Perceived police legitimacy in Ghana: The role of procedural fairness and contacts with the police

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the present study is to examine the extent to which procedural justice and contacts with police influence people's assessments of their local police in post-colonial societies. Specifically, the study aimed to 1) determine whether favorable perceptions of procedural fairness predict individuals' willingness to accept the police as authority Fig. 2) assess the effects of two types of contacts – police-initiated and citizen-initiated contacts – on people's decision to view the police as legitimate and 3) assess the combine effect of fairness and contact on the likelihood of citizens voluntarily accepting their local police as authority figure in the community. Analyzing data systematically collected from two large metropolitan areas in Ghana, results demonstrate significant effects of procedural fairness and police-initiated contacts on citizens' propensity to consider the police as legitimate. Moreover, results further revealed an interactive effect on police legitimacy in Ghana.

1. Introduction

In the past decades, researchers have made efforts to understand the dynamics of public attitudes toward the police, trying to address the single most important question: why do people evaluate the police favorably or unfavorably? Answers to this question differ across studies and social contexts. For instance, some scholars attribute variation in citizens' perceptions of the police to individual demographic characteristics (Boateng, 2012; Hsieh and Boateng, 2015), corruption (Sabet, 2012), and neighborhood disorder (Boateng, 2016; Boateng and Darko, 2016). While these observations are important in advancing our knowledge of citizens' attitudes toward police officers, some police scholars equally believe that individuals' views about the police are determined by how the police treat them and perform their constitutional mandates. This line of argument has become popular among researchers in recent times (Braga et al., 2014; Reisig and Lloyd, 2009; Tyler and Blader, 2000; Tyler et al., 1997; Tyler and Smith, 1997), suggesting that fairness in police decision-making and fair treatment of people during encounters with officers inadvertently yield positive evaluations.

Conceptually, police legitimacy is the belief that the police have the authority to mold behavior following the rule of law (Braga et al., 2014; Tyler, 2006). Previous studies have showed the importance of legitimacy in influencing residents' willingness to cooperate voluntarily with their local police (Gau, 2011; Murphy et al., 2009). On the other hand, procedural justice is the "fairness of the process through which the police make decisions and exercise authority" (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003, p. 514). These authors and others (Meares et al., 2015; Papachristos et al., 2012; Tyler, 2009) have well established the importance of procedural justice during encounters

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between citizens and the police. For example, it has been argued that the use of fair procedures by the police increases judgments of legitimacy, resulting in self-regulation and obedience to the law being enforced. Tyler (2009) believes that a self-regulatory system is cost-effective and leads to fewer confrontations between the police and citizens.

There is no doubt that procedural justice is important during citizens' encounters with the police. However, much of what is known about this concept and its relationship with citizens' behavior is largely based on research that utilized data obtained from the West (especially, from United State), with limited effort to understand the concept in other less developed and postcolonial societies. The lack of adequate research effort in these societies creates room for further examination of the extent to which procedural justice moderates the relationship between citizens and their local police. Therefore, to supplement the efforts of previous studies, the current study examines the extent to which procedural justice and contacts with police influence people's assessments of their local police from a non-Western perspective, analyzing field data from two large metropolitan cities in Ghana.

The aim is to determine whether favorable perceptions of procedural fairness predict individuals' willingness to accept the police as authority figure. Also, to examine the effects of two types of contacts—police-initiated and citizen-initiated contacts—on people's decisions to view the police as legitimate. Finally, the study assesses the combined effect of fairness and contact on the likelihood of citizens voluntarily accepting their local police as authority figures in the community. Considering the persistent tensions between citizens and the Ghana Police Service, a study that focuses on procedural justice in police-public interactions is not only critical but necessary. Currently, there is a low level of public trust in the Ghana Police Service and it is experiencing a legitimacy crisis (Boateng and Darko, 2016); an understanding of the potency of procedural justice in shaping attitudes will help both police administrators and scholars to develop policies that bolster a better relationship between the police and citizens, as well as reducing tensions between the two.

2. Untangling the relationship between police legitimacy and procedural justice

Police legitimacy has received extensive research attention among police scholars. However, despite this effort, scholars have not been able to agree on a single definition. Instead, the concept has been defined differently by various scholars. For instance, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) considered legitimacy as a continuous dialogue between power-holders (officials such as police officers) and their audiences (citizens), and in this dialogue, officers make claims while citizens respond to those claims. Others view legitimacy as obligation to obey authority (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003), and that, people tend to obey the police because they view the police as possessing the authority to make decisions (Boateng, 2018). Despite the lack of a common definition, many studies have demonstrated the importance of police legitimacy in influencing citizens' behavior, especially pertaining to their willingness to cooperate voluntarily with the police (Gau, 2011; Murphy et al., 2009; Tyler and Fagan, 2008; Tyler et al., 2010). Citizens' willingness to offer information is crucial because the police rely heavily on witnesses' accounts of incidents to be successful in solving crimes. Police legitimacy promotes citizens' voluntary cooperation, compliance, and support for the police, as well as shaping public perceptions of the police, particularly public trust in the police. A perception of police illegitimacy among the public could lead to alienation, dissatisfaction, defiance, and non-cooperation from the public (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003).

Prior studies have identified four core elements that determine police legitimacy: procedural justice, police performance, public trust, and confidence (Boateng, 2018). Each of these elements plays important role in determining a department's level of public acceptance. Police researchers believed that when citizens consider the police to be effective at controlling crime, they tend to believe the police are police legitimate (Jonathan-Zamir and Weisburd, 2011); subsequently deferring to their authority. Trust and confidence have also been seen as important factors in maintaining legitimacy (Lee et al., 2015). According to the authors, police force that is not considered trustworthy is unlikely to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public. As noted by Jackson and Bradford (2010), trust and confidence in the police could enhance citizens' participation in police community programs and further lead to voluntary cooperation with the police. The relationship between police legitimacy and procedural justice has well been documented (Cheurprakobkit and Bartsch, 2001; Gau et al., 2012; Mazerolle et al., 2013; Mazerolle et al., 2013; Mazerolle et al., 2012; Murphy, 2005; Tyler & Lind, 1992, 2001). These studies have found evidence to suggest that fair treatment of citizens by the police undoubtedly leads to viewing the police as legitimate. Thus, public compliance and cooperation with legal authorities are influenced by the public's subjective judgments about the fairness of procedures through which institutions such as the police and the courts exercise their authority (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2003, 2005; Tyler and Huo, 2002).

Procedural justice theory has been extensively used in policing studies (Gau et al., 2012; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Tyler and Wakslak, 2004). Gau et al. (2012) argued that the theory's implications for policing, as they relate to police policy, police-community relations, and crime reduction, are remarkable. Police officers symbolize mainstream society (Gau et al., 2012) and are also representatives of the rule of law; their behavior is of great concern to the public. Edwards (1999) remarked that citizens are more concerned about how the police behave than about the behavior of other professionals because of the enormous powers police officers wield. To maintain their symbolic status in society, the police are expected to conduct themselves professionally. Tyler (2003) and other authors (Hough et al., 2010; Reisig and Chandek, 2001) have noted that unfair treatment of citizens will affect not only police legitimacy, but also police performance in controlling crime. Procedural justice judgments are major determinants of whether citizens will cooperate with the police to control crime. As noted earlier, citizens evaluate the police based on the fairness of the procedures they use during interactions as well as the fairness of the decisions the police make. Therefore, to achieve favorable evaluation from citizens, the police must, per Tyler (2004), treat everyone in a similar manner irrespective of race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

In addition to Tyler's works, several recent studies in the policing context have observed the importance of procedural justice in shaping the public's evaluations of the police. Hinds and Murphy (2007) used a sample of Australian citizens to assess the influence of procedural justice on police legitimacy and subsequent public satisfaction with the police and found a positive relationship between

procedural justice and satisfaction with the police. The authors demonstrated that individuals who believed the police used procedural justice in exercising their authority were more likely to view the police as legitimate, and in turn, were more satisfied with the services provided by the police. Murphy (2009) found similar results, observing that procedural justice is more important in police-initiated encounters than in citizen-initiated encounters. Moreover, Gau et al. (2012) used hierarchical linear modeling to examine the effects of macro-level factors on procedural justice and police legitimacy, and found that, though macro-level factors such as concentrated disadvantage influenced perceptions of procedural justice, procedural justice remained the strongest predictor of legitimacy. This suggests that individuals who live in communities with high rates of unemployment and poverty will view the police as legitimate if they consider the police to employ procedural justice principles when exercising their authority. Their findings were supported by three separate studies conducted by Mazerolle and colleagues in 2012 and 2013.

In a randomized field trial experiment, Mazerolle et al. (2012) tested the impact of police using procedural justice principles—neutrality, citizen participation, respect, and trustworthy motives—on public views of the police. The authors concluded that the police would benefit positively when they use the principles of procedural justice in dealing with people. A recent study conducted by Mazerolle et al. (2013) also found that procedurally just traffic encounters with the police shape citizens' views about the actual encounter. They observed this result in the experimental condition and not in the control group, further indicating the importance of procedural justice in shaping citizens' global and specific perceptions of the police. The importance of procedural justice has further been supported by a meta-analysis conducted by Mazerolle et al. (2013). The authors conducted the meta-analysis to synthesize empirical research on the impact of police-led interventions that used procedurally just dialogue focused on improving citizen perceptions of police legitimacy. They included in their review only studies that utilized either an experimental design or a quasi-experimental design and were conducted between 1980 and 2007. The authors found that, among other measures, the procedural justice measure had a positive and statistically significant relationship with police legitimacy.

It must be noted that, despite the evidence supporting the claim that procedural justice is a predictor of citizens' legitimacy perceptions, a few scholars view the relationship between the two variables differently. For instance, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) considered procedural justice as an element use to measure legitimacy and not a predictor of legitimacy. Thus, procedural justice is seen as a variable that measures citizens' legitimacy perceptions. According to the authors, if citizens consider the police to engage in procedurally just practices, it is automatically implied that the police are legitimate. While the current study's aim is not to critique any particular argument, the authors believe that procedural justice is more of a predictor of legitimacy than a component of the concept. Procedural justice practices involve treating people fairly, respectfully and politely, as well as, ensuring that decision making processes are fair and transparent. As a powerful institution with the powers of arrest, detention, and use of force (including deadly force), if the police fail to engage in procedurally just practices, they are bound to be challenged. Citizens will challenge almost everything the police do and stand for, including their very existence. When this happens, citizens will start asking questions about whether the police are fit to serve and protect people, and whether they have the moral and legal authority to make decisions. Questions such as these will seriously undermine the institution's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

2.1. Encounter with police and legitimacy

Aside from procedural justice, the connection between citizens' encounters or contacts with the police and legitimacy has been explored by prior studies. However, findings from these studies have largely been mixed. Although most studies agree that contacts or experiences with the police influence citizens' evaluations of the police (Bartsch and Cheurprakobkit, 2004; Cheurprakobkit, 2000; Kautt, 2011; Merry et al., 2012; Nofziger and William, 2005; Reisig and Parks, 2000; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Skogan, 2005, 2006), they disagree on the direction of the effects. Studies have demonstrated that citizen-initiated or voluntary contact results in favorable evaluations of the police (Cheurprakobkit, 2000; Ren et al., 2005; Skogan, 2005, 2006). For instance, Cheurprakobkit (2000) observed that people who contacted the police tended to have more favorable views about the police than those who were contacted by the police.

Similarly, Skogan (2005) examined citizens' satisfaction with police encounters in the city of Chicago to understand the factors that influence citizens' levels of satisfaction with citizen-initiated encounters with the police. He observed that respondents of all ages and genders who had involved the police previously expressed being more satisfied with the encounter than those in the same categories who encountered the police through police initiating the contact. On average, respondents who initiated the contact indicated more satisfaction than those who experienced police-initiated contact. Skogan suggested several explanations for why respondents who initiated the contact were satisfied. Almost all mentioned that the police were polite and timely in responding, paid attention to their needs, and were helpful. In contrast, those who were less satisfied with the police-initiated contact stated that the police were unfair in their treatment and the police were not polite. In a later study, Skogan (2006) conducted a meta-analysis to assess the relationship between trust and citizens' personal encounters with the police and argued that trust emerged easily in citizen-initiated contacts in which citizens sought help from the police. He further contended that victims of crime were more critical of police work than others, and that trust in the police among victims emerges above all from policing that considers victims' experiences and needs. Subsequently, citizens' personal negative experiences will easily erode trust.

Moreover, several other studies have demonstrated the negative effects of police-initiated contacts on citizens' specific attitudes toward the police (Jesilow et al., 1995; Ren et al., 2005; Smith et al., 1991). These studies observed that individuals who have been ticketed, arrested, or stopped by the police in a vehicle or walking on the street have negative assessments of the police. For example, Ren et al. (2005) found a negative relationship between receiving a ticket and confidence in the police. Some explanations can be offered for the negative effects of police-initiated contact on citizens' evaluations of the police. It has consistently been argued that contacts initiated by the police frequently lead to confrontations between the police and the citizen. Consequently, these

confrontations result in citizens developing hostile attitudes toward the police, hence rating the police low.

Conversely, some studies have observed a positive relationship between police-initiated contact and attitudes toward the police. Kautt (2011) used the British Crime Surveys from 2001/2002 through 2007/2008 to assess whether the signal crime and negotiated order perspectives were applicable in the UK. The signal crime perspective believes that an individual's perception of being victimized is connected to crimes or deviant behaviors in the neighborhood. Thus, a person's level of fear of crime develops based on the occurrence of certain crimes in the area where he or she lives. Kautt found that in this context, police-initiated contacts were associated with more confidence in the police, compared to contacting the police by citizens. Kautt further added that respondents who had experienced involuntary police contact were more likely to assess the performance of the police as excellent.

2.2. Other determinants of police legitimacy

The effects of several other variables on legitimacy have been observed by prior studies, and some of these variables are included in the current analysis as controls. Previous perceptual studies have established a negative relationship between police corruption and legitimacy. These studies agree that corruption reduces individuals' trust and confidence in the police. For example, Silva Forné (2009) found that bribery solicitation negatively affected respondents' satisfaction with the police. Similarly, Sabet (2012), examining the factors that contributed to citizens' dissatisfaction with the Mexico police, observed that corruption among police officers was a major contributor. More specifically, Sabet found that direct experience with bribery was a major source of citizens' dissatisfaction with the police. Individuals who had directly experienced police corruption in the form of bribe extortion expressed higher dissatisfaction with the police.

Neighborhood disorder has also been used to explain citizens' behavior toward the police. Researchers believe that residents develop negative attitudes toward their local police whenever there are high rates of disorder (Boateng et al., 2016; Dowler and Sparks, 2008; Sprott and Dood, 2009). These authors believed that disorder, which signifies police ineffectiveness, reduces trust and confidence that people have in the police. For instance, using a hierarchical linear modeling technique, Boateng et al. (2016) observed that disorder caused variations in trust in the police across 25 neighborhoods, with neighborhoods experiencing higher rates of disorder reporting lower trust in the police. Similarly, Maxson, Hennigan, and Sloane (2003) had earlier found that people were less inclined to voluntarily approve of the police when they perceived disorder to be high in their community. The overall takeaway is that the police are generally expected to reduce or eliminate all social menace in the community—including disorder—and whenever they fail to meet this expectation, face backlash from the people.

Moreover, studies have observed the significant role of public attitudes toward other governmental and criminal justice institutions in influencing attitudes toward the police (Boateng et al., 2016; Ivkovic, 2008). In a comparative study of attitudes toward the police in U.S. and South Korea, Boateng et al. (2016) argued that irrespective of country differences, citizens' perceptions about the police in both nations were linked to their views about other institutions such as the courts. Ivkovic (2008) noted that citizens' trust in the police is associated with their favorable attitudes toward the political and legal systems of the country. These observations echo the notion that attitudes toward police institutions reflect broader set of attitudes toward government, society, and criminal justice system (Albrecht and Green, 1977).

Finally, previous studies have used demographic characteristics to explain patterns of citizens' behavior toward the police. For example, research has shown a positive relationship between age and favorable assessment of the police (Hsieh and Boateng, 2015; Powell et al., 2008; Reisig and Parks, 2000). Older people compared to younger individuals have more favorable attitudes toward the police. Related to gender, some studies have found that males hold more positive views than females (Brown and Coulter, 1983; Hsieh and Boateng, 2015) while others found that females hold more positive views than males (Boateng et al., 2016; Morris, 2015). Yet, Hurst and Frank (2000) found that gender is unrelated to citizens' attitudes toward the police. Marital status and employment have been found to show a positive relationship to favorable attitudes toward police. For instance, Cao and Zhao (2010) observed that people who were married and employed reported higher levels of confidence in the police than single and unemployed individuals did. Moreover, previous studies have found that individuals of lower socioeconomic status tend to have less favorable attitudes toward the police than those of higher socioeconomic status (Huang and Vaughn, 1996; Wu, Sun and Tripplett, 2009). For instance, Wu et al. (2009) observed that lower-class individuals were most likely to express lack of satisfaction with the police. However, some studies have found contrarily that wealthy and highly educated individuals perceive the police less favorably than lower-income and less educated persons (Boateng et al., 2016; Murphy and Worrall, 1999).

2.3. Procedural justice and police legitimacy in developing contexts

Beyond United States and other western countries, procedural justice has received minimal scholarly attention in non-western and post-colonial societies, with host of problems, ranging from governmental ineffectiveness to excessive and arbitrary police use of force and institutional corruption. The few studies that have explored the effect of procedural justice in promoting legitimacy in these contexts have made inconsistent observations, with some offering credence to the procedural justice hypothesis (Reisig and Lloyd, 2009; Davies et al., 2014; Kochel et al., 2013) while others have critically questioned the influence of procedural justice in shaping attitudes toward the police (Bradford et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2014). Reisig and Lloyd (2009) made important observation when studying the behavior and attitudes toward the Jamaican police. According to these authors, Jamaicans who reported favorable perceptions of procedural justice were also willing to work with the police to fight crime. Moreover, in an ethnographic study of policing in Indonesia, Davies, Meliala, and Buttle (2014) argued that citizens' assessments of the police are largely influenced by their views about procedural justice than instrumental concerns, such as performance. These limited studies in non-western contexts

demonstrate the utility of procedural justice practices in enhancing attitudes toward the police and provide insight for police reform.

However, other studies have made opposing arguments about the applicability of procedural justice in explaining changes in citizens' attitudes in developing and postcolonial societies. For instance, analyzing data obtained from a sample of Pakistanis, Jackson, Asif, Bradford and Zakar (2014) concluded that police ability to control crime is more important in influencing attitudes than procedural justice. Likewise, Tankebe (2009) noted that police effectiveness in Ghana is a major concern to Ghanaians than procedural justice practices. These observations question the notion that fair treatment of citizens is paramount to favorable perceptions of the police. The inconsistent arguments about procedural justice and police legitimacy in these social contexts suggest further empirical examination to better understand the concept's limit in promoting legitimacy among citizens in this part of the world. As a result, one of the objectives of this paper is to examine the effect of procedural justice on police legitimacy in a postcolonial and non-western society like Ghana.

2.4. Policing in Ghana: a brief overview

Police and public relationship in Ghana has historically been contentious, dating back to the arrival of the British. Police scholars have argued that the major source of contention and distrust for the colonial police institution was police ineffectiveness to protect and render service to the ordinary Ghanaian Citizen. Policing at the time, was heavily focused on protecting trade routes, maintaining status quo, and helping the British to expand their tertiaries to other areas of the country (Ward, 1948). All these were done to the neglect of the civil police duties that will improve the lives of the ordinary people. Neighborhoods where Ghanaians were residing, were riffed with high crime rates because police officers were neither stationed nor patrolled in those neighborhoods (Killingray, 1991; Ward, 1948). This behavior of the colonial police institution was viewed as a sign of ineffectiveness and consequentially, resulted in a significant trust crisis for the police at the time.

Upon the attainment of political independence in 1957, many people envisioned a police force that was significantly different from its predecessor; but as remarked by many scholars (Boateng and Darko, 2016; Tankebe, 2008), much was not changed. Structurally, the name of the force changed from Gold Coast Constabulary to Ghana Police Service (Boateng and Darko, 2016) but most other aspects were inherited and rolled over to the new era of policing. Justice Tankebe has stated that post-colonial policing in Ghana inherited many components from colonial policing such as the current organizational structure where power is centered at one location (Tankekbe, 2008). Operationally, Ghana police service performs civil policing duties – crime control and service provision but still remains the property of politicians, the rich, and the ruling class.

Like the Gold Coast Constabulary, the Ghana Police Service - GPS faces several major problems, both structural and behavioral. Structurally, the police lack basic equipment and amenities needed for successful performance of their duties. Most police officers are poorly housed and poorly paid. It may be argued that these structural issues have fueled the emergence of the behavioral problems that have become an intrinsic part of the service. Notably, the GPS is plagued by corruption and brutality (Boateng and Darko, 2016). Police officers engage in abusive behavior against citizens and require citizens to pay bribe money before discharging their legally mandated duties. A recent qualitative study by Boateng, Makin, Abess, and Wu (2018) observed the extent to which a police officer can go to collect bride money from citizens, especially those who want to make complaints or report a crime. This behavior, has over time, resulted in a serious trust and legitimacy deficit in the country. To address the negative relationship between the police and the public, and improve police legitimacy in the eyes of the public, we must first attempt to understand how citizens in environment where the police constantly engage in predatory behavior develop their attitudes.

3. Research focus and hypotheses

The current study utilized field data from a non-western post-colonial society to further understand the etiology of police legitimacy by examining the role of procedural justice and contact with the police. These relationships have been well studied, but mainly using people from well-developed nations where the police may work in environment and conditions that are different from those in the less developed and non-western societies. As a result, while findings from these western-based studies may serve as a foundation for understanding legitimacy in the non-western countries, they may not help scholars and practitioners to completely understand the dynamics of citizens' behavior towards their local police agencies. Therefore, there is the urgent need for research using data from non-western countries to understand the attitudes and behavior of citizens toward the police in these countries. Based on the reviews of existing literatures on factors influencing perceptions of police legitimacy, the present study tested the following hypothesis that:

1. Residents' perceptions of police procedural fairness will positively influence their thinking about the legitimacy of their local police.

The literature examining the relationship between procedural justice and legitimacy has noted the importance of focusing on police procedural justice practices in explaining citizens' attitudes toward the police, with favorable perceptions leading to positive views about legitimacy (Davies et al., 2014). The expectation is that citizens who believe the police follow procedures and treat people fairly will also approve of the police as being a legitimate institution with the authority to enforce the law. As the reviews demonstrated, there is a great deal of disagreement among previous researchers on the influence of contact with the police on citizens' assessment of the police. This disagreement and the inconsistencies in findings from prior research require a further examination of the relationship between contact and legitimacy, especially studies that utilize data with characteristics different from the data in prior studies. To examine this relationship with non-western data, the following hypotheses were tested:

2. Citizen-initiated contact will have a positive effect on perceptions of police legitimacy.
3. Police-initiated contacts will have a negative effect on police legitimacy.
4. Procedural fairness interacting with police-initiated contact will influence citizens' views on police legitimacy.

Police-initiated contacts mostly lead to confrontations and negative outcomes such as arrest, tickets, and in the case of Ghana, taking bribes and mounting unnecessary road blocks for traffic stops. Also, as Boateng et al. (2018) argued, some police officers in Ghana are used to collect debt on behalf of citizens; so, individuals that are approached by these officers to collect the debt they owe, may be resentful about such an encounter. However, despite the outcome of the police-initiated contact, if an individual believes the police were fair and treated him/her with enough respect, that person may have positive opinion about the police. It is therefore expected that citizens who believe the police are procedurally fair and were contacted by the police will view the police to be legitimate.

4. Method

4.1. Data and sampling technique

Data used in this study were collected from two metropolitan areas—Accra and Kumasi—in Ghana in 2014. These cities are the two largest cities in Ghana, and together have more than 15% of the country's population (see Ghana Population Census, 2010). Additionally, these cities have more heterogeneous populations than other Ghanaian cities, because of massive internal migration made possible by the widespread availability of socioeconomic and commercial opportunities that other cities do not have. People move from their native cities and rural areas to either Accra or Kumasi for work or school (see Ackah and Medvedve, 2010; Beales, levy, and Moses, 1967; Castaldo et al., 2012; Ghana Statistical Service, 2000). Police activities in the two cities can be said to be more intense than in other parts of the country, mainly because of the widespread economic activities that have attracted people with different cultural backgrounds. Due to the intensity of enforcement efforts, it is believed that people in Accra and Kumasi, both being regional capitals, will experience the police more frequently than those in the other cities, and are assumed to be able to evaluate the police fairly.

To obtain data for the current analysis, 10 neighborhoods (five from each city) were purposively selected from the two cities—located within two administrative regions—for the fieldwork. The decision to employ a purposive sampling approach was based on the reason that some neighborhoods in these cities—just as it is in other parts of Ghana—are reserved for commercial activities and are subsequently not inhabitable. Hence, they are not useful for reaching populations. This reason precludes random selection of the neighborhoods. Individuals targeted for this study were those aged 18 years and above, living in the selected cities at the time of the survey administration. The survey solicited data on residents' opinions about the police and asked respondents to rate the police based on specific measurements presented before them. Overall, the fieldwork in both cities lasted approximately two months: from March 15 to May 15, 2014.

Next, 500 households were randomly selected from the 10 neighborhoods (50 from each neighborhood and 250 from each city) for data collection. After the selection of the households, individual respondents were then selected. Each respondent was selected from one household and was at least 18 years old. In this final selection stage, the use of the birthday methods—which involve selecting the individual from a household with the most recent or first upcoming birthday—was highly desirable, as they are quick, easy, and less intrusive as well as maximizing cooperation rates (Gaziano, 2005; Oldendick et al., 1988). Both the last-birthday and the next-birthday methods were used randomly in selecting the respondents. Overall, 250 respondents were selected from each of the cities, for a total sample of 500 respondents.

The use of research assistants ensured prompt collection of data and a thorough administration of questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered to the selected individuals and were collected at the time of administration. This procedure ensured that the sampled individuals were the ones who filled out the questionnaire. In all, 373 respondents filled out their questionnaires and returned them to the research team, for a response rate of about 75%. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the author's institution at the time of the study.

4.2. Measures

Dependent variable. *Police legitimacy* was the only dependent variable in the study, created from five items. All five items had the same lead-in question, "For the following items, kindly indicate whether you agree or disagree," and the items were "I accept the police as an authority to enforce laws and protect lives and property in my neighborhood"; "The police in my neighborhood can be trusted to make decisions that are right for the people"; "The police in my neighborhood are generally honest"; "I have absolute confidence that the police can do their job well"; and "The police care about the well-being of everyone they deal with." Response categories were (1)

strongly disagree, (2), disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. A maximum likelihood factor analysis, with varimax rotation method indicated that all these items measured the same underlying construct, with factor loadings ranging from 0.66 to 0.76. Therefore, the responses of all the items were combined to form a scale with an alpha value of 0.76 (See Appendix for specific factor loadings for each item). However, for the final analysis, the scale measure was converted into a single ordinal police legitimacy variable,[1] with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The variable measures respondent's overall approval of the police as a law enforcement agent to enforce laws.

Independent variables. There were two primary independent variables in the study: procedural fairness and contacts with the police. Procedural fairness was measured by six Likert-type items, asking respondents to rate the frequency with which the police engaged in behavior consistent with procedural fairness in their neighborhood, using the following response categories: (1) never, (2) almost never, (3) sometimes, (4) almost always, and (5) always. The items included "The police make decisions about how to handle problems in fair ways"; "The police treat people fairly"; "The police treat everyone in your neighborhood equally"; "The police accurately understand and apply the law"; "The police make decisions based upon facts, not their personal biases or opinions"; and "The police give honest explanations for their actions to the people they deal with." A maximum likelihood factor analysis, with varimax rotation method, revealed that all these items measured the same underlying construct. Therefore, the responses were summed to form a procedural fairness scale, which had a mean of 17.56 (SD = 4.35) and an alpha value of 0.76.

The effects of two types of contacts with the police were examined. First, *police-initiated contact* was measured by asking respondents to indicate whether the police had contacted them in the past 12 months, either by stopping them while driving or walking on the street, coming to their homes, or inviting them to the police station (0 = no, indicating no such contact, and 1 = yes, indicating a contact). Second, *citizen-initiated contact* was measured by asking respondents to indicate whether they had previously contacted the police to report crime or suspicious activities, to provide information about crime or suspects, or to visit a suspect in police custody (0 = no, indicating no such contact, and 1 = yes, indicating a contact).

Control variables. The effects of several variables that have been observed by prior research (see Boateng, 2016; Boateng et al., 2016; Cao and Zhao, 2010; Hsieh and Boateng, 2015; Sabet, 2012) were controlled in the current analysis. These were demographic characteristics such as *age*, measured in terms of respondents' actual age at the time of survey administration, and *employment status, gender, marital status, education,* and *income*, which were dichotomously measured as 1 = employed, male, married, post–senior high school, and more than GHC 10,000.

The effects of three corruption variables were also controlled. First, *perception of police corruption* was measured with a *s*ingle item asking respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree that police officers take bribes. Response categories ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. *Perception of judicial and prosecutorial corruption* was assessed by asking respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement that most judges and prosecutors in Ghana take bribes. Similarly, *perception of corruption among correctional officers* was assessed by asking respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement that most prison officers in Ghana take bribes. Both items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree), with respective means of 3.93 (SD = 1.10) and 3.52 (SD = 1.04).

Disorder was measured using eight items assessing the extent of neighborhood problems: litter/trash, hanging around, vandalism, abandoned buildings, dirty gutters, gangs, unrepaired streetlights, and drug dealing. Each of these items had a three-point response set (1 = not a problem, 2 = minor problem, and 3 = major problem). A factor analysis indicated that all these items measured the same underlying construct. Therefore, the responses were summed to form an additive disorder scale. The scale had a mean of 18.05 (SD = 3.44) and an alpha value of 0.73, suggesting an acceptable level of internal reliability.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of variables used in the study. Most of the study respondents were male (55%), between the ages of 18 and 75, with a median age of about 29 years (SD = 12.51). Moreover, about 37% of the respondents were married; more than half (54%) had attained post–senior high school education at the time of the survey, and 59% were employed. Pertaining to respondents' household income, 35% reported earning more than GHC 10,000 as of 2014. As in many studies, the respondents rarely experienced the police while going about their daily activities: only 25% of the respondents claimed they had been contacted by the police in the past, and 33% mentioned they had contacted the police at some point.

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[1] we converted the scaled (continuous) variable into ordinal because it was necessary to have a good fitting model that will accurately represent the data. One of the major assumptions for a continuous DV is that the variable should be normally distributed. We conducted various tests, including skewness and kurtosis tests to verify whether our scaled DV meets this assumption. Unfortunately, the tests proved that the DV was not normally distributed. We addressed this issue by transforming the variable into ordinal, which precipitated the use of ordinal logistic regression. The conversion was done using the visual binning approach in SPSS.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of study variables (n = 373)1.

Variable	Min.	Max.	M (SD)/%
Male	0.00	1.00	0.55 (0.50)
Employed	0.00	1.00	0.59 (0.49)
Age	18	75	29.00 (12.51)
Married	0.00	1.00	0.37 (0.48)
Post-senior high school	0.00	1.00	0.54 (0.50)
Income - > GHC 10,000	0.00	1.00	0.35 (0.48)
Police-initiated contact (yes)	0.00	1.00	0.25 (0.43)
Citizen-initiated contact (yes)	0.00	1.00	0.33 (0.47)
Perception of Corrupt practices by:			
Judges and prosecutors	1.00	5.00	3.95 (1.10)
Correctional officers	1.00	5.00	3.52 (1.04)
Police officers	1.00	5.00	4.26 (0.99)
Procedural fairness	6.00	29.00	17.56 (4.35)
Police legitimacy			
Strongly disagree	–	–	8.2
Disagree	–	–	24.3
Agree	–	–	47.8
Strongly agree	–	–	19.7
Neighborhood disorder	8.00	24.00	18.05 (3.44)

Note: N = Number of respondents; M = Mean score for all variables except age. Regarding age, the M stands for Median; SD = Standard deviation. Missing values for any variable were 10%.

5. Results

5.1. Exploring the effects of procedural justice and contacts on police legitimacy

Given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, an ordinal logistic regression[2] was conducted to explore the effects of procedural fairness and the two types of contacts on police legitimacy. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 2. Model 1 presents the estimates for the main effects while the final model (Model 2) includes an interaction term for procedural fairness and police-initiated contact. The final model is significant (X^2 = 112.92, p = .000). As shown in the table, the relationship between procedural fairness and police legitimacy was positive and statistically significant (Wald = 52.58, p = .000) controlling for the effects of other variables. With an odds ratio of 1.46, residents who perceived the police to be procedurally fair had 1.46 times the odds of accepting the police as a social control agent to enforce laws against them. This finding supports the study's first hypothesis. Police-initiated contact had a negative influence on police legitimacy (Wald = 4.40, p = *.036*). Residents who were contacted by the police were 48% less likely to consider the police as legitimate, an observation that supports the study's third hypothesis. However, when police-initiated contact interacted with procedural fairness, the effect was positive (Wald = 3.79, p = .052). This finding therefore supports the study's fourth hypothesis. The study's second hypothesis was not supported due to the lack of a significant effect for citizen-initiated contact.

In addition to the main effects, three control variables were found to predict police legitimacy. Perception of corruption among judges and prosecutors (Wald = 3.45, p = .56), perception of police corruption (Wald = 15.25, p = .000), and perception of disorder (Wald = 8.21, p = .000) negatively influence citizens' assessments of police legitimacy. Individuals who believed judges and prosecutors engaged in corrupt behaviors were less likely to approve of the police as being legitimate. Likewise, a perception of police legitimacy was less likely among people who reported greater levels of police corruption. Finally, residents who reported higher levels of disorder were less likely to accept their local police as an enforcement authority.

6. Discussion

Police play important roles in the community as both service providers and peacekeepers. However, the performance of such roles will be met with extreme difficulties if the police are not genuinely liked and supported by the residents. It is therefore necessary to examine from various perspectives how the police can obtain voluntary acceptance of their actions from the public. Analyzing data collected from 10 neighborhoods in two large cities located in a predominantly understudied non-western society, the present study explored the effects of procedural fairness and citizen contact with police on individuals' willingness to accept the police as lawful figures.

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[2] Two major ordinal regression assumptions were assessed to determine the need to conduct ordinal regression model. The first, the test of parallel lines was used to test the assumption that coefficients have the same effect (direction) at each level of the DV. This test did not yield a significant result (-2LL = 308.228; X^2 = 25.52, df = 28, p = .599), indicating that the assumption holds. Second, Pearson and Deviance statistics were also used to determine whether there is issue with overdispersion with the model conducted. Both results were not significant, suggesting no issue with overdispersion. If there is no issue with overdispersion, it further suggests that the assumption of independence is not violated.

Table 2
Ordinal Logistic regression exploring the effects of contacts and procedural fairness on police legitimacy (N = 373).

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	Logit (SE)	Wald	OR	Logit (SE)	Wald	OR
Procedural Fairness	.34 (.04)	58.83***	1.41	0.40 (0.06)	52.58***	1.46
Police-initiated contact	.26 (.37)	.50	1.30	−2.81 (1.34)	4.40*	0.52
Citizen-initiated contact	.33 (.33)	.97	1.39	0.21 (0.33)	0.38	1.23
Perceived institutional corruption:						
Judges and prosecutors	.28 (.15)	3.57*	1.33	−0.28 (0.15)	3.45*	0.32
Prison officers	-.08 (.17)	.20	0.93	−0.05 (0.17)	0.07	0.96
Police officers	-.65 (.18)	13.89***	0.52	−0.70 (0.18)	15.25***	0.50
Disorder	-.13 (.04)	8.38**	0.88	−0.13 (0.04)	8.21**	0.88
Male	-.28 (.32)	.76	0.76	−0.25 (0.32)	0.63	0.78
Employed	-.30 (.35)	.75	0.74	−0.30 (0.35)	0.73	0.74
Income	.25 (.34)	.55	1.28	0.34 (0.34)	0.98	1.40
Married	.13 (.36)	.13	1.14	0.15 (0.36)	0.18	1.17
Education	-.32 (.34)	.90	0.73	−0.39 (0.34)	1.35	0.67
Age	.01 (.01)	.27	1.10	−0.04 (0.01)	0.09	1.00
Procedural Fairness*Police-initiated contact				0.16 (0.08)	3.79*	1.68
Thresholds						
Strongly disagree	−1.95 (1.35)	2.09	0.14	−1.22 (1.41)	0.75	0.30
Disagree	.76 (1.36)	.31	0.15	1.51 (1.43)	1.13	4.54
Agree	3.51 (1.37)	6.57*	2.24	4.31 (1.44)	8.92**	74.64
Model fit						
-2LL	337.34			333.75		
X^2	109.24***			112.92***		
Pseudo (Nagelkerke) R^2	0.50			0.51		

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. After treating missing variables using the listwise deletion method, the final sample size for the regression analysis was 251.

Several significant observations were made from the current analysis that are worth discussing. The first observable pattern was that procedural justice theory can be applied to explain variations in police legitimacy. Individuals who believe they are fairly treated by the police rate the police favorably, whereas those who feel unfairly treated assess the police less favorably. It goes on to conclude that perceptions of police legitimacy are higher among people who believe the police treat people fairly. This conclusion is consistent with prior research (Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2013; Mazerolle et al., 2013a,b; Tyler, 2011). Ideally, fair treatment is not limited to the procedures officers use in exercising their authority, but also includes the opportunity given to individuals to take part in addressing their own problems (Tyler, 2000). There is enough evidence showing a significant positive effect of citizens' participation in the decision-making process in institutional settings (Houlden, 1980; Shapiro and Brett, 1993). When citizens can participate in policing decisions and communicate their thoughts about issues confronting their neighborhoods to authorities, they tend to think of the procedure as satisfying and feel they are being treated fairly (Fitzgerald et al., 2002). However, in Ghanaian society, where the police are highly centralized and difficult to access and face an acute shortage of resources, citizen participation in police decision-making is simply a mirage. People are seriously deprived of the opportunity to participate in any policing decision-making affecting their lives in the communities where they live.

Second, contacts with the police are important factors to consider when discussing issues related to police legitimacy. Related to the observation about procedural fairness is the finding that residents who have experienced police-initiated contact tend to disapprove of the police more than those who have had other forms of contact. This observation is inconsistent with previous research (Kautt, 2011), which argued that police-initiated contacts result in positive attitudinal changes among people. Scholars like Kautt (2011) believed that police-initiated contacts can be instances where the police provide services or assistance to citizens without being asked. Therefore, the rendering of such unrequested services—picking up a drunk from the street, occasionally checking on a neighbor, calling a tow truck for a frustrated motorist—may positively influence a person's thinking about the police. Even though this line of argument makes sense intuitively, it does not always apply to all contexts. Despite the inconsistencies with Kautt's (2011) findings, the observation made in this study is consistent with other studies (Jesilow et al., 1995; Smith et al., 1991).

In Ghana, most police-initiated contacts take place during traffic stops, and often lead to confrontation between the officer and the individuals involved. Ghana police officers have the habit of not explaining the "whys" of their actions, and this attitude certainly receives an unfriendly response from individuals.[3] Another type of contact that results in confrontation with the police is the arrest of a suspected person. Unlike in most nations, where the police follow conventional protocols in arresting suspects, officers in Ghana rarely follow such protocols. Arrested persons are often beaten on their way to the police station, and the arrest process itself is intimidating and inhumane. Such unconventional behaviors may have a vicarious impact on people who observe the behavior, resulting in developing bad feelings about the police.

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[3] This statement is based on complaints made by some of the respondents the authors contacted during the survey administration. The respondents' accounts were supported by the authors' own observation of how the police behave during encounter with citizens/motorists in Ghana.

Third, findings from the current analysis show a combined effect of procedural fairness and police-initiated contact on people's judgment of the police in Ghana. The effect is positive and implies that regardless of the circumstances surrounding the police-initiated contacts, individuals who perceive the police to be fair will still consider the police as legitimate. This observation suggests that the negative consequences of the police contacting citizens can be neutralized when people are treated fairly in such encounters. Thus, it further reinforces the importance of fairness in shaping attitudes toward the police.

Finally, the findings demonstrated the importance of applying other factors such as perception of corruption and neighborhood disorder to understand the dynamics of residents' attitudes toward the police. Police scholars have consistently argued that corruption diminishes trust and confidence in the police, and eventually makes people see the police as less legitimate (Hsieh and Boateng, 2015; Sabet, 2012). The rationale is that, a corrupt officer is less likely to treat people fairly and perform his or her work effectively and diligently. Corruption, as noted by You (2006), signifies a violation of just procedures and a betrayal of trustworthiness. As shown in this study, Ghanaians who believe that police officers take bribes before performing their duties tend to disapprove of the police. However, it is not only police corruption that affects legitimacy, but also judicial and prosecutorial corruption. Bribe solicitation by judges and prosecutors—a behavior common in Ghana—has an adverse effect on policing, since police officers and courtroom officials are all part of a unified system that is tasked to keep the peace and protect the vulnerable. This shared responsibility makes it possible that misconduct in one area will affect the other— "Birds of same feather flock together." Unfortunately, this spillover effect of judicial and prosecutorial corruption is damaging, destructive, and worrisome, since the police by themselves cannot do anything to stop it (Boateng, 2012).

The findings discussed above provide insight into citizens' attitudes and behavior toward the Ghana Police Service and serve as a platform for future discussion on reforming the police. Before discussing the policy relevance of these results, it is important to draw readers' attention to four limitations of the current analysis. First, the study analyzed views of people selected from urban areas without considering those in rural areas, and one cannot tell whether the observed patterns would have been different if the opinions of rural people were factored into the analysis. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted incorporating data from both urban and rural areas. Second, the data analyzed were obtained from adult-only sample, excluding citizens that were younger than 18 years of age. This is important to acknowledge because juveniles or young people, due to different experiences, may view the police differently from that of the adult population. Since the views of these individuals were not captured in the current analysis, it is suggested that this issue be examined further with sample obtained from the juvenile population in Ghana. Third, procedural justice includes elements such as fairness, transparency, impartiality, and voice. However, this study used measures that captured only the first three, leaving the element of voice. Again, it is recommended that future study will utilize items that gauge all the four elements of procedural justice. Fourth, this study used purposive sampling technique to select the ten neighborhoods from the two cities, and though this strategy offers several advantages, its major disadvantage cannot be ignored. That is, the possibility of introducing researcher's unconscious bias into the data collected. To address this issue, future study should endeavor to use more sophisticated randomized approach in selecting neighborhoods for participation in the study.

In conclusion, the current study used a non-Western sample to try to understand whether procedural justice and contacts can explain variations in people's views of the police. The analyses conducted in this study offer several contributions to both procedural justice theory and the literature on police legitimacy. As pertains to procedural justice theory, this research adds to the growing number of studies on the generalizability and importance of this theory. By showing the importance of procedural justice in policing, this work helps to illustrate how citizens' perceptions of procedural fairness affect their willingness to voluntarily approve and accept authority figures like the police. Voluntary acceptance of police actions positively affects police operations in many ways; it leads to citizens' voluntary cooperation and compliance, reporting of crime, and serving as witnesses in court. Therefore, police departments must work to achieve and maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

One way to achieve this, especially for a police force like the Ghana Police Service suffering from a legitimacy crisis, is to ensure that police officers abide by the rules of procedural justice: fair treatment of all citizens, citizen involvement in decision-making, and honor and respect for citizens. This can be achieved through constant training and education of officers on matters involving police professionalism and particularly on procedural justice practices. As demonstrated by this study, contact with citizens matters in explaining attitudes toward the Ghana police. Police administrators must therefore ensure that officers on the street follow the necessary protocols when interacting with citizens. They must explain their actions to citizens during encounter and they must also make effort at all time to minimize confrontations, deescalate situations, and only get involve with citizens as permitted by the law. Such behaviors as unauthorized road blocks and stopping of motorists without a reason must stop. Finally, Ghana Police Service should establish effective anti-corruption mechanisms to root out corrupt officers from the service. Independent bodies should be established to supplement the efforts of existing internal system to ensure that the bad apples among the good ones ae identified and punished.

Appendix A. Factor Loadings for the five legitimacy items

Items	Factor Loadings
I accept the police as an authority to enforce laws and protect lives and property in my neighborhood	.678
the police in my neighborhood can be trusted to make decisions that are right for the people	.755
The police in your neighborhood are generally honest.	.661
I have absolute confidence that the police can do its job well.	.695
The police care about the well-being of everyone they deal with.	.762

Note: Variance explained was 50.6%.

Appendix B. Interaction term

Appendix C. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2021.100458.

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