

# The Image of the Police in Israel

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**The police in several Western countries** have been the object of a good deal of dissatisfaction lately, whether in open confrontation with rioters and demonstrators, or as the object of severe criticism by the courts and civilian review boards. Since the respect and cooperation of the public are essential for effective police operation—in reporting crimes, assisting officers, testifying in court, or in less direct ways—police departments have begun to turn their attention to the sources of this tension. Simultaneously, this problem has become a focus of study for a number of social scientists (see, for example, Banton, 1964; Bordua, 1967; Cumming et al., 1965; Gardiner, 1969; Goldstein, 1963; Gourley, 1954; Skolnick, 1966; and Wilson, 1968). We have undertaken a study of some aspects of the relationship between the police and the public in Israel, in the context of a wider series of studies on patterns of contact between bureaucratic organizations and their clients. There may be factors in this relationship which are not evident in other countries; for example, Israeli police are organized on a national basis with centralized control rather than by local departments as in the American system, and the Israeli police are integrated with the national security effort. These very differences, however, may clarify some fundamental elements of the police-public encounter in general.

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In developing a theoretical framework for this study, we began with the assumption that four very broad categories of factors account for the relationship between the police and the public:

- (a) the sociocultural context;
- (b) the aims and functions of police work;
- (c) specific background characteristics and attitudes of the police officer and the person(s) with whom he is dealing; and
- (d) situational factors.

Although these categories are not mutually exclusive, they do provide rough guidelines for a systematic approach to the problem.<sup>1</sup>

In this study, we explored some aspects of the public's attitudes toward the police. There were three main parts to the research: expectations for police behavior in particular situations, evaluation of the personal qualities of the police officer and the nature of police work in general, and willingness of the public to cooperate with the police. It seems clear how these attitudes can directly bear upon interaction with the police, but in what way are the other factors relevant for public-police relations?

The sociocultural context refers to the normative and interinstitutional setting in which contact with the police takes place. Since the authority of the police is contingent upon normative consensus, the degree of social integration within the community will have important consequences for the amount and kind of power or authority which the police can wield. Other parameters of police authority are the formal and informal web of relations between the police and the political structure, the courts, the mass media, and other institutions.

The nature of police work is a category embracing organizational dimensions of the police, such as the hierarchy of authority and the definition of goals. Traditionally, the role of the police officer has been exclusively one of control, with the emphasis upon law enforcement; in modern society, however, the police officer has also come to function as an agent of help, with the emphasis upon service to the community.<sup>2</sup> The contrasting nature of these roles makes it difficult to pigeonhole police work into any of the usual classifications of occupations or practitioner-client relationships. Is it a profession or a bureaucracy? It does not comfortably fit either category. Who "benefits" from police work? Though the "prime beneficiary" of the police is the "public at large," many of their activities are for the benefit of individuals, as in service organizations.<sup>3</sup> Is their contact with the public "heuristic"—tailored to the individual—or "programmed"—standardized? The handling of family or neighborhood quarrels, for example, is presumably highly "programmed," in the sense that regulations exist which define the conditions under which an arrest should be made; yet differential enforcement of the law according to the social characteristics of the people involved suggests that a more heuristic approach is

the one actually used (see Thompson, 1962). The ways in which police administrators define their goals may profoundly affect the way the individual department is run.

We can therefore expect to find that in the third category, the background characteristics and attitudes of the police and the public, the ambiguities of this theoretical bind will find expression. How the police define their function and the degree to which the public perceives and accepts that definition will be manifested in the attitudes and images each has of the other. This includes the multifarious and conflicting expectations for law enforcement, criteria for police efficiency, and evaluations of the social status and working conditions of the police officer. We can also expect these attitudes to vary with class and subgroup memberships of both the officers and the citizens, and to be affected by the communications media to which they are exposed.

Finally, situational factors—location of the contact between the officer and the citizen, reason for contact, amount of danger in the situation, behavior of the citizen, and so on—provide important cues for police reactions and affect the outcome of a particular encounter.

## **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

The data for this study were collected in 1,926 interviews, carried out in the first few months of 1969, in a random sample of the Jewish population in the four big cities of Israel and their environs (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, and Beer Sheva.) Interviewing was conducted by the field staff of the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research and took place in the interviewees' homes. Two hundred thirty-seven individuals declined to participate in the study. The population from which the sample was drawn comprises approximately 70% of the total adult Jewish population in the country.

The interviews included: ten questions dealing with the public's expectations for police behavior in specific situations; eight questions designed to explore the public's evaluation of the personal qualities of the police officer and the nature of the work in general; and five questions concerned with the willingness of citizens to become involved in situations which do not directly concern them.

## **FINDINGS**

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR POLICE BEHAVIOR IN PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

The type of interaction between the public and the police on which we focused in this part of the study dealt with minor traffic violations. Although

the nature of such interaction is limited and specific, nonetheless it is a very prevalent type of contact, and perhaps the only kind in which every citizen is a potential client of the police. One can possibly generalize from this specific situation to other types of contact which are comparable—e.g., minor violations, procedural matters, and the like—but obviously one cannot generalize from this to situations in which a more serious offense is committed.

A useful method for measuring the public's attitudes toward police behavior is to ask about the same situation from two points of view: "ideal" behavior—how the respondent feels the police officer *should* behave—and "actual" behavior—how the respondent feels the police officer *does* in fact behave. The discrepancy between the two is an indication of the amount of dissatisfaction with the police, i.e., the extent to which perceived actual behavior matches the public's ideal expectations. This method of breaking down an attitude into ideal and actual expectations and using the gap between them as an "index of satisfaction" may serve as a useful tool for other attitude studies as well.

Using this method, we described to respondents two situations which were concerned with relatively minor traffic violations by a pedestrian and a driver. They were chosen under the assumption that there would be more disagreement with police behavior for relatively negligible offenses than for crimes of a serious nature. For the "pedestrian situation," the respondent was asked, "Imagine a situation in which a traffic officer stops a man crossing the street outside the crosswalk on a busy thoroughfare, which is, as you know, a violation. Of the following ways in which the officer could behave, which, in your opinion, is the way he *ought* to behave?" Following the respondent's "ideal" reply, he was asked, "And how would an officer usually behave in such a situation?" The same two questions were put to the respondents following a description of the "driver situation": "Imagine a situation in which a traffic officer stops a driver who does not give the right-of-way to a pedestrian at a crosswalk."

The kind of behavior studied in these questions was ticket-giving and police manner for the two situations. The alternative courses of action for ticket-giving are limited, of course, to either giving a ticket or not giving one. For manner, however, three possibilities were presented to the respondents; these alternatives described "tough," polite, and extremely polite police behavior. Thus, there are six possible combinations of ticket-giving and manner, and the respondents were asked to select the one description which was closest to "ideal" behavior, as they saw it, and the one which, in their opinion, most resembled the "actual" behavior of the police officer. The distribution of answers is given in Table 1.

In order to clarify these data, Table 1a presents only those respondents who answered positively to the questions on ticket-giving. It can be seen that the majority say the police would actually give tickets in these situations: 78% think the pedestrian would be given one, and 88% think the driver would be ticketed

**TABLE 1**  
**Ideal and Actual Expectations for Ticket-Giving and Manner Toward**  
**Pedestrian and Driver Violators (in percentages)**

	Situation			
	Pedestrian		Driver	
	Ideal	Actual	Ideal	Actual
1. Informs the man that he committed a violation and requests identification papers. <i>Does not</i> listen to the man's arguments, requests, or explanations; <i>does not</i> enter into conversation with him, and <i>gives</i> him a ticket.	4	34	14	39
2. Informs the man that he committed a violation and requests identification papers. <i>Listens</i> to the man's arguments, <i>answers</i> them, <i>explains</i> the nature of the offense, and <i>gives</i> him a ticket.	34	32	42	36
3. Informs the man that he committed a violation and requests identification papers. <i>Converses</i> with the man at length, not just about his offense, but in general about accidents caused by violations and carelessness. <i>Expresses hope</i> that in the future there won't be a need to give him tickets, and <i>gives</i> him a ticket.	22	12	25	13
4. Informs the man that he committed a violation and requests identification papers. <i>Does not listen</i> to the man's arguments, requests, or explanations; <i>does not</i> enter into conversation with him, and <i>does not give</i> him a ticket.	2	4	1	3
5. Informs the man that he committed a violation and requests identification papers. <i>Listens</i> to the man's arguments, <i>answers</i> them, <i>explains</i> the nature of the offense, and <i>does not give</i> him a ticket.	17	11	8	7
6. Informs the man that he committed a violation and requests identification papers. <i>Converses</i> with the man at length, not just about his offense, but in general about accidents caused by violations and carelessness. <i>Expresses hope</i> that in the future there won't be a need to give him tickets, and <i>does not give</i> him a ticket.	20	8	9	3
Total	99	101	99	101
(n)	(1,913)	(1,768)	(1,899)	(1,763)

("actual" answers 1-3 in Table 1). These figures seem to indicate that the public expects strict treatment from the police for relatively minor offenses. Yet when we consider the *ideal* response, it appears that most respondents are themselves normative: 60% think the pedestrian *should* be ticketed and 81% think the driver *should* be ("ideal" answers 1-3). Thus, in the driver situation, only 7% more respondents feel the police officer will give a ticket than feel it is appropriate, while in the pedestrian situation, there is a discrepancy of 18%. It appears, then, that the public is somewhat more satisfied with the strict handling of drivers who don't stop for pedestrians than it is with the treatment of jaywalkers.

The evaluations of police manner show a much greater gap than for ticket-giving. Table 1b presents only the expectations for a tough manner described in answers 1 and 4. Whereas only 6% of the respondents feel that the ideal police approach to a pedestrian should be tough, 38% think this would be the actual police manner. Similarly, only 15% think toughness is appropriate for the driver, but 42% perceive this as the actual police response. Thus, the public is more dissatisfied with perceived police manner than with ticket-giving and considers it too harsh. In a study of public attitudes toward various government agencies in India, a similar criticism was leveled at the police: 43% of the urban

**TABLE 1a**  
**Ideal and Actual Expectations for Ticket-Giving to Pedestrian and Driver Violators (percentage saying the policeman *should* and/or *does* give a ticket)**

	Situation			
	Pedestrian	Total n	Driver	Total n
Ideal ("should give a ticket")	60	(1,913)	81	(1,899)
Actual ("does give a ticket")	78	(1,768)	88	(1,763)

**TABLE 1b**  
**Ideal and Actual Expectations for a "Tough" Manner to Pedestrian and Driver Violators (percentage saying the policeman *should be* and/or *is* "tough")**

	Situation			
	Pedestrian	Total n	Driver	Total n
Ideal ("should be tough")	6	(1,913)	15	(1,899)
Actual ("is tough")	38	(1,768)	42	(1,763)

sample considered them rude or discourteous (Eldersveld et al., 1968: 56). However, this was a general question and not presented in the context of behavior toward lawbreakers, which may have elicited a harsher rating in the present study. This is one reason that the ideal and actual categories were found helpful—identifying behavior which may be considered justifiably tough.

This approach to the data is particularly useful in comparing the attitudes of various subgroups of the population. For example, it was interesting to check the relation between a respondent's driving status and his expectations for ideal and actual behavior of the policeman in the two situations (Table 2). Although differences between drivers and nondrivers were not dramatic, we did find that the gap between perceptions of ideal and actual behavior is somewhat smaller for those least "involved" with driving. Those having neither a vehicle nor a driver's license were most satisfied with police behavior in both situations. Conversely, licensed drivers and owners of vehicles were somewhat more critical of police practice, not only with respect to ticketing, as shown in Table 2, but also in evaluating police manner.

On the other hand, this correlation between driving status and relative dissatisfaction with the police does not display the same intensity as indicated by a study carried out by the Royal Commission on the Police in England. The Commission found that twice as many motorists as nonmotorists (17.5% of motorists, 7.3% of nonmotorists) had personally found the police to be impolite or nonhelpful. However, the questions posed by the Commission referred to personal experiences of the respondent with the police, which naturally invites more criticism than the hypothetical situations dealt with in this survey (Royal Commission on the Police, Morton-Williams, 1962: 7-9).

Another background variable which can be expected to be of particular significance in Israel is the ethnic origin of the respondent. Israel, as a heterogeneous immigrant society, is composed of groups with different sets of

**TABLE 2**  
**Ideal and Actual Expectations for Ticket-Giving to Pedestrian and Driver Violators, by Driving Status (percentage saying the policeman *should* and/or *does* give a ticket)**

Driving Status <sup>a</sup>	(n)	Pedestrian Situation			Driver Situation		
		Ideal	Actual	Gap	Ideal	Actual	Gap
Have license and vehicle	( 459)	58	78	-20	76	88	-12
Have license, no vehicle	( 186)	56	81	-25	81	88	- 7
No license, have vehicle <sup>b</sup>	( 140)	62	80	-18	77	85	- 8
No license, no vehicle	(1,131)	62	77	-15	84	87	- 3

a. For driver, ideal situation,  $\chi^2 = 15.3$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .005$ ; all other values of  $\chi^2$  n.s.

b. Vehicle in possession of member of family.

norms, values, and attitudes toward authority and the application of sanctions; these can be expected to have a significant effect upon their attitudes toward the police. Therefore, in analyzing the data, the population was divided into three ethnic groups on the basis of their country of origin: (a) Asia (excluding Israel) and North Africa; (b) Europe and the Americas; and (c) Israel.

To our surprise, we found that ethnicity alone does not correlate with a particular expectation for police behavior. More than the ethnic factor, the education of the respondent seemed to make a difference, as indicated by the data on the driver situation (Table 3). Within each one of the three ethnic groups, those with the highest level of education were more likely to say a ticket should be given, i.e., they tended to justify a stricter attitude toward driver violators. Yet because this college-educated group was also the most likely to say that the police do in fact apply the sanction, the gap between the ideal and actual behavior is not much larger for this group than for any other. In other words, members of the groups are not significantly more dissatisfied with police behavior on ticket-giving than members of any other group.

The data on police manner also reveal that ethnicity does not affect attitudes as much as education does. Table 4 indicates that although the highest education groups are the most likely to say the police do act tough to driver violators, they are *not* the most likely group to think this is ideal behavior. This is reflected in the larger gap for the college-educated, which indicates their relative dissatisfaction with police manner.

**TABLE 3**  
**Ideal and Actual Expectations for Ticket-Giving to Driver Violators,**  
**by Ethnicity and Education of the Respondent (percentage saying**  
**the policeman *should* and/or *does* give a ticket)**

Ethnic Origin	Years of		Ideal <sup>a</sup>	Actual <sup>b</sup>	Gap
	Education	(n)			
Asia, North Africa	0-8	(293)	83	89	-6
	9-12	(203)	81	88	-7
	13+	( 33)	91	100	-9
Europe, the Americas	0-8	(271)	78	82	-4
	9-12	(485)	81	85	-4
	13+	(207)	84	90	-6
Natives	0-8	( 92)	80	88	-8
	9-12	(211)	80	87	-7
	13+	(102)	90	94	-4

a. In ideal situation:  $\chi^2$  values for education, ethnicity controlled—all n.s.;  $\chi^2$  values for ethnicity, education controlled—all n.s.

b. In actual situation:  $\chi^2$  values for education, ethnicity controlled—natives of Europe and the Americas,  $\chi^2 = 6.7, 2 \text{ d.f.}, P < .05$ ; all others n.s.;  $\chi^2$  values for ethnicity, education controlled—0-8 years of education,  $\chi^2 = 6.2, 2 \text{ d.f.}, P < .05$ ; all others n.s.



Analyzing the data by ethnicity and education together brings into focus the general question of the retention of ethnic traits among immigrant groups. In this part of the study, groups at the same level of education tend to be similar in their answers, while ethnic distinctions tend to fade, but do not entirely disappear. This trend is borne out and more sharply illustrated in the next part of the study.

We also expected to find that ethnic differences fade as the immigrant spends more time in the country, but the data do not show a dramatic trend in this direction. Ignoring ethnicity, however, the early immigrant groups—the old-timers in Israel—tended to be the *least* normative, as opposed to both the more recent immigrants and native Israelis. This may be a reflection of the age of the respondent, however, for older respondents were the least normative, and they presumably constitute a larger proportion of the early immigrant groups.

#### EVALUATION OF THE POLICE OFFICER AND OF POLICE WORK IN GENERAL

The second part of this research dealt with the evaluation of four aspects of the police: (a) general image of police efficiency; (b) five personal characteristics deemed important for a police officer; (c) status of police work in comparison with other occupations; and (d) working conditions of the police officer.

The first series of questions concerned the general image of police efficiency and the following five characteristics of the police officer—integrity, initiative, judgment, manner in dealing with the citizen, and ability to solve problems. The respondents were asked to rate the police in each of these areas on a seven-point

TABLE 4  
Ideal and Actual Expectations for a "Tough" Manner to Driver Violators, by Ethnicity and Education (percentage saying the policeman *should be* and/or *is* tough)

Ethnic Origin <sup>a</sup>	Years of Education <sup>a</sup>	(n)	Ideal	Actual	Gap
Asia, North Africa	0-8	(293)	15	35	-20
	9-12	(203)	14	36	-22
	13+	( 33)	18	48	-30
Europe, the Americas	0-8	(271)	19	45	-26
	9-12	(485)	15	40	-25
	13+	(207)	14	49	-35
Natives	0-8	( 92)	14	44	-30
	9-12	(211)	17	46	-29
	13+	(102)	14	50	-36

a. All  $\chi^2$  values, controlling for education and for ethnicity, are n.s.

scale (Table 5). Table 5a simplifies the above data by ranking these evaluations according to the percentage of respondents who rated the police in the two most negative and the two most positive categories of the scale.

There are three significant findings which emerge from the above tables. The first is that the public is remarkably well satisfied with the way the police perform their job in Israel. This general question was presented to the respondent as "the degree to which the police fulfill their duties," with the end-points of the rating scale given as "not at all" and "as well as possible." From Table 5, we can see that fully 79% of the answers fell in the three positive categories, while only 6% fell in the three negative ones. This finding presents a

**TABLE 5**  
**General Image of the Police and Evaluation of Police Officer**  
**Characteristics (in percentages)**

Evaluation	General Image	Integrity	Initiative	Ability to Solve Problems	Manner	Judgment
Negative	---	1	2	2	2	4
	--	1	1	4	5	5
	-	4	5	8	10	14
Neutral	0	12	14	19	20	25
Positive	+	22	23	23	26	24
	++	28	23	19	16	10
	+++	29	25	17	15	11
No answer	3	7	8	6	4	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(1,912)	(1,897)	(1,897)	(1,891)	(1,912)	(1,895)

**TABLE 5a**  
**Percentage of Respondents Evaluating the General Police Image**  
**and Police Officer Characteristics in the Two Most Negative**  
**and the Two Most Positive Categories**

	(n)	Negative	Positive
General image	(1,912)	2	57
Integrity	(1,897)	3	48
Manner	(1,912)	4	27
Initiative	(1,897)	6	36
Ability to solve problems	(1,891)	7	31
Judgment	(1,895)	9	21

sharp contrast with the data collected in India. Over 35% of the urban adults in that sample felt that the police are "doing a poor job" (the other options being "fair," "good," or "very good"; Eldersveld et al., 1968: 18-19). However, a favorable police image is not unique to Israel and was also reflected in the surveys done in Great Britain (Royal Commission on the Police, Morton-Williams, 1962: 5-6) and Los Angeles (Gourley, 1953, 1954) among others. Although a favorable police image is not unique to Israel, there is an additional dimension to police activities in this country which may further contribute to their high evaluation. Since the Six-Day War, the Israeli police force has assumed a large part of the security burden against Arab terrorism and sabotage. Consequently, they have come to be identified by the Jewish population as defenders against an aggressive Arab population. As a result of this new perception of the police in their role as security officers (rather than only performers of routine police functions), the police image may have been enhanced; they are seen as relatively successful protectors of the community against an external enemy. Thus, the apparent change in perception of the role of the police in Israel may be one of the factors contributing to the positive general image which they enjoy.

The second finding of note is that the respondents gave a higher rating to the police on their general image than on any of the characteristics which presumably constitute the image. In a sense, this parallels the finding of a study of juvenile attitudes toward the police conducted in Cincinnati, Ohio. In that survey, adolescents rated the police more favorably on generalities—e.g., "The police protect us from harm"—than on specific police-contact statements—e.g., "Police accuse you of things you didn't do" (Cincinnati Police, 1968: 26). One might argue that the reason the general image is more favorable than the components stems from the very fact of its generality: in the summing-up process, some negative aspects may be overlooked. Once the analysis proceeds from the general to the specific, perceptions of the police become more realistic.

Third, the ranking of characteristics suggests that the police are not rated quite as positively on characteristics which reflect their ability to act intelligently—judgment and ability to solve problems—as they are on characteristics which reflect their dedication and good intentions—integrity and initiative. These questions were also presented as scales—e.g., integrity was explained as "personal honesty," and the scale ranged from "no integrity at all" to "absolute integrity."

The next aspect of the police image which was studied concerned the status of police work in comparison with other occupations. This also was evaluated by asking the respondents to rate it on a nine-point scale in which the highest status position was defined as that of a Supreme Court Justice and the lowest, that of a relief worker (Table 6).

**TABLE 6**  
**Evaluation of the Status of Police Work in Comparison with**  
**Other Occupations (in percentages)**

Relief worker	1 - 1%
	2 - 3
	3 - 15
	4 - 22
	5 - 26
	6 - 16
	7 - 10
	8 - 4
	9 - 3
Supreme Court Justice	100%
(n = 1,883)	

As Table 6 indicates, the modal tendency is to place police work somewhere in the middle of the scale: 64% of the respondents are clustered around the middle three categories (4-6). This rating can be compared with the 1965 data of Hodge et al. (1966) on occupational prestige in the United States, where the policeman was commonly placed near the center of the job-status ladder. Interestingly, studies of the police officer's perception of his standing in the eyes of the public reveal that the policeman has a different image of his own status. A study done by Hovav (1963) in Israel, for example, found that the police ranked their occupation higher than they expected the public to rank them. The Royal Commission (1962: 41) which surveyed the opinions of *both* parties, reported that the public does rank the police higher than the police estimate that the public would rate them.

The last aspect of the police image which was explored was an evaluation of the working conditions of the police officer. It was explained to the respondent that this could range from difficult working conditions—"long hours, the possibility of night and weekend assignments, outdoor and indoor work, strenuous activity, and the like"—to easy conditions—"short, regular hours, in an office situation, involving little or no effort, and so on." As can be seen in Table 7, the great majority of respondents (74%) evaluated police work as difficult, ranking it in the lower four categories. Only 15% thought that police work was easy enough to rank it in the upper four categories. In studying the reasons for job turnover among former police officers in Israel, Hovav (1963) found that policemen also see police work as characterized by poor working conditions. The four main reasons cited for leaving the force were low salary, work on holidays and weekends, influence of work on the family, and the lack of opportunity for promotion. The other seven reasons mentioned were mainly concerned with the lack of public sympathy and tension among members of the police department.

**TABLE 7**  
**Evaluation of the Working Conditions of the Police**  
**Officer (in percentages)**

Hard working conditions	1 - 23%
	2 - 17
	3 - 20
	4 - 14
	5 - 11
	6 - 6
	7 - 5
	8 - 2
	9 - 2
Easy working conditions	100%
(n = 1,888)	

The evaluation of the above four aspects of the police showed some interesting correlations with certain background characteristics of the respondents. Driving status, for example, showed more systematic variation on these questions than on those concerning ticket-giving and manner in the pedestrian and driver situations. The more involved with driving the respondent was—by holding a driver's license or owning a car—the more he tended to rank the police lower on four characteristics (excluding integrity, which showed no significant variation), and the general image (Table 8). Drivers and car owners also tended to award the police lower occupational status than other respondents (Table 9).

In contrast to the findings of Tables 8 and 9, Gourley's study (1953, 1954) of the image of the police in Los Angeles revealed that the group most involved with driving—transportation workers—rated the police consistently higher than other groups. While the present study made no such occupational distinctions among the respondents, the replies analyzed by driving status did indicate the opposite tendency: that those more involved with driving tended to be somewhat more critical of the police. As previously mentioned, the Royal Commission (1962) found this same trend to be even more pronounced in Great Britain.

Most studies of police-public relations find significant variations among socioeconomic groups in their perceptions of the police. The Royal Commission (1962: 9), for example, noted that respondents of professional and skilled occupations were somewhat more critical of police behavior, based on their own personal experience, than were those of semiskilled and labor occupations. (This was partially attributed to the fact that a greater proportion of this group were motorists and the motorists were generally more critical.) The Hodge et al. (1966) study also showed that the wealthy were less respectful of police status than were the poor.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Gourley's (1954) survey disclosed that the more

**TABLE 8**  
**General Image of the Police and Evaluation of Police Officer**  
**Characteristics, by Driving Status (percentage in the**  
**two most positive categories)**

Driving Status	(n)	General Image <sup>a</sup>	Integ- rity <sup>b</sup>	Initia- tive <sup>c</sup>	Ability to Solve Problems <sup>d</sup>	Manner <sup>e</sup>	Judg- ment <sup>f</sup>
Have license and vehicle	( 461)	51	48	31	24	18	11
Have license, no vehicle	( 185)	48	53	36	29	25	14
No license, have vehicle <sup>g</sup>	( 140)	58	47	38	29	37	22
No license, no vehicle	(1,121)	61	48	39	36	33	26

a.  $\chi^2 = 18.9$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

b.  $\chi^2$  n.s.

c.  $\chi^2 = 8.6$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .05$ .

d.  $\chi^2 = 16.5$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

e.  $\chi^2 = 46.1$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

f.  $\chi^2 = 56.0$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

g. Vehicle in possession of member of family.

**TABLE 9**  
**Evaluation of the Status of Police Work in**  
**Comparison with other Occupations, by Driving Status**  
**(in percentages)**

	Driving Status <sup>a</sup>			
	Have License and Vehicle	Have License, No Vehicle	No License, Have Vehicle <sup>b</sup>	No License, No Vehicle
High status	11	13	15	20
Average	61	65	68	65
Low status	28	22	17	15
	100	100	100	100
(n)	(456)	(183)	(139)	(1,108)

a.  $\chi^2 = 52.7$ , 3 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

b. Vehicle in possession of member of family.

favorable image of the police was held by the less-educated and unskilled laborers. In short, most data indicate that higher socioeconomic groups are more critical of the police than lower socioeconomic groups.

In the present study, the economic variable alone is not related in strictly linear fashion to respondents' attitudes toward the police. Although there was a general tendency for the lower-income groups to be more positive than the higher-income groups, this factor does not demonstrate as regular a pattern as do ethnicity and education, among the socioeconomic variables.

Looking at ethnicity alone (Table 10), we find that those of Asian and North African backgrounds consistently rate the police higher on most personal characteristics (though not on the general image and less on integrity) than do respondents of European or American backgrounds.

These data become more interesting by combining the two variables—education and ethnicity. As can be seen in Table 11, there is a dramatic difference in attitudes between the well- and the poorly educated respondent: the higher the education of the respondent, the more critical he is of the police. Yet, as this table indicates, education does not entirely wash away the ethnic differences: comparing respondents from the two ethnic groups at the same level of education demonstrates that those with Asian and North African backgrounds still remain the most favorable about the police, especially in evaluating the qualities of intelligent action—judgment and the ability to solve problems.

**TABLE 10**  
**General Image of the Police and Evaluation of Police Officer**  
**Characteristics, by Ethnicity (percentage in the**  
**two most positive categories)**

Ethnicity	(n)	General Image <sup>a</sup>	Integ- rity <sup>b</sup>	Initia- tive <sup>c</sup>	Ability to Solve Problems <sup>d</sup>	Manner <sup>e</sup>	Judg- ment <sup>f</sup>
Asia and North Africa	( 636)	56	51	41	38	30	29
Europe and the Americas	(1,182)	57	49	33	28	26	18
Natives	( 87)	60	44	30	26	28	15

a.  $\chi^2 = 11.7$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .005$ .

b.  $\chi^2 = 23.8$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

c.  $\chi^2 = 27.7$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

d.  $\chi^2$  n.s.

e.  $\chi^2$  n.s.

f.  $\chi^2 = 27.6$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$ .

**WILLINGNESS OF THE PUBLIC TO COOPERATE WITH THE POLICE**

One of the critical problems of police enforcement is the unwillingness of the public to involve themselves in a situation in which they themselves are not directly concerned. This has been found to be one of the chief complaints of police officers<sup>5</sup> and is commonly the focus of police-citizen tension within the community. In this part of the present study, the willingness of the public to contact the police under such circumstances—or their stated reasons for not doing so—was investigated.<sup>6</sup>

These findings must be seen in the sociocultural context of the community, for assisting the police in enforcing the law entails a certain amount of consensus with that law. Where the police and the citizens feel themselves to be part of the same moral community—sharing the same values, goals, and customs—there is less need for legal controls, less deviance from the norm, and more mutual assistance when enforcement is necessary. Even though Israel is a heterogeneous society, and one expression of this heterogeneity is in diverse patterns of socialization to authority, the unique circumstances under which this society is

**TABLE 11**  
**General Image of the Police and Evaluation of Police Officer**  
**Characteristics, by Ethnicity and Education**  
**(percentage in two most positive categories)**

Ethnic Origin <sup>a</sup>	Years of Education <sup>b</sup>	(n)	General Image	Integrity	Initiative	Ability to Solve Problems	Manner	Judgment
Asia, N. Africa	0-8	(295)	64	55	47	45	39	36
	9-12	(206)	55	46	37	34	26	22
	13+	( 34)	41	47	30	27	9	18
Europe, the Americas	0-8	(272)	67	48	41	38	32	29
	9-12	(485)	55	47	34	28	31	19
	13+	(206)	51	49	25	19	22	10
Natives	0-8	( 94)	63	43	43	37	24	21
	9-12	(211)	55	50	33	25	20	11
	13+	(103)	42	52	25	16	9	9

a.  $\chi^2$  for ethnic origin, education controlled—**Manner**: 0-8,  $\chi^2 = 7.2$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .05$ ; 13+,  $\chi^2 = 9.9$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .01$ . **Judgment**: 0-8,  $\chi^2 = 7.5$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .025$ ; 9-12,  $\chi^2 = 10.4$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .01$ . all others n.s.

b.  $\chi^2$  values for education, ethnic origin controlled—**General Image**: Asia, N. Africa,  $\chi^2 = 8.6$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ ; Europe, the Americas,  $\chi^2 = 15.8$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$ ; Natives,  $\chi^2 = 9.0$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ . **Initiative**: Asia, N. Africa,  $\chi^2 = 7.6$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .025$ ; Europe, the Americas,  $\chi^2 = 12.9$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .005$ ; Natives,  $\chi^2 = 7.8$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ . **Ability to Solve Problems**: Asia, N. Africa,  $\chi^2 = 8.9$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ ; Europe, the Americas,  $\chi^2 = 12.9$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .005$ ; Natives,  $\chi^2 = 11.6$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .005$ . **Manner**: Asia, N. Africa,  $\chi^2 = 18.2$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$ ; Europe, the Americas,  $\chi^2 = 8.3$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ ; Natives,  $\chi^2 = 8.7$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ . **Judgment**: Asia, N. Africa,  $\chi^2 = 13.3$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .005$ ; Europe, the Americas,  $\chi^2 = 26.7$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$ ; Natives,  $\chi^2 = 8.5$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .02$ . **Integrity**: n.s.



developing create a remarkably high level of social integration. Especially where matters of security are concerned, there is a high degree of normative consensus and acceptance of authority, and this attitude may be expected to carry over into situations which are perceived as impinging upon security. One would therefore expect a positive response to the question of cooperation with the police.

In order to gauge the extent to which the public would cooperate by reporting suspicious circumstances to the police, a hypothetical situation was posed in which a group of young men is trying to break into a store at night. The respondents were told that "among the people passing by the store, there are those who would contact the police about this and there are those who, for various reasons, would refrain from doing so." The respondents were then asked a projective question: "Of the following reasons, which one is the most likely to cause someone to refrain from passing on information?" This was followed by a question on their own behavior: "How would you yourself behave in such a situation—would you inform the police or not? Why?" The possible reasons presented to them and their frequency of mention are given in Table 12.

**TABLE 12**  
**Evaluation of Public Behavior and Own Behavior in Cooperating**  
**with the Police (in percentages)**

Reasons for Noncooperation	Evaluation of Public Behavior	Evaluation of Own Behavior
1. Notification or filing a complaint requires an additional investment of time and energy.	39	5
2. The police don't pay enough attention to or deal personally with those who come to them.	6	1
3. In general, contact with the police is unpleasant; everyone sends you to someone else.	7	1
4. Complaining to the police doesn't usually help.	3	—
5. It's not a good idea to get mixed up with lawbreakers.	17	4
6. The public is apathetic, in general.	21	1
7. It's not worth getting involved with police or the courts.	5	2
8. Other reasons.	2	2
9. I would cooperate.	—	84
Total	100	100
(n)	(1,904)	(1,903)

Table 12 indicates a high degree of public cooperation: fully 84% claimed that they themselves would contact the police under such circumstances. One might possibly raise doubts about the reliability of this figure, as it may be distorted by the desire of the respondent to give the "right answer," yet, for the reasons given above, this tendency to cooperate does not seem to be exaggerated. The 16% who admitted they would not report it scattered their explanations among the various reasons. As to the possible reasons for noncooperation, however, the projective question indicates that of all the possible reasons, the investment of "time and trouble" was cited as the determining factor by 39% of the respondents. Twenty-one percent claimed that the public was "apathetic," and 17% noted the desire to avoid contact with lawbreakers.

It is interesting that of the three main reasons offered, only one of them—time and trouble—is possibly concerned with both the police and the citizen; the other two reasons reflect the absence of sufficient motivation on the part of the citizens themselves. The reasons which clearly place the blame for noncooperation upon the police—reasons 2, 3, and 4—are mentioned by a total of only 16% of the respondents. This corroborates the findings on the positive general image of the police.

To return to the problem of the heterogeneity of Israeli society and its reflection in cooperation with the police, it is worth examining the ethnic distribution of these data. It must first be mentioned that the police force in Israel—as is possibly the case in other countries—is primarily drawn from among the lower socioeconomic groups which, in this country, are composed of a large proportion of Asian and North African immigrants. Studies of the police in other countries indicate that their relations with the public may have class and ethnic overtones, as the social origin of the police officer may create role conflict if he perceives himself to be working for the establishment and against his own—if indeed he deals with more crime among the lower class (see Bradley, 1968). However, it was our feeling that the public cooperation with the police in Israel has no class or ethnic overtones, and this is borne out in the data. We found *no* significant variation among the ethnic groups in response to the question of their own cooperation: 81% of the Afro-Asian group and 86% of those with European or American backgrounds report that they themselves would cooperate. These figures are remarkably high for both groups. There is slight variation by other background variables, however, such as education. Although the differences are not significant, the data here reveal that there is a tendency for the better educated groups to be more willing to report the event to the police (Table 13). What seems to explain the uniform willingness to cooperate with the police among the ethnic groups is the apparent change in perception of the role of the police officer and the high degree of normative consensus, as previously discussed.

**TABLE 13**  
**Respondents Saying They would Cooperate with the Police,**  
**by Education and Ethnicity (in percentages)**

Education <sup>a</sup>	Ethnic Origin <sup>a</sup>		
	N. Africa, Asia	Europe, the Americas	Natives
0-8	79	81	78
9-12	84	87	87
13+	88	87	86

a. All values of  $\chi^2$  n.s.

All the ethnic groups cite the same three critical factors for reluctance to cooperate with the police: time and trouble, public apathy, and avoidance of lawbreakers. The groups do differ in ranking the importance of these three reasons. All are most likely to cite time and trouble, but respondents of Western origin—Europe or America—rank public apathy as the second most important reason. In contrast, respondents of Eastern origin—Asia or North Africa—rank avoidance of lawbreakers second and public apathy third.

These findings on ethnicity are again modified when the educational level of the respondent is taken into account. In general, the better-educated groups—regardless of ethnic origin—rank apathy as the second most important reason, while the less-educated conform to the pattern found for ethnic origin alone. In short, there is an interaction effect between ethnic origin and education of the respondents, but it appears that education influences answers to these questions, on the whole, more than ethnic origin does.

Finally, one interesting correlation is that respondents from low-income groups are not as likely to cite “time and trouble” as those from high-income groups, perhaps an expression of the “time is money” philosophy attributed to the latter groups.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study of the Israeli police was actually begun in early 1967, at a time when it was felt that the image of the police was at an ebb in Israel. Because of the intervening war in June 1967, the data were collected two years later, and public opinion has apparently changed in the interim. The image of the police among the Jewish people of Israel, as it emerges from this study, seems to be very favorable indeed.

As suggested earlier in this report, the satisfaction with the police in this country may be drawn from two sources: the perception of effective

performance of both regular police duties and special security functions. The usual police role includes activities which are commonly perceived as threatening or, at the very least, as potentially interfering with the daily activities of the citizen in public places. This tends to create some uneasy feelings among even law-abiding members of the community with whom the policeman comes in contact. In Israel, this characteristic apprehension is mitigated as the antagonistic role of the police is perceived by the Jewish population to be directed against the Arab community. This not only reduces the aggressive dimension of police work, but places them in the position of protector. From the point of view of the officer, his integration with the defense problem takes him out of routine police work and leads to higher morale, higher wages, more glamorous tasks, and, therefore, better relations with the public. We can only presume that this situation is an important source of the favorable public image, as there are no comparative data from before the war.

In breaking down the image of the police into its various components, the general image emerged as more positive than its individual components. It was mentioned that a similar pattern was found in another study of attitudes toward the police. In addition, the characteristics of the police which drew higher praise from the public were found to be those which affirmed their dedication and good intentions, rather than those which were related to their ability to act intelligently, which were seen least positively.

By studying the gap between "ideal" and "actual" expectations in order to gauge public satisfaction with the police in particular situations, we found that the anticipated police response generally met with approval. On the one hand, the public condoned the use of sanctions—even when the violation was fairly negligible—and, on the other hand, satisfaction was expressed with the behavior of the police. Nevertheless, although the respondents approved the use of sanctions, they were still less strict than they perceived the police to be. This was primarily true concerning less serious offenses, for example, the hypothetical case of a pedestrian violation used in this study. In other words, the less serious the violation, the larger the gap between the desired police reaction and the anticipated reaction.

In suggesting the kinds of reasons for not "getting involved" by reporting suspicious circumstances to the police, the respondents mentioned time and trouble most frequently, followed by public apathy and a general unwillingness to get mixed up with lawbreakers. The interesting point about these findings is that, despite the ambiguity of the time and trouble answer, the public only rarely mentioned any aspects of the police organization as a factor in not cooperating with them. This is another reflection of public approval of the police.

Different groups, of course, differed in terms of how favorably they viewed the police. In general, the higher socioeconomic groups in Israel were more

critical in all areas of their image of the police. Among the socioeconomic variables tested, the one which seemed best to account for variation was education. Although their overall image was positive, the better-educated tended to be relatively more critical. This finding, it was mentioned, is not unique to Israel and turns up in studies of the police conducted elsewhere.

Other characteristics of the respondents affected their answers less crucially than did education. Ethnic differences, for example, tended to wash away when education was held constant. In three of the four instances in which ethnicity was analyzed together with education (Tables 3, 4, 11, and 13), we found the effect of one's ethnic origin was diminished, although not altogether absent. The small number of cases, however, makes it difficult to generalize about this finding. Another factor which we expected to be more relevant was the driving status of the respondent, but this turned out to be of minimal importance on most questions.

Ideally, any study of the police-public encounter should investigate the mutuality of perceptions, attitudes, and expectations, but this study was limited to the public's point of view. Findings on the image of the police are primarily relevant for the country in which the study was conducted, but we feel that the very uniqueness of the situation in Israel may contribute to a fuller understanding of public-police relations in general.

## NOTES

1. This classification was adapted from a general framework for the study of patterns of contact between bureaucrats and clients. See Katz and Danet (forthcoming).

2. Among the authors who have made this distinction of police functions are Banton (1964: 6-7) who characterizes the policeman as both a "law officer" and a "peace officer"; Cumming et al (1965), who distinguish between the control and support functions; and Wilson (1968: 16-34), who refers to "order maintenance" and "law enforcement" roles of the police officer.

3. Blau and Scott (1962) classify organizations on the basis of who primarily benefits from the interaction. There are "mutual benefit associations," where the membership benefits; "business concerns," where the owners benefit; "service organizations," where the individual client benefits; and "commonweal organizations," where the public at large primarily benefits.

4. This finding is actually reported only in the first edition of Hodge et al. (1966) with reference to the 1947 data.

5. The Royal Commission (1962) found that the point most often mentioned by police officers in suggesting ways in which the public could assist them (apart from helping in particular incidents) was that citizens should report suspicious circumstances to the police, give prompt information, and generally cooperate in crime detection.

6. Some of the social-psychological reasons for avoidance of intervention in crisis situations are discussed in two articles by Darley and Latané (1968b, 1968c).

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