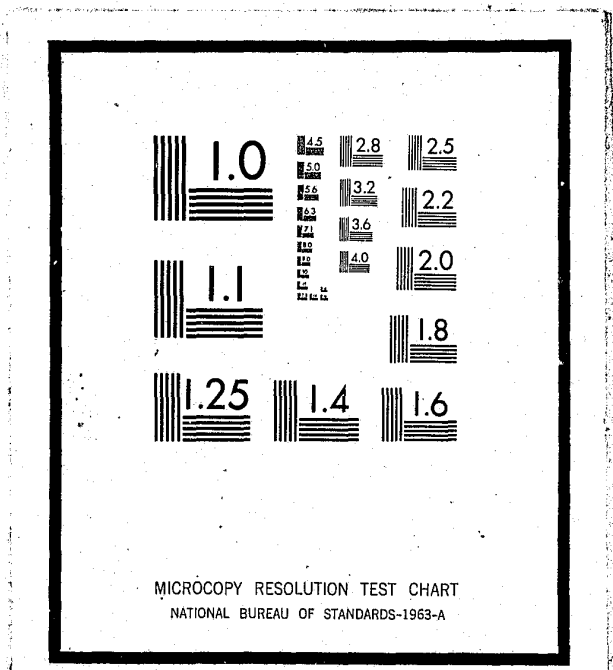


# NCJRS

This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531

Date filmed

8/27/75

## DRUNKENNESS IN POLICE-CITIZEN ENCOUNTERS\*

Richard J. Lundman  
James C. Fox  
Richard E. Sykes  
John P. Clark

A Project Conducted by Observational Research  
University of Minnesota

\*This research was supported by a grant from the United States Public Health Service, National Institute of Mental Health, Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency. Grant No. RO1 MH17917-02. "Quantitative Study of Police Encounters", Richard E. Sykes, Principal Investigator, John P. Clark, Co-Principal Investigator.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 21st Annual Meeting of The Society for the Study of Social Problems, Denver, Colorado, August, 1971.

014373  
SLSMIO

## ABSTRACT

### Drunkenness in Police-Citizen Encounters

This paper examines the incidence and effects of the presence of drunken and sober citizens in encounters with police officers in a large midwestern city. Three hundred encounters were gathered by participant observers riding in randomly selected police patrol cars using a modified recording device (Minnesota Interaction Data Coding and Reduction System) designed to quantitatively record the verbal and nonverbal interaction processes between police officers and citizens. In addition, the nature of the situation that brought the citizens and officers together as well as the demographic characteristics of the citizen actors were recorded with this instrumentation.

It was found that nearly 16% of the encounters contained at least one citizen who was drunk. When these drunk encounters were compared to encounters in which all citizens present were sober, it was found that significantly more drunk encounters involved some type of interpersonal dispute, using the *chi square* test of statistical significance. When drunk and sober encounters were compared in terms of the ecological space of the city in which they occurred, situational space and demographic characteristics of the citizens, no significant differences were found. Using analysis of variance to compare the nature of the communicative acts in drunk and sober encounters revealed that both citizens and officers were significantly more disrespectful or dismienting in drunk encounters. Further, drunk encounters were found to contain significantly more potential or actual acts of hostility, physical action and violence than sober encounters. The data was then analyzed using multiple correlation techniques to determine the effects of the communicative acts on seriousness of police dispositions in drunk encounters. This revealed that the frequency of officer dismientance and potential or actual acts of hostility, physical action and violence were positively correlated with seriousness of police disposition. This was true even when the frequency of the citizen's dismientance was partialled out. These variables were then applied to regression analysis and it was found that they accounted for the greatest percentage of explained variance in police disposition.

It was concluded that the previous finding by I. Pilliavan and S. Brian, A. Reiss and D. Black in relation to police disposition and a citizen's disrespect should be re-examined to account for the police officer's disrespectful and potential or actual acts of hostility, physical action, and violence.

This paper is concerned with the effects of the presence of drunken citizens in police-citizen encounters. In 1969 slightly over 20% of all F.B.I. reported arrests were for the offense of drunkenness. If alcohol related offenses are also considered (i.e., liquor law violations, driving while intoxicated, disorderly conduct, vagrancy), then 46% of the more than five million arrests in 1969 were alcohol related.<sup>1</sup> Such statistics, however, may overestimate or underestimate the importance of drinking and drunkenness in police work since less than 10% of all police-citizen encounters result in arrest.<sup>2</sup> Further, they reveal little of the effects of drunkenness in police-citizen encounters. This paper attempts to more clearly establish the relative importance and effects of drunkenness in police-citizen encounters.

## METHOD

The findings reported in this paper are derived from participant observation of police-citizen encounters in a large midwestern city of about one half million people in a SAMA of approximately two million. Eight carefully trained participant-as-observers rode for fifteen months in randomly selected police patrol cars.<sup>3</sup> The sample of patrol cars was a stratified random time sample weighting weekends and evenings more heavily. The observers quantitatively recorded selected aspects of these encounters using specially designed field encoding equipment known as MIDCARS (an acronym for Minnesota Interaction Data Coding and Reduction System). The selected aspects of the encounters recorded included, briefly, the nature of the problem which brought the officers and citizens together, quantitative and processual descriptions of the interaction between officers and citizens using categories grounded in observation of police patrol activities and influenced by the perspectives of Robert Bales (1950) and Erving Goffman (1961), the situational police dispositions of these encounters, and descriptions of the citizen actors involved in them. The observers recorded these data almost simultaneously with the progression of the interaction using the MIDCARS equipment.

Under present design the equipment is composed of a portable, battery operated tape recorder enclosed in a small container covered by a modified clipboard. A hand entry unit consisting of a numbered keyboard (units 0-9, E, S) is mounted in and flush with the surface of the clipboard, while all other components of the system are hidden from view. Codes or categories describing the nature of the problem, interaction, etc., are electronically stored on cassette tape as they occur by observers using the numbered keyboard. No voice recording is involved. These data are subsequently directly transferred onto a conventional computer tape where they are available for error correction and data analysis. With MIDCARS, time consuming and error producing procedures of

traditional data transfer operations are almost totally eliminated or reduced to controllable technological errors. Another advantage of the system is its unique ability to allow the observer to record a code or category as often as humanly possible: one code can be entered every 1/10 of a second. The time difference between ongoing processes and the selected aspects of those processes recorded was appreciably reduced in this study. Thus, the observer is able to enter data via the keyboard with little or no loss of visual contact from the social reality being observed. Using this equipment, approximately 3,688 hours of observations were completed and 2,750 police-citizen encounters observed.<sup>4</sup>

The particular sample upon which this study is based, however, was not drawn from the total data base. Because of programming difficulties and very recent completion of data collection, we drew roughly a 17% random sample of observation periods completed September 1, 1970 and July 15, 1971. This resulted in the creation of a data base consisting of three hundred police-citizen encounters.<sup>5</sup> This data base contains all of the information in the total data base with one important exception: the processual nature of the interaction between officers and citizens was not available for stochastic process analysis.<sup>6</sup> This paper, then, considers 300 of the 2,750 encounters observed.

## RESULTS

The remainder of this paper will be concerned with describing and, where possible, accounting for differences between encounters in which at least one citizen is drunk and encounters where all citizens are sober. More specifically, we will consider drunk and sober encounters in terms of: 1) their relative importance or incidence; 2) their more or less stable features; 3) the emergent properties of encounters; i.e., communicative acts between police officers and citizens; and, 4) their situational police dispositions.

### 1) *The Incidence of Drunk Encounters*

As was noted earlier, arrest statistics do not provide valid estimates of the incidence of drunkenness in police-citizen encounters. Valid estimates must be based upon the comparison of drunk encounters with the total volume of encounters in any particular police jurisdiction. Following this procedure, Webster (1968: 140) found that drunk and drunk driving incidents consumed 3.7% of all police time in the western city he studied. Wilson (1968: 18) similarly discovered that 2.5% of 312 radio calls were directly related to drunkenness. More recently, Petersen (1971: 2) observed that drunkenness was at issue in 82 or 16.4% of the 499 field incidents he observed in a border state city.

In our own study, the participant-as-observer identified citizens who were drunk in terms of the citizen's breath, walk, and speech. Using these indicators, 91 or 17.6% of the 517

citizens directly involved in the 300 encounters upon which this paper is based were drunk. These drunk citizens were distributed such that 47 or 15.7% of the 300 encounters analyzed contained at least one drunk citizen. The remaining 253 or 84.3% of the 300 encounters contained no drunk citizens.

2) *Stable Features of Drunk and Sober Encounters:*

The encounters reported in this paper occurred in situations with both stable or non-emergent properties and interactional or emergent properties. Here we are concerned with those more or less stable properties which included: the nature of the problems which brought police officers and citizens together, the ecological space of the city, the public, semi-public, and private places or situational space where the encounters occurred, and the demographic characteristics of the citizens involved. When these properties are compared in drunk and sober encounters, interesting differences are observed.

Statistically significant differences ( $p < .01$ ) exist when the problems which brought police officers and citizens together were examined in drunk and sober encounters (See Table 1). Drunk citizens were underrepresented in crimes against property and requests for service from the police. They were, however, overrepresented in crimes against persons and in violations of public and private decorum (e.g., family disputes and violations of norms of interpersonal behavior). Over 53% of drunk encounters involved some type of interpersonal dispute as compared to 26% of all sober encounters.

When drunk and sober encounters were examined in terms of the ecological space in the city studied, no significant differences were found. Drunk and sober encounters occurred nearly equally in all six areas or police precincts of the city. In addition, when drunk and sober encounters were examined according to situational space, no differences were found. Thus, over half of both drunk and sober encounters took place in public places, with the remaining encounters divided nearly equally between semi-public and private places.

At the end of each encounter, the sex, color, class and age of the citizen actors involved were recorded. When drunk and sober citizens were compared with one another in terms of these characteristics and with the characteristics of the city studied, only small differences emerge (See Table 2). Thus, in a city where 45% of the citizens were male, 66% of sober citizens encountered and 74% of drunk citizens were male. When color was examined, again it was found that only slight differences existed between drunk and sober citizens.

Occupationally, there was a tendency for white collar citizens to be underrepresented in drunk encounters while blue collar and unemployed citizens were slightly overrepresented in drunk encounters. In terms of age, drunk and sober encounters contained nearly equal age distributions, although there was a tendency for young adults and senior citizens to be underrepresented in drunk encounters, while adults were overrepresented in drunk encounters.

In summary, then, of the several stable or non-emergent properties of police-citizen encounters only the type of

TABLE 1

Per Cent of Drunk and Sober Encounters According to the Type of Problem which Brought Officers and Citizens Together

|       | Type of Problem        |                      |  |                            |                |                    |                    | Row Total      |
|-------|------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
|       | Crime Against Property | Crime Against Person | Violation of Public or Private Decorum | Request for Police Service | Moving Vehicle | Non-Moving Vehicle | Other <sup>a</sup> |                |
| Drunk | (5)<br>11.6            | (4)<br>8.5           | (21)<br>44.7                           | (0)<br>0.0                 | (12)<br>25.5   | (1)<br>2.1         | (4)<br>10.3        | (47)<br>100.0  |
| Sober | (40)<br>15.8           | (7)<br>2.8           | (60)<br>23.7                           | (41)<br>16.2               | (65)<br>25.7   | (5)<br>2.0         | (35)<br>13.8       | (253)<br>100.0 |
| Total | (45)                   | (11)                 | (81)                                   | (41)                       | (77)           | (6)                | (39)               | (300)          |

$X^2 = 19.21, df = 6, p < .01$

<sup>a</sup> Includes radio calls to take a report or calls where problem is not specified.

TABLE 2

Per Cent of Drunk and Sober Citizens with the Population of the City Studied According to the Percentage Distribution of Selected Characteristics in 1970.

|              | Percentage of Sober Citizens | Percentage of Drunk Citizens | 1970 Population |
|--------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Sex          |                              |                              |                 |
| Male         | 66                           | 73                           | 45              |
| Female       | 34                           | 27                           | 55              |
| Total        | 100.0<br>(n=418)*            | 100.0<br>(n=91)              | 100.0<br>(N=**) |
| Color        |                              |                              |                 |
| Black        | 13                           | 06                           | 04              |
| Indian       | 04                           | 04                           | 01              |
| White        | 81                           | 87                           | 94              |
| Other        | 02                           | 03                           | 01              |
| Total        | 100.0<br>(n=421)*            | 100.0<br>(n=91)              | 100.0<br>(N=**) |
| Occupation   |                              |                              |                 |
| White Collar | 31                           | 22                           | ***             |
| Blue Collar  | 63                           | 69                           |                 |
| Unemployed   | 06                           | 08                           |                 |
| Total        | 100.0<br>(n=422)*            | 100.0<br>(n=91)              | 100.0<br>(N=**) |
| Age          |                              |                              |                 |
| Child        | 06                           | 06                           | ***             |
| Teen         | 06                           | 06                           |                 |
| Young Adult  | 35                           | 06                           |                 |
| Adult        | 41                           | 25                           |                 |
| Senior       | 06                           | 59                           |                 |
| Total        | 100.0<br>(n=422)*            | 100.0<br>(n=91)              | 100.0<br>(N=**) |

\* The total number of sober citizens was 426. The differences among "n's" indicate situations where the observer was uncertain of how to classify a citizen.

\*\* The Population of the city studied exceeds 400,000 according to the 1970 census.

\*\*\* The 1970 census data on the occupational and age compositions of the city studied were not readily available. And, because of significant changes since 1960, we felt use of that data would be inappropriate.

problem which brought police officers and citizens together significantly discriminated encounters involving only sober citizens from those in which at least one citizen was drunk.

### 3) Emergent Features of Drunk and Sober Encounters

Communicative acts between police officers and citizens in drunk encounters differed, often significantly, from the communicative acts between police officers and citizens in sober encounters. Before turning to these differences, however, it is first necessary to briefly describe portions of the complex code used to quantify these acts.<sup>7</sup> With this description in hand, we will then discuss the differences between drunk and sober encounters (as summarized in Tables 3a, 3b, and 3c).

Certain communicative acts (verbal and non-verbal) of either an officer or citizen occurring during an encounter were recorded using the MIDCARS equipment in terms of the various categories which made up the overall interaction code. One set of categories described the degree of "deference", "civility", or "dismienance" of each verbal statement made (this was known as the DCD category set, for deference, civility, dismienance). The DCD category set describes the police and citizen interaction by reference to polite, middle class interaction and deviation, in four ways, from it. When the statements made by officers and/or citizens were non-hostile, non-emotional, impersonal, and similar in manner and form to polite, middle-class interaction, they were coded as civil. When these verbal statements indicated more than usual cooperation, respect, or courtesy, or, when they contained attempts at subservience, flattery, or "buttering-up" they were coded, respectively, as being somewhat deferent or very deferent. Somewhat dismiening and very dismiening codes were used, respectively, when statements indicated non-aggressive, non-compliance with high emotional load, and, when they involved name calling, ridiculing, and personal vituperation. These five codes made up the DCD category set.

A second set of categories, called the action category set, signified certain select behaviors which *might* occur during an encounter. Thus, whenever a statement was intended to indicate humoring or acceptance of a discredited face, "Act 83" was recorded. Act 82 was recorded whenever an officer or citizen indicated sympathy or empathy, while Act 84 was recorded whenever officers or citizens engaged in friendly humor or laughter. Acts 85 through 90 indicated, respectively, that a police officer or citizen had raised his voice, that anger or hostility had been expressed, that a verbal threat to normal freedom had been made, that a threat of physical attack had been made, that territorial restraint had been initiated, and, that one actor had physically restrained another. Acts 91 and 92 were recorded when a physical conflict was taking place, while Acts 93 through 96 indicated, respectively, that a weapon not a gun had been made ready for use (e.g., a beer bottle or nightstick), that such a weapon had been used, that a

gun had been made ready for use, and finally, that a gun had been fired. These fifteen codes made up the action category set.

It is in terms of these two category sets that comparison of interaction in drunk and sober encounters was made. Several of the differences discovered were significant and all of the findings are summarized in Tables 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Citizen DCD statements in drunk encounters differed significantly ( $p < .01$ ) from citizen DCD statements in sober encounters only in the somewhat dismiening and very dismiening categories. Interaction in drunk encounters was more dismiening than interaction in sober encounters (See Table 3a). Deferent interaction was very infrequent in both drunk and sober encounters and no significant differences were found. Civil interaction was the most frequent type of interaction in all encounters and no significant differences were found between drunk and sober encounters.

When officers DCD communicative acts were examined, we found that dismiening statements were significantly more frequent ( $p < .01$ ) in drunk encounters (See Table 3b). For officers, however, the difference was significant only with respect to the somewhat dismiening category of the DCD category set. All of the other DCD categories revealed no significant differences between drunk and sober encounters and civil statements were again the most frequent type of interaction in both drunk and sober encounters.

Analysis of the action category set in drunk and sober encounters revealed that drunk encounters contained significantly more potential and actual acts of hostility, physical action, and violence (i.e., Acts 85 through 90, and, Acts 91 through 96) than sober encounters (See Table 3c). Acts 85 through 90, for example, occurred at least once in 57% of drunk encounters but only in 15% of sober encounters ( $p < .001$ ). Act 83, and, Acts 82 and 84, on the other hand, were no more frequent in drunk or sober encounters.

Finally, a computed variable was included in Table 3C labeled "steps." Steps were defined as the total number of citizen and officer DCD and action coded communicative acts occurring during an encounter. Given this definition, drunk encounters were significantly longer (i.e., contained more steps;  $p < .01$ ) than sober encounters.

### 4) Situational Police Dispositions of Drunk and Sober Encounters

At the completion of each encounter, the situational police disposition of the encounter was recorded. In traffic stop encounters, recorded situational police dispositions included outright release, release with a verbal warning, release with a ticket, and arrest for a misdemeanor. In all other types of encounters, recorded situational police dispositions included no disposition (i.e., police could not or would not deal with the problem), report taking, the provision of service or the calling of other services, confiscation of property, the

TABLE 3a

Analysis of Variance: Citizen Interaction  
In Drunk and Sober Encounters

| Variable            |         | Analysis of Variance |      |             | F         |
|---------------------|---------|----------------------|------|-------------|-----------|
|                     |         | Sum of Squares       | D.F. | Mean Square |           |
| Very Deferent       | Between | .0006                | 1    | .0006       | .0003     |
|                     | Within  | 550.9960             | 298  | 1.8490      |           |
| Somewhat Deferent   | Between | 92.6502              | 1    | 92.6502     | .5405     |
|                     | Within  | 51082.9565           | 298  | 171.4193    |           |
| Civil               | Between | 8.4700               | 1    | 8.4700      | .0921     |
|                     | Within  | 27399.9167           | 298  | 91.9460     |           |
| Somewhat Dismiening | Between | 638.4175             | 1    | 638.4175    | 11.1098** |
|                     | Within  | 17124.3125           | 298  | 57.4641     |           |
| Very Dismiening     | Between | 42.6734              | 1    | 42.6734     | 18.5903** |
|                     | Within  | 684.0466             | 298  | 2.2955      |           |

\*\* Statistically significant at  $p < .01$

TABLE 3b

Analysis of Variance: Office DCD Interaction  
in Drunk and Sober Encounters

| Variable            |         | Analysis of Variance |      |             | F         |
|---------------------|---------|----------------------|------|-------------|-----------|
|                     |         | Sum of Squares       | D.F. | Mean Square |           |
| Very Deferent       | Between | .1115                | 1    | .1115       | .1762     |
|                     | Within  | 188.4752             | 298  | .6325       |           |
| Somewhat Deferent   | Between | 4.6414               | 1    | 4.6414      | .0317     |
|                     | Within  | 43598.5952           | 298  | 146.3040    |           |
| Civil               | Between | 54.5073              | 1    | 54.5073     | .5454     |
|                     | Within  | 29781.6627           | 298  | 99.9385     |           |
| Somewhat Dismiening | Between | 1050.4375            | 1    | 1050.4375   | 18.2967** |
|                     | Within  | 17108.5624           | 298  | 57.4113     |           |
| Very Dismiening     | Between | 1.6032               | 1    | 1.6032      | .3535     |
|                     | Within  | 1351.5268            | 298  | 4.5353      |           |

\*\* Statistically significant at  $p < .01$

**TABLE 3c**  
Analysis of Variance: Action Category Set in Drunk and Sober Encounters

| Variables                   |         | Analysis of Variance |      |             | F          |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------------------|------|-------------|------------|
|                             |         | Sum of Squares       | D.F. | Mean Square |            |
| Act 83                      | Between | .1289                | 1    | .1289       | .4180      |
|                             | Within  | 91.9077              | 298  | .3084       |            |
| Act 82 & 84                 | Between | 29.1488              | 1    | 29.1488     | .3113      |
|                             | Within  | 27893.8919           | 298  | 93.6204     |            |
| Acts 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90 | Between | 63.1000              | 1    | 63.1000     | 52.5178*** |
|                             | Within  | 358.0466             | 298  | 1.2015      |            |
| Acts 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96 | Between | .3143                | 1    | .3143       | 5.0864*    |
|                             | Within  | 18.4157              | 298  | .0618       |            |
| Steps                       | Between | 984312.5010          | 1    | 984312.5010 | 10.7443**  |
|                             | Within  | 27300424.4157        | 298  | 91612.1625  |            |

- \* statistically significant at  $p < .05$
- \*\* statistically significant at  $p < .01$
- \*\*\* statistically significant at  $p < .001$

restoration of decorum short of arrest, and misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, and felony arrest. With some exceptions, drunk encounters had more "serious" situational police dispositions than sober encounters.<sup>8</sup> Thus, 50% (n=12) of drunk drivers were ticketed and 25% were arrested and charged with a misdemeanor while 29% (n=65) of sober drivers were ticketed and only 4.6% were arrested. Similarly, 20% (n=35) of non-traffic drunk encounters ended in a misdemeanor arrest as compared to 2% (n=188) of sober encounters.

Given the difference in the situational police dispositions of drunk and sober encounters, multiple correlation and regression techniques were then applied to drunk encounters where the violator was present. Column (1) of Table 4a presents zero-order correlation coefficients between selected portions of citizen DCD coded statements and seriousness of police disposition. It was found that civil statements by citizens were weakly and inversely correlated with police disposition while dismissing citizen statements were weakly and positively correlated with police disposition. When the frequencies of officer dismissal were partialled out (See Columns (2) and (3) of Table 4a), however, the correlations between citizen dismissal and police disposition changed from positive to negative.

When the zero-order correlations between selected portions of officer DCD coded statements and police dispositions were examined, it was found that civil statements were weakly and inversely correlated with outcome while dismissing statements were moderately and positively correlated with outcome (See Column (1) of Table 4b). When the frequencies of citizen dismissal were partialled out (See Columns (2) and (3) of Table 4b), somewhat dismissing statements by officers remained weakly and positively correlated with police disposition while very dismissing statements by officers became significantly ( $p < .05$ ) correlated with police disposition.

Examination of the Zero-order correlations between portions of the action category set and police disposition reveals significant correlations. Moreover, when both citizen and officer dismissal were partialled out, the positive correlations remained significant (See Tables 4a and 4b, all three columns).

The results were similar when correlating the length of an encounter (i.e., steps) with seriousness of police disposition (See Tables 4a and 4b, all three columns). Although the correlations were weak, the partialling out of officer and citizen dismissal had no effect on their strength or direction.

**TABLE 4a**  
Correlations Between Portions of the Citizen DCD Category Set, Portions of the Action Category Set, Steps, and Police Dispositions: Drunk Encounters, Violator Present

| Variable (Category Code) <sup>a</sup> | (1)<br>Zero-Order Correlation with Police Disposition | (2)<br>Partial Correlation Controlling for Officer Somewhat Dismissing Code of DCD Category Set | (3)<br>Partial Correlation Controlling for Officer Somewhat Dismissing and Very Dismissing Codes of DCD Category Set |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Civil Citizen                         | -.1058  | -.0522  | -.0533   |
| Somewhat Dismissing Citizen           | .0368   | -.1578  | -.1321   |
| Very Dismissing Citizen               | .2166   | .0117   | -.1780   |
| Acts 85 through 90                    | .4484**   | .4112*  | .4149*   |
| Acts 91 through 96                    | .4627**   | .4640**   | .4996**  |
| Steps                                 | .2438   | .2548   | .2531  |

- \* statistically significant at  $p < .05$
- \*\* statistically significant at  $p < .01$
- a see pages 6-7 of this paper for definitions of these variables.

**TABLE 4b**  
Correlations Between Portions of the Officer DCD Category Set, Portions of the Action Category Set, Steps, and Police Dispositions: Drunk Encounters, Violator Present

| Variable (Category Code) <sup>a</sup> | (1)<br>Zero-Order Correlation With Police Disposition | (2)<br>Partial Correlation Controlling for Citizen Somewhat Dismissing Code of the DCD Category Set | (3)<br>Partial Correlation Controlling for Citizen Somewhat Dismissing and Very Dismissing Codes of DCD Category Set |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Civil Officer                         | -.1163  | -.1382  | -.0399   |
| Somewhat Dismissing Officer           | .2318   | .2758   | .1702  |
| Very Dismissing Officer               | .2487   | .2774   | .3613*   |
| Acts 85 through 90                    | .4484**   | .4504**   | .4429*   |
| Acts 91 through 96                    | .4627**   | .4701**   | .4866**  |
| Steps                                 | .2438   | .2438   | .2529  |

- \* Statistically significant at  $p < .05$
- \*\* Statistically significant at  $p < .01$
- a See pages 6-7 of this paper for definitions of these variables.

This multiple correlational analysis, however, did not permit us to determine the combined effects of these variables in determining the seriousness of police disposition. For this, regression analysis is more appropriate and for drunk encounters where the violator was present, we regressed seriousness of police disposition on frequency of officer and citizen dismission, Acts 85 through 90, Acts 91 through 96, and steps. We found that regardless of the situation or problem which brought police officers and citizens together, the combined effect of these variables in an estimated regression

equation accounted for 60% of the variance in seriousness of police disposition. Table 5 (analysis of variance applied to regression) revealed that when all regressors were taken together in the predicted regression equation, the variance explained in police disposition by the regression equation was statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence. Moreover, when we eliminated the effect of the computed variable steps, the predicted regression equation remained statistically significant ( $F_{8, 18} = 2.57$ ) and accounted for 53% of the variance in seriousness of police disposition.

TABLE 5  
Analysis of Variance  
Applied to Regression

| Source                       | SS    | d.f. | MS   | F     |
|------------------------------|-------|------|------|-------|
| Explained<br>(by regression) | 42.47 | 9    | 4.70 | 2.89* |
| Unexplained<br>(error)       | 27.48 | 17   | 1.62 |       |
| Total                        | 69.85 | 26   |      |       |

\* Statistically significant at  $p < .05$

## DISCUSSION

A discussion of the results presented in this paper must be prefaced by the statement that the paper has been exploratory in nature. By this we mean that the results should be viewed as tentative hypotheses to be tested with the full data base. With this statement firmly in mind, we will proceed by paying attention to three issues. They are: 1) the apparent need for careful bounding or specification of statements concerning the importance of citizen drunkenness and chronic drunkenness in police work; 2) the factors influencing the exercise of police discretion; and, 3) the analysis potential of the temporarily unavailable processual interaction data.

### 1) *Drunkenness and Chronic Drunkenness in Police Work*

Among the most interesting of the findings was that citizen drunkenness is apparently an overestimated problem in police work. It appears that drunkenness is less prevalent throughout police work than arrest statistics and conversations with police officials and officers suggest.

A second and related finding was that "chronic drunkenness offenders" played an unexpectedly small role in the motorized, uniformed division of the police department in the city studied. Less than 8% of the drunk citizens encountered by the police were occupationally classified as unemployed, the occupational category used for, among others, chronic drunkenness offenders. Further, the drunk encounters observed did not occur more frequently in the downtown and near-downtown areas of the city studied. This is the location of the so-called skid row where chronic drunkenness offenders are generally found. Finally, the absence of differences between drunk and sober encounters in terms of the public, semi-public and private places where they occur and in terms of the initiators of those encounters also suggest the relatively minor role played by chronic drunkenness offenders.

What these findings suggest, we submit, is the need for careful bounding or specification of statements concerning the importance of drunkenness and chronic drunkenness in police work. Low-level courts and short term penal institutions, to be sure, do deal extensively with these two problems. The police, however, deal with a much wider variety of problems and the majority of these problems, it appears, do not involve drunkenness or chronic drunkenness.

### 2) *Police Discretion*

With the recent increased interest in the police by sociologists, police discretion and the factors influencing its exercise have emerged as areas of major empirical attention (e.g.: Black, 1970; Black and Reiss, 1970; Goldman, 1963; Peterson, 1970; Piliavin and Briar, 1964; Skolnick, 1966). Effort has been directed towards the identification of factors influencing the decision to invoke legal sanctions and towards the identification of factors influencing the seriousness of the sanctions invoked. A major result of these efforts is the hypothesis that in situations where the most serious legal sanction, arrest, is not automatic, the deference and

cooperation given an officer by an offender are the factors which most directly influence the discretionary decisions made by police officers.

In one sense, then, the more serious situational police dispositions of drunk encounters reported in this paper follow from the above hypothesis. Citizens in drunk encounters are significantly more dismissioning than citizens in sober encounters. Moreover, the encounters in which drunk citizen are involved contain significantly more potential and actual acts of hostility, physical action, and violence. Their more serious situational police dispositions can be accounted for in terms of the above hypothesis. The quantitative nature of the data collected, however, allows some modification of this hypothesis.

Symbolic interactionists have long argued that it is not the object but the actor's perception of the object which must be examined if behavior is to be understood (Blumer, 1966; Denzin, 1970; Mead, 1965). The quantitative nature of the data collected allows us to pursue this notion in terms of the above hypothesis. As reported above, the zero-order correlations between citizen dismission and seriousness of situational police disposition are in the expected, positive direction. Roughly stated, they suggest that the more dismissioning a citizen, the more serious the police disposition; this supports the hypothesis discussed directly above. When officer dismission is "controlled" using partial correlation, however, the correlations between citizen dismission and seriousness of situational police disposition become inverse or negative. This suggests, we submit, that it is the officer's *re-actions* to the entire state of the encounter that are central to an understanding of his situational disposition. In other words, it is the officer's frequency of dismissioning statements occurring in response to citizen actions (i.e., his perceptions of, and reactions to, the object) which appear to most directly influence situational police disposition. Should this finding be supported, it would require modification of the hypothesized relation between citizen deference - cooperation and situational police disposition. This modification would be in the direction of incorporation of the officer's reactions to citizen actions.

### 3) *Analysis of the Processual Data*

Because of the recent completion of the study from which the data in this paper was derived, the processual information on the interaction between police officers and citizens which the MIDCARS equipment allowed us to collect was not available for analysis. This data is perhaps the most interesting and informative of the data collected. Such data will allow investigation of, for example, the initial levels of civility and hostility, who initiated what, and the reactions of the other police and citizen actors involved in the encounter. This data will help specify the dynamics of police-citizen encounters and help us move beyond the simple associations presented here.

## SUMMARY

This paper has considered the incidence and effects of drunkenness in police-citizen encounters. In the sample upon which this report was based, it was found that nearly 16% of police-citizen encounters contained at least one drunk citizen. When these drunk encounters were compared to sober encounters, it was found that significantly more drunk encounters involved some type of interpersonal dispute. When drunk and sober encounters were compared in terms of ecological space in the city, place, and certain demographic characteristics of the citizens, no significant differences were found. Comparing the nature of communicative acts in drunk and sober encounters revealed that both citizens and officers were significantly more dismienting in drunk encounters. Further, drunk encounters contained significantly more potential or actual acts of hostility, physical action, and violence. These findings were then related to the more serious outcomes of drunk encounters using multiple correlation and regression techniques. Analysis of this data revealed that officer dismience and the frequencies of potential or actual hostility, physical action, and violence were positively correlated with seriousness of police disposition and accounted for the greatest percentage of explained variance in police disposition.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>1969 F.B.I. Uniform Crime Report (Table 23). In 1969, there were 1,420,161 arrests reported by 4,759 agencies embracing a total population of 143,815,000.

<sup>2</sup>The arrest rate in our own study is under ten percent. Black (1968) found that arrest was the police disposition in ten to twenty percent of the encounters he observed.

<sup>3</sup>For a definition and discussion of the characteristics of the role of participant as observer see: Nicholas Babchuk, "The Role of the Researcher as Participant Observer and Participant as Observer in the Field Situation," *Human Organization*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Fall, 1962), pp. 225-228. For a description of the participant-as-observer role developed in this particular study see: James C. Fox, Richard J. Lundman, and Robert H. Scarlett, "Problems and Techniques of Gaining and Maintaining Research Access in Police Organization," *Observations*, Series No. 2 (enclosed).

<sup>4</sup>For further specification of the MIDCARS equipment, see: Richard E. Sykes, "Midcars: Minnesota Interaction Data Coding and Reduction System," *Observations*, Series No. 1 (April, 1971); and Richard E. Sykes and Fraine Whitney, "Systematic Observation Utilizing the Minnesota Interaction Data Coding and Reduction System," *Behavior Science*, March, 1969.

<sup>5</sup>Thirty-six additional drunk encounters were selected for use in multiple correlation and regression analysis.

<sup>6</sup>Had the full data base been available, the actual interaction flow of an encounter could also have been examined.

<sup>7</sup>The code used in the research for the total data base is described in *Observations*, Series No. 3 (in preparation), which is published periodically by Observational Research, University of Minnesota.

<sup>8</sup>Certain felony arrests were not included in this analysis of police discretion. The arrests excluded were non-discretionary and included, for example, warrants arrests, stabbings, etc.

For purposes of correlation and regression analysis, "seriousness" of a situational police disposition was ordered by setting: a) no disposition (i.e., police could not or would not deal with the problem) equal to one or least serious; b) citizens arrest, property confiscation, the calling of another agency (e.g., an ambulance), the provision of service (e.g., first aid), the restoration of decorum short of arrest, stolen car recovery in the absence of a violator, and the taking of a report equal to two; c) a verbal traffic warning to three; d) a traffic ticket equal to four; e) a misdemeanor arrest equal to five; and, f) gross misdemeanor and felony arrests equal to six or most serious.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Babchuk, Nicholas

"The Role of the Researcher as Participant Observer and Participant-as-Observer in the Field Situation." *Human Organization* 21 (Fall, 1962): 225-228.

Bales, Robert F.

*Interaction Process Analysis, A Method for the Study of Small Groups*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1950.

Bittner, Egon

"The Police on Skid Row: A Study of Peace Keeping." *American Sociological Review*, 32 (October, 1967): 699-715.

Black, Donald J.

"Police Encounters and Social Organization: An Observation Study." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Sociology, The University of Michigan, 1968.

Black, Donald J.

"Production of Crime Rates." *American Sociological Review* 35 (August, 1970): 733-748.

Black, Donald J. and Albert J. Reiss, Jr.

"Police Control of Juveniles." *American Sociological Review* 35 (February, 1970): 63-67.

Blum, Richard H.

"Mind-Altering Drugs and Dangerous Behavior: Alcohol." *Task Force Report: Drunkenness*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967: 29-49

Blumer, Herbert

"Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead." *American Journal of Sociology* 71 (March, 1966): 535-548.

Cumming, Elaine, Ian Cumming, and Laura Edell

"Policeman as Philosopher, Guide and Friend." *Social Problems* 12 (Winter, 1965): 276-286.

Denzin, Normal K.

*The Research Act*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970.

Fox, James C., Richard J. Lundman and Robert H. Scarlett

"Problems and Techniques in Gaining and Maintaining Research Access in Police Organizations" *Observations* 2 (October, 1971): (in process).

Goffman, Erving

*Asylums*. Anchor Books. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961.

Goldman, Nathan

*The Differential Selection of Juvenile Offenders for Court Appearance*. National Research and Information Center, and National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 1963.

LaFave, Mayne R.

*Arrest: The Decision to Take a Suspect into Custody*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965.

Mead, George Herbert

*George Herbert Mead on Social Psychology*. Edited by Anselm Strauss. Phoenix Books. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Petersen, David M.

"Police Disposition of the Petty Offender." Mimeographed, Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University, 1971.

Piliavin, Irving and Scott Briar

"Police Encounters with Juveniles." *American Journal of Sociology* 70 (September, 1964): 206-214.

Skolnick, Jerome H.

*Justice Without Trial: Law Enforcement in Democratic Society*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966.

Spradley, James P.

*You Owe Yourself a Drunk: An Ethnography of Urban Nomads*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970.

Sykes, Richard E. and Frañe Whitney

"Systematic Observation Utilizing the Minnesota Interaction Data Coding and Reductions System," *Behavior Science* (March, 1969).

Sykes, Richard E.

"Midcars: Minnesota Interaction Data Coding and Reduction System." *Observations*, Series No. 1 (April, 1971).

Webster, John Andres

"Police Task and Time Study." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Criminology, University of California, Berkeley, 1968.

Wilson, James Q.

*Varieties of Police Behavior*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968.



**END**