

Procedural Justice in Citizens' Subjective Experiences

One premise of this research was that the quality of service that citizens receive in their encounters with the police is a dimension of police performance to which police managers should pay attention. We undertook to measure this dimension of performance by asking citizens who had contact with the police about their experience, and to make the results regularly available to managers in Schenectady and Syracuse. In this chapter, we describe those measures and the subjective experience that they documented in police-citizen encounters. In addition to summarizing the contours of citizens' subjective experience in each of the cities in terms of citizen satisfaction and the discrete components of procedural justice, we also form a composite measure of procedural justice on which further analysis will focus in a later chapter.

Citizens' subjective experiences with the police have been conceptualized and measured in previous research in two principal ways. One approach has been concerned with citizens' satisfaction with their contact, which has been operationalized in terms of satisfaction with "the police" (Brandl et al. 1994), with "how the police responded" (Skogan 2005), with "the officer's overall performance" (Wells 2007), with the citizen's treatment by police (Reisig and Parks 2000), and with how the situation was handled by police (Reisig and Parks 2000).

The second approach has dwelled on procedural justice. Procedural justice has to do with how authority is exercised and how people experience it. It is not unique to law enforcement and police-citizen encounters; many people use the same criteria in judging the character of their interactions with authorities of many kinds, such as the interactions that people have with their supervisors at work. These criteria include:

- *Voice*: people want and are more satisfied when they are given an opportunity to tell their side of a story, explain their situation, and communicate their views.
- *Quality of interpersonal treatment*: people want to be treated with dignity and respect.
- *Trustworthy motives*: people are more satisfied when they believe that authorities care about their well-being and are considering their needs and concerns, and they draw inferences about that when authorities explain their decisions and justify and account for their actions.
- *Neutrality*: people believe that decisions are made fairly when they see evidence of evenhandedness and the consideration of objective facts.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; indeed, insofar as subjective experience has been treated as an object of explanation, it has been mainly through an examination of the extent to which satisfaction with the contact is shaped by the elements of procedural justice (Skogan 2005; Wells 2007). Most of this research has been cross-sectional, and so it has seldom accounted for the effects of citizens' prior attitudes toward the police on their subjective experiences. As we pointed out in chapter 3, when the effects of prior attitudes have been analyzed in panel surveys, we have found that subjective experience is strongly influenced by those prior attitudes. Citizens who have favorable attitudes toward the police are, *ceteris paribus*, more satisfied with their subsequent interactions with the police, and citizens whose attitudes toward the police are unfavorable tend to be less satisfied. This could be a function of selective perception, as citizens tend to interpret what police do in terms of what citizens expect (Brandl et al. 1994). It could be a function of how citizens with different attitudes behave in their contacts with police and how police respond to that behavior (Tyler and Fagan 2008). Both of these dynamics could operate at the same time. Finally, we note that none of the previous research has empirically estimated the extent to which citizens' perceptions are shaped by what police actually do as opposed to other factors that police do not control, including the attitudes and expectations that citizens bring to the encounter.

In this chapter we examine citizens' subjective experiences with the Schenectady and Syracuse police: citizens' satisfaction with how police treated them and how police handled their problem; citizens' judgments about the procedural justice of the police in their contact, and citizens' judgments about the outcomes of their contacts. We also formulate and test a preliminary model of citizens' subjective experience.

SATISFACTION

Citizens' satisfaction is in some respects a bottom line, in police as in other organizations. Private sector businesses are concerned with *customer* satisfaction, which has

implications for customer loyalty and long-term profitability. Public sector organizations do not compete in markets, and they are sometimes accused of becoming complacent as a consequence, but “reinvented” agencies have exhibited a concern with customer service that rivals that of private firms. Police organizations have direct contact not only with “customers,” that is, people who request services and to whom they are delivered, but also involuntary “clients” to whom police authority is applied. The experiences of the latter are nevertheless important, in respects that parallel customer loyalty, insofar as their experiences may affect their cooperation and compliance with the police, and also in that their experiences are shared with others whose views of the police are influenced by the vicarious experience.

We measured citizens' satisfaction with respect to how citizens were treated by police and, for people who called for service, satisfaction with how their problem was handled. Figure 4 summarizes citizens' satisfaction with how they were treated by the Schenectady and Syracuse police; in the bar labeled for each city, the bar's segments represent the proportion of contacts for which citizens reported the various levels of satisfaction: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied.¹ About three-quarters were very or somewhat satisfied with how they were treated (78.9 percent of those with an opinion in Schenectady, and 77.1 percent of those with an opinion in Syracuse); slightly more than one-fifth were very or somewhat dissatisfied. Most people had an opinion about how police treated them, and most of those were at one pole or the other: very—and not merely somewhat—satisfied or dissatisfied.

While the levels of satisfaction in these two cities are quite comparable to one another, we would naturally wonder whether they are comparable to those found in other places for other police departments. Results from other surveys in other jurisdictions suggest that they are. Citizen satisfaction with Chicago police was somewhat lower, as 72.8 percent of respondents in that city were satisfied. Satisfaction levels in the three municipalities surveyed in 2010 for the National Police Research Platform were somewhat higher than those in Schenectady and Syracuse (81.5 percent satisfied), and satisfaction with New York City police about the same (74.4 percent satisfied), though the differences are quite small relative to sampling error.²

We also measured citizens' satisfaction with how police handled their problems, though only among those who called for police assistance. A bit more than two-thirds (nearly three-quarters of those with an opinion) were very or somewhat satisfied with how their problem was handled; about one-quarter or fewer were very or somewhat dissatisfied. Again, satisfaction levels across the two sites were much the same: 70.3 percent very or somewhat satisfied in Schenectady, and 68.5 percent satisfied in Syracuse.

Most people, then, were satisfied with the service that they received, though room for improvement can be seen. These percentages are based on 182,034

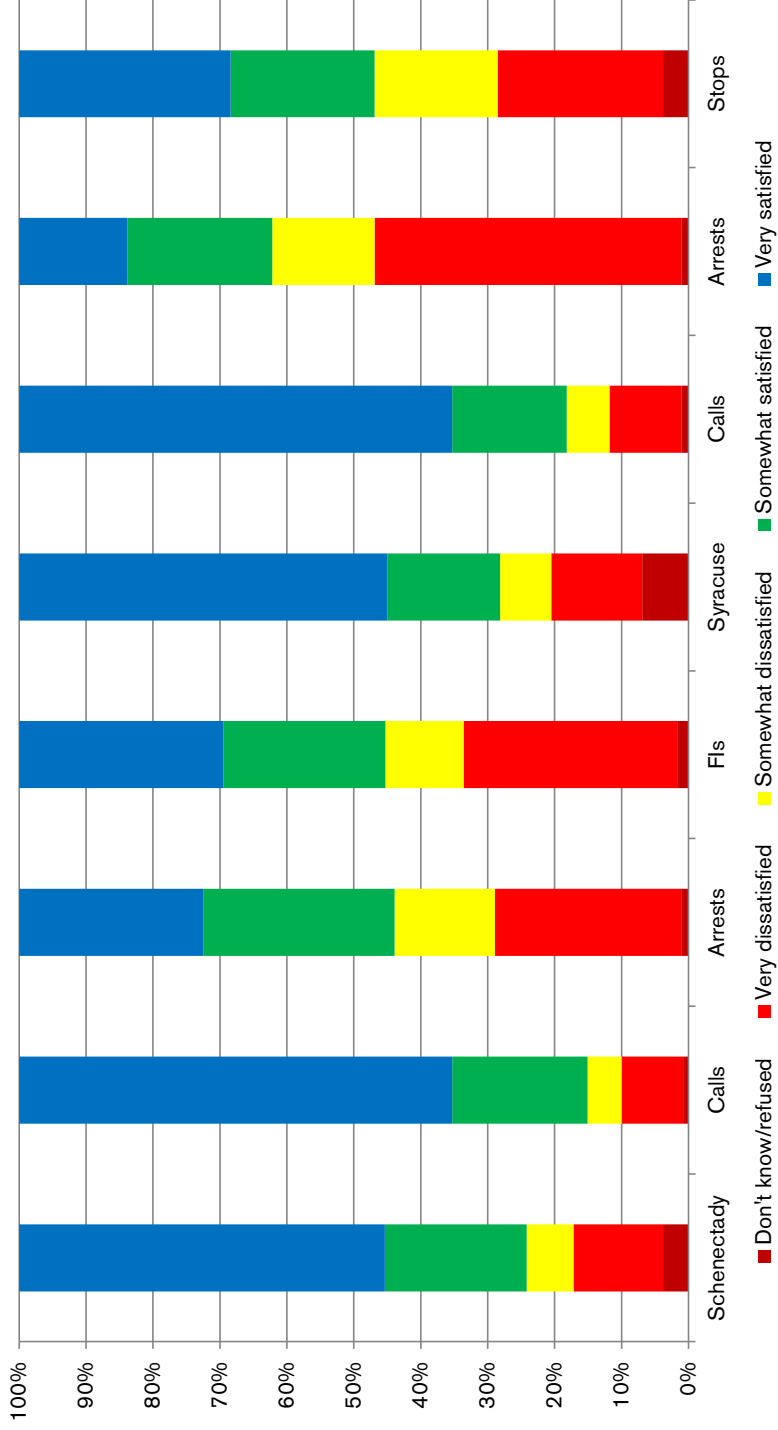


FIGURE 4. Satisfaction with Treatment by Police.

eligible cases: 43,752 in Schenectady and 138,282 in Syracuse. Thus across these eighteen months of surveying, an estimated 8,925 people came away from their contact with Schenectady police dissatisfied with how they were treated, and an estimated 29,316 people were dissatisfied with their treatment by Syracuse police. Of the 33,880 who called for police assistance in Schenectady, an estimated 8,639 were dissatisfied with how their problems were handled; 29,258 of 117,031 who called for service in Syracuse were likewise dissatisfied with the handling of their problems. When we consider the ways that these unsatisfactory experiences could ripple through the population, by way of the relatives, neighbors, and friends of those who have direct contact with the police, the significance of these experiences is multiplied.

Correlates of Satisfaction

Previous research suggests that citizens are more prone to accept police intervention, and to be satisfied with their encounters with police when they or other citizens initiate the contact, compared with occasions on which police initiate the contact on their authority. The latter tend to cast citizens in the role of suspected offenders, their participation in the interaction is not voluntary, and it is the officer who is responsible for their involvement. In the former, even citizens who are—or become—suspected offenders can attribute police intervention to another citizen, whose request serves to legitimize police involvement. We would therefore expect to find lower levels of citizen satisfaction in police-initiated encounters, and that is exactly what we do find in both sites. About half of those whose contacts were initiated by police were satisfied (slightly more than half in Schenectady and less than half in Syracuse); about 80 percent of those whose contacts were citizen-initiated were satisfied. As we found with respect to their treatment by police, citizens tended toward one pole or the other in their judgments about how police handled their problems; about three-quarters of those who were satisfied were very satisfied, and two-thirds of those who were dissatisfied were very dissatisfied.

It surely comes as no surprise that people who were arrested were the least satisfied. Outcomes are not determinative of subjective experience, as we further discuss below, but they are not unimportant. It might come as a surprise, however, that more than one-third of the arrestees (and nearly half in Schenectady) were very or at least somewhat satisfied with their treatment by police, in spite of what is obviously an unfavorable outcome for them; refer to figure 4, in which the bars to the right of each city's overall bar displays the proportions of each subpopulation that were satisfied with their treatment by police. More than half of those who were stopped by police were satisfied with their treatment (with somewhat lower levels of satisfaction among those whose contacts culminated in a ticket, not shown in the figure).

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

We posed to survey respondents a number of items that have been used in previous surveys to measure judgments about the procedural justice with which people were treated:

- The police treated me with dignity and respect.
- The police considered my views.
- The police tried hard to do the right thing.
- The police made their decision based on facts.
- The police respected my rights.
- The police paid attention to what I had to say.
- The police explained their actions.
- The police were very/somewhat [un]fair.
- The police were very/somewhat [im]polite.

In general, 70 to 80 percent of the citizens report very or somewhat favorable experiences on each component of procedural justice, and the proportions are remarkably similar across the two sites, seldom with differences greater than 2 percentage points. Whether the judgment was favorable or unfavorable, respondents tended toward the extreme response categories—namely with strong agreement or disagreement.³ For example, among the citizens who had contact with Schenectady police, 82 percent said that police treated them with dignity and respect, and most of those gave police the most favorable rating (i.e., “strongly” agree); among their counterparts in Syracuse, 81 percent reported that police treated them with dignity and respect. About 70 percent in each city said that police considered their views, an indicator of “voice.” About three-quarters said that police tried hard to do the right thing, and made their decision based on facts—reflections of the perceived quality of decision-making.

It is also clear that, in Schenectady and Syracuse as in the sites of previous survey research, these aspects of how police are perceived to exercise their authority are strongly associated with citizens' satisfaction with their encounters with the police. In cases where citizens believed that police had acted with procedural fairness, all but small fractions (i.e., 10–15 percent), with few exceptions, were satisfied with how they were treated and how their problems were handled. But when citizens believe that police did not act with procedural fairness, they tend not to be satisfied with either how police treated them or with how police handled their problem, with satisfaction levels ranging from 10 to 30 percent (again, with a few exceptions). We would add that these factors together may account for a large fraction—but not all—of the differences in satisfaction among the contact populations we surveyed—those who call for service, those who are arrested, and those who are stopped. There is good reason to believe that these cross-sectional associations are to a degree spurious,

however, insofar as they are produced by the common influence of prior attitudes toward the police, for which we cannot control.

Some previous accounts of procedural justice have distinguished the quality of authorities' decision-making from the quality of their treatment of those on whom they act, while other accounts have drawn distinctions among four dimensions of procedural justice: voice; quality of interpersonal treatment; trustworthy motives; and neutrality. Be all that as it may, empirical analyses of survey items that tap these features of subjective experience tend to find that these various items are so strongly intercorrelated that these conceptually distinguishable dimensions cannot be discriminated from one another in citizens' perceptions, such that the survey responses form just a single scale of procedural justice. That is what we find in the survey data collected in Schenectady and Syracuse: citizens who rated the police favorably on one aspect also tended to rate police favorably on others. This unidimensional structure holds among respondents in each city and in both combined.⁴ Either citizens do not differentiate among these dimensions very well, or these different facets of police performance are strongly associated in officers' overt behavior. Thus we form a single index of procedural justice for further analysis that more economically summarizes citizens' subjective experiences; adding the numerical values assigned to the items' response categories,⁵ the index ranges from -16 to 16. Figure 5, below, shows a simplified form of the index for tabular presentation, with four categories of equal range. The figure also depicts the mean scale scores for each contact population: calls for service; arrests; and stops or field interviews.

This summary index of procedural justice varies in expected ways across types of contacts. Among the people who called for service, most reported favorable experiences. In Schenectady, the mean score on the procedural justice index (9.9) was in the range that we have characterized as most favorable, and in Syracuse the mean fell just short of the lower bound of that range. The fraction who reported procedurally unfair treatment by police is rather modest, about 14–16 percent in all. We should add, however, that the absolute numbers are fairly large. Based on our sample, and subject to a margin of sampling error, we would estimate that across the eighteen months of the survey, 4,811 people who called for service in Schenectady and 19,544 who called for service in Syracuse assessed their experience with the police as procedurally unfair. More specifically, we would project—again, subject to a margin of sampling error—that among people who called for service in these cities, 24,457 encountered police whom they considered very or somewhat impolite, 32,809 encountered police who did not pay attention to what they had to say, and 40,979 came away from their interactions thinking that police did not consider their views.

People who were arrested had less favorable subjective experiences, as we might expect. The means on the procedural justice index were near the midpoint of

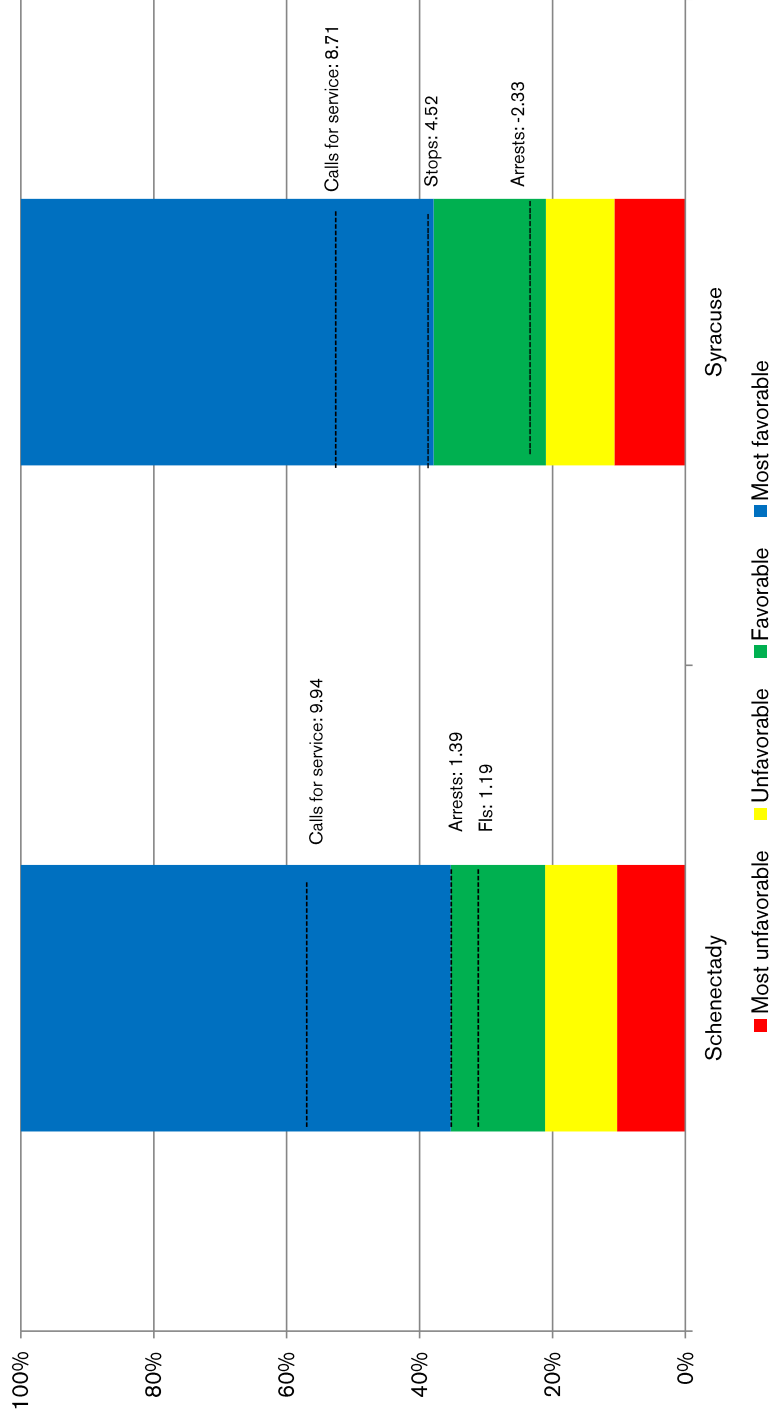


FIGURE 5. Procedural Justice Index.

zero—just above the midpoint in Schenectady, and somewhat below the midpoint in Syracuse. Among those arrested by Schenectady police, 44 percent thought that their treatment was procedurally unfair; in Syracuse, 59 percent of the arrestees rated their treatment as unfair, on balance. Extrapolating to the arrestee populations, we would estimate that 2,988 of the 6,745 people arrested by Schenectady police and 5,197 of 8,779 people arrested by Syracuse police judged their experience with police to have been procedurally unjust. Similar projections for those who were stopped are 1,676 of the 3,127 people stopped in Schenectady and 4,166 of the 12,472 people stopped in Syracuse.

A comparison of these levels of procedural justice to those reported in previous research on police-citizen contacts is complicated by differences in sampling, and particularly the representation of arrestees in this sample. But overall it appears that citizens' subjective experiences in Schenectady and Syracuse are neither distinctly better nor worse than those in other cities that have been the sites of previous research (e.g., Rosenbaum et al. 2011; Skogan 2005, 2006).

SUBJECTIVE OUTCOMES

Citizens' experiences are also colored by their judgments about the outcomes that they receive, even if they are not entirely determined by outcomes. Outcomes take different forms, and the relevant outcomes turn to a large degree on the role that citizens play. Suspected offenders may be taken into custody, issued a ticket, or released without any legal action. Citizens who request police assistance may have their problem resolved entirely by police at the scene, may be referred elsewhere for assistance, or find their situation unaltered by police intervention. Moreover, the quality of any of these outcomes is subject to citizens' interpretations. People who request police assistance will make a judgment about whether police solved their problems. People who are arrested or ticketed will make a judgment about whether that outcome, which is in an objective sense clearly unfavorable for them, was one that they deserved.

People who called for service were, other things being equal, more satisfied with police when they judged that police were able to solve their problems, or at least made an effort to help; two-thirds said that police took care of their problem, while slightly more than three-quarters found police to be very or somewhat helpful. In general, experiences are also shaped by distributive justice—with whether people believe that the outcome was fair or deserved. Overall, nearly two-thirds of the citizens believed that they received the outcome that they deserved. While people who were arrested tended to be less satisfied, more than one-third (35.7 percent) acknowledged that they deserved the unfavorable outcome that they received.

SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS

Subjective experience varies somewhat across demographic subgroups of citizens, that is, by citizens' sex, race and ethnicity, age, educational background, and employment status. The differences that emerge in each site tend to mirror the findings of previous research, and most of the differences are of fairly modest magnitude. Men and women on average report similarly favorable experiences. Citizens' education is related to subjective experience, inasmuch as the college-educated are more positive about their experiences, compared with either of two groups with less education: high school or less; and some college. People who are employed tend to be more positive about their contacts with the police than those who are not employed. Subjective experience is better with age: in general, the older the citizen, the more positive the experience with police. With respect to education, employment, and age, differences on the procedural justice index are greater than those in satisfaction levels.

Whites report more positive experiences than blacks do, though two-thirds or more of both whites and blacks are (very or somewhat) satisfied with their contact, and both groups have mean scores on the procedural justice index that are in the favorable range. Greater disparities can be seen at the extremes, with three-fifths of whites and fewer than half of blacks *very* satisfied with their treatment by police. Hispanics report less favorable experiences than whites do, and in Schenectady, their judgments about procedural justice are even less favorable than those of blacks.

Any of these simple bivariate relationships could be confounded by the other characteristics discussed here or by other factors, such as the nature of the contact with police. Insofar as men, racial and ethnic minorities, the less educated, or the unemployed are overrepresented among those police stop, for example, we would expect differences stemming from these characteristics to be overstated in a bivariate analysis. So no firm conclusions about cause-and-effect relationships are warranted from such bivariate results.

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL PATTERNS OF SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

So that we might better understand the patterns of citizens' subjective experiences, we also dissect them in terms of the features of the encounters that we can identify in police records: the patrol beats in which the encounters occurred; the nature of the problems for which citizens called for assistance; the times of day during which the encounters transpired; and citizens' judgments about police response time.

Patrol Beats

We might expect to find variation across patrol beats in citizens' subjective experiences with police due to differences in the character of the problems and the backgrounds of the people, as well as perhaps differences across the officers assigned to those beats. In addition, since attitudes toward the police vary by neighborhood context, and particularly with the social and economic disadvantage of neighborhoods—for example, the levels of poverty and social disorganization (Sampson and Bartusch 1998)—variation across beats could stem at least in part from features of the areas. We measured the concentrated disadvantage of police beats in Schenectady and Syracuse, interpolating as needed from Census tracts to beats, based on a factor derived from the percentage of the population that is black; percentage of children under eighteen living in a female-headed household; percentage of the population between five and seventeen years of age; percentage of households on public assistance; and percentage of the labor force unemployed.

Beat-specific estimates of the percentage satisfied are subject to sampling errors of 8 to 10 percent, in most instances; the procedural justice index scores have a margin of error of 1 to 2 or so. Some of the differences that can be detected among the beats in either city are likely real differences and not sampling artifacts, but in the main, the variations that we find across beats are not large relative to the sampling fluctuation. Procedural justice, at this beat level, correlates moderately with concentrated disadvantage, with coefficients of -0.56 in Schenectady and -0.50 in Syracuse. Satisfaction levels are for the most part more weakly associated with neighborhood disadvantage, with correlations around -0.25 in Syracuse and -0.46 and -0.71 for treatment and problem handling, respectively, in Schenectady.

Calls for Service

We would expect to find variation across types of calls, since different types of calls are more or less susceptible to resolution by police, and more or less contentious or interpersonally charged. For these analytic purposes, we have classified calls based on the code entered into the CAD system by dispatchers, and into generic categories first developed in 1982.⁶ These category-specific estimates of satisfaction are subject to sampling errors of 5 to 12 percent, in most instances. Some of the differences that emerge—for example, between traffic problems (such as crashes or disabled vehicles), on one hand, and interpersonal conflicts (disputes) or suspicious circumstances (persons or vehicles) on the other hand—are likely real differences and not sampling artifacts. We can say with a fair degree of statistical confidence that citizens whose calls concern interpersonal conflicts or suspicious circumstances have the least favorable experiences, and those whose calls concern violent crimes or nuisances (e.g., noise or other disturbances; animal problems) are less satisfied than many. That statistical confidence must be tempered by the

fact that the codes entered by dispatchers contain some error; a substantial fraction are probably misclassified, through no fault of dispatchers, but rather due to the limitations and inaccuracy of the information available to them (Klinger and Bridges 1997).

Time of Day

We would expect to find variation across time of day, due to differences in the nature of the problems that police confront and the people with whom officers interact at different times of the day, and also perhaps due to differences in the composition of the police and in supervisory practices on different platoons. Thus we define times of the day to correspond to the platoons' working hours, though we caution that these results are based only on a time-of-day breakdown, and not on the assignments of the individual officers involved in the encounters. (Officers assigned to one platoon, say the day platoon, might at times work a shift on another platoon on an overtime basis.)

In general, citizens whose contacts with police transpired during the hours of the first platoon—the “graveyard” shift—reported the least favorable experiences. On daytime platoons, for example, the mean procedural justice index score was nearly or higher than 8.5, while the mean index scores on other platoons were at or under 8, and even as low as 5.59 on the midnight platoon in Syracuse. When we include statistical controls for the type of contact, beat, and call type, however, the differences across times of the day are reduced to negligible magnitude. We infer that differences in performance across the hours of the day are mainly a function of the kinds of problems that police handle and the people with whom they interact.

Response Time

The findings of previous research testify to the role of police response time, relative to citizens' expectations of response time, in shaping citizens' subjective experience. Citizens' expectations are malleable to a degree, so long as call-takers advise them about likely delays and when the arrival of an officer can be anticipated; but such practices by telecommunications personnel are not ubiquitous, and citizens form their own expectations. We asked survey respondents whether police arrived faster than they expected, slower, or as fast as they expected, and their assessments of response time bear the expected relationships to subjective experience. When subjective experience is disaggregated in these terms, we find some wide disparities. Among those who judged the police response to have been faster than expected, 90 percent or more were satisfied with how police treated them, and 85–90 percent were satisfied with how police handled their problems; procedural justice index scores among this group were 11.5–12.5. Citizens who thought that the police response was as fast as expected were somewhat less favorable, but not greatly so.

But among people who assessed the police response as slower than they expected, two-thirds to three-quarters were satisfied with their treatment, a bit more than half were satisfied with how their problems were handled, and procedural justice index scores were under 7 in Schenectady and under 5 in Syracuse.

These associations could be produced in several different ways. It might be that the celerity of the police response colors a citizen's entire experience. It might be that officers who respond more quickly also tend to be more efficacious and procedurally just. Or it might be that citizens who are treated well and whose problems are addressed successfully by police tend to evaluate response time more favorably in retrospect. It might even be that citizens' prior attitudes affect both their assessment of response time and other elements of subjective experience. Not all of these accounts are equally plausible, but neither are they all mutually exclusive.

THE USE OF POLICE AUTHORITY

Procedural justice concerns how and not whether police authority is exercised, but certainly it is plausible that citizens' subjective experiences are shaped by officers' decisions to apply their occupational prerogatives. One form of authority is that to search or frisk. Of the (weighted) sample of those who were reportedly stopped, 72 percent were stopped in a car and 28 percent on foot. Based on citizens' reports through the survey, nearly half (46.8 percent) of those who were stopped were searched or frisked; one-quarter had their vehicle searched. Officers reportedly asked for permission to search or frisk the person in one-fifth of the cases, and asked for permission to search the vehicle in 12 percent. Citizens reportedly consented to a search of their person—whether or not police requested it—in 23 percent, and they consented to a vehicle search in 11 percent. Across both sites, four-fifths of the searches were in connection with arrests, but we have no way to tell from the survey whether the search/frisk preceded or followed the arrest.

Citizens' subjective experience is associated with the exercise of officers' authority to search or frisk: in both sites, satisfaction and subjective procedural justice is greater in police-initiated contacts overall than in the subset in which citizens were searched or frisked. About half of those whose contact was initiated by police were satisfied with how police treated them, and in both cities, their mean procedural justice index score was positive, in the moderately favorable range. Of those who were searched or frisked, less than one-half (as few as one-third in Syracuse) were satisfied with their treatment, and their procedural justice index scores were below zero, in the moderately unfavorable range. Comparable judgments are found among those whose vehicles were searched. Only about one-third (36.4 percent) of the citizens who were searched or frisked considered the search legitimate; nearly one-quarter of the citizens whose vehicles were searched considered the vehicle

search legitimate. Not surprisingly, subjective experience was substantially more favorable when citizens were subjected to a search that they considered legitimate.

Arrests vary with respect to:

- the seriousness of the charge(s)—felony, misdemeanor, violation, infraction;
- the basis for the arrest, such as a complaint, a crime in progress, or a warrant; and
- the immediate disposition of the arrest, particularly whether the arrestee is held or released.

Arrests also vary with respect to the legitimacy of the arrest in citizens' eyes. In both Schenectady and Syracuse, subjective experience was most favorable when the charges were the least serious (less than a violation in the New York State penal code), but otherwise the seriousness of the charges was unrelated to citizens' subjective experience. Subjective experience was most favorable when arrests were based on warrants, whose execution is not (normally) a matter over which the officer exercises discretion, and least favorable when arrests were based on crimes in progress. Arrestees are, not surprisingly, more satisfied when they are released rather than incarcerated, though the immediate disposition of the arrest is also associated with procedural justice, index scores of which were much higher among those who received appearance tickets and released than among those who were held in custody. Finally, subjective experience is more favorable when the citizen regards the arrest as legitimate.

A PRELIMINARY MODEL OF SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

The simple bivariate associations reported above are of course potentially confounded by the effects of the other factors on subjective experience, and so we conducted multivariate regression analyses of satisfaction, procedural justice, and subjective outcomes based largely on the model depicted in figure 6. Citizens' satisfaction is posited to be a function of subjective procedural justice, subjective outcomes, citizens' backgrounds (sex, race, ethnicity, age, education, and employment), and the situational context, including the beat in which the encounter transpired, the platoon on which the encounter transpired, the response time relative to citizens' expectations, the call type, and (as applicable) the arrest basis and arrest disposition, the charge seriousness, and a search/frisk of the citizen and/or search of the citizen's vehicle. Procedural justice and subjective outcomes are a function of citizens' backgrounds and the situational context. We allow as how procedural justice and subjective outcomes could have reciprocal effects, but we believe that it is likely that procedural justice has a greater effect on subjective outcomes than vice versa, and so our equation for subjective outcomes includes procedural justice. We consider this analysis to be preliminary in the sense that it

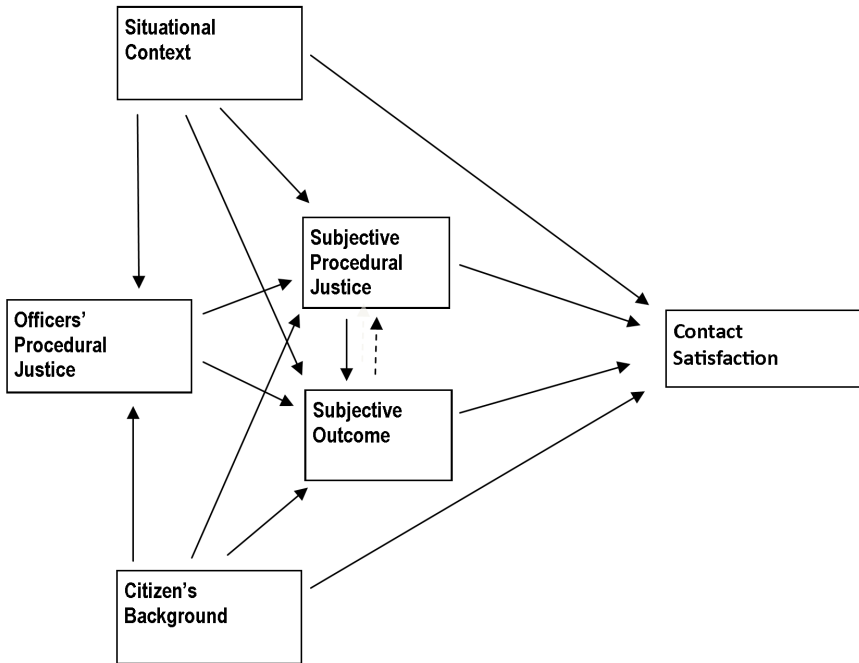


FIGURE 6. A Model of Citizens' Subjective Experience.

includes only the constructs that we can measure with survey data and information in police records; it omits the procedural justice of officers' actions, which we will add in chapter 7. We note that since we do not have data on citizens' attitudes toward the police prior to their contact with the police, prior attitudes are omitted from this model, and this omission is likely to produce inflated estimates of the effects of procedural justice and subjective outcomes.

Table 1 includes the regression coefficients estimated for this preliminary model of subjective experience. The baseline contact is an encounter initiated by neither the police nor the citizen—that is, by a third party. The principal findings from this set of analyses is the extent to which the elements of subjective experience are interrelated, and the fairly weak explanatory power of either citizens' backgrounds or the situational context of the contact. Satisfaction is driven mainly by procedural justice and subjective outcomes. Together these variables account for 74 percent of the variation in citizens' satisfaction with their treatment by police, and 71 percent of the variation in citizens' satisfaction with how their problem was handled. Very little explanatory power is added by citizens' background characteristics or even characteristics of the situation. A few categories of calls have higher or lower levels of satisfaction (relative to the omitted category of nuisances), and satisfaction bears

TABLE 1 Regression Analyses of Subjective Experience

	Satisfaction: Treatment	Satisfaction: Handling	Procedural Justice	Outcome Deserved
Constant	2.37*	2.19*	-0.89	-0.05
Call for service	0.17*	—	5.08*	-0.14
Arrest	-0.04	—	-1.48	-0.00
Police-initiated	-0.07	—	2.34*	0.06
Citizen male	-0.02	-0.02	0.81*	-0.01
Citizen black	0.00	0.00	-0.70*	-0.07
Citizen Hispanic	0.01	0.06	0.54	0.08
Citizen's age	0.00	0.00*	0.04*	-0.00**
Citizen's education	0.00	0.02	0.15	-0.06*
Citizen employed	0.01	-0.02	1.10*	0.05
Neighborhood disadvantage	-0.01	-0.04*	-0.03	-0.02
Procedural justice	0.09*	0.05*	—	0.13*
Problem solved	-0.04*	0.24*	—	—
Deserved outcome	0.07*	0.27*	—	—
Perceived response time	-0.02*	0.06*	2.17*	0.10*
Call: violent crime	-0.01	0.08	-0.38	-0.04
Call: nonviolent crime	-0.02	-0.00	1.64*	-0.24*
Call: interpersonal conflict	-0.06	-0.00	-0.19	-0.12
Call: suspicious circumstance	0.01	0.05	-0.78	0.01
Call: traffic	-0.02	0.09**	2.53*	0.13
Call: dependent person	-0.06	0.08	0.77	0.23*
Call: medical	0.01	0.28*	-1.38	0.11
Call: other assistance	0.05	0.11**	0.54	-0.11
Call: other	0.15**	0.16	-4.47*	0.21
Call: unknown	0.07	0.20**	-0.44	-0.01
Arrest: felony	0.09	—	-3.27	-0.10
Arrest: misdemeanor	0.14	—	-3.02	-0.22
Arrest: violation	0.25**	—	-3.10	-0.03
Appearance ticket	-0.01	—	5.93*	0.11
Arrest: released	-0.07	—	4.16*	0.09
Arrest: warrant	-0.03	—	3.55*	-0.06
Arrest: crime in progress	-0.04	—	0.54	-0.13
Search/frisk person	0.09	—	-7.56*	0.22
Search vehicle	-0.06	—	-3.97*	0.03
Citizen consent search/frisk	-0.29*	—	8.31*	0.24
Citizen consent search of vehicle	0.06	—	2.70	0.12
Platoon 2 (day)	0.00	-0.08*	0.54	-0.03
Platoon 3 (evening)	-0.02	-0.08*	0.32	-0.06
Adjusted R ²	0.75	0.72	0.22	0.57

* p < .05

** p < .10

an independent relationship to response time (our measure of which captures the celerity of the response relative to citizens' expectations, and is therefore itself subjective), but for the most part, citizens' satisfaction is not explained by the objective features of police-citizen encounters that are measured here.

Citizens' judgments about procedural justice are shaped by a number of the factors analyzed here. Citizens who called for service and citizens contacted at police initiative tended to rate procedural justice more positively, compared with those whose contacts with the police were initiated by a third party. Response time affects procedural justice (or both judgments might be affected by another factor, such as prior attitudes). But some of the largest effects stem from the exercise of police authority. Searches detract from citizens' sense of procedural justice: among citizens who were stopped, those who were searched or frisked tended to rate the procedural justice of the police less favorably—3 to 7 points lower.⁷ But citizens who consented to a search or frisk were more favorable, though not quite correspondingly so. Among arrestees, those who were either released in the field or issued an appearance ticket were more positive about procedural justice, and those who were arrested on warrants were more positive, relative to those who were held and those who were arrested on complaints, respectively.

Citizens' backgrounds are also related to procedural justice, all else being equal: citizens who were employed judged procedural justice more favorably, as did men; blacks tended to judge procedural justice less favorably. Assessments of procedural justice improved with age.

Subjective outcomes—whether the citizen believed that s/he got the outcome s/he deserved—are largely a function of the perceived procedural justice. With procedural justice omitted from the equation for subjective outcome, citizens' backgrounds and the situational context together account for just 14 percent of the variation in subjective outcomes. The addition of procedural justice to the equation increases the explained variance to 57 percent. Remarkably, the objective features of outcomes—even whether or not the citizen is arrested and held—have fairly weak effects on subjective outcomes. Even with procedural justice excluded from the equation, the effect of arrest is substantively modest and statistically insignificant.

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND TRUST

Procedural justice and trust are associated in Schenectady and Syracuse, as in previous survey research. Half of those who judged procedural justice in the most favorable terms exhibit the highest level of trust, while more than half of those who judged procedural justice in the least favorable terms exhibit the lowest level of trust. Nearly half of those with the greatest distrust judged procedural justice in

the least favorable terms, and nearly 90 percent of those with high levels of trust assessed procedural justice in very favorable terms. The two (continuous) indices are correlated at 0.64, with virtually identical coefficients in the two sites. (Procedural justice is more weakly related to obligation; the two indices are correlated at 0.36.) This cross-sectional association reflects the reciprocal effects of procedural justice on trust and of trust on procedural justice.

SUMMARY

Using survey items identical to those used in previous survey research, we find in Schenectady and Syracuse patterns of subjective experience similar to those reported in previous research. First, citizens overall reported fairly high levels of satisfaction with their contacts with police, with 70 to 75 percent very or somewhat satisfied with how police treated them and how police handled their problem, and fairly high levels of procedural justice, with 60 to 65 percent in the high range of scores on the procedural justice index and nearly 80 percent on the favorable side of the scale. As we detail in chapter 8, this was a stable pattern throughout the eighteen-month survey period, and so each department had a rather high baseline level of satisfaction and procedural justice at the outset of survey-based measurement of police performance.

Second, procedural justice is comprised of a set of tightly associated features of subjective experience—that is, the components of procedural justice, as they are captured by the various survey items, exhibited the same strong intercorrelation here that they have displayed in previous research. One factor was distilled from a factor analysis, and the additive index formed by the nine survey items has a high level of reliability. The measurement properties of the procedural justice index appear quite satisfactory.

Third, these features of subjective experience—procedural justice and the two forms of citizens' satisfaction—bear strong relationships to one another, as in previous research, and they are also related to other factors that previous research has reported as correlates of subjective experience: whether the contact is police- or citizen-initiated; citizens' race, age, and education; police response time. Not all of these associations are the product of independent influences on subjective experience, however. The effects of citizens' backgrounds and even of situational context on satisfaction and subjective outcomes are apparently mediated entirely by citizens' judgments about procedural justice.

Finally, and notwithstanding the modest differences between the two departments in trust that we reported in chapter 3, levels of subjective experience with police-citizen encounters were very similar across the two sites, and patterns of relationships between procedural justice and other hypothesized correlates were, with only a few exceptions, comparable.

We analyze subjective experience further, and in terms of the actions taken by officers, in chapter 7, and we examine the longitudinal patterns in subjective experience in each site in more detail in chapter 8. But now we turn to a qualitative analysis of citizens' subjective experience, going beyond citizens' responses to closed-end survey items and tapping dissatisfied citizens' own words to describe the reasons for their dissatisfaction.