



Building Strong Police-Immigrant
Community Relations: Lessons
from a New York City Project

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Executive Summary

The 2000 United States Census revealed a significant increase in the number and diversity of immigrants in New York City; more than one-third of the population is foreign born, coming from approximately 200 countries around the world. For the New York City Police Department (NYPD), building trust in communities where significant numbers of these immigrants live is a challenge, as many of these people fear the police, do not speak English, and are unfamiliar with the local justice system. The task grew even more difficult in the wake of September 11, 2001, when local law enforcement took on a new role in national counter-terrorism efforts.

New York City police are not alone in this situation, however. The United States has not seen so large an increase in immigration since the early twentieth century; and never has the immigrant population been so diverse and geographically dispersed. The new demography, combined with the threat of terrorism, has law enforcement agencies throughout the country examining and rethinking their relationships with hard-to-reach immigrant communities. Building trust with these communities has become an essential task. But police departments trying to do so face many barriers, including:

- Fear that contact with police could lead to deportation;
- Imported distrust of police and judicial systems carried over from countries of origin;
- Language and communication barriers; and
- Cultural misunderstandings.

This document describes a joint project of the NYPD and the Vera Institute of Justice that sought to strengthen relations between police and new immigrant communities in the city. The core activity of the project, which was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing, was three sets of forums that brought police officials together with representatives of three separate immigrant communities. Among other things, the initiative showed that:

- Regular channels of communication between immigrant community representatives and police help build trust and create a space where tensions can be resolved before they become damaging; and
- Diversity and political divisions within immigrant communities require police to reach out to a variety of community representatives.

This report is intended to assist other police departments, local-level government officials, and community groups interested in building relations between police and hard-to-reach immigrant communities. It provides an overview of the different components of

the New York City project. It also discusses the following issues that police departments should consider prior to implementing similar initiatives.

- 1) Because immigrant groups are not monolithic—they are made up of ethnically, culturally, socio-economically, and often linguistically diverse subgroups—police must engage a wide range of immigrant leaders and representatives.
- 2) Engaging a diverse group of immigrant representatives involves managing dissension among the community representatives; it is important for police to remain neutral in intra-group rivalries and hostilities.
- 3) Levels of community participation may change throughout the process, but as long as there is a core group of regularly-attending community participants to lead the effort, a decline in attendance is not necessarily an indication of failure.
- 4) If high-level police officials and policy makers do not participate, or if community participants do not see immediate changes in police policy and procedures, the community representatives may perceive an initiative as little more than public relations. Particularly if police chiefs or other high-level policy makers are absent from the process, police representatives must communicate specific ways they intend to use community feedback.
- 5) Community organizations within new immigrant communities typically have limited resources and may be unable to contribute to trust-building efforts at optimal levels. The police, thus, may have to put in more resources—both financial and human—than community participants to make the effort sustainable.

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Introduction

In December 2003, during a meeting at the Vera Institute of Justice between representatives of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and leaders of the city's Arab-American, Muslim, and South Asian communities, a community organizer recounted two recent incidents that illustrated the fear that many in his community had of the NYPD. In one incident, a victim of a stabbing that required 34 stitches across the chest refused to report the crime for fear of being deported. In the other, the organizer had discovered someone curled up in severe pain on his front stoop. The person had gone there rather than to an emergency room because he feared hospital staff would turn him over to immigration authorities.

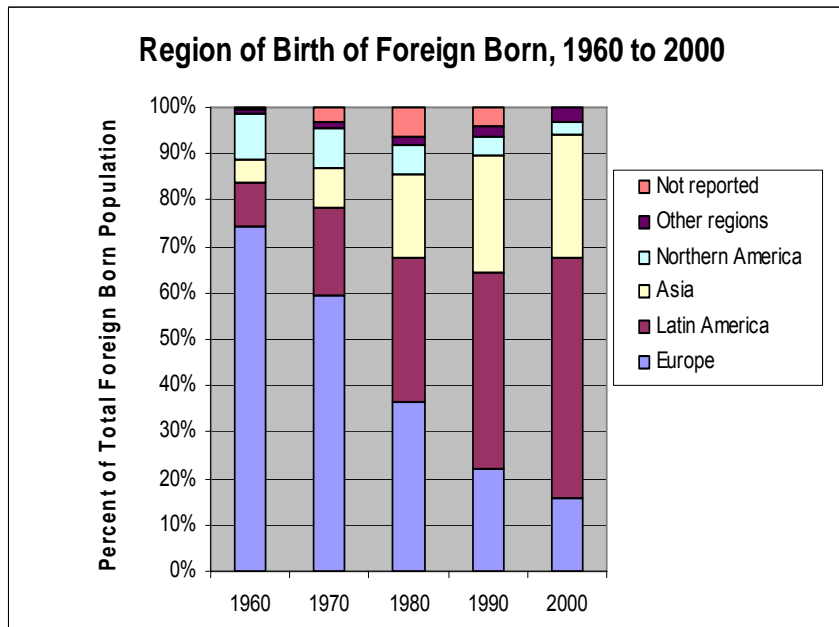
The police were not at all surprised by the anecdotes; they had heard similar stories from leaders of other immigrant communities in the city. It is exactly these types of anecdotes—combined with the data from the 2000 U.S. Census that revealed an increasingly large, diverse, and dispersed immigrant population in the city—that led police officials to make improving police-immigrant relations a top priority.

The NYPD asked the Vera Institute of Justice to examine the functions of its immigrant outreach unit and suggest ways to overcome the fear that separated the NYPD from the city's diverse immigrant communities. After conducting that analysis and researching national practices to improve trust between police and immigrant communities, NYPD and Vera embarked on a joint project to develop and test new strategies to achieve their goal. This report is an account of one of those strategies: a series of forums between police representatives and leaders of three different communities. The report also highlights findings from our research into how participants perceived the forums' value and salient issues that arose during implementation.

The immigrant population in the United States has never been so large, diverse, and widespread as it is today. More than 31 million residents of the United States—more than 11 percent of the population—were born in another country, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. This represents an increase of more than 11 million people compared to a decade earlier.¹ Approximately half of this population entered the United States after 1990.² Figure 1 shows how much the ethnic origins of these immigrants have changed compared to earlier groups of immigrants. In 1960, 74.5 percent of the foreign-born population was born in Europe; today, Europe accounts for approximately 13.7 percent, with 53 percent coming from Latin America and 25 percent originating in Asia.³ Statistics also show that today's immigrants are moving to regions that have not been traditional immigrant destinations.⁴ During the 1990s, foreign-born populations nearly doubled in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia.⁵ With the Census Bureau projecting that the foreign-born population

will continue growing over the next few decades, the proliferation of immigrant communities is likely to persist.⁶

Figure 1



Source: Migration Policy Institute, Migration Information Source, using U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Data for all other years are from Campbell Gibson and Emily Lennon, U.S. Census Bureau, Working Paper No. 29, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999).

Law enforcement agencies across the country are having unprecedented contact with immigrants—as victims, witnesses, suspects, and potential recruits. This has prompted many to examine and rethink how they police immigrant communities.

Research shows that immigrants’ attitudes towards the police are less positive than those of native-born citizens, and immigrants are less likely to initiate contact with police or report crimes.⁷ It has also been shown that the more legitimacy the police have in the eyes of those they serve, the more effective they can be in accomplishing their goals of solving and preventing crime. Residents who trust the police are more willing to call when they need help, to cooperate as a witness, to provide information on crime conditions, and to cooperate with police during an involuntary contact.⁸

Gaining the trust of immigrant communities is particularly important among departments that incorporate community-oriented policing techniques. Community policing is an approach to law enforcement in which police engage communities in a working partnership to reduce crime and promote public safety, in part by identifying and eliminating the community conditions that foster crime.⁹ But generating this kind of involvement among new immigrant communities can be challenging.

A survey of recent initiatives and studies from across the nation indicates that police departments hoping to build relations with immigrant communities are likely to encounter *at least* three significant barriers to developing the trust of immigrant communities:

Fear of deportation. Immigrant groups often cite fear of deportation (their own or that of family members or friends) as a major barrier to building trust and partnerships with police.¹⁰ Even legal immigrants from regions that produce many undocumented immigrants avoid police contact for fear of endangering their undocumented associates. As local and state law enforcement officers have begun working more closely with federal immigration authorities in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, immigrants have had even more difficulty distinguishing among these agencies.¹¹

Imported perceptions of police, crime, and justice systems. Many immigrants—particularly those who come from countries with corrupt, repressive, and violent police forces—fear and mistrust the police. A Phoenix study of Latino immigrants showed, for example, that immigrants’ experience with the police and the criminal justice system in their countries of origin shape their perceptions of the police in the United States.¹²

Language and cultural differences. A nationwide study found that cultural misunderstandings and language barriers lead immigrants to access public safety and justice services less often than native-born citizens do.¹³ The Chicago Police Department study also found that Spanish-speaking Latinos had worse perceptions of police helpfulness, concern, and fairness than white, African-American, and English-speaking Latino respondents.¹⁴ Respondents to the national survey also found that ignorance of American conceptions of justice also inhibited immigrants’ access to the criminal justice system.¹⁵ In many cases, there may also be the additional challenges of policing immigrants who are accustomed to resolving disputes within their communities or who have little experience with cities, modern technology, or state-run criminal justice systems.

These three conditions combine to make new immigrants harder to work with as suspects and reluctant to serve as witnesses or to become new recruits.¹⁶ Many also believe they make new immigrants favored targets of criminals. Additionally, many immigrants have suffered some form of trauma, in war or as the result of persecution or economic collapse. For many, particularly the elderly, relocation to a new country is itself a deep trauma. Traumatic experience breeds distrust that not only affects immigrants’ relations with the authorities (specifically the police) in their new country of residence, but also alienates members of an immigrant community from one another.

Police departments throughout the United States have tried different strategies to overcome these challenges. Some, including the Chicago Police Department, coordinate regular community forums of ethnic or minority groups. Others, such as police in

Bellingham, Washington, employ special liaisons assigned to ethnic or minority groups. The police department in Delray Beach, Florida, created a Haitian Police Academy and a Haitian Roving Patrol to teach Haitian-born residents about police protocols and what they can do to prevent crime. In Corcoran, California, police created a Spanish-language citizens' police academy and some of the first graduates went on to form an all-volunteer patrol. The Dallas police developed a citizenship program primarily targeting the Southeast Asian community. In Lincoln, Nebraska, police produced video-taped instructional materials in Southeast Asian languages. And in Orange, New Jersey, police are helping immigrants become citizens.

The federal government has become involved too. The Department of Justice's Community Relations Service has launched a four-hour cultural competency course that has trained 2,000 municipal officers and immigration and FBI agents throughout the country about Arab and Muslim culture and customs. "Things go a lot better for us if people aren't mad at us," noted a sergeant who participated in the training. "Our officers are only human. If they don't know the facts...they could draw the wrong conclusion about something innocent."¹⁷

This report is intended as a guide for other law enforcement agencies, government officials, and community organizations involved in or considering similar initiatives to build better relations between police and the hard-to-reach immigrant communities they serve.

The New York City Police Department's Initiative

Few police forces face more challenges to developing good relations with new immigrant groups than the New York City Police Department. The 2000 U.S. Census revealed that 36 percent of New York City's population was foreign-born. Of these, 43 percent entered the U.S. between 1990 and 2000 and almost half spoke a language other than English at home.¹⁸ These immigrants come from almost 200 countries around the world, and 2000 U.S. Census data shows us that these immigrants are spread out throughout the city.¹⁹

Although New York police have a long history of working with immigrant communities, the size and diversity of the current immigrant population combined with the city's status as a focal point for the war on terrorism prompted Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly to make developing, implementing, and testing new strategies for working with immigrant communities a priority. In 2003, with support from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), the NYPD partnered with the Vera Institute of Justice in an initiative that sought to build trust with immigrant communities.

The NYPD and Vera resolved to select three immigrant groups with which to develop and test new strategies for building better immigrant-police relations. The principal criterion for selection was to target hard-to-reach immigrant communities that are not well-established in local political and civic institutions and are therefore less likely to participate in the traditional venues for community outreach, such as New York City's Precinct Community Councils and local community boards. By consulting U.S. Census data, interviewing immigrant community leaders and umbrella organizations, and conferring with NYPD executives, we chose the Arab-American, African, and emerging Latin-American communities.

Based on available research and a review of national best practices, the NYPD and Vera decided to create an alternative channel of direct communication with the target communities. A series of forums for police and leaders from those communities would not only open the lines of communication, but they could also create opportunities to jointly analyze problems and generate creative, practical solutions to the barriers to trust. A secondary goal of the forums was to improve the community's sense of empowerment and their overall sense of community efficacy by leveraging their relationships with police executives to develop the immigrant leaders' capacity to advocate for and educate their communities on issues of policing and public safety.

Creating a Regular Forum for Communication between Police and Immigrant Communities

From the summer of 2003 through the fall of 2004, NYPD and Vera held three separate sets of forums with representatives from each of the immigrant groups. Meetings with each community occurred approximately once every three months. * Discussion topic included barriers to trust, strategies for building better police-community relations, and broader policy concerns affecting the police-community relationship.

Both the police and the community representatives were enthusiastic about the forums' promise at the outset, but skepticism tempered their enthusiasm. The police wondered whether the process would really help them in their day-to-day work: “[W]as it going to be successful? How would it help me personally in my outreach to the community?” one officer asked. Several community members suspected the police of having an ulterior motive. “My first thought was: What do they want from us?” one community leader recalled. “Are they going to impose things on us? Will the process be fair?”

Chart 1 summarizes the goals of each group at the outset of the engagement and illustrates the similarity between the initial expectations of both immigrant and police participants.

Chart 1

Goals of Police Representatives	Goals of Community Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create dialogue between NYPD Community Affairs and community • Build trust • Share information about Community Affairs and NYPD • Provide input to the Community Affairs and its programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop community awareness • Develop cultural competency for the NYPD • Create a platform for conveying views and frustration to the NYPD

Summarized from community feedback interviews conducted of a sample of participants.

In spite of the initial misgivings, feedback provided at the end of the first meeting showed that virtually all police and community participants felt that it was worthwhile to carry on. Some of the reasons cited were:

* We slowly phased in the initial meetings with each group—beginning with the Arab-American community, followed by the African and then emerging Latin-American communities.

- *“To develop a common list of concerns and objectives;”*
- *“To help design and run strategies, concrete actions, and programs for the police to outreach to the community;”*
- *“To keep the lines of communication open;”* and
- *“To build understanding and cooperation.”*

After several meetings, accumulating evidence suggested that the community participants’ faith in the process was increasing. One community member stated, “My [initial] concern was that this was a post-9/11 strategy to identify immigrants. I was wrong. The NYPD’s only concern was to better serve our community.” “I really felt like the police were honest in what they wanted to do here. They really tried,” another community participant wrote after a meeting. Another said that, after years of advocacy, she felt “listened to” by government officials for the first time. The simple act of asking for community input in itself seemed to be generating good will and support.

The police representatives were warming to the forums as well. An officer who had originally expressed doubts said afterward, for example, that he had learned things about the community that were helping him in his role as a community liaison.

As the project progressed further, the participants were able to take several practical steps toward improving police-community trust. The police were able to demonstrate their responsiveness to community concerns, and they were able to get feedback and advice on their community outreach efforts.

This benefit was demonstrated when, in fall 2003, the NYPD held its annual conference to reach out to leaders of the local Muslim community. Much of the program was devoted to a NYPD presentation for communities interested in helping the department respond to the threat of terrorism. Despite the police department’s good intentions, some community members in the audience worried that the format of the presentation would intensify fear, suspicion, and inter-group tensions affecting Arab and Muslim city residents. Not long after that meeting, a letter listing their criticisms and demanding that the presentation be changed was sent to NYPD officials by prominent community leaders.

Several community participants of the Arab-American forums were in the audience that morning. Many of these individuals contacted the NYPD officials they had interacted with during the forums to express their concerns. After hearing them out, NYPD revised the presentation to eliminate the perceived bias. When the changed version was presented at a subsequent forum meeting, the community leaders were well-satisfied by the results and saw the NYPD’s quick response as evidence of their sincerity and commitment to improving relations with the Arab-American community.

The police department’s quick and thoughtful actions circumvented avoidable antagonism and generated good will. The process let the community contribute to the police department’s counter-terrorism efforts and demonstrated perhaps one of the most

valuable benefits of the forums: the development of a structure for ongoing dialogue that provided the immigrant community leaders with a constructive venue to channel their frustrations or concerns.

In addition to these practical benefits, the forums also provided a space in which each group could learn about the other. For example, some community leaders learned for the first time about NYPD community affairs programs. Near the end of the forum series, one NYPD liaison expressed satisfaction that the community leaders now knew exactly what the New Immigrant Outreach Unit could offer them. “That was probably one of the best things that came out of it,” he said. “They knew that if they needed the resources or us helping them out, that we were available.”

The police were also able to educate the community about official procedures and policies. The community, in turn, taught the police about their culture, their communities’ fears and concerns, and the institutions that serve their communities. Two issues—trust and awareness—arose regularly. They tended to be inextricably linked for both groups as each, in their own way, worked to impart a greater sense of awareness in the other. One community member in an exit interview stated, “building trust, helping community members to understand the police system and also to help representatives of [the police department] to hear directly from community members what they consider to be their issues. That interaction was very helpful, very informative.”

Perhaps the most important consequence, however, was that the sustained contact nurtured positive relationships between individual members of the police department and immigrant community leaders. Over time, observers noticed an increase in laughter and joking between the two groups, despite the serious and contentious nature of the issues being discussed. Police representatives began opening up and discussing the serious pressures and difficulties associated with law enforcement work. Some of the officers, themselves immigrants, shared personal experiences, while advocates accustomed to confrontational positions began joking and exchanging friendly conversation with police officials. At the last meeting of the forum with Arab Americans, a police participant joked about the confrontational tone of a first-time participant, stating that he reminded him of one of groups’ longest-attending leaders when she first attended the forums. In an exit interview, one community member recounted an experience when he ran into one of the senior police executives participating in the forums. He stated, “We chatted and it was nice. Otherwise I would have completely avoided him but it was really good to be able to talk like friends. So it means if there is any problem it will be very easy for me to get in touch with one of those [police officials] who has been involved in the meetings.” This reversal in each group’s attitudes about the other was the most significant consequence of our project. The relationships bridged through this project opened up a new range of possibility for the immigrant community and for the men and women who have pledged to protect and serve the community.

Engaging a Wide Range of Immigrant Community Representatives

Determining which leaders police should reach out to in order to improve relations with immigrant communities is not always easy. Identifying appropriate contacts can be especially difficult if police do not understand the internal dynamics of the communities they are dealing with.

The Seattle Police Department learned this lesson the hard way. Realizing the importance of developing partnerships with a growing Vietnamese community, they reached out to local leaders who they later learned represented only the part of the Vietnamese community that favored reunification of Vietnam—a controversial position. In establishing this relationship, the Seattle police were seen by the rest of Seattle’s Vietnamese population as taking sides in a divisive issue within their community.

In New York City, we found that while some of the “leaders” the NYPD had been reaching out to before the initiative were the most politically active, they did not necessarily represent the diverse ethnic, linguistic, economic, and religious groups within the larger community. Not surprisingly, the more insular, less politically-engaged immigrant communities are the hardest to reach through the regular channels of police-community engagement.

Among immigrants in such isolated groups, social networks can play a central role in shaping perceptions of crime and U.S. police authorities.²⁰ Most immigrants rely on friends, family, and acquaintances for basic information, such as how to find a job or housing. These same networks can also disseminate rumors or false information, occasionally inflating accounts of negative contacts with police or negative experiences of crime.²¹ An example of this process surfaced at an Arab-American forum when community leaders recounted a story that had been circulating in their community of an Arab-American man who prevented an arsonist from burning down a synagogue by tackling the perpetrator and holding him until the police arrived. According to the story, when the police discovered that the man’s immigration status was invalid he was deported. The intended moral on the street was clear: avoid all contact with police.

Fortunately, community-based social service and religious organizations that play a critical role in such information-sharing networks by providing services and education to immigrant constituents can also provide government institutions—such as the police—with access to these networks. Whenever rumors like the story cited above begin to spread, for example, organizations with contacts in the police department can fact-check the story and ensure that correct information is shared. Conversely, upon learning that inaccurate information about their practices is circulating in a particular community, the police can use their liaisons at community-based organizations to get out the truth.

In order to reach all members of an immigrant community, police may need to reach out to a broad array of community-based organizations, religious leaders, and other representatives. New York City’s African community, for example, comprises

immigrants from dozens of countries, with each country group containing various ethnic and religious subgroups. For example, the Forum of African Immigrant Organizations, an umbrella group to which several forum participants belonged, includes more than 40 member organizations—each with a separate constituency. Given the scope of this community, we sought as diverse a group of representatives as possible for the African forums. The harm of leaving out a sub-population, we decided, would be greater than that of including extra representatives who lacked a true constituency.

We also found that even leaders and advocates in immigrant communities will not always come to the police, either because of fear or discomfort about navigating U.S. government systems, or lack of knowledge or capacity to do so. When the initiative first began reaching out to the African community, Vera staff participated in an introductory meeting with eight African community leaders who would not agree to engage in a dialogue with police until after they met with the Vera organizers. None of the eight knew of any previous NYPD efforts to reach out to their communities, despite multiple police efforts, and none knew that commanders of every city precinct hold monthly meetings with the community. One of the eight even asked whether he was allowed to go to his local police precinct to introduce himself to the commander in his capacity as a community leader. Clearly, these leaders did not understand that they had a right to reach out to the police in order to improve relations with their community and on their own initiative they would not have done so. Given this hesitancy, it was important for forum organizers to aggressively seek out representatives of all the diverse subgroups of the immigrant groups.

Summary

In order to achieve diversity of voices in our initiative, and to better understand the cultural dynamics and social organization of the three target communities, we talked to as many different community and religious organizations as we could. Our outreach plans included the following steps:

We collected a list of names of community organizations and religious institutions from various sources—the New York City Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, immigrant coalition organizations, the police department’s lists of community organizations, victims’ services organizations, and immigrant organizations with which the Vera Institute had previous relations.

We asked the immigrant leaders and representatives we met with during our initial outreach efforts to recommend other members of their community. We then met with those representatives or leaders and asked them to recommend still more community representatives.

We made an effort to include staff of organizations that provide social services in communities with large immigrant populations but who are not traditionally characterized as “leaders,” because of their access to the most vulnerable and often the most disengaged members of the community.

Vera staff made the initial contacts with some of the immigrant community representatives, particularly those that were apprehensive about meeting with the police. Other community leaders or organizations were suspicious about meeting with Vera staff, so we had other immigrant representatives—those who were already committed to the initiative—extend invitations to the forums.

Structuring the Forum Discussions

Recognizing that the agenda for the forums would vary among the different community groups depending on their specific needs and capacity, we adopted a strategy of seeking input from community participants about what topics they wanted to address. However, because we also believed that open dialogue without structure would not be sustainable, we simultaneously emphasized the need for conversation that led to concrete achievements.

This section lays out the structure of one of the three forums, the one held with the Arab-American community, to provide a model for the administration of this type of initiative. The three communities identified many similar issues—including fear of deportation; imported fear or mistrust of police, crime, and justice systems; and language and cultural differences. Consequently, their respective agendas followed a similar pattern. The following summary of the meetings of the Arab-American Police-Community Relations Forum provides a sense of the resulting discussions.

Meeting One: Introductory Brainstorming Session

The first meeting of the Arab-American Police Forum was a facilitated brainstorming session to identify barriers to trust between police and the community and strategies for overcoming them. Since many of the community participants had no prior contact with NYPD officials, Vera staff conducted pre-meeting interviews of community representatives—some in person and some by telephone (some participants preferred to complete the questionnaires in writing)—to help them prepare for the meeting and encourage thoughtful dialogue. The questionnaire included the following questions:

- 1. What steps taken by the NYPD have been most effective in strengthening the police's relationship with your community?*
- 2. What issues most challenge the relationship between the NYPD and your community?*
- 3. Do you have specific crime and safety concerns affecting your community?*
- 4. What do you wish that police officers knew about your community that would help them provide better services to your community?*
- 5. Do you have suggestions for ways the NYPD can improve services to your community?*
- 6. What role should community leaders play to improve relations between the police and your community?*

Although fewer than half the participants responded to the survey, their responses helped the facilitators structure the first meeting. A memo summarizing the responses to both police and community participants provided a springboard for conversation and ideas.

Meeting Two: Community Outreach and Education

One of the challenges identified at the first forum was that community members, particularly new Arab immigrants, do not understand the U.S. criminal justice system and their rights and responsibilities under the system. The second forum focused, therefore, on gathering information to construct an effective outreach and education initiative to fill this need. Again, we surveyed a sample of the community participants to gather information in preparation for the meeting. The survey questions included:

1. *When Arab immigrants first arrive in the United States, what are the most common misconceptions or misunderstandings about the U.S. justice system and the police?*
2. *What crime, safety, police, or legal issues should new Arab-American immigrants be educated about in order to make their transition to American society and government easier?*
3. *Are there any examples of effective outreach campaigns conducted in your community? How was the information communicated?*
4. *What are the most popular media sources for the Arab-American community in New York City?*

After discussing the survey questions, the group prioritized three areas for outreach and education: 1) education on community members' rights and responsibilities, 2) education about New York City's executive order prohibiting city employees from inquiring about immigration status of residents seeking services, and 3) outreach to increase community participation in NYPD's monthly Precinct Community Councils—monthly meetings in each of the city's precincts between the executive precinct staff and the community.

Meeting Three: Forums to Discuss Issues of Immediate Concern

At the NYPD's request, Vera organized and facilitated the third forum meeting to respond to tensions that arose over a counter-terrorism presentation that many of the community participants saw at a citywide gathering of police leaders and the Muslim community.

Meeting Four: Cultural Competency Training of Police Officers

The fourth forum focused on cultural competency training on the Arab-American community for police officers—a priority identified by the group in the initial brainstorming session.

The meeting was divided into two parts. During the first portion of the meeting the NYPD screened a rough cut of a video produced to teach new recruits about the Arab-American community in New York City. The purpose was to get feedback on the video from the community and to demonstrate the department’s good faith efforts to make new officers more culturally sensitive. Because the community was also concerned that existing patrol officers also learn about their community, the second half of the meeting served as a focus group on what information the community participants thought was most important to share with experienced police officers.

Meeting Five: Monitoring Progress

By the fifth forum, we had reached a critical point in the project—attitudes among the police and community had turned a corner. The dialogue became more affable and the community had more faith in the project. The time was ripe to assess the progress of the initiative to date. The meeting began with a summary of the previous forums, the issues discussed, actions taken, and feedback received through evaluations and participant surveys. We then assessed the current status of the strategies the group decided to implement, using a chart (see Chart 2) to outline the progress of each identified strategy. We solicited feedback on the initiatives to date and discussed next steps to wrap up the incomplete initiatives.

Chart 2

Strategy	Proposal / Initiative	Status
Cultural Competency Training for Patrol Officers	Arab-American community reference card	<i>Draft complete. To be reviewed by group tonight</i>
	Streetwise video	<i>Update</i>
Community Education	Legal rights and responsibilities brochure	<i>Draft complete. To be reviewed by group tonight</i>
	Information about Executive Order 41	<i>For discussion tonight</i>
	Initiative to increase participation in Precinct Community Council meetings	<i>Group met with community public relations specialist. For discussion tonight</i>

Meeting Six: Institutionalizing the Initiative

During the sixth forum—the last during the COPS-funded initiative—the group discussed the value of having regular, open forums between police and the Arab-American community and whether they should continue. After the group decided that there was value to continuing the dialogue, we discussed practical issues to continuing the series, such as the role of community leaders versus the police in organizing the forums and the structure and content of future sessions. Recently, the community participants met separately to plan the continuation of the forums. They also decided to expand the initiative to include federal law enforcement. In fact, they recently met with a representative of the local Federal Bureau of Investigation office, to whom they proposed setting up a regular channel of communication between representatives of federal law enforcement and the community and a range of other initiatives, including cultural competency training and educational outreach to the greater Arab-American community.

Addressing Barriers to Trust Identified at the Forums

Opening a discussion about the barriers to building good police-community relations quickly revealed that language and cultural barriers are both major problems. A Mexican community leader noted, for example, that when assessing the credibility of two residents in a dispute, the police tend to favor the one who speaks better English. An African community representative explained that police ought to explain to African suspects that handcuffing is a routine practice in the United States: in West Africa, only the most violent and dangerous of criminals are handcuffed. Another African participant—a refugee—explained that for years after he arrived in the U.S., the mere sight of a police uniform and gun made him tremble uncontrollably.

Having already recognized some of these barriers, the NYPD had several training initiatives in the works, including the drafting of a new recruit curriculum on multi-cultural policing. The forums were an opportunity for the NYPD to get feedback on their existing programs and to develop new promising strategies. The following is a description of some of the new ideas that were implemented as a result of those discussions.

Memo Book Inserts on Specific Immigrant Groups for Targeted Officers

In collaboration with the Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Community Affairs, Vera produced a fact sheet to help educate the police on the history, cultures, and religions of the Arab-American community in New York City. The Arab community participants helped develop the fact sheet on Arab culture that were formatted to fit into the memo books of patrol officers assigned to the seven city precincts with the highest concentrations of Arab residents (see Appendix A).

Educating Immigrant Communities about Police Procedures

Just as police can misunderstand the community, the community can misunderstand the police.²² To help inform the community of police protocols and procedures, we developed several community education materials, including a brochure in Arabic about their legal rights and responsibilities (see Appendix B). The NYPD translated several of its own materials—such as the department’s legal rights and responsibilities brochure—into Arabic (in addition to several other languages). At the suggestion of the African community leaders, we developed an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum on police and police procedures. ESL classes are one of the best ways of accessing the city’s newest immigrant population, and the curriculum can be used by ESL teachers and programs throughout the city.

Helping Officers Communicate

Whenever possible and necessary, the community liaison officers interpreted the forum proceedings. An independent non-profit organization, Public Agenda, was also engaged to moderate a bilingual meeting between the police and Spanish-speaking community members. In addition, the NYPD began developing a language identification card that will allow patrol officers to ask people with limited English proficiency what their primary language is; once it has been identified, an officer can summon an officer who speaks that language.

Targeting Outreach Efforts

While the police department has far more resources than the community-based organizations we were working with, they have to manage multiple, competing demands for a limited pool of resources. Given the number of racial and ethnic groups in New York City, for example, the police department has little choice but to target their community affairs activities. To help them do this, Vera used U.S. Census 2000 data to produce shaded maps that indicate the percentage of the population that the three immigrant communities we work with comprise in each census tract. By overlaying precinct borders onto this map (see Appendix C), we were able to help the police determine which precincts should receive information like the fact sheet on the Arab-American community in New York City.

Issues to Consider

Though the police-community relations forums were valuable, the process was not perfect. Below is a list of some of the implementation challenges we encountered. Some have been resolved; the groups are still working on others.

Sustaining Community Engagement

It is important to acknowledge that levels of participation changed throughout the process. Over time, there was a notable decline in community attendance. The most obvious explanation for this drop off is that community members became dissatisfied with the forums. However, participant feedback contradicts this explanation. As seen in Chart 3, in community feedback interviews conducted of two of the immigrant communities, all of the interviewed participants said they were glad that they had attended, and more than 4 out of 5 said they planned to attend future forums.

Chart 3

Percentage of participants interviewed who ...	
Were glad they attended the meeting	100%
Planned to attend further meetings	84.2%
Would recommend attending meetings to friends and family	73.7%
Think such forums have promise to help improve NYPD community relations	89.5%

Based on an aggregation of responses to community participant feedback interviews.

In the exit interviews, community members who had attended some but not all forums stated that lack of time and other commitments were the reason why they were not able to attend more meetings.

Community members did not express concerns about the decline in attendance. Most of the community participants saw significant gain from the forums. They cited the creation of a pre-existing space and relationships for resolving conflicts, devising solutions for problems, and discussing events of immediate concern as critically important, even if at times the forums are sparsely attended. Moreover, the core group of active community participants who attended all, or most, of the forums played a leadership role. And during a crisis or a period of heightened tensions, the attendance increased.

Getting Police, Policy Makers, Operational Commanders, and Officers to Participate

Just as the police representatives hoped that the participating community leaders would have influence in the community, the community wanted to believe that the police representatives had influence on the police department. At each of the three forums, the NYPD was represented by officers of various rank, ranging from line-level police officers to Assistant Commissioner. Some community members doubted, though, that the meetings could effect real change, since they did not think the “decision makers” were present at the meetings. “We’ve gotten as far as Community Affairs,” one community member reported. “[Now] we need real answers to questions about policy and practice. I have lost patience with Community Affairs; they’re just P[ublic] R[elations] fluff.” This kind of sentiment was particularly evident whenever the conversation turned to contentious policy issues, such as counter-terrorism policy, the role of police in immigration enforcement, and the acceptance of identification cards issued by the Mexican Consulate. Only 22 percent of community leaders responding to exit interviews believed that “NYPD participants who attended the forums were able to convey community concerns and meeting outcomes to senior officials and precinct and patrol staff.”

It should be noted that when community leaders grapple with serious issues, they sometimes confuse powers and may project all issues related to government and power onto the police department. Police representatives can best manage this type of situation if they help to clarify the distinctions in a non-defensive manner.

Similarly, perceptions of disenfranchisement among some community leaders may lead them to push for immediate action based on their suggestions and feedback in the forums. In some cases, when they did not see forum discussions manifesting in changes to NYPD practice and policy, their trust in the process flagged. However, as amendments to most agency policy and practice typically take place based upon sound empirical evidence, as a result of internal and external negotiation, and over significant periods of time, community members are unlikely to see an immediate impact of their suggestions. One way to address this in the short term is for police to be explicit about the specific ways they intend to use community leaders’ feedback and to inform the community participants of steps they have taken towards incorporating their feedback into policy. Realistic expectations should be set for both groups at the outset.

Managing Dissension among Community Representatives

Immigrant communities are often diverse, including people whose countries, cultures, education levels, and professions differ. It should not be surprising, therefore, when representatives of different segments of an immigrant community disagree with each other. One of the three immigrant groups we worked with, for example, was particularly

discordant. “During the meetings there was a lot of dissension within the civilian participants about what needed to be done,” one police representative recalled of this group. “Any dialogue is better [than none], but we didn’t accomplish as much.”

One way to deal with this is to acknowledge up front that the group might not agree on everything and lay out ground rules for deciding on actions. For example, the group can decide which initiatives it should focus on by voting. If the police need to take action that some participants object to, it is important to make it clear to the dissenting party that their voices were heard. In our experience, one source of conflict was that some people felt that certain speakers who claimed to speak for the whole community did not accurately represent their views. To overcome such challenges, it was important for police representatives to engage in equal relationships with all participants.

Inviting the Media

A recurring issue in the forums was whether or not the media should be present, but there was no consensus. Some people felt that participants would not be as open and forthcoming with the media in the room. Others wanted them to communicate the forum’s good work to the larger community. We decided not to include media as observers, but to invite some members of the ethnic press in their capacity as leaders of their community—not as journalists. At one forum, however, a participant—not the organizers—did invite a journalist. The group spent much of the meeting debating whether the journalist should be allowed to remain in the meeting. They eventually agreed to let him stay on the condition that all comments were off the record. Despite this arrangement, for the rest of the evening the discussion was less open and the participants seemed uncomfortable. There was consensus, however, that the NYPD should report on positive outcomes to the media after the fact.

Compensating for Limited Resources

The police should be prepared to assume responsibility for sustaining relationship-building efforts. Hard-to-reach immigrant communities typically have limited financial resources, little if any formal leadership, and weak community-based organizations—which is precisely why they are hard to reach. Few of the African organizations we worked with, for example, had tax-exempt non-profit organization status—which makes raising funds difficult. In all three community groups, most of the organizations we worked with were predominantly voluntary associations that were constantly struggling to manage competing community needs. Police must compete for the time of community members with families, jobs, and other civic and community commitments. Many of the community representatives that we worked with also served as liaisons for the Mayor’s office; other city agencies, including the departments of health, child welfare, and education; the New York City Council; and immigrant coalition organizations. These

imbalances meant that the police also had to be the leaders in producing outputs, such as brochures and other literature generated through the forums.

As a practical consequence of the scarcity of resources among the community participants we discovered that we needed to minimize the number of meetings requiring the community participants' attendance. In all three of the immigrant groups, we came up with ideas for improving relations between the community and the police. At times, we attempted to create subcommittees to help plan and implement strategies identified by the group. However, the subcommittee structure was generally unsuccessful because participants were unable to incorporate additional meetings into their already busy schedules. The daily demands of surviving, and often, supporting a family in a new place means that immigrants have very little free time. A recent immigrant may hold down multiple jobs, or have to care for the children of family members working second or third jobs. Finding time to attend extra meetings is not only burdensome, but often impossible. We found that outside of the full group meetings, it worked best when we collaborated with and used individuals or specific partner organizations as resources, working around the community members' schedules. For example, to draft a version of a NYPD rights and responsibilities brochure that is more accessible to immigrants, Vera and NYPD worked with a single Arab-American civil rights leader. Another community member was hired to translate the brochure into Arabic (see Appendix A).

Conclusion

While there is still work to do to improve trust between New York City’s immigrant groups and police, these initial efforts indicate that progress can come from continued and sustained dialogue. The creation of a space for regular dialogue with a group of community members can provide a constructive avenue for community members to direct their concerns when and if tensions arise. “Meeting face to face [also] helps the educational process; it shows the community that the police could become a friend of the community and the police see that the community is not the monster that the media shows it to be,” said one community participant. The police learn about issues of concern to the immigrant community, and the community participants can serve as a resource for the police department to help them conduct the most effective and culturally-appropriate outreach. Possibly the most important benefit is that personal relationships are developed through regular contact and dialogue.

Challenges remain, however. Many community organizations working with immigrant communities are under serious resource constraints and do not have the infrastructure to devote significant time to police-community relations activities. Immigrant communities are diverse; and, thus, different leaders have different perspectives on police-community issues and opinions on most effective relations-building strategies. This forum model may work better in certain communities than in others. Past history between police and local members of the community may present a blockade to initiating communication with the police in certain immigrant communities. Despite this challenge, it is critical that, in New York and other U.S. cities, we continue to work toward building strong police-immigrant community relations. As another community member stated, “any time you have people talking, trying to learn and understand each other—that’s always a good thing.”

Endnotes

¹ Melissa Taylor, James Carroll, John Seebach, and Irakli Khodeli, *The Changing Population in the United States, Baby Boomers, Immigrants, and Their Effects on State Government*, Trends Alert (KY: The Council of State Governments, 2002), 10.

² Luke J. Larsen, "The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2003," *Current Population Reports*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

³ "Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth as a Percentage of the Total Foreign-Born Population, For the United States: 1960 to 2000," Migration Policy Institute, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/GlobalData/charts/fb.2.shtml>; Larsen, *supra*, 1.

⁴ During the 1990s, in the largest 100 cities, the Hispanic population grew 43 percent and the Asian population increased 38 percent. In medium-sized cities, the increase was even more dramatic: the Hispanic population rose 67 percent and the Asian population 58 percent.

⁵ Taylor, *supra*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Robert C. Davis, *Perceptions of the Police Among Members of Six Ethnic Communities in Central Queens, NY* (New York, NY: Safe Horizon, 2000); Robert C. Davis and Edna Erez, "Immigrant Populations as Victims: Toward a Multicultural Criminal Justice System," *Research in Brief* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1998).

⁸ Wesley Skogan and Kathleen Frydl, eds., *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press), 291-326.

⁹ Mark H. Moore, "Problem-Solving and Community Policing," in *Modern Policing*, edited by Michael Tonry and Norval Morris (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 123.

¹⁰ Cecilia Menjivar and Cynthia Bejarano, "Latino Immigrants' Perceptions of Crime and Police Authorities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 123.

¹¹ Deborah A. Ramirez, Sasha Cohen O'Connell, and Rabia Zafar, *Developing Partnerships between Law Enforcement and American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh Communities: A Promising Practices Guide* (Boston: Northeastern University, The Partnering for Prevention and Community Safety Initiative, 2004).

¹² Cecilia Menjivar and Cynthia Bejarano, "Latino Immigrants' Perceptions of Crime and Police Authorities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004), 129.

¹³ A national survey of police chiefs, prosecutors, and court administrators found that over two thirds of respondents believed that immigrants report crime less frequently than other victims. Robert C. Davis and Edna Erez, "Immigrant Populations as Victims: Toward a Multicultural Criminal Justice System," *Research in Brief* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, May 1998), 4.

¹⁴ Skogan, Steiner, DuBois, Gudell, and Fagan *supra*.

¹⁵ Davis and Erez, *supra*.

¹⁶ National Crime Prevention Council, *Lengthening the Stride: Employing Peace Officers From Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups* (Washington, DC: NCPC, 1995).

¹⁷ “Building Bridges: A Little Cultural Awareness Goes a Long Way,” *Law Enforcement News* (Spring 2004), 2.

¹⁸ “Selected Socioeconomic Characteristics, United States and Top 25 Cities” (New York: New York City Department of City Planning), <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/sf3top25.pdf>.

¹⁹ Mia Lipsit, “Newcomers Left Behind: Immigrant Parents Lack Equal Access to New York City’s Schools” (New York: Center for New York City Affairs, Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, New School University, 2003), citing NYC Department of Education Division of English Language Learners, *Facts and Figures 2001-2002*.

²⁰ Menjivar, *supra*, p. 136.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 136-139.

²² Menjivar, *supra*.

Appendix A: NYPD Fact Sheet on Arab Culture

The following document is a copy of a fact sheet on Arab culture developed by Arab community participants for patrol officers assigned to the seven city precincts with the highest concentrations of Arab residents.



New York City's Arab Communities

Arab-Americans live throughout New York City but are most heavily concentrated in a handful of communities. They live in Bay Ridge and Sunset Park (068/072 precincts), Sheepshead Bay (061 precinct), and the Atlantic Avenue area (076/084 precincts) in Brooklyn; Astoria (114 precinct) and Woodside (108 precinct) in Queens; and parts of Staten Island (122 precinct). They have immigrated to New York from all 22 countries of the Arab world: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Because of the severity of law enforcement in Arab countries, many Arab immigrants fear the police and may hesitate to contact authorities. Since September 11, 2001, community leaders report that this problem has worsened and that Arab-Americans have greater fear of police. These factors make it extremely important for police officers to understand cultural norms in order to establish a good rapport with the Arab community.

WHAT CODES OF CONDUCT SHOULD I KNOW WHEN ENTERING AN ARAB PERSON'S HOME?

- Honor and hospitality are important parts of Arab culture. When greeting an Arab person, be sure to shake hands and make eye contact. While some Arab people do not shake hands with those of the opposite sex, it is generally preferable to offer your hand to someone who does not shake hands than to not offer your hand to someone who does.
- It is also important to understand that Arab people communicate closely. If an Arab person gets very close to you, it is not necessarily a sign of aggression.
- It is considered offensive to ask questions about personal religious behavior or politics in Arab countries.
- Many Arab Muslim households remove their shoes at the door because carpeting is used for prayers.
- It is recommended that you visit as a male/female pair. Some Arab people will not admit persons of the other sex into their home unless a relative of that sex is also present.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE ARAB COMMUNITY?

Arab people practice many religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. A follower of the religion of Islam is a Muslim. Not all Arab people are Muslim, and not all Muslims are of Arab descent. The majority of Arabs in the U.S. are Christian.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW WHEN ENTERING A MOSQUE?

- You may be asked to remove your shoes before entering a mosque.
- Women are expected to dress modestly and may be asked to cover their heads. Men wear long pants and shirts. Women and men often pray in different areas.
- An imam is the leader of prayer at a mosque and an important community leader. If there is a need to address large groups of Arab-American Muslims on a particular public safety or quality of life issue, it would be useful to reach out to the imam.
- The imam gives sermons on Fridays, the holiest day of the Islamic week.



WHY DO SOME MUSLIM WOMEN WEAR A HEAD SCARF?

The word *hijab* means modesty and can be used to refer to a head scarf sometimes worn by Muslim women. This is a religious, not cultural, practice. If police deem it necessary for a woman to remove her head covering, it is recommended that it be done in the presence of female police officers, not male.

WHAT LANGUAGES DO ARAB PEOPLE SPEAK?

- There are several dialects of Arabic spoken in different regions of the Arabic world. Speakers of different dialects are not necessarily able to communicate with each other.
- Arabic is not the only language spoken by Arab people. Berber, Kurdish, and Aramaic are a few of the many other languages spoken in Arab countries. Because of colonization, French and English are often spoken in Arab countries.

USEFUL PHRASES IN ARABIC

- **Hello:** Marhba
- **Goodbye:** Ma saHaama
- **How are you:** Keef ha-Hak (when speaking to a man), or Keef ha-Hek (when speaking to a woman).
- **Fine:** Kway-iss (if you are a man), or Kway-issa (if you are a woman).
- **What's your name?:** Ma issmak (when speaking to a man), or Ma issmooky (when speaking to a woman).
- **My name is:** Ana iss-mee.
- **What is the exact address where you live?:** Ma erwanek?
- **What is your telephone number?:** Aish raqem telefonek?
- **What is your date of birth?:** Ma hoowah tarikh meeladek (when speaking to a man)? or Ma tarikh meeladooky (when speaking to a woman)?
- **May I see your driver's license?:** Moomkin ashooof rokhsetek (when speaking to a man)? or Moomkin ashooof rokhsetokey (when speaking to a woman)?
- **Do you understand English?:** Hail tefhem Inglezy (when speaking to a man)? or Hail tefhemmy Inglezy (when speaking to a woman)?
- **Do you understand what I said?:** Hail tefhem ma agool (when speaking to a man)? or Hail tefhemmy ma agool (when speaking to a woman)?
- **I don't understand:** La lem efhem.
- **Thank you:** Shook-run.
- **You're welcome:** Aaf-wan.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

To learn more about New York City's Arab communities, contact the following organizations:

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

Contact: Monica Tarazi (212) 480-2955 or (212) 480-2956
80 Wall Street, Suite 718, New York, NY 10005

Arab American Association of New York

Contact: Dr. Ahmad Jaber (718) 745-3523
7111 Fifth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11209

Arab American Family Support Center

Contact: Emira Habiby Brown (718) 643-8000
150 Court Street, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201



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Appendix B: Legal Rights and Responsibilities Brochure

The following document is a brochure informing New York City residents of their legal rights and responsibilities.

The police should not ask you about your immigration status if you are calling them for help. Similarly, police officers should not ask you about your immigration status if you have been a crime victim or if you have witnessed a crime being committed, unless you are being investigated for illegal activity, other than mere status as an undocumented alien.

HOW DO YOU MAKE A COMPLAINT AGAINST A POLICE OFFICER?

For complaints about:

- Unnecessary use of force
- Abuse of authority
- Discourtesy or offensive language

Contact the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) - an independent agency that monitors police behavior - by phone, letter or in person at:

40 Rector Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10006
(212) 442-8833
(800) 341-2272

For complaints about:

- Serious misconduct
- Corruption

Notify the New York City Police Department's Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) by phone, letter or in person at:

315 Hudson Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY
(212) 741-8401 (24 hours a day)

Complaints can also be filed at any precinct or police facility.

WHEN FILING A COMPLAINT ...

Be sure to include as much information as possible, including:

- Officer's name
- Shield number
- License plate number
- Description of officer (height, weight, scars, tattoos, etc.)
- Day, approximate time, and place the encounter took place
- Names of other witnesses

You may file your complaint anonymously, but providing your name will greatly assist investigators obtain all relevant information.

TO REPORT A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH A POLICE OFFICER ...

Contact the officer's commanding officer at his or her precinct, police service area, or transit district. Alternatively, contact the Office of Deputy Commissioner Community Affairs at (646) 610-5323.

TO GIVE INPUT TO YOUR LOCAL PRECINCT ...

- To comment on local police, crime, public safety, and quality of life concerns, and to meet your local precinct commander, you can attend your precinct's community council meetings, which are monthly meetings open to all members of the public
- You may also contact the local precinct's *community affairs officer*.



New York City
Police Department



Your Rights And Responsibilities When Interacting With The Police: A Community Guide

OUR MISSION

The mission of the New York City Police Department is to enhance the quality of life in our City by working in partnership with the community and in accordance with constitutional rights to enforce the law, preserve the peace, reduce fear, and provide a safe environment for all people who live, work, or visit this City.

Police interact with the public for many different reasons. They may, for example, think a person has committed - or has information about - a crime, sometimes they believe that a person needs help, or they may simply want to warn someone about a potentially dangerous situation. Remember that each situation is unique, and police officers must alter their response to fit the circumstances.

This brochure provides very basic information on the rights and responsibilities of the public and police during the most common types of encounters. For more information, contact an attorney or a local legal advocacy organization.

WHEN CAN AN OFFICER STOP YOU?

Under New York State law, police officers have the right to stop and question you if they have reason to suspect that you have committed, are committing, or are about to commit a crime. There are also many circumstances when the police can ask you general questions; such as your name, as long as they can give a reason why they are asking the questions.

If police officers reasonably suspect that you are carrying a weapon, they have the right to pat down your clothing to look for it.

In addition, police officers may stop your car:

- If you have committed a traffic violation.
- If they reasonably suspect that you have committed, are committing, or are about to commit a crime, or
- At a DWI or safety checkpoint.

Police officers are not permitted to use race, religion or ethnicity as the only reason for taking police action.

WHAT SHOULD A POLICE OFFICER DO IF HE OR SHE STOPS YOU?

- Explain why you are being stopped.
- Give you his or her name and shield number, upon request.
- Be courteous and respectful.

If you are arrested, the police are entitled to ask you your name, address, telephone number, and other identifying information without telling you what your rights are.

HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE WHEN INTERACTING WITH THE POLICE?

- Remain calm.
- Keep your hands visible.
- Be courteous and respectful.
- Don't physically resist arrest, even if you think the police are wrong.

IF YOU ARE STOPPED IN YOUR CAR . . .

- If asked, show your driver's license, proof of insurance and registration.
- If asked, you and your passengers must get out of the car.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS WHEN INTERACTING WITH THE POLICE?
(These rights belong to non-citizens as well as citizens)

If you are stopped or arrested by the police ...

- You have a right to remain silent. You cannot be punished for refusing to answer questions by the police. However, the police may become more suspicious of you if you do not answer their questions.
- If you decide to speak with the police, anything you say can be used against you in court.

- You have the right to talk to a lawyer before you answer questions. If you cannot afford an attorney, the government will provide one for you.

If the police want to search your home, business or vehicle ...

- Generally, the police require a search warrant. However, there are exceptions (e.g. when an emergency exists or when a person gives consent to search). A search warrant is a legal document signed by a judge that authorizes the police to enter a particular home, business or vehicle to search for specific evidence as part of a criminal investigation.

- When executing a search warrant, the police must announce their authority and purpose, unless the warrant expressly authorizes entry without notice.

If you are a crime victim or witness ...

- In case of an emergency, you can dial **911** from any telephone in New York City to get assistance from the police. Language interpreters are available 24 hours a day.
- To make complaints about loud music, public urination, disorderly youths, graffiti, or other quality of life complaints, you can call **311** from any telephone.
- You can also make complaints in person at your local police precinct.
- You are strongly encouraged to cooperate with all police inquiries.

Appendix C: Map of Mexican Immigrant Population in New York City

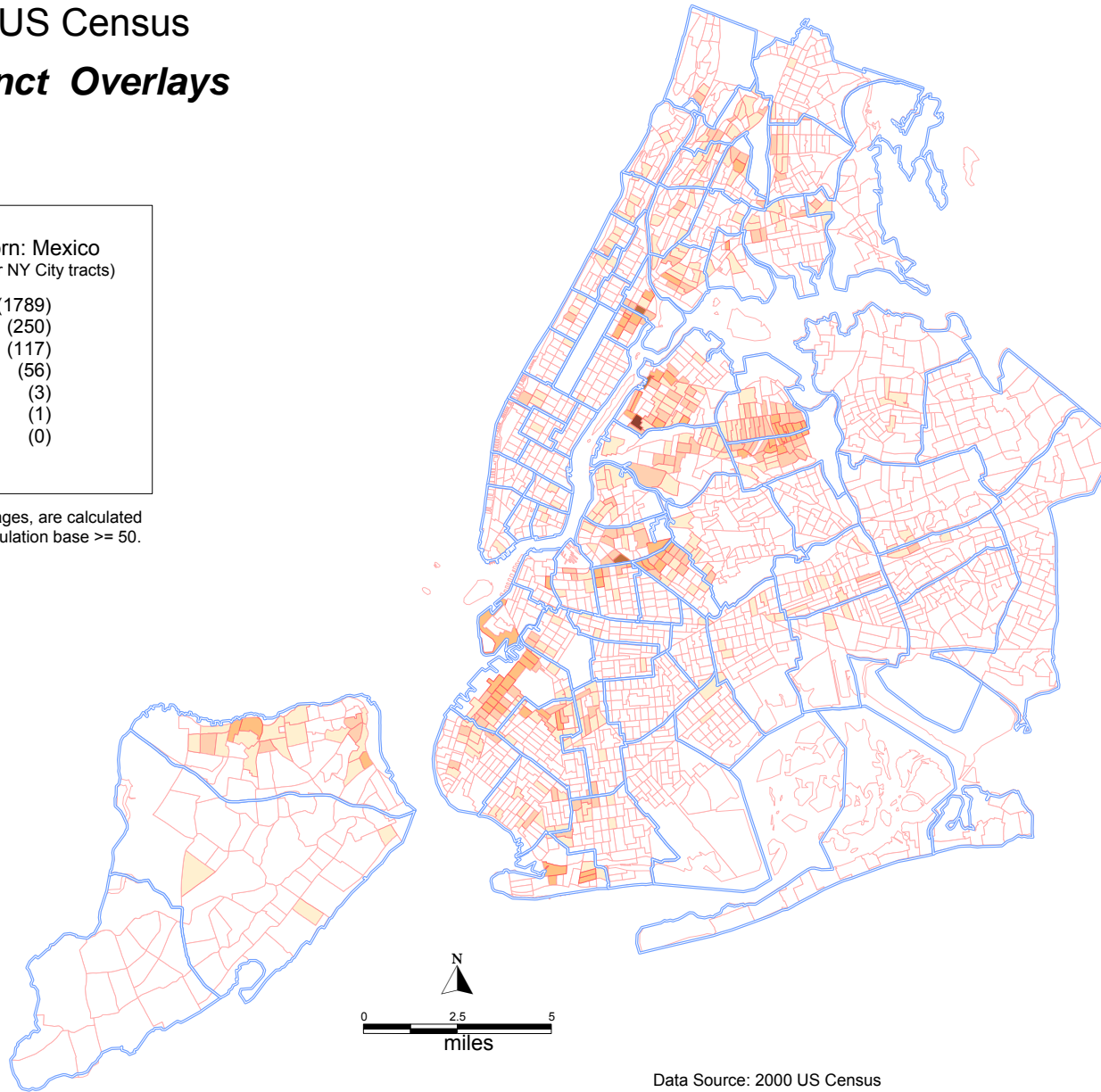
Mexican Immigrant Population in New York City

Based on 2000 US Census
with NYPD Precinct Overlays

Percent Foreign Born: Mexico
(based on 2000 Census for NY City tracts)

< 2%	(1789)
2 to 4.99	(250)
5 to 9.99	(117)
10 to 24.99	(56)
25 to 34.99	(3)
35 to 49.99	(1)
>= 50%	(0)

NOTE: Foreign born percentages, are calculated only for tracts with a total population base >= 50.



Data Source: 2000 US Census
Produced by Vera Institute of Justice



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