Police Officers' Attitudes Toward Citizens in China

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Abstract

Although a substantial number of studies have examined public attitudes toward the police, a relatively thin line of research has assessed police attitudes toward the citizenry in China. Using survey data collected from a sample of approximately 200 Chinese police officers, the current study examined the effects of police officers' demographic characteristics, socialization and experience factors, and role orientations on officers' attitudes toward citizen virtue, citizen cooperation with the police, and citizen input in police work. Results indicated that background and experience characteristics were ineffective in predicting the three aspects of officer attitudes toward citizens. Crime-fighting and service orientations were found to be related to officers' attitudes toward the citizenry. Findings of this study enhance our understanding of police occupational attitudes in China and provide valuable implications for policy and future research.

The police and citizen relationship is one of the most important elements in modern policing (Brandl, Frank, Wooldredge, & Watkins, 1997; Carter & Radelet, 2002; Wu, Sun, & Triplett, 2009). As the most visible symbol of governmental authority (Gabbidon & Greene, 2012), the police have been subjected to a substantial amount of research. One primary line of such inquiries has considered the effects of citizen background characteristics, crime and justice experiences, social attitudes, and neighborhood conditions on attitudes toward the police (MacDonald & Stokes, 2006; Scaglion & Condon, 1980; Skogan, 1978). A comparatively thinner body of research has analyzed factors influencing police officers' attitudes toward the public (Brooks, Piquero, & Cronin, 1993; Z. Chen, 2016; Chu & Sun, 2007; DeJong, 2004; Haarr, 2001; He, Zhao, & Ren, 2005; Ingram & Terrill, 2014; Myhill & Bradford, 2013; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000; Phillips, 2015; I. Sun, 2002; A. Worden, 1993).

The main purpose of this study is to assess factors that affect officer attitudes toward citizens in China. Police attitudes toward the citizenry not only influence how officers treat citizens during their

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encounters but also impact police–community relations and public trust in and cooperation with the police (R. Worden, 1996). In China, the recent deadly contact between Beijing police and a young man, who was detained for soliciting sex and died in police custody, illustrates how distrust of the police could have a detrimental effect on social stability and police–community relations (T. Chen, 2016, May 24).

Several additional reasons justify the study of officer attitudes toward local residents. First, police officers' perceptions of citizens affect their efficacy in gathering information and receiving support from the public. Various studies have found that individual officers' attitudes have little influence on their formal enforcement of the law, but affect the informal aspects of officers' work, such as the tone and manner in which they communicate with citizens and their discretionary use of force (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Greenberg, 2011). Negative attitudes toward the public could lower officers' motivation to contact local residents, resulting in a smaller base of information resources and weaker capability of criminal prevention and investigation. Indeed, local residents know much better about their neighborhoods than the police, and police officers have to rely on their "insider" knowledge and assistance to control crime, arrest suspects, and solve problems (Reisig, 2007; Skogan, 1999; Tyler, 2006; Wang & Wong, 2012; Wilson & Kelling, 2007).

Second and even more importantly, officers' attitudes toward the public may influence how citizens are treated during their interactions with the police. Unfavorable opinions could cause officers, for example, to give citations or tickets without sufficient explanation and to treat citizens in an unfriendly, hostile, or even brutal way (Brandl, Stroshine, & Frank, 2001; Holmes, Reynolds, Holmes, & Faulkner, 1998; Smith & Holmes, 2014; Wong, 1998). Such treatment would definitely carve a bad image of police among the public and discourage citizens from cooperating with the police, leading police–community relations into a malicious circle (Goldsmith, 2005; Murphy & Cherney, 2011; Weitzer & Brunson, 2009).

Third, how officers perceive citizens could shape how they indoctrinate the modern police occupational roles of service and problem-solving into their subjective attitudinal orientations. In the United Kingdom, for example, one dilemma that the police force faces is officers' reservation to the promulgated process-based policing policy, a paradigm that stresses the need for officers to reconnect with the public. Officers tend to view citizens as a problem to be circumvented or overcome, rather than as partners in a collaborative project to maintain law and order (Reiner, 2010). If an officer feels resentment toward citizens, he or she might choose to intentionally ignore the roles of service and order maintenance and heavily endorse law enforcement and crime-fighting instead. Such inconsistency between individual officers' role orientations and organizational policing policy and strategies (e.g., community- and problem-oriented policing) could cause individual officers' poor work performance and barriers of acquiring rewards, promotions, and peer acknowledgments (Beehr, Johnson, & Nieva, 1995; Engel & Worden, 2003; Ingram, Paoline, & Terrill, 2013; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997; Wycoff & Skogan, 1994).

Finally, while some studies have investigated police views of the citizenry in Western societies, such as the United States (DeJong, 2004; Ingram & Terrill, 2014; Phillips, 2015; I. Sun, 2002; A. Worden, 1993), United Kingdom (Johnston, 2003; Myhill & Bradford, 2013; O'Neill, Marks, & Singh, 2009), and continental European countries (Kääriäinen & Sirén, 2012), this line of research is virtually nonexistent in China. To date, only a handful of studies have examined Chinese police occupational outlooks, such as their cynicism, role orientations, and support for community building (Z. Chen, 2016; Cuvelier, Jia, & Jin, 2015; I. Sun, Cretacci, Wu, & Jin, 2009; I. Sun, Liu, & Farmer, 2016; I. Sun, Sobol, Cretacci, & Phillips, 2010). None of them, however, focused on Chinese police attitudes toward local residents. Thus, very little is known about the attitudinal propensities on the citizenry among contemporary Chinese police officers, let alone factors influencing this crucial aspect of police occupational attitudes. This study filled these knowledge gaps in the existing literature.

Using survey data collected from approximately 200 police supervisors in a Chinese metropolitan, this study analyzed the effects of officers' demographics, socialization experience, and role orientations on their attitudes toward citizens including citizen virtue, citizen cooperation with the police, and citizen input in police work. Two research questions guided this study:

1. Do officers' demographics, socialization experience, and role orientations affect their attitudes toward citizens?
2. Are different dimensions of officers' attitudes toward citizens influenced by a distinctive same set of variables?

Recent Developments in Chinese Policing

Chinese police have faced some substantial challenges since the country started its economic reform in the late 1970s. The drastic increase in social stratification and rich–poor polarization in modern China dissolved the previous solitary coalitions between citizens and police in Mao's time. A massive influx of peasants into coastal cities as migrant workers, who became primary targets of law enforcement, were accompanied by an explosion of crime (Cao, 2007; Dutton &Tianfu, 1993; Qi & Oberwittler, 2009; Wang & Wong, 2012; Wong, 2002; Xu, 2009). The polarization of the have and the have-nots in the society and the widespread abuse of power and corruption in domestic governance have triggered citizens' ever stronger resentment and resistance against local officials, causing successive violent confrontations and anger-venting mass incidents (Fewsmith, 2008; Liu, 1990; Rowen, 2007). On the aspect of police work, there is a series of problems such as endemic misconduct, heavy workload, and increased job risk (Tanner, 2004). All these drastic changes have shaken the traditional police-as-superiors and citizens-as-subordinates social balance, resulting in tension with police–citizen relations and reshaping police perceptions of the public. The following review focused on developments in Chinese policing over the past two decades.

Based on the mass-line ideology, which emphasizes reducing the influence of bureaucratic elites in decision-making and enhancing the involvement of direct actions by the masses, the Chinese police relied deeply upon the public and communities in carrying out social control and crime prevention. The field station work in communities was an important policy and strategy. In 2002, the Ministry of Public Security officially launched community policing. It was estimated that more than 80,000 officers were reassigned to police neighborhood stations, whose manpower rose to about 83% of the total police force (Yin & Zhang, 2007; Zhong, 2009).

The invigorated economic growth in China called for correspondent change in the law enforcement system. As part of the "rule of law" campaign, the new *police law* was passed in 1995, manifesting the professionalization of Chinese police. The 1995 *Police Law* consists of 56 articles that covered specific issues such as police organizations, duties, recruitment, training, power, disciplinary procedures, and citizen complaint mechanisms (Ma, 1997). At the same time, the legal reform brought some restrictions on police power, marked by the reinforced protection of suspects' rights in various laws, supervision on police from prosecutors, and various accesses for citizens to make complaints against police. For example, the 1996 *Criminal Procedural Law* allows the defense attorney, as well as relatives of the suspects, to apply for the cancelation of any compulsory measures such as detention or arrest if the time span of the detention is expired by the terms of law (Ma, 1997). Additionally, the increased media attention, including reports or recordings of police misconduct on social media, has surfaced as an influential external supervision on the police. Cases of police corruption and misconduct in which police raped and abused prostitutes and took millions of dollars in bribes were widely reported (Areddy, 2009; Jeffreys, 2010).

Upon the professionalization of police and established restrictions and supervisions on police power, police–citizen relations attenuated due to increased critical attitudes toward the police, the enlarged social distance between police officers and local residents, and citizen–police violent confrontations during protests and petitions. First, as Chinese citizens were exposed to democratic thoughts and reports of police abuse of power in the era of Internet, they became more critical of legal authorities. Police were blamed for only protecting those with money and power, and people openly questioned the fairness and legitimacy of policing, promoting distrust and even hatred toward the police (Z. Chen, 2016; Fu, 2009; H. Li, 2009; Meng, 2009; Zu, 2010). Support, respect and trust that Chinese frontline police felt from the public were far from sufficient, leading to officers' escalated cynical view on the public (Bennett & Schmitt, 2002; Z. Chen, 2016).

Second, police–citizen confrontations during protests and demonstrations have produced tensions and conflicts between citizens and officers. The transition into professionalization at the upper policy level in policing was not fully transmitted into street level officers' practice. There were widespread incidents of police disrespecting the laws and brutally investigating crime, triggering repeated mass protests and violent demonstration events (Hu & Dai, 2014; Y. Li & Ma, 2010; Ma, 2003). In 2010, approximately 180,000 protests, riots, and other mass incidents occurred in China, more than 4 times the total from a decade earlier (Orlik, 2011). Although illegal land seizure by local officials was often the leading cause of public anger and social unrest, protests and litigations specifically against police misconduct and corruption were common (O'Brien & Li, 2004).

Third, public expectations of police roles and the complexity and ambiguity of police roles embedded in officers' practical work created high levels of stress for them. Citizens expected police to respond, help, and rescue for all requests, whereas police complained about their work overload caused by unwanted or low-priority social services. Studies suggested that Chinese police officers perceived a comparative high level of job strain from workload, inadequate support for the police force, and the social service role (Jiang, Xu, & Deng, 2005; Y. Sun, 2007). More than 90% of frontline officers experienced psychological distress such as insomnia, nervousness, and depression (Wang, 2010). Like their Western counterparts, Chinese police were found to hold relatively negative attitudes toward citizens (Z. Chen, 2016).

Several differences in the United States and Chinese policing may be relevant to the study of officers' attitudes toward the citizenry. First, Chinese officers carry out their work in a relatively homogenous society, whereas U.S. officers perform their duty in a society that is highly diverse, culturally and racially. A homogenous culture in Chinese societies makes the police work much less complicated (Jiao, 2001). Second, through the operation of field stations in local neighborhoods, the Chinese police are deployed much closer to the community than their U.S. counterparts. While very few urban American officers actually live in the neighborhoods they police, the police station as well as the neighborhood serves as a second home for many Chinese officers. Chinese supervisors also have more opportunities to engage in direct contacts with local residents than their U.S. counterparts. Finally, the Chinese police enjoy greater power and wider discretion in performing their work compared to the U.S. officers. For example, Chinese police are empowered with authority to hand out administrative sanctions, such as fines and detention in police jails, without any judicial review or approval (I. Sun et al., 2016). Their power to administratively sanction minor offenses and authority over some government administrative functions (e.g., household registration, vehicle registration and inspection, and passport issuance) that are not police duties in the United States also give officers more room to exercise their discretion.

Theoretical Frameworks and Empirical Evidence

Two theories are relevant in explaining the possible attitudinal differences among Chinese police officers. The "predisposition theory" suggests that an officer's occupational attitudes are a reflection

of his/her personal background characteristics (e.g., age, race, gender, educational attainment, marital status and parental educational attainment, and socioeconomic status). Officers perceive the police role, work and citizens differently because they come to the job with different demographic characteristics (Roberg, Crank, & Kuykendall, 2000; I. Sun & Payne, 2004).

Empirical studies showed mixed results for this theory. Previous studies on typologies of police officers showed that officers were not homogenous in their occupational attitudes and operational styles. Compared to male officers, for instance, female officers were less aggressive in using force (Brooks et al., 1993), tended to have a broader scope of role orientations (Sun, 2003), and had higher global attitudes toward community policing (Schafer, 2002). Other studies found that college educated officers were more positive toward legal restrictions (R. Worden, 1990) and supervision from top managers (I. Sun, 2002), but less supportive of community policing activities (Winfree, Bartku, & Seibel, 1996) than their less educated counterparts. Other studies, however, either showed the impact of demographics was mediated by work environmental factors (Schuck, 2014) or a weak connection between officers' background characteristics and occupational attitudes in both the U.S. (I. Sun, 2002) and U.K. samples (Loftus, 2010).

A second theoretical perspective is the "differential socialization/experience theory," which posits that officers' work-related attitudes are influenced by different socialization and experiences in their work environment (Roberg et al., 2000). Police departments' organizational culture, officers' training (e.g., the amount and type of training received), work units (e.g., district offices vs. field stations), assignments (e.g., community policing officers vs. patrol officers), and experiences with citizens were associated with their occupational attitudes (Barlow & Barlow, 2000; Farmer, Beehr, & Love, 2003; Reiner, 2010; Wolfe & Piquero, 2011). The results from empirical investigations are mixed. Some studies in the United Kingdom found that organizational justice cultivated a positive orientation toward community policing and motivation to help the public among officers (Myhill & Bradford, 2013). Some studies showed that community policing training and assignment improved officers' overall satisfaction with their job (McElroy, Cosgrove, & Sadd, 1993; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). Nonetheless, other studies revealed no or only a weak association between community policing training and occupational attitudes (Paoline et al., 2000; I. Sun & Chu, 2008a, 2008b). Like the predisposition theory, the differential experience theory so far has only received modest support from empirical research.

This study examined the effects of factors reflecting both the predisposition theory and socialization/experience theory. The following review focused on demographic, experiential, and orientation factors that were included in this study. A few studies touched on the impact of officer gender on their attitudes toward citizens. One study found that gender was conditionally linked to officers' view on citizens, with female officers in one police department (but not in the second police department) less likely than male officers to assume responsibility for order-maintenance service for communities and citizens (Paoline et al., 2000). In a series of comparative research on Taiwan police and the U.S. police, Sun and Chu reported that Taiwan female officers displayed more critical views of citizens than their male counterparts (Chu & Sun, 2007; I. Sun & Chu, 2006, 2008a, 2008b). Another study indicated that although officers' gender was unrelated to distrust of citizens, the interaction between sex, race, and education affected officers' attitudes toward citizens with non-White male officers more likely than non-White female to distrust citizens, and non-White female officers less likely than White female officers to provide comfort to citizens (DeJong, 2004). Studies also reported that female officers were less inclined than male officers to assimilate hypermasculine beliefs into their identity, leading to more favorable attitudes toward citizens (Schuck, 2014). Other studies, however, showed either a weak association between gender and officer perceptions of citizens (Brooks et al., 1993; Chu & Sun, 2007; Paoline et al., 2000; Poteyeva & Sun, 2009; I. Sun, 2002; A. Worden, 1993) or no relationship between them (Z. Chen, 2016; I. Sun et al., 2010).

Age was another demographic characteristic, which has received limited attention in prior studies of officers' attitudes toward citizens. A handful of studies reported either no age impact (I. Sun et al., 2010) or a weak association between age and police views of the public (Brooks et al., 1993; Haarr, 2001; I. Sun et al., 2009; A. Worden, 1993). More research is warranted before conclusive statements could be made about the effect of officer age.

Officers' educational attainment was also considered in previous studies. Similar to the influence of gender, officer educational background was found to have an inconsistent effect on police evaluations of the public. Some studies found that college-educated officers held more negative views of citizens (Brooks et al., 1993; Paoline at al., 2000), and better educated policewomen were more inclined to support the notion of distrusting citizens (I. Sun & Chu, 2006). However, other studies demonstrated that education could not explain much variation in police officers' perceptions of citizens (Z. Chen, 2016; Moon & Zager, 2007; I. Sun, 2002; I. Sun & Chu, 2006; I. Sun et al., 2010). Interaction effects among gender, race, and education were also identified, with female officers with college degrees more likely to be distrustful of citizens (DeJong, 2004).

Studies on American officers' attitudinal outlooks showed that minority officers were more supportive of building community ties (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). Research also revealed that race could not explain much of the variation in officers' views of citizens (Paoline et al., 2000; I. Sun, 2002). No study has tested the effect of race or ethnicity on officers' attitudes toward the citizenry in China mainly due to a small proportion of minority population. A recent study found that Han majority ethnicity was connected to Chinese police officers' role orientations, with Han officers showing more favorable attitudes toward crime fighting but less supportive for the order maintenance role than their non-Han counterparts (I. Sun et al., 2016). Such attitudinal differences may influence Chinese police officers' perceptions of local residents.

The effect of years of police experience was investigated in past studies on officers' attitudes toward citizens. Most studies showed a positive relationship, with experienced officers holding more positive assessments of citizens (Moon & Zager, 2007; Paoline et al., 2000; I. Sun, 2002; I. Sun & Chu, 2006). A curvilinear relationship between seniority and trust in citizens was found in one study on Chinese police cynicism. That was both officers with experience of more than 11 years and less than 5 years were less distrustful of citizens than those with 6–10 years of experience (Z. Chen, 2016), supporting the classical discovery of Niederhoffer that police cynicism reached its peak between 7 and 10 years of service before declining (Cooper, 1982; Niederhoffer, 1967). However, a study on police constables in Norway reported a negative linear relationship between tenure and distrust of citizens (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2005). Still, other studies found no relationship between work seniority and police evaluations of citizens (Brooks et al., 1993; A. Worden, 1993).

A few past studies analyzed the connection between officers' work assignments (e.g., community policing) and their attitudes toward local residents, with mixed results being reported. Some studies suggested a positive linkage between community policing assignment and trust in citizens (Paoline et al., 2000). Others found a negative relationship between community policing assignments and officers' attitudes toward citizen cooperation (I. Sun, 2002). Still, others indicated no relationship between the two (Z. Chen, 2016).

Besides officer demographic characteristics and socialization characteristics, it is argued that officers' role orientations could influence their attitudes toward the citizenry. Such attitudinal propensities are included in the analysis as officers' perceptions of the proper scope and content of police roles are heavily shaped by their academy and field training and on-the-job socialization experiences. In other words, perceived role orientations are cultivated chiefly through frequent interactions with key reference groups and the exposure to police cultures. As studies on police subculture suggested, officers who endorsed a traditional role of crime fighting would be likely to display a "them-versus-us" mentality and subsequently distrust citizens (Buerger, 2007; Caplan,

2003; Niederhoffer, 1967; Pollock, 2012; Reiner, 2010; Rubinstein, 1973; Skolnick & Bayley, 1988a, 1988b; Wooden & Rogers, 2014), while officers who believed in helping citizens to solve their problems and protect their business tended to view citizens as grateful and supportive to the police (Karp, 2000; Moore, Trojanowicz, & Kelling, 1988; Paoline, 2003; Rosenbaum, 1988). In the United Kingdom, researchers found that police occupational subculture transcended demographic factors in fostering officers' occupational outlooks: Officers tended to identify their force as an in-group while the public as an out-group (Reiner, 2010), and such mentality remained influential over police attitudes toward the public even when community policing was established as the new orientation of policing and demographic diversity was achieved in the police force (Myhill & Bradford, 2013).

In this study, two role orientation variables were examined: crime-fighting role orientation and service role orientation. Under the traditional mass line ideology, Chinese officers' service tasks cover the practices of both order maintenance and service orientations that are commonly distinguished in Western countries. It was plausible that officers favoring the crime-fighting role were more prone to have negative attitudes toward citizens, while officers supporting serving citizens were more likely to have positive views on citizens.

Method

Data Collection and Sample

Data used in the study were collected from a police college located in a southwestern city in China. The college was founded in the 1950s to provide basic preservice training to police cadets. Over the past several decades, the college has steadily expanded into a higher education institution that currently offers bachelor's degree programs through its eight departments/majors to high school graduates and in-service, short-term training courses, or programs to police officers. A survey instrument, which contained 61 items, was developed based on past research on police occupational attitudes in both the United States and China (Chu & Sun, 2007; Paoline et al., 2000; I. Sun et al., 2009; I. Sun & Chu, 2006, 2008a, 2008b). The questionnaire was designed with the purpose to obtain information on officers' attitudes toward work priorities, community policing, citizens, and job satisfaction as well as their background characteristics.

The project was carried out with the assistance of an instructor, who collected survey data during the winter of 2014 from a few hundred police supervisors who were attending an on-the-job training course at the college. These police supervisors were assigned to various units within the city police force and held a rank of sergeant or above. They were informed at the beginning of their training course by the instructor about the opportunity of participating in this research project. The officers were aware of the purpose of the study and the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation before taking the survey. A total of 230 surveys were distributed to officers in their classrooms and 219 surveys were returned, resulting in a 95% response rate. Eight surveys had to be dropped because of missing responses to items used in the analysis. In the end, a final sample of 211 police supervisors was used.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of sample officers were male (76%) and the Han majority (92%). The mean of age and year of police experience were 35 years old and 11 years, respectively. About a quarter (24%) of respondents were working in field stations. Because of the lack of official demographic data on officers and supervisors of the whole police department in the city, the representation of sample officers could not be assured. The researchers' own knowledge about the police force indicated that there was a reasonable congruence between the study sample and the population.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables in Regression Analysis.

Variables	M	SD	Range	α
Dependent variables				
Citizen virtue	12.67	2.01	6–16	.61
Citizen cooperation with police	11.75	2.82	4–18	.62
Citizen input in police work	8.77	2.32	3–12	.74
Independent variables				
Male	0.76	0.43	0–1	—
Age	34.47	2.21	28–42	—
Racial majority/Han	0.92	0.28	0–1	—
Educational attainment	3.94	0.90	1–6	—
Year of police experience	11.52	2.87	1–24	—
Field station	0.24	0.43	0–1	—
Crime-fighting orientation	4.05	1.50	3–12	.74
Service orientation	10.16	1.84	3–12	.73

Note. $n = 211$. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; α = Cronbach's α.

Measures

The dependent variables in this study were three dimensions reflecting police attitudes toward citizens (see Table 1). *Citizen virtue* was an additive scale consisting of 3 items asking respondents whether they agreed that (1) most citizens will do the right thing, (2) citizens have goodwill, and (3) citizens are willing to do the right thing to improve the order of their community. The original response categories for the first 2 items varied from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (6) and were reverse coded. The original response for the third item varied from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4) and was reverse coded too. A higher score of the index suggested a stronger belief of citizen's good virtue. The scale had a Cronbach's α of .61, indicating acceptable reliability.

Citizen cooperation with police was an additive scale of 3 items: (1) most citizens will inform the police when they see something or somebody suspicious, (2) most citizens will offer information when the police ask them to help in finding suspects, and (3) citizens are willing to report to police when they witness a crime. The original response categories ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (6) and were reverse coded so that a higher score reflected a stronger agreement with the notion of citizen willingness to cooperate with the police. The scale had a Cronbach's α of .62, suggesting acceptable reliability.

Citizen input in police work was constructed based on 3 items: (1) police officers should work with citizens on noncriminal issues in a community, (2) working with citizens on noncriminal issues is as important as enforcing the law, (3) working with citizens is the key in successfully solving problems in a neighborhood. The original response categories ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4) and were reverse coded so that a greater value suggested a higher degree of agreement with the statement. The scale had a Cronbach's α of .74, indicating acceptable reliability.

The independent variables included three groups of variables representing officers' demographic characteristics, assignment and experience, and role orientations. Officers' demographic characteristics included gender, age, ethnicity, and educational attainment. *Gender* and *ethnicity* were coded as dummy variables with 1 representing male and the Han majority. *Age* was measured in years. *Educational attainment* was a six-category variable (1 = *high school*, 6 = *master's degree and above*). Assignment and experience included *field station*, a dummy variable indicating whether the officer worked at a *field station* (1) or *not* (0), and *year of police experience*, a continuous variable measured in years.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Summary.[a]

Variables	Citizen Virtue	Citizen Cooperation	Citizen Input
Background characteristics			
Male	−.00 (.32)	−.18* (.46)	−.06 (.37)
Age	.14* (.06)	−.02 (.09)	.11 (.07)
Ethnic majority/Han	−.10 (.52)	−.10 (.75)	−.02 (.60)
Educational attainment	.02 (.15)	−.00 (.22)	.04 (.18)
Socialization/experience			
Year of police experience	.05 (.05)	−.03 (.07)	.01 (.06)
Field station	−.08 (.31)	.00 (.46)	.08 (.37)
Role orientations			
Crime-fighting orientation	−.15* (.09)	−.02 (.14)	−.03 (.11)
Service orientation	.27*** (.07)	.19** (.11)	.34*** (.09)
R^2	.11	.04	.10

[a]Entries are standardized regression coefficients from ordinary least squares regression, with standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Role orientations included crime-fighting orientation and service orientation. *Crime-fighting orientation* was an additive variable asking officers to rate the importance of some police goals: (1) fighting crime, (2) antiterrorists, and (3) attacking narcotic crime. Response categories ranged from *very unimportant* (1) to *very important* (4). A higher score on the scale suggested a stronger orientation toward the crime-fighting role. The Cronbach's α associated with the scale is .74, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Service orientation was an additive scale of 3 items: (1) offering service to the community should be an important measurement in assessing an officer's work, (2) community service is very relevant to the success of police work, and (3) a successful service-oriented policing in a community could bring down crime rate. Response categories ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). The scale had a Cronbach's α of .73, suggesting acceptable internal consistency. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for all variables in this study. The variance inflation factors (VIFs) were examined for multicollinearity. The highest VIF was *age* with a value of 1.09, which was smaller than the generally accepted limit of 10 (Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim, & Wasserman, 1996), suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern in this study.

Results

Three separate ordinary least squares regression models (see Table 2) were estimated to answer the two research questions of this study. The first panel presented the model with the effects of independent variables on officers' perceptions of *citizen virtue*. Among officer background characteristic, only one exerted a significant effect, with older officers more likely to agree with the statements of citizen virtue. The task assignment and years of experience, two socialization variables, were found unrelated to officer attitudes toward citizen virtue, whereas both role orientation variables were significant predictors. Officers with a service role orientation were more likely to believe that citizens had good virtue. On the contrary, officers with a crime-fighting orientation were less inclined to favor such a notion. Standardized coefficients suggest that, among all predictors, the variable service orientation (.27) has the strongest impact on officer attitudes toward citizen virtue, followed by crime-fighting orientation (−.15) and age (.14). All independent variables together accounted for 11% of the variation in police attitudes toward citizen virtue.

The next model assessed the effects of the independent variables on officers' attitudes toward citizen cooperation with the police. Similar to the results in the first model, among officer demographics, only one (gender) was a significant predictor. Male officers were significantly less likely than female officers to support the notion of citizen cooperation with the police. Two socialization variables were not associated to perceptions of citizen cooperation. Among the two role orientations, only the service orientation mattered. Officers endorsing service activities were more likely to believe that citizens are willing to cooperate with the police. Among the independent variables, service role orientation (.19) continues to be the strongest predictor, followed closely by officer gender (−.18). The model explained only 4% of the variation in officer attitudes toward citizen cooperation with the police.

The third panel reported the results testing officers' opinions on citizen input in police work. Only one variable, service role orientation, is significantly associated with officer's attitudes toward citizen input in police work. Those who hold stronger orientations in service were more likely to agree that citizens should have input in police work. The explanatory variables accounted for 10% of the variation in officer views of citizen input in police work.

Discussion

Although past studies have investigated various attitudinal outlooks of police officers, there were few attempts to understand what factors affect officer evaluations of the most important reference group of their work—local residents. Even rarer was research that assessed police occupational attitudes in transitional China, where police–community relations have faced great challenges in recent decades. This study represented one of the first attempts to explore the connections between Chinese police demographics, assignment and experience, and role orientations and their attitudes toward citizens. Three major findings emerged from the analysis.

First, neither the predisposition theory nor the differential socialization/experience theory is effective in predicting three aspects of officer attitudes toward their clients. Although gender and age were linked to officer perceptions of the citizenry in two separate models, their influences were not consistent and each was limited to a single model. Nonetheless, a few interesting findings are worthy of discussion. For example, we found that male officers were more critical than their female counterparts in their opinions on citizen cooperation with the police. This finding could be a result of the gendered work assignments in the Chinese police forces. Chinese female officers are more likely to undertake administrative and supportive tasks in line with their traditional gender–role expectations, whereas male officers usually undertake frontline work assignments. As a result, in their past work experiences, male officers have more opportunities to encounter unsupportive citizens in dealing with neighborhood disorder and crime problems, which may lower their evaluations of citizen cooperation with the police. Another possible explanation is that women are cultivated with an ethic of care due to the socially constructed expectations on females (Gilligan, 1982). Female officers thus tend to be more patient, considerate, and thoughtful than their male counterparts and comparatively successful in communication and cooperation with citizens, resulting in more pleasant experiences and favorable perceptions of citizens' cooperation among female officers. Future research should take the possible moderating role of gender into consideration and continue to explore the gendered structural influence in police work and division of tasks, and how it affects various aspects of officers' occupational outlooks.

We also found that older supervisors were more inclined to favor the notion of citizen virtue. One may speculate that older officers have more life experiences and developed a more realistic view of the nature of human beings, leading to more favorable attitudes toward citizen virtue. Our data do not contain direct evidence to support or refute this possible explanation, however. Future studies

should investigate how officer's age, their ontological view toward the nature of humans, and occupational attitudes are correlated.

Although previous research has confirmed the importance of socialization in shaping officer occupational outlooks (e.g., Van Maanen, 1974), the "differential socialization and experience" perspective received weak support in this study. Both year of police experience and field station assignment failed to predict officers' attitudes toward citizens. Such a weak linkage could be due to the limitation associated with our measurement as working in field station was constructed as a dummy variable, inadequately reflecting the complex process of socialization and the complexity of work environment that officers experienced. Future studies should employ in-depth interviews or ethnographic work to untangle the connections between officer socialization experience and their job-related attitudes.

Second, our findings suggest that officer occupational attitudes are not stand-alone but highly intertwined phenomena as their role orientations are significantly related to multiple dimensions on attitudes toward the citizenry. As expected, a role tendency toward service is accompanied by more favorable perceptions of citizen virtue, in sharp contrast from the tendency toward crime fighting. Furthermore, officers' service orientation, but not their crime-fighting orientation, was associated with their favorable judgment on citizen cooperation with and input in police work. Taking these findings together, officers' preferences for service-related tasks were clearly strongly linked to an overall positive evaluation of the citizenry. Our findings also suggest that numerous police–citizen violent confrontations in recent decades resulting mainly from public protests have taken a toll on Chinese officers' views of the virtuousness of community residents. Such perception of the citizenry echoes the "we-versus-they" mentality or subculture, which emphasizes the distinctions between officers and civilians, commonly found among U.S. officers in early studies of the police (Van Maanen, 1974; Yunker, 1977). The possible intertwined relationship between the crime-fighting orientation, police subculture and solidarity, and disbelief in citizens' virtue, and even hostility toward citizens, should be further investigated in future studies on Chinese police.

Finally, factors in the models exerted different influences over various dimensions of officers' attitudes toward citizens. For example, the two role orientations affected officers' perceptions of citizen virtue, but the crime-fighting orientation was weakly connected to views of citizen cooperation and input with the police. In addition, as mentioned above, officer age and gender each exerted a significant effect on one of the three different attitudinal dimensions on citizens. Collectively, our findings indicate the need for future studies to measure officer attitudes toward citizens along different dimensions and perhaps the development of explanatory models that are suitable for distinguishable attitudes.

Although this study has made a genuine contribution to the existing literature, a few limitations should be noted. First, the results were based on a cross-sectional analysis, which were susceptible to problems of causal ordering. For example, although we found that officer role orientations influenced their attitudes toward citizen virtue, it is possible that officer views of citizen virtue shape their developments of role orientations. Such a potential reciprocal relationship should be further assessed in future research. Second, this study was based on data collected from police supervisors in a large metropolitan in China. Findings of this study thus may not be generalized to supervisors in smaller or rural police departments as well as rank and file officers. Further research is needed to explore officers in different areas and ranks in order to assess the congruence (or incongruence) in their attitudes. Finally, although our analysis yielded some findings on officers' attitudes toward the citizenry, it also suggested the inadequacy of officers' demographics and socialization factors in accounting for their views of citizens. Same as the models in various studies testing officers' attitudinal outlooks (e.g., I. Sun et al., 2016), the models in the current study accounted for a small portion of the variance in attitudes toward local residents. Future studies should consider collecting

data from multiple agencies and incorporating other levels of predictors, such as organizational characteristics (e.g., size, cultures, and leadership styles), in a multilevel analysis to advance the test on and explanatory power of officer subjective outlooks related to the citizenry.

Findings of this study reveal several implications for the Chinese police. First, our findings clearly show a link between officer role orientations and attitudes toward citizens, particularly citizen virtue. This implies that if police top brass would like to cultivate officers' views of virtuous citizens and a greater citizen role in police work, then programs and trainings aimed at strengthening their acceptance of service roles should be put into place. It is also important to help officers reconcile the conflict between crime-fighting and service orientation in their perception on citizen virtue. After all, both orientations are pillars of policing, and they should not be essentially counteracting each other. Second, certain groups of officers could be targeted to improve their perceptions of the citizenry. For instance, male officers' attitudes toward citizen cooperation may be improved by rotating them among crime investigation, community service, and administrative units. Similarly, in-service training and support should be offered to younger officers who are less optimistic about citizen virtue. A general positive attitude toward local residents and a healthy police–community relationship would undoubtedly not only benefit the Chinese police but also facilitate domestic governance and social stability in China.

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