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Exploring officer views of community policing in counterterrorism

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ABSTRACT

Recently there has been increased emphasis on actionable intelligence in counterterrorism. Building from the process-based model of regulation, police chiefs and scholars generally agree that community policing has promise in this regard. Yet, it is not clear the extent to which police officers concur. Since officers are in a position to implement community policing practices, it is important to understand variants in officer-level support. Using data collected from 741 officers in three departments, this project explores officer-level views of community policing's utility to address terrorism and more common crimes. Overall, officers view community policing as appropriate to address both common crimes and terrorism. Results suggest that department-level policy itself is not the key driver of support. Rather, an officer's own experience with community policing and support for the practice in general determine views on community policing in counterterrorism. Results also highlight the importance of comparative research across departments.

KEYWORDS

Community policing; procedural justice; legitimacy; counterterrorism; surveys

'Stopping terrorists requires detailed, accurate, and timely community-level intelligence. In many ways the community-oriented approach favored by successful police departments is the same kind of approach that is most likely to uncover terrorist operations. Such investigations are long term, culturally sensitive, and microlevel.' Lafree and Hendrickson (2007, p. 783)

Introduction

In recent years, a number of Americans have either perpetrated terrorist violence domestically or traveled to conflict zones to join terrorist organizations in Syria, Somalia, and elsewhere.¹ To prevent this, information from communities is critical to help law enforcement foil attacks and intercept people at risk for engaging in this violence. There is little debate that people are more likely to cooperate with police when they view law enforcement as legitimate (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2001). It is similarly clear that citizen perceptions of police are determined by the quality of interactions between the groups (Skogan, 2005; Tyler, 2005). The procedural justice model suggests that police legitimacy results from perceptions that police are fair in their treatment and decisions

(Tyler, 1990). Community policing is widely regarded as a tangible mechanism for enhancing procedural justice, increasing perceptions of police legitimacy,² and building public trust (Department of Justice, 2015). As Worden and McLean (2017, p. 192) note, 'Community policing is procedurally just on a community scale.' Thus, facilitating relationships between the public and law enforcement may be critical to cooperation in counterterrorism (Carter & Carter, 2012; Murray, 2005).

From a law enforcement perspective, community policing has been widely adopted to build relationships with the public. When people view police more positively and have relationships with them, they are more likely to report crimes. Research suggests that this process is similar for common crimes and terrorism alike (Kearns, 2016; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). From this, many police chiefs think that community policing and homeland security are compatible (Chappell & Gibson, 2009). However, previous research on police attitudes toward community policing in counterterrorism has been limited to top managers. To date, we do not know how individual officers view community policing in counterterrorism. Officers on the streets are the ones in a position to engage in relationship building, which makes understanding their levels of support for it all the more critical. Research has shown that individual officers differ in their support for community policing in general (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994). Thus, it is important to understand how officers view the utility of community policing in counterterrorism. This project addresses two questions: First, do officers differ in their support for community policing to address terrorism and more common crimes? And, if there are differences, why are some officers more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism than others?

This paper examines differences in officer-level support for community policing both to address terrorism and more common crimes. The next section engages with the literatures on community policing and counterterrorism policing efforts, and suggests why some police officers may be more supportive of community policing to address a range of crimes including terrorism. I then discuss my sampling frame, procedures, and analytic strategy. I conclude with the project's results, implications, and avenues for future research.

Literature review

What is community policing?

Community policing is often discussed, yet more difficult to conceptualize and measure due to the range of possible actions that can fall within this framework. Community policing is generally focused on problem solving through mobilizing resources and adapting organizational function to foster community partnerships (Community Policing Consortium, 1994; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Furthermore, part of community policing's core mission involves response to changes in the environment (Zhao, 1996).

Cordner (1995) acknowledged the challenges to conceptualizing community policing, as some claim it is 'a philosophy, not a program' (p. 1) while others argue that it is an empty term. He acknowledged that there are numerous common elements of community policing, and summarized them into three main dimensions: a philosophical dimension, a strategic dimension, and a programmatic dimension. Building on Cordner (1995) conceptualization, Skogan and Frydl (2004) argue that community policing can be viewed as both a philosophy and an organizational strategy. Under this conceptualization, community policing is comprised of four main components: police functions, decentralization, community engagement, and problem orientation. Similarly, Maguire and Wells (2009) state that community policing is comprised of three main characteristics: problem solving, community engagement and partnerships, and organizational adaptation. There is considerable overlap in these two conceptualizations of community policing, though Maguire and Wells also focus on the organizational requirements to implement community policing. Additionally, attention to issues salient to the community is critical to community policing. Over time, these issues may change. Thus, community policing requires ongoing innovation to changing needs, not merely a one-time adjustment to implement new programs (Skogan & Frydl, 2004; Maguire & Wells, 2009).

Goertz (2006) asserts that there is substantial attention paid to measurement and scaling within social science, but less attention on constructing concepts. He emphasizes the multidimensional and multilevel nature of concepts. In his framework, concepts are comprised of three levels: the basic level, the secondary level, and the indicator level. The basic level is the major concept that the researcher is investigating (community policing in this case). The secondary level is comprised of multiple dimensions of the basic level. The indicator level is at the level of operationalization where data is gathered to measure the concept. Using Goertz's framework and previous literature, I argue that community policing is comprised for four secondary level factors: police functions, organizational adaptations, problem orientation, and community engagement.

Differences in officer support for community policing

Police departments across the country have widely adopted community policing as a guiding philosophy. Yet, it is not clear how this translates to officer-level support for the practice in general and across different contexts. Police officers are diverse and approach their jobs in different ways, which can both help and hinder policy implementation (Paoline, 2004). In the case of community policing, street-level officers are often the ones in a position to implement the policy directives. Officer-level perspectives on appropriate policing can impact the extent to which policy – including putting the procedural justice model into practice – is implemented (Worden & McLean, 2017). Research shows that there is variation in support for community policing among individual police officers (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994). Factors such as an officer's age and race impact their support for community policing in general (Lewis, Rosenberg, & Sigler,

1999; Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Novak, Alarid, & Lucas, 2003; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). Research also shows that officers differ in support for community policing across racial groups (Kearns, 2017). Since community policing allows for officers to dynamically respond to situations and concerns in the community, it also increases the opportunity for principal-agent issues to arise. If an officer is supportive of community policing and that is departmental policy, then there should be fewer barriers to engage in the practice. Conversely, the decentralized nature of community policing makes it more difficult to identify and address non-compliance. Officers who are less supportive of community policing may be more likely to ignore leadership's directives. Thus, it is important to understand what impacts officer-level support for community policing overall and how that support changes across contexts, including in counterterrorism.

Community policing in counterterrorism

The need to combat terrorism and violent extremism has raised questions about the appropriate practices that law enforcement should employ to this end. Some scholars have argued that community policing should be abandoned in counterterrorism in favor of more intelligence and data driven efforts (Davis et al., 2010; Murray, 2005; Oliver, 2004, 2006). Similarly, many agencies have felt pressure to jettison community oriented policing practices for more aggressive approaches (Friedmann & Cannon, 2007). Yet, more aggressive approaches are antithetical to the process-based model of regulation, which posits that people evaluate police behavior using criteria from procedural justice (Tyler, 2003). Further, when police behave in a more procedurally just way, this can increase perceptions of police legitimacy and make people more likely to obey and cooperate (Tyler, 2001).

For effective counterterrorism, collaborations that build trust between communities and law enforcement are critical to cultivate information networks (Aziz, 2014; Briggs, 2010; Murray, 2005; Tyler, 2011). Building from this, others have focused on community policing as a mechanism to increase procedural justice and foster citizen cooperation with police in counterterrorism where tradition intelligence methods are insufficient (Clarke & Newman, 2006; Innes, 2006; Kelling & Coles, 2011; Maguire & Wells, 2009; McGarrell, Freilich, & Chermak, 2007; Mockaitis, 2003). This need not be different from other crime control efforts, which also rely on citizen cooperation. In fact, many law enforcement leaders agree that community policing can be a beneficial counterterrorism tool (Henry, 2002). For example, a survey of police chiefs in Virginia found that over 85% thought that community policing and homeland security were compatible (Chappell & Gibson, 2009). Yet, the extent to which officers agree is unknown.

Community policing has traditionally focused on addressing more visible crimes through relationship building with the community, particularly in urban areas (MacDonald, 2002; Maguire & Wells, 2009). Yet, terrorism threats are different from common crimes in two key ways. First, being pushed to violent extremism more commonly occurs behind closed doors. This highlights the needs for informants within

the communities to alert police to suspicious activity that happens in private (Williams, Horgan, & Evans, 2016). Second, unlike more common crimes, which tend to be concentrated in urban areas, many of the worst terrorist attacks in the United States were planned in suburban or rural areas (LaFree & Bersani, 2014). Thus, with more terrorism threats possibly coming from suburban and rural areas, local law enforcement in these non-urban areas may be poised to make an impact in counterterrorism.

Local law enforcement officers often play critical roles in identifying and dismantling terrorist plots and apprehending suspected terrorists after attacks. Timothy McVeigh, for example, was apprehended during a routine traffic stop for failing to have a tag on the vehicle he was driving just after perpetrating the Oklahoma City Bombing (Marcoa, 2015). Similarly, during a robbery investigation in 2005, local police in Torrance, California discovered jihadist propaganda and evidence of plans to attack targets in the United States. Four men were arrested, three were convicted and one was sent to psychiatric care in a federal prison (Department of Justice, [DOJ], 2005). These are just two examples of the critical role that local law enforcement plays in counterterrorism. Law enforcement leadership acknowledges the potential promise of community policing in counterterrorism. Yet, it is not clear whether individual officers – those in a position to actually build these relationships – agree.

Academics and police chiefs generally think that community policing is compatible with counterterrorism (e.g. Chappell & Gibson, 2009; Clarke & Newman, 2006). In this way, policing terrorism does not have to be different from policing other crimes (Holden, 2009). Building from path dependency theory,³ officers who already engage in community policing should be more likely to think community policing is appropriate in counterterrorism. In contrast, officers who do not engage in community policing overall would have a more difficult time seeing its utility in counterterrorism specifically. Thus, support for community policing in counterterrorism may be explained by the extent to which community policing practices are generally employed by the department overall. Departments – and their officers – that already engage in community policing need only make minor adjustments to adapt this model to counterterrorism. From this train of logic, I expect that:

H1: Law enforcement officers who use community policing in general will have more positive views about relationship building in counterterrorism.

Beyond department-level policy, officers can make individual determinations about how to engage with communities and how this varies across contexts. From a citizen perspective, general views of law enforcement influence specific views (Brandl, Frank, Worden, & Bynum, 1994) yet general and specific views can differ in meaningful ways (Kearns, 2016). Similarly, some police officers think that procedural justice approaches are appropriate in some situations or with some people but not others (Worden & McLean, 2017). More broadly, research shows that general and specific attitudes are related but distinct for issues such as equality (Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006), environmentalism (Vining & Ebreo, 1992), and political opinion (Fiorina, Abrams,

& Pope, 2005). Following this, it is not safe to assume that an officer who generally supports community policing will do so equally across contexts. Still, officers who have greater buy-in for community policing overall should be more supportive of this policy across contexts. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: Law enforcement officers who support community policing will have more positive views about relationship building in counterterrorism.

Alternative explanation

Some may argue that department-level policies explain differences in community policing across crime types. In fact, police chiefs tend to do just this by stating that their officers engage in community policing because that is the policy. Chiefs and senior leadership make decisions on what issues are priorities at the departmental-level and how those priorities should be addressed. If the department leaders prioritize community policing, then these directives will be sent down to the officers in a position to act upon this mission. This assumes, however, that officers will follow all – or at least most – directives. Yet, some departments' leaders state that community policing occurs even when evidence of such practices is lacking (Ortiz, Hendricks, & Sugie, 2007). If department-level policies explain differences in community policing, then we would expect to see variance between departments, but little variance between officers in the same department. I examine this alternative explanation on community policing in counterterrorism.

Methodology

Sample

Data for this project were collected from officers in three police departments in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Each department emphasizes community policing as a policy, which was articulated by each chief, outlined in each department's mission, and demonstrated in each department's activities and public messaging. The participating departments are in the same metropolitan area to control for environmental factors that could impact community policing as best as possible. The departments vary in size of the force, area covered, population, and population density. Department 1 is mostly suburban. Department 2 is a mix of urban and suburban neighborhoods. Department 3 is a mix of suburban and rural areas.

Across the three departments 741 officers had the opportunity to participate in this study between March and May 2016. In total, 713 officers completed the survey while 28 either declined or turned in incomplete surveys.⁴ Since data were collected from each squad in each department, every patrol officer should have had the opportunity to participate. Although some officers were absent from roll calls, this should be random and was unavoidable.⁵

Procedure

By collecting data from individual officers in multiple departments, I compare responses both within and across departments. As is common in policing scholarship, I used roll call surveys to examine officer-level views on community policing to address terrorism as compared to more common crimes. I first obtained permission from each department's chief. Each chief provided me a contact in the department to facilitate data collection. Neither the chief nor any other member of the department was involved in the data collection itself. Prior to each roll call, my contact emailed shift supervisors to let them know that I would be there to collect data and that participation was voluntary. At each roll call, I introduced the study and myself and asked the officers for their consent to participate. I reminded officers that participation was voluntary and anonymous. I told officers that anyone who did not want to participate could either refuse a survey or turn in a blank survey and nobody would know if they had participated. I also made it clear that only aggregate responses would be shared publically.

Survey design

Participants first answered basic demographic questions as a warm up. They then answered a series of questions to measure their experience with community policing practices followed by a series of questions about their support for community policing in general. Participants were then asked about the extent to which community policing is appropriate to address a range of crimes.

The outcome variable for both hypotheses is support for community policing in counterterrorism. To measure this, participants were asked the degree to which 'Policing practices that focus on building relationships⁶ with the public are appropriate to address _____. ' Participants evaluated this question for six crimes: vandalism, break-ins, gang activity, domestic violence, homicide, and terrorism activity. Responses were measured on a 7-point scale where higher scores indicate more support for community policing to address each crime.⁷

The independent variables in this study are: experience with community policing in general and support for community policing⁸ in general.⁹ For hypotheses 1, I conceptualize community policing¹⁰ as being comprised of the four key elements: police functions, operational adaptations, problem orientation, and community engagement. Police functions were measured with seven items,¹¹ operational adaptations were measured with eight items,¹² and problem orientation¹³ and community engagement¹⁴ were measured with three items each. Departments and their officers can also engage in behaviors that undermine community policing. These countervailing forces were measured with six items.¹⁵ Altogether, experience with community policing was measured with twenty-seven items. All items were added to create a composite score for experience with community policing.¹⁶ Scores ranged from 63 to 173 (N = 668, M = 130.32, SD = 16.53, $\alpha=0.72$) where higher scores indicate more experience with community policing. For hypothesis 2, support for community policing is measured with eight items.¹⁷ Again, items were added to create a composite score for support for

community policing. Scores ranged from 25 to 56 ($N = 711$, $M = 42.50$, $SD = 6.16$, $\alpha=0.80$) where higher scores indicate greater support for community policing in general.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Officers generally agree that relationship building is compatible with counterterrorism ($N = 712$, $M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.82$). Support for community policing in counterterrorism varies for officers within each department, but does not vary across departments, $F(2, 709)=0.94$, $p = 0.39$. This demonstrates that there are not average department-level differences in support for community policing in counterterrorism. Contrary to the alternative explanation, this suggests that individual preferences may be a stronger driver of support than department policy. For comparative purposes, I also average each officer's support for community policing to address the five non-terrorism crimes (vandalism, break-in, gang activity, domestic violence, and homicide) and compare support for each crime individually. Officers are generally supportive of community policing across all crime types, ($N = 711$, $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.27$). A simple t-test shows that, overall, officers indicated that community policing was more appropriate in counterterrorism than in more common crime control ($t(710)=2.34$, $p = 0.01$), though Department 1 drove this result ($t(414)=2.43$, $p = 0.008$) and it is not significant for the other two departments. These findings suggest that officers think community policing is at least as appropriate to address terrorism as it is to address more common crimes,¹⁸ and also highlights differences across departments.

All three departments' chiefs stated that they engaged in community policing. Yet, experience with community policing differs across departments, $F(2, 665)=6.05$, $p = 0.003$. Officers in Department 1 had less experience with community policing on average than officers in the other two departments ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, there is also a good deal of variance in stated experience within each department. This suggests that department-level policies impact officer behavior but policy is not the driving force for engagement in community policing. In contrast with experience, support for community policing in general does not differ across departments, $F(2, 708)=1.18$, $p = 0.31$. Again, there is variance in general support for community policing within each department, which suggests individual-level factors are at play. Descriptive information about the key variables and additional demographic information about the departments and officers are show in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics and descriptive variables by department.

Variable	Department 1	Department 2	Department 3
Gender: Male	88.19%	82.96%	88.68%
Gender: Female	11.81%	17.04%	11.32%
Age: 18–24	10.92%	6.82%	10.69%
Age: 24–34	41.44%	56.82%	45.28%
Age: 35–44	30.27%	20.45%	28.30%
Age: 45+	17.37%	15.91%	15.72%
Education: No college	32.45%	8.89%	20.63%
Education: Some college	67.55%	91.11%	79.38%
Race: Caucasian	81.14%	81.34%	84.28%
Race: African-American	6.95%	11.19%	6.92%
Race: Asian	5.96%	2.99%	3.77%
Race: Hispanic	7.69%	11.94%	10.05%
Race: Middle Eastern	0.50%	1.52%	1.89%
Politics: Liberal	3.76%	9.30%	10.90%
Politics: Moderate	37.84%	30.23%	32.69%
Politics: Conservative	58.40%	60.47%	56.41%
Foreign Born	11.41%	8.96%	11.18%
Bilingual	22.87%	22.39%	24.84%
DV (Support for COP in counter-terrorism)	Mean: 5.70 SD: 1.81 Var: 3.26	Mean: 5.52 SD: 1.90 Var: 3.59	Mean: 5.81 SD: 1.79 Var: 3.19
IV1 (Experience with COP in general)	Mean: 128.46 SD: 17.10 Var: 292.50	Mean: 133.37 SD: 14.46 Var: 209.19	Mean: 132.51 SD: 16.13 Var: 260.06
IV2 (Support for COP in general)	Mean: 42.20 SD: 6.04 Var: 36.49	Mean: 42.88 SD: 6.35 Var: 40.36	Mean: 42.96 SD: 6.28 Var: 39.45

Analyses

Data for this project were collected from individual officers across three departments in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.¹⁹ It is reasonable to expect that departmental culture impacts individual experiences and views. Since there were a small number of departments, hierarchical models are not optimal to account for officers being nested within departments (see Gelman & Hill, 2006). Rather, department-level effects are controlled for using dummy variables for two of the three departments in all models. As a robustness check, I also estimated each model for departments separately.

The dependent variable in all analyses is measured on a 7-point scale, so models are estimated with ordered logistic regression. To ease the substantive interpretation of each variable, odds ratios are reported. Additionally, since the key independent variables use different scales, standardized coefficients are also presented to allow for meaningful comparison of the relative impact of each variable on the outcome. Prior research shows that officer-level variables like age and race impact support for community policing in general (Lewis et al., 1999; Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Novak et al., 2003; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997), so I estimated all models to include officer gender and age.²⁰ Table 2 shows the results for the overall sample.

As expected, officers who have more experience using community policing practices and those who are more supportive of community policing in general are consistently more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism and across other crimes. A one-point increase in support for community policing produces, on average, a 7% increase in the odds of being more supportive of the practice in counterterrorism. For a one-point increase in community policing experience, there is a 2% change in odds of being more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism. These results are largely consistent across each crime type.

Table 2. Community policing in counterterrorism.

	Counter- terrorism	Other Crimes (average)	Vandalism	Break-in	Gang activity	Domestic Violence	Homicide
CP Experience	1.02** (0.006) [0.25]	1.03*** (0.005) [0.41]	1.02** (0.006) [0.29]	1.02*** (0.005) [0.30]	1.02** (0.006) [0.31]	1.03*** (0.006) [0.45]	1.02** (0.006) [0.29]
Support for CP	1.07*** (0.02) [0.40]	1.10*** (0.02) [0.57]	1.10*** (0.02) [0.61]	1.09*** (0.02) [0.53]	1.12*** (0.02) [0.68]	1.06*** (0.02) [0.37]	1.07*** (0.02) [0.41]
Male	1.45 [†] (0.29) [0.12]	1.14 (0.23) [0.04]	1.38 (0.28) [0.11]	1.20 (0.23) [0.06]	1.29 (0.28) [0.09]	1.05 (0.21) [0.02]	0.99 (0.19) [-0.004]
Age	1.22* (0.10) [0.18]	1.06 (0.08) [0.04]	1.10 (0.09) [0.09]	1.07 (0.09) [0.06]	1.10 (0.10) [0.09]	1.03 (0.08) [0.03]	1.01 (0.08) [0.007]
Department 1 (dummy)	1.35 (0.25) [0.15]	1.28 (0.24) [0.12]	1.18 (0.24) [0.08]	1.06 (0.21) [0.03]	1.18 (0.24) [0.08]	1.21 (0.23) [0.09]	1.24 (0.25) [0.15]
Department 3 (dummy)	1.28 (0.31) [0.14]	1.55* (0.34) [0.18]	1.38 (0.32) [0.14]	1.06 (0.21) [0.04]	1.44 (0.36) [0.15]	1.51 [†] (0.35) [0.21]	1.72* (0.40) [0.28]
Observations	647	646	647	647	646	647	647

Notes: Ordered logistic regression models. Odds ratios presented with robust standard errors in parentheses. Constants not reported. X-standardized coefficients in brackets to allow for comparison of the relative impact of each variable.

[†] $p < 0.10$.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Since community policing experience and support are on different scales, x-standardized coefficients allow for comparison of their relative impact on support for community policing in counterterrorism. When comparing the magnitude of these effects, support for community policing has a greater impact than experience. A one-standard deviation increase in general support has a larger (0.40 increase in log odds) impact than a one-standard deviation increase in experience (0.25 increase in log odds) on support for community policing in counterterrorism. Across crime types, the substantive impact of both community policing experience and support is similar. One notable exception is domestic violence where experience matters more than support. Support for community policing in general is a stronger predictor of support for community policing to address gang activity, vandalism, and break-ins than it is to address domestic violence, homicide, and terrorism. This suggests that the same mechanisms lead to context-specific support for community policing across crime types,

though the magnitude of the impact varies. Age and gender generally do not impact support for community policing across crimes. Older officers are more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism, but there are no differences across other crimes. It is possible that experience directly dealing with terrorism and terrorism threats in the DC area over the past few decades explains this difference.

To examine differences between officers in the same department, I estimated the same models for each department separately. As shown in Table 3, results are not consistent across departments. In Department 1, general support for community policing predicts views of community policing to address terrorism and crimes overall, but community policing experience only predicts support for community policing to address non-terrorism crimes. Substantively, for a one-point increase in support for community policing, there is a 7% increase in the odds of supporting the practice in counterterrorism. Across common crimes, the change in odds ranges from 4 to 12%. A one-point increase in community policing experience yields a 2% increase in the odds of supporting community policing in counterterrorism. This effect is similar across most common crimes. To compare the relative impact of experience with and support for community policing, standardized coefficients show that a one-standard deviation increase in support (0.38 increase in log odds) has a larger impact than a one-standard deviation increase in experience (0.27 increase in log odds) on support for community policing in counterterrorism. Similarly, for most crimes, general support for community policing is a stronger predictor of crime-specific support than experience. Yet, for both domestic violence and homicide, experience was a stronger predictor than general support. This again demonstrates that the same mechanisms explain crime-specific support for community policing but their relative magnitudes vary. In Department 1, neither officer gender nor age impact support for community policing across crime types.

In Department 2, support for community policing tends to predict more favorable views of community policing to address terrorism and crime generally, but there is more variation across crime types. A one-point increase in general support for community policing leads to a 10% increase in the odds of supporting the practice in counterterrorism. Across crimes, general support ranges from no impact (domestic violence) to a 23% increase in odds (gang activity) of context-specific support for community policing. While community policing experience impacts crime-specific support for community policing in general and in Department 1, we do not find this in Department 2. The only exception is to address domestic violence – here experience with community policing matters, though general support for community policing does not. Additionally, in Department 2 male officers are more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism, but there are no gender differences in support for community policing to address other crimes. Conversely to the findings in other departments, in Department 3 neither experience with community policing nor support for community policing are related to views of community policing in counterterrorism, though support for community policing is positively related to views of community

policing to address other crimes. Here, older officers are more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism and a few of the more common crimes.

Table 3. Community policing in counterterrorism by department.

	Counter- terrorism	Other crimes (average)	Vandalism	Break-in	Gang activity	Domestic violence	Homicide
Department 1							
CP Experience	1.02* (0.007) [0.27]	1.03*** (0.006) [0.43]	1.01 [†] (0.008) [0.24]	1.02** (0.007) [0.33]	1.02** (0.008) [0.37]	1.03** (0.008) [0.44]	1.03** (0.01) [0.42]
Support for CP	1.07** (0.02) [0.38]	1.09*** (0.02) [0.55]	1.12*** (0.02) [0.66]	1.10*** (0.02) [0.56]	1.10*** (0.02) [0.60]	1.07** (0.02) [0.38]	1.04* (0.02) [0.26]
Male	1.26 (0.35) [0.08]	1.13 (0.28) [0.04]	1.48 (0.41) [0.13]	1.05 (0.27) [0.02]	1.44 (0.42) [0.12]	1.08 (0.25) [0.03]	0.99 (0.25) [-0.003]
Age	1.11 (0.11) [0.09]	0.97 (0.09) [-0.03]	1.08 (0.11) [0.07]	1.08 (0.12) [0.07]	1.00 (0.11) [-0.004]	0.88 (0.09) [-0.11]	0.89 (0.09) [-0.10]
Observations	373	372	373	373	372	373	373
Department 2							
CP Experience	1.03 [†] (0.01) [0.36]	1.03* (0.01) [0.44]	1.02 [†] (0.01) [0.30]	1.02 (0.01) [0.22]	1.01 (0.01) [0.10]	1.04** (0.01) [0.55]	1.02 [†] (0.01) [0.32]
Support for CP	1.10** (0.04) [0.61]	1.13*** (0.04) [0.79]	1.14*** (0.04) [0.80]	1.12** (0.04) [0.71]	1.23*** (0.05) [1.31]	1.07 [†] (0.04) [0.41]	1.09* (0.04) [0.57]
Male	2.78* (0.17) [0.39]	1.25 (0.53) [0.09]	1.03 (0.42) [0.01]	1.54 (0.66) [0.17]	0.84 (0.35) [-0.06]	1.38 (0.60) [0.16]	1.12 (0.44) [0.04]
Age	1.17 (0.29) [0.14]	0.91 (0.19) [-0.08]	0.82 (0.16) [-0.17]	0.83 (0.19) [-0.16]	1.03 (0.26) [0.02]	1.02 (0.22) [0.01]	1.12 (0.23) [0.10]
Observations	123	123	123	123	123	123	123
Department 3							
CP Experience	1.01 (0.01) [0.12]	1.02 (0.01) [0.28]	1.02* (0.01) [0.37]	1.02 (0.01) [0.27]	1.02 [†] (0.01) [0.29]	1.03* (0.01) [0.40]	1.00 (0.01) [-0.06]
Support for CP	1.05 (0.03) [0.27]	1.08** (0.03) [0.49]	1.06 [†] (0.04) [0.36]	1.06* (0.03) [0.39]	1.07* (0.04) [0.43]	1.05 (0.03) [0.29]	1.10** (0.03) [0.59]
Male	0.92 (0.42) [-0.02]	0.96 (0.61) [-0.01]	1.66 (0.83) [0.16]	1.33 (0.63) [0.08]	1.63 (1.03) [0.15]	0.74 (0.41) [-0.09]	0.81 (0.40) [-0.06]
Age	1.50* (0.27) [0.38]	1.34* (0.18) [0.28]	1.37* (0.21) [0.30]	1.21 (0.22) [0.18]	1.45* (0.25) [0.35]	1.44* (0.24) [0.35]	1.19 (0.21) [0.16]
Observations	151	151	151	151	151	151	151

Notes: Ordered logistic regression models. Odds ratios presented with robust standard errors in parentheses. Constants not reported. X-standardized coefficients in brackets to allow for comparison of the relative impact of each variable.

[†] $p < 0.10$.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

The starting questions for this study were: do officers differ in their support for community policing to address terrorism and more common crimes? And, if there are differences, why are some officers more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism than others? Results demonstrate that there are between-officer differences – but few within-officer differences – in support for community policing across contexts. Essentially, officers who are supportive of community policing to address common crimes are generally supportive of community policing in counterterrorism as well. This suggests that support for community policing to address specific crimes may be more individual than departmental, which is in line with previous research on perceptions of community policing overall (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994).

The present study finds evidence to support my general argument that officer-level factors are a strong predictor of community policing in the context of counterterrorism. Results of the aggregate analyses across departments demonstrate that officers who are more supportive of community policing in general also think these practices are appropriate in the context of counterterrorism. Additionally, greater community policing experience is related to more support for community policing to address terrorism and other crimes. While the magnitude of the impact varied by crime type, both experience and general support matter. Overall, the story is a fairly straightforward one: officers tend to think that community policing is appropriate across a range of crimes, and officers who have more experience with community policing and those who are more supportive of it as a whole are more likely to generalize these thoughts across contexts. Officers' views on a practice can impact implementation (Worden & McLean, 2017), so more positive views on community policing should increase procedurally just behaviors with communities. While it is not clear what percentage of officers need to support community policing for it to have a meaningful impact on department-level practice, more officer-level support is surely better. There may be a tipping point at which additional officer-level support does not matter, but examining that is beyond the current scope. Still, information is critical to counterterrorism and engagement in procedurally just behaviors that could increase public cooperation with law enforcement is beneficial.

While experience with and support for community policing have positive downstream implications, these factors impact context-specific support to varying degrees. Despite the clear aggregate findings, the disaggregated results show meaningful differences in what impacts support for community policing across crimes. In Department 1, both experience and general support impact context specific support for community policing. In Department 3, neither mattered. The results were mixed in Department 2. Differing results across departments demonstrates three key things. First, the factors that impact officer-level support for community policing across contexts are not uniform. Second, department-level factors may be important on understanding officer-level support for policy. Third, these findings highlight the importance of

comparing support for community policing across departments to see where department-level factors may impact results in a way that is not detected in aggregate analyses.

Future directions

In the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, terrorism is a salient concern. The participating departments have direct experience with terrorist attacks and protecting potential hard and symbolic targets. In jurisdictions where terrorism is less of a concern, officers may not be as supportive of community policing to address it since terrorism feels less relevant to them. In such departments, we may see more within-person variation in support for community policing across common crime types. We may also see lower support for community policing to address other crimes viewed as less salient in their jurisdictions.

Disaggregating analyses by department showed variance in some results when compared to the overall findings. Similarly, aggregate results paint a picture that is not equally applicable to each department. Had this project focused only on the averages across department or on any one of the participating departments, the results would have been different. It is important to understand department-level differences in why some officers are more supportive of community policing across crime types. Qualitative work can help to unpack the mechanisms at work and how those mechanisms vary across departments. Additionally, department-level differences such as those found in this study may be common. In policing studies more broadly, comparative work across departments can help to identify and unpack how department-level factors and individual-level factors interact and impact policing practice.

Policy recommendations

This project addresses the unresolved question of identifying and explaining officer-level differences in support for community policing to address terrorism and common crimes. While experience with community policing does not impact context-specific support in all cases, there are other positive downstream implications of the practice. Nationally, there has been a vigorous debate on police reform in general and in the context of counterterrorism. Community policing has been suggested as a powerful tool to build citizen-police relationships. In this regard, community policing can have a positive impact on public perception and action even when it does not impact officer-level views.

Across models, general support for community policing was the strongest predictor of support for community policing in counterterrorism. Two ways to increase general support for community policing are rewarding it and demonstrating its benefits. First, implementing mechanisms for officers to further engage in and be rewarded for community policing practices can have a positive impact on officer-level views of the practice. Second, to foster support for community policing across contexts, it is important to increase officer buy-in. One way to accomplish this is to highlight the

benefits of community policing from the public's perspective. Just as officers generally think that community policing is compatible with counterterrorism, community members indicate that cooperation with police in counterterrorism is similar to cooperation more generally (Kearns, 2016). Greater relationship building efforts with communities overall, as well as in communities with members who may be at greater risk of engaging in this violence, is critical to effective counterterrorism and policing more broadly.

Conclusions

In the present study, I examined officer-level views of community policing to address a range of crimes. The challenge here is not new to policing – officers often have different priorities and views than their commanders. While research has previously demonstrated that demographic factors impact officer support for community policing in general, scholars had not unpacked this further to examine differences in support for community policing across contexts. Yet, officers encounter myriad situations and dynamic threats that may not be deemed equally useful to approach with proactive, relationship building means. Public narratives often focus on tough tactics in both crime control generally and counterterrorism specifically, yet relationship building between police and communities may actually encourage the most cooperation. I examined how officers navigate these competing ideas to form views on community policing across crime types. Findings in this study show that crime-specific support for community policing appears fairly stable within each officer. In short, officers who support community policing to address common crimes are likely to view the practice favorably in counterterrorism as well. Conversely, officers with less favorable views toward community policing overall and those with less experience engaging in community policing are less supportive of the practice.

This project presents some challenges that should be unpacked further. While an officer's views on community policing are similar across crime types, research shows that this is not the case across racial groups (Kearns, 2017). Police officers encounter dynamic situations that may impact support for proactive policing practices. As such, questions remain about how other contextual factors, and the interactions among these factors, impact both officer-level support for and engagement in community policing and how communities respond to policing officers across situations.

Notes

1. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/isis-suspects/>
2. Tyler (2006) defines legitimacy as 'a psychological property of an authority, institution, or social arrangement that leads those connected to it to believe that it is appropriate, proper, and just.'
3. Path dependency suggests that it is more difficult, and perhaps impossible, to change course once a policy is implemented (Schneider & Ingram, 2005).

4. In Department 1, 69.80% of patrol officers were asked to participate and 94.85% did. In Department 2, 84.38% of patrol officers were asked to participate and 98.54% did. In Department 3, 71.74% of patrol officers were asked to participate and 97.58% did.

5. Paoline and Terrill (2013) used a list of officers in each department to track who had been asked to participate and who had not to ensure that everyone was given the opportunity. In the present study, none of the police chiefs would provide access to personnel information to use this method.

6. Since the term 'community policing' can mean different things to different people, I did not use this term in the survey. Rather, I asked about 'relationship building,' the core underlying aim of community policing.

7. The correlation between support for relationship building to address terrorism vs. other crimes is 0.64.

8. While general support and specific support for a range of topics are related to one another, they are often not synonymous. As expected, general support for community policing is correlated with context specific levels of support. Correlations between general support for community policing and each of the context specific measures of support range from 0.22 to 0.35. This indicates a positive relationship, but also demonstrates the difference between general and specific support for community policing.

9. Correlation between these variables is 0.48.

10. In an ideal world, experience with community policing might be measured by real-world observations of officers over time in a department. Yet, this is infeasible due to resource constraints. Additionally, inferences could be hindered if officers behave differently knowing they were being watched (the Hawthorne effect). To capture community policing experience at the individual-level across the whole department, survey methods are necessary. Surveys, however, have space constraints. While there are numerous behaviors and actions that could fall within the community policing framework, it was necessary to cull the list to a limited number of questions that still capture the essence of the practice.

11. Police functions: (1) Trying to reduce fear of crime amongst the public is beyond the scope of policing; (2) Police should provide the same quality of service to all members of the public; (3) In the last week, what percentage of your time on duty was spent engaging in patrol?; (4) In the last week, what percentage of your time on duty was spent responding to calls to service?; (5) In the last week, how often did you intervene with individuals who are at risk of being victim of crime?; (6) In the last week, how often did you intervene with individuals who are at risk of committing crime?; and, (7) In the last week, how often did you engage in activities that would reduce criminal opportunities?

12. Organizational adaptation: (1) Who is primarily responsible for selecting problems in the community that deserve police attention?; (2) You have autonomy to decide how to best respond to community issues; (3) You can voice concerns about a police or practice to a direct supervisor without fear of punishment; (4) How often does your beat change; (5) Executives in your department support efforts to engage with all members of the community; (6) Your department provides sufficient training on how to engage with the public; (7) Your relationships with community members are important for your performance reviews; and, (8) Your department adjusts its practices in response to community needs.

13. Problem orientation: (1) The following questions measure problem orientation: Your department emphasizes reacting to individual incidents rather than solving community problems; (2) Your department prioritizes building partnerships with members of the community; and (3) Your department focuses on underlying factors that can lead to crime.

14. Community engagement: (1) Your department shares information with the public by holding meetings; (2) Your department educates members of the community about police practices; and, (3) Your department partners with other groups that impact the quality of life in the area.

15. Countervailing forces: (1) Racial profiling is an acceptable practice in your department; (2) Officers in your department are demographically representative of the community (3) Treating people differently based on appearance is an acceptable practice in your department; (4) Executives in your department make it difficult for officers to engage in a positive manner with members of the community; (5) Your department puts obstacles in the way of officers who want to engage with members of the community; (6) Your department's commitment to building relationships with members of the community is more symbolic than genuine.

16. Correlations among each of these five dimensions (four of community policing experience and one of countervailing forces) range from 0.13 to 0.63. Models are reported using an additive index of community policing experience. As a robustness check I also estimated each model using each of these dimensions and the results were substantively and significantly the same.

17. The following questions measure general support for community policing: (1) Relationship building with the public is ineffective for crime control; (2) Relationship building with the public is a worthwhile approach for police agencies; (3) Relationship building with the public is the future of policing; (4) Police agencies that engage in relationship building with the police are less effective; (5) Individual officers in your department sometimes disobey directives of the department leaders; (6) You support an emphasis on reacting to individual

incidents rather than solving community problems; (7) You support adjusting policing practices in response to community needs; and, (8) You support efforts to engage in positive interactions with all members of the community.

18. While officers generally thought that community policing was at least as appropriate in counterterrorism as it is in more common crime control, not all officers agree with this. To probe mechanisms that may impact different views on the usefulness of community policing across crime types, I estimated a number of multinomial logistic regression models comparing three groups of officers: those with similar views on community policing across contexts (N = 558), those who are more supportive of community policing in counterterrorism than for common crimes (N = 117), and those who are less supportive of community policing to address terrorism than other crimes (N = 38). These models examined the impact of several officer-level factors – age, gender, education, race, and support for community policing with minorities – and department-level differences. None of these factors significantly explained either group of officers whose views on community policing in counterterrorism differ from their views on the practice to address more common crimes. Additionally, there were no department-level differences in each of these categories, $F(2, 710)=0.16$, $p = 0.85$.

19. There are, of course, concerns about officers responding honestly to potentially sensitive questions at work. It is possible that some officers provide socially desirable responses. Alternatively, officers may give the same responses across multiple questions because that is their true view. To account for these possible explanations, I estimate all models to include and exclude ‘straight-liners.’ First, I estimated all models to exclude participants who straight-lined their response across the majority of the questions that comprise the independent variables. Second, I estimated all models excluding participants who straight-lined the dependent variable. Across all models, these exclusions did not alter the results. The models reported include all participants.

20. Models were also estimated without age and gender included and the results are unchanged.

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