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CITIZEN'S SATISFACTION WITH THE POLICE

by

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B.S. August 1998, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculties of
Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

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May 2005

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ABSTRACT

CITIZEN'S SATISFACTION WITH THE POLICE

Kim Barshanet Baskerville
Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University, 2005
Director: Dr. Randy Gainey

The purpose of this research project is to examine three competing models of citizen satisfaction with the police: 1) citizen characteristics, 2) citizen experience with the police, and 3) citizen quality of life issues. Data were taken from *Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 Cities, 1998*. The relationship between citizen satisfaction and the three models were tested by examining different types of contact between police and citizens, race, age, gender, and quality of life, which was measured by satisfaction with neighborhood and satisfaction with city. In addition, an item labeled disorder, which takes into consideration acts of social incivilities in the neighborhood helped to measure quality of life.

At the bivariate level, type of contact was significant for three specific contacts, which were: having a casual conversation with the police, reporting a crime to the police and involvement in a community activity with the police. There was no significant relationship between

gender and satisfaction with the police, which is inconsistent with previous studies that have examined satisfaction with police and gender.

Logistic Regression was conducted for contact, citizens' characteristics and quality of life. The quality of life item demonstrated the most explanatory power. There was approximately 21 percent of variation in satisfaction with the police when using quality of life as a predictor.

To my mom and best friend
Barbara Baskerville-Bass
who has given her unconditional love and continued
encouragement and support to always pursue my dreams
and to never settle for less.
I love you and thank you for everything.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced society, the presence of police officers in neighborhoods and on the streets can be seen almost constantly throughout the day. We can see a motorist being stopped and maybe a ticket being written. Police officers are seen coming into our neighborhoods because there may be a domestic dispute with the couple across the street. The police are seen at the grocery store because there has been a brick thrown through the window or a kid is caught shoplifting. The police are also seen in communities, patrolling the neighborhood and inviting citizens to come out to community meetings. The situations in which police officers and citizens are seen together are countless and we could depict thousands of pictures. These daily encounters between police and citizens are critical since citizens' perception of, and satisfaction with, the police are heavily shaped by their direct police experiences. Indeed, "improving the quality of daily interaction between patrol officers and citizens may be the best way for police administrators to improve-

public satisfaction with the police" (Reisig and Parks 2002:ii).

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects of citizen characteristics, quality of life issues and police-citizen encounters on citizens' satisfaction with the police. The issue of citizen satisfaction with the police is important for at least three reasons. First, citizen satisfaction with the police is arguably one of the best indicators of the quality of police services. Second, citizens who are highly satisfied with the police are more likely to perceive the police force as a legitimate social institution and subsequently are more likely to cooperate with the police. Finally, in a time of community policing, citizen involvement and cooperation are essential for the police to effectively address neighborhood concerns and problems.

The issue of citizen satisfaction with the police has been a topic for quite some time (Hurst, Frank, and Browning 2000) and "to understand the complexities and variations in policing today, it is useful to revisit the historical traditions that eventually led to contemporary police operations. The origins of policing date back to ancient empires around the world" (McCamey, Scaramella and Cox 2003:6). The early settlers of America brought a night

watch system with them during settlement that required all able-bodied men to volunteer their time to help protect the cities.

The police organization as we know it, originated as "municipal policing" in London, in 1829, by Sir Robert Peel (McCamey et al. 2003:5). Sir Robert Peel felt that the police should be organized somewhat like a "military style or organization, which is controlled by the government" (McCamey et al. 2003:5). Peel visualized the police as being familiar with the neighborhoods they were assigned (McCamey et al. 2003) and foreshadowed the idea of community policing.

It is essential to evaluate whether people are happy with the police in their community. Citizens and police are always interacting with each other in some form or another. Police-citizen encounters affect citizens' feelings and result in positive or negative perceptions toward the police. Therefore, citizens' direct contacts with the police have a direct effect on their satisfaction with the police. Citizen satisfaction with the police may also be affected by other factors such as citizens' characteristics and quality of life issues in the neighborhoods. For example, minorities tend to be less satisfied with the police than whites (Huebner, Schaefer

and Bynum 2004). Studies also show that citizens who live in neighborhoods with high levels of social or physical disorder are less satisfied with the police (Reisig and Cancino 2004).

Citizen satisfaction with the police is an essential aspect in resolving conflict in the community. It is important that the perspectives that society has developed toward the police be examined in order to clearly identify the satisfaction of citizens. Citizen satisfaction or how citizens feel toward the police will affect how citizens perceive the services they receive.

In order to have a better understanding of citizen's satisfaction with the police, attention needs to be turned to everyday activities. If there is an examination of the experiences and the outcomes that have been expressed over time sound inferences may be drawn in one direction or the other that citizens tend to have about satisfaction with the police.

The main purpose of this study is to assess citizen characteristics, police-citizen encounters, and quality of life issues. Specifically, it is designed to seek answers to the following questions:

1. Do citizen characteristics influence their satisfaction with the police?
2. Do citizen experiences from past encounters with police affect their satisfaction with the police?
3. Do neighborhood quality of life issues affect citizen satisfaction with the police?

The study of citizen satisfaction with police is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, the findings of this study will help researchers to build a better model of citizen satisfaction. Many studies have examined factors that affect citizen satisfaction but few have considered the effects of three unique groups of predictors simultaneously in explaining citizen satisfaction. This study examines the explanatory power of three competing predictors.

Several implications for police practice and policy are also expected. First, the information that is found might bridge the gap between the communication, or lack thereof that citizens and police have developed overtime. Second, the information can help improve the relationships that exist between citizens and the police and help police officers identify certain characteristics of citizens that initially may have been hard to pinpoint. Finally, being knowledgeable of the type of profiles of individuals will

help police approach situations so that the outcome will be more positive for both officer and citizen.

There are several theoretical implications or rational explanations that give rise to a form of reasoning for each one of these unique models: citizen characteristics, citizen experiences and quality of life issues, which may determine citizens' satisfaction with the police. First, the *citizen characteristics model* argues that certain demographic characteristics help explain variation in citizen satisfaction with the police. One possible type of explanation is sub-cultural theories. The actual affiliation a citizen has with a particular subculture affects their satisfaction with the police. For example, young black children may hear negative things from their parents about the police in their neighborhood, which in turn may lead to lack of trust and greater dissatisfaction with police. On the other hand, white school-aged children may see the police assisting their parents, which has a tendency to lead to positive feelings toward the police.

Next, the experience with police model may be explained by looking at symbolic interactionism. This theory is accredited to George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) who were interested in looking at the ways in which people interact with each

other (Babbie 1995). The main focus of the *experience with police model* is how police and citizens interact or treat each other in a given situation, which in turn affects citizen satisfaction.

Finally, the *quality of life model* is based on the fundamental principle that citizen satisfaction is a function of overall environmental cohesion or lack thereof and may be swayed by social incivilities. The explanation that seems to best explain this model is how environmental stimuli affect citizens' satisfaction with the police. For example, a neighborhood that has drug selling and poor lighting may lead to resident dissatisfaction with the police, if they feel that the police are not fulfilling their obligation to protect the community. The quality of the neighborhood and the city in which residents live may influence their satisfaction with the police.

In the next chapter, I review the previous literature conducted on citizens' satisfaction with the police. It covers citizen characteristics, police-citizen encounters and citizen quality of life issues. Chapter three discusses the methodology used, the data sources, the statistical method that will be used and the limitations of this study. Chapter four summarizes the results of the

study and chapter five discusses the theoretical and policy implications of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will assess whether citizen characteristics, citizen experiences with police and quality of life issues influence citizen satisfaction with the police. Many studies have examined the effects of these three groups of variables on citizen satisfaction separately, but very few have examined all three simultaneously. As a result, we know very little about the relative explanatory power of each group of variables. This research incorporates all three groups of variables into one study and examines their relative strength of predicting citizen satisfaction.

EXPERIENCE WITH POLICE MODEL

The majority of the research on citizen attitudes towards the police has been based on the "experience with police model" (Reisig and Parks 2000:609). The emphasis of the *experience with police model* is that the level of satisfaction citizens have with the police is a result of their direct contacts with the police. Reisig and Parks (2000) state that previous studies on police-citizen encounters show that those who express positive encounters

with the police usually are more satisfied with the police. They argue that if service expectations are met or exceeded by the police then citizens are more likely to have positive attitudes towards them. Similarly, citizens are much more likely to cooperate with the police if they are given the reason why they are being stopped, questioned or detained (Wiley and Hudik 1974). Reisig and Parks (2000) argue that if police officers explain their reason for a particular action then citizens tend to have a more positive reaction.

Research also shows that the type of contact with the police is very important and can influence citizens' attitudes toward the police (Reisig and Chandek 2001). For example, Reisig and Chandek (2001) found that voluntary contacts such as citizen request for assistance are more positive than involuntary contacts with the police, such as traffic and suspicion stops, which sometime result in negative perceptions. Others suggest that a citizen's expectation of a situation and the actual results of an encounter influence his or her perception of the police. Situations that arise or escalate can be minimized by police actions if officers take the time to put forth a little extra effort in trying to turn a negative situation into a positive one (Coffey, Eldefonso and Hartinger 1971).

For example, a citizen-police encounter resulting in an arrest for the citizen and an injury to the officer may be viewed as a negative situation. On the other hand, a positive situation might be a citizen receiving help from an officer or the citizen actually giving help to the officer, such as, information to help solve a previous case.

One reason this negative connotation has been attached to police officers is that they are seen as a symbolic threat to the public. Coffey et al. (1971) indicated that there are some undesirable consequences that follow when citizens have or develop these negative feelings toward the police. They include citizens tending to avoid the police, a lack of cooperation from citizens due to reluctance to contact the police, and a belief that police are their enemies (Coffey et al. 1971). More recent studies also show a link between citizen satisfaction and past encounters with police (Huebner et al. 2004). Dissatisfaction with specific encounters with the police, such as traffic stops and intervening in personal disputes, is a significant factor in determining citizen satisfaction with the police.

Moreover, previous research indicates that citizens who have seen or heard of incidents about other citizen

experiences with the police that are out of character or unprofessional on the officer's part tend to form negative attitudes toward the police (Brown and Benedict 2002). Hence, there are some undesirable consequences, mainly negative attitudes toward police that follow when a citizen observes or has prior knowledge of deviant behavior displayed by the police (Brown and Benedict 2002). "The congruence between expectation and perceptions of the police service affects the levels of satisfaction with the way police handle an encounter" (Reisig and Chandek 2001:95). Cheurprakobkit (2000) argues that the most important factor in determining whether or not the public is satisfied with the police is their individual experiences with the police. Specifically, the quality or type of contact that is made between citizens and police will play a big part in citizens' satisfaction with the police and the services of the police.

Previous research on contacts between police and citizens revealed that about 21% of the public had some form of direct contact with the police in 1999 (Langan et al. 2001). This project also indicated that about 1 in 500 persons age 16 or older, had some form of contact with the police, which involved the threat of force or the actual use of force (Langan et al. 2001). Furthermore the study

showed that citizen-police contacts are not evenly distributed across race, gender and age. Contrary to popular belief, the contact rate between whites and police are higher than the rate for blacks and Hispanics. Male contacts with the police are higher than female contacts.

The survey also indicated that those in the younger population ages 18 to 19 had a higher rate of contact with the police than the older population age 50 or older.

Langan and colleagues (2001) 1999 survey showed that the majority of the population (two-thirds) had experienced a police contact only one time. They indicated that the reason for their contact with the police was that they were in a motor vehicle stop as a passenger of the motor vehicle.

"In 1999 alone, approximately 10% of licensed drivers were pulled over by police one or more times in a traffic stop" (Langan et al. 2001:1). There were a total of 19.3 million drivers stopped and of this number four million drivers were stopped more than one time during that year. Research shows that informal contact with the police significantly influences how citizens perceive police job performance (Maxson, Henning and Sloane 2003).

CITIZEN CHARACTERISTICS MODEL

Various citizen characteristics affect their satisfaction with the police. These characteristics include race, age and sex. For example, Reisig and Parks (2000) examined several citizen characteristics, such as race, gender, age and education in their study of citizen satisfaction. They found that citizen perception of the officer's demeanor was influenced by their race and ethnicity. That is, minorities are more likely to have a negative perception of officers than whites. Blacks were found to be less likely to think that the police are helpful, concerned, fair, trustworthy and respectful to the citizens that live in disorderly and orderly neighborhoods (Maxson et al. 2003). Cheurprokkit's (2000) research supports the argument that ethnicity and race influence the attitudes citizens have toward the police.

The rate of police-citizen encounters varies across citizen race. More specifically, whites (1 out of every 4.5) have the highest rate of contact with the police. The residents who are identified as other such as Asian, American Indian and Alaska Natives in the resident population have the lowest rate of contact with the police (Langan et al. 2001).

Little research has examined Hispanics' perceptions of the police. However, according to Cheurprakobkit (2000), when comparing whites to blacks and Hispanics, the latter (blacks and Hispanics) are usually arrested more, rarely request information from police, and tend to have more negative police experiences. In essence, the research that has been conducted which includes Hispanics shows negative connotations about Hispanics' feelings toward the police.

Research indicates that race and ethnic differences in juvenile satisfaction with the police mirrors that of adults. Taylor and colleagues (2001) found that white juveniles hold the most favorable attitudes toward the police, and black youth hold the least favorable attitudes, while Hispanics are in between whites and blacks. Interestingly, Asian attitudes are similar to white and Native American attitudes toward the police (Taylor et al. 2001).

According to Langan and colleagues (2001), age is a strong predictor of the frequency of citizen-police encounter; younger people are more likely than older citizens to have some form of contact with the police. According to the same study, older motor vehicle drivers had very little contact with the police, while approximately 80% of 16 to 17 year olds had a face-to-face

contact. The teens indicated that the contacts they had with the police had been initiated by the police. In essence, younger drivers are more likely to be stopped by the police than older drivers.

Previous research also found that citizens who are college age or in college tend to have more negative feelings toward the police than older citizens (Williams and Nofziger 2003). The reason some students were not satisfied with police was their lack of trust for police and not feeling safe (Williams and Nofziger 2003). College students may also develop negative feelings toward the police because their police contacts may be involuntary. For example, an officer may be sent out to a fraternity party to control the noise, which in turn leads to decreased satisfaction toward the police.

The survey conducted by Langan and colleagues (2001) highlighted some important characteristics of the citizens that were involved in traffic stops by the police. Of the individuals stopped by the police, the majority were youths or males. Males also had a higher chance of being stopped more than once.

QUALITY OF LIFE MODEL

Very little research has examined the relationship between quality of life issues and citizens' satisfaction with the police (Reisig and Parks 2000). The quality of life issues examined are the perceptions that residents form about their neighborhood and the city in which they live. Research shows that citizens who thought or viewed their neighborhood as disorderly showed less approval of the police officers than those in more organized neighborhoods (Maxson et al. 2003). Citizen assessments of the police are influenced by the amount of informal social control and social cohesion present in a neighborhood. Citizens who viewed their neighborhood as socially cohesive also generally approved of police performance and demeanor (Maxson et. al. 2003).

Reisig and Parks (2000) argue that citizen perception of neighborhood conditions such as social disorder and crime will affect their level of satisfaction with the police. They highlight the fact that the *quality of life model* is based upon "individual perceptions of the neighborhood and not the differentiation in neighborhood ecological structures, such as economic deprivation" (Reisig and Parks 2000: 611). Citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the police if they "perceive their

neighbors to be willing to help protect one another from crime such as to engage in formal collaborative police-citizen partnerships and to unite formally with nearby residents to deal with neighborhood problems like crime" (Reisig and Parks 2000:610). Neighborhood characteristics influence attitudes toward the police, satisfaction with the police and are highly related to crime rates (Alpert, Dunham and Piquero 1998). For example, a considerable amount of trash in a neighborhood may lead citizens to form negative attitudes toward the police. For the most part, the argument that citizens' perception of the police tends to be related to negative attitudes about the neighborhood in which they live has been supported by previous research (Reisig and Parks 2000).

In contrast to these trends research by Sims, Hooper and Peterson (2002) found that resident views of social disorder might positively affect citizen satisfaction with the police. Specifically, they found that citizens favor the police in their neighborhood if they notice problems such as abandoned buildings and social incivilities. This contradicts previous research on social disorders and social incivilities, which indicate that, if the neighborhood is seen as disorderly, then citizens' satisfaction with the police decreases. To understand this

contradiction, Sims and colleagues (2002) argue that residents may have developed a relationship or a rapport with the police officers that usually investigate the scenes in the neighborhoods that have order maintenance problems. This would seem to support the experience with the police model.

This review of the literature suggests that the *experience with police model*, the *citizen characteristics model* and the *quality of life issues model* each may help to explain citizens' satisfaction with police. To some extent, the three models may be related, but each offers an alternative interpretation and policy implication for citizen satisfaction with the police.

Based upon the findings of previous studies, the following research questions are formulated and will be analyzed:

1. Do citizen characteristics influence their satisfaction with the police?
2. Do citizen experiences from past encounters with the police affect their satisfaction with the police?
3. Do neighborhood quality of life issues affect citizen satisfaction with the police?
4. Which of the three models discussed best explains citizen satisfaction with the police?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this research is to examine the impact of citizen characteristics, citizen-police encounters, and quality of life issues on citizen satisfaction with the police. The first section describes the data sources and sample used in the study. The second section explains the variables used in the study. The third section discusses statistical analysis plan for the study. The final section describes the limitations of this study.

DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLE

The data used in this study come from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). The original project entitled "Criminal Victimization and Perception of Community Safety in 12 United States Cities, 1998" was designed to examine the criminal victimization, perceptions of community safety, and satisfaction with the local police (United States Department of Justice 1999). The data were collected in 1998 from 12 cities, including: Chicago, IL; Kansas City, MO; Knoxville, TN; Los Angeles, CA; Madison, WI; New York,

NY; San Diego, CA; Savannah, GA; Spokane, WA; Springfield, MA; Tucson, AZ and Washington, DC. Three levels of data were collected. Part 1 contains household-level data, Part 2 contains person-level data, and Part 3 includes incident-level data. Part 2 will be the main source of data used in this research. The person-level data consist of 18,514 cases (citizens) aged 12 and older. Only those age 16 or older were asked questions about the neighborhood and the type of community policing used. The survey was conducted by phone using a random digit dialing method.

VARIABLES

The dependent variable is citizen satisfaction with the police and is based on a single item: "Are you satisfied with the police?" Response categories include: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = satisfied, 3 = dissatisfied, and 4 = very dissatisfied. The independent variables to measure citizen characteristics are sex, race and age. Sex is coded 0 for male and 1 for female. Race is coded 0 for white and 1 for black. Age is measured in years.

The second group of measures reflects citizen experiences or familiarity with the local police. These items include: "In the past 12 months have you made an effort to get to know the police in your neighborhood?"

"In the past 12 months have you been in contact with the local police for any reason?" "In the past 12 months what activities have you seen the police doing such as talking to residents in the neighborhood?" The variables will be measured as dummy variables with 0 indicating no and 1 yes. Although these do not measure positive or negative experiences, per se, they do measure type of contact with the police such as direct or indirect.

The final category describes quality of life issues. Items included: "How satisfied are you with the quality of life in your neighborhood?" "How satisfied are you with the quality of life in your city?" Response codes for these are: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = satisfied, 3 = dissatisfied, and 4 = very dissatisfied. This category will be recoded further with 1 = very satisfied and satisfied and 0 = dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. Another set of items focus on signs of disorder or incivilities. Items include: "Do any of the following conditions or activities exist in your neighborhood such as, trash, rundown/neglected building or prostitution?" These variables are measured as dummy variables with 0 representing no and 1 yes.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Some of the variables listed above will form scales, and others will be used as single items. The study will first report descriptive statistics, such as percents, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum of all dependent and independent variables. Bivariate correlation between the dependent variable and all independent variables will be examined next. Finally, ordered logistic regression will be used to estimate the effect of each set of explanatory variables controlling for other variables.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations that have been present from the very beginning of the study and some that have arose during the process of the study. First, the study relies on secondary data. This indeed can become a potential problem because there is room for error during data collection of which the current researcher is unaware. However, there were 12 cities sampled with over 18,000 cases and this would have been an impossible task to complete alone. Some potentially important variables could not be used because they were not collected in the original survey. They may have possibly given more explanatory power to the three models. For example, data such as

specific incidents with the police such as satisfaction with the last contact with the police, satisfaction with any contacts with the police and positive and negative experiences were not collected by the sponsoring agencies. On the other hand, the data used helped relatively to clearly identify the three distinct models that are being examined for this research project. Hence, each model will be analyzed statistically to indicate which has the most explanatory power on citizen satisfaction with the police.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of the statistical analyses including: descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate statistics. The data came from "Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Safety in 12 U.S. Cities, 1998" (United States Department of Justice 1999). The original sample size of the study was 18,514 cases; however, the sample size was reduced because only a sub-sample was asked questions about contacts with the police. There were 5,185 cases used for the project.

Table 1 describes characteristics of the respondents. The majority of the sample was female (51.6 percent) and males accounted for 48.4 percent. The 5,185 cases included 80 percent white, almost 17 percent black and approximately 3 percent Asian, American Indian, Eskimo and Hispanic. Respondents' ages ranged from 16 to 90 with a mean age of 41 years.

Table 1 also represents a list of items that were used to measure conditions, which may exist in the neighborhoods. Respondents age 16 and older were asked, "Do any of the following conditions or activities exist in your neighborhood: abandoned cars and/or buildings,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Percent	(N)
Male	48.4	2510
Female	51.6	2675
White	80.1	3937
Black	16.5	810
Other	3.4	169
Disorder Items		
Abandoned cars/building	22.9	1159
Rundown buildings	23.2	1190
Poor lighting	34.6	1777
Overgrown shrubs	25.5	1311
Trash	21.8	1129
Empty lots	22.1	1141
Public Drinking	29.5	1434
Public drug sell	22.9	1075
Vandalism/graffiti	38.4	1959
Prostitution	9.0	440
Panhandling/begging	26.4	1358
Loitering	37.4	1918

Variable	Category	Percent	(N)
Neighborhood	Very Dissatisfied	4.0	204
Satisfaction	Dissatisfied	12.1	621
	Satisfied	52.0	2668
	Very Satisfied	32.0	642
City	Very Dissatisfied	6.4	325
Satisfaction	Dissatisfied	22.2	1130
	Satisfied	54.6	2775
	Very Dissatisfied	16.8	857
Police	Dissatisfied	26.5	824
Satisfaction	Satisfied	83.4	4158
Type Contact with Police			
Casual Conversation	yes	20.4	1059

Table 1. Continued

Variable	Category	Percent	(N)
Call for Service	yes	18.2	942
Provided info to Police	yes	16.8	873
Report a Crime	yes	26.5	1375
Participated in Survey	yes	.5	28
Asked for advice	yes	4.8	251
Community Activity	yes	4.9	255
Traffic Violation	yes	14.6	755
Work with Police	yes	5.5	284

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Range	Maximum Range	(N)
Age	40.93	15.59	16	90	5185

rundown/neglected buildings, poor lighting, overgrown shrubs/trees, trash, or empty lots?" They were also asked, "Do any of the following conditions or activities exist in your neighborhood: illegal public drinking/public drug use, public drug sales, vandalism or graffiti, prostitution, panhandling/begging, or loitering/hanging out?" The findings shown in Table 1 indicate that vandalism and graffiti (38.4 percent) were the most prevalent negative conditions in the neighborhoods. Prostitution (9 percent) was the least prevalent. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the disorder items used for the "quality

of life model". Items measuring disorder were scaled with a standardized Cronbach's alpha of approximately .75.

The respondents were asked, "How satisfied are you with the quality of life in your neighborhood?" and "How satisfied are you with the quality of life in your city?" Response categories were very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. The majority (71%) was satisfied or very satisfied with the city and 84 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the neighborhood.

The dependent variable concerning satisfaction with the police stemmed from the questions "In general, how satisfied are you with the police who serve your neighborhood? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?" The answers were scaled with very satisfied being the highest value and very dissatisfied, the lowest value. The dependent variable was later recoded as a dichotomous variable with very satisfied and satisfied coded as 1 and dissatisfied and very dissatisfied coded as 0. The data indicated that 83.4 percent of the residents were satisfied and 26.5 percent were dissatisfied with the police. (See Table 2.) Table 1 also describes the type of police contact citizens experienced within the last 12 months. These activities stem from the question asked, "In the past 12 months,

Table 2. Bivariate Analyses Predicting Satisfaction
with Police

Items	Satisfaction With Police
Gender	
Male	83.1
Female	83.8
Race*	
White	86.6
Black	72.0
Other	82.1
Satisfaction with Neighborhood*	
Very Satisfied	95.3
Satisfied	83.9
Dissatisfied	62.7
Very Dissatisfied	45.1
Satisfaction with City*	
Very Satisfied	92.6
Satisfied	86.8
Dissatisfied	75.3
Very Dissatisfied	59.6

*Significant at the .05 level

have you been in contact with the local police for any reason?" If the respondents indicated yes as the answer, then they were asked, "How would you best describe your contact with the police?" The respondents indicated that they had casual conversations with police, called police for service, provided information to police, reported a crime to police, asked for information or advice, participated in community activity with police, involved in

traffic violation and/or accident and worked with police on problem. Respondents indicated that they had more contact with the police by reporting a crime (26.5 percent), and they were least likely to have participated in a survey by the police (.5 percent). (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Bivariate Analyses Predicting Police Satisfaction Using Type of Contact with the Police

Item	Category	Satisfaction with Police Percent
Casual Conversation*	yes	88.1
	no	82.3
Call for Service	yes	84.0
	no	83.3
Provided info to Police	yes	81.2
	no	83.9
Report a Crime*	yes	75.9
	no	86.2
Participated in Survey	yes	81.5
	no	83.5
Asked for Advice	yes	85.2
	no	83.4
Community Activity*	yes	91.0
	no	83.1
Traffic Violation	yes	84.5
	no	83.3
Work with Police	yes	81.9
	no	83.6

Significant at .05 alpha level

The research project consisted of three unique models: the citizen's characteristics model, experience with police model, and quality of life model. The "citizen's

characteristics model" focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Contrary to previous studies, gender was not significantly related to being satisfied with the local police. Approximately 83 percent of males and females were satisfied with the police. However, the data suggested that race of the respondents was statistically significant. Table 2 indicated that whites (86.6 percent) were more satisfied with the police than those respondents who indicated that they were black (72.0%) or another race (82.1%). The data was consistent with the model. Not present in tabular form, a bivariate t-test was also conducted for age, which indicated that the respondents' age was statistically significant at the .05 alpha level. Of those who indicated they were satisfied, the mean age was approximately 41 years with a standard deviation of 15.7, and for those not satisfied, the mean age was 38 years with a standard deviation (14.5).

According to the data, older respondents were more likely to be satisfied with the police than younger respondents, which is consistent with the citizen characteristics model. (See Table 4.)

The "experience with police model" places an emphasis on citizen-police contact. The model suggests that

citizens who have more contact with the police are less likely to be satisfied with the police. Data were not

Table 4. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Satisfaction with the Police: Citizens' Characteristics

Item	Exp(B)
Female	1.091
Black	.396*
Other	.778
Age	1.014*
Nagelkerke r-square	.044

*Significant .05 alpha level

available on the number of police contacts; however, type of contact was available. Table 3 indicates that some specific types of contact are statistically related to satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the police.

Respondents who had a casual conversation with the police (88.1%), and were involved in some type of community activity (91.0%) with the police were more likely to be satisfied with the police than those who were not satisfied with their casual conversation (82.3) and community involvement (83.1). However, those who reported a crime to the police (75.9%) were more dissatisfied with the police

than those who had not (86.2%). The dataset was consistent with the model.

The final model viewed the quality of the environment and the surroundings of the respondents' neighborhood and city, which is referred to as the "quality of life model." This model proposed that disorganized neighborhoods produce dissatisfaction with the police. Consistent with this model, a bivariate t-test not in tabular form indicates that those who are satisfied with the police live in less disorganized neighborhoods (mean= -1.34, standard deviation = 6.03) than those who are not satisfied (mean= 3.78, standard deviation= 8.02). According to Table 2 there were more respondents that indicated they were satisfied with the city and neighborhood in which they live.

The quality of life model designed for this study was consistent with the data used. The model predicted that citizens who live in a disorderly neighborhood would not be satisfied with the police. There was a statistically significant relationship between the three "quality of life" measures and satisfaction with the police.

Attention is now turned to the logistic regression models. Logistic regression was used to determine which model provides the most explanatory power in determining satisfaction with the police. The first logistic

regression model analyzed is the citizen characteristics model. The items used were female, black, other, and age. Consistent with prior research, blacks were less satisfied than whites and younger respondents less than their older counterparts. These two variables were statistically significant and explained approximately 4.4 percent of the variation in satisfaction with the police. Gender was not related to satisfaction with the police despite previous research, which showed that females tend to be more satisfied with the police than males. The logistic regression analysis for the quality of life model indicated that all three variables used were statistically significant. Approximately 21 percent of the variation was explained by using quality of life as a predictor in satisfaction with the police. Those who are satisfied with the neighborhood and city in which they live tend to be satisfied with the police. On the other hand, those who lived in a disorderly environment were less satisfied with the police. (See Table 5.)

A logistic regression model was conducted predicting satisfaction with police based on citizen contacts or experience with the police. There was a statistically significant relationship between having a casual

conversation and involvement in the community activity and being satisfied with the police. Also, there was a

Table 5. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Satisfaction with the Police: Disorder

Item	Exp (B)
Satisfaction (Neighborhood)	2.133*
Satisfaction (City)	1.512*
Disorder	.950*
Nagelkerke r-square	.207

*Significant at the .05 alpha level

statistically significant relation between reporting a crime and being dissatisfied with the police. The model explained 3.3 percent of variation for predicting satisfaction with the police when using contact as a predictor. The individuals who stated that they had a casual conversation or had some sort of involvement with the police were more satisfied with the police than others. Those who reported a crime tended to be less satisfied. (See Table 6.)

In terms of explanatory power, the experience with the police model used nine items to measure different types of

contact or experience with the police. The nine variables only explained 3.3 percent of the variation of satisfaction

Table 6. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Satisfaction with the Police: Contact

Item	Exp(B)
Casual Conversation	1.438*
Call for Service	1.091
Provided Info to Police	.850
Report a Crime	.522*
Participated in Survey	.646
Asked for Advice	1.080
Community Activity	2.009*
Traffic Violation	.998
Work with Police	.819
Nagelkerke r-square	.033

* Significant at .05 alpha level

with the police. The four items included in the citizen characteristics models explained slightly more variation (4.4%). The quality of life model with only three variables explained by far the largest amount of variation in the dependent variable, approximately 21 percent of the variation.

Finally, a logistic regression model for all the items used to predict satisfaction with the police showed that the analysis indicated that age, black, satisfaction with

neighborhood, satisfaction with city, disorder, casual conversation, and reporting a crime were all statistically significant. The model explained approximately 25% of the variation in satisfaction with the police. (See Table 7.)

Table 7. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Satisfaction with the Police: All Independent Variables

Item	Exp (B)
Age	1.014*
Female	1.235
Black	.672*
Other	.819
Satisfaction (Neighborhood)	2.117*
Satisfaction (City)	1.563*
Disorder	.955*
Casual Conversation	1.380
Call For Service	1.273
Provided info to Police	.944
Report a Crime	.611*
Participated in Survey	1.296
Asked for Advice	.882
Community Activity	1.718
Traffic Violation	1.222
Work with Police	.893
Nagelkerke r-square	.245

*Significant at .05 alpha level

In conclusion, the analysis indicates that the "quality of life model" lends the most explanatory power. All the items used as predictors were statistically significant for this model and explained the greatest

variation. According to the data used for this research project, the quality of neighborhoods and cities are the strongest determinants of satisfaction with the police.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data used for this research project was taken from a study called "Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 United States Cities, 1998" (United States Department of Justice 1999). Three very unique models were developed and tested.

First, the citizen characteristics model was based on past literature showing differences in police satisfaction by race, age and gender. The research showed, for example, that whites tend to be more satisfied with the police than blacks and those of other races. Reisig and Parks (2000) found that minorities were less satisfied with the police than whites. The analyses presented here were consistent with those findings. This is consistent with the notion that there is a sense of unease that minorities have when dealing with the police. Regarding gender, women tend to be more satisfied with the police than their male counterparts. Taylor and colleagues (2001) found that females had more favorable attitudes toward police than males. The research presented here is inconsistent with this finding. The data indicated no significant differences between males and females concerning their

satisfaction with the police. The inconsistency could be partly due to no significant difference in the amount of women or man who responded to the survey. The cases used for this project may seem to show little or no significance in citizens' satisfaction with the police because the women were a majority by a small percentage in a large sample size.

The model also stated that younger people tend to be dissatisfied with the police while older people are usually more satisfied with the police. Results of this thesis are consistent with this finding. Perhaps, younger citizens are more dissatisfied with the police because they are usually more socially active than older citizens. Their energetic activities may call for more police involvement than older citizens who in general tend to be less active.

The "experience with the police model" stated that direct contact and/or involuntary contact would influence citizen satisfaction with the police. This model was consistent with the data analyzed here in that specific types of contact indicated satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the police. Cheurprakobit (2000) indicated that type of contact between citizens and police influences citizen perception of the police. The data indicated that having a casual conversation and involvement in a community activity

with the police would lead to greater satisfaction with the police. However, reporting a crime would lead to feelings of dissatisfaction with the police. Perhaps residents have some reservations about reporting crimes. They may simply feel more comfortable when just talking to an officer or being involved in community activities with other citizens and police.

Finally, the model used to describe the environment and social atmosphere was called the "quality of life model". This model suggests that social incivilities and dissatisfaction with the neighborhood and the city in which citizens lived would lead to dissatisfaction with the police. Reisig and Parks (2000) indicated that citizens are more satisfied with the police if they are satisfied with the neighborhood in which they live. According to the results of the analyses presented here, this model is consistent with the data and supports past research. In essence, citizens hold police accountable for neighborhood quality to some degree and this influences their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with police.

Now attention is turned to some possible policy implications and perhaps various reasons as to why some citizens are dissatisfied with the police. Some policies that can help police-citizen relations are enforcing and

promoting police officers' attendance at communication classes and tactics on de-escalation. These classes and information that the officers will receive are valuable skills that will help officers handle situations, which may lead to more positive outcomes. Also, allowing citizens to learn about and participate with officers on a regular basis in neighborhoods allows residents to feel more comfortable with their local police.

The data indicate that younger individuals tend to be more dissatisfied with the police than older residents. Youthful individuals tend to be more active than their elders. Police could use this youthful energy to their advantage and involve the youth in helping to keep the neighborhood free from the social incivilities that plague some neighborhoods and cities, such as keeping the neighborhood clean and becoming familiar with more residents through the clean up process.

Blacks and other minorities tend to be less satisfied with the police than whites. There are programs like community policing in neighborhoods designed to attract blacks and other minorities to join cooperative organizations, which in turn may result in positive attitudes toward the police. For example, if police campaign in the inner cities and neighborhoods that are

predominantly black and Hispanic they may be able to work together to help fight crime and bridge the gap between minorities and police. The advancement of current technology is the key to bridging the gap between citizens and police. Also, the movement toward community policing is of utmost necessity if the residents in the community are to communicate more effectively with the police. The use of computer generated information and crime mapping are popular and are needed to help to resolve issues in the community that make residents develop feelings of dissatisfaction with the police.

There has been some research in the area of quality of life and satisfaction with the police. Reisig and Parks (2000) have found that there is a strong correlation between satisfaction with neighborhood environment and satisfaction with the police. Officers who work beats that have social incivilities present should take the initiative to get involved and help the residents to become more organized and clean up the neighborhoods. One way to do this is to develop cooperative organizations with police and residents where they can team up and clean the neighborhoods. This will enable the police to become more familiar with residents and residents will appreciate the time and help of police in their community.

Data indicate that the three models designed for this research project support the perceptions of citizen satisfaction with police. The evidence is robust and it is clear that if the environment has some form of social incivility present then dissatisfaction is obvious among the residents.

Although the data used for this research project was collected in 1998, this project has improved on past research by bringing in a more theoretical focus and more sophisticated statistical techniques. One might still ask, however, about the relevance of this cross-sectional study seven years later. It seems likely that many of the relationships between the theoretical independent variables are still predictive of satisfaction with the police. Citizens' exposure and the type of citizen-police encounters may lead to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Residents observe the quality of their neighborhoods and cities in which they live everyday, which leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Also, citizen demographics and their association with a particular group influence satisfaction with the police today. Seven years later we can still realistically observe the aspects of citizen's satisfaction with the police in the 1998 data and the facets of everyday life today to draw conclusions.

Overwhelmingly, the four research questions formulated were answered using the "Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 United States Cities, 1998" (United States Department of Justice 1999). The majority of past literature and research that has been examined were relevant and compliment the efforts of the study used for this project. The results of such findings bring positive attention and hope for future research in the area of satisfaction and policing. The focus of future research should lean toward facets that might improve the relationship between citizens and police. Important to consider are police-citizen interaction and communication. Perhaps, future researchers may seek to examine the affects gender has on satisfaction with the police. One might want to look at the female population and explore aspects of the sub-cultural influence that females share to explain satisfaction with the police. Basically, the problems or the issues are clear and have a clear direction to focus attention on when creating policies and conducting new research.

In conclusion, it is possible to develop more positive feelings toward the police by the groups who are dissatisfied. However, the police and those who are dissatisfied must want to develop better systems to

communicate and have a more positive portrayal of the police through media and the political arena. In the future, we may want to go into schools to research by survey and by focus groups to better understand the youths' depiction of police. Also, examining the neighborhoods in which the police patrol and finding an innovative way to attract residents to get involved with the police on a regular basis may help to form more positive attitudes toward the police. Finally, the way a situation is approached initially between residents and police will determine whether or not the citizen will be satisfied or dissatisfied with police.

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