CITIZEN SATISFACTION WITH POLICE ENCOUNTERS

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This article examines the character and consequences of encounters between police and residents of the city of Chicago. It describes the frequency with which they contacted the police for assistance or support and how often they were stopped by them. Follow-up questions gathered information about the character of those contacts. The analysis contrasts the effects of experiential, on-scene factors with those of race, age, gender, and language on satisfaction with encounters. It demonstrates the great importance of the quality of routine police-citizen encounters, for things that officers did on the spot dominated in determining satisfaction. The personal characteristics of city residents played an important role in shaping who was treated in this way or that and affected satisfaction primarily through on-scene actions by police.

Keywords: *satisfaction; citizen; contact; race*

This article examines the character and consequences of encounters between police and residents of the city of Chicago. Although there are many determinants of people's attitudes and assessments of policing, none is more important for policy than the quality of service being rendered. Through their training and supervision practices, departments have the capacity to shape the relationship between residents and officers working the street. Whether police are polite or abrasive, concerned or aloof, or helpful or unresponsive to the obvious needs of the people they encounter depends importantly on actions taken by department leaders.

This study examines the frequency with which Chicagoans contact the police for assistance or support and how often they are stopped by them. Follow-up questions gathered information about the character of those contacts. The analysis contrasts the effects of experiential, on-scene factors with those of race, age, gender and language on satisfaction with encounters. It demonstrates the great importance of the quality of routine police-citizen encounters, for things that officers did on the spot dominated in determining satisfaction. The personal characteristics of city residents played an important role in shaping who was treated in this way or that and affected satisfaction primarily through on-scene actions by police.

Early research examining attitudes toward police set up the question in this fashion and suggested that experiential factors predominated more than personal ones. For example, Winfree and Griffiths (1971) partitioned the variance in ratings of police performance between measures of (a) experience and (b) social background and found that positive and negative contacts with police explained 20% of those ratings, whereas demographics explained only 2%. Chicago, a city that is generally polarized over race and policing issues, provides a contemporary test of the proposition. In addition, as we enter the 21st century, Chicago represents some of the nation's increasing demographic complexity. Earlier studies generally focused only on Black-White divides (but see an early study including Mexican Americans by Bayley & Mendelsohn, 1968). Chicago's large Latino population, which continues to grow due in part to immigration from Mexico, increases the diversity of its social mix. Their presence enables us to assess the situation facing new immigrants and long-term Latino residents, as well as those of Whites and African Americans.

Although there is heterogeneity on both sides, the great divide in research on the effects of experience with police is whether encounters are initiated by police or by citizens. In general, people who call, flag down, or approach the police are more satisfied with what happened—and with policing generally—than those who are pulled off the road or stopped by patrol officers while walking on foot. In a review of the literature, Decker (1981) dubbed these "voluntary" and "involuntary" contacts; they are also frequently referred to as "police-initiated," or "proactive," and "citizen-initiated," or "reactive" encounters (p. 83). He concluded that contacts initiated by citizens are more positive in style and substance. He reasoned that the legitimacy of police intervention is ensured in these encounters because they were contacted for assistance and that the police are most likely to play a supportive role in citizen-initiated contacts. Police-initiated contacts, on

the other hand, are not entered into voluntarily and are more likely to be of a suspicious, inquisitorial, and potentially adversarial nature.

Differences in satisfaction with citizen- and police-initiated contacts have been observed in many studies. For example, Southgate and Ekblom (1984) found that, in Britain, being involved in field interrogations and vehicular stops generated three times as much public annoyance (as they measured it) as other kinds of encounters with police. A recent survey of London using a satisfaction measure, which is very similar to that employed in this study, found that a bare majority of respondents were either "very" or "somewhat satisfied" with how they were treated when stopped by the police, compared to two thirds of those who had contacted the police about a crime-related matter (Hough, FitzGerald, Joseph, & Qureshi, 2002).

There is also variation in satisfaction within these general categories of encounters, depending on the service rendered. The 1988 British Crime Survey (BCS) probed for a variety of citizen-initiated encounters and revealed that those who recently had called the police, visited a station, or approached the police on the street to get or give them information (e.g., that a traffic accident had occurred) generally were quite satisfied with the encounter. However, those who contacted police to report a disturbance, nuisance, or suspicious person came away dissatisfied with how they were treated, and those who wanted to report a crime were the least satisfied of all. The latter groups constituted 44% of the adult population of England and Wales, so their unhappiness was significant (Mayhew, Elliott, & Dowds, 1989). American research points in the same direction. Those who contact police because they have been victimized typically are less satisfied than others as a result (Bordua & Tifft, 1971; Skogan, 1989; Smith, 1983; Walker, Richardson, Williams, Denyer, & McGaughey, 1972).

Research on crime victims also provides evidence of the effect of variations in the service delivered by responding officers. This research indicates that rapid response times, in-depth investigations, information sharing with victims, and involved and supportive attention to victims' needs generate satisfaction (for research on these topics in Britain, see Ekblom & Heal, 1982; Shapland, 1984). These concerns can be fairly common: The 1988 BCS found that 56% of victims complained that police did not keep them informed about their case. This lack of communication between police and victims was strongly related to general measures of victim dissatisfaction (Mayhew et al., 1989). Bad service is also frequent, and Parks (1976) found that victims who received good service were the only ones whose attitudes were as positive as those of nonvictims; otherwise, victims were more

negative about police performance. In the United States, response time studies by Furstenberg and Wellford (1973), Pate (1976), Percy (1980) and others document the importance of the speed of police response. British research on police-initiated contacts finds that fair and courteous treatment (e.g., giving people reasons for stopping them, explaining their rights) all contribute to satisfaction with encounters; Bland, Miller, & Quinton, 2000; Bucke, 1997; Quinton, Bland, & Miller, 2000; Stone & Pettigrew, 2000).

DATA

This article examines these issues through the lens of a 2001 survey of Chicagoans aged 18 and older. The survey was conducted by telephone between April and June 2001. The telephone number sample was generated randomly to ensure that listed and unlisted households had a proportionate probability of being contacted. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, and, for this study, those who preferred to be interviewed in Spanish, or could only be interviewed in Spanish, are referred to as "Spanish speakers." An adult resident aged 18 and older was selected randomly for questioning. Advance letters describing the purpose of the study were sent to households having a listed telephone number; a randomized experiment embedded in this survey found that this increased response rates by approximately 5% (Parsons, Owens, & Skogan, 2002). The response rate, based on estimates of the eligible population, was 42%. The cooperation rate (completed interviews plus refusals divided by the number of completed interviews) was 61%. A total of 2,513 respondents were interviewed, a sample large enough to examine the experiences of the subgroups of interest here. The descriptive findings presented here are based on data that have been weighted to correct for biases introduced by households with more than one phone number (they have too high a chance of being contacted) and to account for the number of adults living in each household (potential respondents in larger families each have a smaller chance of being selected at random for an interview). All multivariate analyses and reports of statistical significance presented here are based on unweighted data.

ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE

One purpose of the survey was to examine the frequency with which Chicagoans contact, and are stopped by, the police. Questions about contacts with police present respondents with a recall task. Methodological research

on a variety of self-report tasks, ranging from criminal victimization to doc-
tor visits, indicates that recall is a fragile process. One way to enhance recall
is to warm up respondents by providing them verbal cues and a context in
the survey that aids recall (Skogan, 1981). In the 2001 survey, questions
about contacts with police appeared following a 16-item series of general
questions about "police in your neighborhood." The contact recall items
also came after recognition questions concerning community policing.

Citizen-initiated encounters with police were inventoried using a nine-
question list of many of the most frequent reasons for contacting them,
ranging from reporting a crime to requesting routine information. The list is
presented in Table 1. Respondents were instructed to describe only events
that had occurred in the past year. In the 2001 survey, half of Chicagoans
aged 18 and older recalled such an encounter. In response to another set of
questions, 20% of those who were interviewed recalled having been
stopped by police during the same period, either while they were in a motor
vehicle or while they were on foot. In this study, these are referred to as
"police-initiated" or "proactive" stops.

These figures are higher than those documented in other recent surveys.
In a 2000 survey of Londoners, 38% indicated they had contacted police
about a list of concerns; in this study, it is 50%. Twelve percent of London-
ers recalled they were involved in a vehicle or foot stop during the previous
year; in this study, the figure is 20%. The age cutoff for participation in the
London survey was lower (age 15 rather than age 18 in the Chicago study),
and as we will see below, this probably increased the London stop rate
because of the high frequency of stops of younger males (Hough et al.,
2002). However, reports of proactive stops were still less frequent in Lon-
don than in Chicago. In the United States, a national study conducted for the
Bureau of Justice Statistics found a low overall police-citizen contact rate,
21% (Langan, Greenfield, Smith, Durose, & Levin, 2001). However, that
survey relied on a single question asking if respondents had a contact with
the police and then screened out any that were not face-to-face. The lack of a
sophisticated memory-jogging questioning sequence, doubtless, led to the
underrecall of contacts. On the other hand, other forces are at work, which
tend in the opposite direction. These surveys all provided a verbal recall
period, instructing respondents to recall contacts occurring "in the past
year." There is a strong tendency for respondents to inaccurately include
memorable events that happen to lie outside of the time boundary imposed
by survey questions. Pulling in out-of-scope incidents inflates survey

TABLE 1.   Frequency of Encounters with the Police

	Percentage of Reporting Encounters	Percent Reporting an Encounter by Race			
		Whites	Blacks	Latinos (in English)	Latinos (in Spanish)
Any citizen-initiated encounter	50	52	54	57	33
Reported a crime	24	26	27	35	9
Reported a traffic accident or medical emergency	19	19	22	26	10
Reported a suspicious person who might be connected to a crime	12	13	13	18	6
Reported suspicious noises	10	8	12	16	8
Reported any other event that might lead to a crime	10	10	12	18	3
Contacted police about any other neighborhood concerns or problems	12	11	14	19	8
Contacted police to ask for advice or information	17	17	22	18	6
Contacted police to give them any information	12	13	14	18	4
Reported any other sort of problem or difficulty	11	9	12	16	6
Any police-initiated encounter	20	16	26	24	16
In a car or on a motorcycle that was stopped by police	16	13	21	19	13
Stopped and questioned by police when out walking	6	4	9	10	4
Unweighted n	2480	1083	744	238	266

Note: Weighted data; see text. Percentages do not sum to the totals given because of overlapping contacts with police. Right panel excludes persons of other and undetermined race.

measures of victimization (Skogan, 1981), and this process probably inflates the recall of encounters with the police as well.

FREQUENCY OF ENCOUNTERS

A detailed breakdown of the distribution of citizen-citizen encounters in Chicago is presented in Table 1. As it documents, contacts of diverse types were all relatively common. The most frequent reason to contact police was to report a crime (24%). Reporting accidents or medical emergencies was a

close second (19 %). Between 10% and 12% recalled reporting suspicious persons or noises, or "things that might lead to a crime." About the same proportion recalled giving the police information or contacting them regarding some other neighborhood concern or problem, and 17% said they contacted police to ask for advice or information.

The 50% total presented in Table 1 is for one or more citizen-initiated contacts, for some respondents reported contacting the police in more than one circumstance during the course of the year. Among respondents who recalled a contact, 62% (or 31% of all respondents) recalled two or more different kinds of encounters, and 38% (20% of all Chicagoans) recalled three or more. One consequence of this tendency for Chicagoans to involve the police in a broad mix of concerns is that there was no discernable clustering among subsets of the citizen-initiated encounters described in Table 1. The respondents who initiated an encounter did so for diverse reasons, and a single measure, whether they contacted the police about any problem on the list, is the best way to summarize their experiences. In the analyses that follow, both a dichotomous yes-no contact measure and a count of the number of different kinds of encounters that each respondent had with the police will represent their contact with police in the course of a year.

Table 1 also presents the frequency of two kinds of police-initiated encounters: stops of people while in a motor vehicle or while they were on foot. It indicates that 16% of those interviewed recalled a police-initiated traffic encounter during the previous year, and 6% described being involved in a foot stop. Similar to citizen-initiated encounters, these too overlapped, and 14% of those who were stopped encountered the police both ways in the course of a year. In total, 20% of Chicagoans aged 18 and older recalled involvement in one or more police-initiated encounters during the course of a year.

Finally, the world was not neatly divided between supplicants and suspects. There was a large overlap between police and citizen-initiated encounters. Among those who were stopped by police, 61% also recalled contacting them about some matter during the course of a year. This was a higher rate than that reported by any other analytic subgroup in the survey. Chicagoans who are stopped by police are also ready consumers of police services, under different circumstances. This may have consequences for their ratings of the quality of self-initiated encounters. Examining the 1982 BCS, Maxfield (1988) found that a significant portion of the general dissatisfaction with policing described by persons who contacted the police was
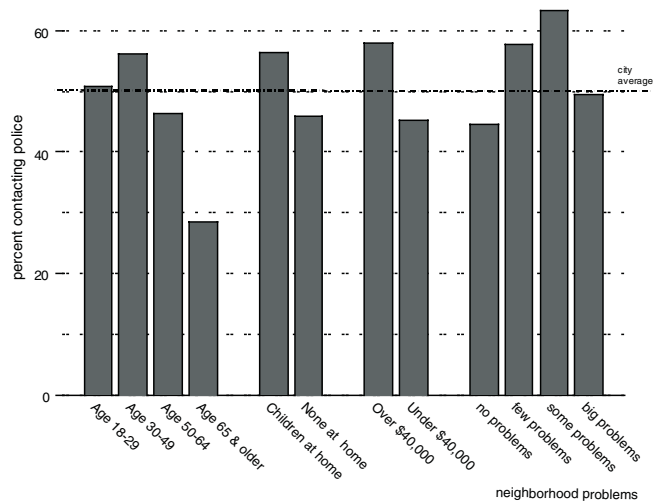
FIGURE 1: **Demographic Distribution of Self-Initiated Encounters With Police**

attributable to their past encounters with police in traffic stops and as the participants of police investigations.

WHO CONTACTS THE POLICE?

Figure 1 summarizes the social distribution of encounters with the police. As it indicates, older city residents were less likely than others to do so; among those aged 65 years and older, less than 30% had occasion to contact the police, 20 percentage points below the city average. Lower income Chicagoans and those with children living at home were significantly more likely than their counterparts to contact the police.

Perhaps the most notable demographic feature of resident-initiated encounters with police is the low level of outreach by Chicago's Spanish-speaking community. This was documented in detail in Table 1, where it was reported that only about one third of Latinos who were interviewed in Spanish recalled contacting police during the previous year, a figure far below the city average. Only 3% of Spanish speakers recalled contacting police about a crime, compared to 35% of English-speaking Latinos and about one quarter of everyone else. Spanish-speakers were also far less likely to involve the police in accidents or medical emergencies, to call them to allay their suspicions or to relay information about neighborhood prob-

lems, or to exchange information with the police. There were no substantial differences in the rate of encounters reported by Whites and African Americans, and English-speaking Latinos were, if anything, more likely than others to involve the police in their concerns.

It was not surprising to find that living in a troubled neighborhood was also linked to the frequency with which Chicagoans contacted the police. To examine this, the survey gathered ratings of the extent of 12 neighborhood problems, including crime (robbery, car theft, burglary, drug sales, and gang violence), social disorder (public drinking and loitering and disruption in schools), and physical decay (abandoned cars, abandoned buildings, graffiti, and loose trash). Respondents were asked to rate each as either a big problem, some problem, or no problem. The combined responses are categorized here for visual display. These are problems for which calling the police to report crime or suspicious people or circumstances, to describe their concerns about neighborhood conditions, and to give them information would all be appropriate.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the rate at which respondents contacted the police generally rose with the level of their concern about neighborhood conditions. About 45% of those who recalled that they had no problems at all contacted the police, a figure that rose to 63% among those in the next-to-highest category. This steady progression did not extend to those living in the city's most troubled communities, however. At just less than 50%, they showed more reticence about contacting the police. One reason for this is that this is where the city's Spanish-speaking Latinos are concentrated.

The limited involvement of Spanish-speakers with the police stands in stark contrast to the crime and disorder problems that they reported in the survey. In general, Chicago's Spanish-speaking Latinos face the most troubling neighborhood conditions of all, followed by African Americans (Skogan & Steiner, 2004). However, reliance on police among the city's Spanish speakers is incommensurate with their concerns. Figure 2 links contacts with the police to the index of 12 neighborhood problems, which are separated for each racial and language group. It indicates that the more concerned Chicagoans were about a broad range of neighborhood problems, the more likely they were to mobilize the police. More than 80% of Whites in the highest problem category and about two thirds of African Americans and Latinos who were interviewed in English had contacted the police in the past year. However, only just above one third of Spanish speakers in the highest problem category recalled contacting the police.
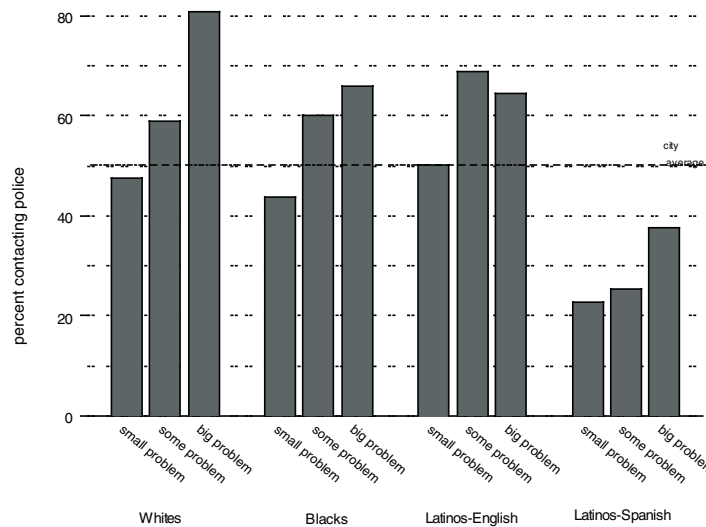
FIGURE 2:   Race, Neighborhood Problems, and Contacting the Police

   This differential relationship with the police among Spanish-speakers was further exacerbated by the distribution of problems themselves by race and language. Using the three categories of neighborhood problems presented in Figure 2, only 10% of Whites lived in areas that they rated having severe problems; although they contacted the police frequently, there were not many of them. Among African Americans, 26% placed themselves in the highest problem category, and for English-speaking Latinos, it was 22%. But among Spanish speakers, 66% rated their neighborhood in the most problem-ridden category. They were heavily overrepresented in areas plagued by gang violence, street drug markets, public drinking, auto theft, and other serious city problems. The city's Spanish-speaking population thus suffered a double disadvantage. Although plagued by the worst neighborhood conditions, they were very reluctant to involve the police in their problems. The dramatic difference in the rate at which English and Spanish-speaking Latinos initiated encounters with the police suggests that language factors play a very large role in shaping the relationship between the city's newest immigrants and institutions of government. It also implies that, in heavily Spanish-speaking areas of the city, official rates of crime, which depend on ordinary citizens contacting the police to make official reports, may not adequately reflect the problems facing those living there.
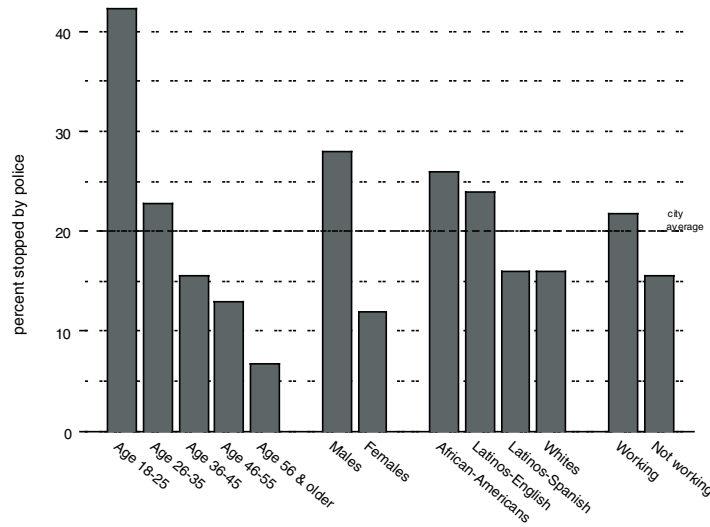
FIGURE 3:   **Demographic Distribution of Stops by Police**

WHO GETS STOPPED?

Not unexpectedly, the distribution of stops by police was strongly related to demographic and social factors. The strongest correlate of being stopped by police was age. The age gradient for stops is illustrated in Figure 3. Although it divides respondents into age categories that are distinctly related to stops by police, the youngest category disguises even sharper distinctions. For example, 63% of 22-year-olds and 58% of 19-year-olds recalled being stopped. Within the age category of 26- to 35-year-olds, 35% of 26-year-olds recalled being stopped, but only 21% of 34-year-olds. This further magnifies the effect of age in multivariate analyses in which exact figures are employed. For the categorization that is presented in Figure 3, the decline was from 43% in the youngest group to 7% in the oldest.

The next most potent predictor of police stops was gender. As Figure 3 illustrates, 28% of males, but only 12% of females, indicated that they had been stopped by police during the course of a year. We will see in this section and the next that gender plays virtually no role in how respondents reported being treated during a police-initiated encounter, but it was strongly related to their risk of being involved with them in the first place.

The racial and ethnic background of Chicagoans was related to their risk of being stopped by police as well. In 2001, 26% of African Americans who

were surveyed recalled having been stopped by police during the past year. Among Latinos who were interviewed in English, the rate was virtually the same, 24%. However, Spanish-speaking Latinos—the city's fastest-growing demographic group—recalled few police-initiated encounters. They, and Whites, reported being stopped with the same frequency, 16%. (The small number of respondents of other or undetermined race, who were excluded from Figure 3, recalled being stopped at about the city average, 20%.)

Other factors were related to the risk of being stopped. Figure 3 depicts the relationship between being in the labor force and having a job, as opposed to not working outside the home, and being stopped. The higher stop rate for working respondents may have been related to their daily journey to work. Other factors were linked with being stopped, including home ownership, education, marital status, income, length of neighborhood residence, and having children living at home. However, none of these relationships was strong, or they quickly vanished in multivariate analyses because of their association with age, in particular.

The combined effect of the big three factors associated with being stopped by police is illustrated in Figure 4. It divides survey respondents into age-sex-race groups and presents the percentage of each that reported being stopped by police during the previous year. In Figure 4, young respondents range from 18 to 25 years old, middle age ranges from 26 to 55 years old, and older respondents are those older than age 55. It graphically depicts the fate of the demographic group at highest risk: young Black males. The very high stop rate for young Black males—64% in the course of a year—contrasts with all other groups. Statistically, the impact of age was by far the greatest of the three factors. Note that four of the six young groups depicted in Figure 4 were the four most frequently stopped, and another (young White females) ranked sixth. Differences associated with gender came next. In Figure 4, three of the four most-stopped groups were male, and four of the top six groups were male. The six groups including White respondents were evenly divided between the highest and lowest halves of Figure 4.

SATISFACTION WITH ENCOUNTERS

This section examines how satisfied Chicagoans were with their encounters with police. It first describes a measure of satisfaction, and then explores the factors that help explain why they were satisfied, or not, with the service that police rendered or their treatment while in police hands.
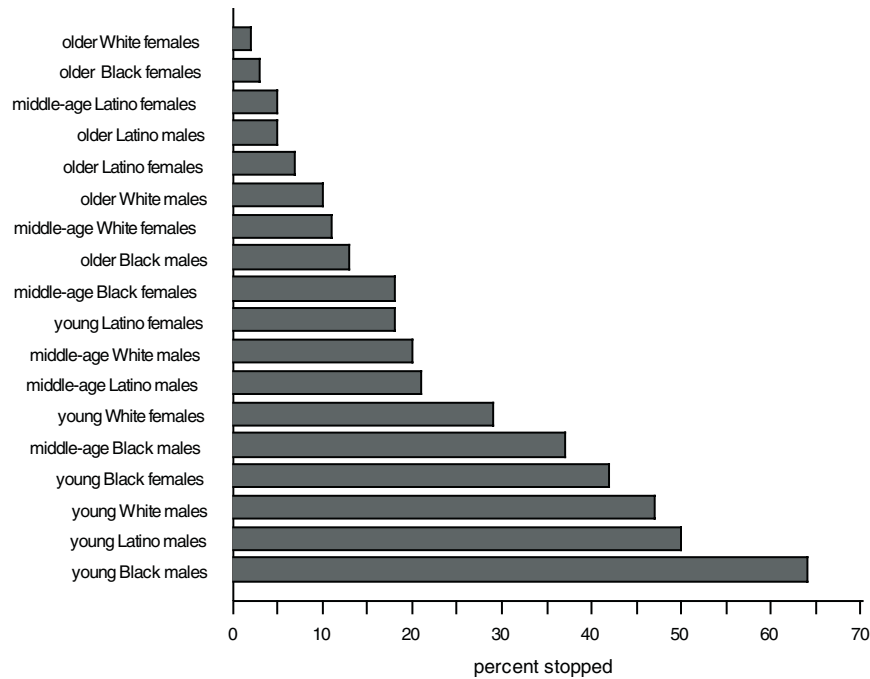
FIGURE 4:   **Age-Race-Sex Distribution of Stops by Police**

Past research indicates that police seem to be judged by how much effort they apparently put into an encounter. One consistent finding of research is that people are less outcome oriented than they are process oriented; that is, they are less concerned about someone being caught or (in many instances) getting their stolen property back than they are in how promptly and responsibly they are treated by the authorities (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Police are judged more by what physicians might call their "bedside manner." Factors such has how willing they are to listen to people's stories and show concern for their plight are very important, as are their politeness, helpfulness, and fairness. Information sharing is also very important; police willingness to give advice and to notify victims of progress in their case has a great effect on victim satisfaction, for example.

In the Chicago survey, respondents were questioned in detail about their most recent experience with the police. Both descriptive and evaluative questions were presented to every respondent recalling a self-initiated encounter with the police and similar questions were asked of those recalling being stopped by them. Respondents recalling more than one encounter
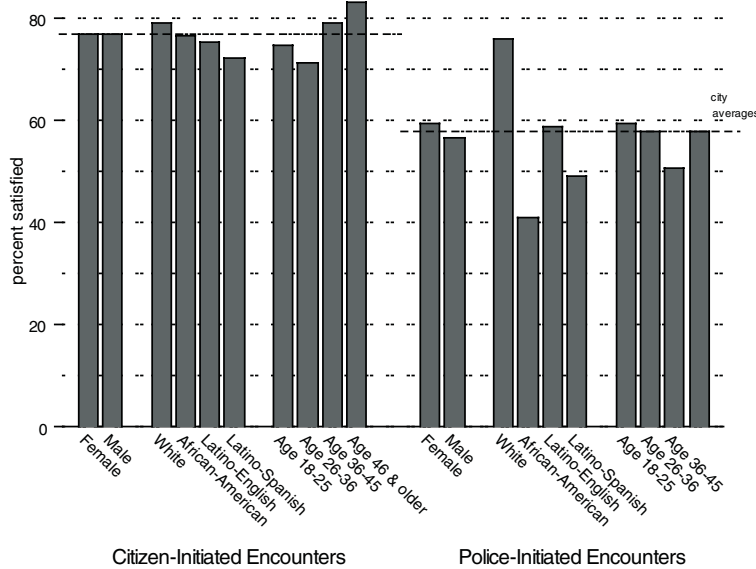
FIGURE 5:   Demographic Distribution of Satisfaction With Encounters

within the past year were reread the brief scenarios to which they had replied "yes" and were asked which was the most recent. They were instructed to think about that experience while answering the follow-up questions. In the aggregate, the most recent of multiple contacts closely approximates a random sample of those contacts, and this design limits the number of questions that must be presented to each respondent. Only a few respondents could not or would not respond to some of the evaluative follow-ups; this was the case for an average of 2% of those questioned about a self-initiated contact, and 1% of those asked to describe a police-initiated contact.

Figure 5 illustrates the level and distribution of satisfaction with both citizen- and police-initiated encounters. After a series of descriptive questions that are described below, respondents were asked, "Overall, how satisfied were you with the way the police responded?" The response categories ranged from very satisfied to very dissatisfied, with two intermediate positions between them. Overall, 77% of those who had contacted the police indicated that they were either very or somewhat satisfied, and 57% of those stopped by the police chose the same responses.

There was relatively little demographic variation in Chicagoan's overall assessments of what happened when they contacted the police. One of the

least satisfied groups was Latinos who had been interviewed in Spanish, but, at 72%, they were scarcely under the city average. Older residents who had contacted the police were the most satisfied, but, at 83%, they were not much above the city average of 77%. As we shall see in a statistical analysis that is presented below, demographic factors played little role in determining the extent of satisfaction with police service, when people called the police.

Figure 5 also depicts subgroup differences in satisfaction with police-initiated stops. The most notable variation is that associated with race and language. Compared to Whites at 71%, African Americans and Spanish speakers were significantly less likely to be satisfied with those encounters. On the other hand, although we saw above that gender played a significant factor in determining who was stopped, it played no role at all in how people perceived they were treated when they were stopped by the police.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SATISFACTORY ENCOUNTERS

The demographic pattern of discontent described above does not present a compelling explanation of why Chicagoans who contacted the police were satisfied or dissatisfied, however. This section examines some of the characteristics of these encounters that are linked to satisfaction. It then asks whether these sources of satisfaction were, in turn, linked to age, race, and linguistic capability to more precisely identify the origins of cleavage around the quality of police service in Chicago. The data suggests that the sources of satisfaction with the quality of citizen-initiated encounters with the police were not linked to those cleavage lines. On the other hand, things that happened at the scene were linked to race, age, and language when police pulled respondents over or stopped them while they were on foot.

In the Chicago survey, the apparent effort that police put into a case is measured by their perceived response time and the extent to which police heard our respondents out by paying attention to what they have to say. Effort at two-way communication on the part of police was measured by a question asking whether police told those who called what actions they were going to take in response to their complaint. The survey also asked about the politeness and helpfulness of police in citizen-initiated encounters and about their politeness and fairness in police-evoked contacts.

Table 2 presents the percentage of respondents who responded in a favorable manner to questions about police actions in their case. In general,

TABLE 2.   Descriptions of Police Actions at the Scene

	Percentage Favorable	Percentage Favorable by Race			
		Whites	Blacks	Latinos (in English)	Latinos (in Spanish)
Citizen-initiated encounters					
Police came right away or scheduled an appointment	73	81	67	70	63
Police paid careful attention to what they had to say	86	87	87	92	73
Police clearly explained what action they would take in response, or none was necessary	70	70	69	65	73
Police were very or somewhat helpful vs. not very helpful or not at all helpful	82	84	82	83	76
Police were very or somewhat polite vs. somewhat or very impolite	91	91	91	94	86
Average unweighted *n*	1226	536	402	87	68
Police-initiated encounters					
Police clearly explained why they wanted to talk to them	62	80	48	63	50
Police paid careful attention to what they had to say	58	77	45	53	48
Police clearly explained what action they would take or none was necessary	64	76	52	69	43
Police were very or somewhat fair vs. somewhat or very unfair	64	79	53	60	62
Police were very or somewhat polite vs. somewhat or very impolite	56	74	45	48	45
Unweighted *n*	475	172	178	54	37

Note: Weighted data; see text. Right panel excludes persons of other and undetermined race.

differences between citizen- and police-initiated stops were as anticipated. Those who had themselves initiated the encounter were most positive. Overall, almost three quarters of them thought that the police came right away or indicated they had scheduled an appointment to meet with the police (which was also tied to satisfaction with the police response). They were almost unanimous about the politeness with which they were treated (91% gave police a favorable rating). They were also very positive that the police payed attention to what they had to say (86%) and were helpful (82%).

It was not surprising to find that those who were pulled over or stopped while they were on foot were less satisfied with their experience. However, even a majority of them responded on the positive end of each evaluative question. They were most positive about the fairness with which they were treated and with police care in explaining the situation to them (64%) and least satisfied with how politely they were treated (56%) and police attention to what they had to say on their own behalf (58%).

Table 2 also presents the racial distribution of responses to these descriptions and assessments of what happened at the scene. Reactions to the service that was rendered when they contacted the police were fairly consistent across groups. Latinos who preferred to be interviewed in Spanish were somewhat less likely than others to find the police helpful, but the difference was not statistically significant when the relatively small number of respondents is taken into account. They were significantly more likely to think that police did not pay careful attention to what they had to say, but 73% thought they did. Perceived response time was significantly associated with the race of the caller, for Whites received significantly better service on this dimension. This relatively equal (and high) level of satisfaction among persons of different races in the quality of service that they received when they contacted the police may in itself be an accomplishment. Earlier research (which was conducted in other cities) tended to find that African American victims of crime were significantly less satisfied than were Whites in the response of the police when they contacted them for assistance (see, for example, Homant, Kennedy, & Fleming, 1984).

There were larger and more consistent racial and language-related differences in what police did on the scene when it came to police-initiated encounters, however. Overall, the police were described as having delivered moderately high levels of service, but the figures disguised sharp racial divisions. African Americans and Spanish-speaking Latinos, in particular, were far less likely to report that police had explained why they had been stopped, paid attention to what they had to say, or explained why they did what they did. The situation was somewhat better for Latinos interviewed in English, but they too were significantly less likely than were Whites to remember receiving good service. Foot and traffic stops initiated by the police were viewed in fairly critical fashion, all but the city's Whites. Less than half of African Americans and Latinos found them to be polite. Both groups were significantly more likely than were Whites to feel that they were treated unfairly. These findings parallel those of some of the earliest studies of police interactions with the public, which found that African Ameri-

TABLE 3.   Impact of Personal and Situational Factors on Satisfaction With Encounters

Satisfaction With Citizen-Initiated Contacts			*Satisfaction With Police-Initiated Contacts*		
	Standardized Coefficient	*Significance*		*Standardized Coefficient*	*Significance*
Paid attention to what they had to say	.10	.00	Paid attention to what they had to say	.01	.79
Explained what action they would take	.05	.01	Explained what action they would take	.06	.03
Police were polite	.19	.00	Police were polite	.41	.00
Police were helpful	.60	.00	Police were fair	.46	.00
Came right away	.10	.00	Explained why stopped	−.03	.33
Age (years)	.03	.11	Age (years)	.02	.39
African American	−.01	.58	African American	−.05	.05
Latino	.01	.54	Latino	−.01	.75
Spanish speaker	.02	.39	Spanish speaker	−.01	.77
R^2	.70		R^2	.73	
n	1,119		n	451	

Note: Unweighted data.

cans were much more likely than Whites to report experiencing insulting language, unnecessary searches of their person, and instances of police brutality.

The final issue is the following: To what extent do the factors, which research suggests are associated with satisfaction with encounters, actually explain variations in satisfaction, and to what extent do they account for dissatisfaction in the quality of police service expressed by Chicago's African Americans and Latinos?

To examine this, Table 3 presents the results of a regression analysis of the correlates of service satisfaction. As in Figure 5 above, satisfaction is measured by responses to an overall satisfaction question, with responses ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. The analysis summarized in Table 3 includes assessments of various elements of police service provided by our respondents. The lower half of the table includes the additional effects of the age, race, and language factors that were linked to various measures of citizen satisfaction described above. Table 3 suggests that, by-and-large, the actions and demeanor of police on the scene accounted for most of the differences in satisfaction associated with age, race, and language.

Police helpfulness dominated satisfaction with citizen-initiated encounters. This is indicated by the relative size of the regression coefficient
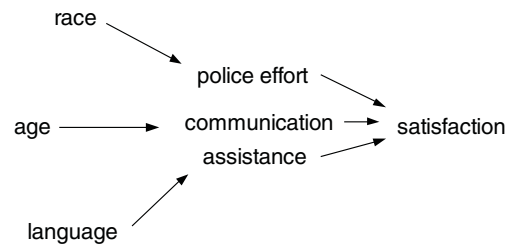
FIGURE 6:　Effects of Race, Age, and Language on Satisfaction With Police Service

associated with helpfulness in Table 3. Politeness, paying attention to what callers had to say, and coming right away when they were called had positive effects as well. Controlling for these factors, there were no significant direct effects of race, age, or language on assessments of the quality of police service. Because all Spanish speakers are Latinos, there is substantial multicolinearity between the two measures. Separate analyses sequentially omitting language and Latino origin did not change the substance of the conclusions presented in Table 3. The explained variance in satisfaction (which was considerable, 70%) was chiefly associated with what officers did at the scene.

When they stopped people, fairness and politeness were the most important aspects of police behavior. There were also significant benefits of carefully explaining what actions they would take. Unlike citizen-initiated encounters, there was a residual relationship between being an African American and giving police a lower satisfaction rating, controlling for this list of on-scene actions by the police. This effect of race was statistically significant, but was far less important than most of the on-scene factors described in Table 3.

Of course, this does not mean that race and linguistic capacity did not play an influential role in these encounters. Rather, their effect on satisfaction was through the differential treatment allotted people during these encounters, in particular when they were initiated by the police.

DISCUSSION

The major findings of this study are summarized in Figure 6. In brief, the major determinants of citizen satisfaction with police encounters can be found in the things that police did at the scene. These included being polite, helpful, fair, attentive to what they had to say, and willing to explain what

was going on. On the surface, social factors, such as race, age, and linguistic capabilities, seemed to be linked to views of the police, a familiar story in American cities. However, the link was there mostly because these personal factors were related to how the police treated those they stopped or served in some fashion. Differences in treatment provided most of the link between those important social cleavages and views of the police.

But should we care whether people are satisfied with how they are treated? Is it just the bottom line of police effectiveness in solving crimes that counts? As a normative question, the answer seems quite clear: Americans are committed to both equality of treatment and an objectively fair level of treatment through almost every aspect of their laws and constitution. But there are practical reasons why both the public and the police should care as well. This is especially true if the experiences that people have with the police are an important determinant not only of their immediate satisfaction but also of their more general views of the police and the quality of service that they deliver. There is debate over this issue. Reisig and Parks (2000) argue for a strong link between situational satisfaction and the more general views of the public regarding the police. The classic studies of police-public contacts (including Dean, 1980; Jacob, 1971; Poister & McDavid, 1978; Smith & Hawkins, 1973) all came to the same conclusion. On the other hand, in a study that directly addressed issues of causal direction, Brandl, Frank, Worden, and Bynum (1994) found that the effect of experience on general attitudes was not very large and that a counter effect—that of people's general views of the police on how they interpreted their recent experiences—was stronger. In their view, people stereotype the police and selectively perceive even their own experiences. By inference (they do not say this), this implies that the quality of service rendered does not matter very much, but few would want to press that point normatively.

Most analysts think, instead, that important consequences for the police flow from the assessments that people make of their personal experiences. Their evidence is that positive views of the police make the work of the police easier and more effective. Tyler (2004) concludes that the degree to which people view the police as legitimate influences whether they comply with police orders or requests. More generally, people accept the decisions of police when they believe the police have acted fairly and openly with them (Tyler & Huo, 2002). On the other hand, observational studies of on-street encounters find that experiencing disrespect from the police reduces citizen compliance with police instructions (Mastrofski, Snipes, & Supina, 1996; McCluskey, Mastrofski, & Parks, 1999). McCluskey (2003) found

that, controlling for other factors, citizens who receive respectful treatment are observed to be twice as likely to comply, and those receiving disrespectful treatment are nearly twice as likely to rebel. Likewise, he finds that when police patiently discuss a situation with them, citizens are more than twice as likely to comply with their requests. (On the other hand, Hickman and Simpson [2002] found that fair treatment from the police does not encourage domestic violence victims to report future incidents more frequently.)

There is also evidence that how people are treated by the police influences their willingness to obey the law, even when the police are not around (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 1990). Variations in police conduct have been shown to influence their later reoffending once they get into trouble (Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, & Sherman, 1997; Paternoster, 1987). Favorable views of the police influence how readily people step forward to help the police by reporting crimes, identifying offenders, and serving as witnesses (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

There is much that can be done in the domain of the routine work of the police: dealing with citizen's calls and on-street encounters with the public. At a time in which there is much discussion of problem-oriented policing and intelligence-driven policing, there is also evidence for the importance of process-oriented policing. A recent report of the National Research Council (Skogan & Frydl, 2003) summarizes the actions that police could take to improve their standing. First, people are more satisfied when they can exercise their voice. Being able to explain their situation and communicate their views to the police is linked to the legitimacy of resulting police actions. Second, people want their police to be unbiased, neutral in resolving disputes, and objective in their decision making. Evenhandedness enhances the apparent fairness of their ultimate actions. Third, people value being treated with dignity and respect and having their rights acknowledged. Finally, people respond positively when the police consider their needs and concerns and take care to show concern about their well-being. Unlike many of the outcomes of policing, including safer streets and healthier communities, these are factors that recruitment, training, and supervision by police departments can assuredly affect (Reisig & Parks, 2002). As Tyler (2004) summarizes it, "[P]rocess based reactions benefit the police, because they cannot always provide desirable outcomes, but it is almost always possible to behave in ways that people experience as being fair" (p. 89).

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