

Assessing the impact of police-initiated stop powers on individuals and communities: the UK picture

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“There is no compelling ‘business case’ for the present level of stop and search ... it has a deeply damaging effect on society; it impacts negatively on the law abiding population and is cause of a loss of public support for and de-legitimation of the police. It increases the frequency of adversarial encounters – some of which have the potential to trigger public disorder – and contributes to accelerating the flow of young black people disproportionately into the criminal justice system” Bowling and Philips (2007: 959-60).

Introduction

This paper explores the current state of UK research into the effect of police-initiated stops on individuals and communities. It concentrates on four distinct but inter-related topics: the fundamental issue of the unfairness of the current situation; the role police stop activity can play in driving a wedge between individuals, communities and the police and in damaging trust, legitimacy and the potential for cooperation; the links between the experience of stop and search and wider forms of social exclusion; and the potential role of police stops in criminal justice net-widening and in pulling young people into the criminal justice system. The paper closes with some ideas for future research that might expand on existing work.

The fact of ethnic disproportionality in the exercise of police stop and search powers is taken here as a given (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2010), and the reasons for this disproportionality are not discussed. Equally, no consideration is given to the number and variability of UK police powers to stop and search: it is in any case highly unlikely that members of the public distinguish between them (Bowling and Philips 2007; Macpherson 1999). Finally, the focus is limited almost entirely to the UK, although relevant US work is drawn upon as required.

Data from a recent survey of young men from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups are used to illustrate the discussion at several points. This survey was fielded in the summer of 2010 on behalf of the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) as an add-on to its London-wide Public Attitudes Survey. A total of 1,017 young BME men (aged 16-30) from four London boroughs were interviewed, with questions probing their attitudes toward police, crime and disorder, their sense of identity, their social bonds to family and community, and a range of other issues. Some 20 per cent of the sample reported being stopped by police in the past year, while still more reported other forms of personal and vicarious contact with officers, making the survey an ideal source for current purposes. Only summary results from statistical modelling are shown here as the full results have yet to be formally released by the MPS.

Disproportionality and the basic issue of fairness

Police stop and search practice is currently a topic of intense debate in the UK, concerning in particular the issue of its fundamental fairness. Most recent research (e.g. Bowling and Philips 2007; May et al. 2010) concludes that ethnic disproportionality in the experience of police stop/stop and search activity cannot be justified. That is, whether one considers arguments such as the population ‘available’

to be stopped (MVA and Miller 2000; Waddington et al. 2004), differential offending rates (Bowling and Philips 2002), or differences in the 'hit rates' of stops in terms of arrests, there is an essential element of disproportionality that cannot be explained away. The level of public debate over stop and search over the last 30 years means that this aspect of it is both widely known and experienced on a personal level by many British people, not just those who have recently been stopped by officers.

We should not underestimate this as a potential negative effect of stop and search powers in and of itself, particularly in cases where the exercise of these powers are experienced as *unfair*. The police are a core state agency and stop and search is historically a key element of its practice. Yet, in democratic, plural, societies people have a right to be free from unnecessary or abusive state interventions and to expect that the state represents them and defends their interests. Indeed, the police themselves have an interest in demonstrating to the public that this is the case (see below). The criminal justice system should not simply ensure order and security, but also treat people fairly and decently and be aligned with the normative expectations of those it governs. Fairness is of course one of the keystones of justice itself (Rawls 1999); equally, citizens should not be at risk of humiliation from, and be treated with dignity by, their government (Margalit 1996). These concerns lie at the heart of debates about British policing at both an ideological and practical level.

Recent work on the psychology of justice has underlined that issues of fairness are at the centre of individuals' understandings of the way the criminal justice *should* work; equally, fairness is the primary lens through which people judge their actual encounters with system agents such as the police (Tyler 2006b; Tyler and Huo 2002). While distributive justice and notions of fairness associated with 'just deserts' (Robinson and Bowers 2007; Robinson and Darley 1997) may be important in people's thinking about the system as a whole, when it comes to the policing the evidence consistently suggests it is the fairness of the procedures used that is the clinching factor.

UK-based work has started to pick up and apply Tyler's procedural justice model (e.g. Bradford 2010; Bradford *et al.* 2009; Hough *et al.* 2010; Jackson *et al.* in press; Tendayi *et al.* 2006), while related studies have also focused on the importance of openness and transparency in trust building between police and community (Spalek *et al.* 2011). This body of work suggests that the procedural justice model is highly relevant in the British context. As in the US, research consistently finds that in their dealings with the police people care most about how fairly they are treated, and fair treatment is linked to trust, legitimacy, cooperation and compliance with the law. Based on social-psychological understandings of the role of group membership in people's lives, procedural justice theory stresses that treatment at the hands of important group representatives such as the police carries status-relevant messages concerning individual's inclusion in and relationship with the groups the police represent. The procedural justice model thus resonates strongly with British research that stresses the links between the police and images of nation, community and the dominant social order (Loader and Mulcahy 2003; Reiner 2000; Waddington 1999).

Procedural fairness is characterized by neutrality on the part of authorities, voice in the interaction on the part of the individual, treatment that is respectful, open, and dignified, and the development of mutual trust. Stop/search disproportionality and the processes that lead to it – whether ethnic profiling, prejudice or outright racism, or simply unreflexive and thoughtless policing – risks undermining individual's opinions of the police across all these criteria. Disproportionality, almost by definition, damages people's sense that the police are neutral and have their best interests at

heart. Even if this were not the case, excessive use of this police tactic risks drawing large numbers of people from certain groups into confrontational and negative contacts with the police that are less likely to be grounded in respect, openness and dignity than other types of contact between officers and citizens.

Ethnic (and other) disproportionality in the use of police powers such as stop and search therefore risks fundamentally undermining public assessments of the fairness of the police and the wider criminal justice system, the extent to which people believe it to respect and represent them, and, because of this, the legitimacy invested in the system by those it governs (Tyler 2006a). Ultimately police officers rely on legitimacy for the successful prosecution of their duties, and a key message of current research is that present stop and search practice may ultimately harm the police as much it harms the public. The associations between negative contact with officers – encounters experienced by those involved as procedurally unfair – and lower levels of trust, and legitimacy are explored below.

Stop and search, trust and legitimacy

The negative links between the experience of excessive police attention and lower levels of trust and confidence among ethnic minority and other youths in the UK is perhaps the best researched topic among those considered here. Such research stretches back to the first 'Policing for London' report (Smith 1983) and continues right up to the present day (e.g. Sharp and Atherton 2007). These and similar studies are a subset of a wider body of work looking at the relationship between contact with officers, public trust, and the legitimacy of the police. There are two particularly relevant elements to this body of work in the present context.

The first is one of the core findings of almost all research in this area – that the net impact of contact with the police on public confidence is negative, and that levels of trust and support for the police appear to be lower among those who have had recent personal contact with officers. (Bradford *et al.* 2009; FitzGerald *et al.* 2002; Walker *et al.* 2009). This factor hardly need be rehearsed here, save for one observation. That the overall impact of contact with the police is negative appears largely due to an asymmetry in the effect of contact on confidence (Skogan 2006). Poor or unsatisfactory contacts have a large negative impact on trust in the police, good or satisfactory contacts have a much smaller positive impact. While the extent of this asymmetry may have been overplayed, current UK research suggests that it is considerably stronger in relation to police-initiated contacts than in relation to those initiated by members of the public (Bradford *et al.* 2009; Myhill and Bradford forthcoming). That is, there seems to be something about police-initiated contacts such as stops that make them particularly likely to damage the relationship between police and public. Police-initiated contacts also seem to have a major impact on perceptions of police fairness and also assessments of the extent to which police understand and act on community issues (Bradford *et al.* 2009); that is, on those elements of public opinion most strongly linked to the legitimacy of the police (Jackson *et al.* in press).

The second relevant facet of existing work is the multiplicative effect of multiple stops and other forms of police-initiated contacts. The British Crime Survey and other sources confirm that people from some BME groups are considerably more likely to experience multiple stops and other forms of police-initiated contact (Bowling and Philips 2007; Sharp and Atherton 2007), and this seems likely to only accentuate the negative association between contact and trust. One poor experience at the hands of police officers may be discounted or gradually fade from memory – a

series of such experiences, at both the individual and community level, can seriously damage the relationship between police and public.

The fact that contact with officers seems to have a net negative impact on public trust in the police is, again, bad in and of itself. The now defunct 'PSA23' target – which gave police forces in England and Wales one overarching performance target, to improve public confidence – was very possibly misguided in its application (FitzGerald 2010; Myhill *et al.* 2011). But it did at least acknowledge the idea that public validation of the police service is a core element of its democratic accountability. If a certain section of society, by dint of excessive rates of contact with officers, has a lower level of trust in the police this should be of some concern, quite aside from any concrete consequences that might flow from it.

Cooperation between police and public

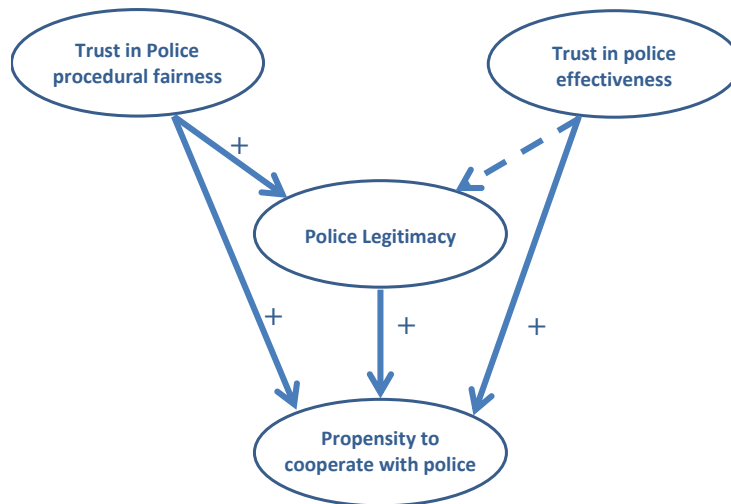
Yet, recent UK studies have also started to apply ideas from the procedural justice theory to probe more deeply into the potential effects of personal contact with officers on public cooperation with the police and compliance with the law. Tyler's model links the experience of fair treatment at the hands of police officers, through the intervening mechanisms of trust and legitimacy, to public cooperation with the police and compliance with the law (Bradford and Jackson 2010). Unfair treatment, by contrast, undermines cooperation and promotes cynicism about the law (Hough *et al.* 2010).

Police stop and search activity, if it is experienced negatively by those involved and felt by them to be procedurally unfair, is therefore likely to damage the potential for cooperation between police and public. This has potential implications for both individuals and communities. Despite the growth of private policing in recent years (Johnson 1992), for most people in the UK the public police are still the monopoly provider of security and the possibility of legally sanctioned redress in the face of victimization. Individuals who feel unwilling or unable to engage with the police and access the sorts of help officers may be able to provide are significantly disadvantaged compared to those who do feel able to turn to the police at times of need. Furthermore, the communities in which they live will suffer collectively as issues of law and disorder are less likely to be addressed – and even when police action is forthcoming its effectiveness will be damaged if officers are unable to rely on the assistance of local people, whether as victims, witnesses, or sources of information. Propensities to cooperate with the police can thus be seen as an element of the social capital carried by individuals and communities, where social capital is defined in its broadest sense as inhering in social relations that have (potentially) productive benefits.

Data from the MPS survey seem to confirm that stop and search activity damages public cooperation. In this survey, as in the wider PAS (Bradford *et al.* 2009) and the British Crime Survey (Walker *et al.* 2009), the net effect of experiencing a police stop on opinions of the police is negative. While some of the encounters reported by respondents were felt to be positive, trust in the fairness of the police was on average lower among those who had been stopped than among those who had not. Figure 1 lays out the possible outcomes of this in terms of individual's willingness to cooperate with the police (measured in the survey by questions such as 'if the situation arose, how likely would you be to call the police to report a crime you witnessed'). The figure summarizes the results of a structural equation model replicating a core aspect of procedural justice theory – that police legitimacy rests heavily on the public's sense that officers act in a fair way, and that both procedural

fairness and legitimacy are linked to propensities to cooperate. Both relationships hold strongly in this data – as they do in the PAS and other UK surveys (Bradford and Jackson 2010; Hough *et al.* 2009) and it appears that police behaviour – such as stop and search – that damages trust in the fairness of the police does indeed damage cooperation.

Figure 1: Unfairness damages legitimacy and cooperation
Summary of results from a Structural Equation Model predicting self-reported propensity to cooperate with the police



Self-help violence

According to Tyler's model procedural fairness encourages people to feel that the police have the right intentions toward them and that they are 'on the same side'. It is this sense of group belonging and motive-based trust that generates police legitimacy and promotes cooperation and compliance with the law. It also encourages individuals to cede to the police the right to define proper behaviour (Kelman and Hamilton 1989). According to the classic Weberian discussion of the nature of legitimate state power, granting the police legitimacy involves giving it the right to define what is the right or wrong thing to do in those circumstances that fall within its remit. In situations where the potential or actual use of force is needed to reach a desired outcome – for example the sanctioning of someone who has committed an assault – a legitimate police force is able to convince citizens that it is the only suitable mechanism of the application of such force and that they should not take it upon themselves to act.

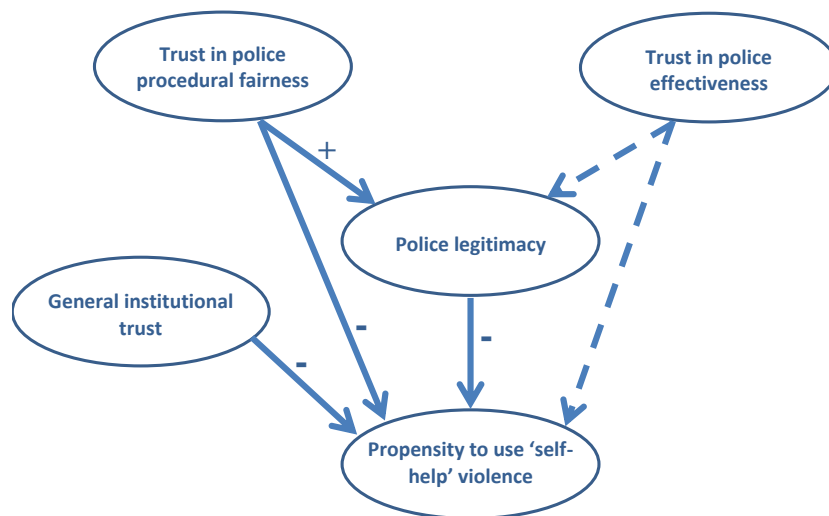
An illegitimate police force, by contrast, encourages people to take the law into their own hands. Individuals who, whether because of the experience of police unfairness or for some other reason, do not hold the police to be legitimate may be more likely to engage in 'self-help' violence (Black 1998). Given the nature of the law and the criminal justice system in a country such as the UK those who do so are likely to find themselves in confrontation with the police. Individuals who try to solve their problems themselves may also be more likely to suffer physical injury, financial loss, and other negative outcomes. In short, people who feel they can or must use

violence to protect themselves, their property or their honour are likely, on average, to be significantly disadvantaged when compare to those who feel they can and should leave things to the police.

The House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee (2007: 52) outlined just such a process. The committee reports comments made to it by witnesses from police, community and faith groups, who concluded that “a lack of trust in the police was leading young people to turn to informal ‘street justice’, in which friends, relatives or the victims themselves took action to seek redress”.

The London survey data again appear to support this argument. Respondents were asked a series of questions about how ‘right’ they thought it was for people to use violence to solve problems they encounter, such as being attacked in the street or being involved in a neighbour dispute. One interpretation of the answers given to these questions is that they collectively reveal each individuals latent propensity to ‘be prepared’ to use violence themselves. Results from a structural equation model predicting this latent propensity are shown in Figure 2. Readiness to use violence was strongly linked to perceptions of police fairness and legitimacy. On average, those respondents who felt the police to be fair and who granted it legitimacy were considerably less likely to say that using violence to solve problems is the right thing to do.

Figure 2: Police fairness is linked to readiness to use self-help violence
 Summary of results from a structural equation model predicting self-reported propensity to use ‘self-help’ violence



Wider issues of social exclusion

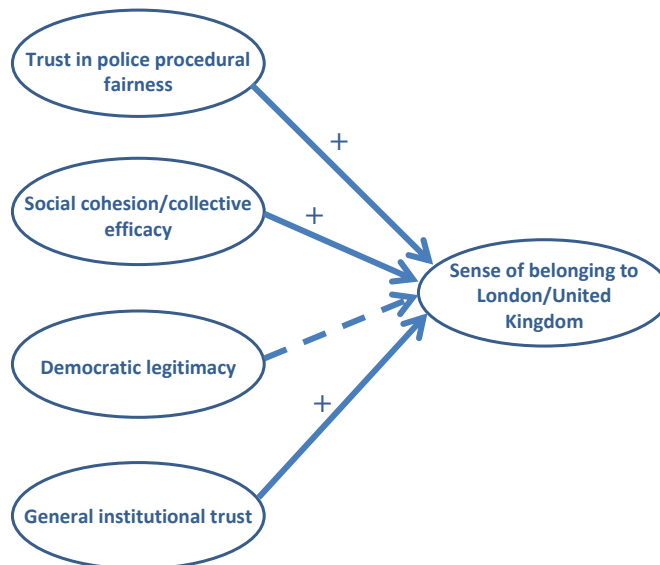
Current evidence therefore strongly suggests that experiences of police unfairness damage trust, legitimacy and the potential for cooperation. Because of the asymmetry in the effect of contact with officers on trust, police stop and search activity, especially when disproportionate, is highly likely to affect the relationship between the police and those who experience it. The net result, at both the community and individual level, is to distance people targeted for stop and search from a key element of the assistance the state can offer its citizens.

Further, recall that the causal mechanism at the heart of the procedural justice model is shared group membership. By and through the way they treat the people they encounter police officers communicate powerful messages about their inclusion and status within the social group(s) the police represent, whether these are conceptualized as the nation or state (Loader and Mulcahy 2003; Reiner 2000), the respectable community (Waddington 1999), or some other similar social group. Experiencing unfairness may be linked not only to distrust in the police organization but also to a wider sense of exclusion from the social group(s) it represents.

Naturally, contact with the police is linked with actual as well as symbolic exclusion. Social exclusion has been defined as a: “lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in ... normal relationships and activities.... It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole” (Levitas *et al.* 2007). People who are socially excluded are more likely to be subjected to police interventions for a whole host of reasons, many of which are far beyond the matter of how the police officers exercise their power (e.g. McAra and McVie 2005). But the argument here is that police activity may *promote* social exclusion, in some circumstances at least. Symbolically, officers’ actions can push people out from the social groups that the police represent. More concretely, police contact can drag individuals into the criminal justice system and away from more socially productive roles.

The London survey provides good evidence of symbolic exclusion. It contained a series of questions concerning identities, affiliations and belonging. To take just one example, a paired set of questions asked how strongly respondents felt they ‘belonged’ to London and Great Britain. Answers to these two questions were highly correlated, and loaded onto one underlying factor that might represent their sense of belonging to the wider society (this interpretation is of course open to debate). Most of the respondents did feel they belonged (nearly 80 per cent, for example, felt ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ strongly that they belonged to Great Britain) but, as Figure 3 illustrates, those who felt the police be less fair were less likely to feel they belonged to the wider society. As the figure suggests this association was robust to the inclusion of several potentially confounding variables, such as general institutional trust, democratic legitimacy, and perceptions of social cohesion.

Figure 3: Trust in police fairness is linked to sense of belonging to the UK
 Summary of results from a structural equation model predicting sense of belonging to London/United Kingdom



Many of the issues discussed above may coalesce in recent experiences of the police among British Muslims and people with South Asian or the Middle Eastern heritage thought by others to be Muslim. Several authors have noted that many current methods in counter-terrorism policing – including stop and search under various powers – undermine trust, turn communities inwards and away from the majority society and the state, and ultimately may create a vicious spiral as aggressive police tactics (and political rhetoric) engender radicalization which in turn triggers yet more repressive responses (Spalek and Lambert 2008; Spalek et al. 2008; Vertigans 2010).

Criminal justice net-widening

For evidence of the possible link between police stop activity and more literal forms of exclusion we can turn to a body of literature concerned with the implications arising from police contact in terms of individual's entry into the wider criminal justice system. Contact with the criminal justice system among young people, such as that initiated by a street stop, is thought by police and government alike to reduce the risk of their (re)offending. For the minority who are stopped and found to have committed an offence the sanctions that arise are intended to have a deterrent effect on future behaviour, while remedies put in place in terms of any intervention programmes they may enter into are in place to address the 'root causes' of their offending. Presumably, on this account, the majority not guilty of any offence will still be deterred from potential future offences by active demonstration of police power and efficacy. However McCara and McVie (2007) note that a growing body of international research suggests 'system contact' such as involvement with the youth justice system and in particular experience of more severe forms of sanctioning is as likely to result in enhanced offending as in diminished offending. "Taken to its extremes, this research would suggest (in a manner akin to labelling theory) that contact with the youth justice system is inherently criminogenic' (ibid: 318)."

Evidence to this effect has accrued over a relatively long period of time. Farrington (1977) found that self-reported delinquency was higher among a group of boys from London first convicted at age 14-18 than among a matched group of unconvicted boys (matching was via similarity on a self-reported delinquency scale at age 14). Farrington *et al.* (1978) found a similar effect for those who had their first convictions age between 18 and 21, again compared with a group not convicted between those ages. Similar results have been reported elsewhere (e.g. Huizinga *et al.* 2003; Tracy and Kempf-Leonard 1996).

In their own study McCara and McVie (2007) use data from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime to examine this issue. The Edinburgh study is a longitudinal study of a cohort of young people in Edinburgh aged 11 or 12 in 1998. It succeeded in conducting a virtual census of the cohort in that year, and returned to them annually for the next 6 years (and at less frequent intervals since then). Two findings are of particular relevance here. First, the odds of being charged by police between sweeps three and four (aged around 14 to 15) were examined. In a model that controlled for socio-demographic and behavioural correlates – such as socio-economic status and self-reported offending – the strongest predictor by far of reporting a police charge at sweep four was having reported a charge at earlier sweeps. This pattern replicated through the other stages of the Scottish youth justice system examined. For example, referrals by the police Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) to the Reporter were higher among those who had been so referred at a prior date.

Second, McAra and McVie examined the effect of system contact at sweep four on self-reported serious offending at sweep five. Intervention (police charge, referral to the Reporter and/or brought to hearing) and comparison groups were identified using propensity score matching, and change in rates of self-reported offending between sweeps four and five were compared across the two groups. Overall, there was a significant fall in offending rates in both groups. However, not only was this no larger in the intervention compared with the comparison groups overall, those brought to children's hearings¹ at sweep four were *more* likely to report serious offending at sweep five than their matched counterparts not brought to hearing. The authors conclude that "significant desistance from offending is apparent among young people who have either no or minimal system contact, whereas those who are drawn furthest into the system with the aim of receiving intervention to address their behavioural problems are inhibited in this regard" (ibid: 334).

While McAra and McVie were not able to look at the implications of their work in terms of ethnic difference the relevance of their paper is clear. The evidence around disproportionality in police stop activity need not be restated, and BME groups are over-represented at every stage of the criminal justice process (Bowling and Philips 2002). If the findings from the Edinburgh study replicate to England and Wales – and there is no reason to suggest they would not – the implication would be a kind of ratcheting effect, as increased contact predicts increased offending and further contact. One important point is that these effects and their implications are independent of each other, to some extent at least. The estimated effect of previous charges on the odds of a charge at sweep four noted above was conditional on self-reported offending. It was not simply that those who reported an earlier charge were offending more – there was something about earlier police attention *in and of itself* that predicted a greater chance of a later charge.

In Edinburgh much of this ratcheting effect appears to function by agencies identifying the 'usual suspects' (McAra and McVie 2005), often on class and geographical bases, who become the principal focus of official attention and who are constantly recycled through the hearing system. Add to this the likely effects of institutional (and indeed personal) racism, and it is not hard to envisage that many of those from the BME populations regularly targeted by stop and search activity will find themselves classed as the usual suspects and pulled into exactly the same processes as those described above.

Work by May *et al.* (2010) in England and Wales suggests exactly this. Looking at police and criminal justice practice across four police Basic Command Units (BCUs) and 12 Youth Offending Teams they found that 'proactive policing' – of the type characterized by stop and search activity – was highly unevenly spread geographically and in terms of the types of crime targeted. They concluded that in the areas studied "a considerably higher proportion of arrests of Asian, black and mixed race teenagers originate from proactive work than arrests for other groups" (ibid: 34). They also found that, once arrested, mixed race defendants were more likely to be charged than their white counterparts, while black and mixed race defendants were more likely to be remanded in custody (ibid: vi). May *et al.* thus concur with the Home Affairs Select Committee who, in 2007, noted that young black people are nearly twice as likely as their white counterparts to enter the criminal justice system as a result of being stopped and searched (Home Affairs Select Committee 2007: 45).

¹ The children's hearing system is the primary institutional framework for youth justice in Scotland. The system deals with both welfare and criminal justice issues. Young people can be referred up to age 15 and retained in the system until age 18.

Police stop and search activity may then not only result in a net negative relationship between police and those who experience it that can undermine their sense of belonging to the social groups the police represent. It might also trigger more concrete processes of social exclusion, as they run higher risks of being dragged into the criminal justice system, with negative implications in terms of deviancy amplification, deepening entry into the system, and consequent reduction in life chances.

Looking forward

The research outlined above contains three core messages. First, ordinary people as well as ivory tower academics care deeply about the fairness of the police and the wider criminal justice system. Encouraging a sense that the criminal justice system is unfair may in itself be a negative impact of current stop and search practice.

Second, when it comes to interactions between police and public notions of fairness play out most importantly at the level of process. Excessive use of stop and search undermines people's sense of the procedural fairness of the police and damages its legitimacy. This has significant implications for the ability of communities to cooperate with the police and for the ways individuals and communities seek to manage the 'law and order' problems that confront them. Attempting to solve these problems without the assistance of the police may carry a significant social and economic penalty that could even predict further negative contact with the police.

Third, excessive or disproportionate police-initiated contact is linked with social exclusion. Symbolically, when it is experienced as unfair such contact pushes people away from the important social groups the police represent. Materially, it may drag people into the criminal justice system and damage their future potential to participate fully in society.

Significant gaps remain in current UK research, however, and this paper closes by listing and elucidating some potential areas for future research.

Trust, victimization and self-help violence

The relationship between trust, reporting victimization and engaging in self-help violence needs much more consideration. While the results of the London survey are highly suggestive they in no way prove the associations suggested. The findings presented here are from a cross-sectional survey which cannot hope to unravel the potential causal mechanisms behind the associations observed. Equally, the survey relies on self-reported (indeed implied) behaviour, with all the problems attending this approach. Research using data collection strategies that address one or both of these issues would be most welcome. Criminal justice oriented surveys with panel designs are relatively rare in the United Kingdom. Studies that integrate administrative data to look at issues such as offending trajectories are somewhat more common – unfortunately they seem rarely to address the core issues of trust and legitimacy outlined above.

A further related problem is that most existing British work on public opinions of the police relies either on population surveys such as the BCS and PAS, or on qualitative work with very specific groups of individuals. We know very little in quantitative terms about how offending and 'suspect' populations interact with officers, how they think about the police, and what the implications might be. How does being the object of police attention affect their lives? How do they negotiate this

fact, and what is the impact of the steps they take? The survey reported above is useful step in this direction, but it is only that.

Quantitative data in relation to financial and other 'real' effects of stop and search practice would also be most useful. What are the proximate and longer-term economic costs of stop and search activity, both for the individual's stopped and the police and the criminal justice system? What the implications in terms of job- and other future prospect of individuals disproportionately dragged into the system?

An Edinburgh study for England and Wales?

The Edinburgh Study discussed above in fact brings together many (although certainly not all) of these issues. It combines a longitudinal survey design with experiential and opinion data collected from individuals, parents and teachers with access to the young people's police, court and social services records (www.law.ed.ac.uk/cls/esytc/). This allows significant insight into the processes that lead to specific outcomes, for example the effect of 'system contact' on future behaviour. A similar project looking at the experiences of young people in a more ethnically diverse British city would bring huge insight into the effects of stop and search on factors such as offending, social exclusion and alienation (it would also, of course, be hugely expensive).

Operationalizing procedural justice and convincing the police

A key barrier to change in stop and search practices in the UK often appears to be a belief among police officers (at both street and management levels) that it is an effective tool in 'fighting crime'. Given that they seem unconvinced by the wealth of contrary evidence concerning arrest hit-rates and other aspects of disproportionality, perhaps some of the issues raised above might better convince them. The associations between adversarial contact, lower trust, lower cooperation and perhaps higher offending should be particularly powerful arguments.

However to convince a skeptical audience data of the type and quality outlined immediately above would be needed. Equally, much more research is required on how to operationalize the ideas of the procedural justice model in terms of everyday policing. How can police officers 'do' fairness, and can concrete effects be identified? More work is certainly needed on police training in this area, and particularly into the impact such training might have on numbers of complaints, adversarial encounters, and so on.

Yet, implicit here is the idea that stop and search can be done differently, and that it is not the quantity but the quality of the stops that is most important. This is open to debate – it might well be, for example, that because disproportionality is inherently unfair an improvement in quality would need to be accompanied by a reduction in quantity. It may be that the raw number of stops is a key issue. Perhaps officer's behaviour experienced positively at an individual level can still aggregate up to a negative experience of the way police power is exercised at the group or social level. Such conundrums are difficult to answer without much more research.

Criminal justice styles, the media, and making the case for change

This is perhaps the thorniest issue of all. Using public attitudes toward sentencing as an analogy, more than a decade of robust academic work demonstrating that the public is not nearly as punitive as is often thought the case (Roberts and Hough 2005) has signally failed to convince the press and indeed politicians otherwise, as recent events concerning sentencing policy in England and Wales demonstrate: the

government rapidly back-tracked on sentencing reform seen by tabloid leader writers as too lenient (Jenkins 2011). Concerns about police stop and search activity and its attendant problems are likely to be an equally hard sell.

Perhaps the best current hope is for a slow accretion of evidence, of the type outlined here, that current stop and search policy is not just ineffective but actively counterproductive in that it is likely to damage public cooperation with the police, increase offending, and increase throughput into the criminal justice system still further – with all the attendant costs this implies. Research looking at the financial costs of these factors would be particularly welcome, although it is recognized that such costing exercises are fraught with difficulty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, much remains to be done in relation to the potential impact of stop and search on individuals and communities. Current debate and research in the UK seems stuck in a groove of argument and counter-argument about the fact of and reasons for disproportionality. This debate has yet to produce a resolution precisely because the real effects of stop and search have received relatively little attention. There are very significant gaps in existing research, particularly in relation to the identification and quantification of concrete negative effects arising from current practice. While 'abstract' effects such as inherent unfairness are compelling to those on one side of the argument they are distinctly unconvincing to many on the other, particularly those who believe stop and search as currently constituted provides a useful return in terms of crime reduction and prevention. Evidence of the type discussed above, if it were to be forthcoming, may offer a way out of this impasse.

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