Manchester
Metropolitan
University

An investigation into the general public's attitudes towards the police in Greater Manchester

Donna Watterson

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**ABSTRACT**

The current research investigated public attitudes towards the police using a questionnaire given to 100 participants recruited from Greater Manchester. The participants were recruited using an opportunity sampling technique and were of a mix of genders and from a range of ages. The research aimed to find out if there were differences in attitudes towards the police between a variety of variables which were gender, age, victimisation and contact with the police. The questionnaire, designed in the style of a 5 point Likert scale, combined relevant items from 3 existing questionnaires relating to confidence in the police, personal characteristics of the police and perceived police fairness. Scores on the questionnaires were analysed using the computer program SPSS to discover any trends among the participants. A 2x3 ANOVA found a significant effect of gender and age on confidence in the police. Males and younger participants had significantly lower confidence in the police than females and older participants. Four independent t-tests concluded that contact with the police and having been a victim of crime did not significantly affect confidence. A discussion of the findings concludes that two out of the four hypotheses were significantly proven, and ideas for future research are proposed.

| Key Words | Attitudes | Police | Victimisation | Gender | Age |
|-----------|-----------|--------|---------------|--------|-----|

**Background Research**

According to Bradford, Jackson & Stanko (2009) public confidence in policing has become a key element of police performance over the past decade. Crime surveys, such as the British Crime Survey (BCS), report trends in crime that are often independent of the official crime statistics (Williams, 2001). This crime research is often readily available to view by the public in Britain, in contrast to countries such as the United States where information on crime trends are often only reported in light of some sort of national emergency, for example (Skogan, 1996). Websites such as HMIC consistently provide detailed reports on how police forces are performing both nationally and locally and, in 2010, they reported that out of the 43 police forces in Britain, Greater Manchester was 'causing concern'. Greater Manchester police (GMP) received a score of 'poor' on two out the three performance indicators, namely the 'Local Crime and Policing' and the 'Confidence and Satisfaction' indicators, the latter being of importance with relation to the current research (HMIC, 2011).

Myhill and Beak (2008) claim that aside from the large surveys such as the BCS, comparatively few research studies in the UK have looked at public confidence in policing and most of the available data exploring factors that affect confidence comes from the United States. Demographic variables such as age and gender, contextual variables such as victimisation, and personal contact with police are some of the factors often associated with confidence in the police (Ren, Cao, Lovrich and Gaffney, 2005). Therefore, with such a large availability of American research related to factors affecting public confidence in the police, and the recent indication that GMP are performing particularly bad with regards to confidence and satisfaction, the current research aims to further these findings.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is one of the major surveys used in the UK that assesses crime rates and how the police across the country are performing. A major section of the BCS is dedicated to public perceptions and attitudes towards the police and last year the survey found, on average, significantly higher levels of confidence in the police (Parfrement-Hopkins & Green, 2010). With the current relevance of the findings of the BCS compared with the objectives of the current research, the BCS will act as a baseline for the background research discussed in this literature review section.


**Effects of Age on Confidence in the Police**

The 2010 BCS found that those between the ages of 16-24 had the lowest overall confidence in the police whereas the oldest respondents, of ages 65 and above, had the highest overall confidence. Looking at specific statements, this trend was also found, for example,in the over 75s who had the highest agreement to the statements regarding police fairness (75% agreed), police respect (91% agreed) and police dealing with local concerns (73% agreed). In contrast, the youngest respondents (the 16-24 year olds) had the lowest agreement to these statements (60%, 78% and 63% respectively). This difference in age is furthered by other studies such as Ren *et al* (2005), who found that the only significant predictor in their demographic model was age. They reported that older people showed significantly more confidence in the police than the younger people and that the other variables, which were gender,

income, race and education, were not significant. Furthermore, a survey study looking into police effectiveness, fear of crime and media consumption by Dowler (2003) found again that older respondents were more likely to have higher ratings of police effectiveness than younger respondents. In fact, a lot of the research related to public attitudes towards police finds the same result (Cao, Frank & Cullen, 1996). However, one conflicting finding was described by Myhill et al (2008) who stated with reference to their logistic regression of the findings in the 03/04 BCS, that being over the age of 25 predicted lower confidence in the police. However, since then there has been further consideration and alteration of the questions used in the BCS, and confidence in the police has risen consistently since 2004 to 2009/10 from 46% overall satisfaction in police to the current 56%, which indicates that these findings may not represent an accurate finding in light of some of the other research mentioned.

## Effects of Gender on Confidence in the Police

An article by Taylor, Turner, Esbenson and Winfree (2001) states that gender differences are often inconsistent. Ren et al (2005), as mentioned earlier, found that gender was not a significant predictor of confidence in the police. However, in the BCS, women rated the police as 'doing a good job' higher than men in the BCS (59% compared to 54%). Furthermore, the average overall confidence in police, based on the statement 'taking everything into account I have confidence in the police in this area', was higher for females than for males (71% compared with 68%). Other studies have found significant differences in gender with regards to feeling that the police respect and treat people fairly (Jackson and Sunshine, 2007). Cao et al (1996) also found that females had significantly higher confidence in the police, as measured by a 5 item Likert scale asking about whether participants believed that police were responsive, cared about the neighbourhood and maintained order. Furthermore, drawing on the results from the 03/04 BCS, Jackson (2010) stated males judged their local police as doing a poor job more than females. Therefore, most research indicates that females have better attitudes towards the police than males, with only a few inconsistencies in the data. Thus, the current research aims to further these results with regards to the public in Greater Manchester.

## Effects of Contact with the Police on Confidence

Another variable being looked at in this research is public contact with the police. Bradford *et al* (2009) state that personal contact is directly linked to confidence. In the BCS, when asked whether they agreed that the police were 'doing a good job', those who had had personal contact with the police over the past 12 months had lower agreement than those who had not had contact. Furthermore, the overall confidence in police was also lower in those who had had contact with the police (65% compared with 70%). This clearly shows that having personal contact with police may indeed lower your confidence in them. Bradford *et al* (2009) state that any kind of contact produces negative attitudes. However, Myhill et al (2008) claim that this is not always the case as they propose that what is important is whether the person is satisfied with how the police deal with their specific problem. This is public-initiated contact and in their study, the more satisfactory participants rated the

contact, the higher the confidence. Furthermore, with police-initiated contact, the same was found; that those who rated the contact as unsatisfactory had lower confidence. Therefore, it is not the mere presence of the police in personal contact with the public that affects confidence, but how the police deal with that particular person.

This distinction between public and police-initiated contact is furthered by Ren *et al* (2005) who outline the difference between voluntary and involuntary contact. The former refers to the public initiating contact with the police, for example requesting information or reporting crimes, which they suggest produces positive attitudes because the police are seen as playing a 'supportive role'. Conversely, involuntary contact refers to police initiated contact and generally lowers confidence, for example a person being routinely stopped and searched. Bradford et al (2009) claim this to be the case due to the mere inconvenience of being stopped by the police. However, if Myhill et al's (2008) claim that it is about how the police deal with people on a personal level, then being stopped and searched may not always lead to lower confidence but could actually increase confidence because it provides an example of the police doing their job well.


**Effects of Victimisation on Confidence in the Police**

Victimisation is another variable that this research is looking into, something that Bradford *et al* (2009) claimed would lower confidence in terms of the belief that police allow crimes to happen. It seems that there are mixed findings about victimisation and confidence. Those studies that find victimisation lowers confidence in the police include Ren *et al*'s (2005) study and indeed the BCS of 09/10 who found that overall confidence in the police was significantly lower if the person had been a victim of crime (60% compared with 71%). Victims were in much less agreement to all of the statements, especially those referring to police being relied on when you need them and confidence in the police fighting minor crimes and understanding local concerns. In contrast to these results, Webb and Marshall (1995) state that victimization and experience with police programs as predictors of lower attitudes do not have as much support as other demographic or contextual factors. Furthermore, Ho and McKean (2004) found that being a victim of crime and having contact with police were not statistically correlated with confidence in the police as did Myhill et al (2008) who claimed that victimisation was not independently associated with confidence in the police. The idea that victimisation may indeed lower confidence could link back to the idea of personal contact with the police changing your opinion of them based on whether the communication between the individual and police was satisfactory. Bradford et al (2009) claim that victims who call the police for assistance want their issue to be taken seriously and to be dealt with quickly and effectively. Hohl, Bradford and Stanko (2010) also state that communication is key, and that people expect police to act in appropriate ways and put the public's interests above their own. It may be the case that crimes that are relatively common and involve little physical harm, such as burglary, may lead to a more standardised and therefore less personal response by the police than crimes involving serious assault for example. So, not specifying what kind of crime participants have been victim of may distort the findings somewhat.

**Greater Manchester Police and the Removal of the Public Confidence Target**

In 2010 the Home Secretary of the new government announced the abolishment of the central public confidence target in police policy (Greenwood, 2010). The confidence target was one of many central targets put forward by the previous government to act as a 'guidance' to inform police practice (Home Office, 2010). The current Home Secretary's justification for removing these central targets include the claim that these old targets and standards did not take into account the public's local needs and took power away from Chief Constables. The Home Office states that police forces will no longer be required to report back to central government regarding their performance targets. Forces are, however, urged to continue monitoring their own performance (Home Office, 2010). This may cause problems as some forces may be more efficient in self-monitoring their performance than others. HMIC claim that, although the target has been removed (relating to their confidence and satisfaction indicator on the report cards), they will continue to display the indicator until further review. However, if the review concludes that they need to remove this indicator, forces who already perform badly, such as Greater Manchester, or forces who are less hands-on may suffer in the long run in terms of monitoring their own performance. Therefore, a sub-aim of this research is to see whether public confidence in the police is good enough to justify the removal of the target and to identify which groups in society may be at risk of deteriorating confidence.

**Hypothesis 1:** Younger respondents will have significantly lower confidence in the police than older respondents.

**Hypothesis 2:** Males will have significantly lower confidence in the police than females.

**Hypothesis 3:** Respondents who have had personal contact with the police at some point, and those who have been in contact within the last 12 months, will have significantly lower confidence in the police than those who have not.

**Hypothesis 4:** Respondents who have ever fallen victim of a crime, and indeed those who have been a victim in the last 12 months, will have significantly lower confidence in the police than non-victims.

## Method

### Design

The current research is an independent measures design using questionnaire items to assess public confidence in the police. There are four independent variables which are age, gender, victimisation and personal contact with the police. Gender has two levels (male and female) and age is split into three categories; low age (16-31), middle age (32-50) and high age (51 and above). There are two questions relating to victimisation and two questions relating to personal contact with the police. The dependent variable in this study is the total score on the questionnaire which indicates overall confidence in the police.

### Sample

A total of 100 participants (49 females and 51 males) of a range of ages were included in this study, recruited using an opportunity/convenience sampling technique. Ages ranged from 16 to 83 with a mean age of 42. Participants were opportunistically recruited from places such as universities, hospitals and cafés in Greater Manchester.

### Questionnaire Design

A standardized, structured questionnaire was used in this research which consisted of a range of statements relating to confidence in the police. The questionnaire was produced by combining relevant items from three existing questionnaires and the items related to things such as perceived police effectiveness, perceived police fairness and mannerisms of the police. Seven items from the British Crime Survey and five items from Webb and Marshall's (1995) survey were incorporated into this questionnaire. A further six items were from Ren *et al*'s (2005) study. A total of 18 statements were used. The items used were not put in the order in which they appeared in the original questionnaires, nor were they grouped into three separate sets reflecting each original questionnaire independently. Instead, all of the items were put in a somewhat random order; that is to say that all items were mixed up together. The questionnaire was scored using a 5 point Likert Scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree). Participants were asked to disclose how much they agreed with each statement. The use of negative scoring for the Likert scale, which is often used to prevent response bias, was not used on this questionnaire because the items taken from the other 3 studies were not negatively scored. Demographic information (age and gender) was asked for at the beginning of the questionnaire. The further four statements relating to victimisation and contact with police were included towards the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted first to 6 participants to make sure that all the instructions made sense. Following this pilot, only one small change was made which involved rearranging one of the statements because of slight grammatical confusion. A Cronbach's Alpha test of internal consistency was also conducted on the pilot study and the score for

this questionnaire was 0.955. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the appendix.


## Data Collection

The only materials needed in this investigation were 100 copies of the questionnaire along with cover sheets for each one. Participants were recruited from cafés, hospitals and universities in the Centre and South of Manchester, Stockport, Salford and Bolton. People were approached and asked whether they wanted to take part in the research. They were given a verbal explanation as to what the study aimed to find out, how to complete the questionnaire and approximately how long it would take to complete. If the participant agreed to take part they were handed a questionnaire with a cover sheet attached to it which outlined the research aims. The coversheet also asked for their written consent (through signing and dating the sheet), and outlined their rights as participants (such as the right to withdraw and the right to the retrieval of the results of the study). Furthermore, an explanation of how to complete the questionnaire was provided on the sheet and an email address through which they could contact the researcher at any point if they had any queries was provided for their records. After they had completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for taking part and reminded that they could receive the final results if they wanted to.


## Data Analysis

Scores from the questionnaire were input into the computer program 'SPSS' and analysed using a variety of statistical tests. An initial test of normality was conducted, called the Kolomogoro-sminrov test of normality. This test shows whether or not the data is normally distributed and subsequently whether or not the use of parametric tests is justified (Langdridge, 2004). This data was indeed normally distributed and so the second statistical test used was an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). A 2x3 design was used with regards to the variables gender and age. A 2-way independent ANOVA highlights the differences between the means and shows whether there is an effect of gender and age on overall confidence in the police, and also whether there is an interaction effect between age and gender. A Post Hoc test, namely the Tukey HCl test, was also conducted. This post-hoc test can only be done on groups which have three or more levels, so the variable of age was looked at in this way. Four independent t-tests were then conducted with regards to the two remaining variables: contact with police and victimisation. Each of the four questions relating to these variables were compared with the overall score on the questionnaire to see if there were any differences in means between those that answered 'yes' and those that answered 'no'.


## Justification of Method

The use of a questionnaire seemed the most appropriate and most widely used method for research into public attitudes towards the police. The use of quantitative data enables the researcher to gain many more participants in a shorter period of

time in comparison to qualitative research, which may take longer and prove more time consuming for the researcher.  Furthermore, the use of quantitative methods proves quick and easy for those taking part as well, which is applicable for the current research with regards to time limits and lack of resources.  Lastly, the use of objective statistical tests on the results means that valid and reliable conclusions can be accurately drawn from the findings, which again seems applicable with research like this.  However, Frank et al (2005) suggest that quantitative methods are good for finding out how people generally feel but hardly ever allow for explanations as to why they hold certain attitudes.  With more time, and a reconsideration of sample size, a qualitative method may well have been interesting and allowed for a deeper insight into how people feel.  However, with reference to the research title, and the time limits of such a study, a method which finds out how people 'generally feel' will be completely justified using the techniques outlined above.


**Ethics**

The current research effectively adheres to the ethical guidelines put forward by the British Psychological Society (BPS).  All participants were provided with a cover sheet explaining who was conducting the research and why, and also what the questionnaire required them to do.  Each participant signed and dated the coversheet to prove their written consent to take part.  All participants were told that they had the right to withdraw their results from the study at any point up until the submission of the research and were informed that their responses would be treated with complete anonymity (no names to be included in the write-up).  Confidentiality is more difficult to enforce but it was made clear that any information they gave (age, gender and personal opinions) would only be seen by a few selected individuals, namely the researcher and the dissertation supervisor.  Further emphasis on anonymity was tied in with the confidentiality explanation.  Participants were given an email address through which they could contact the researcher if they had any problems or queries (for example if they wanted to withdraw their scores or they wished to know the results).  A possible ethical issue that could have arisen was that of distress of participants.  Asking people about personal contact with the police or experiences of victimisation may have brought about painful memories or anger if they had previously been involved in a serious crime, for example.  This did not arise but in preparation, a list of contact details for local groups that deal with helping victims of crime (for example www.victimsupport.org.uk) was kept at hand.  Lastly, if the participant did indeed get angry or defensive when answering the questions, the researcher's own personal well-being was also considered and preparations were made in an attempt to solve this problem.  Firstly, participants were all recruited from public places meaning that the researcher was never alone with any single participant at any time.  Furthermore, an anonymous second helper was with the researcher at all times to aid in the collection of questionnaires which again meant that the researcher was never alone or vulnerable (see Appendix for ethics forms).

**Results**

The Kolomogoro-sminrov test of normality found that the data in the study was normally distributed (p<0.001).



**Histogram**

Mean = 61.13
Std. Dev. = 12.648
N = 100
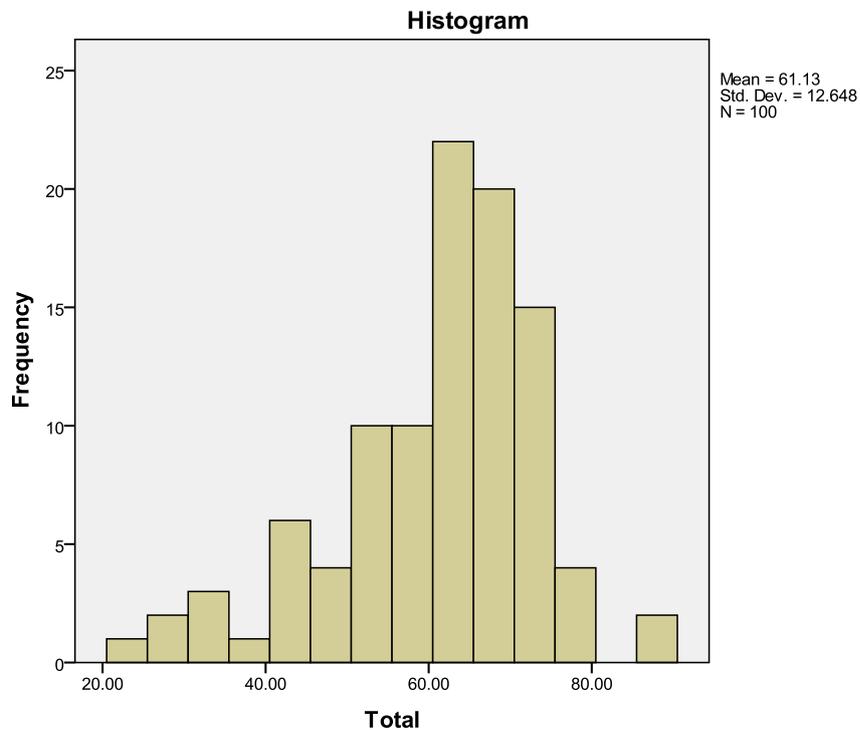
**Figure 1: Graph of the distribution of data**

The overall mean score on the questionnaire was 60.42, out of a possible 90. This means that all participants had an overall confidence of 67%.

**Table 1**

**Showing the mean scores on the questionnaire for both levels on the victim and contact variables**

| Variable | Yes | No |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contact | 60.213 | 64.8 |
| Contact in last 12 months | 59.091 | 62.134 |
| Victim | 61.333 | 60.784 |
| Victim in last 12 months | 55.278 | 62.415 |

**Table 2**

**Showing the mean scores on the questionnaire for all age groups**

| Age | Mean score |
|-----|-----------|
| 16-31 | 56.55 |
| 32-50 | 64.22 |
| 51+ | 60.49 |

**Table 3**

**Showing the mean scores on the questionnaire for both genders**

| Age | Mean score |
|-----|-----------|
| 16-31 | 56.55 |
| 32-50 | 64.22 |
| 51+ | 60.49 |

The fact that the data was normally distributed, and that this is a factorial design with more than one variable, a parametric analysis of results was conducted, the first of which was an independent 2-way ANOVA on the variables gender and age, followed by four independent t-tests on the remaining variables.

**Table 4**

**Showing the results of the independent ANOVA**

| Variables | F value | df | Error | sig. value |
|-----------|---------|----|----|-----------|
| Gender | 4.785 | 1 | 94 | 0.031 |
| Age | 3.356 | 2 | 94 | 0.039 |
| Gender and Age Interaction | 1.079 | 2 | 94 | 0.344 |

An independent 2-way ANOVA showed that there was a significant effect of gender on overall confidence in police. $F(1,94)= 4.785$, $p<0.05$. The means show that females scored significantly higher than males ($M= 63.17$ compared with $M= 57.67$). Thus, these findings support hypothesis 2 which states that males will have significantly lower confidence in the police than females.

The ANOVA also showed that there was a significant effect of age on overall confidence in police. $F(2,94)= 3.356$, $p<0.05$. The means show that, out of the three age groups, the youngest participants had the lowest confidence in police measured by the questionnaire items combined ($M= 56.56$), where the middle group had the highest confidence ($M= 64.22$). Tukey's HSD post hoc test revealed that the significance lies in the difference between the youngest and the middle groups, and no significant differences were found between the older group and any other group. These findings support hypothesis 1 as the younger respondents did indeed have lower confidence than older respondents.

The ANOVA found no significant interaction effect between age and gender on confidence in police. $F(2,94)= 1.079$, $p>0.05$. Looking at the means it seems that males in the 16-31 and the 51+ category had the worst overall confidence in the police ($M= 55.737$ and $M= 55.091$ respectively). The highest confidence score came from females in the middle group ($M= 66.250$). However, as stated, these findings were not rated as significant.

**Table 4**

**Showing the results of all independent t-tests**

| Variables | t value | df | Sig. value |
|-----------|---------|-----|------------|
| Contact | -1.465 | 29.4 | 0.154 |
| Contact in last 12 months | -1.125 | 62.65 | 0.265 |
| Victim | 0.205 | 71.44 | 0.838 |
| Victim in last 12 months | -2.053 | 23.31 | 0.052 |

Independent t-tests revealed that the was no significant difference between people who had had contact with the police (N=80) and those who had not had contact with the police (N=20) on overall confidence; $t(29.4)= -1.465$, $p>0.05$. The means show that those who had had personal contact had a lower overall score of confidence than those who had not ($M= 60.213$ compared with $M= 64.8$). However this difference was not significant. Thus, hypothesis 3 was not proven to be correct.

The independent t-test also revealed no significant difference between those who had had contact with the police in the last 12 months (N= 33) and those who had not (N= 67) on confidence in the police; $t(62.65)= -1.125$, $p>0.05$. The means indicate

that those who had come into contact with the police in the past 12 months had a lower confidence score than those who had not (*M*= 59.091 compared with *M*=62.134), but again these findings are not significant and therefore disprove hypothesis 3.

With regards to victimisation, there was no significant difference between those who had been a victim of crime (N=63) and those who had not (N= 37) with $t(71.44)=$ 0.205, $p>0.05$. The means show that victims had a slightly better score than non-victims (*M*=61.333 compared with *M*= 60.783). These findings disprove hypothesis 4.

The final t-test found no significant difference between those that had been a victim of crime within the last 12 months (N= 18) and those who had not (N= 82); $t(23.31)=$ 2.053, $p>0.05$. Looking at the means, it seems that those who had been a victim of crime within the last 12 months had a much lower confidence score than those who had not been a victim in the last 12 months (*M*= 55.278 compared with *M*= 62.415) but this difference was deemed not significant. Thus, again, the final hypothesis was not supported.


**Discussion**

The results of this study confirm two out of the four hypotheses as accurate. Hypothesis one stated that younger respondents would have significantly lower confidence in the police than older respondents. The findings indicate that younger respondents had the worst overall confidence in the police, proving the hypothesis. However, it was not the case that an increase in age lead to higher confidence in the police as it was the middle group, rather than the oldest respondents, who had the highest confidence in the police. Hypothesis two stated that males would have significantly lower confidence in the police than females, which was reflected in the findings, with females scoring significantly higher on the questionnaire than males. The remaining hypotheses were not supported by the findings. Contact with the police had no significant effect on confidence in the police, regardless of whether it was within the last 12 months or not. Furthermore, being a victim of crime did not affect confidence in the police when compared to being a non-victim, even when victimisation was in the last 12 months. Average overall confidence in the police was good (67%) with regards to all participants, but room for improvement is indicated.


**Age**

The findings with regards to age supported the results of all of the previous research outlined earlier. Ren et al (2005), Dowler (2003) and Cao, et al (1996) all found that younger respondents had significantly lower confidence in the police than older respondents. The current research supports these findings with regards to younger people having the lowest overall confidence. Ren et al (2005) proposed that younger participants have worse attitudes towards the police because they see the police as trying to restrict their independence, an idea which further research could possibly develop. Furthermore, Jackson et al (2007) looked at perceptions of the police with regards to social values and norms and state that police are responsible

for the upkeep of these values.  With regards to young people, and especially young males, society tends to label them as 'hoodies' or 'hooligans' which is a stereotype that may lead to negative attitudes towards the police.  It could also be proposed that the idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy may come into play, for example everyone labels them as bad so therefore they will act bad and express pessimistic attitudes (Jackson, 2010).  Most of the studies mentioned in the background research seem to imply a correlation between age and confidence, thus the older you get, the more confident you become in the police (Cao et al, 1996), which is not the trend found in the current research.  For example, a clear correlation between age and confidence is shown in the BCS 09/10 as the youngest had the lowest score of 64% confidence, the middle ages scored between 66 and 70%, and the oldest participants have scores of 72-79% (Parfrement-Hopkins et al, 2010).  In the current research, the results do not follow this pattern.  However, comparing the results of the BCS to the current research is difficult as their age variable is split into many more categories than this study.  For example, while the 32-50 category in this research is classed as the middle group, these ages are covered over 3 categories in the BCS.  This means that results may be distorted somewhat in the current research.  Furthermore, studies other than the BCS do not provide specific age categories and instead report the raw age at the time of filling in the questionnaires and present findings related to the mean age.  Therefore, age is a continuum, with the youngest scoring low on confidence and a steady increase in confidence as age increases. Consequently, it is again difficult to fully compare the current research due to differences in methods, specifically the grouping of ages.  Being that a third of the questionnaire used in the current study was taken from the BCS, mirroring the age groups in the BCS would make the results easier to compare.  However, having seven age groups was not compatible with a sample size of only 100 participants.  It may have lead to some age groups containing a very small number of participants which would make the findings difficult to generalise.  Future research with a larger sample size and the use of a stratified sampling technique would address this issue.  Overall, the findings in this research support the majority of studies outlined in the background research in that younger respondents do indeed have lower confidence in the police compared to older respondents, possibly due to younger respondents feeling like they need to rebel against those who are trying to take away their independence.


**Gender**

Ren et al (2005) was the only study presented earlier that stated that gender was not a significant predictor of confidence in the police.  The current research goes against this finding and supports the majority of research relating to gender and confidence in the police, showing that males have significantly lower confidence than females.  The BCS reported that males have less confidence than females, as did Jackson et al (2007), Cao et al (1996) and Jackson (2010).  Cao et al (1996) proposed that females hold more positive attitudes towards the police because they tend to be less involved with them.  Furthermore, police are said to treat females nicer than males when they do come into contact with them.  As mentioned earlier, Jackson (2010) suggests that social norms may have a part to play in public perceptions of the police.  It could be said, therefore, that males are typically seen as more aggressive and seek to be seen as powerful and masculine, which may indicate why they are less likely to express positive attitudes towards the police.  Taylor et al (2001) stated

that there are often inconsistencies in the differences in confidence towards the police between genders. They also stated that where females do have higher confidence it is because of the 'chivalry-hypothesis'. This, however, only really relates to those who answered 'yes' to the police contact question, as Taylor et al (2001) claim that police officers exercise chivalry and politeness when speaking to females, whether they are victims, offenders, or indeed just a person stopped in the street. This courtesy is very often stated as a reason why females rate police better than males, as police tend to be more cynical of males.

## Contact with Police

The findings from the current research found that having had personal contact with police had no significant effect on a person's confidence in them. These results do not support the previous research, as contact with the police seems to be a largely researched area and understanding the relationship is a principal tool in improving confidence in the police through the likes of annual policing plans. All previous research states that contact with the police changes your perceptions of them in some way. The ways in which it does this, however, depends on the type of contact a person has with the police, for example positive or negative, and police or public initiated (Ren et al, 2005). In the current research, although not significant, a trend was found in the means with the two questions relating to personal contact which was that those who had had contact with the police scored lower on overall confidence than those who had not. This loosely supports Bradford et al's (2009) claim that any contact produces negative attitudes. However, a flaw of the current study is that the type of contact with the police was not specified, and thus the question covers all kinds of contact including both positive and negative. Myhill et al (2008) suggested a difference in confidence occurs not merely when a person has had contact but when contact was deemed as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Furthermore, Hohl et al (2010) states that the presence of the police on the streets, in daily contact with the community, may be enough justification for a good level of confidence, but only if most of their activity is focused at the 'criminal other'. In contrast, if a person is depicted as this 'criminal other', confidence is lowered. The amount of conflicting research into the area of contact with the police shows a need for wider investigation. The current research may have benefited from distinguishing between the different types of contact, for example including a variety of options to choose from, or indeed a more qualitative approach where there is space for participants to expand on their experiences.

## Victimisation

According to the current research, being a victim of crime did not lead to significantly lower confidence in the police when compared to non-victims. This finding supports some of the research outlined earlier such as Webb et al (1995), who found that victimisation was not a predictor of confidence in the police, and Ho et al (2004), who found that there was no significant correlation between being a victim and confidence in the police. However, it is clear that there is much research that does indeed find that victimisation leads to different perceptions of the police. Most research claims that if a person has fallen victim to crime, their confidence in police

is lowered somewhat, suggested to be because they blame the police for allowing the crime to happen (Bradford et al, 2009). Other studies propose that if the police handle the situation effectively and are seen to put the victim's needs before their own, then the victim will rate the police highly because they have satisfied the victim's expectations (Hohl et al, 2010). Looking at the current results, although no significant difference was found between victims and non-victims with regards to confidence, the means do show that those who had been a victim of crime within the last 12 months had lower overall confidence than those who had not. This supports the idea that being a victim lowers confidence in the police, which was found in the BCS with an almost 10% difference between those who had been a victim in the last 12 months and non victims. It is worth noting that the significance value on the t-test was little over what would be classed as significant. However, it is also worth noting that the number of victims in the last 12 months was a lot lower than the number of non-victims (18 compared to 82). Therefore, the sample was unrepresentative and future research would benefit from a different sampling technique such as a stratified random technique so that an equal number of victims and non-victims would be included, leading to a fully generalisable and representative sample. Understanding the type of crime a person has been a victim of may also produce better findings if this research were to be repeated. Some research has criticised the quantitative method of close-ended surveys by stating that larger-scale research is needed that goes beyond simple questions such as 'are the police doing a good job' (Jackson et al, 2007). As mentioned earlier, it may be useful to allow participants to subjectively expand on their experiences in order to gain more of an insight into how victimisation affects individuals and their confidence, being careful not to upset or anger participants in the process.

A final point should be made with regards to the research indicating that Greater Manchester is currently performing poorly on the confidence and satisfaction indicator put forward by HMIC. These findings show an overall confidence level of 67%. Therefore, public confidence in the police on a small scale is generally good. There is clearly room for improvement, and it may be worthwhile, if this research were to be taken into account, to try and bring confidence between genders and across all age groups to a standard level before trying to improve society's overall confidence. For example, those at risk of deteriorating confidence are younger people and males. Planning to involve young people in volunteer work with the police, or indeed making sure that police officers treat males and females equally, could be a start in trying to level out confidence across society. The removal of the public confidence target is, theoretically, a good move as it is giving individual police forces more power over how they run the community. However, confidence levels may deteriorate in the following years if police forces do not create some form of standardised way of monitoring performance without involving central government targets.

To conclude, the overall findings of this study show a clear difference in confidence in the police between males and females, and between differing age groups. Males and younger respondents have significantly lower confidence in the police compared to females and older participants. Contact with the police and victimisation prove not to affect confidence in the police. However, changes in the sampling technique and including further questions about what types of contact and what types of crime a person has been victim of would likely result in better findings in light of the methods used in previous research.

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