

Perceptions of the Police in Two Nations: An Exploratory Study of Policing Views among Bangladeshi and U.S. College Students

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ABSTRACT

Even though there is a rich body of literature on citizens' views of policing in the U.S., cross-national research on policing views is very limited. This exploratory study examined the views of Bangladeshi college students on different areas of policing and compared and contrasted their views with those of U.S. college students. Analysis of survey data from 742 college students revealed a significant difference between the two nations in their views of many aspects of policing. Specifically, Bangladeshi students were lower in their trust of the police, evaluations of actual police civility, expectation that police should be civil, views that the police work hard, and perceptions of the effectiveness of the police as compared to their U.S. counterparts. Bangladeshi students, however, were higher in their confidence in the police, their views that the community should have input into police operations, and their support for aggressive policing than were the U.S. students. There were no differences in views between the two groups of students in terms of actual police-community interaction and that the public should support the police. The findings also indicated that men generally had more positive perceptions of the police.

Key Words: Bangladesh; U.S.; Policing Views; College Students

INTRODUCTION

The views that citizens have about the police are important. These views can influence the degree and type of interaction people have with the police and the degree of support provided to the police (Cao & Dai, 2006). Without public support, modern policing is difficult, if not impossible (Islam & Ali, 2008). Positive views of the police by citizens can lead to a positive relationship with the police, which can improve the effectiveness of the police (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Negative views can lead to resentment, which can impede the ability of the police to be effective formal agents of law and order (Goldsmith, 2005). Policing views are, therefore, important to explore and understand (Nalla & Madan, 2011). While there is a growing body of research on policing views, the vast majority of studies have focused on Western nations, especially the United States (Brown, Benedict, & Wilkinson, 2006; Cao & Dai, 2006). There are numerous nations across the globe in which there is a scarcity of research on people's views of the police. The lack of studies limits the understanding of policing views and how they

differ across nations (Khan & Unnithan, 2008). Cross-national research can help narrow the gap between different nations and create bridges where information flows more freely (Cao & Cullen, 2001). As Jowell (1998) pointed out, “the importance and utility to social science of cross-national measures is incontestable. They help to reveal not only intriguing differences between countries and cultures, but also aspects of one’s own country and culture that would be difficult or impossible to detect from domestic data alone” (p. 168). By examining views of police from a cross-national perspective, a more complete understanding of the police and policing across the globe will be gained.

In light of the fact that there has only been a modest amount of cross-national research on policing views, especially those involving Asian and Muslim nations, this exploratory study examined the views of individuals in the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (henceforth Bangladesh) and the United States of America (henceforth, the U.S.). Bangladesh was selected because it is a large, growing, and important, largely Muslim, nation in South Asia. Approximately 90% of the population is Muslim, with the vast majority being Sunni, making Bangladesh the third largest Muslim nation and the second most populous Sunni country (with Indonesia being the most populous Sunni nation) (Banglapedia, 2011). Additionally, Bangladesh is the eighth most populous nation in the world (World Factbook, 2012a). Very little about Bangladesh criminal justice issues has been published in Western journals, including people’s views on policing. The U.S. was selected as reference nation to compare and contrast the Bangladeshi views of the police. Because this was an exploratory study with limited financial resources, college students were surveyed about their confidence in the police, trust in police, views of police civility, perceptions of police effectiveness, views on police accountability and input by the public, attitudes towards aggressive policing, and general support for the police. It also investigated whether or not there is significant inter-national variation in perceptions of the police after controlling for individual characteristics of age, gender, and academic level.

Literature Review

Cross-National Views of Police Research

There is a rich literature on views of the police in the U.S. (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Research in the U.S. has shown that the populace as a whole generally has satisfaction with and confidence in the police (Frank, Brandl, Cullen, & Stichman, 1996; Nofziger & Williams, 2005); however, attitudes vary by race, gender, and age (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Nofziger & Williams, 2005). While there has been far less research on policing views in other nations, there is a growing body of cross-national research on policing views. Among 60 surveyed Nigerian college students, the majority felt that the police were too quick to act, were impolite to citizens, were corrupt, and used excessive force (Alemika, 1988). A majority of surveyed Mexican college students viewed the police as being ineffective in controlling crime and treated citizens unfairly (Brown et al., 2006). In a convenience survey of residents of St. Petersburg (Russia) and the Queens area of New York City (U.S.), U.S. respondents were more likely to feel that the police were effective than Russian respondents, while Russian respondents were slightly more likely to feel that the police stopped people without a good cause (Davis, Ortiz, Gilinskiy, Ylesseva, & Briller, 2003). In another survey based on college students, U.S. students had a higher satisfaction with police and viewed the police as having more integrity than their Chinese counterparts, even after taking into account age, gender, and academic level (Wu, 2010). U.S.

college students reported higher levels of trust and views of the police being civil than did students from Bangladesh, Canada, and Nigeria (Lambert, Jiang, Khondaker, Elechi, Baker, & Tucker, 2010). Based on a convenience sample of Indian residents, it was found that most felt that the police were corrupt and satisfaction with the Indian police was not high (Nalla & Madan, 2011).

There have been a series of published studies based on the World Values Survey to examine the confidence in police (using a single item) in various countries. U.S. respondents generally had greater confidence in the police than their Japanese counterparts (Cao & Stack, 2005; Cao, Stack, & Sun, 1998). German respondents were less confident in the police than respondents from the U.S. (Cao, 2001). Chinese respondents were generally lower in their level of confidence in the police than the U.S. respondents were (Cao & Hou, 2001). Additionally, Chinese respondents had greater confidence in the police than Taiwanese respondents, and age, educational level, and gender were significant predictors as well (Lai & Zhao, 2010). U.S. citizens were more confident in the police than citizens from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Cao & Zhao, 2005). Cao and Burton (2006) reported that Turkish respondents' confidence in police was as high as other European Union nations. There have been several studies based on the International Crime Victimization Survey, which asked if a person felt the police in his/her country did a good job at controlling crime. Van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta (2000) reported that perceptions of the police doing a good job in dealing with crime were higher in Canada and the U.S. than various European nations. In a later study, Van Dijk, Van Kesteren, and Smit (2008) reported that the view that the police were doing a good job in controlling crime varied across the 30 nations examined, with European nations generally more positive than non-European nations.

The past research indicates that policing views often differ across nations even when controlling for personal characteristics, such as age, gender, and educational level. Second, most previous studies have used limited measures on views of the police, such as confidence, trust, and perceived civility. There are other policing views which have yet to be fully examined. Finally, only one study on public views of Bangladesh police published in a Western journal could be located, and this study examined views on trustworthiness and civility of the police (Lambert et al., 2010).

Brief Overview of Bangladesh and the U.S.

Bangladesh, which literally translates to “country/land of Bengal,” is a nation in South Asia with an estimated population of more than 168 million people living in an area the size of Iowa (Das, Khondakar, Quamruzzaman, Ahmed, & Peck, 2012; Geography, 2005). It is the eighth most densely populated nation (World Bank, 2012). Approximately 89% of the population is Muslim, with the vast majority being Sunni, making Bangladesh the third largest Muslim nation and the second most populous Sunni country (Banglapedia, 2011; World Factbook, 2012a). The population of Bangladesh is largely ethnically homogeneous, with 98% being Bengali (Geography, 2005; World Factbook, 2012a). The Bangladesh population is largely young, poor, and rural (World Factbook, 2012a). Almost 50% of the population lives on one U.S. dollar or less a day (Oxford Economics, 2008). The area of Bangladesh has a long, rich human history dating back thousands and thousands of years. In the middle 1700s, the area became part of British India (Bangla2000, 2012). When India gained independence in 1947, the

Bangladesh area became part of Pakistan, and then became East Pakistan in 1955 (World Factbook, 2012a). After a bloody conflict, it became an independent nation in 1971 (Banglapedia, 2011; Knox, 2009). While there have been four military coups since independence, Bangladesh is currently a democratic nation (World Factbook, 2012a). It has a secular unicameral parliamentary form of government and is governed by two major political parties, the Bangladesh Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (D’Costa, 2012; Knox, 2009). Its capital is Dhaka, and Bangladesh is divided into seven administrative divisions (i.e., states) (World Factbook, 2012a).

The U.S. is a nation located in North America. With an estimated population of 313 million, it is the third most populous nation (World Factbook, 2012b). With over 2200 million acres, its population density is much lower than Bangladesh; however the majority of U.S. citizens live in urban areas (U.S. Census, 2012; World Factbook, 2012b). While the U.S. is a multi-ethnic nation, the majority of the U.S. residents are Caucasian (79%) and Christian (77%) (U.S. Census, 2012; World Factbook, 2012b). The U.S. has one of the world’s largest and richest economies (World Desk Reference, 2012; World Factbook, 2012b). For example, the gross domestic product per capita in Bangladesh is \$1700 and in the U.S. it is \$48,100 (Knox, 2009; World Factbook 2012a, 2012b). After gaining independence from Britain, the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1787 (World Factbook, 2012b). The U.S. is a federal republic comprised of a federal government and 50 state governments. The two primary political parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party (World Factbook, 2012b).

In the past 20 years, there has been an increase in crime, especially violent crime, and a breakdown of law in Bangladesh (Das & Palmiotto, 2006; Ganguly, 2002). In the 10 years between 1996 and 2006, crimes reported to the police increased from 93,000 to 130,000 (i.e., an increase in the rate from 78 to 87 crimes per 100,000 citizens) (Bangladesh Police, 2012a; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005). Just four years later, by 2010, over 162,000 crimes were reported to the police, a rate of 110 per 100,000 citizens (Bangladesh Police, 2012a). It is important to note that underreporting of crime is common in Bangladesh, particularly for property crimes. It is estimated that about 15,000 children and women are victims of human trafficking each year (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005). Organized robbery gangs are common (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005). Parts of Bangladesh are described as being lawless (Knox, 2009). Additionally, there has been an increase in terrorist activity by militant Islamic groups in Bangladesh (Ganguly, 2006; Uddin, 2009). For example, on August 17, 2005, 450 bombs aimed at government buildings were set off by Jamaatul Mujahideen, an Islamist extremist terrorist group (National Counterterrorism Center, 2011). Hundreds of Bangladeshis have been killed in terrorist attacks in the past decade (Ganguly, 2006). While there has been a rise in crime and terrorism, the use of incarceration is low. Bangladesh has an incarceration rate of 42 per 100,000 (Walmsley, 2012).

The U.S. crime rate, including the violent crime rate, initially rose dramatically compared to 50 years ago but has been declining slowly since the early 1990s (Uniform Crime Reports, 2010). Between 1996 and 2010, felony crimes reported to the police decreased from 13,473,614 to 10,329,135 (i.e., a rate decrease from 5079 to 3432 per 100,000 citizens) (Uniform Crime Reports, 1997, 2011). As with Bangladesh, underreporting of crimes, particularly property

crimes, is a problem in the U.S. Nevertheless, the official crime rates are higher for the U.S. than for Bangladesh, particularly for crimes of violence (Bangladesh Police, 2012a; Uniform Crime Reports, 2011). The use of incarceration is higher in the U.S. compared to Bangladesh or other nations. With an incarceration rate of 743 per 100,000, the U.S. has the highest rate of people under criminal incarceration in the world, while Bangladesh is ranked at 203rd out of 216 nations in terms of rate of incarceration at 42 per 100,000 (Walmsley, 2012).

Brief Overview of Police in Bangladesh and the U.S.

Bangladesh has a national police force which can trace its roots back to the *Colonial Police Act of 1861* (Das & Palmiotto, 2006; Islam & Ali, 2008). Many Bengali police officers participated in the fight for independence from Pakistan (Bangladesh Police, 2012b). Today, this national police force is responsible for law and order in the nation (Bangladesh Police, 2012b; Uddin, 2009). There are other specialized police agencies, such as the Rapid Action Battalion, which was formed in 2003 to combat the rise in serious crime and terrorism (Das & Palmiotto, 2006). The national police are divided into five regional administrative units which are further broken down into 64 districts. There are a total of over 125,000 police officers assigned to more than 500 police stations across Bangladesh (Bangladesh Police, 2012b; Das & Palmiotto, 2006; Uddin, 2009). This translates to a rate of approximately 85 officers per 100,000 citizens.

In the mass media, an unfavorable picture is often painted of the Bangladesh police. The police are not seen as friends or partners with the community (Islam & Ali, 2008). It is alleged that the police will often harass and intimidate ordinary, law-abiding citizens (Siddiqua, 2008). The police are seen as ineffective in dealing with crime and disorder (D'Costa, 2012). "Lawlessness is a common phenomenon that Bangladeshi people live with everyday. Larceny, hijack, robbery, burglary, arson, damage of private and public property, fight over property and political power, murder (including political), and rape are a few of different types of crime that Bangladeshi people experience on an everyday basis" (Khondaker & Lambert, 2009, p. 5-6). The equipment of the Bangladeshi police is outdated and training of officers is rarely done, which hinders the effectiveness of the police (Islam & Ali, 2008). The Bangladeshi police have been criticized for being overly controlled by politicians (Uddin, 2009). The police have often been described as protecting the interests of those with power, particularly those in control of the government (Das & Palmiotto, 2006). Ordinary Bangladeshis "believe the cops are only lackeys in a system in which the chief criminal beneficiaries are a handful of powerful gang lords with important political connections" (Adiga 2004, p. 6). Police are also seen as being complicit in the ruling party's efforts to suppress the political opposition. Islam and Ali (2008) contended that "experience shows that the police were openly used by the ruling parties at different times after independence of the country" (p. 7). Furthermore, the police are viewed as being corrupt (Das & Palmiotto, 2006; Kashem, 2005; Uddin, 2009). In order to report a crime, many victims are required to pay a bribe to the police (Andvig & Fjeldstad, 2008). In one study, among citizens who had recent contact with the police, 84% complained of police corruption (United Nations, 2005). In another survey of 5000 Bangladeshi households, 97% of those who had contact with law enforcement reported experiencing corruption at the hands of the police (Knox, 2009). For example, in order to report domestic violence or other crimes, citizens are expected to pay an average of \$29 U.S., which is significant considering that the per capita income is \$2400 U.S. (Khondaker & Lambert, 2009). As noted by Islam and Ali (2008), "the promise of the police is

rarely maintained because of the presence of bribes at different levels in different degrees” (p. 7). While corruption is common in Bangladesh, the police are seen as one of the most corrupt social institutions in Bangladesh (Konx, 2009).

The Bangladesh police are also accused of using excessive force and engaging in abuse. Extra-judicial killings do occur by the police (Dowler, 2008). For example, the Rapid Action Battalion, formed in 2003 to deal with serious crime and terrorism, has been accused of being involved in over 600 extra-judicial killings (D’Costa, 2012). This force has also been accused of widespread human right violations and torture (Ullah, 2009). The regular Bangladesh police are also alleged to engage in torture, including severe injuries and death to those detained (Edston, 2005; Moisaner & Edston, 2003; Uddin, 2009). Often those tortured are members of the opposing political party and include those with a college degree and university students (Moisaner & Edston, 2003). While their time in police custody tends to be short (1 to 3 days), the injuries of some of those detained by the police are serious, and are “often in need of acute medical treatment afterwards” (Moisaner & Edston, 2003, p. 138). Many Bangladeshi people even fear the police (Asian Human Rights Commission, 2005). While there are problems, there have been efforts to reform the police. In the past decade, there have been efforts to improve the relationship and interactions between the Bangladeshi police and citizens (Islam & Ali, 2008). An anti-corruption commission was recently formed to address corruption, including by the police (D’Costa, 2012; Islam & Ali, 2008). Nevertheless, much more work is needed. In a survey of people who had interacted with the police in Dhaka, the capital city, most did not have positive views of the police nor felt that the police had the best interests of the residents at heart (Islam & Ali, 2008). Finally, surveyed Bangladeshi college students reported low trust in the police and felt that in general the police did not treat everyone with respect (Lambert et al., 2010).

Early policing in the U.S. was influenced by the British; however, over time, four general levels of law enforcement agencies developed, municipal/local, county/sheriff, state, and federal. There is no single centralized police force in the U.S. There are slightly over 700,000 sworn full-time law enforcement officers who are employed at over 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the U.S. (Uniform Crime Reports, 2012). Thus, law enforcement in the U.S. is highly decentralized. There are approximately 235 police officers per 100,000 citizens.

Scholars have divided the U.S. policing into three eras; the political era, professional era, and community policing era (Kelling & Moore, 1988). In colonial America and immediately following the American Revolution, American law enforcement virtually mirrored the English system with the exception of a unique form of slave patrol in Southern states (Williams & Murphy, 1990). Overall, the quality of police service was low, corruption was rampant, and the community-police relationship was intimate yet hostile (Williams & Murphy, 1990). Under the influence of modern technology, rising crime rate, and progressive police leaders, the U.S. police had entered the professional era at the turn of the 20th century. A professional style of policing emphasizes centralizing police organizations, increasing the use of technology, limiting police discretion through regulations and guidelines, and enhancing police recruitment and training (Kelling & Moore, 1988). Although police professionalism is one of the most significant reform efforts in the U.S. as well as across the globe, it started to have some problems, particularly

regarding distanced police-citizen relationship. By 1960s, the U.S. police faced serious challenges, including decreased institution legitimacy, mounting crime and fear of crime, and intensified tension with minority communities (Kelling & Moore, 1988). New reforms were needed to navigate the police through these crises. The nationwide community policing movement, starting in early 1980s, thus served as a survival strategy to improve police legitimacy and effectiveness. Community policing, using multiple measures to capture police performance, highlights public satisfaction with the police (Bayley, 1994).

It is not surprising that a substantial amount of research been conducted on citizen perceptions of the police since 1960s (Brown & Benedict, 2002). In general, evidence accumulated over the past 50 years indicates a widespread positive and supportive attitude toward the police in the U.S. (Huang & Vaughn, 1996). Findings also suggest that the level of satisfaction can vary across a variety of individual characteristics and experiences. For example, minorities, African Americans particularly and to a lesser extent Hispanic and Asian Americans, have been found to have less favorable views of the police than whites (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Wu, Sun, & Smith, 2011). While the ideals surrounding the U.S. policing have been based on principles of equality, fairness, justice, and minimal government intrusion into citizens' lives (Steverson, 2008), in reality, police misconduct, including brutality and corruption, exists, and can be pervasive in certain departments during certain periods, as uncovered by independent commission reports (e.g., Knapp Commission, 1973; Mollen Commission, 1994). High-profile incidents of police misconduct are likely to have a negative impact on public perceptions of the police within a certain amount of time after the incidents, but public perceptions remain largely stable over time (see the longitudinal data of the Gallup Poll) (Maguire, 2012).

Research Objectives

There are two research objectives for this exploratory study. The first is to explore the views of different areas of policing among Bangladeshi college students. Although Bangladesh is the eighth most populous nation, the third most populous Muslim country in the world, and growing economically, there has been very little research on policing views of Bangladeshi residents published in Western journals. This study examined public confidence in the police, trust of the police, and views of police civility, police effectiveness, input into police operations, police accountability, and aggressive policing, and support for the police. Because this was an exploratory study with limited financial resources, college students were surveyed. Using a college student sample affects the generalizability of the results to the overall Bangladeshi population. While Bangladeshi college students may not represent the views of overall population, after graduation they will probably have a greater say in policing issues than others with less political and economic power (Khondaker, Lambert, & Jiang, 2011). Thus, understanding their attitudes and opinions is important for future police reform.

The second research objective is to compare and contrast the views of Bangladeshi and U.S. college students. Past research suggests that policing views vary both within and across nations. Since both nations have been influenced to a degree by their history as former British colonies, there may be some similarities in views of the police between the two countries. On the other hand, Bangladesh and the U.S. have developed their own unique cultures which probably

have led to differences in policing views. In order to determine whether the views of policing differ between the two nations, it is important to control for the variables that may shape these views at the individual level. Previous studies have generally controlled for the demographic characteristics of gender, age, and educational level. In this study, gender, age, and educational level were controlled for in the multi-variate analyses. It was predicted that there would be both intra- and international differences in policing views between the nations.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of students at one Bangladeshi university and one U.S. university were surveyed. The Bangladesh institution was the largest public university located in the capital city, Dhaka. The institution offered both undergraduate and graduate degrees in 51 academic disciplines and had an enrollment of about 30,000 students. The surveys were given to 8 classes from 8 different disciplines to ensure that students from different academic backgrounds were represented. The U.S. university was a public institution located in the Midwest with an enrollment of approximately 20,000 and offered undergraduate, master, and doctoral/terminal degrees. At the U.S. university, undergraduate students in 18 classes were surveyed. The selected classes were general education courses required by all majors. At both academic institutions, the survey was explained to the students, and it was emphasized both verbally and in writing that the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Students were asked not to complete the survey if they had done so in another class. Students completed the survey during class time.

A total of 258 usable surveys were returned by Bangladeshi students, and a total of 484 usable surveys were returned by U.S. students. Thus, a total of 742 surveys were used in this study. For the overall group of respondents, 56% were women and 44% were men, with about the same percentage of women in both groups (55% of the Bangladeshi participants were women and 56% of the U.S. participants were women). For the overall group, the median age of the respondents was 21 and the mean age was 21.57, with a standard deviation of 4.62. The Bangladeshi respondents were slightly younger than the U.S. respondents (20.80 versus 21.96 mean years old). For the overall group, 30% were freshmen, 14% were sophomores, 34% were juniors, and 22% were seniors. The Bangladeshi students were more likely to be freshmen and the U.S. students were slightly more likely to be seniors.

Variables

The students were asked to respond to 18 Likert items reflecting their views on police, which were answered using a five-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 5). Based on a review of the items and exploratory factor analysis results, a total of 11 indexes were formed. The indexes (in bold) and the items that were used to form them are presented in Table 1. All the factor loading scores were above .45. Indexes using two or more items were created by summing the responses of the items together.

The personal characteristics of gender, age, academic level, and nationality were included in the multivariate analyses. Gender was measured as a dichotomous variable representing a woman (coded as 0) or a man (coded as 1). Age was measured in continuous years. Academic level was an ordinal variable coded as 1 = freshman, 2 = sophomore, 3 = junior, and 4 = senior. Nationality of the participant was coded as 0 = U.S. and 1 = Bangladesh.

Results

Table 1 presents the percentage responses for the 18 Likert items reflecting the views on police among the Bangladeshi and U.S. students. For the majority of items in Table 1, there appeared to be differences between two groups of participants. The Independent t-test was used to determine whether the differences were statistically significant, and the findings are also reported in Table 1. Overall, Bangladeshi participants had more confidence in the police, were more likely to believe the community should have input, were more likely to feel the police should be more accountable for their action, and more supportive of aggressive policing than did their U.S. counterparts. Interestingly, U.S. students had a higher level of trust in the police, were more likely to feel the police should be civil to citizens, and were more likely to agree that the police worked hard and were effective. There was no statistically significant difference for perceptions of actual level of police involvement into the community and whether people should always support the police. Overall, there was a statistically significant difference between Bangladeshi and U.S. participants for 9 of the 11 indexes and 14 of the 18 individual items.

Table 1

Percentage Results and Differences Between Bangladeshi and U.S. Participants on Policing Views (N = 918)

Items (Indexes are in bold)	Bangladesh					U.S.					Bangladesh		U.S.		t-value
	S D	D	U	A	S A	S D	D	U	A	S A	Mea n	SDe v	Mea n	SDe v	
Confidence in Police											9.19	2.92	8.25	2.64	-
The police know what is best for my community	7	3	1	3	6	17	3	3	1	4	2.94	1.12	2.58	1.07	-
Police know what is best for people	9	3	1	3	10	13	3	3	1	1	3.07	1.18	2.57	0.96	-
Police know how to best respond to crime	5	3	1	3	13	6	2	3	3	4	3.23	1.16	3.10	0.99	-1.57
Trust in Police											2.42	1.18	3.37	1.12	10.66*

I trust the police	26	3	2	1	5	9	1	2	4	12	2.42	1.18	3.37	1.12	10.66*
		0	2	6			3	2	5						*
Police Civility											4.69	1.87	5.63	1.70	6.79**
Police are generally friendly	25	4	1	1	3	5	1	2	5	4	2.31	1.13	3.32	0.98	12.41*
		3	0	9			8	1	2						*
Police generally treat everyone the same in my community	29	3	1	1	7	28	3	1	1	3	2.39	1.25	2.31	1.12	-0.94
		1	8	4			6	8	5						
Police Should Be Civil											3.75	1.05	4.21	0.81	6.56**
The police should show respect to those they meet	5	7	1	4	23	2	2	8	5	38	3.75	1.05	4.21	0.81	6.56**
			9	6					0						
Police Work Hard											2.26	1.09	3.22	0.96	12.06*
Police in my community work hard	27	3	1	1	2	4	1	3	3	7	2.26	1.09	3.22	0.96	12.06*
		8	7	4			9	5	6						*
Effectiveness of Police											4.99	1.62	6.31	1.41	11.12*
Police generally have little impact in the amount of crime in my community (RC)	12	5	1	2	3	2	1	3	4	5	3.09	1.03	3.37	0.89	11.37*
		2	2	1			6	0	7						*
Criminals have little fear of the police (RC)	12	5	1	1	6	3	3	2	2	4	2.79	1.02	2.94	0.96	5.79**
		3	5	3			7	7	9						
Should Have Police Input											4.01	0.73	3.81	0.84	-
															3.12**

The community should have input on how the police operate	1	4	1	6	22	1	1	1	6	16	4.01	0.73	3.81	0.84	-
			4	0			0	4	0						3.12**
Police Actual Input											5.50	1.92	5.31	1.50	-1.44
In my community, the police frequently ask residents to provide ideas on how to best respond to crime	14	4	1	2	3	21	3	3	9	1	2.51	1.07	2.32	0.95	-2.40*
		7	4	1			7	1							
The police generally attend and participate in local community meetings	10	3	1	3	11	3	2	4	2	2	3.05	1.22	2.99	0.82	-0.73
		0	4	4			4	6	5						
Police Accountability											8.06	1.23	7.41	1.29	-
There should be greater control of the police by community citizens	1	1	1	5	10	3	2	4	2	5	3.62	0.88	3.12	0.90	-
		3	8	8			0	2	9						7.00**
Police should be accountable for their actions	1	5	2	3	54	1	2	6	4	42	4.04	0.81	4.28	0.76	-1.97*
				8					9			1			
Aggressive Policing											7.64	1.58	5.79	1.62	-
															13.95*
															*

Excessive police scrutiny is necessary to fight crime	3	8	5	5	31	7	3	4	1	1	4.00	0.99	2.69	0.87	-18.52*
Frequent stops by the police in the community is necessary to reduce crime	5	6	2	5	16	10	2	2	3	6	3.66	1.00	3.10	1.12	-6.36**
Police Support											3.28	1.14	3.16	1.08	-1.37
People in the community should always support the police	6	2	1	3	13	6	2	2	3	8	3.28	1.14	3.16	1.08	-1.37

Note. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree. SDev stands for standard deviation. RC stands for reverse coded (percentages reported here reflect being reverse coded). There were 258 Bangladeshi participants and 484 U.S. participants.

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was conducted with each of the 11 policing view indexes as the dependent variables to determine whether the differences between Bangladeshi and U.S. participants would disappear once controlling for the shared effects of gender, age, and academic level (i.e., the independent variables were gender, age, academic level, and nationality). The multivariate analysis results are reported in Table 2. Due to space limitations, the dependent variables are reported in the rows and the independent variables are reported in the columns. While not reported, the Variance of Inflation Factor scores and the tolerance values did not indicate a problem with multicollinearity. Nationality was a statistically significant predictor for 9 of the 11 indexes on policing views. On average, U.S. participants had higher levels of trust of the police, were more likely to see the police as being civil, more supportive that the police needed to be civil, more likely to view the police as working hard, and were higher in their level of perception that the police were effective. Conversely, Bangladeshi participants in general expressed a higher level of confidence in the police, more likely to agree that the police should seek community input, expressed greater hopes of police accountability to the community, and were more supportive of aggressive policing. For the indexes on police actual input and police support, the nationality variable was a non-significant predictor (i.e., there was no significant differences between Bangladeshi and U.S. students on these two indexes).

Table 2

Regression Results for the Views of Police Indexes/Variables (Standardized Regression Coefficients Reported)

Index/Dependent Variable	Gender	Age	Academic Level	Nation	R-Squared
Confidence in Police	.27**	-.07	.05	.16**	.11**
Trust in Police	.10**	-.08	-.04	-.38**	.15**
Police Civility	.11**	-.04	-.02	-.26**	.08**
Police Should Be Civil	-.03	.09**	-.02	-.23**	.07**
Police Work Hard	.10**	-.02	-.08	-.43**	.19**
Effectiveness of Police	.09**	-.04	-.12**	-.42**	.18**
Community Should Have Input	-.09**	.10**	-.16**	.08**	.06**
Police Actual Input	.18**	-.01	-.03	.03	.04**
Police Accountability	-.23**	.09*	-.04	.22**	.11**
Aggressive Policing	.08*	-.04	.04	.45**	.21**
Police Support	.08*	-.06	.10*	.06	.02*

Note. Dependent variables reported in rows and independent variables reported in the columns. Gender was coded as 0=female and 1=male. Age was measured in continuous years. Academic level was coded as 1=freshman, 2=sophomore, 3=junior, and 4=senior. Nation was coded as 0=U.S. and 1=Bangladesh. See Table 1 for the specific items used to create each of the indexes/variables. The number of Bangladeshi participants was 258, and the number of U.S. participants was 484.

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Among the other independent variables, gender was a significant predictor on 10 of the 11 views on policing indexes. Men were more likely to have confidence in the police, to trust the police, to feel the police are civil, work hard, and are effective, to feel that the police actually are involved with the community, to support aggressive policing, and to feel people should always support the police. Women were more likely to feel that the community should have input and that police should be accountable. There were no significant differences between men and women on whether the police should be civil.

Age was a significant predictor for 3 of the 11 indexes. As age increased, there was a higher level of support that the police needed to be civil to the public, the community should have input into how the police operate, and the police should be held accountable to the community. For the other 8 indexes, age was not a significant predictor.

Academic level had a significant relationship with 3 of the policing indexes. Increases in academic level were associated with higher agreement that the public should support the police. Conversely, increases in academic level were related to less support for the view that the police should be civil to those they encounter and that the community should have input into police operations. For the other 8 indexes, academic level was not a significant predictor.

Finally, it is important to note that while all R-Squared values were statistically significant, these values were low (i.e., ranged from .02 to .21). Since R-Squared represents the amount of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables, this means that other variables than nationality, gender, age, and academic variables helped shape the views of college students on the 11 views of police indexes.

Discussion

Based on data collected from college students in Bangladesh and the U.S., this study represents the first study to compare public perceptions of the police in these two nations. Several interesting findings arise. First, college students as a group appear to have less than positive or certain views on the police. Without collecting data from the adult populations, we are unable to gauge the degree to which college students' views differ from the adults, but our findings do suggest that college students have quite low levels of confidence in police and unfavorable evaluations of various police performance areas, including civility and fairness, working ethic, effectiveness, and efforts in seeking community input. For example, fewer than half of the participants in each nation agreed that the police know what is best for their community, what is best for people, or how to best respond to crime. Even worse, only 21% of the Bangladesh and 18% of the U.S. participants thought that the police generally treated everyone the same in their community. As few as 16% and 42% of the Bangladesh and the U.S. participants believed that the police in their community work hard; meanwhile, as many as 24% and 52% of the Bangladesh and the U.S. participants believed that the police generally have little impact in the amount of crime in their community. It should be noted that a large number of the surveyed students seem to be rather uncertain or simply indifferent about the police and police services. A large proportion of the participants, especially Americans, reported that they are uncertain about the surveyed questions of policing. The U.S. students have especially high percentages of fence sitters on the confidence in police questions. One in three of the participants said that they were uncertain whether or not the police know what is best for the community and people. Similarly, over 30% of the U.S. participants reported that they were uncertain about whether the police work hard or have impact on crime in the community. Comparatively speaking, there are fewer Bangladesh participants who selected the neutral or indecisive responses. This pattern of large numbers of uncommitted answers from the U.S. college students is similar to what has been found on juvenile attitudes toward the police in the U.S. (e.g., Hurst, 2007; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001).

Second, with the exception of confidence in police, the Bangladesh students are, in general, less favorable about police performance than their U.S. counterparts. To start with, the Bangladesh students had significantly lower levels of trust in their police, with the majority of

the participants expressing distrust for the police while the majority of the U.S. students voicing trust for the police. The Bangladesh students have also held significantly lower levels of satisfaction with police friendliness, industriousness, and effectiveness on crime. The two samples, meanwhile, were similar in their opinion regarding police equal treatment. That is, both groups have the same proportion of participants who were uncertain about this area of police performance (18%) and importantly, both were equally dissatisfied about police treatment of different people in the community (60% for the Bangladesh participants and 64% for the U.S. participants).

The generally less trustful and less favorable views of the police held by Bangladesh students than their U.S. counterparts are not unexpected, in light of the differences in the degree of police professionalism and the amount of police misconduct in the two nations. As aforementioned, police-community relations in Bangladesh are largely strained due to rising crime rates and heightened public fear of crime, police lack of training and professionalism, police unfairness toward people without power, and police harassment and corruption (Das & Palmiotto, 2006; D'Costa, 2012; Islam & Ali, 2008; Khondaker & Lambert, 2009; Siddiqua, 2008; Uddin, 2009). In contrast, although not without problems, the U.S. police are, overall, more democratic and professional than police in many developing countries. Indeed, police corruption is considered a universal problem, but is particularly challenging in countries in crisis and/or in transition (Bayley & Perito, 2011). Corruption, in general, is more severe in Bangladesh than in the U.S. The Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be on a scale of 0-10 with 0 meaning highly corrupt and 10 meaning very clean. Bangladesh scored 2.7 and ranked the 120th (of 182) while the U.S. scored 7.1 and ranked the 24th (Transparency International, 2012). As an important and highly visible sector of the government, it is not surprising that the police received lower satisfaction in Bangladesh than in the U.S.

It is, however, surprising that the Bangladesh students expressed higher levels of confidence in their police than did the U.S. students. Although there were more U.S. students who were uncertain about their opinion on this issue, greater proportions of the Bangladesh students reported that they believed the police know what is best for their community, what is best for the people, and how to best respond to crime. It is possible that living in a collectivist culture (Azim, 2008), Bangladesh students are more likely to respond in a socially endorsed way when they are uncertain of a survey question. That is, when Bangladesh students are unsure about how they think of police knowledge and capability, some of them, especially those highly group-oriented, may report that they are confident in the police instead of being uncommitted in their response, thus inflating the average levels of confidence. A second possible explanation is that Bangladesh students may hold more onto the traditional view that the police are the most qualified, or even the sole, crime fighters, while the U.S. students may have a better understanding of the limitations of the police in crime control with the influence of the community policing movement. Consequently, it is possible that when Bangladesh students had high expectations that the police know how to best respond to crime yet fail to do so, they become even more disappointed and distrustful of the police. These two postulations need to be empirically tested by future research.

Third, regarding the opinion on what the police should be or should do, results show that the American students place greater importance on police civil behavior while the Bangladesh students emphasize police accountability and endorse aggressive policing more. Specifically, more American students (88%) than Bangladesh (69%) believed that the police should show respect to those they meet, whereas more Bangladesh students than American students believed that the community should have input on how the police operate (82% versus 76%), there should be greater control of the police by community citizens (68% versus 34%), the police should be accountable for their actions (92% versus 91%), excessive police scrutiny is necessary to fight crime (83% versus 17%), and frequent stops by the police in the community is necessary to reduce crime (66% versus 45%).

These attitudinal patterns may reflect the differences in policing and legal culture in the two nations. In the U.S., procedural justice has increasingly been recognized as an important factor in promoting police legitimacy and boosting public confidence and cooperation (Tyler, 2001). How the police interact with citizens, including officers' manner, attitudes, and behaviors, have important implications for citizen compliance with the police. Recent research has shown that the same significant effects of procedural justice may not be found in different cultures. Tankebe (2009), for example, revealed that in Ghana, public cooperation with the police is influenced more by utilitarian factors such as perceived police effectiveness than procedural justice. The author attributed this finding to a lack of police legitimacy and high levels of public alienation from the police in Ghana. In the Bangladesh context, due to similar reasons, the public may have placed greater values on the instrumental concerns rather than normative concerns of police performance. Indeed, facing escalating crime problems and a police force with problems of corruption and other abuse of power, a strong desire for enhancing police accountability seems most natural for Bangladesh students.

The finding that Bangladesh students were more supportive of aggressive policing than their U.S. counterparts is also interesting. In a nation that emphasizes crime control instead of due process, Bangladesh participants are likely to be less aware of or cautious about the potential danger of aggressive policing practices. In the U.S., college students may be more sensitive to the protection of human rights and due process and, accordingly, more wary that excessive police scrutiny and frequent stops may infringe on citizens' constitutional rights and increase police harassment on less powerful groups of the society. In addition, Bangladesh students may have a stronger tendency than their U.S. counterparts to attribute the crime problem to a lack of action by the police and, therefore, believe that intensified law enforcement is, by default, necessary to reduce crime.

Finally, gender turned out to be a significant predictor of college students' perceptions of the police. Results indicated that men tend to have higher levels of both confidence and trust in the police. They also hold more favorable evaluations of police civility, diligence, effectiveness, and efforts in seeking community input. Relatedly, men are less likely than women to think that the police should show respect to those they meet, community should have input on how the police operate, or the police should be held more accountable to the community. In contrast, they are also more likely than women to support for aggressive policing and the idea that the community should always support the police. These results are different from what was usually

found in the American literature of public perceptions of the police, where gender was either a weak/non-significant predictor (Chermak, McGarrell, & Weiss, 2001; Huang & Vaughn 1996), or women were found to be more supportive of the police than men (Reisig & Correia, 1997; Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998). It is possible that the Bangladesh women have especially low levels of satisfaction with the police, as was found in this study. This significant gender effect may be partially explained by the gender bias allegation that the Bangladesh police treat men better than women as gender inequality in Bangladesh remains a severe issue, with women dominated by a patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system and positioned in a relative lower status (Ferdaush & Rahman, 2011).

As is the case with many studies, the current study had shortcomings. There are methodological concerns related to the use of college students as participants. This was a single exploratory study. Additional studies are needed to determine whether the results can be replicated. While college students may become active in the shaping of government agencies, including the police, it is unknown if the views of the college students represent the views of the general population. Additionally, as college students were sampled, it means that the results cannot be generalized to the larger Bangladesh society. College students tend to be young, freedom-oriented, and more liberal, and thus may be more cynical and less trustful of the police (Williams & Nofziger, 2003). Conversely, college students usually also represent the highest socioeconomic status groups in a society, especially so in Bangladesh, and as such, may have more favorable attitudes toward the police as they see the police as the protector of their interests and the status quo.

In this study, the R-squared values were low (see Table 2), which means that future research needs to examine more theoretically-relevant predictor variables to better explain the intra-national differences observed. Policing views are complex and are likely formed by a variety of variables within a society. Future research should include more and better-measured explanatory variables. For example, due to data constraints, this study does not contain measures of the type and quality of past experience with the police, which are likely to influence evaluations of the police (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Crime-related variable, such as victimization and fear of crime, may affect public perceptions of the police as well, possibly especially so in Bangladesh. Additionally, future researchers should consider controlling for the socio-economic status of participants.

Moreover, improved measures for the different areas of views on policing should be used in future research. In the current study, several policing areas were measured using a single item and the remaining areas were measured with only a handful of items. In future research, scales with multiple uni-dimensional items need to be created, and comparable, valid cross-cultural measures should be developed. Furthermore, no questions concerning views on police abuse of power and corruption were included in the current study. It is unclear if these views would help explain trust and confidence in the police. Finally, there were several untested explanations presented for the findings. These explanations need to be empirically tested. While those surveyed may desire changes in police practice, this study did not ask about the methods advocated for this change. Police culture probably needs to be considered when making changes to the police in a particular nation (Nickels & Verma, 2008).

In closing, this exploratory cross-national study was conducted to start to understand the perceptions of Bangladeshi people towards police and policing, as well as to test if there was a difference in policing views between Bangladeshi and U.S. college students. A total of 742 college students from both countries were surveyed. The results indicate that there appeared to be differences between two groups of participants. Bangladeshi participants had more confidence in the police even though they had less trust. On the other hand U.S. participants expressed more trust but less confidence. Bangladeshi students were much more supportive of aggressive policing than were their U.S. counterparts. A number of unexamined explanations are provided for the perceptions of Bangladeshi participants. The results also indicate that females are more likely to have less positive views towards the police and policing. Limitations of the research as well as suggestions for future research are provided. Much more cross-national research on policing views is needed.

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Table 1

Percentage Results and Differences Between Bangladeshi and U.S. Participants on Policing Views (N = 918)

Items (Indexes are in bold)	Bangladesh					U.S.					Bangladesh		U.S.		t-value
	SD	D	U	A	SA	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	SDev	Mean	SDev	
Confidence in Police											9.19	2.92	8.25	2.64	-4.24**
The police know what is best for my community	7	37	15	34	6	17	32	32	15	4	2.94	1.12	2.58	1.07	-4.17**
Police know what is best for people	9	30	18	33	10	13	35	34	16	1	3.07	1.18	2.57	0.96	-6.08**
Police know how to best respond to crime	5	30	16	36	13	6	24	30	36	4	3.23	1.16	3.10	0.99	-1.57
Trust in Police											2.42	1.18	3.37	1.12	10.66**
I trust the police	26	30	22	16	5	9	13	22	45	12	2.42	1.18	3.37	1.12	10.66**
Police Civility											4.69	1.87	5.63	1.70	6.79**
Police are generally friendly	25	43	10	19	3	5	18	21	52	4	2.31	1.13	3.32	0.98	12.41**
Police generally treat everyone the same in my community	29	31	18	14	7	28	36	18	15	3	2.39	1.25	2.31	1.12	-0.94
Police Should Be Civil											3.75	1.05	4.21	0.81	6.56**
The police should show respect to those they meet	5	7	19	46	23	2	2	8	50	38	3.75	1.05	4.21	0.81	6.56**
Police Work Hard											2.26	1.09	3.22	0.96	12.06**
Police in my community work hard	27	38	17	14	2	4	19	35	36	7	2.26	1.09	3.22	0.96	12.06**
Effectiveness of Police											4.99	1.62	6.31	1.41	11.12**
Police generally have little impact in the amount of crime in my community (RC)	12	52	12	21	3	2	16	30	47	5	3.09	1.03	3.37	0.89	11.37**

Criminals have little fear of the police (RC)	12	53	15	13	6	3	37	27	29	4	2.79	1.02	2.94	0.96	5.79**
Should Have Police Input											4.01	0.73	3.81	0.84	-3.12**
The community should have input on how the police operate	1	4	14	60	22	1	10	14	60	16	4.01	0.73	3.81	0.84	-3.12**
Police Actual Input											5.50	1.92	5.31	1.50	-1.44
In my community, the police frequently ask residents to provide ideas on how to best respond to crime	14	47	14	21	3	21	37	31	9	1	2.51	1.07	2.32	0.95	-2.40*
The police generally attend and participate in local community meetings	10	30	14	34	11	3	24	46	25	2	3.05	1.22	2.99	0.82	-0.73
Police Accountability											8.06	1.23	7.41	1.29	-6.36**
There should be greater control of the police by community citizens	1	13	18	58	10	3	20	42	29	5	3.62	0.88	3.12	0.90	-7.00**
Police should be accountable for their actions	1	5	2	38	54	1	2	6	49	42	4.04	0.811	4.28	0.76	-1.97*
Aggressive Policing											7.64	1.58	5.79	1.62	-13.95**
Excessive police scrutiny is necessary to fight crime	3	8	5	52	31	7	36	40	16	1	4.00	0.99	2.69	0.87	-18.52**
Frequent stops by the police in the community is necessary to reduce crime	5	6	22	50	16	10	22	22	39	6	3.66	1.00	3.10	1.12	-6.36**
Police Support											3.28	1.14	3.16	1.08	-1.37
People in the community should always support the police	6	24	19	37	13	6	27	21	38	8	3.28	1.14	3.16	1.08	-1.37

Note. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree. SDev stands for standard deviation. RC stands for reverse coded (percentages reported here reflect being reverse coded). There were 258 Bangladeshi participants and 484 U.S. participants.

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 2

Regression Results for the Views of Police Indexes/Variables (Standardized Regression Coefficients Reported)

Index/Dependent Variable	Gender	Age	Academic Level	Nation	R-Squared
Confidence in Police	.27**	-.07	.05	.16**	.11**
Trust in Police	.10**	-.08	-.04	-.38**	.15**
Police Civility	.11**	-.04	-.02	-.26**	.08**
Police Should Be Civil	-.03	.09**	-.02	-.23**	.07**
Police Work Hard	.10**	-.02	-.08	-.43**	.19**
Effectiveness of Police	.09**	-.04	-.12**	-.42**	.18**
Community Should Have Input	-.09**	.10**	-.16**	.08**	.06**
Police Actual Input	.18**	-.01	-.03	.03	.04**
Police Accountability	-.23**	.09*	-.04	.22**	.11**
Aggressive Policing	.08*	-.04	.04	.45**	.21**
Police Support	.08*	-.06	.10*	.06	.02*

Note. Dependent variables reported in rows and independent variables reported in the columns. Gender was coded as 0=female and 1=male. Age was measured in continuous years. Academic level was coded as 1=freshman, 2=sophomore, 3=junior, and 4=senior. Nation was coded as 0=U.S. and 1=Bangladesh. See Table 1 for the specific items used to create each of the indexes/variables. The number of Bangladeshi participants was 258, and the number of U.S. participants was 484.

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$