
Public Experiences of Police Violence and Corruption in Contemporary Russia: A Case of Predatory Policing?

Theodore P. Gerber

Sarah E. Mendelson

“Predatory policing” occurs where police officers mainly use their authority to advance their own material interests rather than to fight crime or protect the interests of elites. These practices have the potential to seriously compromise the public’s trust in the police and other legal institutions, such as courts. Using data from six surveys and nine focus groups conducted in Russia, we address four empirical questions: (1) How widespread are public encounters with police violence and police corruption in Russia? (2) To what extent does exposure to these two forms of police misconduct vary by social and economic characteristics? (3) How do Russians perceive the police, the courts, and the use of violent methods by the police? (4) How, if at all, do experiences of police misconduct affect these perceptions? Our results suggest that Russia conforms to a model of predatory policing. Despite substantial differences in its law enforcement institutions and cultural norms regarding the law, Russia resembles the United States in that direct experiences of police abuse reduce confidence in the police and in the legal system more generally. The prevalence of predatory policing in Russia has undermined Russia’s democratic transition, which should call attention to the indispensable role of the police and other public institutions in the success of democratic reforms.

Social scientific studies of relations between the police, the state, and society have a long and rich tradition within the United States and the United Kingdom, and the last several decades have witnessed the growth of a comparative policing literature (Cain 1993; Bayley 1999; Mawby 1999; Caparini & Marenin 2004). We contribute to this literature by examining the prevalence, patterns, and consequences of public experiences of police violence and police corruption in contemporary Russia. Scholars, journalists, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have suggested that police

We are grateful for generous financial support for collection of the data described in this article from the Ford Foundation, USAID, and the Glaser Progress Foundation. We also wish to acknowledge helpful feedback and advice from Tanya Lokshina, Richard Lot-speich, Borislav Petranov, William Alex Pridemore, Ronald Weitzer, Grigory Shvedov, Steven Solnick, Marina Zaloznaya, the anonymous reviewers, and the current and previous *LSR* editors. Please address correspondence to Theodore P. Gerber, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706, e-mail: tgerber@ssc.wisc.edu, or to Sarah E. Mendelson, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1800 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, e-mail: smendelson@csis.org.

Law & Society Review, Volume 42, Number 1 (2008)
© 2008 by The Law and Society Association. All rights reserved.

violence and corruption have become rampant in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991. They have documented the forms that police misconduct takes, proposed explanations for why it has grown more frequent, and considered possible measures that might be taken to combat it. But these accounts rely largely on anecdotes, case studies, official data, localized investigations, and interviews rather than standard social science methods, and they do not derive broader theoretical insights from the Russian case. We seek to advance both empirical and theoretical understanding of police misconduct in Russia by analyzing data from six large sample surveys and from nine focus groups.

We address four empirical questions: (1) How widespread are public encounters with police violence and police corruption in Russia? (2) To what extent does exposure to these two forms of police misconduct vary by social and economic characteristics? (3) How do Russians perceive the police, the courts, and the use of violent methods by the police? (4) How, if at all, do experiences of police misconduct affect these perceptions? Given the quality of our data, our empirical findings provide a useful benchmark against which future social scientific studies of police misconduct in Russia can be measured.

Our empirical findings have three broader theoretical implications for social and political perspectives on police misconduct. Most important, the Russian pattern of police misconduct suggests a model of policing that has not been formally identified in the comparative policing literature: *predatory policing*. Policing can best be described as predatory where police activities are mainly (not to say exclusively) devoted to the personal enrichment and self-preservation of the police themselves rather than the protection of the public or the systematic repression of subordinate groups. No police force in the world is completely free of corruption and violent abuse by officers in its ranks. Under predatory policing both forms of misconduct are not only widespread—the rule rather than the exception—but they are also motivated primarily by the interests of the police themselves, not the interests of other elites.

Second, by analyzing how police misconduct affects attitudes toward the police and the courts in Russia, we assess whether findings from United States–based research on these topics can be generalized to a very different national context. Russia differs from the United States in several key respects. Russia’s police are more centralized and less accountable to the public. Some scholars argue that cultural traditions and Soviet-era experiences conspire to undermine perceptions of individual rights, belief in the rule of law, and trust in legal institutions. If so, low trust in the police could be based on long-standing cultural norms, not direct individual experiences of police misconduct. If individual encounters with police

violence and corruption erode trust in legal institutions in Russia, despite Russia's distinctive cultural and institutional context, then U.S. patterns may be generalizable to other widely diverging institutional and cultural contexts.

Finally, the extent and effects of police misconduct in Russia draw our attention to the important but often neglected role of police reform in the process of democratic transition. With the exception of specialists on comparative policing, the vast majority of scholars analyzing transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule focus on reforms of political institutions, the economy, and legal institutions such as constitutions, courts, bodies of law, and judicial procedures. While changes in these realms are clearly integral to democratic transition, another essential condition for its success is that public institutions—especially those, such as the police, with access to the means of violence—serve rather than threaten the public. Our findings suggest that regardless of progress on other fronts, police misconduct undermines democracy in Russia. Scholarly theories of democratic transition should devote more attention to the role of the police and other public institutions. So should policy makers, because an undemocratic police force is a potential source of instability and an ineffective ally in the struggle against global organized crime and terrorist networks.

Before proceeding, we need to clarify what we mean by “public experiences of police violence and police corruption.” We specifically refer to *public experiences* to highlight our focus on personal encounters with the police that members of the general public (including both citizens and noncitizens) identify as involving violence or corruption by the police officers and on the relationship between these encounters and broader public perceptions of the police and Russia's legal institutions. We define *police violence* as any act on the part of a police officer designed to inflict severe pain or suffering on the part of the victim, including beating with fists, feet, or instruments, and all forms of physical torture. Russian and international law generally prohibit such acts (Human Rights Watch 1999). *Police corruption* is a broad concept encompassing many behaviors and activities involving the illegal use of police authority for personal gain. However, our empirical analysis deals solely with corrupt activities that *directly* victimize individual members of the public: for example, bribe-seeking, extortion, shakedowns, and other activities whereby police officers use their authority to extract money, goods, or services from individuals. Because these corrupt actions always involve a victim in a very immediate sense, they can be studied using the methods and data at our disposal. Other forms of corruption such as collusion with criminals, kickbacks, cover-ups, and trafficking in contraband certainly wreak harm on the public, but they often take place completely outside of public view

and therefore cannot be studied using general population surveys and focus groups.

Public experiences of police violence and corruption represent only one aspect of a complex phenomenon. A complete account of police misconduct would require analysis of a broader range of corrupt activities (not limited to those directly experienced by members of the general public), attempts to measure the actual prevalence of different forms of police misconduct, and examination of how the police organize, carry out, and perceive acts of violence and corruption in their ranks. But these topics are beyond the scope of our study. While public experiences are only one aspect of police misconduct, they can be readily studied using standard methods and, as we find, they matter a great deal: they undermine trust in the police and legal institutions and foster the widespread perception that the Russian police are not so much protectors of the public or of the state as they are predators on society.

Theoretical Context

Predatory Policing

Weitzer (1995: Ch. 1; see also Marenin 1985) describes two basic theoretical models of the role of the police. Policing in the United States and in most developed democracies conforms by and large to a “functionalist” model, where the police provide services, enforce the law, and preserve order in the general interest. Policing in authoritarian societies and those with polarized social structures tends to conform to a “divided society” model consistent with conflict theory: the police mainly protect the interest of dominant elites and suppress subordinate groups such as racial/ethnic minorities, the poor, or the political opposition. Of course, in any country frequent exceptions to the predominant model occur: police misconduct takes place where the functionalist model prevails, and the police occasionally solve crimes and arrest criminals where the divided society model prevails. The issue is: which model best typifies the performance of the police in a given national context? Among the distinctive characteristics of divided society policing are systematic bias of the police against subordinate groups, strong identification of the police with the ruling regime, and “polarized communal relations with the police, with the dominant group as a champion of the police and the subordinate group largely estranged from the police” (Weitzer 1995:5).

At first glance, the reportedly widespread police misconduct in Russia appears to conform to the divided society model. Since Russia became an independent state in late 1991, the police have

suppressed real or perceived opposition and have persecuted ethnic minorities and immigrants (Shelley 1999; Robertson 2004). These types of actions have persisted in recent years (Amnesty International 2006; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2007). But we propose that Russia's police may correspond more closely to a third model: predatory policing.

Policing is best described as predatory to the extent that police officers prey on their society by using their positions to extract rents in the form of money, goods, or services from individual members of the public.¹ They apply violence both as a direct means of extracting these rents and in order to satisfy occasional demands by officials to assist in oppressing opposition groups or to give the appearance of solving criminal cases, thereby preserving their access to opportunities for rent extraction. Predatory policing obviously departs from the functionalist model, where, with some exceptions, the police enforce the law and protect the public.² But it also diverges from divided society policing in three key respects: (1) members of the public are just as or more likely to personally experience police corruption as they are to experience police violence; (2) all groups experience significant levels of police misconduct, even if some groups are disproportionately exposed; and (3) even if elites occasionally deploy the police for political purposes, most instances of police misconduct advance the material interests and self-preservation of the police themselves rather than suppress subordinate groups.

Our distinction between predatory and divided society policing draws attention to the fact that similar forms of police misconduct—violence and corruption—can stem from two different sets of interests: the political interests of elites in preserving their power and the individual material interests of the police themselves. These sets of interests are not necessarily incompatible. Indeed, they appear to operate hand-in-hand in many societies characterized by highly dysfunctional police forces. Accounts of undemo-

¹ Our use of *predatory* differs from Levi's (1988) concept of the "predatory state," which treats revenue maximization by the state as inherently predatory. It has more in common with Evans's characterization of states as predatory when "[t]hose who control the state apparatus seem to plunder without any more regard for the welfare of the citizenry than a predator has for its prey" (1989:562).

² We recognize that frequent misconduct by the police—of either a predatory nature (for the enrichment of the police themselves) or a political nature (directed toward the suppression of particular groups)—takes place in societies such as the United States and Great Britain that most closely resemble the functionalist model. Yet we would argue that even if such misconduct takes on a systematic character in some localities for some periods of time, the predominant tendency in the larger system of policing is oriented primarily toward combating crime and preserving public safety. The fact that exposés of localized police corruption or brutality attract considerable attention in the national media and often lead to major scandals and legal measures against the perpetrators confirms that such practices sharply deviate from the norm.

cratic, unprofessional, violent, and corrupt policing in countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil (Morris 1991; Chevigny 1999; Botelo & Rivera 2000; Gomez-Cespedes 1999; Hinton 2005), Nigeria (Igbinovia 1985), and other former European colonies (Cole 1999), describe many predatory police practices. But these practices are closely intertwined with politicized practices involving the systematic suppression of subordinate groups.

Predatory behavior by the police in these countries is thus linked, perhaps inextricably, to their role serving the political interests of particular regimes or officials. The high levels of political conflict and violence that typify these societies make it difficult to disentangle politically motivated from personally motivated police misconduct, and this may explain why observers have not analytically distinguished these two forms of police misconduct. In contrast, since the early 1990s there has been no opposition or overt political challenge to the regime in Russia, apart from the geographically contained separatist conflict in Chechnya. Thus Russia is a case where predatory policing could be clearly predominant. As such, it can help us refine the distinction between predatory policing and divided society policing, develop a methodological approach for distinguishing empirically between the two models, and understand the conditions that produce predatory policing independently of overt political manipulation of the police by elites.

But how can we ascertain empirically whether predatory policing predominates in Russia? Based on our conceptual distinction between predatory policing and divided society policing, three questions identify which model applies to a particular national context where police misconduct is extensive: (1) How common are public experiences of corruption, relative to experiences of violence? (2) How insulated from police misconduct are members of the ethnic majority and socioeconomic elite? (3) To what extent are acts of police misconduct motivated by personal gain of the police rather than political objectives? A greater prevalence of encounters with corruption, less insulation of particular ethnic and socioeconomic groups from police misconduct, and the identification of personal gain rather than political objectives as the main motive for police misconduct all point toward predatory policing rather than divided society policing. These questions may be difficult to answer for the countries of Latin America and Africa. But our data provide answers to all three questions with respect to Russia, and in each case they are consistent with predatory policing.

Generalizing Findings From the United States

Most political and legal theorists would agree that “the ability of the police and other government officials to enforce the law

depend[s] upon public satisfaction with, confidence in, and trust of legal authorities” (Tyler 1984:51; see also Tyler 1990). In turn, a legion of studies have shown that negative personal experiences with the police tend to lower confidence in the police in the United States (e.g., Smith & Hawkins 1973; Scaglione & Condon 1980; Tyler 1990; Weitzer & Tuch 2004) and in Canada (Koenig 1980; Wortley et al. 1997). But it is unclear whether the relationship observed in the United States also obtains in other national contexts with radically different police institutions and legal culture. Moreover, even in the United States few studies examine whether negative experiences with the police affect views toward other legal institutions such as the courts (Tyler 1990).

Russia differs institutionally and culturally from the United States in ways that make it doubtful that the United States-based findings apply. Russian police institutions are far more centralized than the U.S. police, which could mean that Russians’ views of the police are closely associated with their views of other federal government institutions rather than their immediate personal experiences. In addition, institutional mechanisms whereby the public can exercise some degree of authority over the police and the courts (such as citizen review boards, elections of sheriffs and judges, or lawsuits seeking redress for police brutality) are essentially lacking in Russia. The absence of formal accountability may make notions of “procedural justice” highly abstract and irrelevant to Russians to begin with.

That would be consistent with a standard explanation for the difficulties of establishing a rule of law in Russia that emphasizes legal culture—more specifically, the lack thereof—in the popular consciousness (Shelley 1999). According to this view, a “negative myth” that sees the law as a mere instrument of the powerful predominates in Russian culture (Kurkchiyan 2003). Some identify long-standing Russian cultural tradition as the source of deep skepticism regarding the law (McDaniel 1996; Newcity 1997). Others point to Soviet-era experiences. Writing on the eve of the collapse of state socialism, Markovits (1989) voiced doubts about the prospects for meaningful judicial review in the socialist countries because judges and citizens alike were so accustomed to dependence on the state that they could not perceive themselves as the protectors or bearers of individual rights. A decade later, Hendley (1999) attributed low “demand” for law by the Russian public to decades of witnessing the Communist party use law in purely instrumental fashion and to more recent examples of economic elites doing the same.

Whether rooted in historical traditions or in Soviet-era experiences, a deeply ingrained skepticism toward the law and legal institutions in Russia would seem to rule out any confidence in the

police and the courts, whether or not individuals directly experience police misconduct. If predatory policing does prevail in Russia, police misconduct may be so common as to evoke little outrage or surprise on the part of victims. Thus although it seems intuitive that people who personally experience police misconduct will consequently have less confidence in the police and other legal institutions, the unique institutional and cultural context of Russia could weaken the effects of individual experience relative to general cultural norms and attitudes. If Russians perceive police violence and corruption to be the normal state of affairs, those who experience them could be no more likely than others to report low trust in the police and the courts.

Some scholars dispute the claim that Russian views on the rule of law differ from views in other European societies (Gibson 2003). And even if deep skepticism of legal institutions prevails in Russia, direct individual experiences with police misconduct could still undermine confidence in both the police and the courts. Our survey data contain several measures of attitudes toward the police and the courts. Thus we can readily examine whether experiences of police misconduct influence attitudes toward legal institutions. If personal encounters with police misconduct affect views of the police and the courts in Russia, then the findings from the United States can apply in very different institutional and cultural contexts.

A related issue is whether Russians actually have tolerant attitudes toward police violence. Some scholars argue that Russians are inclined to favor authoritarian rule (McDaniel 1996; Pipes 2004). Support for a strong hand on the part of the state, coupled with fear of rising crime, may well prompt Russians to advocate harsh police measures. If so, they may view beatings and torture by the police as acceptable practices. In that case, media reports about violent abuses by police—another source of negative views toward the police in the United States (Weitzer 2002)—may not undermine confidence in the police among Russians and may even bolster their confidence. We do not have direct measures of exposure to reports about police violence in our data, but we do have survey questions and interview materials that let us directly assess whether Russians approve of police violence.

Policing and Democratic Transition

The potentially predatory character of policing in Russia today underlines how essential police reform is to successful democratic transition. Political scientists, sociologists, and economists who study postsocialist transitions tend to emphasize political institutions

such as elections, parties, and parliaments and economic changes such as privatization and market reform (e.g., Przeworski 1991; Centeno 1994; Fish 1995; Shleifer & Treisman 2004). Legal scholars devote due attention to establishing rule of law, but they focus on the formation of new legal institutions and procedures and the use of laws to resolve economic disputes (Sanders & Hamilton 1992; Pistor 1996; Hendley 1999; Hendley et al. 1999, 2000; Black et al. 2000).

The regression of Russia's police force into a predatory institution demonstrates that these political, economic, and legal transformations are only part of the story. The task of establishing government institutions that provide services to the public and protect human rights and individual security is a distinct and equally crucial component of democratic transition, as criminologists and specialists on policing have recently begun to point out (Bayley 2001; Caparini & Marenin 2004; Karstedt & LaFree 2006). Establishing a professional, legitimate, and accountable police force is clearly a vital part of this process (Caparini & Marenin 2004). As several studies of Brazil, where the police violence increased following democratization of the political system, have noted, police abuse violates the human and civil rights that democratic institutions are supposed to protect (Caldeira & Holston 1999; Mitchell & Wood 1999). By undermining individual security, it impedes the exercise of citizenship rights; fosters impunity of the powerful; promotes inequalities of power, rights, and wealth; and threatens to delegitimize the entire project of democratization.

According to Bayley, in the 1990s the U.S. government came to appreciate "that security is important to the development of democracy and police are important to the character of that security" (2001:5) and that democratic police forces in other countries were more effective partners in combating international crime rings and other security threats. For these reasons, the promotion of democratic policing is an important foreign policy goal in the United States. In light of Russia's enormous geopolitical and economic power, predatory policing there should be of particular concern to policy makers in the United States. Corrupt and violent police are likely to be complicit in organized crime and even in terrorist activities.³ Thus in addition to undermining social order, fostering

³ Recent Russian experience shows that the connection between police corruption and terrorism is not merely hypothetical. In September 2004, terrorists apparently bribed law enforcement agents to allow them to reach the school in the town of Beslan in the Russian province of North Ossetia, where they seized hostages, ultimately resulting in hundreds of deaths (Murphy 2004). For evidence of close cooperation between police and organized crime groups in Russia, see Salagaev (2004).

domestic insecurity, and jeopardizing what remains of Russia's democratic political institutions, predatory policing also threatens international security.

The Police in Russia: Brief Background

The Russian police system is centrally controlled and administered at the federal level (Moscow-Helsinki Group 2005). The centralized structure was inherited from the Soviet police, described by Shelley (1990, 1999). In the 1960s, the Soviet police began to evolve from a very intrusive organization whose main purpose was to safeguard the state and the party into a more professional force that devoted more effort to preserving public safety. However, during the Brezhnev era (1964–1982), growing corruption, which produced several highly publicized scandals involving major political figures, thwarted professionalization. The press freedoms introduced in the late 1980s exposed still more cases of corruption. Meanwhile, crime rates began to soar and organized criminal groups grew emboldened—two trends reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Center for Strategic and International Studies 1997; Pridemore 2000, 2002; Shelley 2000; Gavrilova et al. 2003). Recent years have seen some diversifying and decentralizing tendencies, but these have not fundamentally altered the centralized character of Russia's police (Shelley 1999; Favarel-Garrigues & Le Huerou 2004; Robertson 2004).

By the time the Soviet Union unraveled, the Russian police were ill-equipped to confront surging crime and needed thorough modernization. But rather than implement systematic, fundamental reforms, the Russian government introduced a confusing series of reorganizations, renamings, and leadership changes. Meanwhile, despite formal laws providing supervisory authority over law enforcement to the Russian legislature, the administrative organ overseeing the police—the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD)—defied any attempts to exercise such authority (Waller 1997). On the street, the police continued to suffer low salaries (exacerbated by inflation), insufficient personnel (in particular, experienced officers and qualified recruits), poor training, outdated communication and transportation equipment, and a lack of computers (Human Rights Watch 1999; Shelley 1999; Pridemore 2000; Robertson 2004). These conditions persist, according to a recent Russian study (Moscow-Helsinki Group 2005). Many left the police to pursue more lucrative opportunities in private security firms (Shelley 1999, 2000).

Police Violence and Corruption: Prior Evidence and Unresolved Issues

Rather than commit the financial or political resources necessary to create an effective police force, MVD authorities pressured their units to improve official performance indicators, such as the number of arrests and rate of crimes solved (Uildriks & Van Renen 2003; Robertson 2004). Recent attempts to change these criteria for assessing police performance have proven superficial (Moscow-Helsinki Group 2005). A survey of cadets and recent graduates of a Russian police academy identified “pressure from above to achieve good clear-up rates” as the second most important motive (following “low pay”) for police to use their position for their own ends (Beck & Lee 2002). But official performance targets also greatly increase the incentives for police to use beatings and torture to compel detainees to “confess” to crimes. A report by Human Rights Watch (1999) cites this pressure from above as an important factor behind the many instances of violent abuses it documents and also provides evidence of gratuitous beatings of indigents and drunks held in “tanks” by the police (see also Moscow-Helsinki Group 2005).

Russia’s human rights ombudsman, Vladimir Lukin, describes specific cases where suspects were beaten or tortured in order to extract confessions, practices he describes as common (RIA Novosti 2004). A news article reports that 25 percent of the respondents in a 2004 poll conducted in 12 large Russian cities claimed they had been beaten or tortured by the police (“Poll: 25% Victimized by Police,” *The Moscow Times*, 21 May 2004, p. 3). A particularly vicious series of police operations took place in the city of Blagoveshchensk in Bashkortostan (a Russian province in the Volga region with a large Muslim population) in December 2004. Local police, accompanied by members of the special police forces (OMON), rounded up hundreds of young men in cafes, restaurants, and other public places, beat them severely, and held them illegally for several days (Rabinovich 2005). Although the Russian press (Belasheva 2005) covered the incident, the ensuing investigation has yet to produce significant punishment for the police officers or officials involved (Amnesty International 2006). As recently as March and April 2007, police forces brutally attacked crowds of peaceful marchers and passersby at small protest demonstrations in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Nizhnyi Novgorod (see Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2007).

In addition to police violence, police corruption has also apparently become common since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In its most common forms, police demand bribes for minor

infractions or shake down citizens for cash (Human Rights Watch 1999; Feifer 2003). High-level MVD officials have been implicated in investigations of organized crime activities, and there are numerous reports of police involvement in protection and extortion rackets (Center for Strategic and International Studies 1997). Beck and Lee report that “large numbers of respondents” in their survey of police cadets and new officers said many specific corrupt behaviors by police are “morally acceptable” (2002:360–1). Gavrilova et al. cite data from an unpublished study (Kolennikova et al. 2002) based on 2,209 interviews with police officers that 50 percent “make extra money by engaging in up to fifty activities unrelated to their duties, many of which are illegal . . . bribe-taking, registering stolen cars, drug and arms dealing, selling fake passports, and kidnapping” (2003:142). Salagaev’s (2004) investigative study identifies a range of connections between police and organized crime groups in the Russian province of Tartarstan.

According to Ivkovic, 9.9 percent of the Russian respondents to the 1996/1997 International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS), a survey of urban samples in 41 countries, said they were asked to bribe a policeman during the past year (2003:614; see also Zvekic 1998). Among the 18 transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe included in the study, only Bulgaria had a higher rate (at 10.5 percent). Yugoslavia and Croatia were somewhat close (about 7.0 percent), Lithuania and Slovakia more distant (at about 4.5 percent), and the remaining countries all quite far behind at 3.3 percent (Ukraine) or lower. Only three of 13 developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America had higher rates than Russia (Indonesia, Argentina, and Bolivia). The rates were below 1.0 percent in all eight Western European countries and Canada, and below 1.5 percent in the United States. Based on this comparative benchmark, police corruption appears to be especially widespread in Russia. However, the Russian ICVS was conducted only in Moscow, so these results, while useful for comparative purposes, may not reflect the situation in the rest of Russia.

The MVD itself has acknowledged the severity of the police corruption problem, spearheading anticorruption campaigns such as “Operation Clean Hands” in 1996 (Waller 1997) and the “Were-wolves in Uniform” campaign in 2003 (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2003). The MVD censured 21,000 officers for various offenses in 2002, and fired 17,000 (Feifer 2003). But these measures have evidently met with skepticism on the part of the public. Russian President Vladimir Putin complained in his 2005 state of the union address: “[w]e need the type of law-enforcement agencies in whose work the upstanding citizen can take pride, instead of crossing to the other side of the street when he sees a man in uniform. Those, whose main goal is personal gain, rather than

upholding the law, have no place in the law-enforcement system” (2005: n.p.).

Unresolved Questions

Interviews with victims, journalistic reports, insider informants, studies of the police, official pronouncements or statistics, and surveys of geographically limited areas all suggest that police violence and corruption are very serious problems in contemporary Russia, perhaps sufficiently widespread to qualify Russia as a case of predatory policing (see also Glikin 1998; Gilinskii et al. 2002). But these data sources are not suitable for quantifying more precisely their prevalence and consequences, or for examining whether particular socioeconomic or ethnic groups are singled out for victimization. In addition, prior research has not examined subjective dimensions of police abuse such as the links between experiences of misconduct and views toward the police and possible tolerance of violent police practices. Most important for our purposes, the available research gives us no basis for determining whether policing in Russia is better described as predatory or as a case of divided society policing. We turn now to our survey and focus group data, which allow us to answer this question and address the other limitations in prior research on police misconduct in Russia.

Data Sources

Surveys

The bulk of our data come from six surveys conducted in Russia from spring 2002 through summer 2004 by a Moscow-based survey research firm that has set the industry standard in Russia since 1990 (see Table 1). The organization was known as the All Russian Center for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM) until fall 2003. At that time central government authorities took over

Table 1. Survey Data

Date	Sample	N
April 2002	6 regions (Kaluga, Ryazan, Sverdlovsk, Perm', Stavropol, Rostov), ages 18–64	3,002
May 2002	Nationally-representative, ages 16 and older	2,394
January 2003	Nationally-representative, ages 16 and older	2,389
February 2003	6 regions (Kaluga, Ryazan, Sverdlovsk, Perm', Stavropol, Rostov), ages 16–64	3,000
June 2004	6 regions (Kaluga, Ryazan, Sverdlovsk, Perm', Stavropol, Rostov), ages 16–64	3,405
July 2004	Nationally-representative, ages 16 and older	2,408
Total		16,598

VTsIOM (under the guise of privatization) and dismissed its founding director, Yuri Levada. Virtually all of VTsIOM's erstwhile staff left the organization and joined Levada in forming the Levada Analytic Center, which conducted our 2004 surveys.⁴

Three of the surveys, conducted in May 2002, January 2003, and July 2004, were part of a series of bimonthly "monitoring" surveys of the Russian population applied to nationally representative probability samples, drawn according to standard multistage procedures.⁵ To the core set of questions, we added pretested questions on experiences of police abuse, confidence in a variety of political and social institutions, and other topics related to human rights and democracy. We included a specially designed module examining attitudes toward the police, the courts, and various police interrogation techniques in the July 2004 national survey.

The other three surveys were "regional" surveys implemented by the same organization in six Russian provinces: Kaluga and Ryazan (both near Moscow), Perm and Sverdlovsk (in the Urals region), and Rostov and Stavropol (in the Northern Caucasus). The regional surveys were part of another project that called for moderate age restrictions of the samples (see Table 1). These regions may not be representative of Russian regions more generally. Accordingly, for analyses where we combined the regional and national data sets, we applied data weights calculated to limit the statistical power of the data from those six regions so that it roughly equaled the statistical power of the data from equivalent provinces sampled in the national surveys. We also applied data weights to individual survey respondents to ensure that sample distributions across gender, age, locality type, and education categories reflected known population distributions.⁶ Our combined data file includes 16,598 observations.

⁴ One anonymous reviewer suggested that this action could indicate that the data collection process prior to fall 2003 was subject to the influence of outside political controls. If anything, the takeover suggests the opposite. The action may well have been part of a larger effort to control outlets for the independent collection and dissemination of information about Russian society and politics. But if control was the motive, this dramatic action implies that the government could not exert influence prior to the takeover. The senior author has had a close working relationship with the organization since 1997, and has never had any indication from the staff that government officials were exercising influence on the research process or findings. Our analyses show only minor changes in some variables between the periods before and after the organization became formally independent. These changes follow no consistent pattern. Thus we doubt that outside political influence shaped our findings.

⁵ We provide more details on sampling, fieldwork, and quality control procedures for the surveys in the Appendix.

⁶ These weights, computed by the data producer, correct for oversampling of women, the elderly, urban residents, and the highly educated, a feature of most Russian surveys for reasons that remain unclear.

Measures

Our surveys asked respondents to indicate whether they or their family members have “experienced during the last two or three years any instances of violence (beating, torture, other forms of physical assault) on the part of the police [*militzia*].” Based on responses to this question, we assess the prevalence and sources of variation in exposure to police violence. We also asked whether respondents or family members “experienced during the last two or three years any illegal actions on the part of the police that did not involve violence, such as the demanding of bribes, refusal of residential registration, illegal investigation, threats, and so on.”⁷ We interpret affirmative answers as encounters with police corruption and accordingly use this measure to assess its prevalence and correlates.

While they both directly tap into personal experiences of police misconduct, these measures are far from perfect. In particular, our measure of encounters with corruption does not perfectly correspond to our definition of corruption (the use of position to extract rents): while demanding a bribe clearly constitutes corruption, the other examples may or may not. However, our reading of the literature on Russian police abuse cited above leads us to believe that the vast majority of affirmative answers to the second question reflect demands for bribes. In addition, the other actions mentioned probably related to corruption. While in some cases police may have denied respondents registration, investigated them illegally, or threatened them for purely political or ideological reasons, it is highly likely that most such actions were intended to extort money, goods, or favors from the respondents.

Generally, the extent of police misconduct is hard to measure (see Ivkovic 2003). Respondents may be reluctant to discuss what must have been painful and, possibly, humiliating experiences. Thus our estimates of prevalence may be downward biased. Respondents may have also idiosyncratically interpreted the notions of *violence* and *nonviolent mistreatment*, perhaps overstating their incidence. Flawed though they may be, our survey questions offered a more systematic and replicable measure of how many Russians experience different forms of police abuse than can be gleaned from government statistics, interview-based studies, and public assertions by activists or officials. Moreover, survey research is the

⁷ The Russian word for *family* used in the questions, *sen'ia*, denotes members of one's immediate family rather than extended family (*rodstvoenniki*). Although reports of experiences by family members may be less reliable than reports of personal experiences by the respondent, we doubt that hearsay plays much of a role since immediate family members rather than more distant family members are the reference.

only methodology that permits us to systematically examine the correlates (both predictors and consequences) of citizen experiences of police misconduct. This is why survey questions similar to ours have been used in many studies of the correlates of police misconduct in the United States and Canada (Smith & Hawkins 1973; Koenig 1980; Scaglione & Condon 1980; Tyler 1990; Wortley et al. 1997; Weitzer 2002; Weitzer & Tuch 2004). In any case, our focus groups let us examine some of our questions of interest using an alternative method.

Focus Groups

To obtain more information on how Russians think about the institutions and issues covered in our surveys, we conducted nine focus groups of 9–12 participants each in the provincial capitals of Ryazan, Perm, and Rostov regions in July 2002. Staff from the Center for Independent Social Research of St. Petersburg helped us develop a question guide, recruited participants in the groups, and moderated the discussions, which we observed. We have extensive notes on all groups and transcripts from all but one (where recording equipment failed). In each city we ran one group consisting of young adults (under age 30) and two with mixed ages. The greater depth and richer details the focus groups offer regarding the consequences of and attitudes toward police misconduct make them a valuable supplement to our quantitative data.

Quantitative Results

How Widespread Are Public Encounters With Police Violence and Police Corruption in Russia?

The distributions of responses to our questions about experiences with police violence and corruption remained fairly stable across the three waves of surveys we conducted, suggesting no discernible trend in the prevalence of abuse (see Table 2). Overall, 5.2 percent of our respondents say they experienced physical abuse by the police during the last two to three years, 4.9 percent say family members did, and 8.6 percent say either they or their family (or both) did.⁸ The corresponding figures for experiences of

⁸ The 95 percent confidence intervals around these estimates are very narrow due to our large sample size. With 16,598 observations, our maximum “margin of error” (for an evenly distributed dichotomous variable) is approximately plus or minus three-quarters of a percentage point.

Table 2. Reported Experiences of Violence and Corruption by the Police During the Last 2–3 Years

	2002	2003	2004	Total	LCL	UCL
<i>A. . . . experienced physical abuse (violence) by the police</i>						
Respondent	5.2%	5.5%	4.7%	5.2%	4.8%	5.5%
Respondent's family member(s)	5.0%	5.4%	4.3%	4.9%	4.6%	5.2%
Respondent, family member(s), or both	9.0%	9.0%	7.7%	8.6%	8.1%	9.0%
<i>B. . . . experienced nonphysical abuse (corruption) by the police</i>						
Respondent . . .	6.5%	7.0%	5.5%	6.3%	6.0%	6.7%
Respondent's family member(s) . . .	4.3%	6.0%	5.0%	5.1%	4.8%	5.5%
Respondent, family member(s), or both . . .	9.2%	10.0%	9.0%	9.4%	8.9%	9.8%
<i>C. . . . experienced any abuse by the police</i>						
Respondent . . .	9.2%	10.0%	7.8%	9.0%	8.6%	9.5%
Respondent's family member(s) . . .	7.3%	9.3%	7.1%	7.9%	7.5%	8.4%
Respondent, family member(s), or both . . .	13.8%	15.0%	12.5%	13.8%	13.3%	14.3%

Note: LCL and UCL denote, respectively, upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence intervals.

Source: Weighted National and Regional Surveys from 2002–2004.

corruption are similar: 6.4, 5.1, and 9.4 percent. Combining acts of violence and corruption, our data suggest that 9.0 percent encountered some kind of police misconduct directly in the last two to three years, 7.9 percent have family members who experienced it, and 13.8 percent did so either directly or through family members.

These numbers are smaller than some reported by the media and human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch 1999). However, a survey that reported 25 percent of respondents had experienced violence by the police was conducted only in Russia's 12 largest cities: sample size and possible restrictions were not mentioned ("Poll: 25% Victimized by Police," *The Moscow Times*, 21 May 2004, p. 3). Police violence is more prevalent in big cities than elsewhere (see below), so this figure cannot be generalized to the broader Russian population. That study appears to have asked about encounters ever experienced with the police, not just encounters during the last two to three years. Moreover, our figures are replicated across three waves of surveys.

In any event, our results indicate that police misconduct is indeed prevalent. Official figures put the number of Russians ages 16 and older on January 1, 2004, at 119,154,119 (Goskomstat 2004). Our point estimates of 5.2 percent of Russian adults victimized by police violence in any two- to three-year period, 6.3 percent by corruption, and 13.8 percent by some form of misconduct directly or via family translate into roughly 6.2, 7.6, and 16.4 million acts of police misconduct. These numbers are staggering:

police misconduct is widespread, even commonplace, in Russia today.⁹

How do our estimates from Russia compare with estimates of the prevalence of police misconduct in the United States? Weitzer and Tuch report that in a sample of 1,792 Americans, roughly 3 percent of whites and 9 percent of blacks and Hispanics say that the police have at some point used “excessive force” against them; 3 percent of whites, 8 percent of Hispanics, and 10 percent of blacks say they have “seen a police officer engage in corrupt activities” (2004:315). These numbers imply that police violence and corruption are considerably less frequent in the United States than in Russia, at least for whites, and possibly also for Hispanics and blacks. However, “excessive force” does not necessarily entail violence, and the question in the American survey asks about “seeing” police corruption, not about being a victim of police corruption. Thus the numbers reported by Weitzer and Tuch probably overstate the prevalence of police violence and corruption relative to our estimates from Russia. Moreover, their questions pertain to any experiences in the course of one’s entire life, while our Russian survey questions are limited to experiences in the last two to three years. A crude comparison therefore suggests that Russians experience about twice as much police violence and corruption in the course of two to three years than Americans experience in the course of their lifetimes. Third, their sample is drawn from cities with at least 100,000 inhabitants, where, according to the authors, police misconduct is particularly salient (Weitzer & Tuch 2004:310). Finally, studies by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics report much lower rates of the use of force by the police in the United States: a nationally representative 1996 survey of 6,241 respondents age 12 or older found that only 0.2 percent (1 in 500) were “hit, held, pushed, choked, threatened with a flashlight, restrained by a police dog, threatened or actually sprayed with chemical or pepper spray, threatened with a gun, or experienced some other form of force” in the last year (Greenfield et al. 1997:12).

⁹ One reviewer raised the issue of whether we are justified in characterizing police misconduct as “widespread” on the basis of 13.8 percent of the adult population experiencing some form of it in the last two to three years. We acknowledge that there is an element of subjective judgment in all such characterizations, which lack a definitive standard. However, we suspect that if, for example, 13.8 percent of a community’s households had a member contract HIV within a similar time span, then most observers would readily characterize the situation as an “epidemic.” Many Russians may actively avoid all encounters with the police and thus are at minimal risk for experiencing police misconduct. In relative terms, we believe that careful juxtaposition of our data with similar results from studies in other countries, as well as the comparative data from the ICVS cited above, show that police misconduct is considerably more common in Russia than in the United States and many other countries.

In answer to the first question, which distinguishes predatory from divided society policing, our results show that police corruption is slightly more widespread than police violence: 9.4 percent report experiencing corruption themselves, via their family members, or both, while the corresponding number for police violence is 8.6 percent. Each point estimate is outside the confidence interval around the other. Although there is a very small overlap in the intervals themselves, the most reasonable interpretation of the data is that they indicate that corruption is at least as common as violence, and in fact probably somewhat more common. This is our first indication that the predatory policing model better characterizes Russia than the divided society model.

Does Exposure to Police Misconduct Vary by Social and Economic Characteristics?

Our surveys confirm findings from interview-based reports that younger males experience the most police violence (Human Rights Watch 1999): 11.2 percent of males under 40 in our sample report recent experiences of police violence, compared to 9.0 percent of males in their forties and substantially lower percentages of older males and females of all ages. A similar pattern holds for police corruption, reported by 13.3 percent of males under 40 and 9.6 percent of males in their forties. Combining the two forms, our data indicate that 18.7 percent of Russian males under 40 personally experience police misconduct in any two- to three-year period. The figure is somewhat lower (9.3 percent) for males in their forties and does not exceed 6.0 percent for females of any cohort. Clearly, the police are most likely to target men under 40. Even if young males are more likely to commit crimes and thus come into contact with the police as criminal suspects, that hardly excuses or explains their disproportionate exposure to illegal police abuse.

The divided society model of policing suggests that ethnic minorities and those of lower socioeconomic status are disproportionately victimized by police misconduct. Even in the United States, where the divided society model seems to be inappropriate as a characterization of the main tendency of policing (Weitzer 1995), race/ethnicity, social status, and urban residence affect exposure to police abuse (Weitzer & Tuch 2004). To determine how these factors relate to exposure to police misconduct in Russia, we estimate logistic regression models for each form of abuse separately and for the two combined (see Table 3). The multivariate models confirm the descriptive findings regarding the effects of age and gender.

Citizens of Russia who are of non-European ethnic origin are more likely than ethnic Russians to encounter police violence,

Table 3. Logistic Regressions: Who Experienced Police Misconduct in the Last 2–3 Years?

	<i>Violent abuse</i>			<i>Corruption</i>			<i>Any abuse</i>		
	B	SE	exp(B)	B	SE	exp(B)	B	SE	exp(B)
Cohort (18 to 29)									
30 to 39	-.059	.102	.94	.154*	.091	1.17	.043	.079	1.04
40 to 49	-.275**	.106	.76	-.248**	.098	.78	-.251**	.083	.78
50 to 59	-.372**	.123	.69	-.702**	.123	.50	-.591**	.100	.55
60 and over	-1.018**	.182	.36	-1.198**	.159	.30	-1.170**	.135	.31
Woman	-1.222**	.088	.29	-.993**	.075	.37	-1.050**	.065	.35
Ethnic Origin (Russian)									
Other Slavic or European	.242	.189	1.27	.731**	.144	2.08	.467**	.135	1.59
Non-European	.357**	.106	1.43	.169	.104	1.18	.134	.089	1.14
Other/missing	.765**	.248	2.15	.607**	.229	1.84	.426**	.213	1.53
Education (Secondary degree)									
VUZ degree	-.278*	.145	.76	.078	.106	1.08	.025	.096	1.02
PTU	.116	.119	1.12	-.069	.118	.93	-.009	.097	.99
Less than secondary	.186*	.106	1.20	.070	.101	1.07	.222**	.084	1.25
Workforce Status (unskilled manual)									
Professional/manager	-.607**	.172	.55	.465**	.134	1.59	.088	.115	1.09
Routine non-manual	-.129	.143	.88	.296**	.135	1.34	-.012	.113	.99
Skilled manual	-.071	.115	.93	.267**	.119	1.31	.055	.096	1.06
Working, occ. missing	.513	.452	1.67	.897**	.407	2.45	.455	.385	1.58
Military/Police	-1.523**	.630	.22	-1.603**	.699	.20	-1.665**	.541	.19
Self-employed	-.076	.204	.93	1.263**	.153	3.54	.888**	.137	2.43
In school	-.447**	.165	.64	.095	.156	1.10	-.194	.130	.82
Unemployed	.379**	.128	1.46	.535**	.135	1.71	.310**	.112	1.36
Not working, not looking	1.057**	.207	2.88	.903**	.232	2.47	.895**	.189	2.45
Other ^a	-.396**	.147	.67	.217	.136	1.24	-.114	.113	.89
Rural resident	-.030	.137	.97	-.240*	.124	.79	-.161	.107	.85
Ln(city size)	.065**	.026	1.07	-.013	.024	.99	.025	.020	1.02
Moscow	.348**	.166	1.42	.764**	.144	2.15	.588**	.126	1.80
Year (2002)									
Year 2003	.066	.086	1.07	.083	.077	1.09	.110*	.066	1.12
Year 2004	-.119	.091	.89	-.199**	.084	.82	-.201**	.072	.82
Constant	-2.992**	.341	.05	-2.272**	.311	.10	-2.073**	.264	.13
Log likelihood			-3052.1			-3593.7			-4598.6

Note: Dummy variables for residence in each of the six provinces in our regional surveys are included in all models, but not shown.

Source: Pooled 2002–2004 data, weighted. N = 16598.

**Statistically significant at $p < .05$, two-tailed.

*Statistically significant at $p < .05$, one-tailed.

^a“Other” category includes retired, disabled, maternity leave, homemakers, other nonspecified, and missing activity.

controlling for the other variables: the metric coefficient of 0.357 implies that their odds of victimization are 43 percent ($e^{0.357} = 1.43$) higher.¹⁰ The difference between ethnic Russians and other Slavic or European ethnicities is not significant, suggesting that racism on the part of police officers may be behind the disproportionate exposure of non-Europeans.

¹⁰ We found no significant variation among non-European ethnic groups, aside from an unusually high rate of abuse among ethnic Chuvash, for which we have no explanation. We have too few cases in most of the more detailed ethnic categories to permit analysis of ethnicity in less aggregated form. We initially included a dummy variable for Muslim faith in the model; it had no significant effects, so we removed it.

What is most surprising about the effect of ethnicity is that it is so *small*. The odds ratio of 1.43 implies, for example, that if an ethnic Russian with particular characteristics has a 0.053 predicted probability of experiencing police violence in the last three years (the national average for all adults), then a non-European-origin Russian citizen with the same characteristics has a 0.073 predicted probability.¹¹ Compared to ethnic Russians whose characteristics give them a 0.030 predicted probability of experiencing police violence, non-Europeans in Russia have a 0.042 predicted probability. These differences, while statistically significant, pale in magnitude to the 9 versus 3 percent black/white difference in exposure to “excessive force” in the United States reported by Weitzer and Tuch (2004). In their study arguing that disproportionate police violence against blacks in Brazil undermines that country’s status as a democracy—which is consistent with divided society policing—Mitchell and Wood report a black/white ratio of the odds of exposure to police assault among young men of 2.40, corresponding to a 0.069 predicted probability for blacks who have the same characteristics as whites with a 0.030 probability (1999:1014). Thus although police violence disproportionately targets non-European ethnic minorities in Russia, the magnitude of the ethnic differences is much smaller than in other countries.

Non-Europeans are no more likely to experience police corruption than are ethnic Russians, controlling for other variables. Yet those of other Slavic or European ancestry are more likely than ethnic Russians to be victimized in this way (their odds are about twice as high). In terms of exposure to any form of abuse, the latter effect clearly prevails, as the effect of non-European ethnic origin is again nonsignificant. Altogether, the ethnic differences in exposure to police misconduct in Russia are too inconsistent and small in magnitude to conform to a divided society model of policing.

The effects of social status, as measured by education, workforce status, and occupation, also vary by type of abuse. University graduates are less likely than high school graduates to experience police violence; high-school dropouts are more likely. Compared to manual workers (the omitted category on workforce status and occupation), professional-managerial workers, students, and police officers/military personnel are less likely to experience police violence. The latter finding suggests that police officers are loath to target other officers or soldiers due to occupational solidarity or fear of reprisal. The unemployed and those who have given up looking for work are more exposed to police violence than are

¹¹ To obtain this result, first convert the “baseline” probability (0.053) to odds, then multiply by the odds ratio (1.43), then convert the resulting odds back to a probability.

unskilled workers (and, by extension, the other groups of employed workers). These findings all indicate that, to some degree, higher social status helps insulate Russians from police violence. The police may feel they have greater impunity to brutalize lower-status individuals, and higher-status Russians may be more adept at avoiding contact with the police.

The picture is more mixed with respect to the probability of experiencing police corruption. Education has no net effect. Unskilled workers have fewer such experiences than professional-managerial, routine nonmanual, and skilled manual workers. In turn, the self-employed are significantly more likely to report corruption than all three of these categories of hired employees.¹² The self-employed (and, to a lesser extent, professionals and managers) make good targets for bribes because they are likely to have cash to pay, and the vast number of regulations and taxes that apply to them encourage “violations” that can be forgiven with a bribe. Unemployed and discouraged workers also experience more police corruption than unskilled workers.

To gain a more intuitive sense of the magnitude and pattern of effects of ethnicity and social status on exposure to police violence and abuse in Russia, consider the predicted probabilities implied by our models for different combinations of education, workforce status, and ethnicity, estimated for males under 30 living in cities other than Moscow with more than 1 million residents (see Figure 1). The first pair of columns pertains to those with the lowest social status (unemployed high school dropouts), the second and third pair to working and middle-class status (unskilled workers and self-employed workers with secondary degrees), and the fourth pair to higher status (university educated professionals). For each of these combinations, predicted probabilities for ethnic Russians and non-Europeans are shown.

The predicted probabilities answer the second question that distinguishes predatory policing from divided society policing: Do all groups experience significant levels of police misconduct, even if some groups are disproportionately exposed? Although higher-status groups and ethnic Russians are somewhat less exposed to police violence than lower-status groups and non-Europeans, the differences are relatively small in magnitude. Most important, no group of young men is immune. Even among ethnic Russian university-educated professionals, the predicted probability is 0.048. At the other extreme, the predicted probability for non-European unemployed high school dropouts is 0.110. Thus while elites are less than half as likely to experience police violence as the most

¹² Auxiliary analysis shows that the differences between the self-employed and the corresponding categories are all statistically significant.

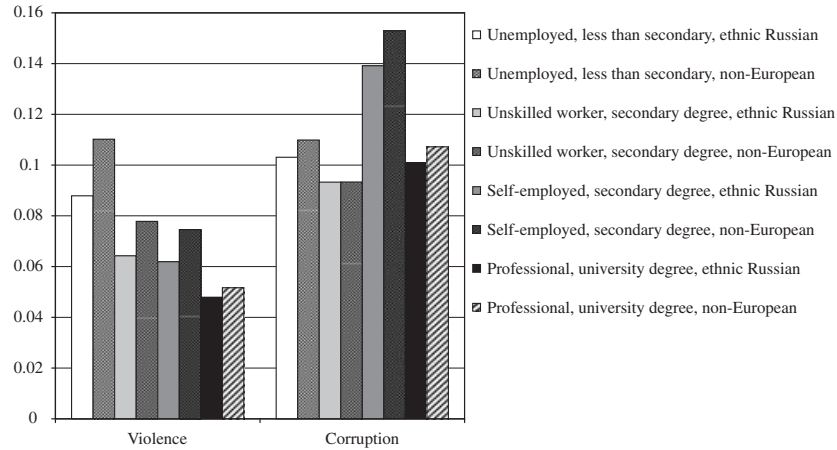


Figure 1. Predicted Probabilities of Experiencing Police Violence and Corruption, Russian Males Under 30 in Large Cities With Various Ethnic and Socioeconomic Traits.

subordinate of groups are elites do nonetheless experience a substantial rate of police violence. As for corruption, the differences by ethnicity are negligible and nonsignificant; the differences by status are small and do not correspond to a hierarchical status gradient. Our data again indicate that predatory policing is the best model to describe Russia.

Before turning to the next set of analyses, we note that in Russia, as elsewhere, city size has positive effects on both violent and nonviolent abuse: the larger the size of the locality, the more abusive the police. Presumably, greater concentrations of police mean more contact between them and the public in larger urban areas. Both forms of police abuse are especially rampant in Moscow, even controlling for its distinctively large size. This probably reflects local policies encouraging police intimidation of racial minorities and immigrants and the opportunities for extortion and bribery provided by Moscow's unconstitutional withholding of residency registrations from many newcomers. We also include dummy variables for the six regions we sampled in our three regional surveys, to control for possible regional effects not absorbed by our weights, but we do not show the estimates of these "nuisance" parameters.

How Do Russians Perceive the Police, the Courts, and Violent Police Methods?

We examine a range of questions pertaining to attitudes toward the police and the courts (see Table 4). Our 2003 and 2004 surveys

Table 4. Attitudes Toward the Police, Courts, and Other Institutions

<i>A. How much confidence do you have in the . . . ?</i>						
	... police	... courts	... mass media	... Army	... political parties	... President
Complete confidence	3%	4%	6%	9%	2%	23%
Some confidence	23%	31%	40%	40%	17%	50%
Not much confidence	36%	29%	31%	25%	37%	13%
None at all	29%	18%	14%	15%	28%	6%
Hard to say	9%	18%	9%	11%	16%	8%
<i>B. How much are you personally at risk of violent abuse by the police?</i>						
A great deal	14%					
Somewhat	36%					
Not much	22%					
Not at all	21%					
Hard to say	8%					
<i>C. If you were arrested under suspicion of having conducted a crime, would the police treat you as they should according to the law?</i>						
Definitely	4%					
Probably	14%					
Probably not	38%					
Definitely not	28%					
Hard to say	16%					
<i>D. How much do fear being arrested for no reason?</i>						
A great deal	8%					
Somewhat	33%					
Not much	28%					
Not at all	20%					
Hard to say	11%					
<i>E. If you were accused of a crime you did not commit, how likely is it that you would be convicted?</i>						
Absolutely impossible	8%					
Almost impossible	9%					
Not very likely	12%					
Neither likely nor unlikely	16%					
Somewhat likely	24%					
Very likely	8%					
Extremely likely	2%					
Hard to say	21%					

Note: Source for panel A is weighted national and regional surveys from 2003 and 2004 (N = 11,202). Source for panels B through E is the weighted July 2004 national survey (N = 2,408).

asked how much “confidence” or “trust” (the Russian word, *do-veriia*, can mean either) the respondent has in six institutions: the police, the courts, the army, the mass media, political parties, and the President of Russia. Combining the surveys (which exhibit trivial change over time), only 3 percent of respondents say the police “fully” deserve trust, 23 percent say they “probably” deserve it, 36 percent say “probably not,” and 29 percent say “not at all.” The remaining 9 percent find it hard to say. Our data indicate that barely one-quarter of the adult population has confidence in the police, and most of these have only partial confidence. About two-thirds do not trust the police. Trust in the courts is only slightly higher: 35 percent trust them to some degree, while 47 percent do not trust them. Russians have little confidence in their law enforcement and legal institutions.¹³

Russians’ levels of distrust of legal institutions are high by international standards. According to the World Values Survey, on average 80 percent of the populations of Western European countries trust the police, and 66 percent trust the courts (Mishler & Rose 1997:429). Even in post-Soviet Ukraine, which shares many similarities with Russia, 43 percent of respondents in a 2000 survey conducted in a large city (Kharkiv) said they trust the police, and 31 percent said they do not (Beck & Chistyakova 2002:127). Only 10.2 percent of the Russian respondents to the 1996 ICVS said that the police “do a good job,” lower than in any of the other transition countries surveyed (Zvekić 1998:78)

Perhaps Russians distrust all institutions and see the police or courts as no worse than others. In fact, the distribution of responses for the other four institutions we asked about show that levels of trust vary substantially by institution, and political parties are the only institution Russians trust less than they trust the police. Russians tend to trust the mass media, the army, and the President, but not political parties, the police, or courts. While Russians may view many institutions with skepticism, they have especially negative views toward the legal institutions and political parties. This contrasts sharply with the situation in the United States and Europe, where the public holds the local police in higher regard than most other governmental and civil society organizations, including the media, the U.S. Supreme Court, and a range of NGOs (Peek et al. 1978; Mishler & Rose 1997; Newton & Norris 2000). In sum, our data indicate that the Russian public is unusually suspicious of the police and courts, both relative to other countries (including

¹³ Our 2002 surveys asked about the Federal Security Service (FSB), rather than the police. Confidence in the FSB is somewhat higher, at 45 percent (8 percent fully confident). However, a considerable proportion (34 percent) has at least some misgivings about the FSB, too, and 22 percent declined to express an opinion.

other transition countries) and relative to other public institutions in Russia.

More detailed questions on our 2004 national survey reveal additional evidence of widespread mistrust and fear (Table 4, panels B–E). Asked how much they personally fear being physically abused by the police, half the respondents answered “at least somewhat.” Only 4 percent are certain they would be treated according to the law if they were arrested, while two-thirds say probably not (38 percent) or definitely (28 percent) not. We find that 41 percent fear “somewhat” or “a great deal” being arrested for no reason; only 20 percent are completely free from this worry. Finally, only 29 percent find it unlikely that they would be convicted if charged with a crime they had not committed, and 34 percent find it at least somewhat likely. Russians are clearly uneasy over the police and courts. They fear arbitrary arrest, violence, and illegal treatment by the police. They doubt the courts would acquit them of a crime they did not commit.

An additional set of questions on the July 2004 national survey ascertains whether Russians see some forms of police violence as acceptable, which they might due to an authoritarian political culture or concerns about rising crime. To see if views on police practices vary depending on the type of offense, we asked respondents to imagine scenarios where the police arrested suspects for defrauding a business partner (white-collar crime), stealing a car (petty property crime), selling heroin to a neighbor (serious, but not a capital offense), and murder (capital offense). For each scenario, we inquired whether three different actions of the police are acceptable, are legal, and should be legal: handcuffing the suspect during arrest and transport to the police station, beating and/or kicking the suspect, and electrically shocking the suspect (see Table 5).

Not many Russians (9–21 percent) categorically reject the use of handcuffs at the time of arrest, a standard police procedure in many countries. Substantial majorities say that beating and electroshocking are not acceptable, with some variation by type of offense: 71–76 percent categorically reject beatings or electroshocks for fraud and car theft suspects, but the numbers drop to 58 and 68 percent for murder suspects. Still, most reject these violent methods even for murder suspects. Moreover, most who accept them do so only when the suspect misbehaves or tries to escape. Very few (2–6 percent, depending on the nature of the offense) say it is generally OK for the police to beat or shock suspects.

Most Russians also know that Russian law prohibits beating or electrically shocking suspects regardless of the offense. Only small minorities (8–10 percent) believe these practices are legal; most

Table 5. Attitudes toward specific police practices

<i>A. Is it acceptable for the police to use the following methods on suspects accused of . . .</i>				
	<i>. . . fraud</i>	<i>. . . murder</i>	<i>. . . drug dealing</i>	<i>. . . car theft</i>
<i>Handcuffing the suspect</i>				
Under no circumstances	21%	9%	14%	19%
If suspect misbehaves	48%	33%	41%	48%
Generally ok	21%	51%	38%	24%
Hard to say	11%	6%	8%	9%
<i>Beating the suspect</i>				
Under no circumstances	71%	58%	64%	74%
If suspect misbehaves	15%	27%	21%	14%
Generally ok	4%	6%	6%	4%
Hard to say	10%	9%	9%	8%
<i>Electroshocking the suspect</i>				
Under no circumstances	76%	66%	71%	77%
If suspect misbehaves	11%	17%	13%	9%
Generally ok	2%	5%	4%	2%
Hard to say	11%	12%	12%	11%
<i>B. Are the following methods legal for suspects accused of . . .</i>				
	<i>. . . fraud</i>	<i>. . . murder</i>	<i>. . . drug dealing</i>	<i>. . . car theft</i>
<i>Handcuffing the suspect</i>				
Yes, legal	44%	56%	54%	48%
No, illegal	17%	13%	15%	18%
Don't know if legal	26%	20%	20%	21%
Hard to say	13%	11%	12%	13%
<i>Beating the suspect</i>				
Yes, legal	8%	10%	9%	8%
No, illegal	63%	59%	60%	64%
Don't know if legal	18%	20%	19%	16%
Hard to say	10%	11%	12%	12%
<i>Electroshocking the suspect</i>				
Yes, legal	10%	11%	11%	9%
No, illegal	57%	54%	54%	58%
Don't know if legal	18%	21%	19%	17%
Hard to say	15%	14%	16%	15%

Source: Weighted July 2004 national survey, N = 2,408.

understand that they are not (54–64 percent). However, fairly large numbers are uncertain about their legality or decline to answer the question. Views of legality do not vary much by type of offense: most respondents correctly assume that the type of offense has no bearing on the legality of particular police practices. Responses regarding whether these practices *should* be legal for suspects of different crimes broadly follow the pattern regarding whether they are acceptable (results available upon request).

Most Russians oppose the use of violence and torture by the police: they do not think these practices are acceptable or should be legal even if the suspect misbehaves or tries to escape. Public concern about the rise of crime and drug addiction has not translated into broad public support for brutal police interrogation methods. Furthermore, most Russians understand that these methods are illegal, regardless of what crime a suspect has allegedly committed. The prevalence of these methods cannot be attributed to their

normative acceptance by the public or to a widespread misconception that they are legal. Of course, neither the rejection of brutal techniques nor the knowledge of their illegality is universal. But public attitudes are hardly tolerant of police violence and torture: if anything, they constrain rather than enable abuse.

Finally, we have data that directly bear on the third question that distinguishes predatory from divided society policing: is the main motive for police misconduct to advance the material or corporate interests of the police rather than to suppress subordinate groups? It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to definitively measure the main or predominant motive that drives police misconduct. Our approach is to ask what the public perceives to be the main role of the police in Russia. If the public perceives the police as operating mainly to advance their own material interests, it provides some indication that their violent and corrupt practices are predatory rather than politically motivated. If, on the other hand, the public tends to perceive their main role as advancing the interests of elites or preserving public order, then the divided society or functionalist models would appear to be more valid. Of course, we recognize that public perceptions of police motives can be mistaken or misleading, but nonetheless we would maintain that they offer some insight into actual police motives: after all, these are the opinions of people who come into regular contact with police officers—directly or through their family, friends, and acquaintances—and thus their views are grounded in experience.

Accordingly, we asked respondents which of three activities the police do most of all, second most, and third most: safeguard public order and protect citizens, serve the political and economic interests of those in power, or pursue their own material interests.¹⁴ For each activity, we also provided the option that “the police do not do it at all.” Only one-quarter of our sample believe that the police protect the public first and foremost (see Table 6). Nearly half (47 percent) say this is only the third priority of the police, or that they do not do this at all. Twenty-eight percent cite protecting elite interests, and 37 percent cite pursuing their own material interests as the top priorities of the police. Thus a plurality of Russians see the police as predatory—serving their own material interests—above all. In the view of the public, self-interest rather than elite interest is the driving factor behind police misconduct, yet another finding that points at predatory policing as the most appropriate model.

¹⁴ We have not seen this question in studies of police misconduct in other national contexts. We would advocate including it in future studies of this nature as a way of testing whether the predatory model is relevant to a particular country.

Table 6. What do the police do most of all, second most, third most?

Preserve public order and protect citizens	
Most	25%
Second most	19%
Third most	41%
Not at all	6%
Hard to say	9%
Serve the interests of elites	
Most	28%
Second most	42%
Third most	12%
Not at all	5%
Hard to say	12%
Serve their own material interests	
Most	37%
Second most	24%
Third most	21%
Not at all	6%
Hard to say	11%

Source: Weighted July 2004 national survey, N = 2,408.

How, If at All, Do Experiences of Police Misconduct Affect Perceptions of the Police and Courts?

To assess whether personal experiences of police misconduct affect attitudes toward the police and the courts, we estimated seven multivariate ordinal logit models, where the dependent variables are the ordinal measures of perceptions of the police and the courts presented in Tables 4 and 6. Each model includes four dummy variables indicating, respectively, that the respondent and the respondent's family experienced police violence and corruption during the past two to three years, plus all the variables in our models for experiences of police misconduct (see Table 3) as controls. Here we report only the effects of experiences of misconduct, net of age, sex, ethnicity, education, social status, and place of residence. We present the exponentiated coefficients, because their magnitudes can be interpreted intuitively as "multiplier" effects: values above one imply that the cumulative odds of having a value at least as high as a particular value rather than a lower value are increased by experiencing abuse in a particular form by that factor; values less than one imply that the odds of the outcome are decreased by that factor (see Table 7). The final column presents the aggregated effects of experiencing all four forms of abuse (as roughly 1 percent of our respondents report) versus experiencing none of them.

Experiences of police of misconduct significantly shape perceptions of the police and the courts, controlling for other variables. For a number of attitudes, all four variables measuring (different) exposure to abuse have significant, predictable effects.

Table 7. Effects of Experiences of Police Misconduct on Views Regarding the Police

	Violent police abuse of R	Nonviolent police abuse of R	Violent abuse of R's family	Nonviolent abuse of R's family	All four forms of abuse vs. none
Trust in the police	.69	.65	.75	.74	.25
Trust in the courts	.77	.70	.82	.85	.37
Fear police violence	1.50	2.20	1.63	2.00	10.70
Would treat legally if arrested	.52	.57	.53	.49	.08
Fear unjustified arrest	2.34	2.46	1.18	2.65	18.02
Likelihood of conviction if improperly accused of a crime	2.27	1.94	1.56	2.62	18.03
Rank of "protect public order" in what police do	.76	.54	.86	.60	.21

Note: These are exponentiated coefficients from multivariate ordinal logit models described in the text. All models contain controls for age, sex, ethnicity, education, workforce status, and place of residence. All reported coefficients are statistically significant at $p < .05$ except for those in *bold italics*.

For example, respondents who themselves experienced police misconduct have lower odds than those who did not (by a factor of 0.69) of falling in higher rather than lower categories of trust in the police.¹⁵ A direct encounter with police corruption similarly reduces trust in the police, as do family members' exposure to police violence and corruption. Those who experience misconduct in all four ways have only one-quarter the odds of falling in higher categories of trust.

Each type of encounter with police misconduct also generates skepticism about the *courts*, whether we use our trust measure or our question about the likelihood of being falsely convicted. Police abuse not only diminishes public confidence in the police, but it also leads the public to view the entire legal system in a more negative light. This is a striking finding, because it suggests that negative experiences with one law enforcement institution reflect badly on other law enforcement institutions. We have not seen any study apart from Tyler (1990) test for such a generalized effect of negative encounters with police. However, we find that experiences of police abuse do not affect trust in other, non-law enforcement institutions (results not shown). Thus the effects are specific to the

¹⁵ Specifically, their odds of choosing "completely deserve trust" versus any other category are 0.69 times the odds for those who did not themselves experience police violence. In addition, their odds of saying *either* "completely deserve trust" or "probably deserve trust" versus *either* "probably" or "definitely do not deserve trust" are 0.69 times the odds for those who did not themselves experience police abuse. Finally, their odds of saying either "probably not" or "probably" or "completely" versus saying "definitely" are, likewise, 0.69 times the odds for those who did not experience violence. See Long (1997) for more details regarding the interpretation of ordinal logit coefficients.

relevant institutions. All types of encounters with police abuse increase fear of police violence and decrease the expectation of fair treatment if arrested. All except family members' experiences of violence increase the fear of being unjustifiably arrested. Police corruption victimizing oneself or one's family decreases one's ranking of protecting public safety as a police activity.

In Russia experiences of police misconduct—of self or family, violent or nonviolent—increase mistrust and fear of the police specifically and the legal system in general. Thus rampant police abuse in contemporary Russia undermines public trust in the legal system. While cultural dispositions and the memory of Soviet-era experiences may also play a role in making Russians skeptical of their legal institutions, the current dysfunctional performance of the police contributes independently to that skepticism. This conclusion implies that if the police change their predatory behavior, public confidence might be restored. We find further evidence for this claim in our focus groups.

Focus Group Themes

The moderator asked participants in our focus groups whether they have confidence in the police (militsia), as well as the other institutions covered in our surveys. This was our only question about the police, but apart from the army and the war in Chechnya, no other topic provoked as much emotion. The heated response shows that police misconduct is not an abstract societal problem, but an immediate and upsetting part of day-to-day reality for many Russians, one upon which they reflect and offer theories to explain. The words of these anonymous Russian citizens bring to life the concerns and experiences covered by the survey.

When the moderator raised the topic of the police, one participant commented: "I think that no other branch has violated as many persons' human rights as the militsia" (R2).¹⁶ Others spontaneously recounted specific episodes of unprovoked police violence they experienced, heard about, or witnessed. One was detained and roughed up for no reason in front of an "Alfavit" store (R1). Another's acquaintance was beaten so badly that he suffered permanent brain damage (O3). Another's daughter said the police helped local toughs beat participants in a peaceful political demonstration (R2). Another saw police handcuff a homeless man to a pole, then hit him in the kidneys with batons; on a

¹⁶ We identify the focus group that is the source of each citation using a letter to indicate the location (P for Perm, O for Rostov, and R for Ryazan) and a number to indicate which group we conducted in that region.

different occasion, he saw police chase a man for “150 meters” before beating him until there was a “puddle of blood” (R3). Another reported physical attacks on different family members (P3). One participant, a doctor at a local hospital, countered another who spoke positively of the police:

[Y]ou don’t work in a hospital and you’ve never seen how many beaten people [the police] bring in. It is appalling, simply appalling. They just haul them in, dump them off, and leave, as if they just cleaned them off the streets. So many. Literally one every day. One a day (O2).

While this doctor finds the level of police abuse witnessed with her own eyes appalling, in general the examples of arbitrary police violence provoke no surprise or outrage. The absence of such sentiments implies that most participants in the groups view police abuse as a fairly quotidian phenomenon in contemporary Russian society, a problem provoking intense discussion and strong feelings, but not shock.

Participants also decried police corruption and described incidents of bribery. Several described being shaken down by police officers (P1, O3). One woman said the police refused to protect her family from harassment because the suspect had paid a bribe (R2). Others equated police with muggers:

[T]here are some good men in the police who are professionals, who honestly struggle to do something despite their low pay. And there are also an enormous number of low-lives [*bydla*] who, well, just beat and kick you in the entryway. That is, a typical mugging. And they take whatever they can. Because they want to get drunk and they are messed up in the head.

–Well, sometimes they first ask you for money [before beating you up].

–Not necessarily (R3).

Participants also complained about the incompetence of the police (R1, R2), their inability to solve serious crimes such as robbery or murder (R2, P3), their unfairness (P2), indifference (O1, O3), “rudeness and cruelty” (P2), and accusatory or lewd reactions to complaints (O3, P3). A prevailing sentiment in the groups was one of despair that the police are not up to the task of preserving public safety: “Since the police won’t protect you, then whom can you turn to?” (O1). Typical comments portrayed the police as more interested in lining their pockets than in investigating crimes or preserving public order:

The militia don’t haul away the drunken bums. For the most part they arrest people who are still on their feet and walking in an

orderly manner, because they can take something from them. They don't respond to calls (R2).

Such experiences produce antipathy toward the police:

And when they stop us for absolutely no reason and try to take us to their building to try to get money out of us for their own financial purposes—that, of course, creates negative reactions. The same goes for the highway police [GIBDD]. Therefore, I think that increasing their salaries will not be enough. The real problem is that most who join the organs of the militia are unworthy people, many even have a criminal record (R1).

This last comment points to a typical explanation offered for rampant police abuse and corruption: the low quality of recruits. As others put it:

[T]he least educated, uncultured guys join the militia, then they try to assert themselves once they have the power. That's where the rudeness, the stupidity, and the numerous violations of the law come from (R2).

I'm not saying we don't need the militia. But we need people with balanced psyches there. The problem is simply that people with unbalanced psychology, with hunger for power, join the police. It is an awful state of affairs when a man with a mass of complexes obtains some kind of power in his hands in order to then work out [his psychological problems]. I don't know—probably the majority of the militia are like that. Maybe some of them aren't so bad (O2).

Several different participants suggested that many policemen are demobilized soldiers who lacked any alternative career possibilities, with predictable consequences:

And after the army the only thing they know how to do is to hold a gun and wear a uniform. It is their only skill. The militia gives them the opportunity to somehow get established in life, because they cannot make it in any factory or commercial structure—they don't have the necessary knowledge. It turns out that the army does not give them the means to realize their potential. Not everyone can find a way to get involved in something before age 18 that would protect them from being taken into the army. The army gives them no possibility to realize their abilities in education, and then they become unwanted. It seems to me that they grow weaker psychologically—they leave the army at 21 with nothing. Those who did not join the army have already gotten set up in life—they finished their education, the most ambitious set up their own enterprises. So, this plays a significant role in producing the kind of militia that we have (R1).

The militia are formed by the street. They are young men, 20 to 22 years old, who served in the army. That is, they have had experiments performed on them. You know, in the army the “grandfathers” [experiment] on the young ones.¹⁷ All kinds of things happen there, the most interesting experiments as to what the human organism can endure. And so what do you expect of these young men—of whom I would guess about 50 percent are damaged, are semi-morons, and so forth? Correspondingly, I have only 1 percent confidence in the militia. They don’t do anything and don’t want to do anything (R3).

Other explanations for the poor performance of the police were mentioned only once: bad laws regulating police behavior (R2), failure of citizens to know and stick up for their rights (O2), and the failure to reform the police system after the collapse of the Soviet Union (P2).

Although suspicion and hostility toward the police predominate, there are noteworthy undercurrents of sympathy and support. Several participants said they “want to trust” the police, mainly because they recognize that the police could play a vital role in protecting public safety:

I want to trust the militia because our security directly depends on them. Therefore, when there have been times in my life when I’ve had to call the militia and they at least showed up on time and at least helped me do something, my trust increased. I want it to grow still more (R3).

This comment provoked enough derisive laughter to prompt the moderator to admonish the group members to respect one another. But others also expressed an underlying disposition to trust the police, and the comment suggests that positive experiences with the police can improve citizens’ confidence in them. Through more effective performance and reduced misconduct, the police may be able to restore their image, as tarnished as it may be due to their current tendencies. Russian popular culture offers some material for the construction of a positive image of the police:

It’s great that they show movies about cops—you know, the famous series [“Cops”] where the police are truly dedicated, willing to risk their lives to do good. But then you see the low-lives [*bydla*] in uniform who have weapons, batons, and do whatever they like (R3).

This contrast of television images and reality is not entirely cynical: if the police are often “low-lives” in Russia today, it is not because they have to be that way.

¹⁷ This is a colloquial Russian expression referring to violent hazing of new conscripts by older conscripts.

In fact, several opined that some police officers are honest, dedicated, and capable: “The police are the police. Just like anywhere else there are good ones and bad ones. But overall I trust them” (O2). Some described help offered by the police, even as they recounted incidents when the police had been indifferent, insulting, or abusive. Although no participants expressed unadulterated admiration for the police, several expressed ambivalence:

I would say I have mixed feelings toward the militia. Yes, on the one hand there are a large number of abuses of their positions, constant rudeness on a daily basis. Naturally, I have a negative opinion from that perspective. But on the other hand, [they] have such a miserly salary, and therefore they get by as best they can—some by abusing power, others by stopping cars on the road, etc. (P2).

I feel very ambivalent about them. I think I agree [with another participant] that some of them are good, and these good people have directly helped me. But on the other hand I have had other encounters with the police—they are very poor and because they want to feed their families, they want to survive, they get involved in things like bribery (R3).

These feelings of ambivalence and the hints of a strong underlying desire to trust the police represent signs of hope in the face of the overwhelming sentiments of suspicion and mistrust of the police due to pervasive experiences of corruption, violence, and indifference on their part. Together with our quantitative finding that negative encounters with the police undermine trust in the police and the courts, these signs of ambivalence indicate that there is hope for restoring public trust in these institutions. If the frequency of negative experiences was drastically reduced and positive experiences became more common, then levels of public confidence in Russia’s legal institutions would probably rise. We would, to be sure, have more solid grounds for this expectation if our data contained measures of positive encounters with the police and these were positively associated with trust in the police and the courts. But the evidence we have available does suggest that there is potential for the restoration of faith in Russia’s legal institutions, providing that they perform better. While long-standing cultural norms and years of negative experiences may well represent an additional barrier to be overcome, our findings caution against abandoning all hope in the face of an inhospitable cultural environment. If experiences matter at the individual level, then a dramatic improvement in the types of experiences Russian citizens have in their encounters with the police may well provide the basis for establishing legitimacy of the law.

Conclusion

We believe our empirical results show that contemporary Russia is a case of what we have called predatory policing. Public encounters with police corruption are at least as common as experiences with police violence, and both are widespread. The primary structural basis for violence appears to be pressure from higher authorities to meet case-clearing targets (which encourages police to obtain “confessions” by torturing suspects), not elite directives to oppress subordinate groups. There are some statistically significant disparities in exposure to police misconduct along the lines of ethnicity and social status, but no group of young males is immune to police misconduct, the disparities are small in magnitude, and they do not follow a consistent status gradient. Finally, the Russian public tends to view self-interest rather than elite interests as the primary motive for police misconduct. While public perceptions of police motives may be mistaken, the fact that such a perception is so common is nonetheless telling.

No doubt, the Russian police do engage in actions that protect the interests of elites and suppress minorities: they harass ethnic minorities, police political protests, and investigate political opposition groups (Shelley 1999; Robertson 2004; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2007). Police forces have played important roles at various times in the brutal counterinsurgency campaign in Chechnya (Kramer 2004). But our data suggest that these political roles of the police are less prominent than their overtly predatory behaviors, whereby they use their authority to enhance their personal wealth and violently abuse citizens regardless of their ethnicity, political orientation, or social background.

As in the United States, experiences of police misconduct in Russia clearly correlate with low confidence in the police and the courts, despite Russia’s important institutional and cultural distinctiveness. Therefore, our study offers grounds for concluding that the linkage between experiences of misconduct and legitimacy of law enforcement is not restricted to the United States but can apply in countries with very different institutions and culture. Russians’ distinctively high levels of distrust in the police and the courts are based at least in part on their current experiences of misconduct and incompetence by those institutions. We cannot rule out the possibility that deep-seated cultural traditions of skepticism about the law or Soviet-era experiences also help produce mistrust of legal institutions in Russia, because these factors could easily supplement the effects of more recent experiences. But our findings do suggest that the current performance of the police does have an impact on public levels of trust: culture and the past are

not the sole influences. Moreover, we find little support for the notion that Russian culture fosters tolerance of police misconduct.

Finally, the predatory character of policing in Russia should call the attention of democratic theorists and policymakers to how dysfunctional public institutions, especially those that are supposed to protect individual security, can impede democratic transitions. Effective public institutions—large-scale organizations and systems connected to national, regional, or local governments that provide services to the general public—play a vital role in preserving the enviable quality of life that citizens typically enjoy in modern developed societies. When the legal system (police, courts, prisons), the military, the postal service, public education institutions, regulatory agencies, and systems of public transportation, public health, and safety (ambulance, fire, inspection, and sanitation services) perform well, they provide public goods and enhance the well-being of wealthy and poor alike. They both reflect the nature of the state in which they exist and help keep it stable and secure. In contrast, the Russian police actively (as opposed to inadvertently) deliver more public harm than public good. They are not the only public institution in Russia that can be characterized in this way (see Gerber 2004), but because they directly hurt rather than protect the individual security of Russian citizens, they do more to undermine democracy and civil society than any other institution.

Since the 1990s, social scientific studies of Russia have focused mainly on changes in the economy, intra-elite power struggles, and new electoral and legal institutions. Scholars and policy makers focusing on these aspects have recently begun portraying Russia as a stable, “normal” country (Shleifer & Treisman 2004). But this label can hardly be applied to a country where predatory policing prevails. Modern police forces have been described, aptly in our view, as “the capstone in the creation of the modern state” (Marenin 1985:102). Our results indicate that the Russian state does not qualify as such. An adequate approach to the challenges facing Russia’s democratic transition today requires sustained attention to the task of reforming the police.

Contemporary Russia stands out as a case where predatory policing obtains in a global power with a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons and a relatively modernized economy. The predatory character of policing cannot be attributed to the Soviet legacy as such or to Russia’s economic problems. Other transition countries have devoted more energy and resources to the tasks of police reform, producing less predatory police forces (Shelley 1999; see also Caparini & Marenin 2004). By all accounts, the recent improvement in Russia’s economy has not reduced the levels of police violence and corruption. Predatory policing reflects the failure of Russia’s post-Soviet leaders to devote sufficient energy and

resources to the reform of the police. This failure has exacerbated prior organizational pathologies, such as forcing confessions rather than using modern police techniques such as intelligence-based policing and forensics to solve crimes, or dealing with raising crime by issuing performance targets from above rather than investing in better tactical approaches.

We suspect that predatory policing applies to many other countries, particularly developing countries with impoverished economies and weak state institutions, but we lack sufficient expertise on policing in other countries for us to assert definitive claims. By making the analytical distinction between predatory and divided society policing in the context of our study of Russia, we hope to encourage experts on policing in other countries to explicitly examine whether the predatory policing model is more appropriate for those contexts. By applying the concept in our empirical analyses, we hope to suggest how one might go about doing so. Ultimately, comparative analyses may identify factors that make predatory policing the dominant pattern in some countries but not others.

As for Russia, additional population surveys with more detailed questions could permit analysis of the prevalence, correlates, and consequences of specific forms of police corruption and violence that Russians encounter most frequently. More studies of Russian police officers using surveys or field methods would shed valuable light on how they perceive these issues and, possibly, what might be done to counter the predatory tendencies that permeate Russian policing.

Appendix: Survey Procedures

All three national surveys were implementations of a regular bimonthly “monitoring” survey conducted by the data producer using the following procedures. The sample was drawn in three stages. First, all urban population points and rural administrative areas were divided into 65 strata according to region type (urban versus rural), a proxy for ethnic composition, size, and administrative status. A total of 110 primary sampling units (PSUs) were systematically selected within the strata, with probabilities proportionate to size (Moscow and St. Petersburg were self-representing). Next, secondary sampling units (SSUs) consisting of either electoral districts (in urban PSUs) or villages (in rural PSUs) were selected within each PSU such that eight to 12 interviews were conducted in each SSU. Third, addresses within SSUs were selected using a random walk algorithm. At each address, the respondent with the nearest birthday was chosen for a face-to-face

interview. Interviewers were instructed to attempt to contact residents of a dwelling at least three times before substituting. Sampling for the regional surveys applied the same steps, yielding 129 PSUs due to the larger target sample size, with the provincial capitals self-representing at the stage of PSU selection. The June 2004 regional survey also included oversamples of 600 young adults (ages 18 to 29) in the Rostov and Stavropol regions. The post-stratification weights corrected for the resulting age imbalances prior to data analysis. The overall refusal rate (number of refusals divided by the sum of refusals and successful surveys, where interrupted surveys were treated as refusals) equaled 34.4 percent. While not particularly impressive, this figure is typical for surveys in Russia today.

Quality control procedures included both computer checks and verification of the work of interviewers via telephone or mail with at minimum 20 percent of randomly selected respondents. Only minor examples of interviewer error were revealed in the course of these procedures. Most of these involved failure of the interviewer to select the correct individual at the residence (based on birthday). To assess the general representativeness of the data, we examined the distribution of the employed respondents by industry, comparing these distributions to national and regional averages based on official data. We found close correspondence for all surveys between the weighted survey distributions and the corresponding official distributions. We will provide detailed results of these comparisons upon request.

References

- Amnesty International (2006) "Russian Federation: Preliminary Briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture," 1 April, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460142006?open&of=ENG-385> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Bayley, David H. (1999) "Policing: The World Stage," in R. I. Mawby, ed., *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Univ. College of London Press.
- (2001) *Democratizing the Police Abroad: What to Do and How to Do It*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.
- Beck, Adrian, & Yulia Chistyakova (2002) "Crime and Policing in Post-Soviet Societies: Bridging the Police/Public Divide," 12 *Policing & Society* 123–37.
- Beck, Adrian, & Ruth Lee (2002) "Attitudes to Corruption Amongst Russian Police Officers and Trainees," 38 *Crime, Law, & Social Change* 357–72.
- Belasheva, Irina (2005) "A Clean-Up Operation on a Neighboring Street," *Vremya Novstei*, 21 March 21, <http://www.vremya.ru/2005/46/51/120860.html> (accessed 1 Dec. 2007).
- Black, Bernard, et al. (2000) "Russian Privatization and Corporate Governance: What Went Wrong?," 52 *Stanford Law Rev.* 1731–808.
- Botelo, Nelson Arteaga, & Adrián López Rivera (2000) "Everything in This Job Is Money': Inside the Mexican Police," 17 *World Policy J.* 61–70.

- Cain, Maureen (1993) "Some Go Backward, Some Go Forward: Police Work in Comparative Perspective," 22 *Contemporary Sociology* 319–24.
- Caldeira, Teresa P. R., & James Holston (1999) "Democracy and Violence in Brazil," 41 *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 691–729.
- Caparini, Marina, & Otwin Marenin (2004) "Police Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Change," in M. Caparini & O. Marenin, eds., *Transforming Police in Central and Eastern Europe: Process and Progress*. Munster, Germany: Lit Verlag.
- Centeno, Miguel Angel (1994) "Between Rocky Democracies and Hard Markets: Dilemmas of the Double Transition," 20 *Annual Rev. of Sociology* 125–47.
- Center for Strategic and International Studies (1997) *Russian Organized Crime*. CSIS Task Force Report. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- Chevigny, Paul M. (1999) "Defining the Role of the Police in Latin America," in J. E. Mendez et al., eds., *The (Un)Rule of Law and the Underprivileged in Latin America*. Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press.
- Cole, Bankole A. (1999) "Post-Colonial Systems," in R. I. Mawby, ed., *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Univ. College of London Press.
- Evans, Peter B. (1989) "Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State," 4 *Sociological Forum* 561–87.
- Favarel-Garrigues, Gilles, & Anne Le Huerou (2004) "State and Multilateralization of Policing in Post-Soviet Russia," 14 *Policing & Society* 13–30.
- Feifer, Gregory (2003) "Russia: Police Corruption Chokes Progress," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 19 Feb., <http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/02/19022003164607.asp> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Fish, M. Steven (1995) *Democracy From Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Gavrilova, Natalia S., et al. (2003) "Patterns of Violent Crime in Russia," in W. A. Pridemore, ed., *Ruling Russia: Law, Crime and Justice in a Changing Society*. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.
- Gerber, Theodore P. (2004) "When Public Institutions Fail: Coping With Dysfunctional Government in Post-Soviet Russia," 3 *Contexts* 18–28.
- Gibson, James L. (2003) "Russian Attitudes Towards the Rule of Law: An Analysis of Survey Data," in D. J. Galligan & M. Kurkchian, eds., *Law and Informal Practices: The Post-Communist Experience*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Gilinskii, Ya, et al. (2002) *Sravnitel'noe Sotsiologicheskoe Issledovanie 'Naselenie i Militsiia v Bol'shom Gorode* [Comparative Sociological Research, Population and the Police in a Large City], Otchet 4. Sankt-Peterburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii Sotsiologicheskii Institut RAH, Tsentri Deviantologii.
- Glikin, Maksim (1998) *Militsiia i Bespredel* [The Police and Disorder]. Moskva: Izdatelstvo Tsentripoligraf.
- Gomez-Cespedes, Alejandra (1999) "The Federal Law Enforcement Agencies: An Obstacle in the Fight Against Organized Crime in Mexico," 15 *J. of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 352–69.
- Goskomstat [The State Committee on Statistics] (2004) *Chislennost' naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii po polu i vozrastu* [The Size of the Population of the Russian Federation by Sex and Age]. Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike.
- Greenfield, Lawrence A., et al. (1997) Police Use of Force: Collection of National Data. Report NCJ-165040, U.S. Department of Justice. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/puof.pdf> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Hendley, Kathryn (1999) "Rewriting the Rules of the Game in Russia: The Neglected Issue of the Demand for Law," 8 *East European Constitutional Rev.* 89–95.
- Hendley, Kathryn, et al. (1999) "Do Repeat Players Behave Differently in Russia? Contractual and Litigation Behavior of Russian Enterprises," 33 *Law & Society Rev.* 833–67.

- (2000) "Law, Relationships and Private Enforcement: Transactional Strategies of Russian Enterprises," 52 *Europe-Asia Studies* 627–56.
- Hinton, Mercedes S. (2005) "A Distant Reality: Democratic Policing in Argentina and Brazil," 5 *Criminal Justice* 75–100.
- Human Rights Watch (1999) *Confessions at Any Cost: Police Torture in Russia*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Igbinovia, Patrick Edobor (1985) "Police Misconduct in Nigeria," 8 *Police Studies* 111–22.
- Ivkovic, Sanja Kutnjak (2003) "To Serve and Collect: Measuring Police Corruption," 95 *J. of Criminal Law & Criminology* 593–613.
- Karstedt, Susanne, & Gary LaFree (2006) "Democracy, Crime, and Justice," 605 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 6–23.
- Koenig, Daniel J. (1980) "The Effects of Criminal Victimization and Judicial or Police Contacts on Public Attitudes Toward Local Police," 8 *J. of Criminal Justice* 243–9.
- Kolennikova, O. A., et al. (2002) *Economic Activity of the Personnel of Law Enforcement Agencies in the Post-Soviet Russia*. Moscow: Open Society Institute.
- Kramer, Mark (2004) "The Perils of Counterinsurgency: Russia's War in Chechnya," 29 *International Security* 5–62.
- Kurkchian, Marina (2003) "The Illegitimacy of Law in Post-Soviet Societies," in D. J. Galligan & M. Kurkchian, eds., *Law and Informal Practices: The Post-Communist Experience*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Levi, Margaret (1988) *Of Rule and Revenue*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Long, J. Scott (1997) *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Marenin, Otwin (1985) "Police Performance and State Rule: Control and Autonomy in the Exercise of Coercion," 18 *Comparative Politics* 101–22.
- Markovits, Inga (1989) "Law and Glasnost: Some Thoughts about the Future of Judicial Review under Socialism," 23 *Law & Society Rev.* 399–448.
- Mawby, R. I. (1999) "Approaches to Comparative Analysis: the Impossibility of Becoming an Expert on Everywhere," in R. I. Mawby, ed., *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Univ. College of London Press.
- McDaniel, Tim (1996) *The Agony of the Russian Idea*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Mishler, William, & Richard Rose (1997) "Trust, Distrust, and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies," 59 *J. of Politics* 418–51.
- Mitchell, Michael J., & Charles H. Wood (1999) "Ironies of Citizenship: Skin Color, Police Brutality, and the Challenge to Democracy in Brazil," 77 *Social Forces* 1001–20.
- Morris, Stephen D. (1991) *Corruption and Politics in Contemporary Mexico*. Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press.
- Moscow-Helsinki Group (2005) *Arbitrariness in Russian Law Enforcement: Roots and Typical Practices: Briefing Paper*. Moscow: Demos Center.
- Murphy, Kim (2004) "Russia May Pay for Bribes with Lives," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Nov., http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/110804LATimes_bribes.shtml (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Newcity, Michael (1997) "Russian Legal Tradition and the Rule of Law," in J. D. Sachs & K. Pistor, eds., *The Rule of Law and Economic Reform in Russia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Newton, Kenneth, & Pippa Norris (2000) "Confidence in Public Institutions: Faith, Culture, or Performance," in S. J. Pharr & R. D. Putnam, eds., *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Peek, Charles W., et al. (1978) "Comparative Evaluation of Local Police," 42 *Public Opinion Q.* 370–9.
- Pipes, Richard (2004) "Flight from Freedom: What Russians Think and Want," 83 *Foreign Affairs* 9–15.

- Pistor, Katharina (1996) "Supply and Demand for Contract Enforcement in Russia: Courts, Arbitration, and Private Enforcement," 22 *Rev. of Central and East European Law* 55–87.
- Pridemore, William Alex (2000) "Russia (Developing Nation-State)," in G. Barak, ed., *Crime and Crime Control: A Global View*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- (2002) "Social Problems and Patterns of Juvenile Delinquency in Transitional Russia," 39 *J. of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 187–213.
- Przeworski, Adam (1991) *Democracy and the Market*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Putin, Vladimir (2005) Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, 25 April. Archived at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9130-1.cfm> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Rabinovich, Igor (2005) "Groups Investigate Police Rampage in Bashkortostan," *Russian Regional Report*, 24 Feb., <http://se2.isn.ch/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=7&fileid=A5D78F45-4B5B-6EEB-B1F2-C3B0699FD3CB&lng=en> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (2003) "More Alleged 'Werewolves in Uniform' Busted," 29 Oct., <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2003/10/291003.asp> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (2007) "Russia: Opposition Rallies Met With Massive Police Force," 16 April, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/04/ad7f708b-b3ce-41b2-9aee-935b08d628d8.html> (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- RIA Novosti (2004) "Press Conference with Human Rights Commissioner Vladimir Lukin," Federal News Service, 16 June, http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Publ/2004/AGENCIES/040616_ria_novosti.html (accessed 30 Nov. 2007).
- Robertson, Annette (2004) "Police Reform in Russia," in M. Caparini & O. Marenin, eds., *Transforming Police in Central and Eastern Europe: Process and Progress*. Munster, Germany: Lit Verlag.
- Salagaev, A. L. (2004) *Ruka Ruku Moet: Heformal'nye Sviazi Organizovannykh Prestupnykh Gruppировок s Pravoohranitel'nymi Organami Respubliki Tatarstan* [One Hand Washes Another: Informal Connections Between Criminal Groups and Security Organs in the Tatarstan Republic]. Tsentral'nye Analiticheskiye Issledovaniia i Razrabotki. Kazan', Russia.
- Sanders, Joseph, & V. Lee Hamilton (1992) "Legal Cultures and Punishment Repertoires in Japan, Russia, and the United States," 26 *Law & Society Rev.* 117–38.
- Scaglion, Richard, & Richard G. Condon (1980) "Determinants of Attitudes Toward City Police," 17 *Criminology* 485–94.
- Shelley, Louise (1990) "Policing Soviet Society: The Evolution of State Control," 15 *Law and Social Inquiry* 479–520.
- (1999) "Post-Socialist Policing: Limitations on Institutional Change," in R. I. Mawby, ed., *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Univ. College of London Press.
- (2000) "Is the Russian State Coping with Organized Crime and Corruption?," in V. Sperling, ed., *Building the Russian State: Institutional Crisis and the Quest for Democratic Governance*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Shleifer, Andrei, & Daniel Treisman (2004) "A Normal Country," 83 *Foreign Affairs* 20–38.
- Smith, Paul E., & Richard O. Hawkins (1973) "Victimization, Types of Citizen-Police Contacts, and Attitudes Toward the Police," 8 *Law & Society Rev.* 135–52.
- Tyler, Tom R. (1984) "The Role of Perceived Injustice in Defendants' Evaluations of Their Courtroom Experience," 18 *Law & Society Rev.* 51–74.
- (1990) *Why People Obey the Law*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale Univ. Press.
- Uildriks, Niels, & Piet Van Reenen (2003) *Policing Post-Communist Societies: Police-Public Violence, Democratic Policing and Human Rights*. Antwerp, Netherlands: Intersentia/Open Society Institute.

- Waller, J. Michael (1997) "Police, Secret Police, and Civil Authority," in J. D. Sachs & K. Pistor, eds., *The Rule of Law and Economic Reform in Russia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Weitzer, Ronald (1995) *Policing under Fire: Ethnic Conflict and Police-Community Relations in Northern Ireland*. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press.
- (2002) "Incidents of Police Misconduct and Public Opinion," 30 *J. of Criminal Justice* 397–408.
- Weitzer, Ronald, & Steven A. Tuch (2004) "Race and Perceptions of Police Misconduct," 51 *Social Problems* 305–25.
- Wortley, Scott, et al. (1997) "Just Des(s)erts? The Racial Polarization of Perceptions of Criminal Injustice," 31 *Law & Society Rev* 637–76.
- Zvekic, U. (1998) *Criminal Victimization in Countries in Transition*. Rome: United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, Publication No. 61.

Theodore P. Gerber is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His research examines social, political, economic, and demographic developments in contemporary Russia. His articles have recently appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, and the *International Migration Review*.

Sarah E. Mendelson is Director of the Human Rights and Security Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Since coming to CSIS in 2001, she has collaborated on numerous opinion surveys in Russia and has worked with the younger generation of Russia's leading human rights organizations on public awareness campaigns. She received her Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University.