

An exploratory international comparison of professional confidence in volunteer policing

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Abstract

Police volunteers are an important asset to communities and policing agencies, but have been relatively understudied in academic literature. Similar models of police volunteers have developed in the United States and the United Kingdom, but differ in the level of their operational preparedness and training. Across England and Wales standardized policies have been established which govern the recruitment, training, and deployment of volunteer police officers, but in the United States there has been consistent resistance from local governments to develop national standards for reserve and auxiliary police. This current study examines the confidence of volunteer police officers serving in two police forces, one within the North East of England, and one within central Florida. The study utilizes vignettes to describe realistic situations that might be encountered by volunteer police on patrol in either country, and asked respondents to report their confidence within the scenario to perform certain functions based upon aspects drawn from the National Occupational Standards (NOS) expected of a regular police officer across the UK. Results of the study show that while both groups of volunteer officers in the study are confident in their professional abilities to handle issues at a policing scene, differences in training may have resulted in UK volunteer officers feeling less confident about interviewing and administrative paperwork skills than their US counterparts. This paper adds to the very limited literature about volunteer policing and identifies recommendations in relation to volunteer officer training and confidence to perform certain functions of their policing roles.

Keywords

Volunteer, police, training, confidence

Introduction

Volunteer law enforcement officers are utilized in many countries throughout the world as a supplement to regular, paid, full-time police forces. They can be used to stretch tight budgets and can increase citizen access to resources. Volunteer police can be used for routine police services, including foot or vehicle patrol, or be trained to work in more specific police functions, such as marine patrols, emergency response teams, or investigative units.

The operational use of volunteer police varies between countries and geographic jurisdiction, while some use volunteer police the same as full-time or regular police, others use volunteers to act only as the eyes and ears for the police and to report problems in the community (Wolf *et al.* 2015a). Volunteer police officers are often seen in current UK policing, and in those countries where at some point in history there was a British influence, including Ireland, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Canada, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, the United States, and New Zealand. However, they can also be found in other countries, as well, including Hungary, Germany, and the Netherlands.

The primary function of volunteer police officers (special constables) across England and Wales is to support, work alongside, and supplement the duties of regular police officers. As an added benefit, these special constables also represent the communities that are being policed (Pepper and Wolf 2015, Newburn 2008, Stuart 2008). Training for special constables is drawn from elements of the Policing National Curriculum which is used to create a professional framework for policing. The Initial Learning for the Special Constabulary (often referred to as the IL4SC) is traditionally taught over weekends and evenings, equating to the equivalent of around 3 to 4 weeks of full-time training, this takes new starters up to the level of accompanied patrol (College of Policing 2015). In 2014, there were 72 of these special constables working within Cleveland Police.

As found in the powers of special constables in the UK, reserve deputies in Orange County have the same police powers as their regular police colleagues, wear the same uniforms, and carry the same gear. The Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) in central Florida had 85 volunteer reserve deputies in 2014. An additional role of these volunteers as compared to their UK counterparts, however, is at times to run fully independent patrols (Pepper and Wolf 2015). The two categories of volunteers in Florida require reserves with the OCSO to have either a minimum of 319 hours or a minimum of 770 hours of training (Wolf 2014).

While modernization of the UK Special Constabulary has attempted to bring about standardization for many aspects of volunteer policing, law enforcement agencies throughout the United States utilize reserve and auxiliary law enforcement officers differently, with distinct responsibilities. Recent volunteer policing events, including an accidental shooting of a suspect by a volunteer police officer in April 2015 and the death of a volunteer sheriff's deputy in a shooting in May 2015, have led to a push for standardization in the US (Wolf *et al.* 2015a), but little movement has occurred.

The aim of this current study is to compare and contrast the self-reported confidence that volunteer police have in approaching potential situations that they may face while in a policing function. This study looks at the volunteer police services from a UK North East Police Force (Cleveland Police) and a US Central Florida Sheriff's Office (Orange County). Although these two geographic areas are some 4,000 miles apart and different in size, they have many similarities in terms of a mixture of urban and rural locations, areas of high population density, and higher than national average crime rates. They have similar numbers

of full-time officers and part-time volunteer officers along with a local university which has a good relationship to the police service.

Volunteer participants in both organizations completed a self-administered questionnaire that included demographic questions and questions related to their training. Finally, the participants were asked to respond to three short vignettes that asked them to assess their confidence in performing police functions at the listed scenarios. This research provides an interesting comparison between the volunteers in the US and the UK police agencies.

Literature Review

There is a renewed global interest in volunteers who are active in government (Cooper *et al.* 2006), and volunteers are essential for many functions of governmental organizations to succeed (Musick and Wilson 2008). In the United States, the rate of volunteerism among adults who actively or occasionally volunteer is about one in four, and averages about 32 hours per resident per year (Bryer 2014, National and Community Service 2016). Whilst across England, research conducted for the Cabinet Office found that during the period 2013 to 2014, almost three quarters of 5,000+ respondents across England had volunteered either formally (such as unpaid in groups or clubs) or informally (providing unpaid help to others) in the month proceeding the research, with little change in the rates of volunteering over the previous ten or so years (Cabinet Office 2014). Local governments may be extremely interested in utilizing volunteers, as they support governmental functions and fill a void in service. Volunteers at the local level also can represent public service in a positive way to their friends, neighbors, and families (Bryer 2015). While volunteerism has been examined to great extent, volunteerism specific to policing organizations has been largely lacking from the literature.

Citizen police were utilized long before the concept of modern policing in the mid-nineteenth century (Greenberg 2015). The use of uncompensated community members for public safety purposes can be traced back to the dawn of civilization. Tribal structures in early human history relied on a mutual responsibility to ensure that law was enforced (Seth 2006). Later, in 10th century Britain, the local lord would appoint a 'Constable of the Manor' whose primary purpose was to maintain the 'King's peace' and to raise the 'hue and cry' if necessary to summon aid (Wolf *et al.* 2015a, Greenberg 2005). With the implementation of Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police Act in 1829 there was already the ability for the government to summon additional police aid in the form of Special Constables. In 1831, provisions in law regarding Special Constables were adopted which clarified their nomination and duties (Seth 2006). Many UK Special Constables died in the line duty, particularly in World War II (Greenberg 2015).

The American system of policing is largely based upon the model of Sir Robert Peel's London based Metropolitan Police, and this is true for volunteer policing, as well (Dobrin 2015). In the mid-17th century, American sheriffs often called upon local posse volunteers to assist in order maintenance (Wolf *et al.* 2015b). Volunteer policing units in the United States grew out of Civil Defense units during World War II, and throughout the late 20th century were a response to government needs in a variety of jurisdictions, resulting in auxiliary and reserve units throughout the country (Wolf *et al.* 2015a, Greenberg 2005).

Modern UK police agencies utilize volunteer special constables to serve as unarmed warranted police officers on a part-time basis, they serve in all police forces across England, Wales and Scotland. These so called 'Specials' are vested with the same powers to uphold

the law as their full-time counterparts, but have significantly less initial training. Specials are provided with the same equipment as full-time officers, including handcuffs, radios, a stab vest, and an incapacitating spray. Often Specials work in teams, with other Specials or full-time officers, but they can also be authorized to patrol alone (Seth 2006). Special Constables are asked to provide several hours of service each week, primarily on evenings and weekends (Greenberg 2015). There are more than 16,700 Specials across England and Wales (College of Policing 2016), and more than 5,000 Specials in the 32 boroughs that make up London alone (Bailey 2015).

American reserve and auxiliary officers are disparate in function because of the local control inherent with the American structure of government, and are dependent on the local agency policies and state standards (Greenberg 1984). Some policing agencies in the United States utilize reserve volunteer officers in the same manner as regular police personnel, and they receive similar training. Other jurisdictions utilize volunteer police as 'eyes and ears,' and to call on regular police when trouble is encountered or suspected (Dobrin 2015). Still others use a combination of these volunteers dependent upon the amount of training they have received and local laws.

Immediately recognized as a major difference between policing in the UK and the US, inherent in American policing is that all full-time police are armed with handguns. Arming of volunteer police varies across the United States, but in Florida volunteer police are armed and categorized by state statute into one of two categories: auxiliary police (with less training and authority than full-time police) and part-time police (with equal training and authority of full-time police, but may be paid or volunteers). These classifications are discussed in additional detail, below.

Another major difference in American policing from that of the UK, is that US police forces are decentralized, and every state and local jurisdictions follows different state laws, regulations, rules, and policies in reference to how the police are able to perform their public service. This decentralization reflects the contrast between federal, state, and local government, and the over 17,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States; some with only a handful of officers, and others with tens of thousands (Blair 2010).

The police service across the United Kingdom is governed by national guidelines for much of its activity. Although there are differences in the ways Chief Constables interpret and enact national regulations, operational policing is reasonably the same throughout. Although historically the British have kept politics distinctly separate from policing, Police and Crime Commissioners were elected for the first time in 2012 (APCC 2016). They were introduced in an effort to connect local populace with their policing bodies. Under this new system, the goal is to increase understanding and participation in the police through the elected commissioner holding the police accountable for public priorities (Rogers and Gravelle 2012).

Volunteer Policing in the UK and the US ***Special constables in the United Kingdom***

Across England and Wales there is a standardized selection and recruitment process for regular police officers with a similar, yet shorter, process for special constables. This recruitment process includes an initial application, assessment centre, vetting, medical and fitness, along with a final interview. Once recruited, special constables are generally trained

to the requirements of the standardized national programme, called 'Initial Learning for special constables' (IL4SC). The College of Policing (2015) provides guidance on a number of training programs which police forces may opt to follow including the IL4SC. This program covers a range of mandatory units linked to the Policing National Curriculum with a number of optional units which individual police forces can add to the initial training. These mandatory units are usually taught over a mixture of weekend and evening classroom and practical sessions (although in some forces sessions are also taught in block weeks) covering aspects such as ethics and values of the service, personal safety, arrest and detention, first aid, stop and search, human rights and diversity, criminal law and road traffic offences etc. Once their initial training is complete, special constables are attested (sworn in as a police officer) and then when on duty have the same powers as a regular police officer. At this stage of their training, special constables are equipped and expected to take part in mentored accompanied patrol. During this phase special constables commit as a volunteer to a minimum of 16 hours of unpaid duty a month including a mixture of training and tutored operational patrol where over a period of months they complete their 'Police Action Checklists (PACS)'.

During this tutored phase, usually supported by a regular police tutor officer, special constables demonstrate and document in their PACS that they can implement their knowledge and complete tasks in practice. Once the PACS are complete, their status is confirmed as having the ability to perform safe and lawful accompanied patrol. This initial training is also supplemented in some forces with additional required local training, for example, the Metropolitan Police Service trains special constables to a level enabling them to deal with some types of public disorder (Whittle 2014).

Increasingly, more forces are also encouraging special constables to move on with a tutor police officer to achieve independent patrol status. This is achieved over a year or so, by the special constable's successful completion and assessment in practice of additional units from the Policing National Curriculum. Throughout their service, special constables work voluntarily under the control of the Chief Constable and are bound by the police conduct regulations (Special Constabulary Manager: Norfolk Constabulary 2011).

Reserves and auxiliaries in the United States

The training provided in US police academies for regular, full-time, police officers averages about 19 weeks (or 761 hours), of which 60 hours is spent on firearms instruction and 44 hours on self-defense instruction (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2009). After completion of the police academy, regular police recruits complete field training, or on-the-job training, under the instruction of a training officer in the agency where they are employed. While there are many variations across the United States on how this field training is conducted, recruits spend an average of approximately eight weeks in this training (Bureau of Justice Assistance 2014).

There is no standard of training in the United States, however, for volunteer police officers. Training varies from absolutely no formal training to the same amount of training that is required of full-time personnel within the jurisdiction. In Florida, the state where this current study focuses, there are two categories of volunteer law enforcement officers, those who are categorized as 'auxiliary' officers under state law, and those who are categorized as 'part-time' officers under state law. Auxiliary officers have completed basic academy courses in firearms, defensive tactics, patrol techniques, criminal investigations, first aid, and emergency vehicle operations (319 hours). Part-time officers have completed the same training as full-time officers within the state of Florida (770 hours).

In Florida, part-time officers must complete the same state qualifying exam as their full-time counterparts to receive a law enforcement officer certification. They can begin to volunteer and receive agency training while they await the results of that exam, which may take several months. Agency training consists of coursework and simulations training followed by on-the-job training (very similar to the mentored accompanied patrol of UK special constables) called 'field training' with a Field Training Officer. In the Orange County Sheriff's Office, utilized in this current study, these reserves must complete 4 weeks of classroom training (twenty 8-hour days of classroom, simulations, and knowledge testing) followed by 16 weeks (fifty-six 12-hour days) of field training. Auxiliary certified volunteers must undergo the same field training, but are not required to complete the state officer certification exam. Both auxiliary and part-time certified reserves in the OCSO must complete the mandatory field training program within two years (Wolf and Beary 2010).

There is a difference in authority for each of these classifications. Auxiliary officers in the state of Florida must be under the span of control of a regularly-certified law enforcement officer (which includes part-time or regular officers) to have police powers. Part-time officers do not have the same restrictions on their authority, and have the same responsibilities and authority as their regular, full-time, police counterparts. The Orange County Sheriff's Office uses a combination of auxiliary and fully-certified volunteer officers. Reserves who have attended the shortened academy have limitations in their work, in that they are not authorized to work alone as they must be in the presence of a fully-certified reserve or full-time deputy to have law enforcement powers (Wolf 2014). The Orange County Sheriff's Office combines both auxiliary-certified and part-time certified volunteer officers into one unit, the OCSO Reserve Unit; all members of this unit are classified as Reserve Deputy Sheriffs with the agency and commit to volunteer a minimum of 16 hours of duty each month, 12 of which must be in a patrol capacity (Wolf and Beary 2010).

A national survey of police volunteers who work for sheriffs agencies in the United States found that the average these volunteers spend in their policing duties is about 9 hours a week. The survey also found that most agencies issue all duty gear and uniforms to their policing volunteers, but this varies between jurisdictions. While most agencies do not provide any wage or salary for their service, some agencies do provide a small stipend to compensate for any expenses borne by the volunteer (Wolf *et al.* 2015b). The OCSO reserve unit averages approximately 270 hours each year per volunteer, and reserves are not provided any salary or stipend for their service.

Research Question

Because US and UK police organizations utilize volunteer police to perform general policing functions, and because these two different agencies have distinctly different training programs, the researchers for this current study developed the following research question:

Do Orange County Reserve Deputies or Cleveland Special Constables have more confidence when responding to calls for service in regards to:

- 1) Providing initial support to victims,
- 2) Providing initial first aid to victims,
- 3) Managing potential conflict,
- 4) Using appropriate police powers,
- 5) Detaining or arresting individuals,
- 6) Searching individuals and vehicles,
- 7) Interviewing victims and suspects, or

8) Completing the required administration/paperwork after handling the incident?

Methodology

This current exploratory study was designed in order to contrast the levels of confidence of volunteer police officers within Cleveland Police (UK) and volunteer deputies within Orange County Sheriff's Office (Florida). The survey collected demographic information along with the volunteers self-reporting their confidence when responding to specifically described patrol related incidents.

The research utilized vignettes (see Appendix 1 for complete vignettes) describing in a short paragraph three realistic uniformed patrol related events. Vignette methodology was chosen to 'present participants with carefully constructed and realistic scenarios' (Aguinis, and Bradley 2014, p. 352) in order to enhance both internal and external reliability. By using this methodology for the current study, the researchers were able to control the perceived circumstances to collect respondent confidence levels. The situations presented in the vignettes are readily recognizable to all police officers, whether volunteer or not, and therefore increase generalizability to the greater population. The scenarios presented for this study revolved around (vignettes are provided in the appendix):

- 1) An urban foot patrol during an evening with a reported theft from a vulnerable elderly witness by an angry young male.
- 2) An urban night time disturbance, with an injured, apparently drunk female who has been assaulted by a group of males.
- 3) An urban afternoon verbal taunting of a distressed individual with aggressive verbal and physical posturing towards the police volunteer.

The participants were then asked to respond with their confidence to deal with such scenarios. Their confidence was self-reported on a five point Likert scale linked to selected and adapted aspects of the UK National Occupational Standards (NOS) which are expected as functions of regular UK police officers utilizing the Policing Professional Framework (Skills for Justice 2010).

The respondents were asked to report their confidence in their personal abilities (based on their training and experience) in categories on a five point scale (see Appendix 2). Approval was sought and granted from the Universities' Institutional Review Board (USA) and Ethics Committee (UK), along with the appropriate authority at each of the police agencies.

Participants were then selected using convenience sampling during previously scheduled evening meetings for the whole volunteer force, for which participants had opted to attend. It is acknowledged that it takes time to build trust working with policing and criminal justice partners, as such the use of convenience sampling enabled engagement with these subjects. The surveys were explained and then self-administered to both teams of police volunteers. Voluntary involvement and informed consent was obtained from each of the respondents. All respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the data collected, and that any reported findings would have no identifying information. Of the 47 OCSO reserve deputies in attendance, from the 83 who could have attended, 41 completed the survey (total response rate of 49%). Thirty-one of the 32 attending Cleveland Police participants responded, out of a possible maximum of 72 who could have attended (total response rate of 43%).

Data were collected from both groups of volunteers using the same research instrument at set points during mid-2014. The survey instrument utilized vignettes to collect the perceptions of a respondent's confidence of how they would deal with an event. The results must be tempered with the realization that how an individual perceives they would respond may not

be as such in reality. Recognizing the convenience sampling bias and self-selection bias of the respondents who attended the meetings in which the survey was distributed, and also the self-selection bias of those who filled out the survey, the researchers acknowledge that various probability sampling techniques would have enhanced the overall reliability of the data. The external validity, or the ability for the current research findings to be generalised across a much wider population of police volunteers, is therefore limited.

Results

The analyses presented are all two-tailed tests, as available research makes no predictions to which direction any difference between agencies might result. Respondents were asked two initial questions about training. The first (see Table 1) asked if the respondent felt that their initial training prepared them adequately for policing. Respondents were to choose one item from the list of five options that reflected their feelings of preparedness. The differences between the OCSO and Cleveland responses were significant (Pearson Chi-Square test $p = .007$). Respondents from both agencies were about equal in saying they received most of the training required (about 32% for both), but there was a large difference between those saying they received all the training required (37.5% of OCSO respondents did as compared to 3.2% of Cleveland respondents). Additionally, almost twice the percentage of Cleveland respondents (25.9% compared to 12.5% of OCSO respondents) reported that they felt that they did not receive enough training.

<insert Table 1 about here>

In addition to large differences in perceptions of initial training, there were significant differences (Pearson Chi-Square test $p = .05$) between the two groups of volunteers of their perceptions after the initial training (see Table 2). Over 95% of OCSO respondents said they had attended formal professional development or advanced training classes since completing their initial training, as compared to 80% of Cleveland respondents.

<insert Table 2 about here>

The next analyses examine the 3 vignette scenarios, with the same ten Likert scale items for each, with 5 possible answers. Table 3 shows the results of summing all of the items within each of the three vignettes, and the comparison of them between the two agencies (with independent samples t-tests). The differences in responses in all three scenarios are significant, showing the OCSO respondents report being more confident in their training than the Cleveland respondents in each scenario. The levels of confidence are stable between the three scenarios for each agency.

<insert Table 3 about here>

Table 4, however, examines each of the ten items summed across the three scenarios. The results of the independent samples t-tests illustrate that the differences between the two agencies might not be as widespread as it first appears, and are impacted by a small subset of training areas. There are only three events in which the Cleveland respondents report feeling significantly less comfortable with their training than the OCSO respondents: interviewing the victim, interviewing the suspect, and completing required paperwork (at a much lower level of significance, but, as noted earlier, still within the accepted parameters of significance for two-tailed tests).

<insert Table 4 about here>

Discussion

When asked if the training received as a volunteer prepared the respondents for operational policing, only a small number of respondents from Cleveland Police agreed that this was the case as opposed to a high proportion of OSCO volunteers. Although OSCO respondents went on to suggest that there wasn't quite enough initial training, this was only in part supported by respondents from Cleveland Police, where a large proportion suggested that the initial training was the minimum they required.

This difference could be due to the limited time spent on initial training as a special constable in England and Wales with the equivalent of around 3 to 4 weeks of full-time training over evenings and weekends (which equates to approximately 160 hours) which includes a number of assessments. This takes new volunteer officers to the level of accompanied patrol (College of Policing, 2015), which is then followed by up to 12 months tutoring within the workplace where practical expertise in dealing with incidents is demonstrated. This is compared to part-time officers within the state of Florida, who complete the same training as full-time officers of at least 770 hours, take a state of Florida examination and then are tutored within the workplace (auxiliary officers receive the same tutoring, although less academy training of 319 hours), although the duration of this tutoring differs between law enforcement agencies.

The research reveals that in both of the US and UK sample groups, involvement in professional development is high with over 95% of OCSO police volunteers and over 80% of Cleveland Police special constables reporting that they had attended training and development session since completing their initial training. Previous research has shown that volunteer police officers regularly donate in the region of 25 to 30 hours a month to their part-time voluntary roles (Whittle 2014; Pepper and Wolf 2015). However, what isn't clear is the division between hours that are donated for operational front-line services as a policing resource as opposed to involvement in professional development.

The research shows that confidence in dealing with all three of the scenarios was generally high amongst respondents from both volunteer agencies. This is seen across the majority of the selected aspects of the NOS in relation to the functions expected of a regular police officer in the UK. However, there were several areas for concern in relation to volunteer officer confidence. These relate primarily to the volunteer special constables responding from Cleveland Police who reported low confidence in both the completion of the required administration/paperwork and with regards to interviewing victims, along with very low confidence in interviewing suspects. This is as opposed to their OCSO counterparts, where self-reported confidence only fell significantly in relation to the completion of the required administration/paperwork, but then not as much as respondents from Cleveland Police.

This lack of confidence could be due to the training requirements for UK special constables at the time of the survey. Mandatory units studied as part of the initial training to become a special constable in England and Wales only includes the interviewing of witnesses with optional taught units on interviewing suspects. Each police force decides which optional units should be included in the initial training program. Billet (2002) describes how in order to ensure shared vocational competency with co-workers, learning within the workplace relies on an individual's ability to access support and guidance, build on existing knowledge and, over time, be exposed to new scenarios. This is further supported by Smets and Pauwels (2010), who identified that in order to ensure the effectiveness of training as an interviewer,

then it is essential that the interviewing skills are put in to practice and supported by workplace coaching. This being the case, if suspect and witness interviewing are a core function of a police officer, then those special constables who are not enabled, due to their initial and developmental training along with the appropriate allocated time and guidance, to develop these knowledge and skills within the workplace, will be at a disadvantage and lack confidence in performing such tasks. It is also not clear from the research how forces select which aspects of the IL4SC training to deliver and if there are expectations that special constables within Cleveland Police, although having the same powers as regular officers, will be expected to interview suspects.

In Florida, both auxiliary certified and part-time certified volunteer officers have blocks of instruction in their initial training program (the police academy) on investigations, which includes interviewing witnesses and suspects. Central to these instructional blocks are specific sections on US mandates related to Constitutional Law regarding interviewing, detaining, and seizing suspects. US academy training on interviews is also interwoven with other blocks of instruction, including civil liability, constitutional law, and criminal investigations (Marion 1998). Specialized classes beyond basic academy training are also available for police officers in 'interviews and interrogations' (Inbau *et al.* 2015) and reserve and auxiliary deputies with OCSO are encouraged to take specialized training in this and other content areas. One major difference between US and UK volunteer police has also been reported which may add to the significant differences found in the current study. It is commonplace in the United States for retiring full-time law enforcement officers to seek volunteer policing positions, but this is rare in the United Kingdom. 25% of the OCSO reserve unit reported having prior experience as a full-time, or regular, officer and this experience may lend itself to greater confidence in interviews and interrogations. None of the Cleveland Police volunteers reported the same experience (Pepper and Wolf 2015).

The fact that volunteer police do not spend as much time as their regular counterparts in the field may be a critical factor in why both US and UK volunteer police feel less confident in the administrative aspect of policing. Policing agencies are constantly upgrading and renewing forms, computer software, processes, and routing of paperwork that it can be extremely difficult, even for a regular officer, to keep up. While a regular police officer may make an assault arrest once a month, for example, it may be six months to a year (or longer) between assault arrests for a volunteer police officer. If processes for paperwork change in the time period, it may make the volunteer officer less confident in completing the necessary affidavits, forms, statements, and charging paperwork.

Study Limitations

The primary limitations to this study result from the selection of the agencies and the sampled respondents. The two agencies were selected based on geographical convenience and existing professional relationships. As this is an exploratory study, and is not attempting to be a representative sample of police agencies within the US and UK, this limitation is not critical. The response rate may also be considered a limitation for this study. However, this is only an issue if the respondents who did not take the survey are different from the ones who did in terms of key measured variables. Without measuring these key variables from the non-respondents, any selection bias is impossible to measure, but is likely to be limited, as the respondents and non-respondents come from a very similar pool (volunteer officers within the same agency). As the survey was distributed at a monthly meeting, common mundane reasons for missing the meeting are the most likely reason for not completing the survey.

Conclusions and recommendations

Generally, confidence in dealing with all three of the urban policing related scenarios was high amongst respondents across both volunteer agencies. However, the results demonstrate areas for concern in relation to volunteer officer training and confidence to perform certain functions of their policing roles. These relate primarily to the volunteer special constables responding from Cleveland Police who, as opposed to their volunteer colleagues in OCSO, reported low confidence in the interviewing of victims and very low confidence in interviewing suspects. Whilst both OSCO and Cleveland Police volunteers reported significantly lower confidence levels in the completion of the required administration/paperwork.

While this study attempts to identify similarities and differences in training and confidence of volunteer police in two different countries, there is a dearth of research on this very important aspect of policing. Further research should be conducted in relation to the duration and content of initial and developmental training, along with the deployment, of police reserves in order to meet and ensure a consistent approach for the operational workplace.

Additional comparative research should be conducted which expands on the small number of agencies of this current study. Research should be expanded to identify if trends are replicated in other agencies. Finally, the results of this research should be utilized to create training updates for volunteer police that may be different than those received by their full-time, regular counterparts.

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Appendix 1

Scenario 1

You are on patrol in an urban area during the early evening and are stopped in the street by an upset elderly male who seems confused and unsteady on his feet, who tells you that ‘the young man over there has just taken my money.’ You approach the young man and ask him if you can speak to him, which he angrily rejects as he moves off towards a nearby car.

Scenario 2

You are on patrol in an urban area just after midnight and several large crowds are gathering outside of the local bars/pubs. You hear a commotion and find a young woman on the ground bleeding profusely from a cut on her arm. She is drunk and she tells you that she is not sure how it happened, but that she thinks one of the three men standing near you may have argued with her over buying a drink and as a result she has been cut.

Scenario 3

You are on patrol in the middle of an afternoon along a city street when you see a two young men sitting in a vehicle taunting an adolescent girl. The girl is walking away, but is crying. You tell the men to move along, but one of them gets out of the car, walks over to you and, posturing aggressively, asks you to ‘make’ him move.

Appendix 2

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Providing initial support to the victim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If required, providing initial first aid to the victim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing the potential conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using the most appropriate police powers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detaining or arresting individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Searching individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Searching the vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interviewing the victim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interviewing the suspect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completing the required administration/paperwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 1. Do you feel that your initial training prepared you for operational policing?

	OCSO	Cleveland
Yes, all the training I required	37.5%	3.2%
Yes, most of the training I required	32.5%	32.3%
Yes, the minimum training I required	17.5%	38.7%
No, not quite enough training	7.5%	19.4%
No, not nearly enough training	5.0%	6.5%
Pearson Chi-Square p = .007		

Table 2. Have you attended any formal professional development or advanced training classes since completing your initial training?

	Orange County SO	Cleveland UK PD
No	4.9%	19.4%
Yes	95.1%	80.6%

Pearson Chi-Square $p = .05$

Table 3. Summary of three scenarios compared

	OCSO	Cleveland
	Mean (Std. Dev.)	Mean (Std. Dev.)
Scenario 1*	14.2 (7.2)	9.6 (5.3)
Scenario 2**	14.3 (7.3)	9.0 (5.7)
Scenario 3***	14.7 (7.7)	9.6 (6.3)

* T-test $p = .003$

** T-test $p = .001$

*** T-test $p = .004$

Note: Items in each scenario were scored as 2, 1, 0, -1, -2. With 10 items per scenario, the range of the sum of all items in the scenario could be from -20 to 20. The means that higher the score, the more confident the respondent is in their training.

Table 4. Comparisons across individual items summed in all three scenarios

Sum of item across three scenarios	Agency	Mean (Std. Dev)	p values
Providing initial support to the victim	OCSO	4.58 (2.34)	.700
	Cleveland	4.76 (1.43)	
If required, providing initial first aid to the victim	OCSO	4.34 (2.41)	.814
	Cleveland	4.21 (1.99)	
Managing the potential conflict	OCSO	4.63 (2.34)	.615
	Cleveland	4.38 (1.74)	
Using the most appropriate police powers	OCSO	4.58 (2.29)	.258
	Cleveland	3.97 (2.10)	
Detaining or arresting individuals	OCSO	4.32 (2.44)	.690
	Cleveland	4.11 (1.79)	
Searching individuals	OCSO	4.55 (2.39)	.909
	Cleveland	4.61 (1.47)	
Searching the vehicle	OCSO	4.39 (2.55)	.394
	Cleveland	3.93 (1.86)	
Interviewing the victim	OCSO	4.55 (2.25)	.000*
	Cleveland	-0.82 (3.89)	
Interviewing the suspect	OCSO	4.21 (2.60)	.000*
	Cleveland	-2.00 (3.75)	
Completing the required administration/paperwork	OCSO	3.26 (3.40)	.069*
	Cleveland	1.71 (3.32)	

Note: Items in each scenario were scored as 2, 1, 0, -1, -2. With 3 scenarios combined, the range of the sum of all items in the scenario could be from -6 to 6. The means that higher the score, the more confident the respondent is in their training.