CITIZEN OVERSIGHT OF THE ALBANY POLICE: Perceptions of Residents, Police Clients, and Complainants, 2002

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Report prepared for the Government Law Center of Albany Law School and the City of Albany, the Albany Citizens' Police Review Board, and the Albany Police Department.

January 21, 2003

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the City of Albany and the cooperation of the Albany Police Department, especially Commander Anthony Bruno and the rest of the staff of the Office of Professional Standards, and Commander Paula Breen, Lt. John Finn, Gretchen Daugherty, and Nicole Scalisi of the Administrative Services Bureau. Thanks also go to the Government Law Center, especially its Director, Patricia Salkin, and staff attorney, Justina Cintron. Finally, we are indebted to the research team at the Hindelang Center, including Joyce Allison, Juliana Benjamin, Jorge Chavez, Matt Fetzer, Nelsida Frias, Lisa Gonzalez, Gina Penly Hall, Chris Harris, Nate Meehan, Meghan Nagy, Yolanda Pina, Kate Raynor, Cindy Rohan, Alison Ruggerio, Nicole Scalisi, Shelley Schlief, and Robert Smith-Hoffman.

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Introduction

Created by legislation that was signed into law in July of 2000, the Albany Citizens' Police Review Board (CPRB) became operational in May of 2001. The Government Law Center (GLC) of Albany Law School was retained by the City of Albany to provide support services to the CPRB, and it was required by the same legislation that created the CPRB to "contract with one or more local colleges, universities or research institutions to conduct surveys of complainants concerning the level of their satisfaction with the process and to conduct surveys of the community to get feedback concerning the CPRB and the Police Department." Pursuant to the legislative mandate, the GLC subcontracted with the Hindelang Criminal Justice Research Center. In a report submitted to the GLC on January 28, 2002, we summarized the results of surveys conducted through December 31, 2001. In this report, we update the previous findings, and extend the analysis to address questions that we could not address last year.

The purpose of the research, we presume, is to contribute to informed judgments about the performance of the complaint review system in Albany. The research was designed to measure conditions on which citizen oversight may have effects, and to illuminate the social psychological mechanisms through which those effects are thought to operate. As we explained in our previous report, citizen involvement in complaint review is thought to have a number of salutary effects, including improvements in:

- the perceived receptivity of the complaint review system to complaints;
- the perceived efficacy of the complaint review system;
- the rate at which perceived misconduct is reported to authorities;[1]
- police performance in interactions with citizens, and hence citizens' assessments of police services;
- the satisfaction of complainants with their experiences with the complaint review system; and
- the fairness of complaint review, as it is judged by complainants.

Our primary objectives, then, are to bring *systematic* information to bear on an assessment of the degree to which citizen oversight in Albany is fulfilling these expectations, and to deepen our understanding of how the complaint review process works here.

The review of complaints about the police has several primary constituencies, each of which has been surveyed. (Details about the methodology of the surveys can be found in the appendix.)

Clients. "Clients" are those people who have direct contact with the police. Since it is from clients' interactions with the police that complaints are most likely to arise, clients are a target audience of crucial importance for complaint review. Clients who believe that complaints are investigated thoroughly, outcomes are reached fairly, and sanctions are imposed appropriately, have more faith in the complaint review system, and as a result they

[1] By "misconduct" we mean "any alleged improper or illegal act, omission or decision" by a police officer that directly affects the person or property of an individual by reason of a violation of any general, standing or special order or guideline of the police department, a violation of any federal law, state law or municipal ordinance, or "any act otherwise evidencing improper or unbecoming conduct." In this we follow the City of Pittsburgh Citizen Police Review Board, "Rules and Operating Procedures" (1998), p. 2.

may be more likely to give voice to their complaints when they are subject to police misconduct. Thus two measures of the success of any complaint review system, whether or not it provides for citizen oversight, are (1) clients' perceptions of complaint review, and (2) clients' proclivity to complain, given some reason to complain. The client survey provides information about both of these phenomena, for a sample of clients. The survey was initiated on October 15, 2001, with a sample whose contacts with police took place between September 3 and 16, 2001, and it has been on-going; through October 15, 2002, we interviewed 906 clients. Because we survey a *sample* of clients, our estimates of their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior are subject to sampling error, as noted in our discussion of findings as needed.

Complainants. We might suppose that the most dramatic effects of citizen oversight are observed among complainants, inasmuch as they have close contact with the process, and they are presumably very attentive to indications that the process is open and fair. For our survey of complainants, we dissect the process into several parts. Thus the complainant survey provides information about the *goals* of complainants in filing a complaint, their subjective experiences with the *intake* and *investigation* processes, their perceptions of the *fairness* with which their complaint was handled, and their *satisfaction with the outcome* of the complaint review. We survey complainants as soon as possible after the final disposition of their complaints; through October 15, 2002, we interviewed 23 complainants.[2] Because we survey the population rather than a sample, estimates of complainants' perceptions are not subject to sampling error.

Officers. Officers, of course, also have an important and legitimate stake in complaint review, and we believe that no balanced evaluation of complaint review would fail to take their perceptions of and experiences with complaint review into account. We survey officers against whom complaints have been filed, after the disposition of those complaints. Like the complainant survey, the officer survey provides information about officers' subjective experiences with the investigation process, their perceptions of the fairness with which the complaint was handled, and their satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint review. We survey the population, rather than a sample, though as we discuss below, the response rate has not been high and the representativeness of the respondents is an open question; through December 31, 2002, we received responses from nine officers.

Albany Residents. Under a separate contract with the Albany Police Department (APD), we surveyed a sample of Albany residents by phone between July and October of 2001. This survey enabled us to gauge the community's satisfaction with the Albany police, and residents' assessments of the police along a number of more specific dimensions. Thus we were able to describe the breadth and depth of the problems for which effective complaint review may be a partial solution, using information that is more systematic than anecdotal accounts of individual cases of misconduct.

We attempted to recontact the same respondents in 2002 for a second interview, which included nearly all of the survey items that were asked in 2001, and in addition items drawn from the client survey about complaint review in Albany. We completed a second

[2] We treat as disposed any case in which notification of the CPRB's disposition has been sent to the complainant, and in which the GLC has so indicated to us, whereupon we make contact with the complainant.

interview with 353 respondents, and we also completed interviews with an additional 9 respondents who were not interviewed in 2001. Thus we can not only describe residents' perceptions of Albany police, but also estimate the proportion of all Albany residents who are aware of citizen oversight in Albany, and describe their perceptions of the complaint review process.

Findings through 2001

Before proceeding further, it might be helpful to summarize our findings based on survey research conducted in 2001, and reported previously. First, we found no evidence of pervasive police misconduct, or of widespread *perceptions* of police misconduct. We found among Albany residents a fairly high level of satisfaction with police services in their neighborhoods (nearly 80%), and favorable views of the performance of Albany police on more specific dimensions of police work. Furthermore, among people who had contact with the Albany police, we found a high level of satisfaction with how they were treated by the police and how their problems were handled. More than three fourths of those who called for assistance were very or somewhat satisfied with how their problem was handled, and 70% or more evaluated their interaction with the police positively. Even among those who were stopped by Albany police, we found a high level of satisfaction with how they were treated by officers. Clients who were dissatisfied with some aspect of their contact identified poor service or less serious forms of misconduct as the reasons for their dissatisfaction; very few cited more serious misconduct, such as physical or verbal abuse. Most residents did not perceive police corruption, police use of excessive force, or police stopping too many people as problems in their neighborhoods, although at least one tenth of residents perceived all or most of these as at least some problem in their neighborhoods. Thus it appeared safe to conclude that the breadth and depth of the problem of police misconduct in Albany was not unusual or grave, calling for drastic measures.

Second, we found that most people who were dissatisfied with their contacts with Albany police, and others who believed that they had a reason to complain about the police, *did not complain* through any channels. We found evidence that whether or not dissatisfied citizens complain turns to some degree on their confidence in the complaint review process, especially their confidence in complaint investigations: citizens who believe that complaint investigations are thorough, and thus believe that they can be efficacious in complaining, are more likely to complain, given a reason to complain. We also found evidence that citizens' confidence in the complaint review process is affected by their awareness that citizens participate in complaint review, which suggests that efforts to raise the level of awareness of citizen oversight among would-be complainants may, in turn, increase the propensity of dissatisfied citizens to complain. However, we also found evidence that citizens' confidence in complaint review is shaped more by their more general attitudes toward the police than it is by their awareness about the provisions for citizen oversight. This may imply that the success of even the most vigorous outreach efforts by the CPRB is likely to be limited.

Third, and relatedly, perceptions change slowly. The public's attitudes toward the police are fairly stable, and previous research (a study of Detroit residents) suggests that these attitudes are only weakly influenced by actual experiences with the police (of either

a positive or negative nature).[3] The effects of the citizen role in complaint review that the CPRB plays in Albany (and of other initiatives by the APD) may accumulate gradually and be felt only in time.

Fourth, most citizens who did take action to complain did not direct their complaints to either APD's Office of Professional Standards (OPS) or the CPRB. The CPRB is part of a much larger set of mechanisms by which aggrieved citizens can be heard and seek the resolution of their concerns, as they consider appropriate, and through which citizen feedback on police performance is channeled to police executives. Because many complaints here in Albany, as in other cities, involve allegations of less serious forms of misconduct, and because many complainants do not seek to have officers punished, many complaints can and probably should be resolved without recourse to an adjudicative process like that for which the CPRB provides. It is conceivable that citizen involvement in complaint review enhances the legitimacy of the complaint review system, and that it might also enhance the legitimacy of the police department, and thereby facilitate complaint-making and resolution in various forms. In any case, we would not presume that complaints serve no useful purpose if they are not processed through the CPRB. Nor should we presume that if the rate of complaints rises, the complaints will or should take the form of written complaints that fall within the purview of the CPRB and OPS.

Current Findings

As readers of this report will discover, we now have further and stronger evidence that these conclusions hold. Most residents of Albany are satisfied with the quality of police services, most residents do not perceive police misconduct as a problem in their neighborhoods, and these outlooks tend to be stable over time. Most people who have contact with the Albany police are satisfied with how they were treated by police and with how police handled their problem. Satisfaction is strongly influenced by how citizens are treated by the police: clients of the police are more satisfied when police are courteous, when police pay attention to what citizens have to say, and when police explain their actions. Most people who are dissatisfied with some element of their contact with the police cite as the reason either less serious forms of misconduct–discourtesy, for example–or poor service–such as a lack of concern or understanding, or an inability to solve the problem. Most of those who are dissatisfied–even a majority of those who believe that police engaged in a form of misconduct–do not take any action to complain. Whether or not a complaint is made turns to some degree on perceptions of the complaint review process. Most of those who do take action to complain do not direct their complaints to OPS or the CPRB.

By the end of 2001 we had interviewed too few complainants to form the basis for even tentative conclusions; through October of 2002, we had interviewed more complainants, though still not a large number. Here too our findings do not diverge much from those that we reported previously, and based on the somewhat larger number of respondents, we reach tentative conclusions about complainants' satisfaction with the

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[3] Steven G. Brandl, James Frank, Robert E. Worden, and Timothy S. Bynum, "Global and Specific Attitudes toward the Police: Disentangling the Relationship," *Justice Quarterly* 11 (1994): 119-134.

process. Most complainants are not satisfied with how their complaints are handled or with the outcomes of their complaints. They tend to be skeptical about the thoroughness of the investigations. They do not understand how the outcome was reached or, in many cases, even what it means. While most complainants did not file their complaints with the objective of having the officer(s) punished, their satisfaction is strongly influenced by the disposition: complainants whose complaints are sustained tend to be more satisfied. Most complainants, therefore, do not get what they want from the process, which may be structurally incompatible with complainants' goals.

We might cautiously add, based on the small number of responses to the officer survey, that officers' assessments of their experiences with complaint review are mirror images of those of complainants: officers assess the investigation process favorably, and they are for the most part satisfied with the outcomes. On some elements of the review process, however, officers' views are mixed.

The remainder of this report elaborates on these conclusions. We begin with the perceptions of the constituency that is furthest removed from police complaint review, residents, many of whom do not in a typical year have direct contact with the Albany police. We discuss residents' satisfaction with and perceptions of the police and of complaint review, relying largely on findings from the 2002 resident survey. We then discuss the perceptions and behavior of people who had contact with the Albany police, including their confidence in the complaint review process and their awareness of citizen oversight, their level of satisfaction and the influences thereon, the prevalence of and reasons for dissatisfaction with the police, and the rate at which such dissatisfaction takes the form of complaints. We thereupon examine the perceptions of the constituencies that are closest to the process, CPRB complainants and officers. We focus on complainants' perceptions of the complaint intake process, and both constituencies' perceptions of investigations and outcomes. Finally, we discuss the implications of the survey findings for an assessment of the degree to which citizen oversight is achieving the objectives that we identified above.

Readers will find that, with more data and more time to analyze the data, this report relies more heavily than our previous report relied on multivariate analyses of the data. Our objective in this is to describe patterns of associations that better support inferences about cause-and-effect relationships. It may be, for example, that satisfaction with the police is associated with whether officers are polite, pay attention, and explain their actions. We perform multivariate analysis in order to isolate the relationship between two variables, say satisfaction and politeness, independent of the other factors, which may also be associated with politeness, and whose effects on satisfaction might therefore be confounded with those of politeness. Thus we have occasion to report such findings as satisfaction is patterned (or affected) by whether officers are polite, pay attention, and explain their actions, *other things being equal*, meaning (in this instance) that each of these factors bears a relationship to satisfaction, even after the influences of all of the other factors have been statistically removed.

Residents' Perceptions

Perceived Quality of Police Services

As we noted above, citizens' attitudes toward the police tend to be stable over time, and the responses of our panel bear this out. Among the 2001 respondents with whom we were able to conduct a second interview, 79 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with the quality of police services in their neighborhood in 2001, and in 2002 the level of satisfaction was nearly identical, at 82 percent (see Figure 1).[4] Residents' assessments of the performance of Albany police on more specific dimensions of police work–how fair, helpful, concerned, and polite the police are when dealing with residents, and how well the police are doing in keeping order on the streets, preventing crime, and helping victims–were also quite stable, albeit with slightly fewer unfavorable assessments in 2002, and somewhat fewer extremely positive assessments.

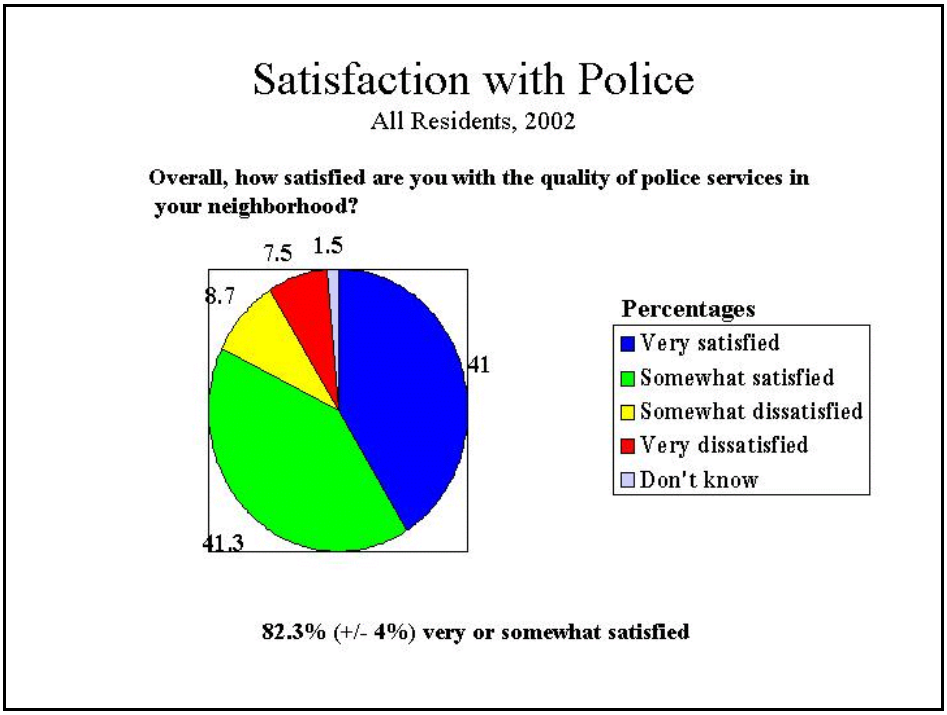

Figure 1

[4] The 2001 estimate of the percentage satisfied is slightly higher than that we reported last year in *Police Services in Albany: Citizens' Views*, because it is based on only the respondents who participated in both surveys, and the 2001 respondents with the least favorable views of police were somewhat less likely to participate in 2002. For a more complete discussion of response rates and nonresponse bias, see the appendix.

Perceived Police Misconduct

Most residents do not perceive police misconduct–stopping too many people, police being too tough on the people they stop, and/or police use of excessive force–as a problem in their neighborhood, but misconduct is perceived as a problem for a substantial fraction (see Figure 2). Moreover, perceptions of these problems are found mainly among African-Americans, for *71 percent* of whom–compared with 13 percent of whites–one or more of these perceived practices was a problem in 2001.[5] This distribution of opinion is by itself some cause for concern: even if most residents city-wide do not perceive police misconduct as a problem, that so large a fraction of one segment of the population expresses such distrust of police poses a challenge for the police. Whether the perceptions of police practices are accurate or inaccurate, they are probably quite real in their consequences for police-citizen interactions and police-community partnerships. Furthermore, the distribution of opinion coupled with the underrepresentation of African-Americans in the sample implies that the 2001 sample estimate (24 percent) understates the proportion of the city population that perceives police misconduct as a problem.[6] Adjusting for the differences in perceptions across racial/ethnic groups and the representation of each group in the sample, a better estimate would be as high as 32 percent in 2001 (and approximately the same in 2002).

These survey data reveal disparities in perceptions and opinion, but they are not evidence of biased policing. Such disparities in perceptions could arise from residents' direct experiences with the Albany police, vicarious experiences (i.e., those of relatives, friends, or neighbors) with the Albany police, media reports of police practices or incidents here or elsewhere, childhood and adolescent socialization, and other sources, on most of which we do not have data. But the survey data confirm that, like other outlooks concerning the police, these perceptions are fairly stable: residents who believed that police misconduct

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[5] Other things being equal, these perceptions are also more common among men, renters, residents with less education and lower incomes, residents who were less satisfied with police, and residents who perceive more disorder and more crime in their neighborhoods.

[6] The 2001 sample is 20.4 percent African-American and 70.3 percent white, while the Albany population is 28.1 percent African-American and 63.1 percent white (according to the 2000 Census). This discrepancy stems largely from the fact that in parts of the city that are more transient and less affluent, proportionately more of the phone numbers that we selected from a reverse phone directory were out of service when we dialed them. (Thus the sample also underrepresents some other socio-demographic groups, such as renters.) The racial discrepancy would not distort the sample estimate of any belief or attitude that does not vary across racial groups. If, for example, the levels of satisfaction with the police were equivalent across racial/ethnic groups, then the sample estimate would not be distorted by the under- or overrepresentation of any racial or ethnic group. In fact, the levels of satisfaction among racial/ethnic groups in Albany did vary some in 2001: 82% of whites, 68% of African-Americans, and 87% of other racial or ethnic groups, were satisfied overall with police services in their neighborhoods. Based on these estimates, we can project the level of satisfaction for the population as a whole, taking account of the racial composition of the population: 78.6% satisfied. This estimate is very near the estimate that we reported previously–79.4%–because the discrepancies between the sample and the population are not very large, *and* because the differences in satisfaction levels are not large. However, the differences in residents' perceptions of police misconduct *are* quite pronounced, and thus the underrepresentation of African-Americans has a correspondingly more substantial impact on the accuracy of the sample estimate.

was a problem in 2001 also tended to believe that it was a problem in 2002, and those who did not perceive misconduct as a problem in 2001 tended not to perceive it as a problem in 2002. We might further infer that these perceptions are unlikely to be readily altered, as shifts in these perceptions over time–i.e., between the first interview and the second–were unaffected by residents' contacts with the police, whether they were evaluated positively or negatively.

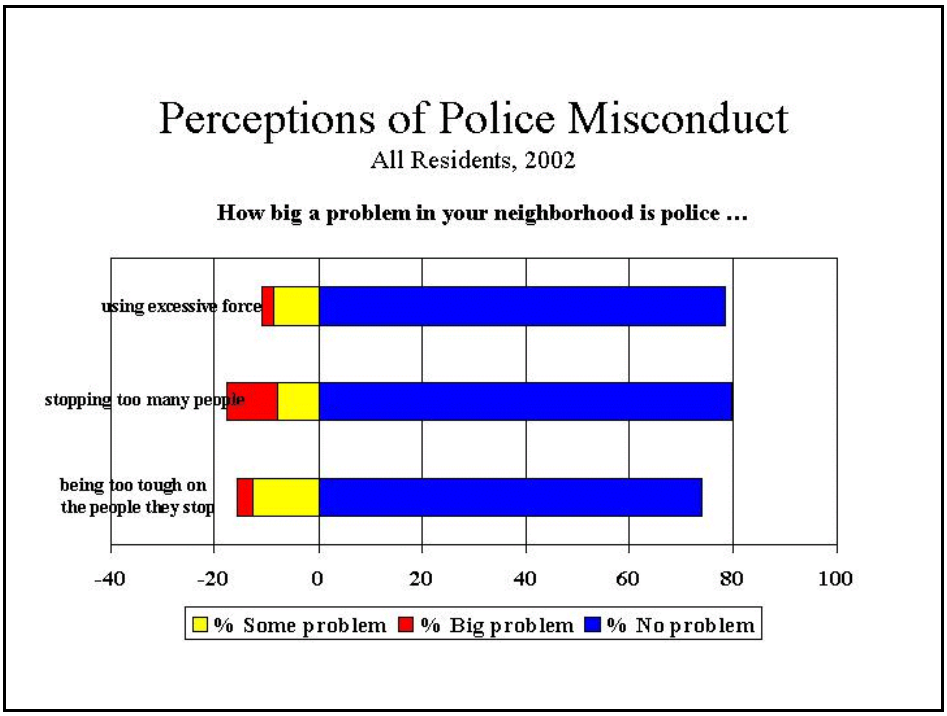

Figure 2

Perceptions of Complaint Review

About three fourths of Albany residents believe that complaint investigations are very or somewhat thorough (see Figure 3); nearly one quarter profess not to know how thorough complaint investigations are, and only 5 percent believe that investigations are not at all thorough. Over half believe that the sanctions imposed on officers found to be guilty of misconduct are very or somewhat severe (see Figure 4); slightly more than one quarter believe that sanctions are somewhat lenient, and 11 percent do not know. Both of these beliefs are shaped to some degree by residents' satisfaction with the police, their race, and their education. Residents who are more satisfied with the police tend to credit the police with conducting more thorough investigations and imposing more severe sanctions. African-Americans are much more likely than whites to believe that investigations are not thorough

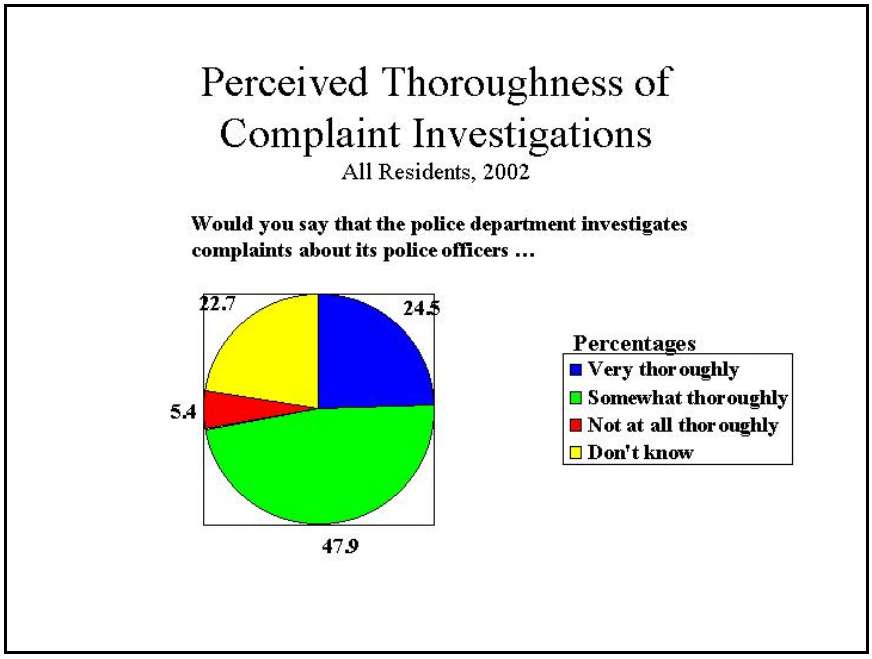

Figure 3

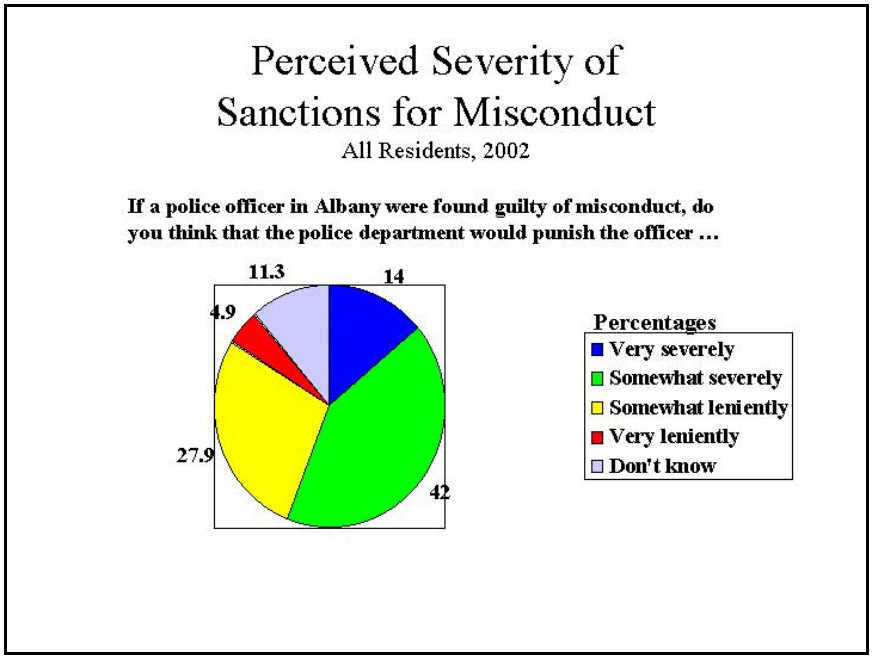

Figure 4

and that sanctions are lenient.[7] Better educated residents tend to be skeptical of the thoroughness of investigations and the severity of sanctions. Residents' beliefs about complaint investigations are also associated with their perceptions of police misconduct (stops, excessive force) in the neighborhood: residents who perceive misconduct as a problem tend to believe that investigations are less thorough.

Somewhat more than one half of residents believe that Albany has a "civilian review board" (which was generically described to respondents as "a board that includes civilians who oversee the police department's investigation of complaints about its officers"); one fifth do not know whether or not Albany has such a board, and more than one quarter believe that Albany does *not* have a board (see Figure 5).[8] This level of awareness is greater than that found among Minneapolis residents two years after that city's citizen review panel was created.[9] Albany residents' awareness of citizen oversight appears to be patterned by their age, race, marital status, and sex: older people, African-Americans, married people, and men are *more* likely to know that Albany provides for citizen oversight, other things being equal.[10] In addition, residents who had attended at least one meeting of a community group in the previous year–i.e., people who take an interest in public affairs–are much more likely to know about citizen oversight.[11] Surprisingly, neither education nor income is related to awareness of citizen oversight, other things being equal. Furthermore, knowledge about citizen oversight is not affected by residents' satisfaction with the police, nor does knowledge of citizen oversight have an effect on how residents evaluate police services. Thus we infer that residents' *knowledge* that Albany has a citizen review board is largely cognitive in nature and thus independent of their *affect* toward the police. As a consequence, residents' awareness of citizen oversight may be more susceptible to the influence of outreach efforts than are their assessments of the integrity of the review process.

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[7] Adjusting for the representation of racial/ethnic groups in the sample would revise downward the estimates of the proportions of residents with favorable views of complaint review, to 67.6 percent who believe that investigations are very or somewhat thorough, and to 50.2 percent who believe that sanctions are very or somewhat severe.

[8] We used the term "civilian review board," rather than citizen review board or other alternatives, partly because we wanted to ensure comparability between findings here and findings in another jurisdiction that used this survey item, and partly also because we believe that "civilian review board" is a widely recognized term for institutions like Albany's CPRB.

[9] Wayne A. Kerstetter and Kenneth A. Rasinski, "Opening a Window into Police Internal Affairs: Impact of Procedural Justice Reform on Third-Party Attitudes," *Social Justice Research* 7 (1994): 107-127.

[10] The differences are not very large, however, and adjusting for the representation of racial/ethnic groups in the sample yields no substantial change in the estimate of the proportion of residents who are aware of citizen oversight (50.7 percent).

[11] Respondents who had contact with the police–either by calling for assistance or being stopped by the police–were also more likely to know about citizen oversight. But as we discuss below, this finding is inconsistent with our findings based on the client survey. In view of the smaller and less representative sample of people who had contact with the police that is afforded by the resident survey, we would resolve the discrepancy in favor of the client survey results.

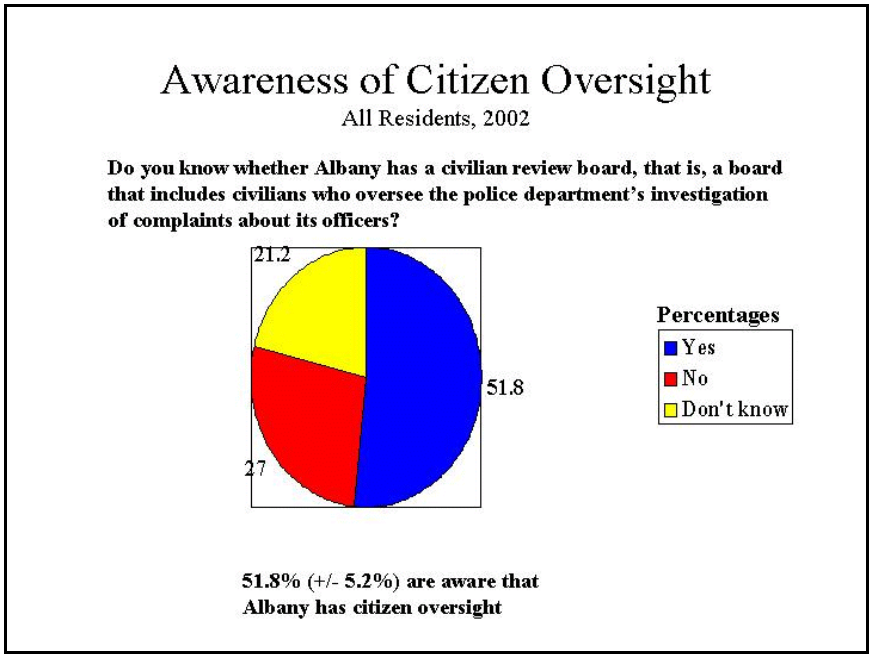

Figure 5

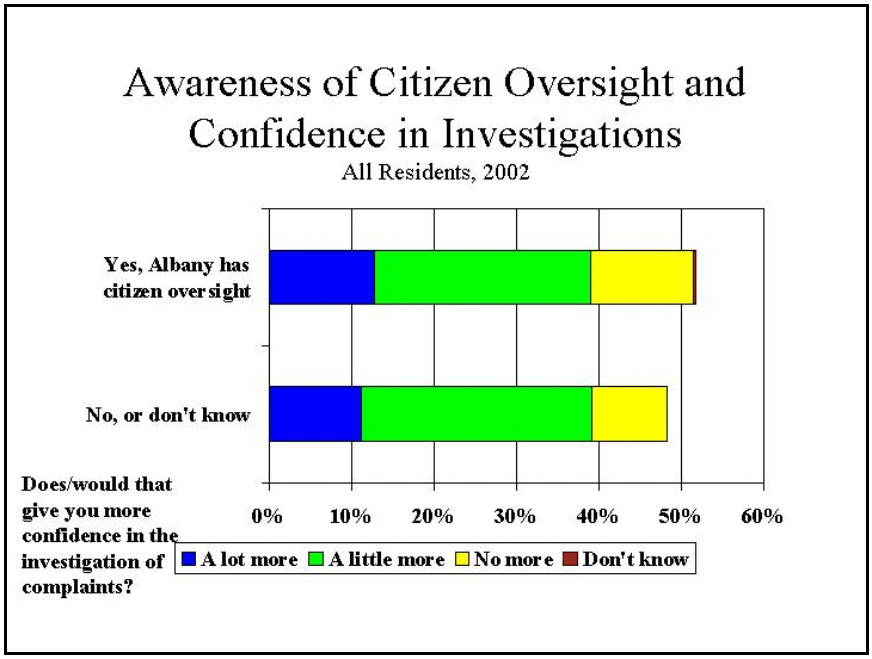

Figure 6

Indeed, that African-Americans are more likely to be aware of citizen oversight than whites are may reflect the success of outreach efforts by the CPRB.

Among those who believe that Albany has a civilian review board, three fourths report that as a result they have a lot or a little more confidence in complaint investigations; among those who believe that Albany does not have citizen oversight, or who do not know, 81 percent believe that they would have more confidence in complaint investigations if there were a civilian review board (see Figure 6). Residents with higher incomes, men, and residents who are more satisfied with the police, are those most likely to say that they have or would have more confidence as a result of citizen oversight. However, our analyses of residents' beliefs about complaint review (the thoroughness of investigations and severity of sanctions) suggest that residents' awareness of citizen oversight has a weak effect on their beliefs about the process–so weak, in fact, that it cannot be reliably distinguished from sampling error.

Clients' Perceptions and Behavior

While most clients of the Albany police are Albany residents, they are a distinct subgroup of residents with somewhat different perceptions of the police. In particular, clients tend to be less satisfied with the police, and they tend to perceive more problems with police practices (e.g., stops, excessive force). Clients also have different perceptions of complaint review: they are less aware of citizen oversight, and they have less favorable perceptions of the complaint review process. These are important differences.

Perceptions of Complaint Review

As we observed above, on pages 1-2, clients' perceptions of the complaint review system are important especially insofar as they have a bearing on the likelihood that acts of perceived misconduct will be reported: clients who have faith in the complaint review system are, we might postulate, more likely to make complaints if they believe that they have been subject to police misconduct. The client survey provides some information with which we can gauge clients' perceptions of complaint review, particularly the thoroughness of complaint investigations, the severity of the sanctions imposed on officers when misconduct is established, and the role of citizens in complaint review.

Almost half of police clients in Albany believe that complaint investigations are very or somewhat thorough, one fifth believe that investigations are not thorough, and about one third do not know (see Figure 7). Slightly more than one third of clients believe that sanctions are very or somewhat severe, while almost half believe that sanctions are very or somewhat lenient, and 18 percent do not have an opinion (see Figure 8). In both of these respects, clients' perceptions of the complaint review system are less favorable than those of residents generally.

Thirty-four percent of the people who have contact with the police are aware that Albany has a "civilian review board" (see Figure 9). Almost 30 percent believe that Albany does not have a civilian review board, and the rest–over one third–do not to know one way or the other. Thus it appears that awareness of citizen oversight is also lower among clients

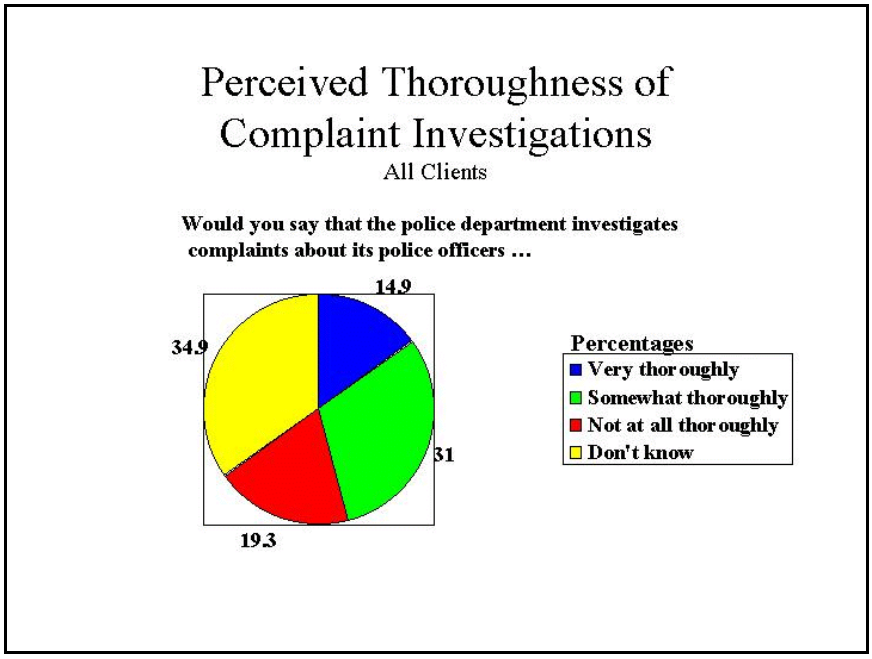

Figure 7

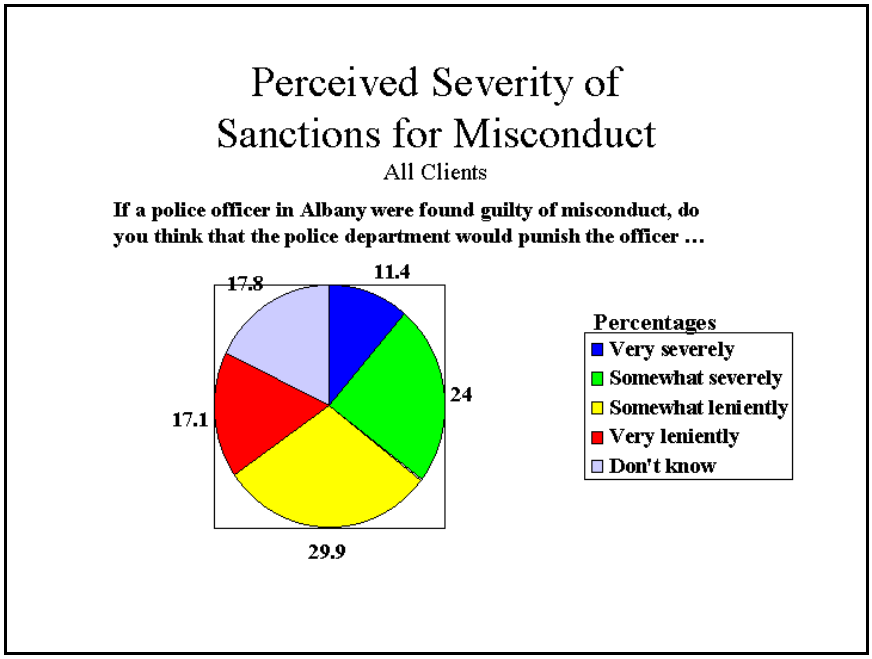

Figure 8

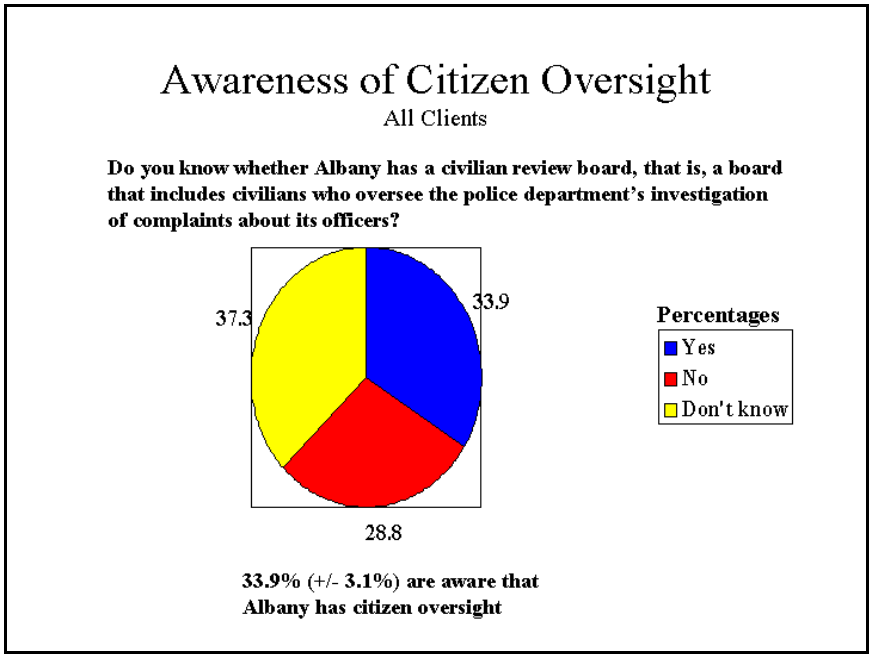

Figure 9

than it is among residents generally (cf. footnote 11). But variation among clients, like variation among residents, is patterned by race, age, and sex: African-American clients are more likely to know about citizen oversight, as are older people and men. In addition, clients with more education, and with higher incomes, are more likely to know that Albany has citizen oversight.

Of those who know about citizen oversight in Albany, 24 percent say that it gives them a lot more confidence in the police department's investigation of complaints, and an additional 42 percent say that it gives them a little more confidence. Approximately one fifth say that it gives them no more confidence in the investigation of complaints. (See Figure 10, the upper bar of which is decomposed in terms of these perceptions.)

Of those who are not aware of citizen oversight in Albany, one third say that they would have a lot more confidence in investigations if there were a civilian review board, and an additional 43 percent say that they would have a little more confidence in complaint investigations; 14% say that they would have no more confidence, and the remainder do not know. (See Figure 10, the lower bar of which is decomposed in terms of these perceptions.)

Changes over Time. One might expect that clients' awareness of citizen oversight, and with it their perceptions of the integrity of the process, would change for the better over time, as the role of the CPRB is better established, and as the CPRB engages in outreach. However, as Figure 11 shows, no such changes among clients can yet be detected. Awareness of citizen oversight, and confidence in investigations, fluctuate mostly within margins of sampling error, with no detectable pattern over time.

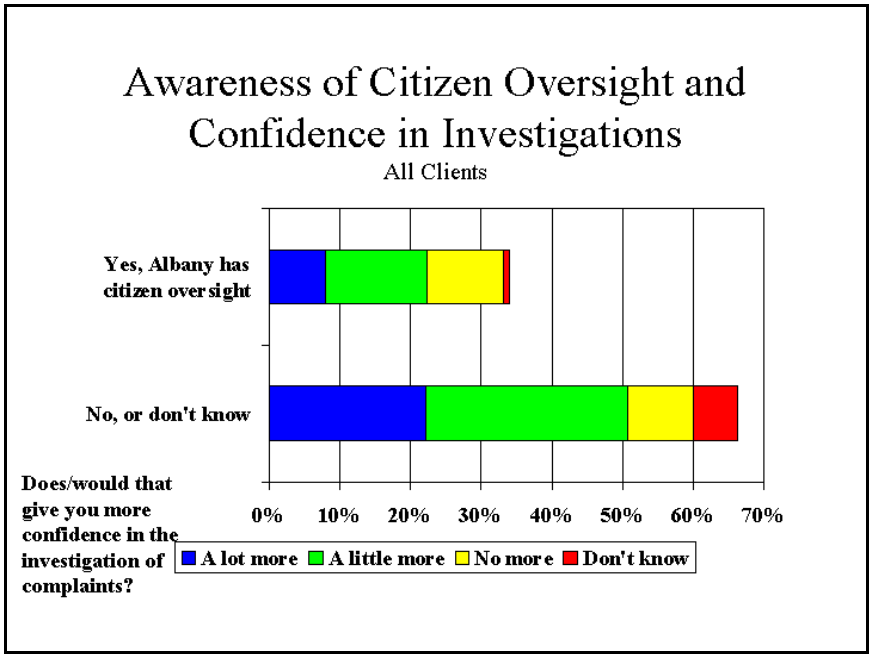

Figure 10

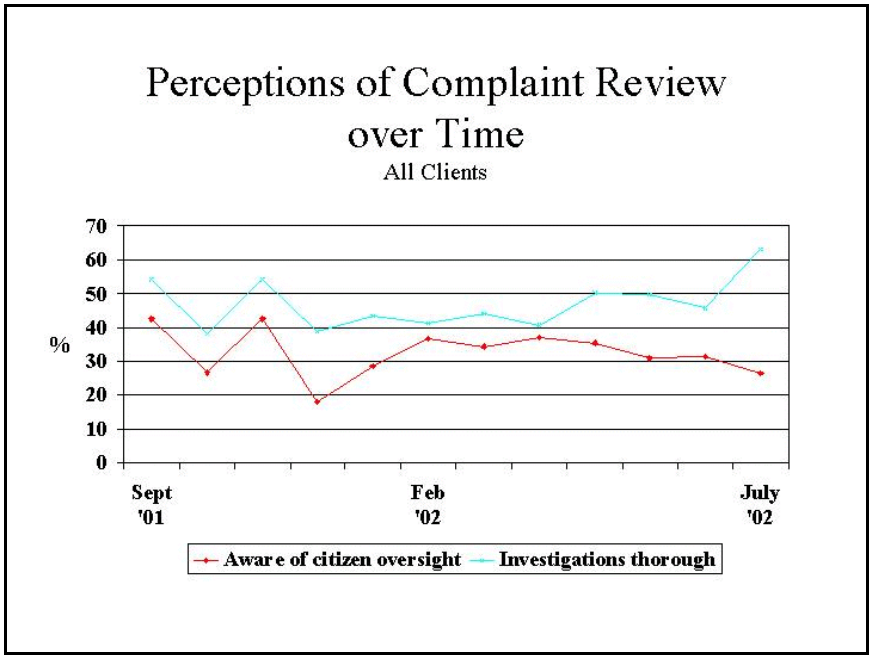

Figure 11

The Impacts of Attitudes toward the Police. Clients' perceptions of the thoroughness of complaint investigations, and of the severity of sanctions, bear fairly strong relationships to their more general views of the police: clients who have confidence in the police tend to believe that investigations are thorough (see Figure 12) and that sanctions are severe, while those who lack confidence in the police tend to believe that investigations are not thorough and sanctions are lenient. Similar relationships hold between how much more confidence clients have or would have given citizen oversight, on the one hand, and their confidence in the police more generally, on the other hand; that is, those with more positive attitudes toward the police tend to be more sanguine about the impacts of citizen oversight on the thoroughness of complaint investigations. The most plausible interpretation of these patterns, we believe, is that clients tend to attribute to the police properties that are consistent with their more general attitudes toward the police: people with less favorable attitudes toward the police are more skeptical about the integrity of the complaint review process, and about the effects of citizen participation on that process. In contrast with these patterns, it appears that clients do not make such affective projections with respect to the existence of citizen oversight. Clients who have more favorable views of the police are more likely to profess that they do not know whether Albany has citizen oversight, and correspondingly *less* likely to believe either that Albany has citizen oversight or that Albany does not have citizen oversight.

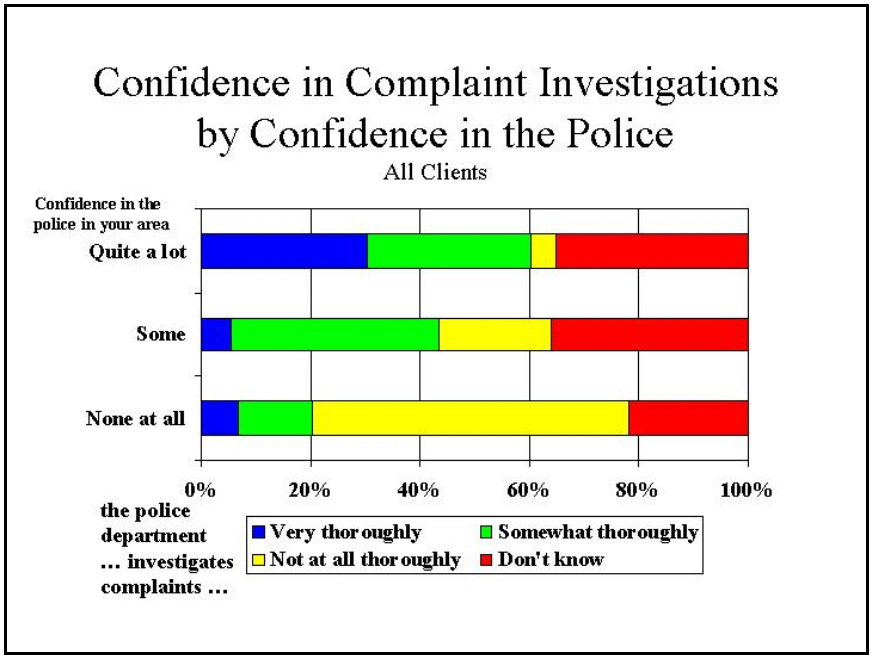

Figure 12

Clients' knowledge about the existence of citizen oversight has some effect on their perceptions of the thoroughness of investigations, even when confidence in the police is statistically controlled, and also some (but a weaker) effect on perceptions of the severity of sanctions. This suggests that citizen oversight has had a salutary effect on the legitimacy of

the complaint review system among clients, and that successful efforts to increase clients' awareness would further enhance its legitimacy–two thirds of police clients are unaware of the citizen role in complaint review, and their perceptions of complaint review are less positive than those of clients who are aware of citizen oversight. But the effects of awareness of citizen oversight are much smaller in magnitude than those of more general attitudes toward the police. This suggests that the legitimacy of the complaint review system is sharply bounded by deeper–and probably more enduring–attitudes toward the police.

Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with the Police

As Figure 13 shows, 70 percent of clients are very or somewhat satisfied with how the police treated them, while 77 percent of those who requested assistance are satisfied with how police handled their problem.[12] Remarkably, between 50 and 55 percent are *very* satisfied with their treatment by police, and how police handled their problem.

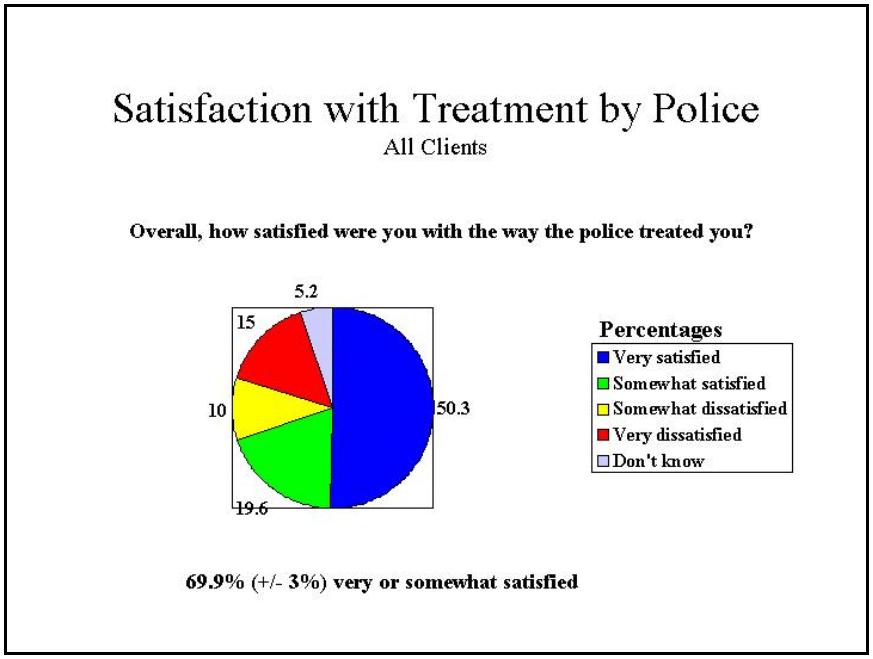

Figure 13

[12] Clients whose contact with the police arose from a request for service are asked how satisfied they were with how the police handled their problem, and they are also asked how satisfied they were with how they were treated by the police; other clients, whose contacts with the police stemmed from police initiative or another citizen's request for police assistance, are asked only how satisfied they were with how they were treated by the police. The margin of sampling error in the estimated percentage satisfied with their treatment by police is plus-or-minus 3.0 percent, and the margin of error in the estimated percentage satisfied with how police handled their problem is plus-or-minus 3.3 percent.

Clients' satisfaction is patterned by their attitudes toward the police–those with more favorable attitudes are more likely to be satisfied–and by their age–younger people are less satisfied. Clients' satisfaction is also shaped by several elements of their interaction with the police. Clients are more satisfied when police are polite, helpful, pay attention to what citizens say, and explain the reasons for their actions, other things being equal. Satisfaction is also associated with the nature of clients' contact–arrestees and people who are field interviewed tend to be less satisfied. (Remarkably, perhaps, about half of arrestees and field interviewees [47.3 and 55.5 percent, respectively] are very or somewhat satisfied with their treatment by police, while 76.4 percent of those who called for assistance are satisfied.) But these differences are attributable to the nature of their interaction with police: arrestees and field interviewees tend to be less satisfied because they tend to perceive that police were not polite or fair, did not pay attention, and did not explain the reasons for their actions. We would also note that, other things being equal, satisfaction is unrelated to race. Thus far, we can detect no statistically reliable trends over time in clients' subjective assessments of police service, which have fluctuated mostly within a margin of sampling error (see Figure 14).

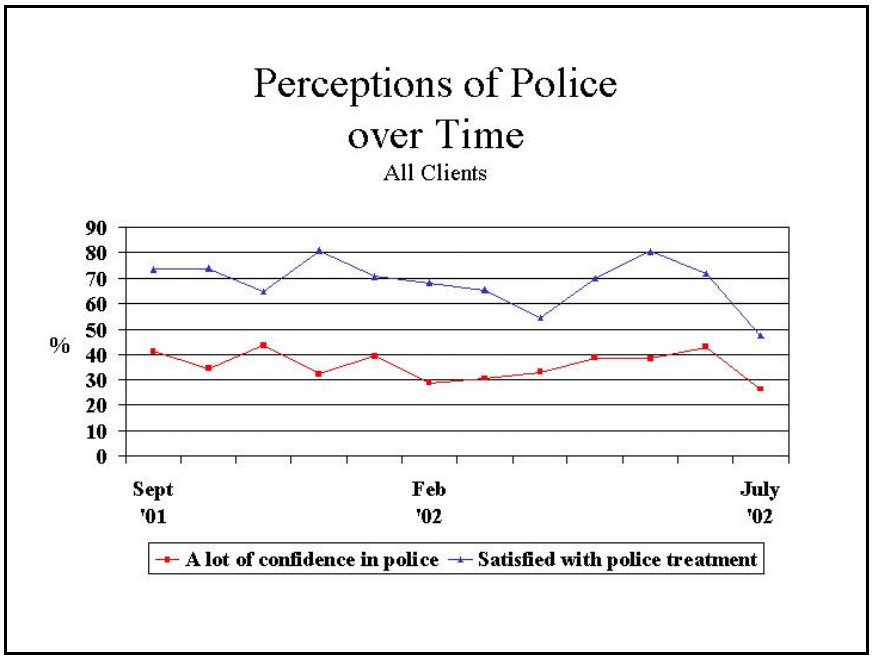

Figure 14

Clients' dissatisfaction stems mainly from what they perceive as incompetence and poor judgment, a lack of concern by the police (i.e., the officer did not care or listen), or discourtesy (see Figure 15), cited by 27 percent, 22 percent, and 18 percent, respectively, of clients who were dissatisfied with their treatment by police (while 7 percent did not cite a

reason).[13] Twelve percent cited unequal treatment by police. In addition, among clients who requested assistance and who were dissatisfied with how police handled their problem, 21.5 percent cited a lack of action by police, and 5 percent believed that police did not solve the problem. Small proportions of dissatisfied clients cited verbal abuse (5.5 percent) or physical abuse (3.7 percent). These results suggest, first, that dissatisfaction stems not only from actions that (as they are perceived by the clients) constitute misconduct by the police, but also from what clients judge (correctly or not) to be poor service. If we take physical abuse, verbal abuse, discourtesy, and unequal treatment as forms of misconduct, and the remaining reasons for dissatisfaction as poor service, then 37 percent of the incidents with which clients are dissatisfied involved perceived misconduct. Second, the forms of misconduct about which clients are dissatisfied tend to be of a less serious nature, e.g., discourtesy rather than physical abuse.

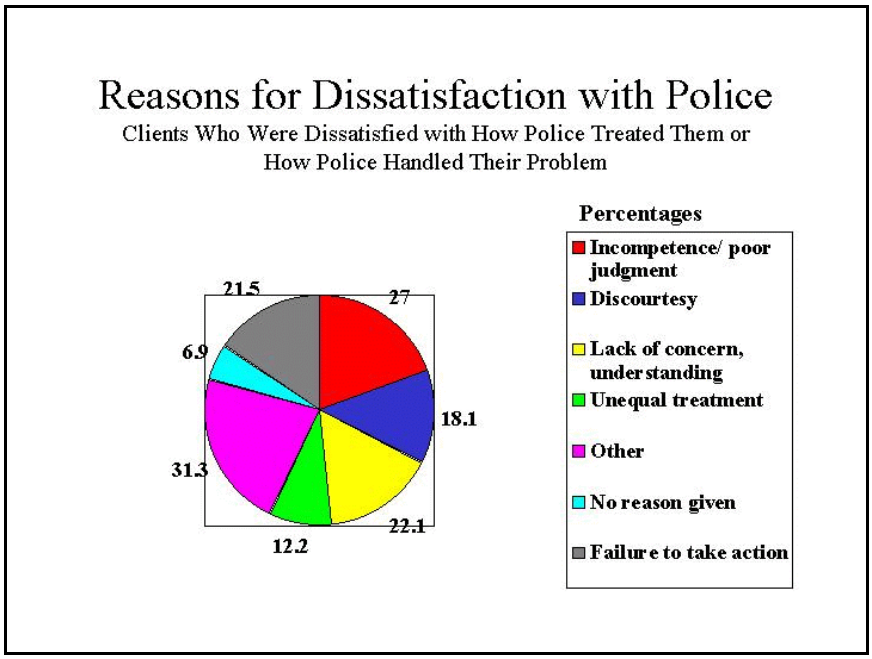

Figure 15

Complaining

Of those who are dissatisfied either with how police treated them or with how police handled their problem (or both), 20 percent took some action to complain (depicted as the upper bar in Figure 16). Only 20 percent of those–comprising 4 percent of all of the incidents in which clients were dissatisfied–reportedly took the form of written complaints. Of those who did not complain (shown as the lower bar in Figure 16), more than half did not

[13] We coded from each respondent's open-ended accounts one or–if necessary–two reasons for his/her dissatisfaction, so the sum of the percentages exceeds 100.

complain because they thought that it would not do any good to complain. Twelve percent did not know to whom to complain, and for 11% the matter was not important enough to complain. Few were deterred from complaining by their fear of the police or the belief that they would suffer reprisals from the police.

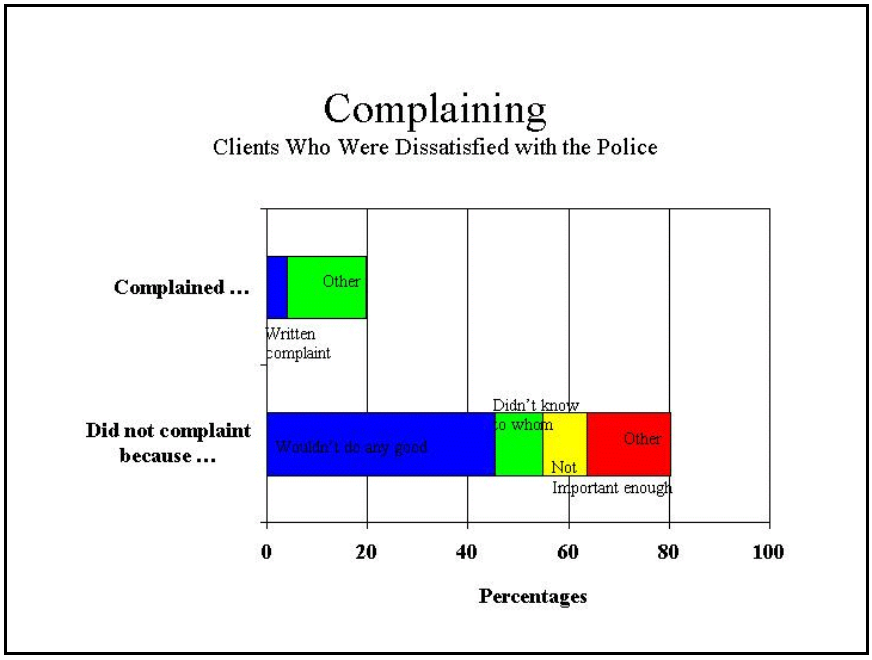

Figure 16

The propensity to complain varies across clients' reasons for dissatisfaction. For example, of those who were dissatisfied with the courtesy of police, 20 percent complained, of those who were dissatisfied with the judgment or competence of police, 26 percent complained, and of those who were dissatisfied as a result of verbal abuse, 44 percent complained; but of those who cited a lack of concern by the police as a reason for their dissatisfaction, only 12 percent complained. More generally, clients whose dissatisfaction concerns misconduct are more likely to complain (27 percent vs. 16 percent).

The distinction between misconduct and poor service is important in understanding complaint-making by dissatisfied clients. Clients who are dissatisfied as a consequence of what they take to be poor service are more likely to complain if they are aware of citizen oversight; older clients, whites, and women are less likely to complain, given poor service. (Clients with more favorable views of the police are somewhat more likely to complain, other things being equal, but the effect is too weak to reliably distinguish it from sampling fluctuation.)

Clients who believe that the police with whom they had contact engaged in misconduct are more likely to complain if they have more confidence in complaint investigations; they are also more likely to complain if they are aware of citizen oversight (even independent of their perceptions of complaint investigations), though the effect is

statistically marginal. Furthermore, the likelihood of complaining in such instances has risen over time, other things being equal. But in cases of perceived misconduct, neither race, sex, nor age affects the likelihood of a complaint.[14]

These patterns are quite interpretable, even if they are complex. Would-be complainants' perceptions of the thoroughness of complaint investigations have a bearing on their decisions to complain, but only when the incident involves an allegation that might be expected to prompt an investigation–i.e., misconduct, and not poor service. Perceptions of the thoroughness of complaint investigations, as we saw above, are affected by awareness of citizen oversight, and so clients' awareness of citizen oversight (indirectly) affects their propensity to complain. In addition, the likelihood of complaining in cases of perceived misconduct has risen over time (independent of perceptions of complaint investigations), which is what we would expect to observe if as perceptions of complaint review filter through the community, the legitimacy of complaint review increases. Awareness of citizen oversight affects the choice to complain, even–and especially–when the complaint concerns poor service, which may suggest that citizen oversight has affected clients' perceptions of the legitimacy of the entire complaint process.

However, of those who complained, almost half said that the person to whom their complaint was directed either did nothing to help or made matters worse, and 17 percent do not know what the person might have done. Not surprisingly, two thirds are dissatisfied with the way that their complaint was handled and 60 percent are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint (see Figure 17).

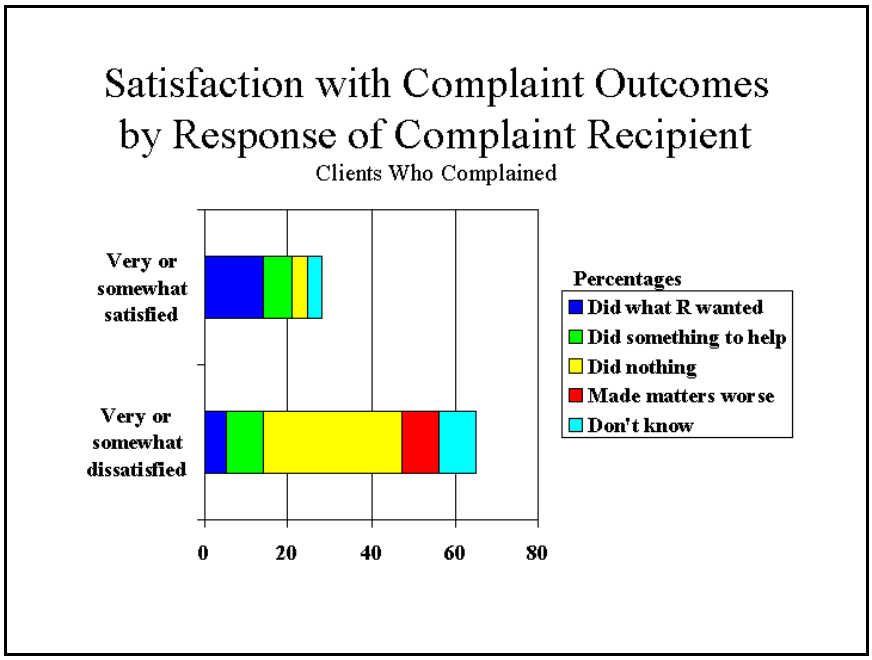

Figure 17

[14] We caution readers that these estimates rest on a fairly small subsample of clients; these inferences must be treated as quite tentative, although we believe that they are superior to speculation or anecdotes.

CPRB Complainants' Perceptions

Fifty-three complaints had been adjudicated by the CPRB as of October 15, 2002.[15] Several of these complaints contain allegations against multiple officers, and many complaints contain allegations of more than one form of misconduct; OPS identified 78 separate allegations in the 53 complaints. Using the OPS categories, 47 percent concern officer conduct, 19 percent allege misuse of force, 17 percent involve call handling, 9 percent concern arrest authority procedures, 4 percent involve off-duty conduct, and 4 percent are other charges, such as the mishandling of prisoners' property. From a comparison of this distribution with that of the "complaints" made by clients, we might infer that the complaints processed by OPS and the CPRB disproportionately concern more serious forms of misconduct. One fifth of the CPRB complaints concern the use of force; only 4 percent of the incidents in which clients are dissatisfied, and 7 percent of the incidents about which clients complain, concern the abuse of force.

CPRB outcomes in these cases closely mirror those of OPS: 13 percent are sustained; 21 percent are not sustained; in 23 percent the officer is exonerated; in 30 percent the complaint is unfounded. In addition, 3 percent are mediated, 4 percent are judged ineffective policy or training, and 6 percent result in "no finding."

We have completed interviews with 23 complainants. Only one complainant declined to participate, and we were unable to reach 12 complainants (who were responsible for 14 complaints). Our attempts to contact the complainants in the remaining 15 cases continue at this writing.

Perceptions of Intake and Investigation

Three quarters of the complainants found it easy to understand how to navigate the complaint review process. Without exception, complainants were able to obtain complaint forms from a variety of sources upon inquiry or direct request for assistance. OPS, other APD locations, the Corporation Counsel's Office, the Government Law Center, and the Center for Law and Justice were identified as the primary locations at which complaint forms were provided. Most complainants contacted OPS directly–by walk-in, phone, or mail–with any questions regarding complaint intake. Though 91 percent had little or no difficulty in completing the complaint form, almost half received some form of assistance from OPS in completing their forms. Two thirds of the complainants believed that the intake officer was understanding.

One quarter of the complainants reportedly had no contact with investigators, and these complainants also have negative views about the thoroughness of the investigation. Most of these complainants filed their complaints directly with OPS, and it is likely that the OPS investigative interview with the complainant coincided with the intake process. This set of complainants, we infer, had no contact with police that they *recognized* as investigative in nature, as intake served a dual role in their cases. Among these

[15] This number excludes two cases that were under litigation and hence suspended, and two other cases that the CPRB chose not to review.

complainants, the most recently filed complaint was November of 2001, and the procedures in which complainants' misunderstanding may have originated have reportedly been changed.

But as Figure 18 shows, even complainants who had what they recognized as a contact with complaint investigators have mixed opinions regarding the investigation. Only 35 percent of these complainants (27 percent of all complainants) feel they had an opportunity to tell their side of the story, and only 17 percent (13 percent of all complainants) feel that the investigators were interested in finding out the truth about the case. Overall, 22 percent of complainants believe that the investigation was thorough.

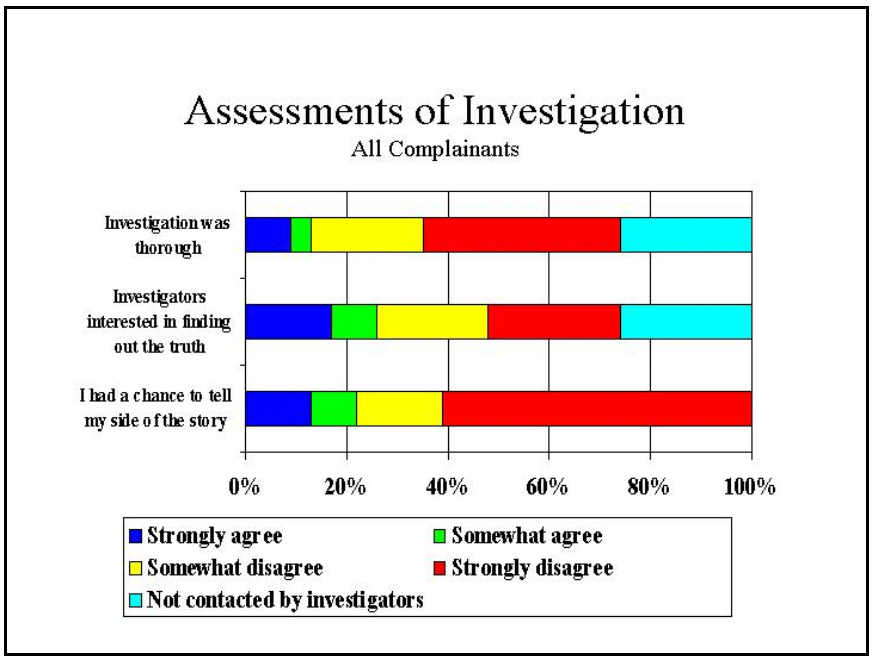

Figure 18

Complainants' assessments of the investigation are associated with case outcomes, as most of those whose complaints resulted in an outcome other than sustained rate their investigation experiences unfavorably. Those whose complaints were sustained tended to be more positive.

Goals

Complainants typically had multiple goals in filing complaints. Our respondents could identify as many as they wished, and the 22 who responded to this question identified 38 goals. These goals can be arranged in terms of their seriousness–from having the officer punished, to corrective actions such as ending harassment, getting charges dropped, and being compensated monetarily, to merely letting the department know about the incident or the officer. By ordering complainants' goals in this way, we can identify each complainant's

most "serious" goal (see Figure 19). Complainants tend not to be punitive; only 17 percent of the complainants wanted the officer punished in some manner.[16] Forty percent wanted to let the department know about the incident, leaving the appropriate resolution to administrators. Several complainants (17 percent) wanted the officer counseled or retrained. Among the multiple goals that each complainant could identify, the majority of complainants included the goal of having their complaints heard and addressed by the police administration.

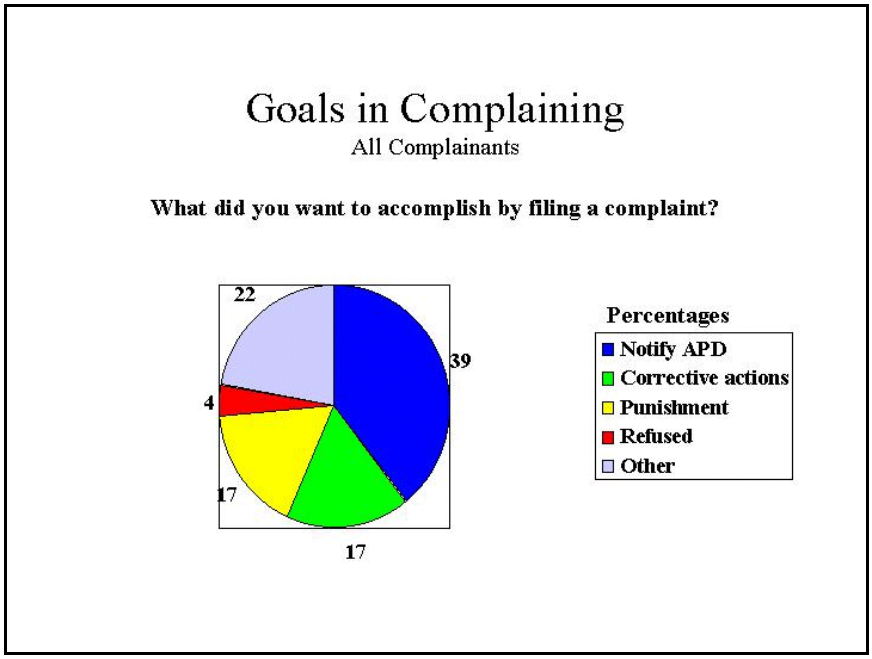

Figure 19

Satisfaction with Outcomes

The outcomes of complainants' cases are strongly associated with complainants' satisfaction. Complainants whose complaints were sustained (or partly sustained) by the CPRB tend to be very or somewhat satisfied; those whose cases were resolved as "not sustained," "exonerated," or "unfounded" are almost uniformly very or somewhat dissatisfied. Consequently, most complainants are not satisfied, either with how their complaints were handled or with the outcome (see Figure 20). Most (83 percent) feel that they did not get what they wanted from the complaint process (see Figure 21). This is striking, in view of complainants' goals, which tended not to be punitive. One plausible explanation for this set of findings is that the complaint review process, which is designed

[16] Some complainants may hold but not acknowledge punitive goals, perhaps believing that they present to an interviewer a more favorable image of themselves if they espouse only non-punitive goals. One need not take all of these responses at face value to draw the conclusion that punishment is not a dominant theme in complainants' goals.

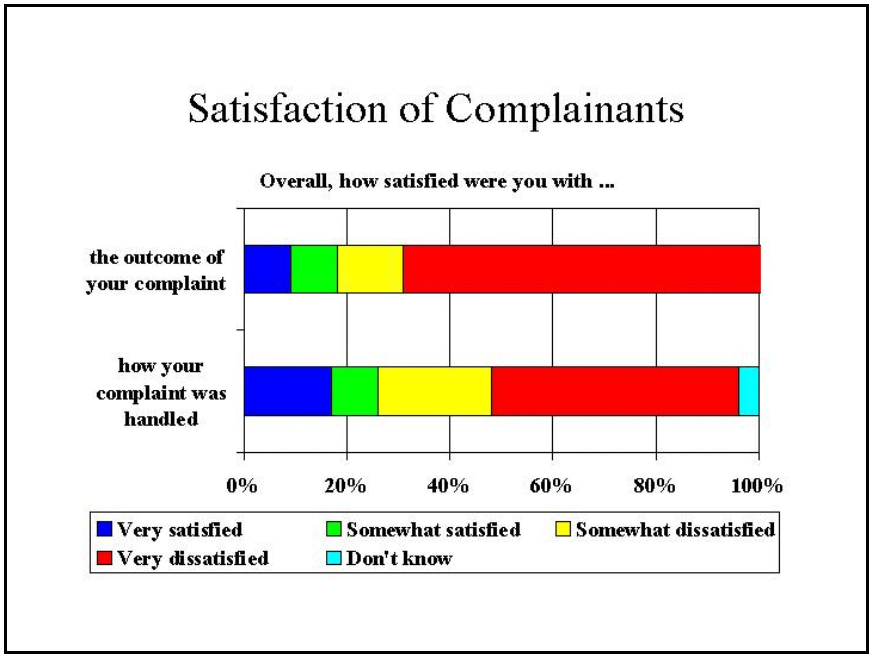

Figure 20

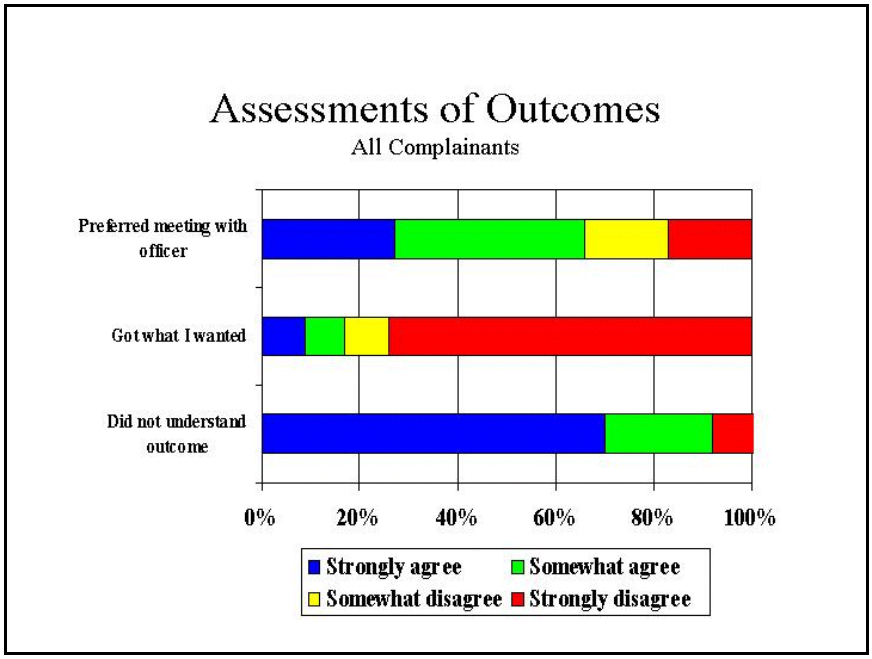

Figure 21

to adjudicate guilt, channels complainants' expectations and reshapes their goals to coincide more nearly with the adjudicative nature of the process. Nothing about this process–with the possible exception of intake–validates or affirms the complainant's concerns, unless the disposition is one of "sustained."

Most of the dissatisfied clients are mystified about the complaint outcome, including how the outcome was reached and the language in which it was communicated. All but a small fraction (9 percent) agreed with the statement, "I did not understand the outcome" of the complaint. Three quarters also wanted to know more about what happened to the officer(s) against whom they filed their complaints. Over half would have preferred to have a face-to-face meeting with the officer against whom the complaint was made.

We might reach several conclusions, at least tentatively:

- Complainants have not, for the most part, found it difficult to file complaints. None had difficulty locating or completing complaint forms, and it appears that the intake process worked smoothly for these complainants.
- The investigative and adjudicative stages of the complaint review process are not transparent for complainants. While OPS investigates the allegations and the CPRB reviews the investigation, many complainants believe that the investigation of their case was not thorough (even, in some cases, that no investigation has taken place).
- Complainants do not understand the recorded outcomes. Complainants whose complaints are not substantiated know only that the officer has been found not guilty.
- Complainants' objectives and expectations are not being met, for the most part, and it may be that they cannot be met (except, perhaps, through mediation).

Officers' Perceptions of Complaint Review

The low response rate to the survey of officers should make readers very cautious in interpreting the results, which may not be representative of the population from which the respondents have been drawn. Our meetings with the Albany Police Officers Union in March of 2001, which were held in order to explain the purposes of and procedures for the survey, revealed that many officers were skeptical of the CPRB's role, and seemed disinclined to act in any way that could be construed as acceptance of the CPRB, including participation in this survey. Those who have participated may have views that are different from those who have not participated. (None of the respondents, on whose reports we rely for information about the outcomes of their cases, was the subject of a sustained complaint.) Be that as it may, we think that it is important to report the views of those who have made them known to us.

Perceptions of Investigation

As Figure 22 shows, officers have favorable views of the investigation process. Four of the nine officers reported that they did not have face-to-face contact with OPS investigators, but rather communicated only through inter-departmental communication (IDC), and these respondents therefore were not prompted to answer most of the questions about the investigation. Those who did have face-to-face contact with OPS investigators

reported that investigators were concerned with the officers' rights and interested in finding out the truth, and that the investigation was thorough. All of the officers–whether or not they had face-to-face contact with OPS–believed that they had a chance to tell their side of the story, which is of course an important element of procedural fairness.

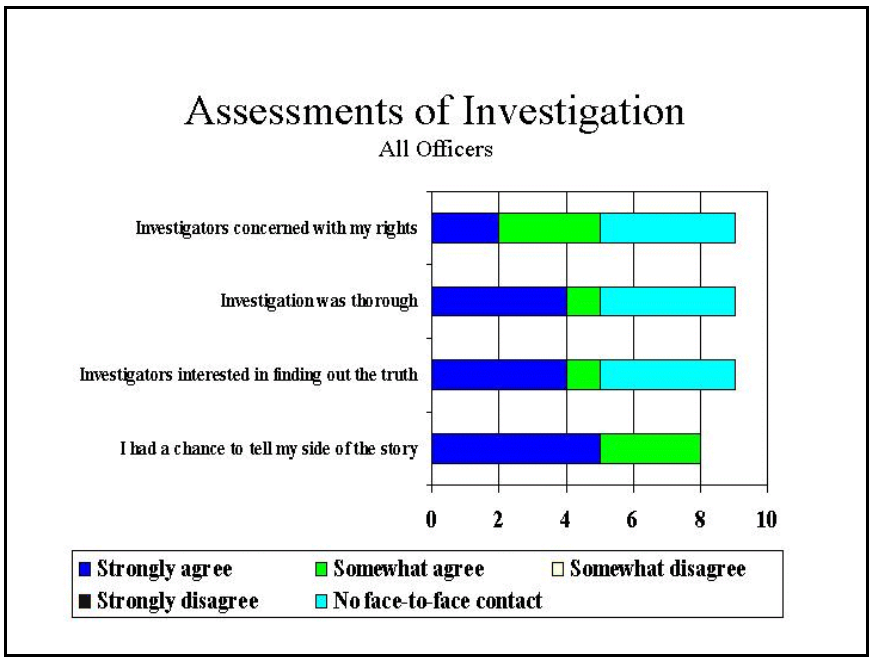

Figure 22

Satisfaction with Outcomes

As Figure 23 shows, officers' assessments of complaint review outcomes are diverse. Some officers believed that the process took too long to reach an outcome, while others did not. Three of the nine would have preferred to have a face-to-face meeting with the complainant, though five of the remaining six expressed a strong disinclination for such a meeting. Four of the officers believed that they did not receive an adequate explanation of the outcome, and five believed that they were not kept adequately informed during the review process. (Three of the officers reported that they did not receive notification of the outcome of APD's review; one reported that s/he did not receive notification from the CPRB.)

As Figure 24 shows, most officers were satisfied with both the outcome of APD's review and how the complaint was handled by APD, and as Figure 25 shows, most were also satisfied with the outcome of the CPRB's review. Five of the nine were very or somewhat satisfied with how the complaint was handled by the CPRB, while one was very dissatisfied, one did not know, and two did not respond.

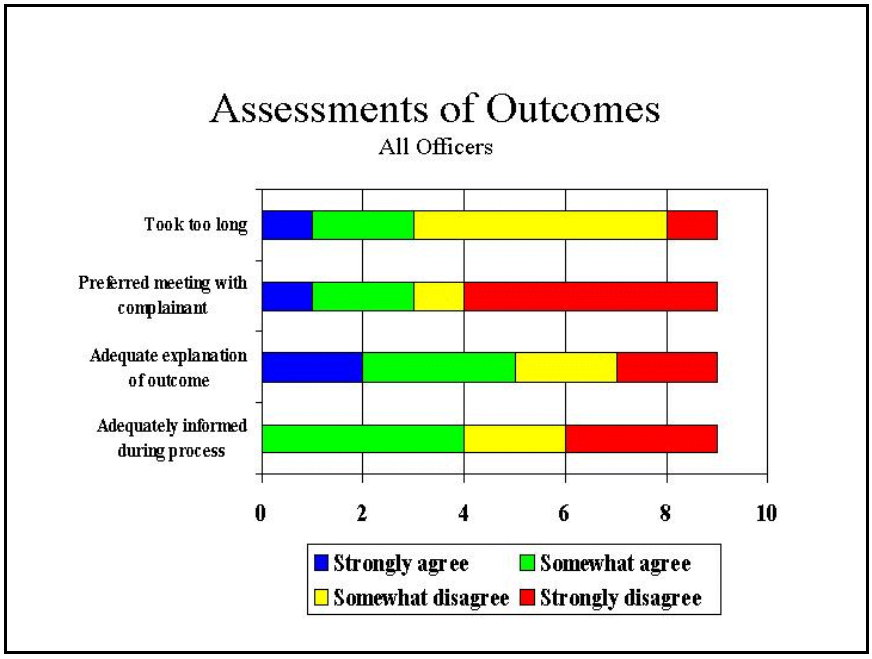

Figure 23

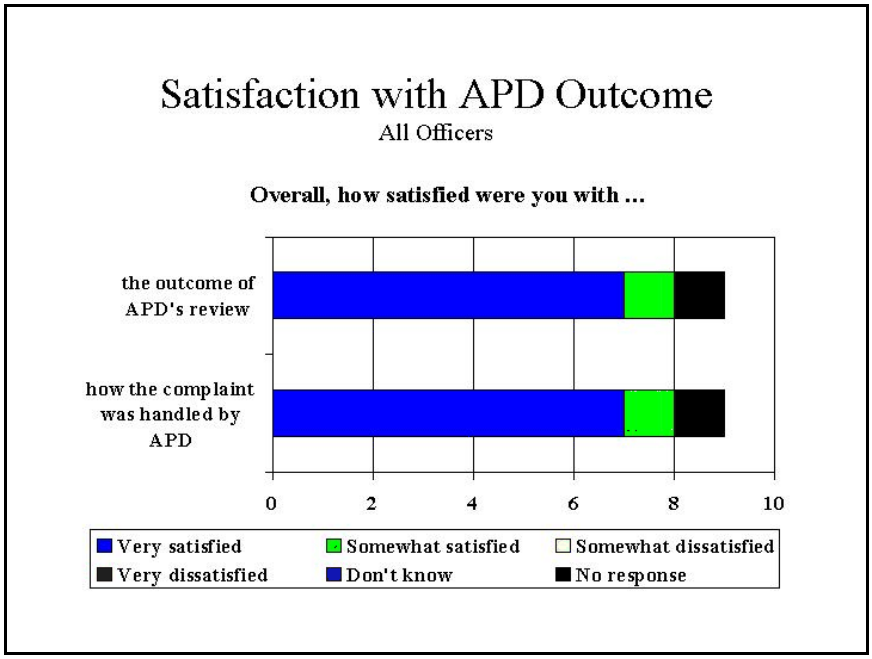

Figure 24

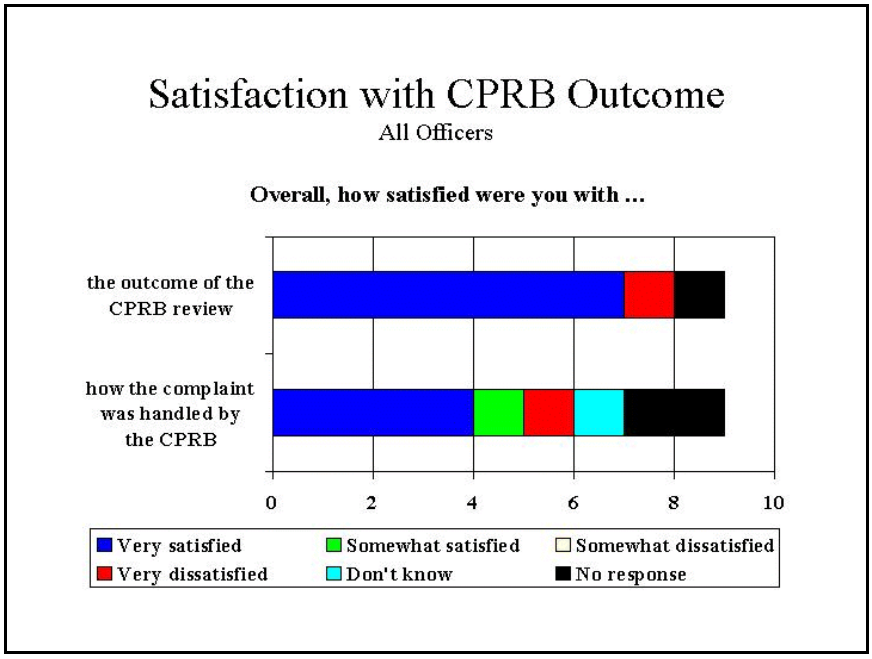

Figure 25

Conclusions

We conclude by addressing the set of questions that we raised at the outset, concerning the degree to which citizen oversight is meeting the expectations that proponents of citizen oversight might have for it.

Legitimacy of Complaint Review

We find evidence that citizen oversight has had some effect on the legitimacy of the complaint review process, particularly with respect to the thoroughness of investigations, and to a lesser extent, the severity of sanctions. The effect appears to be weak among all residents, for most of whom the review of complaints against the police is probably not a salient issue, but it is somewhat stronger among clients. Clients, compared with residents more generally, are less aware of citizen oversight and have less faith in complaint review; increases in awareness might be expected to have further and favorable implications for the legitimacy of complaint review in this important constituency.

Be that as it may, perceptions of the complaint review process among clients and others are affected still more–and for either the better or the worse–by more general attitudes toward the police, and these attitudes tend to be stable over time. Hence we can expect that improvements in the legitimacy of complaint review will be made in small increments over a long period of time.

Those among whom awareness is currently lowest–that is, lower-income and less-

educated clients–are those who typically take less interest in public affairs, are less attentive to information about government, and are unlikely to attend public meetings. Outreach to this constituency is very challenging.

Complaint-Making

Complaints of all kinds represent a fraction of the incidents about which people who have contact with the police are dissatisfied. Whether citizens' dissatisfaction stems from what they take (correctly or not) to be a form of misconduct or inadequate service, a complaint is made only 15 to 25 percent of the time. This leaves much room for improvement.

One might reasonably question whether an increase in complaints would constitute an improvement. We believe that the answer to this question is yes, but with the caveat that the increase would not necessarily be an increase in CPRB complaints, but rather an increase in the rate at which citizens who are displeased with the actions of police take action to contact an official and seek a resolution of their concerns. Many cases of dissatisfaction may be only a misunderstanding of what police officers must do, may do, or may not do–i.e., of police procedure, or the limits on police authority.[17] In such instances, the citizen may resolve the reason for his or her dissatisfaction by learning more about what can (and cannot) be expected of the police, and then the "complaint" is an occasion for civic education, and an opportunity to improve police-community relations. This task may often fall not to the CPRB or even OPS but to a police supervisor or even another government official (e.g., a city councillor). Taking such complaints seriously would also serve to underscore an agency's commitment to effective and responsive service.

Our findings suggest that some of the variation in clients' propensity to complain might be attributable to citizen oversight, albeit only at the margin, in that complaint-making is affected by clients' perceptions of the integrity of complaint review, and (hence indirectly) by clients' awareness of citizen oversight (which influences their perceptions of complaint review). Further, in cases of perceived misconduct, the rate of complaint-making has increased over the life of the CPRB, which may also reflect an impact of citizen oversight. But most of these complaints have not been directed to the CPRB. One quarter to one third of these complainants were satisfied with the outcome of their complaints–a figure, we would point out, that is larger than the proportion of CPRB complainants who are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

CPRB Complainants' Satisfaction

Many proponents of citizen oversight form their strongest expectations for positive impacts with respect to complainants' satisfaction with complaint review, yet it is there that

[17] All or most of the exonerated CPRB cases probably fit this description, and they comprise nearly one quarter of all CPRB complaints. Such incidents almost certainly comprise a larger proportion of all of the "complaints" that dissatisfied clients make, and a still larger proportion of the incidents that give rise to dissatisfaction that is not currently communicated to officials.

they may find their most profound disappointment. These expectations are implicitly or explicitly based on three assumptions: that many complaints are meritorious; that complainants are interested primarily in having police misconduct punished; and that police investigations of these complaints are not sufficiently probing. From these premises, it follows that citizen oversight of complaint investigations will result in a sharp increase in the proportion of complaints that are sustained, and also in an increase in the satisfaction of complainants.

But the documented experience in other jurisdictions shows that the rate at which citizen complaints are sustained has remained low even after the adoption of citizen oversight.[18] Why? Many complaints are not sustained, even after thorough and fair investigations, because they entail only an allegation, a denial, no testimony in support of the allegations from presumptively impartial witnesses, and no physical evidence.[19] Whenever and wherever police investigations of citizen complaints are thorough and fair in the absence of citizen oversight, the adoption of citizen oversight is unlikely to raise the rate at which complaints are sustained. The implication is that at least two (or all three) of the assumptions were untrue, at least in those jurisdictions. A process designed primarily to fix guilt and impose sanctions in cases in which guilt is difficult to establish–even when the officer *is* guilty and the investigation *is* thorough–is one that seems unlikely to yield outcomes that are satisfactory to anyone interested primarily in punishment.

Moreover, it appears that such a process is not well-adapted to most complainants' goals in filing complaints. A study of New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board found, as we have in Albany, that most complainants do not file complaints in order to have the officer punished, and the authors of that study concluded that the focus of civilian review on investigation and punishment was not compatible with the objectives of many complainants.[20] Complainants who file complaints with the objective of letting the department know about the incident find that the review process typically eventuates in one of four outcomes, only one of which–a sustained complaint–could be satisfactory from a complainant's point of view.[21] This is a *structural* shortcoming of citizen oversight, and it may be the reason that some advocates of citizen oversight have placed greater emphasis on the role of oversight bodies in reviewing police policy and making recommendations for changes in procedure and training, and less emphasis on the review of complaints. Writing

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[18] Samuel Walker, *Police Accountability: The Role of Citizen Oversight* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 2001), pp. 120-122.

[19] See Douglas W. Perez, *Common Sense about Complaint Review* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), p. 234; and Walker, *Police Accountability*, pp.. 139-140.

[20] Michele Sviridoff and Jerome E. McElroy, *Processing Complaints Against the Police in New York City: The Complainant's Perspective* (New York: Vera Institute, 1989), especially pp. 27-30.

[21] The disposition of the complaint may have less impact on the satisfaction of some complainants than it does on others. For example, one might expect that the appointment of a monitor would affect complainants' perceptions of the thoroughness of the investigation, and hence their assessments of the fairness of the process, independent of the disposition of the complaint; but with only 23 respondents, the data do not yet support an analysis of this potential impact.

about the policy review function performed by some citizen oversight agencies, Samuel Walker, a well-known proponent of citizen oversight, recently observed that "the shortcomings of many citizen review agencies to date result from a lack of vision and an excessively narrow focus on symptoms–individual complaints–rather than on the underlying problems."[22]

Even so, citizen review of complaints may serve as an important mechanism of accountability, given many citizens'–and especially clients'–skepticism about the integrity of the complaint review process when citizens do not play a role. The implication is that an assessment of citizen oversight should not turn primarily on the level of satisfaction among complainants. Residents' and clients' assessments of the legitimacy of the complaint review process are at least as important as complainant satisfaction in assessing the performance of citizen oversight.

Police Performance

The performance of the police, both in terms of professionalism or craftsmanship (i.e., the practitioner's standard) and in terms of citizens' assessments (the "consumer" standard), is perhaps the least proximate outcome of citizen oversight. The professional or craftsmanship standard concerns officers' overt behavior in their encounters with citizens. Many proponents of citizen oversight, assuming that the rates at which complaints are sustained will increase, may expect that officers will be deterred from misconduct by the greater threat of sanction that citizen oversight establishes. This is a long causal chain, and as we have discussed, the assumption about sustain rates is questionable. It is also possible, however, that complaint review could be part of a professional development process, providing feedback to officers about their performance, both from a professional perspective (that of peers in OPS and of police executives) and the citizen perspective (that of complainants). In either case, the outcome in question is the behavior of police officers. Citizens' assessments are one step further removed still, and they are shaped not only by what police do (or fail to do) but also by citizens' expectations, prior attitudes toward the police, and other factors. Thus it is probably not possible to estimate the impact of citizen oversight on police performance (using either standard), which is affected by a host of factors other than citizen oversight, and changes over time could be due to many other developments or events that are unrelated to citizen oversight.

We can measure only citizens' assessments through surveys of citizens. With such measures we can examine trends and other patterns, and we believe that such information is useful for both police managers and the citizenry. We now know that most citizens are satisfied with the services they receive from the Albany police. This holds both for people whose police services include that provided in the context of an individual contact with the police and for people whose police service is only that provided to an entire neighborhood

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[22] Samuel Walker, "New Directions in Citizen Oversight: The Auditor Approach to Handling Citizen Complaints," in Tara O'Connor Shelley and Anne C. Grant (eds.), *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems, Critical Issues and Making POP Work* (Washington: Police Executive Research Forum, 1998), p. 171.

(e.g., in the form of police patrol). We also know that a substantial fraction of the population–and about two thirds to three quarters of African-Americans–regard some form of police misconduct as a problem in their neighborhood. Yet very small fractions of clients–1 to 2 percent–are dissatisfied with their treatment due to what they experienced as verbal or physical abuse by police. Furthermore, the disparity between African-Americans' and whites' perceptions of police misconduct is not matched by a corresponding–or any–disparity in clients' assessments of individual contacts with the police. One (partial) explanation for these contrasting patterns of perceptions and subjective experiences is that individual incidents can have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on perceptions. Where police more frequently have occasion to use their authority, residents are likely to see or hear about an incident in which police misuse–or appear to misuse–their authority. Even if such incidents are not typical of police-citizen encounters, they may have enduring impacts on residents' perceptions of the police.

We also have some clues about how the level of satisfaction might be raised. First, as we discussed in *Police Services in Albany: Citizens' Views*, residents who perceive higher levels of social disorder in their neighborhoods–public drinking, drug dealing, groups hanging out, disruption around schools–are less satisfied with the police, other things being equal. We infer that residents hold the police at least partly responsible for ameliorating these "quality-of-life" conditions, and thus that police efforts to address these problems would be responsive to public priorities and well-received as high-quality police service by residents. Second, as we discussed above, clients are more satisfied with their treatment by police when the police are polite and fair, and when they explain their actions. As other research has shown, the respect and impartiality with which people are treated affect their assessments of the encounter independent of the outcome, e.g., even when they are arrested or ticketed.[23] It might also serve to dispel mistaken impressions of police motives (e.g., for stops).[24]

Any organization must measure that which it values, for it will surely come to value whatever it measures. Police organizations have for decades measured enforcement outputs–arrests, citations–and while officers grumble about supervisory or administrative pressure for "numbers," and police of all ranks disdain "bean counters," these readily quantifiable outputs are counted and valued. The satisfaction of police clients and other stakeholders (or customers) is more difficult and costly to measure (especially to measure systematically), but many police agencies (including APD) have begun to do so. The degree to which such information is integrated into the administration and management of police departments will probably affect the degree to which citizens' assessments are valued by department members. Citizen oversight can reinforce such developments.

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[23] Tom R. Tyler and Robert Folger, "Distributional and Procedural Aspects of Satisfaction with Citizen-Police Encounters," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 1 (1980): 281-292.

[24] Vanessa Stone and Nick Pettigrew, *The Views of the Public on Stops and Searches*, Police Research Series, Paper 129 (London: Home Office, 2000).

Appendix:
Survey Methodology

Client Survey

We sample on a biweekly basis from several subpopulations of clients, including those who called for police service (hereafter calls for service), those who were arrested (arrestees), and those who were field interviewed by police (field interviewees). We sample disproportionately from among those subpopulations –arrestees and field interviewees–who are presumptively more likely to be dissatisfied with their contact with the police; to estimate characteristics for the client population as a whole, respondents are statistically weighted to reflect their probabilities of sample selection, so that we can form estimates of the entire client population.[25]

Most interviews are conducted by phone; when we learn that a would-be respondent is unavailable by phone because s/he is incarcerated in the Albany County Correctional Facility, we make arrangements to contact the respondent there and conduct the interview in person. The interview concentrates mainly on clients' evaluations of their contact with the police, and on somewhat more general attitudes and experiences with the police, including the complaint review system. Because we interview clients within four to eight weeks of their contacts with police, their responses are subject to a minimum of error or distortion due to their recall of the events.

Through October 15, 2002, we conducted interviews with 906 clients, including 501 calls for service, 342 arrestees, and 63 field interviewees. These 906 clients represent 47.4 percent of the clients who we were able to contact, as the others declined to participate. The completion rate varied some across subsamples: 49.1 percent among calls for service; 48.4 percent among arrestees; and 34.1 percent among field interviewees. An additional 3,004 phone numbers drawn for the sample proved to be out of service or otherwise ineligible at the time of our calls (29.4 percent of the calls for service, 38.2 percent of the arrestees, and 46.1 percent of the field interviewees), and our efforts to reach an additional 3,399 clients were unsuccessful (39.9 percent of the calls for service, 41.4 percent of the arrestees, and 41.5 percent of the field interviewees). Analysis of potential sampling and non-response biases is in progress, but it appears safe to presume that the sample underrepresents the more residentially transient clients.

Complainant Survey

Our data collection plan provides for surveying *all* complainants, so long as they consent to the interview, of course, as soon after the final disposition of their complaints as we can contact them and make arrangements for the interview. As we do for the client

[25] The set of cases from which we sample is smaller than the entire population, for practical reasons. Calls for service are eligible for sampling only if the record includes a name (and some that are sampled are later excluded as ineligible because the record does not contain an individual's name); also, we exclude alarms and 911 hang-up calls. Arrestees and field interviewees are eligible for sampling only if the record includes a phone number.

survey, we provide for interviewing complainants in person at the Albany County Correctional Facility as needed. Our findings about complainants are subject to no sampling error, and while they may be subject to some nonresponse bias, we cannot detect it.

Complainants who have not completed the interview–either because they declined or because we were unable to reach them (no forwarding address or phone numbers have been available)–are very similar to those who have completed the interview, at least in terms of characteristics about which we have information. Seventy-two percent of the complainants, 70 percent of the respondents, and two thirds of the non-respondents are male. Sixty-four percent of the complaints concern either officer conduct or call handling; 60 percent of the respondents' complaints, and two thirds of the non-respondents' complaints, also fall into one of these categories. Nineteen percent of the complaints involve misuse of force; 18 percent of the respondents' complaints and one fifth of the non-respondents' complaints concern the misuse of force. Thirteen percent of the complaints are sustained; 16 percent of the respondents' complaints, and 14 percent of the non-respondents' complaints, are sustained. Information about race is incomplete, as it is a field on the complaint form that complainants may or may not complete, and only about half of complainants do so. Three fifths of the respondents self-identify as black or African-American.

Officer Survey

This survey parallels the complainant survey in two respects: the survey includes all officers against whom complaints are filed, not a sample; and the survey content taps many of the same perceptual dimensions (using language as nearly identical as possible). The officer survey differs from the complainant survey in that it takes the form of a self-completed questionnaire, rather than a phone interview, and it is anonymous, with completed questionnaires returned directly to us by mail. Packets containing a questionnaire and a stamped, addressed envelope for the return of the completed questionnaires are delivered to OPS; OPS delivers packets to officers through the Albany Police Officers Union. The survey was initiated in November, 2001, and it is on-going.

Resident Survey

Between July and October of 2001 , we surveyed a sample of 962 Albany residents, 900 of whom completed the entire interview schedule. Call this the "wave 1" survey. At the conclusion of the interview, we asked the respondents to provide a (first) name by which we could ask for them in the future; 830 of the 900 respondents obliged us with a name. We attempted to contact all of these 830 respondents for a second interview between August and December of 2002. We completed a second interview with 353 respondents, and we also completed interviews with an additional 9 respondents who were not interviewed in 2001.

Of the 830 wave 1 respondents, we were able to contact 470 (56.6 percent) in 2002, as 188 of the phone numbers were then out of service, and we were unable to contact 172 respondents after as many as 20 call-backs. The 353 who agreed to the interview represent 75.1 percent of the 470 respondents contacted.

Those who completed a second interview differ in some potentially important respects from the wave 1 respondents who did not participate in wave 2. Wave 1 respondents who were, at the time of that interview, "definitely" going to move out of the city were much less likely to be contacted for wave 2, as 66 percent of their numbers were out of service, and so too were 40 percent of the numbers of the wave 1 respondents who were "probably" going to move; only 16 percent of the former, and 30 percent of the latter, completed a wave 2 interview. Relatedly, 40 percent of the wave 1 renters, compared with 12 percent of the wave 1 homeowners, had numbers that were out of service by wave 2.

Wave 1 respondents who were lower-income were more difficult to reach for wave 2, and they were also more likely to decline to participate when they were contacted. So too were African-American respondents, 34 percent of whose phone numbers were out of service by wave 2, and among whom the rate of completion was 66 percent. Inasmuch as satisfaction with the police is associated with all of these factors, the wave 2 respondents overrepresent the more satisfied of the wave 1 respondents: 47 percent of the very satisfied wave 1 respondents completed a wave 2 interview, along with 39 percent of the somewhat satisfied, 43 percent of the somewhat dissatisfied, and only 26 percent of the very dissatisfied.

In view of this pattern of response rates, we attempted to supplement the wave 1 respondents with others who had not been previously interviewed, within the limits of survey resources. Thus we generated lists of randomly generated phone numbers, oversampling telephone exchanges that tend to be found in patrol zones that are disproportionately transient, lower-income, and African-American in composition. This effort yielded only 9 interviews before survey resources were exhausted.