

Refugees' Perceptions of the Police in Western New York

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the adaptation of refugees to the American criminal justice system by focusing on how they perceive law enforcement officers in Western New York. This study also compares African and non-African (including Asian) refugees' perceptions of the police. A questionnaire adapted from the one used by Song (1992) to measure perceptions of police by Chinese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees in Southern California is used in this study. Findings and analyses may carry policy implications for law enforcement agencies to improve their services to refugees.

Introduction

Most research on the interaction between refugees and law enforcement officers in the United States focuses mostly on domestic violence cases (e.g. Bhuyan & Senturia, 2005; Muftić & Bouffard, 2008; Nilsson, Brown, Russell, & Khamphakdy, 2008; Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Thornton, & Giday, 2005; Thornton, Senturia, & Sullivan, 2005), and also on child maltreatment among refugee communities (Ima & Hohm, 1991). Previous studies that examined refugees' and/or immigrants' perceptions of law enforcement officers in the United States focused mostly on Asian and Latino populations (Chu, Song, & Dombrink, 2005; Chu & Song, 2008; Song, Vidales, & Dombrink, 2008). However, empirical evidence indicates that there has been an increase in the number of refugees from the continent of Africa as well as the Middle East in recent years (Singer & Wilson, 2007). Therefore it is important that more research should focus on this upcoming group of refugees.

Prior research (e.g. Chu & Song, 2008) indicates that immigrants who have had previous negative contact with law enforcement officers, those who have been victims of crime previously and, those who have experienced poor communication between themselves and law enforcement officers are more likely than those who have not had negative experiences with law enforcement officers, to harbor negative attitudes toward law enforcement officers. Weitzer, Tuch, and Skogan (2008) classified some aspects which impact on citizens' perceptions of law enforcement officers into different categories. These categories were as follows; "individual demographic characteristics, (race, gender, age, etc.)," "police- citizen contacts (both negative and positive encounters)," "neighborhood crime, Disorder and policing," and finally, "community policing" (Weitzer et al., 2008). The purpose of the present study, was to examine the adaptation of

African and non-African refugees by focusing primarily on how African and non-African refugees perceive law enforcement officers in Western New York.

Political, social, natural disasters and economic turmoil in different regions around the world have forced people to migrate to other countries in search of a better life as well as safety. The United States is one of the countries where people from different countries around the globe migrate to in search of “greener pastures” as well as “humanitarian protection” (Li & Batalova, 2011, p. 1). Each year the United States of America admits immigrants into the country as lawful permanent residents, refugees, or asylum seekers. According to McCabe and Meissner (2010), the population of lawful immigrants in 2008 was 12.5 percent of the American population, approximately 38 million immigrants. In this year, immigrants from Latin America comprised the largest percentage (53.6 percent), followed by Asian immigrants (26.8 percent). European immigrants comprised 13.1 percent and African immigrants comprised 3.7 percent, while immigrants from North America made up 2.2 percent of the immigrant population in the United States (McCabe & Meissner, 2010, p. 6; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Statistics obtained from a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) annual report indicates that by the end of 2009, there were approximately 43.3 million forcibly displaced (that is, refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people-IDPs) people in the world. Out of a population of 43.3 million displaced persons, 15.2 million people were refugees and the rest were either asylum seekers, victims of natural disasters or IDP's (UNHCR, 2010). A more recent edition of the UNHCR annual report indicates that by the end of 2010, the number of forcibly displaced people had gone up to 43.7 million people (UNHCR, 2011). According to the report, this is the highest number of forcibly displaced people in 15 years. Moreover, out of the 43.7 million forcibly displaced people in 2010, 15.4 million were refugees; 10.55 million of

the 15.4 million refugees were under UNHCR's custody and the remaining 4.82 million were Palestinian refugees. Furthermore, Afghani and Iraqi refugees were approximately 50 percent of the refugees under UNHCR's custody worldwide in 2010. In the same year (2010), the UNHCR submitted more than 108,000 refugee cases to different countries for resettlement. Statistics from 22 countries indicate that approximately 98,800 refugees were resettled in these countries. Out of the 22 countries, the United States of America resettled about 71,400 refugees out of the 98,800 refugees that were resettled in 2010 (UNHCR, 2011).

The number of refugees to be resettled each year in the United States is determined by the president in consultation with congress (Li & Batalova, 2011). In addition to establishing the number of people to be resettled in the country, the president also selects five global regions as well as one reserve where refugees will be accepted from. For instance, between 2002 and 2007 the number of refugees to be accepted each year was set at 70,000. At the beginning of 2008 however, this number was increased to 80000 and it has been retained to date. The number of refugees to be resettled varies in terms of numbers and regions. The increase in 2008 was due to an increase in the number of Iraqi, Iranian and Bhutanese refugees being resettled in the U.S. The regions of interest in 2010 were East Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, near East and South Asia and Europe, and Central Asia. Furthermore, the highest number (38,000) of refugees was allocated to the near East and Central Asia region (Li & Batalova, 2011).

According to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) immigration Statistics, refugees from Iraq, Burma, and Bhutan made about 71.1 percent of refugees resettled in the U.S in 2012 (Martin & Yankay, 2013). Other countries with a high number of refugees that were resettled include Somalia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Eritrea, Sudan, and Ethiopia. These 10 countries made up about 94.4 percent of refugees who arrived in the U.S in

2012. The DHS's statistics further reveal that during the same year 40.4 percent of refugees were resettled in Texas (10.1 percent), California (8.9 percent), Michigan (6.2 percent), New York (6.1 percent), Pennsylvania (4.8 percent), and Georgia (4.3 percent) (Martin & Yankay, 2013). About 15 percent were resettled in Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, and Washington; approximately 45 percent were resettled elsewhere in the United States.

Definition of Terms

At this point, it is important to define key terms that will be used throughout this study. The first term to be defined is who is eligible for being a refugee. The definition of the term refugee is well established; however, sometimes it is subject to different interpretation depending on where and how it is applied. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defines a refugee as someone

“who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (The Refugee Convention, 1951).

However, some scholars argue that the definition of a refugee based on the 1951 Refugee Convention is narrow because it excludes people who may in fact be considered to be refugees. For instance, Steimel (2010) states that whereas in 2006 only 14 million people fit the United Nations definition of a refugee, there were people who did not fit into this definition yet they were either internally displaced people, environmental refugees, or their governments were not recognized by the United Nations as persecutory (Schweid, 2007). The United States distinguishes between the legal definitions of a refugee from that of an asylee. Steimel (2010) states that “according to the US immigration laws, a refugee is a person who is unable or

unwilling to return to his or her native country due to a well-founded fear of persecution or because the person's life or freedom would be threatened" (p 221).

This implies that to apply for refugee status, a person must be physically located outside the United States of America at the time when they are applying for refugee status. On the other hand, to qualify for asylum legally in the United States, a person should be physically present in the United States. For purposes of this study, a refugee was defined as a person who met the United Nations criteria of a refugee and was admitted by a resettling agency in the United States.

Justification for the study

Currently, there are few studies in the literature which focus on the perceptions of law enforcement officers by refugees, and no studies on African refugees, in the United States. Recent statistics indicate that the number of refugees from Africa and the Middle East has increased in the past few years (Li & Batalova, 2011). Focusing on this understudied group is vital not just for academic purposes but also for policy implications. Most African refugees are black, and since numerous studies have examined how African Americans/blacks perceive law enforcement officers in the United States (e.g. Lee, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2010; Macdonald & Stokes, 2006), there may be a presumption that African refugees fall under this group. However, studies have shown that refugee populations may have different perceptions of the police when compared to other immigrant populations and other minority groups. Most refugees have had traumatic experiences with the police in their home countries or in the camps and therefore their perceptions of law enforcement officers are likely to be affected by their prior experiences (Campbell & Julian, 2007). This study is important because law enforcement and other agencies, as well as humanitarian and refugee resettling agencies can use the findings to improve their

services and address African and non-African refugee concerns and therefore foster better working relations.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the adaptation of refugees to law enforcement in Buffalo and Rochester, New York by focusing on how African and non-African refugees perceive law enforcement officers. In an attempt to bridge the gap in previous research, the present study used some aspects of a survey in Song's (1992) research on the perceptions of law enforcement officers by Chinese immigrant and Vietnamese refugee communities in Southern California. Similar studies were replicated in New York City and Toronto, Ontario (Chu, Song and Dombrink, 2005; Chu and Song 2008). Similar to Chu and Song's 2008 study, the present study examined hypotheses regarding how prior victimization, prior police contact, poor communication and fear of crime would affect refugees' perceptions of law enforcement officers.

Theoretical Frameworks

Different explanations and hypotheses have been provided by researchers, politicians, law enforcement agencies and the public to explain police/minority relations in the United States. Thus, in an attempt to explain this phenomenon, critical race theory will be explored in this section. Existing research that examines citizens' perceptions of the police usually focuses on individual characteristics such as race, age, gender, social class, and so on. However, most empirical research focuses mainly on race as a key determinant of citizens' perceptions of the police in the United States (Weitzer et al., 2008).

Distrust of local police departments by racial and ethnic minority groups has been a source of conflict in the history of American law enforcement (Chu et al., 2005). According to Weitzer et al. (2008), racial and ethnic minorities often view themselves as targets of abuses by

law enforcement officers in the United States (p. 399). In an attempt to understand the relation between minorities and law enforcement officers, Weitzer et al. (2008) adopt Blumer's (1958) group position thesis to understand how unequal positions in society between the white majority and racial minorities may determine their interactions as well as individual perceptions. Weitzer et al. (2008) argue that the group position thesis can serve as a possible explanation of the distrust between minority group members and law enforcement officers because the former consider the latter to be the dominant class with privilege to exercise power. Moreover, Cox and Fitzgerald (1983) posit that most police officers tend to identify with dominant white groups rather than with subordinate minority groups; therefore, they tend to express prejudice and discrimination towards these minority groups. In the similar vein, minority groups are also more likely to harbor prejudices and act in discriminatory ways against police officers.

Immigrants have been largely associated racial/ethnic minorities. Historically, immigration has impacted on law enforcement as well as other aspects of society in general. Deakin (1988) states that the emergence of class struggles in the late part of the 19th century, led to police professionalism in the United States. This was as a result of efforts made by the progressive movement to change America (Deakin, 1988). Immigration therefore impacted heavily on the establishment of the code of conduct for the police as well as professionalism. Equally important, early immigration affected policing in two major ways: the first was that immigrants became a majority of the people that were recruited as new law enforcement officers. The second impact on law enforcement was that the newly arrived immigrants presented a different view of the law from the native born American populations (Deakin, 1988). Immigration brings about drastic demographic changes which can be a challenge to not only law

enforcement but to the communities where immigrants move and settle into (Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007).

In a study on racial profiling of Mexicans and/or Latinos by immigration officers, Romero (2006) argues that according to Immigration and Naturalization agents in the United States, citizenship appears to be synonymous with skin color. Under these circumstances, being Mexican (i.e., “Mexicanness”) becomes a basis of suspicion for criminality under Immigration Law (Romero, 2006, p .449). As a result, law enforcement agents and even the public in general perceive immigrants to be inferior and therefore more likely to harbor criminal tendencies when compared to American born individuals. A rapid increase in the number of immigrants that coincides with economic recession in the country often reinforces the hostility of the general public, including law enforcement officers, toward immigrants. “Symbolic violence” has been used to depict how noncitizens face two dilemmas—one for the identity of immigrants and the other for the perceived involvement in criminal activity (Hagan, Levi, & Dinovitzer, 2008, p. 99). This is particularly evident in that the emergence of immigrants from Asia and Latin America occurred around the time when crime rates formed an upward trend in the 1970s and 1980s, thus reinforcing the myth of the immigration-crime link (Menjívar & Bejarano, 2004).

A majority of recent research provides empirical evidence which indicates that law enforcement at both the federal and local level treat members of minority racial groups differently from dominant racial groups. According to Smith and Alpert (2007), Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to be stopped, searched, arrested, and given harsher treatment by police officers. Disparities in the treatment of different ethnic and racial groups may be explained by high offending levels among Blacks and Hispanics. Historically, racial profiling by law enforcement was tolerated and sometimes even encouraged.

Today, overt racial profiling by law enforcement officers is rare. However, as stated earlier, the number of minority group members who are stopped, searched and arrested by individual police officers is still higher than that of whites. Further, although law enforcement officers may not necessarily dislike racial and/or ethnic minority group members, they still associate their race and/or ethnicity with perceived criminality (Smith & Alpert, 2007). As we move from an era of overt racial profiling, a new era where officers use race strategically for the exercise of their discretion is ushered in (Smith & Alpert, 2007). Law enforcement officers use their judgment (based on their knowledge and/or assumptions of group criminality) to decide on which racial group is likely to commit certain crimes and therefore when these crimes happen they know where to go and who to arrest.

However, Smith and Alpert (2007) argue that unconscious racial stereotyping during decision making, rather than “racial hatred” or “strategic use of race,” can satisfactorily explain the differences observed in stops by street level law enforcement officers as indicated by empirical research (p. 1277). In support of this explanation, Smith and Alpert (2007) note that street level officers who are mostly exposed to minority or immigrant groups in inner city areas with higher crime rates are more likely to be more punitive when compared to their counterparts in white dominated neighborhoods with a presumably lower level of crime. The unconscious racial stereotyping explanation is consistent critical race theory. The media, politicians, law enforcement agencies, and the dominant group reinforce some stereotypes about minority or immigrant groups, knowingly or unknowingly, and these lead to distrust between these groups and authorities. By contrast, racial/ethnic minorities, as well as immigrants, may respond to differential treatment with negative perceptions of official figures. Against this backdrop, this

study examined the perceptions of law enforcement officers by not only refugees in general but also subgroups such as African versus non-African refugees in Buffalo and Rochester, New York.

Literature Review

Understanding refugees' prior experiences with law enforcement officers is necessary because previous studies have shown that many immigrants move into their adopted countries having had prior negative experiences with the police in their countries. Such experiences are likely to impact on their perception of the police in their host countries (Song, 1992; Chu & Song, 2008). Lewis and Ramakrishnan (2007) reinforced this observation by stating that some immigrants who experienced police corruption and brutality in their home countries might avoid using police as a potential source of service for combating crimes and maintaining public order in their immigrant communities (p. 876). Contemporary research on the perceptions of the U.S. police by the public has been based on Bellman's (1935) police service rating scale and Parratt's (1936, 1938) survey instrument that modified Bellman's rating scale (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Built on these early studies, research has focused on individual variables such as age and race as well as contextual variables such as crime rates and victimization to examine the public's attitudes toward the police (Decker, 1981).

Research on the attitudes of the citizens toward the police is important for many reasons. Public attitudes toward the police are often associated with police behavior. Negative attitudes toward the police may come from a simple incident that involves police abusive behavior, and the outcome often promotes citizen-police tension and serves as the leading cause of riots in U.S. urban cities (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Researchers also argue that racial and ethnic minorities often view themselves as the victims of police abuse (Weitzer et al., 2008, p. 398). Minorities are, therefore, more likely to rebel against the ill treatment, whether real or perceived in such

ways as riots and protests. This not only complicates police work but it also gives police work negative publicity. Brown and Benedict (2002) argue that it is to the best interest of police officers, politicians, and administrators to pay attention to the attitudes of the public toward the police, because public hostility toward the police can jeopardize their careers.

On the other hand, the public's perception of the police is important because when citizens are satisfied with the police, they are more likely to provide information that could help in reducing crime, and vice versa (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Therefore, gaining citizen's cooperation is important because it helps the police to do their work more effectively. In their study on the experiences of African refugees with law enforcement in regional Australia, Campbell and Julian (2007) argue that it is important and maybe even necessary that the police and refugees have good working relations. These researchers argue that because of constant change within a community, it is important to deal with these changes in an effective manner through the efforts of both the police and the community. Also, negative publicity in the media can be detrimental to police organizations, because they may lose public support that is necessary for police effectiveness. Last but not least, fostering police/refugee relations can support positive interactions between the police and refugees for the improvement of community policing (Campbell & Julian, 2007, p. 5).

In addition, studies (e.g. Weitzer et al., 2008) indicate that citizens' satisfaction with the police goes a long way in helping the police to do their work because citizens will be more willing to comply with their demands. Moreover, citizens' perceptions of the police and police departments are important because when citizens disapprove police behavior, the likelihood of the police department losing its legitimacy is high (Weitzer et al., 2008, p. 399). Currently, much of the research done on minorities and the American criminal justice system has focused

mainly on African Americans and/or blacks (e.g., Barnum & Perfetti, 2010; Brunson & Miller, 2006; Gabbidon, Higgins, & Porter, 2011; Weizer, et al., 2008), Asians (e.g., Chu & Song 2008; Chu et al., 2005), and Latinos (e.g., Menjivar & Bejarano, 2004; Romero, 2006; Skogan, 2009). On the other hand, other studies focused on comparing how different ethnic and racial minority and/or immigrant groups perceive law enforcement officers in the United States (e.g., Hickman & Piquero, 2009; Smith & Alpert, 2007; Song et al., 2008; Tillyer & Klahm, 2011; Warren, 2008). However, there are no studies that have focused primarily on African refugees' perceptions of law enforcement officers in the United States. Yet, there is empirical research which indicates that refugees have different experiences with law enforcement officers when compared to other immigrant populations. And therefore refugees are more likely to perceive law enforcement officers differently from other immigrant groups in general (Campbell & Julian, 2007; Song, 1992). Most research on citizens' attitudes towards law enforcement officers focus mainly on demographic characteristics such as race. Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, and Ring (2005) have observed that both national and local surveys have consistently shown a difference in attitudes toward the police by different racial and ethnic groups. For instance, when compared to whites, African Americans often express less satisfaction with the police. Attitudes of Latinos are closer to those of African Americans rather than to whites (Rosenbaum et al., 2005, p. 344).

Studies indicate that law enforcement officers use discretion while carrying out their duties. In a study to examine the stop and frisk pattern across neighborhoods in New York City, Fagan and Davies (2000-2001) found evidence of aggressive policing used by law enforcement officers in minority neighborhoods. Moreover, findings from the study suggest that rather than implementing Order Maintenance Policing (OMP) in areas with greatest physical disorder, as per

the broken windows theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), police officers focused on stopping and searching citizens from minority neighborhoods which were poor and socially disadvantaged (Fagan & Davies, 2000-2001). Furthermore, Romero (2006) states that law enforcement officers exercise discretion while implementing immigration laws. Immigration law enforcement is set up in such a way that it targets certain minority group members. For instance, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) strategically targets hot spots where ethnic immigrants frequently occupy for routine activity, including local businesses, social service agencies, and residential neighborhoods (Romero, 2006).

Furthermore, Smith, Novak, Frank and Lowenkamp (2005) state that whereas law enforcement officers in the United States can intervene in a wide range of situations and have the power to engage in different activities that concern citizens, they conduct their activities with “relative autonomy and little direct supervision, often in situations of low visibility” (Smith et al., 2005, p. 325). The fact that law enforcement officers enjoy some autonomy while carrying out their duties may encourage the use of discretion by individual street level officers. Elaborating on Skolnick’s (1966) work, Schafer, Carter, Bannister and Wells (2006) found that the process of decision making by law enforcement officers is influenced by the subcultural value systems found within their employing agency. Even though police organizations try to limit the use of discretion by individual police officers, the decision making process is still influenced by personal beliefs, thus the use of discretion is sometimes inevitable (Schafer, et al., 2006). Race and ethnicity are among the most dominant individual variables in studies that focus on citizens’ perceptions of law enforcement officers. Lee et al. (2010) argue that ethnic identity plays a major role in shaping the attitudes of African American youths toward the police.

On the other hand, other studies focus on victimization rates as major predictors of citizens' perception of the police. In a study to examine the perceptions of law enforcement officers by Chinese immigrants in Toronto, Canada, Chu and Song (2008) hypothesize that an individual's experience of victimization is inversely associated with police evaluations. In a study, Skogan (2005) indicates that citizens' satisfaction with law enforcement officers is determined by whether the contact they had with officers was initiated by them or by the officer. Furthermore, there was a variance even in citizen initiated contact in that citizens who contacted the police to get or give information expressed more satisfaction with the police compared to those who contacted police to report a disturbance or nuisance (Skogan, 2005). Further, Skogan (2005) states that the manner in which crime victims' reports are dealt with will determine how citizens evaluate law enforcement officers. For crime victims to be satisfied with law enforcement officers while reporting crimes, they need to feel that there was a quick response when they called for help and that police will conduct or conducted an in-depth investigation. Equally important, the police need to be supportive and share information about the case with the crime victims (Skogan, 2005).

In addition, Davis, Erez, and Avitabile (2001) state that the support and cooperation of the citizens is necessary for the criminal justice system to operate more effectively. However, there is evidence that citizens often choose not to report crimes therefore compromising the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. A good working relation between the public and law enforcement agencies will go a long way in gaining citizen cooperation in fighting crime. In addition, citizens' experience with the police need not be direct for them to affect their perceptions of law enforcement officers. The indirect knowledge or experience of how others evaluate law enforcement officers positively predicts a citizen's attitudes toward law

enforcement officers (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). For instance, citizens learning police brutality from media coverage may lead them to develop negative attitudes perceive have an unfavorable impression on police officers (Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Weitzer, 2002). Even though existing research has not indicated a strong relations between demographic characteristics and failure to report crimes by victims, prior experience with police while reporting is a strong predictor of citizens' perceptions of law enforcement officers (Davis et al., 2001). In addition, even though there is limited data on victimization rates and crime reporting among immigrant communities, some research findings (e.g. Davis et al., 2001) suggest that there are possibilities of lower crime reporting among immigrant communities. This has been attributed to difficulty in assimilating into the American system due to cultural differences and also due to their previous experiences with law enforcement officers prior to their arrival into the United States. Some immigrants therefore have a negative perception of the police officers because they view them as oppressors (Davis et al., 2001).

Prior research indicates that citizens' reports are important to law enforcement agencies because they assist in crime control (Campbell & Julian, 2007). Criminal justice agencies also are increasingly recognizing the importance to respond effectively and efficiently to immigrants' needs in criminal matters (Davis et al., 2001). Existing empirical research nonetheless has identified language barrier as a predictor of immigrants' perception of law enforcement officers in the United States. For instance, Chu and Song's (2008) findings reveal that poor communications lead Chinese immigrants perceive police prejudice against Asians. Some studies (e.g., Davis et al., 2001) also have indicated language barrier, a lack of knowledge about U.S. laws, different cultural experiences, and previous negative experience with law enforcement in countries of origin as some of the aspects that shape immigrants' attitudes toward

U.S. law enforcement officers and that lower their motivation for reporting crimes. Lewis and Ramakrishnan (2007) point out that a substantive growth recently in the number of foreign born population has posed a challenge to local police departments because many of the immigrants are not fluent English speakers. Further, limited language support systems in most police departments require law enforcement agencies to rely on bilingual civilians or officers to respond to calls of citizens with limited English abilities (Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007). Language barrier between law enforcement officers and immigrants can lead to frustrations, in turn affecting immigrants' perceptions of the police.

Previous studies (Song, 1992; Song et al., 2008; Chu & Song, 2008; Chu et al., 2005; Davis et al., 2001; Menjivar & Bejarano, 2004; Romero, 2006; Weitzer et al., 2008) have indicated that there is differential treatment of immigrants and refugees by law enforcement officers in the United States. On the other hand, recent studies from other countries that carry out refugee resettlement programs have explored the experiences of refugees with the criminal justice systems in those countries. For example, Campbell and Julian (2007) conducted a study and focused on three major aspects of refugee adaptation to Australian law enforcement. These aspects were classified into different categories as follows: African refugees' perceptions of the police, their experiences with the police, and their understanding of the Australian laws. The authors grouped the findings into two broad categories, including background and transition as well as reaction to present experiences. Findings from the background and transition category suggest that most refugees had had negative experiences with the police during the pre-migration period and this affected their perception of the police. On the other hand, most refugees expressed a knowledge vacuum when it came to the Australian law. Most refugees were not clear on what the law says about many issues in the Australian society. Campbell and Julian

(2007) found that some refugees did not understand their rights and privileges in Australia because they did not have similar frameworks in their countries of origin.

On present experiences, Campbell and Julian (2007) found that some African refugees based their knowledge of Australian laws on assumptions. This trickled down to the community in general because of weak social links that existed within refugee communities and Australian society at large. Most refugees in the study felt that there was less access to justice because their perception of law enforcement were primarily based on the incidents when they were victims and how they were treated by the police during those moments. Campbell and Julian (2007) also found that there were incidences of underreporting of certain crimes, over reporting and sometimes false reporting of others by the African refugees. The Australian example clearly demonstrates that refugee populations experience a lot of problems when adapting to law enforcement and other aspects of the criminal justice system in their host countries.

Moreover, the portrayal of refugees and other minority groups by the media in Australia has served not only to strain the relationship between minorities and the police, but also to reinforce negative stereotypes about recent immigrants in the Australian society. Since media rely on law enforcement officers' characterization of crimes in their reports, it is not surprising the labeling effect works against minority groups. Reports from law enforcement officers are taken seriously by the public therefore when certain minority group members are labeled criminals; the society accepts that to be the truth even though it's not always the case that minorities are criminals (White, 2009; Windle, 2008). Furthermore, there has also been evidence of police racism toward African refugees in Australia (Windle, 2008). The constant portrayal of certain ethnic minorities as youth gang members by Australian media has reinforced the

perceptions of minority immigrants as gang members even though most of the youth from the affected groups are not frequent or violent offenders (White, 2009).

Studies on minorities and the criminal justice system have also been conducted in other countries. There has been a long history of distrust between certain minority groups and law enforcement officers in the United States, Canada, and other European countries (Cao, 2011; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009). Even though most citizens expressed their confidence in the Canadian police, minorities had slightly lower confidence levels when compared to other groups (Cao, 2011). Many citizens in most democratic western countries express confidence in law enforcement agencies and agents; however, the feelings of confidence do not necessarily apply to minorities in these countries where they often evaluate law enforcement officers less favorably (Cao, 2011).

Existing research on the attitudes of new immigrants towards the criminal justice systems in the United States have indicated mixed feelings. Whereas some studies (Chu et al., 2008) have shown that immigrants often evaluate law enforcement officers less favorably than their domestic counterparts, other studies (Davies et al., 1998; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009) have indicated that immigrants evaluate law enforcement officers more favorably compared to native born American. Perceived fairness of the American system by immigrants is often used as one of their reasons for coming to this country (Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009). Similar studies on other countries also show mixed results. For instance, Albrecht (1997) reported the attitudes of German, Italian and Turkish youths towards the criminal justice system in Germany. Findings from this study indicate that German youth are more likely to complain about law enforcement officers in their country than either Italian or Turkish youths.

Findings like those discussed in previous sections suggest that more research on the attitudes of diverse groups toward law enforcement officers will help bridge the gap in the existing literature. Against this backdrop, this study is set to provide some insight into the perceptions of police officers by refugees in Western New York. Building on findings from previous studies, this study investigates hypotheses based on a study conducted by Chu and Song (2008) that examined the perceptions of law enforcement officers by Chinese Immigrants in Toronto, Canada. Thus the hypotheses in the present study are as follows:

- a) Refugees who, or whose household members, were previously victimized will evaluate police less favorably than those who were not through the direct or indirect experience of victimization.
- b) Refugees who, or whose household members, had prior contact with the police will perceive the police more negatively than those who or whose household members had no prior contact.
- c) Poor communication will result in refugees' negative perception of the police.
- d) Fear of crime will result in the refugees' negative perception of the police.

Methods

Data and Sampling Procedures

Data for this study were collected from refugees in two cities in Western New York- Buffalo and Rochester. We borrowed a survey instrument from Song's (1992) research on Chinese immigrants' and Vietnamese refugees' perceptions of the police in Southern California. Subjects targeted for the present study were African and non-African refugees who met the United Nations criteria of a refugee and who were therefore admitted in Buffalo and Rochester, New York, through refugee resettlement programs, regardless of their current status and length of stay. The study was implemented in refugee communities of different nationalities. The

refugees that were included in the present study include: Somali, Liberian, Congolese, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Rwandese, Sierra Leonean, Burundian, Iraqi, Togolese, Burmese and Bhutanese. A refugee in this context is any individual who owing to persecution or war has left his/her home to seek safety in the United States of America. Collecting research data from minority immigrant communities can be a challenge because of the cultural difference (Chu & Song, 2008; Song, 1992). The refugee population in Buffalo represents a diverse set of characteristics. The sample population in the current study came from different countries from Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Equally important, some refugees came in earlier than others so they are more adjusted when compared to newly arriving populations. With limited amount of workable population lists, it was difficult to get data systematically from the refugee population. The present study borrowed a two-stage sampling method from Song (1992) for Vietnamese immigrants and also from Chu and Song (2008) for the Chinese immigrant communities in Toronto, Canada.

For the present study, the researcher first identified a representative groups of social services, in this case refugee agencies and community organizations in different refugee communities. The International Institute of Buffalo, Journey's End and Catholic Charities are some of the major refugee resettlement agencies in Buffalo. The researcher established contact with some of these organizations. The community organization that the researcher identified for the present study was the Buffalo Immigrants and Refugee Empowerment Coalition (BIREC). The researcher met with a few community leaders as well as some of the officials of the BIREC organization and explained to them the purpose of this research. As part of the research, the researchers have attended BIREC's monthly meeting as well as other community events since February 2011. One hundred and eighty questionnaires were prepared and distributed to the subjects through their community leaders. However, prior to administering the surveys to the

sampled population, the researcher pre-tested a few of the questionnaires on the community leaders. After the pre-test, the surveys were distributed to the rest of the subjects by their community leaders with much supervision from the researcher. As an incentive to participants and also to gain cooperation, a \$ 10 fee was paid to most of the subject who took part in the study and agreed to be paid. The response rate for the present study was 70 percent, so the researchers did not have to re-administer the questionnaires. A copy of the consent form, which was to be read to the participants, was given to the community leaders, with clear instructions on how to go about the whole process. Subjects were reminded not to include names on the surveys. At the beginning of the questionnaire we assured the participants that all the information collected in this study would be kept confidential. Further, the consent form asked for voluntary participation in this study.

It should be noted that even though the aim of this study was to reach out to African as well as non-African refugee populations, it was not easy to access the non-African refugee population, partly because of language barrier and also lack of contacts in the community. Nevertheless, we sampled approximately 18 percent non-African refugees. In other words, 8.0 percent of the sample came from Iraq, 4.0 percent from Burma, 3.2 percent from Bhutan, 1.6 percent from Yemen, and finally 0.8 percent Cuban refugees. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, the sample population of this study did not include prisoners or minors.

Dependent variables

This study measured different dimensions of refugees' perceptions of law enforcement officers in Buffalo and Rochester, New York. Just like the survey instrument, this study also borrowed the main dependent and independent variables from a study conducted by Chu and Song (2008) to examine the perceptions of law enforcement officers by Chinese immigrants in

Toronto. Thus, the first three dependent variables in the present study were perceived police prejudice, perceived police effectiveness, and respect for police. This study created the fourth dependent variable with the first three dependent variables combined together to capture refugees' general attitudes toward the police (see Table 1).

The first dependent variable, perceived police prejudice, was measured by a single item that asked "How serious is [the issue of prejudice against refugees by police] in the city where you live?" Respondents rated the issue on a scale from 1 (not serious at all) to 6 (very serious). Original responses based on this scale were dichotomized based on scores 1-3 for non-seriousness (coded 0) and scores 4-6 for seriousness (coded 1). To measure the second dependent variable as to how refugees perceived police effectiveness, the item that asked whether "The police in the city where you live are generally effective in dealing with crime problems" was used. Responses to this item ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Reverse coding was performed to reflect a low score for ineffectiveness (1 = not effective) and a high score for effectiveness (6 = effective).

The third dependent variable, respect for police, was measured by the item that asked "Considering everything about the way police do their job in the city where you live, would you say that you have great respect for the police, mixed feelings about them, or little respect for them?" Subjects responded either as great respect (coded 3), mixed feelings (coded 2), or little respect (coded 1). There was an additional response choice for respondents who would like to answer "I don't know." We treated the "I don't know" response as an undecided response that was coded together with the mixed feelings category (coded 2). This approach reduced the possibility of treating these cases as missing data. The fourth dependent variable was general attitudes toward the police, as measured by a composite score to capture a refugee's perception

of police prejudice, perception of police effectiveness, and respect for the police. Because perceived police prejudice was a negative attitude and the other two were positive attitudes, reverse coding was performed for perceived police prejudice. Moreover, scores for respect for the police were doubled to be consistent with the original 1-6 scale for perceived police prejudice and perceived police effectiveness. With the 6-point scale for each of the first three dependent variables added together, the scale for the fourth dependent variables ranged from 4 (more negative attitudes toward the police) to 18 (more positive attitudes toward the police).

Independent Variables

The main independent variables in the present study were prior victimization, prior police contact, poor communication, and fear of crime (see Table 1). Studies (e.g., Davis et al., 2001) have indicated that previous victimization can negatively affect people's perceptions of the police. Prior victimization in this study was measured by a yes/no question that asked the respondent: "Have you or anyone in your household ever been a victim of a crime in the United States?" A dummy variables was created to capture a positive response (1 = yes) and a negative response (0 = no). Prior police contact was measured by asking respondents the following yes/no question: "Have you or anyone in your household ever had any contact with the police?" Respondents were to answer with either yes (coded 1) or no (coded 0).

Previous studies (e.g. Chu & Song, 2008; Menjivar & Bejarano, 2004) have shown that communication can affect new immigrants' perceptions of the police. Poor communication in this study was measured by an item that asked refugees to rate "How serious is [poor communication between police and refugees] in the city where you live?" Responses were based on a scale from 1 (not serious at all) to 6 (very serious). Lastly, existing studies (e.g., Chu et al., 2008) have also found that an individual's fear of crime is likely to affect how they will evaluate

law enforcement officers. As found by Chu and Song (2008), individuals who fear crime are less likely to evaluate law enforcement officers favorably. In the present study, fear of crime was measured based on a question as to “How serious is [resident’s fear of crime] in the city where you live?” The scale for responses ranged from 1 (not serious at all) to 6 (very serious).

Statistical models in this study also controlled for refugees’ demographic characteristics, including race, gender, education, English ability, and length of stay in the U.S. (see Table 1). Race was a dichotomous variable, capturing African refugees (coded 1) and non-African refugees (coded 0). Gender was also a dichotomous variable, consisting of female refugees (coded 1) and male refugees (coded 0). Education was constructed as a dummy variable, differentiating refugees who ever attended college or received a college/graduate degree (coded 1) from those who had never attended college (coded 0). Similarly, English ability was measured as a dummy variable. Refugees who indicated no problem at all for their English ability was coded 1; the remaining refugees were combined to form a group with limited English ability. Length of stay was coded as a continuous variable where subjects indicated the number of years they have stayed in the U.S.

Statistical Analyses

This study used three types of regression to examine dependent variables. First, logistic regression was an appropriate statistical technique for the analysis of the police prejudice variable because of its dichotomous nature. Second, OLS regression was performed for two dependent variables – i.e., police effectiveness in crime problems and positive attitude toward the police. Researchers contend that it is appropriate to replace ordinal regression with OLS regression when the number of ordered categories is more than five (Chu & Song, 2008; Zumbo & Zimmerman, 1993), as in the present investigation of police effectiveness in crime problems

and positive attitude toward the police. Finally, for the respect for police variable that was operationalized as a trichotomous variable, we ran statistical models with multinomial logistic regression. Because the response choice “don’t know” was combined with the mixed feelings category, the order of categories for this variable might not be clear-cut. As a result, multinomial logistic regression is more preferable than ordinal regression.

Findings

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables. Slightly more than half of refugees’ responses suggested that there was concern about police prejudice against refugees during encounters. One-third of respondents had great respect for the police, whereas only 12% of them showed little respect. The majority of respondents had mixed feelings about respect for the police (56%). Overall, respondents indicated that the police were relatively effective in dealing with crime problems and that refugees’ attitude toward the police appeared relatively positive.

Regarding the characteristics of refugees, the majority of respondents were male, came from continental Africa, had education beyond high school (i.e., some college education, a college degree, or a graduate degree), and had no problem with English at all. Approximately two-thirds of respondents were married, and their age range was between 25 and 44 (not shown). They had been in the U.S. for an average of approximately 7 years prior to this survey. Moreover, a quarter of respondents (including their household members) had experienced victimization, and half of respondents (including their household members) had prior police contacts in the U.S. Respondents indicated that such problems as fear of crime and poor communication between the police and residents were relatively serious in the city where they lived.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables (N = 126)		
Variable	Mean or %	SD
Dependent Variables		
Police prejudice (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.52	.50
Police effectiveness in crime problems (1 = not effective; 6 = effective)	3.83	1.38
Respect for police (1 = little; 2 = mixed; 3 = great)	.12	.33
	.56	.49
	.32	.05
Positive attitudes toward police (3-item Likert-style scale of prejudice, effectiveness, & respect)	11.49	2.95
Independent Variables		
African refugee (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.82	.38
Male (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.58	.50
College or above (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.71	.45
English ability (1 = no problem at all; 0 = limited)	.59	.49
Years in U.S.	6.91	3.95
Prior victimization (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.26	.44
Prior police contact (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.53	.50
Fear of crime (1 = not serious; 6 = serious)	3.92	1.56
Poor communication (1 = not serious; 6 = serious)	3.63	1.59
Note: Missing cases exist for various variables.		

Turning to multivariate analyses, the primary purpose of this research is to examine how refugees perceived the police in terms of prejudice, effectiveness, and respect. We initially included a respondent's age (1 = age 35 or older; 0 = 34 or younger) and marital status (1 = married; 0 = single) in all models (available upon request); however, the preliminary findings consistently displayed no statistical significance for the two respondent characteristics across all models. We therefore eliminated these two variables from analysis in the models reported below. This approach provided two advantages. First, in light of the small sample size in this study, reducing the number of independent variables included in models for analysis could enhance statistical power. Second, with *R-squares* changed only slightly, the number of independent variables that were significant increased, suggesting that the effects of certain factors might have been hidden due to the small sample size used to examine hypotheses.

Perceived Police Prejudice against Refugees

Table 2 presents the findings of main effects on the perception of police prejudice and the perception of police effectiveness. A refugee’s educational level, victimization experience, prior police contact, and perception of communication problems significantly predicted the perception of police prejudice. Respondents with some college education, a college degree, or a graduate degree were less likely than those without education beyond high school to feel the severity of police prejudice. Respondents (including their household members) with previous police contacts also were less likely than those without such experiences to feel police prejudice. By contrast, refugees’ experiences in victimization or perception of poor communication led them to be more likely than those without any victimization experience or perception of communication problems to view police prejudice as a serious problem.

Perceived Police Effectiveness

Regarding police effectiveness in dealing with crime problems, the only two significant factors that predicted this outcome was a refugee’s gender and perception of communication problems. Compared to female respondents, male respondents gave more favorable evaluation of the police’s dealing with crime. Consistent with its unfavorable effect on police prejudice, poor communication undermined a positive perception of police performance. Respondents who viewed poor communication as a serious problem were less likely than those who viewed it as a frivolous problem to believe that the police dealt with crime effectively.

	Police Prejudice ^a			Police Effectiveness ^b		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	Exp(<i>b</i>)	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
African	.168	.694	1.183	.580	.361	1.609
Male	-.756	.486	.469	.487	.248	1.968*
College or above	-1.786	.670	.168**	.322	.313	1.028
English ability	-.619	.568	.538	.155	.280	.553
Years in U.S.	.059	.065	1.060	-.017	.034	-.486
Prior victimization	1.190	.595	3.286*	-.469	.304	-1.545
Prior police contact	-1.267	.603	.282*	.047	.295	.160
Fear of crime	.176	.157	1.192	-.136	.084	-1.620

Poor communication	.731	.195	2.077***	-.259	.089	-2.921**
R^2 or Nagelkerke R^2	.350			.193		
N	108			107		
* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ ^a . Logistic regression ^b . OLS regression						

Respect for Police Officers

Results from multinomial regression for refugees' respect for the police are shown in Table 3. Because of the trichotomous dependent variable, three models were analyzed: great respect compared with little respect, great respect compared with mixed feelings, and little respect compared with mixed feelings. Race and the length of stay in the U.S. were statistical significant in Model 1 of Table 3. The police were more likely to earn great respect, as opposed to little respect, of African refugees than of non-African refugees. The police also were more likely to earn great respect, as opposed to little respect, of refugees who had a short stay in the U.S. than of those who had a long stay.

Several variables, such as length of stay in the U.S., victimization experiences, prior police contact, and the perception of communication problems, became statistically significant in Model 2 of Table 3 when great respect was compared with mixed feelings. The police were more likely to earn great respect, as opposed to mixed feelings, of refugees who had a short stay in the U.S. than of those who had a long stay. Respondents (including their household members) without previous victimization or with previous police contacts were more likely than those with victimization experiences or without police contacts to show great respect rather than mixed feelings. When respondents' perception of poor communication was not a problem, they tended to show great respect rather than mixed feelings.

Lastly, race and prior police contact were statistical significant in the comparison between little respect and mixed feelings, as shown in Model 3 of Table 3. Compared to non-

African respondents, African respondents were less likely to show little respect as opposed to mixed feelings. Respondents (including their household members) with previous police contacts were more likely than those without police contacts to show little respect rather than mixed feelings. The effects of prior police contacts in Table 3 suggested that refugee respondents who had police contacts tended to either like them or not, with relatively low likelihood of having mixed feelings.

	Great Respect (vs. Little Respect)			Great Respect (vs. Mixed Feelings)			Little Respect (vs. Mixed Feelings)		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	Exp(<i>b</i>)	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	Exp(<i>b</i>)	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	Exp(<i>b</i>)
African	2.606	1.085	13.545*	.703	.749	2.020	-1.903	1.033	.149*
Male	1.134	.744	3.108	.102	.528	1.107	-1.032	.662	.356
College or above	.294	.987	1.342	.767	.667	2.153	.473	.873	1.605
English ability	.022	.870	1.022	.265	.583	1.303	.243	.781	1.275
Years in U.S.	-.306	.114	.736**	-.220	.082	.803**	.086	.101	1.090
Prior victimization	-1.492	.871	.225	-1.858	.691	.156**	-.366	.775	.694
Prior police contact	-.045	1.025	.956	1.956	.685	7.071**	2.001	.941	7.396*
Fear of crime	-.321	.261	.725	-.052	.164	.949	.269	.246	1.309
Poor communication	-.253	.267	.776	-.364	.188	.695*	-.111	.248	.895
<i>Nagelkerke R²</i>	.323			.323			.323		
<i>N</i>	108			108			108		

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

Positive Attitudes toward Police Officers

The last analysis of this study focused on refugees' overall attitudes toward the police by creating a composite score to capture a refugee's perception of police prejudice (i.e., a negative attitude), perception of police effectiveness (i.e., a positive attitude), and respect for the police (i.e., a positive attitude). A high composite score suggested a refugee's positive attitude toward the police, whereas a low composite score demonstrated a refugee's negative attitude toward the police. Table 4 presents these findings. A refugee's race, gender, length of stay in the U.S., victimization experience, and perception of communication problems were significant predictors of whether the police were evaluated favorably. Respondents who were African refugees, those

who were male, and those who had resided in the U.S. for a short period of time were more likely than those who were non-African refugees, those who were female, and those who had resided in the U.S. for a long period of time to have a positive attitude toward the police. Respondents (including their household members) with previous victimization also were less likely than those without such experiences to evaluate the police positively. Refugees' perceptions of poor communication led them to be less likely than those without the perception of communication problems to favor the role of the police.

Table 4. OLS Regression Models for Refugees' Perceptions of the Police

	Positive Attitudes Toward Police		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
African	1.577	.722	2.185*
Male	.984	.498	1.975*
College or above	1.167	.631	1.848
English ability	.413	.571	.723
Years in U.S.	-.159	.068	-2.333*
Prior victimization	-1.379	.612	-2.254*
Prior police contact	.566	.592	.956
Fear of crime	-.241	.170	-1.418
Poor communication	-.810	.180	-4.496***
<i>R</i> ²	.312		
<i>N</i>	106		

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Summary of Findings

The above findings revealed several patterns. First, compared to non-African respondents, African respondents had more positive perceptions of police work in Western New York. The police received a better evaluation from male refugees than from female refugees. Second, there was evidence that the length of refugees' stay in the U.S. played a role in predicting their perceptions of the police. This factor was found to negatively affect their attitude toward police work. Third, prior victimization negatively affected refugees' perceptions of the police. By contrast, prior police contacts produced mixed findings regarding the

prediction of perceptions of the police. Finally, poor communication was viewed as detrimental to refugees' perceptions of the police role. Overall, our findings showed that when poor communication became a major problem, refugees tended to evaluate the police unfavorably.

Discussion and Recommendations

Several findings derived from the analyses of the survey data described above are consistent with findings from previous studies which examined minority citizens' perceptions of law enforcement officers in the United States. However, the present study was faced with several shortcomings which may limit the generalizability of the results obtained from this study to other refugee populations in the United States. First and foremost the sample size for this study comprised of only 126 refugees; this in our opinion is too small of a sample to make important generalizations to the refugee populations in Western New York and the United States in general. A larger sample would be more effective in measuring refugees' perceptions of law enforcement officers. Furthermore, this study adopted a non-probability sampling method from Chu and Song's (2008) for data collection. This method calls for caution because it reduces the power of generalization of the findings to other similar populations. Moreover, whereas the goal of this study was to obtain representative samples from both the African and non-African refugee communities, the researchers did not get adequate feedback from the Iraqi, Burmese and Bhutanese refugees communities in Western New York. This was attributed in part to language barrier and an insufficient number of contact people from these communities. A statistical comparison of the African and non-African refugees' perceptions of law enforcement might have been skewed because of this limitation. Also, the sample under study had a wide range of different and diverse characteristics, some of which are unique to each group.

Some participants indicated that they had been in the United States for more than ten years while others had only been in the country for six months. Furthermore, as Chu and Song (2008) pointed out, the measure of previous contact with police did not capture the types of contact. Previous studies have indicated that the type of contact citizens' have with law enforcement officers will determine their attitudes towards for them. For instance, in a study to examine determinants of the publics' satisfaction with the police, Weitzer and Tuch (2005) state that the attitudes toward the police by citizens are determined by the type of contact they had with law enforcement officers. Unpleasant experiences tend to produce negative attitudes, while positive encounters with law enforcement officers increase citizens' perceptions of police satisfaction. Finally, we cannot adequately explain why most refugees indicated that police prejudice against refugees was a serious problem and that they had mixed feelings about respect for law enforcement officers in the U.S yet they still perceived law enforcement officers to be effective?

In spite of its limitations, the present study has yielded some information which can be used by future researchers to examine the perceptions of law enforcement officers by refugees. There exists a knowledge dearth which unfortunately could not be wholly satisfied by the present study. Thus, the researcher recommends that future research in this area should increase the sample size. Also, in my opinion, studying refugees from one or two countries at a time may be more effective than focusing on "African and non-African" refugees for instance. This is because refugees present a very diverse population. For example, Somali refugees have different experiences and therefore different perceptions of law enforcement officers when compared to Burmese refugees. Furthermore, researchers should explore other data collection and sampling techniques. In addition, rather than using just surveys for data collection, researchers should

consider using both surveys and interviews to collect data about refugees' perceptions of law enforcement. Since most respondents indicated that there were very few bilingual officers in law enforcement agencies and policy makers should consider employing more bilingual officers. According to Davis et al. (2001) law enforcement agencies need to secure the cooperation of citizens' to be able to do their work more effectively. However, if there is a communication breakdown between refugees and law enforcement officers then chances are refugees will not cooperate with law enforcement officers to report crime. Finally, most respondents indicated that law enforcement officers do not understand their culture and that understanding their cultural background is necessary if law enforcement officers are to gain more cooperation from them.

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