PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE

Testing the Effects of Public Experiences of Police Corruption in Ghana

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Nearly every study of police corruption hypothesizes that public experience of police corruption undermines the moral standing of the police. However, scarcely any studies actually test the hypothesis. My aim in this empirical study is to compare the effects of three dimensions of police corruption on perceptions of police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness. These three dimensions of corruption are personal experience, vicarious experience and subjective evaluations of police anti-corruption measures. The data come from a survey of people living in Accra, Ghana. The findings show that both vicarious experiences of corruption and satisfaction with reform measures explain assessments of police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness, but that personal experiences of police corruption do not do so.

Keywords: confidence, corruption, trustworthiness, procedural justice, Ghana

Introduction

Reality, as it often has a tendency to do in Africa, always [interferes] with theory. (Herbst 2000: 81)

Many researchers have examined the effects of the quality of police–public encounters upon different aspects of public confidence in police institutions. Generally, the evidence from previous research suggests that positive experiences with the police result in increased confidence in them, but that negative encounters undermine confidence (see, e.g. Bradford *et al.* 2009; Jackson and Sunshine 2007; Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Tyler 1990; Weitzer and Tuch 2005). Contrary findings from other studies show either very marginal or no effects of experiences of criminal justice agencies on attitudes toward those agencies (Schafer *et al.* 2003; Skogan 2006; Van de Walle 2009). Various studies also tell us a great deal about the correlates of police corruption[1] (see Kutnjak Ivkovic 2005; Newburn 1999; Sherman 1974); they devise typologies of police corruption (Punch 2000; Roebuck and Barker 1974) and they identify what does and does not work in preventing corruption (Goldstein 1977; Punch 1985; 2000; Sherman 1978). Certainly, much progress has been made in developed democracies in tackling corruption. The kinds of spectacular corruption scandal reported 30–50 years ago are rare today

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[1] As with other concepts in the social sciences, 'police corruption' appears to defy a universally acceptable definition. However, and for reasons beyond the scope of this paper (see, e.g. Tankebe 2007), Maurice Punch's definition should suffice for our current purposes: police corruption occurs 'when an official receives or is promised significant advantage or reward (personal, group or organisational) for doing something that he is under a duty to do anyway, that he is under a duty not to do, for exercising a legitimate discretion for improper reasons, and for employing illegal means to achieve approved goals' (Punch 1985: 14; see also Dixon 1999; Kleinig 1996).

(Newburn 1999; Reiner 2000). However, in many transitional societies,[2] police corruption remains a grave problem (see, e.g. Gerber and Mendelson 2008; Hasty 2005; Holmes 2006; Smith 2007).

Criminologists often conduct direct measurement and analysis of various sorts of social behaviour to establish and explain relationships between variables. Unfortunately, such measurement and analysis have not extended fully to corruption victimization. Nevertheless, it is commonly asserted that experiences of police corruption undermine public perceptions of police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness. Bayley (1995: 92), for instance, posits that 'nothing is more destructive of the standing of the police than corruption'. In the British context, Reiner (2000: 64) notes that corruption in the Metropolitan Police during the 1970s and 1980s 'fatally damaged the image of the police as impersonal and disciplined law enforcers'. However, few studies directly test the effects of public experiences of police corruption on public confidence in the police. Such testing is necessary to establish whether public experience of police corruption actually produces the many outcomes commonly ascribed to it. The British Crime Survey, for instance, examines the effects of public experiences of the police and courts on public confidence in these institutions, but it does not specifically examine the effects of public experiences of police corruption or misconduct.

One reason for this analytical inattention is a widespread belief that due to their subterranean nature, the facts about police corruption cannot be discovered from asking the individuals directly implicated in them, or that if such facts can be discovered, they cannot be validated (see, e.g. Klockars 1999: 208–9; Leys 1965: 215; Sherman 1978: 187; Skogan and Frydl 2004: 268–9). However, this belief does not bear careful scrutiny. For example, criminologists cannot be confident about the validity of self-reported offending or victimization from traditional crimes—such as burglary and theft—any more than they can be confident about the incidence of police corruption. Indeed, as Bayley (1966) argued, people are often willing to speak candidly about corrupt practices in which they have either personally engaged or seen others engage. In theory, police corruption is virtually always bad for the police organization on many levels. However, one cannot assume a negative impact of public experiences of police corruption without some empirical test of this assumption. Such a test requires direct measurement of people's experiences of police corruption. The present study provides exactly this kind of test. My aim is to test the effects of public experience of police corruption on public confidence in the police in Ghana.

In this research, I provide a disaggregated quantitative analysis of the effects of corruption on three dimensions of public *confidence* in the police: trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness. Three dimensions of public *experiences* of police corruption are considered: personal experiences of corruption, vicarious experiences of corruption and satisfaction with police anti-corruption performance. This differentiation at the levels of both experience and confidence is important. Previous studies have established that vicarious and personal experiences have different effects

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[2] These are also often called 'new democracies'; they are societies undergoing profound socio-economic and political transformations from a history of non-democratic and authoritarian rule, and striving towards democratic governance and the institutionalization of the rule of law. Samuel Huntington describes them as part of a 'third wave' of democratization (occurring in post-1974), as distinct from two previous 'waves of democratisation', which he argues occurred between 1828 and 1926, and between 1943 and 1964 (Huntington 1991: 5).

on different dimensions of public confidence in the police (see, e.g. Rosenbaum *et al.* 2005; Skogan 2006; Weitzer and Tuch 2005). What has been previously unexamined is whether and how different types of public experiences of police corruption affect public confidence in the police. In this article, I seek to contribute towards filling this gap in our criminological knowledge.

Confidence and the Problem of Police Corruption

There is a significant body of literature on various dimensions of public confidence in local police forces and courts. As previously indicated, procedural justice, trustworthiness and effectiveness are important dimensions of this confidence. Procedural justice has become an important topic of criminological research through the work of Tyler and his colleagues. Tyler (1990) argues that the public perceive the police as procedurally just if they rate the qualities of decision-making and treatment processes positively. The key defining elements here are public perceptions of consistency, neutrality, objectivity, impartiality, lack of capriciousness—i.e. 'quality of decision-making'—and treatment of people with politeness, dignity and respect—i.e. 'quality of interpersonal treatment' (Paternoster *et al.* 1997; Tyler 1990). Confidence in police effectiveness concerns public perceptions about the police's performance in providing security in people's neighbourhoods. Although the causes of crime are outside the control of the police (Bayley 1994), citizens expect the police to deal satisfactorily with crime issues in their local area. In England and Wales, public confidence in police effectiveness in dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods is now the key indicator of the performance of police forces (Johnson 2009).

Trustworthiness denotes a quality or 'a form of capital' (Hardin 1996: 29) attached to people or institutions concerning the future dependability or reliability of their actions or behaviour (see Sztompka 1999: 25). Researchers often differentiate between 'horizontal' trust—which is obtained among citizens—and 'vertical' trust—which is obtained between citizens and institutions (Putnam 1993: 173–5). This research is concerned with the latter. There is something paradoxical about trust: although conditions of uncertainty necessitate beliefs about the trustworthiness of institutions, convictions about the trustworthiness of particular institutions introduce a degree of confidence in the predictability and certainty of expectations from day-to-day interactions between citizens and institutions (Hardin 1996; O'Neill 2002; Sztompka 1999). People are therefore conscious of breaches of trust, especially in their interactions with legal and political institutions.

Evidence from previous research shows a strong positive association between public confidence in each of these areas with public law-abiding behaviour and cooperation with legal authorities (e.g. Paternoster *et al.* 1997; Reisig and Lloyd 2009; Reisig *et al.* 2007; Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Tankebe 2009*a*; Tyler 1990). Many researchers agree that public confidence in the police is 'the cornerstone for public cooperation and the basis for police legitimacy in a democratic society' (Rosenbaum *et al.* 2005: 344; see also Roberts and Hough 2005). Given this, an understanding of the antecedents of public confidence in the police is essential. One of the widely discussed yet scarcely tested predictors of confidence in the police is public experiences of police corruption. It is often hypothesized that where police corruption is widespread and virulent, corruption is the ultimate destroyer of trust, of procedural justice and of the effectiveness of legal

and political institutions (O'Neill 2002). In the context of officers taking or demanding bribes, Goldsmith (2005: 455) observed that 'the association of police services in public perceptions with capacity to pay undermines confidence in the police institution in terms of a generalised commitment to provide a service' (see also Holmes 2006).

The pervasiveness of police corruption yields a *de facto* form of discrimination in the distribution of 'public goods'; it indicates that the criminal justice system operates with little concern for the broader public interest (Rose-Ackerman 1999). Anderson and Tverdova (2003: 92) argue that when corruption is present, issues of 'procedural and distributive fairness become a myth; this in turn, is likely to diminish the legitimacy of democratic political institutions'. Bayley (1966) further argued that corruption in police organizations lowers respect both for police officers in their recurrent encounters with the public and for the institutions, undercutting popular faith in police readiness to act fairly and equitably to all citizens. To the extent that the police have responsibility for public order, their scandal, misconduct and other corrupt acts raise questions about their suitability for this responsibility and undermine the sense of control, credibility and competence that the police must command in performing their remit (Manning 2003). Cross-nationally, corruption has been found to reduce support for, trust in and even the legitimacy of political and legal institutions (e.g. Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Kääriäinen 2007; Seligson 2002).

Other researchers have argued that police officers in organizations that are permeated by systemic corruption often neglect their duties in pursuit of personal gain (Goldstein 1977). Goldstein (1977) has argued that in extreme cases, corrupt police officers view their obligations to the public as mere nuisances and intrusions on their time. In this sense, the abandonment of normative obligations of justice and effectiveness has been considered the gravest and most pernicious result of corruption (Alatas 1990; Rose-Ackerman 1999). It is often argued that as the police become associated by the public with corruption, their capacity to provide 'effective and equitable policing which contributes to citizens' sense of attachment and belonging' is undermined (Loader and Walker 2001: 28). Goldsmith has argued that this leads to citizens withholding trust from legal authorities in a manner 'perfectly sensible and rational, especially where trustors' security needs and interests are better served by other arrangements' including vigilantism (Goldsmith 2005: 450; see also Goldstein 2003; Tankebe 2009*a*).

Some researchers have argued that the public's subjective evaluations of their confidence in state institutions often depend on their sense of the historical record of these institutions' degree of trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness (Rothstein 2000). In assessing their interactions with the police, for instance, members of the public take into consideration their immediate and past historical record. They subconsciously (or consciously) ask themselves, who are the police? Are they corrupt? As Rothstein (2000: 493) argues, 'it is not the formal institution as such which people evaluate but its historically established reputation in regard to fairness and efficiency'. In societies in which police corruption is widespread, police officers fall into 'a priori distrust' (Sztompka 1999: 43). These observations suggest two results. First, the experiences people have in their day-to-day encounters with those in authority can either reinforce or refute prior perceptions of the trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness of these authorities. As Hardin (1993: 525) argues, 'experience moulds the psychology of trust'. Likewise, Luhmann (1979: 74) asserts that 'distrust has an

inherent tendency to endorse and reinforce itself in social interactions'. Second, people's experiences can mark the formation of fresh attitudes about the trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness of the police. This is precisely the emphasis of Tyler's (1990) procedural justice arguments: ordinary everyday police–public interactions can have crucial implications for the cultivation of confidence and legitimacy in the police. In these encounters, people look out for evidence of impartiality, neutrality and consistency in decision making as well as treatment of citizens with dignity and respect. When these are absent, whether because of corruption or for some other reasons, the public are unlikely to develop confidence in the police. Indeed, perceived injustice can often produce defiant reactions that may lead to lawbreaking (Agnew 1992; Sherman 1993; 2010) and vigilante violence (Tankebe 2009*a*).

Perhaps the most neglected dimension of police corruption, even in the political science literature, is how perceptions of the success or otherwise of anti-corruption measures affect public confidence. We do not know whether and to what extent public assessments of the efforts of police managers in dealing with officer corruption affect the public's views about police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness. It is a truism that the complete eradication of police corruption is impossible. However, and considering its supposed manifold negative consequences, there is every reason to seek to prevent or control corruption, even if the results of such efforts are disappointing (Holmes 1993: 49; see also Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996).

A principal feature of post-corruption investigations has often been the replacement of a police chief and a subsequent policy of full acknowledgement and 'tough-talking' about preparedness to tackle corruption (Crank and Langworthy 1992; Sherman 1978). By this acknowledgement, condemnation and what Mouzelis (2008)—in an entirely different context—calls 'strategic distancing', police managers signal a new beginning to the public and thereby seek to enhance their 'reputation (and legitimacy) as superior beings who accept the responsibility of correcting defects in [the police service] and improving consciousness' (Holmes 1993: 208). This is important because by signalling a clear departure from the past, police managers hope to convince the public—or at least significant members of it—of the police's own implied moral superiority and 'zero-tolerance' stance regarding a grave issue of public outrage (Crank and Langworthy 1992; Holmes 1993). As Holmes (1993: 212) argues, '[i]f a regime consistently turns a blind eye to corruption that is visible to most if not all, then any respect some citizens and officials do have for the authority of the regime, and perhaps even the system, would decline'. Viewed in this way, the ability of legal institutions to control corruption can genuinely help to cultivate confidence in the police and local courts (Bayley 2006; Crank and Langworthy 1992; Diamond 1990).

However, it may be hypothesized that the (re)legitimation potential of corruption reforms is, to a significant degree, contingent not only on public beliefs about the genuineness of these reforms, but also on levels of public satisfaction with the police's anti-corruption performance (see Tankebe 2010 forthcoming). This is crucial because there is sometimes a tendency for corruption reforms to be what Bayley has called 'a highly publicised morality play' (1983 cited in Reiner 2000: 174)—intended to establish credibility through the punishment of highly visible corrupt officers, but without commitment to solve the underlying causes—and therefore unlikely to build confidence in the police (Rose-Ackerman 1999: 226). As Kutnjak Ivkovic (2005: 72) argues, 'police chiefs who talk the talk but don't walk the walk, in addition to decreasing their own

credibility, send the message that they are not sincere and that the efforts put into corruption control are hypocritical'.

However, contrary to the assumptions of police researchers, some political scientists are divided on whether corruption is necessarily and invariably pernicious for political and legal institutions. Some researchers have argued that in post-colonial societies, legal institutions can often become, to many people, 'a web of largely unknowable and complicated regulations, and hence of a permanent threat of punishment' (Leys 1965: 224). Against this apparent threat from impersonal and abstract institutions, some citizens may consider it entirely reasonable to take any available precaution, such as offering bribes, to avoid the consequences of unlawful behaviour (Bayley 1966; Leys 1965).

For example, Ekeh (1975), in analysing African politics, differentiates between a 'primordial'[3] and a 'civic' public in post-colonial Africa. The realm of the former is governed by indigenous shared norms and customs, but the realm of the civic public— inhabited by the post-colonial state and its institutions, including the police—suffers from weak moral commitment. The reason for this detachment lies in the legitimacy deficits of the colonial state and the failure of many Africans to decouple the post-colonial state from its predecessor (Ekeh 1975; see also Dunn and Robertson 1973). As a result, people emphasize the utilitarian value of the civic public, hence a disproportionate emphasis on rights vis-à-vis duties (Ekeh 1975). Ekeh further argues that corruption 'arises directly from . . . the legitimation of the need to seize largesse from the civic public in order to benefit the primordial public' (Ekeh 1975: 110). The moral economy of corruption within this civic public thus makes it a *respectable crime.* Respectable crimes in this sense are crimes which 'while being legally culpable and widely reproved, are none the less considered by their perpetrators as being legitimate, and often as not being [offences] at all' (De Sardan 1999: 34; see also Karstedt and Farrall 2006; Newell 2001). They are often more strongly denounced as illegal by victims than by perpetrators, even if there is significant overlap between the two in different contexts. Thus not only do such crimes occupy 'a grey zone of legality and morality' (Karstedt and Farrall 2006: 1011); further, 'the real borderline between what is [considered an offence] and what is not fluctuates, and depends on the context and on the position of the actors involved' (De Sardan 1999: 34). If this is correct, then citizens who benefit from corrupt transactions are unlikely to express negative views about the police. Indeed, on Ekeh's analysis, police officers may risk loss of public confidence if they seek 'to extend the honesty and integrity with which [they perform their] duties in the primordial public to [their] duties in the civic public' (Ekeh 1975: 110).

Thus, we cannot continue to assume that public experience of police corruption always affects public confidence in the police adversely. The present study aims to discover the extent to which public experiences of the three dimensions of police corruption (personal or direct experience, vicarious experience and evaluative experience of police corruption reforms) influence their levels of confidence in police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness.

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[3] The notions of 'primordial' and 'civic' spheres of individual behaviour are familiar analytical concepts in sociological studies (see Geertz 1963; Shils 1957). They are akin to the distinction Durkheim drew between social relations and behaviour in *organic* and *mechanical* societies (Durkheim 1984), and Töennies' juxtaposition between *Gelleschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. The crucial point here is that the distinction between primordial and civic public in the present study is not based on any implied value judgments about the moral superiority or inferiority of either public.

Policing and Corruption in Ghana

Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) was a British colony until 1957, when she regained her political independence. Although forms of policing had been in place before colonial rule, the police force as a professional entity was officially established in 1831 (Aning 2002; Tankebe 2008*a*). Since then, corruption was and has continued to be a significant problem for the police in Ghana. There have been numerous allegations of corruption and complicity with criminal elements at all levels of the police service (see Sah 2005; Tuffuor 2006). In a recent survey by Ghana Integrity Initiative (2005), 78.6 per cent of Ghanaians considered the police to be the most corrupt institution.

Police corruption in Ghana takes many forms. Some police officers fail to arrest, investigate or prosecute offenders because of family or friendship ties to colleagues in the force. Others take bribes from suspects either to overlook their offences and not to arrest them, or to present weak cases in court. Yet other officers mount roadblocks to collect bribes from motor traffic offenders. Indeed, studies show that bribe-taking is mostly associated with the Ghana traffic police (CDD-Ghana 2000: iii). A large proportion of Ghanaians, especially in urban areas, are therefore frequently exposed to this form of police misconduct. Andreski's (1969) description of the behaviour of the police in Africa four decades ago remains valid today:

The police are among the worst offenders against the law: they levy illegal tolls on vehicles, especially the so-called mammy-wagon (heavy lorries with benches and roofs) which usually carry many more passengers than they are allowed and transgress a variety of minor regulations. [These vehicles] are allowed to proceed regardless of the infractions of the law if they pay the policeman's private toll. (Cited in Okereke 1995: 281)

Since the end of colonial rule, two explanations of police corruption have been popular in Ghana. First is the 'rotten apple' thesis according to which acts of corruption are treated as an individual pathological issue, thereby denying that police corruption is an institutional problem (Knapp 1972; Sherman 1978). Consequently, the solution to the problem is simply 'carefully screening applicants for police positions, pursuing defective officers aggressively, and removing them from their police positions before their behaviour spread throughout the agency' (Klockars 1999: 208). Studies have, however, shown that corruption is often pervasive and systemic, and therefore explanations based on the individual pathology or deviance of police officers will not do (e.g. Sherman 1978: xxviii). Indeed, one of the important accomplishments of the hearings of the Knapp Commission in New York was that it 'destroyed the police union's argument that police corruption was confined to a few "rotten apples" in an otherwise healthy barrel' (Sherman 1978: xxviii).

Second, some have argued that traditional norms and values sanction corruption in the sense articulated by Ekeh (1975; see also Le Vine 1975; Nukunya 1992). But, while cultural factors may undoubtedly be involved in corruption, they are grossly insufficient to explain the biting corruption of the post-colonial state. More accurately, the displacement of traditional cultural values by what Assimeng (1986: 248) calls 'rugged materialism' explains the kind of corruption that bedevils Ghanaian society. Rugged materialism describes a condition of aggressive preoccupation with material accumulation without regard to values of probity and propriety (Assimeng 1986: 249). Thus, what many Ghanaians refer to and strongly condemn is 'meat-eating' corruption (Knapp

1972), and the unrestrained rapaciousness of such 'meat-eaters'. Meat-eating is one of two types of police corruption practices identified in the Knapp (1972) commission's report on police corruption in New York (the other type being 'grass-eating'). Meat-eaters are police officers who 'aggressively misuse their police powers for personal gain' (Knapp 1972: 4) rather than passively accept offered bribes or other opportunities for corruption as 'grass-eaters' do.

A major challenge for policing in Ghana since the beginning of liberal democratic governance in 1993 is rising crime, especially violent crime (see Appiahene-Gyamfi 2002; Boakye 2009; Tankebe 2008*b*). The coincidence of democratization and violence is, of course, not exclusive to Ghana; many researchers have identified and sought to understand this trend in other transitional societies (e.g. Karstedt 2003; 2008). There are also widespread reports of human rights violations and procedural impropriety, including the police beating of suspects, arrest without warrant and the detention of suspects beyond constitutionally permitted limits (Tankebe 2008*b*). Some researchers have ascribed the quality of policing in Ghana to poor training and widespread police corruption (e.g. Aning 2002; Adinkrah 2005; Tankebe 2008*a*). Yet, despite public pronouncements by both police managers and political leaders on various efforts to deal with police corruption, by many accounts, corruption remains. Unfortunately, evidence explaining how or even whether public experience of police corruption affects their confidence in the police is non-existent, seriously hampering efforts to develop appropriate remedial measures. The present study provides such evidence by testing the effects of corruption on confidence in the police.

Methods and Data

The data were collected between June and August 2006. The respondents were chosen using a multi-stage sampling procedure, which selected a random sample of 450 households across different Census Enumeration Areas (Ghana Statistical Service 2005: 17). Within each household, a person was randomly selected from a list of individuals aged 18 years and above. Of the 450 questionnaires given to the selected research participants, 374 were returned. This represents a response rate of 83.1 per cent, which yields a sample size adequate to detect effects of the three dimensions of experience of police corruption on any of the three public confidence dimensions (Cohen 1988). The researcher and his assistants personally delivered the questionnaires to the respondents. In some cases, the respondents completed the questionnaires *in situ*, but in other cases, the questionnaires were left for collection at a later date. This appears to have accounted for the over-sample of literate people (see further below), if the originally selected illiterate respondents allowed educated family members to complete the questionnaire.

Measures

The details of the questions used to operationalize each of the key variables are displayed in Table 1. The items used to measure perceptions of police 'trustworthiness', 'effectiveness' and 'procedural justice' were adapted from the New York study by Sunshine and Tyler (2003). The operationalization of corruption requires a brief explanation.

TABLE 1   *Descriptive statistics of scaled items*

Items	Mean	S.D.
Corruption		
Personal experience[a] (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.65)		
(1) Payment of money or promise of favour to a police officer to overlook your unlawful behaviour	0.23	0.42
(2) Police refusal to investigate, arrest, charge or prosecute you because of relations to a police officer	0.14	0.35
(3) Used somebody related to a police officer to prevent a case being pursued against you	0.11	0.31
Vicarious experience[a] (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.56)		
(4) Witnessed payments or promises made to officer to overlook their unlawful behaviour	0.57	0.50
(5) Known a situation where police refuse to investigate, arrest, charge or prosecute because of relations to a police officer	0.30	0.46
Evaluative experience[b]		
(6) The police leadership is doing well to tackle police corruption	2.68	1.48
Trustworthiness[c] (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.80)		
(7) The Ghana police are trustworthy	2.51	1.31
(8) I am proud of the police in Ghana	2.98	1.31
(9) I have confidence in the Ghana police	2.92	1.32
(10) The Ghana police are often dishonest (reversed)	2.52	1.27
(11) The Ghana police are usually honest	2.62	1.19
(12) The Ghana police always act within the law	2.74	1.23
Procedural justice[c] (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.88)		
(13) The police treat everyone with respect	2.59	1.36
(14) The police treat everyone with dignity	2.63	1.34
(15) The police treat everyone equally	2.18	1.29
(16) The police respect people's rights	2.87	1.37
(17) The police follow through on their decisions and promises they make	2.78	1.31
(18) The Ghana police always act within the law	2.74	1.22
(19) The police take account of the needs and concerns of people they deal with	3.07	1.28
(20) The police sincerely try to help people with their problems	3.26	1.30
(21) The police clearly explain the reasons for their actions	3.24	1.34
(22) The police try to find the best solutions for people's problems	3.33	1.27
(23) The police provide opportunity for unfair decisions to be corrected	3.20	1.26
(24) The police use rules and procedures that are fair to everyone	2.79	1.31
Effectiveness[c] (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.86)		
(25) The police respond promptly to calls about crimes (e.g. robbery, assault)	3.20	1.33
(26) The police are always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to victims of crime	3.22	1.26
(27) The police are always able to provide the assistance the public need from them	3.01	1.25
(28) The police are doing well in controlling violent crime (e.g. armed robbery)	3.99	1.08
(29) Crime levels in my neighbourhood have changed for the better in the last year	3.61	1.26
(30) There are not many instances of crime in my neighbourhood	3.63	1.23
(31) I feel safe walking in my neighbourhood at night	3.30	1.43
(32) Overall my neighbourhood is a good place to live in terms of security	3.52	1.27
(33) Overall the police are doing a good job in my neighbourhood	3.29	1.34
(34) When the police stop people they usually handle the situation well	3.03	1.28

[a] Response set ranged from 1 = not all to 4 = many times.

[b] Response set ranged from 1 = quite poor to 5= very good.

[c] Response set ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Attempts to measure corruption are varied. Some studies, notably Transparency International, measure public perceptions of corruption. Other studies focus on 'the quantity of *organisation* generally present in corruption activities' (Sherman 1978: 188, emphasis in original). Neither of these approaches, however, allows us to test the effects of citizens' experience of corruption. Following Seligson (2002), the present study is concerned to measure actual experiences. Unlike Seligson, however, I differentiate

between *personal* and *vicarious* experiences. This differentiation is based on evidence from previous research that shows that personal and vicarious experiences of the police have different effects on attitudes towards the police. I also measure and examine the effects of public *evaluations* of police corruption reforms on the outcome variables.

In order to achieve the greatest construct validity of experience of police corruption, one has to identify 'the prototypical form of corrupt behavior' (Newburn 1999: 13). Newburn identifies taking of bribes as *the* prototypical form of police corruption. In many developing societies, including Ghana, this will exclude other important and widespread forms of police corruption: the use of kinship and familial connections to influence police officers to act or omit to act against lawbreaking. This usually does not involve the payment or offer of any inducements, but emanates from a sense of moral obligation as described above (see also Scott 1969: 321). The current operationalization of 'public experience of police corruption' therefore incorporates items about bribe-taking and citizens' use of social connections to influence police behaviour in their favour.

Control variables

Four control variables were included in the analysis—age, gender, educational and political affiliation. Age is often associated with greater confidence in the police because it is thought to promote conservatism and integration into the normative order through cultivation of a 'stake in conformity' (Cao *et al.* 1998). Younger citizens, by contrast, consider the police as exercising a restrictive role on their freedoms and are therefore more inclined to possess negative views about the police (Reisig and Correia 1997). From these studies, one expects age to predict the three dimensions of public confidence in the police. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 70 years, with a mean age of 30.5.

Gender is yet another variable frequently included in studies of public confidence in the police. Unlike age, previous research shows contradictory findings on its effects. In the present study, approximately 39 per cent of the sample was female. When compared with the population of the Accra metropolis, these data over-sample male respondents (see Ghana Statistical Service 2008: 7), thereby necessitating a weighting to reflect more accurately the gender distribution of the Accra metropolitan area.[4] Gender was dummy coded (female = 1).

Educational attainment is also associated with negative attitudes towards the police (see, e.g. Tyler 2005: 335; Weitzer *et al.* 2008: 415). Specifically, higher education leads to more critical views of the police because educated people tend to possess greater understanding of the normative obligations of legal institutions towards citizens and thus greater awareness of social injustice (Thompson and Lee 2004). Thus, we expect that education will have a negative effect on confidence in the police in Ghana. All the research participants were educated, with nearly a fifth having received post-secondary school education (including polytechnic and university education). Compared to the

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[4]The weighting produced an adjusted sample of 51 per cent female participants. It is important to note that the weighted data altered only the findings with respect to two of the control variables. In the unweighted data, political affiliation and education weakly predicted perceptions of quality of treatment ($\beta = 0.10$, $p < 0.10$) and perceptions of quality of decision making ($\beta = -0.11$, $p < 0.10$), respectively. In the weighted data, these specific associations disappeared.

population of the Accra metropolis, this sample was highly educated. Recent data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey show that 8.8 per cent of the residents of Accra have no formal education at all (Ghana Statistical Service 2008: 12).

We may describe this sample as an *aspiring middle class*.[5] Thus, the sample is not representative of the general population of the Accra metropolis. Nevertheless, this is an important sample to study, for two reasons. First, and as indicated previously, educated sections of society are more likely to identify police misbehaviour, including corruption. We are therefore more likely to detect an influence with such a sample than with a more representative sample. As such, if the analyses presented here uncover no effects of experience of police corruption on confidence in the police, one would not expect them elsewhere. Second, middle classes constitute what Rothschild (1977) calls 'auxiliary power centres'; their views are often far more important to governments than those of ordinary people, because they can be crucial to the legitimacy and survival of governments (see also Bottomore 1993). It follows that the levels of confidence in the police among such an educated sample will influence their preparedness to push for democratic police reforms. In this study, education was treated as a dichotomous variable, according to whether or not the respondent had received post-secondary education.

In addition, the effects of corruption on attitudes towards legal and political institutions are mediated by political allegiances (Anderson and Tverdova 2003). Previous research shows that in countries with high levels of corruption, government supporters are unlikely to make negative assessments of public institutions (see, e.g. Anderson and Tverdova 2003). Political affiliation is therefore captured here, coded as a dummy variable, indicating support or otherwise for the incumbent government. While approximately two-thirds (67.1 per cent) of the sample supported the incumbent government during the time of the study, this percentage is problematic, since, in the absence of data for the specific year of the study (i.e. 2006), one cannot be sure of its representativeness. However, analyses of data from the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections for the 14 constituencies of the Accra Metropolis show government popularity of 53.12 per cent (see Electoral Commission of Ghana 2004) and 46.47 per cent (see Ghanaweb 2009), respectively. The reason for this overrepresentation of government supporters in the present sample may be traced to a history of 'successive one-party and military dictatorships in which freedom of expression was suppressed (sometimes with brutality) in modern Ghana [which has] discouraged the open statement of citizens' views and consequently measured public opinion' (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1999: 59).

[5] This description of the sample as an aspiring middle class is intended to convey the sense that within the specific context of Ghana, the acquisition of formal education endows the sample with attributes conducive to current or future membership of the inchoate middle class in Ghana. As in other developing countries, the middle class in Ghana is dominated by public servants, entrepreneurs and salaried employees in the formal sector of the economy and members of learned professions (Assimeng 1986; Bottomore 1993). Formal education thus becomes a necessary means for acquiring the requisite skills for membership in this class. The educated sample in this study is therefore not to be equated with the upper classes and political elite, which have tended to segregate themselves into 'gated communities' (see Asiedu and Arku 2009; Grant 2005). On the contrary, and given that about 80 per cent of the current sample had up to secondary school level of education, the sample cuts across people resident both in poor and wealthy neighbourhoods in the Accra metropolis. A recent survey of all adults in Accra reports that 91 per cent had at least basic formal education (Ghana Statistical Service 2008), making it unusual to find households without members of this aspiring middle class.

Findings

In a nationwide survey of 1,500 households in Ghana, published in 2000, more than two-thirds of the respondents reported that they had paid bribes to police officers (CDD-Ghana 2000: ii). As shown in Table 2, by contrast with the general population, there is very little personal experience of police corruption among the educated sample. Personal experience of corruption ranged from 10.5 to 23.3 per cent. Current or aspiring middle-class members are often not as powerless as the general population, and therefore may be less likely to have daily personal experiences of police corruption. It may equally be—given the history of police brutality and intimidation (see, e.g. Tankebe 2008*a*)—the artefact of a concern, even fear, of being seen to criticize the police. Of course—and although difficult to tell—the low incidence of personal experience of police corruption may reflect improvements in police behaviour.

The data further show that in cases of monetary payments or favours, the proportion of the respondents who reported that they had 'sometimes' or 'many times' witnessed corrupt transactions in which other citizens used these as tools to influence police officers to their advantage (48.78 per cent) was more than four times the proportion of those who had personally done so with similar frequency (11.10 per cent). How might we account for this marked difference between personal and vicarious experiences of corruption? The data do not allow us to answer this question with certainty, because the respondents were not required to indicate the sources of their vicarious knowledge. However, a possible source may be from the widespread practice among the transport police of setting up road-blocks to extract money from commercial-vehicle operators (see further above, and CDD-Ghana 2000) who are judged to have infringed driving regulations. In other words, because these transactions occur in public spaces, most people are likely to witness them either as passengers on commercial vehicles or from their own private vehicles.

TABLE 2   *Descriptive statistics*

Items	Many times	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Personal experience				
(1) Payment of money or promise of favour to a police officer to overlook your unlawful behaviour (n = 369)[a]	4.06	7.04	12.20	76.70
(2) Police refusal to investigate, arrest, charge or prosecute you because of relations to a police officer (n = 170)	2.94	7.06	4.12	85.80
(3) Used somebody related to a police officer to prevent a case being pursued against you (n = 372)	3.49	1.88	5.11	89.52
Vicarious experience				
(1) Witnessed payments or promises made to officer to overlook their unlawful behaviour (n = 371)	30.46	18.32	8.63	42.59
(2) Known a situation where police refuse to investigate, arrest, charge or prosecute because of relations to a police officer (n = 373)	14.21	6.97	9.12	69.70
Evaluative experience[b]				
(1) The police leadership is doing well to tackle police corruption (n = 278)[†]	11.20	29.60	14.90	34.80

[a] Numbers in parentheses represent valid responses.

[b] The response set for evaluations of the police's anti-corruption performance ranged from 'very poor' to 'very good'.

[†] 9.5 per cent were 'uncertain' about the police's anti-corruption performance.

The preceding line of reasoning appears to find corroboration in the data on corrupt transactions through the use of kinship or friendship connections to avoid arrests, investigations or prosecution for unlawful behaviour. Here, the difference between personal and vicarious experiences was less extreme, with vicarious experiences being only about twice as frequent as personal experiences. More specifically, 21.18 per cent of the sample reported they had 'sometimes' or 'many times' vicariously experienced police corruption through the use of social connections, but only 10.0 per cent of the sample indicated they had personally used such contacts to influence police officers to their own advantage at similar frequency. Thus, because corruption transactions of this mode would usually occur in private, they tended to be less accessible to other citizens.

Table 1 also shows that 40.8 per cent of the sample evaluated police corruption reforms positively; that is, they thought the police leadership's performance in controlling corruption among police officers was 'very good' or 'quite good'. However, about half of all the respondents (49.2 per cent) thought the police's efforts were 'very poor' or 'quite poor', with a further 9.5 per cent being 'uncertain' in their assessments of corruption reforms.

The descriptive data thus provide evidence of considerable discrepancy in public personal, vicarious and evaluative experiences of police corruption. But might these differential experiences of police corruption translate into differential effects on public confidence in police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness? Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analyses are used to establish the unique effects of the three dimensions of public experiences of police corruption (i.e. personal, vicarious and evaluative experiences) on the three dimensions of public confidence in the police. Collinearity diagnostics for the variance inflation factor (IVF) confirmed that this is not a problem with the current analyses (Hutcheson and Sofronniou 1999). Importantly, these statistical results do not imply causation. Rather, they simply identify which of the included factors are correlated with various levels of confidence in the police.

Corruption and confidence in the police

The analyses were conducted in three different OLS regression models. The first tests the effects of corruption on confidence in police effectiveness. Overall, this regression model accounted for 21 per cent of the variance in public confidence about police effectiveness, corresponding to a moderate effect size of 0.27. Contrary to expectations, the regression analyses displayed in Table 3 show that personal experience of police corruption does not predict confidence in police effectiveness. However, evaluation of police corruption reforms was a strong predictor of public confidence in police effectiveness ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$); that is, as satisfaction with police efforts to control corruption increased, perceptions of police effectiveness in providing security also increased. In addition, public vicarious experience of police corruption decreased confidence in police effectiveness ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < 0.01$). Among the control variables, higher education and being female were both associated with decreased confidence in police effectiveness. The former is consistent with previous research associating education with critical assessment of police activities (e.g. Sunshine and Tyler 2003). However, the latter finding is not easy to explain. One possibility is women experience of higher levels of personal victimization than men. However, chi-square analysis (not presented here) found no such difference between male and female respondents.

TABLE 3   *The effects of corruption on perceptions of police effectiveness, procedural justice and trustworthiness*

	Effectiveness		Procedural justice		Trustworthiness	
	b (S.E.)	β	b (S.E.)	β	b (S.E.)	β
Age	–0.01 (0.05)	–0.01	0.04 (0.05)	0.05	0.00 (0.05)	0.00
Gender	–0.26 (0.10)	–0.15*	–0.06 (0.10)	–0.03	–0.27 (0.12)	–0.13*
Education	–0.30 (0.13)	–0.14*	–0.18 (0.13)	–0.09	0.03 (0.14)	0.01
Political affiliation	0.09 (0.11)	0.05	0.22 (0.11)	0.12+	0.20 (0.13)	0.10
Personal corruption exp.	0.12 (0.23)	0.03	0.12 (0.23)	0.04	0.14 (0.26)	0.04
Vicarious corruption exp.	–0.40 (0.14)	–0.19**	–0.61 (0.15)	–0.29***	–0.44 (0.17)	–0.18**
Corruption reforms	0.17 (0.04)	0.30***	0.12 (0.04)	0.21**	0.20 (0.04)	0.31***
F		9.70***		8.60***		7.78***
R²		0.21		0.20		0.18

Note: Entries are unstandardized coefficients (*b*), standardized coefficients (β), and standard errors (S.E.).
*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

Unfortunately, the current data are insufficient to assess whether the finding might be associated with different levels of vicarious experience of victimization.

Turning to procedural justice, the analysis in Table 3 further shows that the strongest predictor of this outcome is vicarious experience of police corruption (β = –0.29, p < 0.001); that is, people who reported that they had witnessed corrupt transactions involving other citizens were less likely than non-witnesses to have confidence that the police treat people procedurally fairly. As expected, evaluations of the anti-corruption performance of the Ghana police service also predicted confidence in procedural justice. The more that people thought police managers were doing a good job in controlling corruption, the more likely they were to make high ratings of the procedural justice of police interactions with the public (β = 0.21, p < 0.01). Political affiliation also predicted judgments of procedural justice but only weakly, such that people with allegiances to the incumbent government were more likely to evaluate police procedural justice favourably. This is broadly consistent with cross-national results reported by Anderson and Tverdova (2003). As with effectiveness, personal experience of corruption was statistically insignificant in predicting assessments of procedural justice. Overall, this model accounts for 20 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable, and with a corresponding moderate effect size (f² = 0.25).

Finally, the effects of corruption on perceptions of police trustworthiness are considered. Here, evaluations of police reform efforts emerged as the strongest predictor of levels of trustworthiness (β = 0.31, p < 0.001). In other words, expressions of satisfaction with police attempts to deal with the problem of corruption increased the perception that the police were trustworthy. Vicarious experience of police corruption also explained levels of trustworthiness (β = –0.18, p < 0.01); that is, experience of corrupt transactions involving other citizens lessened the likelihood that the police would be judged trustworthy. Again, personal experience of corruption did not predict trust in the police. Among the control variables, gender predicted trustworthiness (β = –0.13, p < 0.05), such that females were less trustful of the police than males were. The model explained approximately 18 per cent of the variance in police trustworthiness. The effect size for this model was moderate (f² = 0.22).

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to test whether public experience of police corruption predicts public confidence in the police. In particular, it examines the correlates of trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness—all proxy measures of public confidence in police. More than four decades ago, Leys argued that 'it is natural but wrong to assume that the results of corruption are always both bad and important', because the reverse may often be true (Leys 1965: 222). The current analyses test this argument using data from Ghana. As summarized in Figure 1, three main findings are noteworthy.

First, and surprisingly, personal experience of police corruption did not predict any of the three outcomes. How can one explain this failure? Perhaps the results are an artefact of treating personal experiences of police corruption in an undifferentiated manner. Specifically, personal or direct experience of police corruption can be disaggregated into police-initiated and citizen-initiated corruption. The former is likely to be non-voluntary, taking the form of coercion or extortion, and therefore citizens will consider themselves to be victims of police misconduct. Unwilling victimhood almost always leads to perceptions of injustice that, in turn, might have negative effects on public confidence in the police. Perceptions of victimhood are, however, less justifiable when citizens voluntarily seek to influence police decision in order to evade criminal liability or to obtain services otherwise inaccessible to their fellow citizens. As Ohlemacher (2002: 61) argues, 'corrupt behaviour by a government official, if initiated by the citizen him/herself, is hardly a victimisation in a classical sense'.

Of course, police-initiated corruption can sometimes be consensual. When 'police corruption . . . is consensual [independently of who initiated the transaction], with both the police and the parties to such transactions benefitting from them' (Sherman
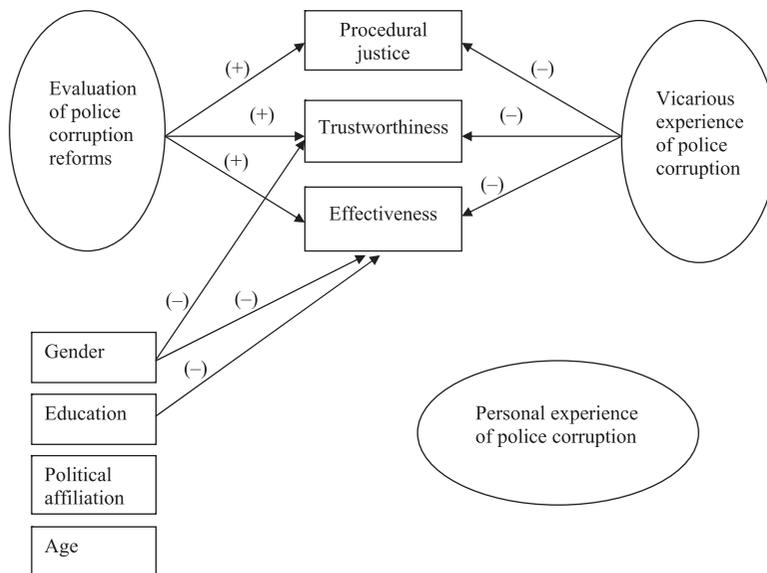

FIG. 1   Predictors of public confidence in the police in Ghana.

1978: 188), it may not be fanciful to hypothesize that such transactions can produce some sort of identification with, and attachment to, the corrupt official. Undoubtedly, the motivation for this attachment is perverse, but 'perverse incentives are real incentives' (O'Neill 2002: 55). Undoubtedly also, this may typically involve a narrow class of powerful individuals and organized criminals who seek to influence police for their own benefit at the expense of the rule of law (see Diamond 1990). As Jong-sung and Khagram (2005: 136) argue, 'the wealthy have both greater motivation and more opportunity to engage in corruption, whereas the poor are more vulnerable to extortion'.

Second vicarious experiences of police corruption consistently predicted all three dimensions of public confidence in the police. In particular, increased vicarious experiences of police corruption were associated with a decline in public perceptions of police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness. The educated sample captured here seems committed to the universalistic values of the civic public of the post-colonial state. These values specify that the police must treat citizens according to legal provisions concerning 'acceptable, desirable, proper, and rightful outcomes and procedures' (Barbalet 2001: 137–8). Resentment emanating from vicarious experiences of police violations of normative requirements of justice and propriety (e.g. police officers taking bribes) leads to reduced confidence in the police. This interpretation calls into question the continued relevance of aspects of Ekeh's propositions regarding the post-colonial state (see above). If it is correct, one may conclude that—far from being committed to a mercenary engagement with the state—some of the aspiring middle class in Ghana are committed to the promotion and defence of the values of the post-colonial democratic state. This is because, as indicated above, they seem to expect police behaviour to be consistent with those values. Further studies are necessary to determine whether the uneducated who have day-to-day experience of police corruption share the views of the better educated or not.

The third noteworthy finding from the Ghanaian data is that public satisfaction with police managers' efforts to control police corruption predicts increased levels of public confidence in police trustworthiness, procedural justice and effectiveness. The control of corruption in the courts and police force may have significant effects on the reproduction and maintenance of police legitimacy and ensuring the rule of law by demonstrating that the authority of the police will be used practically and on a daily basis to serve the interests of citizens (Bayley 2006). The evidence from Ghana suggests that this is contingent on people's satisfaction with those efforts. The implication is that reforms to address corruption require considerably more than exhortation, rhetoric and declaration of intent to combat the negative effects of corruption on the perceived legitimacy of police organizations (Bayley 1966; Holmes 1993; Rose-Ackerman 1999). Unfortunately, commitment to democratic reform of the Ghana police (including the control of corruption) remains at the level of rhetoric. Some have attributed the lack of meaningful reform to apprehension among the political elite about creating a sort of Frankenstein monster (see Hills 2000; 2007; Tankebe 2008a). That is, the political elite appear reluctant to create a democratic and independent police force that they are then, by definition, unable to manipulate and that may even investigate the corrupt activities of these elites themselves. Consequently, it has been argued that the state of policing in Ghana reflects the depth of the commitment of the political elite to democracy (Tankebe 2008a).

One serendipitous conclusion from this study is that attitudes towards the police may vary significantly between the aspiring middle-class people and the general population. The aspiring middle-class sample in this study reported minimal *direct* experience of police corruption. Additionally, whatever experiences they had had yielded few effects on their perceptions of police trustworthiness, procedural justice or effectiveness. In contrast, the *vicarious* and evaluative experiences of police corruption by this aspiring middle-class sample consistently predicted their reflected levels of police confidence. These findings support Susanne Karstedt's apt characterization of trust (which she uses interchangeably with confidence) as *sociotropic*, by which she means it is 'mostly not based on individual experience but generated through collective perceptions and vicarious experience . . .. Trust in the police and justice system is therefore less dependent on how these agencies act, and more on how they are collectively perceived' (Karstedt 2009: 2).

In the context of corruption in a post-colonial developing country, 'sociotropic confidence' may be good news, because it suggests a larger commitment to the civic good rather than to instrumental self-interest. Kluegel and Mason (2004: 814) grasp this well, albeit in a different context: '. . . the greater weight that people attach to sociotropic evaluations than to egocentric ones, in both established democracies and transitional ones, suggests a certain selflessness on the part of citizens—that they are not exclusively concerned with their own personal well being—or at least that people can establish a certain distance in their assessments of politics and economics by considering the state of the whole country rather than their own little piece of it.' The findings reported in the present study, which are based on data from an educated sample, are consistent with previous research linking higher education with greater commitment to, and concern for, democratic values and principles, especially the rule of law (Lipset 1959; Tankebe 2009*a*). Some political scientists have argued that governments are more sensitive and responsive to the concerns and demands of the middle class in society because a loss of legitimacy or support among the middle class can have a 'multiplier-and-demonstration effect' that precipitates the destabilization of a government (Rothschild 1977: 499; see also Bottomore 1993: 75). If this observation is correct, one may argue that the aspiring middle class in Ghana may be more inclined to use their influence to achieve greater democratic reforms of the police. Of course, it is doubtful whether there can be truly democratic police reforms without democratization in every other aspect of social and political life (Dunn 2005: 162; see also Pino and Wiatrowski 2006). In other words, talk of police reforms may be empty if those reforms are not part of a broader effort to achieve accountability and the rule of law in the civic public of Ghanaian society.

Mouzelis (2008: 19) argues that all 'contextless generalisations' in the social sciences suffer one fate: they are 'either trivial or actually wrong (wrong in the sense that they are valid only under certain conditions not specified in the theory)'. This is an important observation and leads us to a crucial caveat in considering the findings discussed here. The results are based on data from the specific context of a post-colonial developing country, which is very different from Western developed democracies, such as the United Kingdom. For example, Ghana has a legacy of colonial policing and military rule, with significant levels of institutionalized police corruption (Aning 2002; Tankebe 2008*a*). Additionally, there is a more or less stable expectation—exemplified in a commonplace expression, 'police is police' (sic.) (Tankebe 2009*b*)—that interactions

with the police would involve police demands for bribes, even if many Ghanaians find this abhorrent. Given these features of Ghanaian policing, it is of decisive importance not to assume the generalizability of the findings to different contexts with different levels and tolerance of police corruption. What these tentative and limited findings suggest, however, is that in the specific context of Ghana, the meanings and consequences of corruption for public confidence appear to be different from the theoretical predictions in the West.

Nonetheless, the question of the generalizability of the findings to other contexts can be established only by similar studies in those contexts. Some researchers have grouped countries under a three-fold typology, depending on the incidence of corruption: *highly* corrupt (e.g. Nigeria, Cameroun); *moderately* corrupt (e.g. Ghana, Egypt); and *least* corrupt (e.g. United Kingdom, Sweden) countries (Huther and Shah 2000; Uslaner 2007). More research on the corruption–confidence hypothesis is required to establish the meanings attached to the concepts 'corruption' and 'confidence' in countries with these differing levels of corruption and how these concepts might be related. It is also crucial to observe that differential cultural meanings of these concepts may exist within countries with thoroughly diverse cultures, particularly in the West. In these countries, some scholars have drawn the kind of distinctions Ekeh (1975) makes in the post-colonial African context, between a civic and a primordial public (e.g. Joppke 1996; Koopmans and Statham 1999). These scholars further argue that there are sometimes normative conflicts between the requirements of 'civic morality' and the normative customs and traditions of some ethnic minorities and migrants. Thus, different cultural values may translate into differential understandings and interpretations of corruption, and into differential perceptions and expectations of the police even within the same country. This raises interesting issues for police forces in England and Wales, where public confidence in the local police has become the key indicator of the performance of the police (Johnson 2009). In this regard, might there be an argument to incorporate questions that measure public experiences of police corruption or misconduct in the British Crime Survey?

Whether one is interested in differences within or between countries, the findings from Ghana suggest a differentiation between various types of corruption experience, such as citizen-initiated experiences; negative police-initiated experiences (e.g. extortion); positive or consensual police-initiated experiences; vicarious negative experiences; vicarious positive experiences; and evaluative experiences of police corruption reforms—and different dimensions of confidence in the police. It is important to reiterate the observation about the dearth of evidence on the effects of corruption on public confidence in the police, and the necessity for comparative research to overcome this limitation on an important topic. Such comparative studies would afford the opportunity to explore the specific socio-political contexts in which certain types of public experiences of police corruption are related to public confidence in the police, and to determine in what contexts they are not.

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