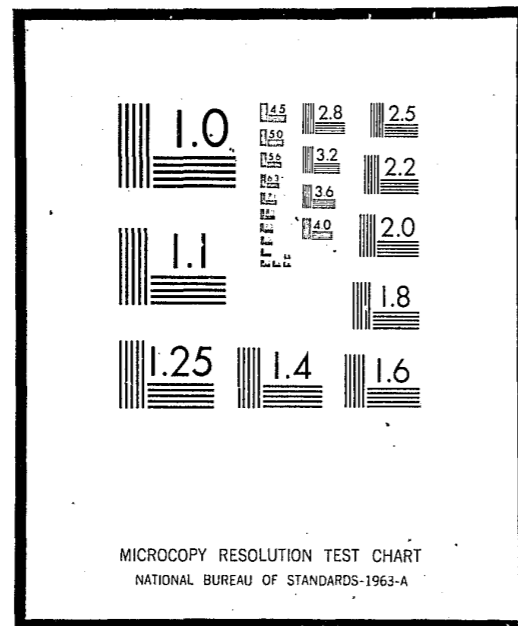


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THE CRIME PREVENTION UNIT OF THE
FARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT - Crime Prevention
AN EVALUATION OF "OPERATION IDENTIFICATION"

Submitted by:

Thomas D. McDonald
Department of Sociology-Anthropology
North Dakota State University
Fargo, North Dakota 58102

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INTRODUCTION

Reported here is a preliminary evaluation of "Operation Identification," an experimental program to combat burglary located within the Crime Prevention Unit of the Fargo Police Department. This program was funded by the North Dakota Combined Law Enforcement Council--Grant Number 2-180(B-3).

The assessed period of time covered in this report is, in the main, August 1, 1973, through December 31, 1973. Depending on the specific issue under review, however, this time period will vary; that is to say, data and other relevant information have been collected and evaluated both prior to and after the August through December period in order to provide as complete an assessment as possible on the program.

CRIME TARGET APPROPRIATENESS

The first issue which should be considered in evaluating "Operation Identification" of the Fargo Police Department is whether the personnel responsible for the selection of "Burglary" as the crime specific target selected an appropriate goal. In deciding upon an answer to this question, the statistics of the Fargo Police Department were collected and reviewed. Such statistics have been utilized in an effort to assess whether burglary or some other crime should have been viewed as a more serious problem in the City of Fargo and if so, whether existing resources could and should have been marshalled in order to attack the issue.

Table 1 presents a ten year summary, i.e., 1964 through 1973, of officially recorded crimes in Fargo.

In this reviewer's opinion, four major crimes bear close consideration in assessing the decision to attack burglary. As Table I indicates, the crimes of burglary, larceny over \$50, and larceny under \$50, and auto theft constitute the overwhelming majority of crimes. Thus, one can conclude that the decision of a crime specific target can be narrowed to four of the seven major crimes. In addressing both larceny over and under \$50, it is important to consider that each of these categories contains a wide range of crimes, e.g., purse snatching, shoplifting, stealing items from automobiles, bicycle thefts, and stealing money from various coin operated machines. The point here is that the range of behaviors is so wide and the persons and property which are victimized are so diverse that it would be somewhat naive to suggest that larceny, at least in general, can be realistically viewed, using program operational

TABLE I
 AN YEAR SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN MAJOR CRIMES IN THE CITY OF FARGO, N. D.

Classification	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Murder	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manslaughter by Negligence	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	0	0
Forcible Rape	2	2	2	1	3	5	3	5	2	2
Robbery	4	7	5	13	8	7	13	9	11	7
Assault	*5	*9	*5	20	23	42	40	35	30	26
Burglary	118	225	151	194	163	168	201	176	354	281
Larcenies over \$50	140	206	241	291	280	313	390	551	574	599
Larcenies under \$50	594	790	905	859	925	937	817	1,141	1,743	1,386
Auto Theft	63	69	59	132	89	73	98	94	126	142
Totals	931	1,311	1,370	1,512	1,493	1,546	1,564	2,013	2,841	2,444

*Tabulation of aggravated assaults only.

criteria as a crime specific problem. In short, the personal and property characteristics of larceny are two factors, among others, which make this crime category so diffuse that it cannot be attacked without additional sub-categorization.

Continuing with the remaining two officially categorized crimes, one is left with burglary and auto theft. For the moment, this review will confine itself to these two specific crimes. In considering the data from Table I and restricting the attention to burglary and auto theft, it is noticed that there exists an unstable but overall increase in the amount of each crime for the past ten years. In particular, there is evidence of a major increase for each of these from 1972 to 1973. More exactly the amount of burglaries have increased by 195 or 69.4%, and the amount of auto thefts have increased by 173, or 121.8% from 1972 to 1973. When one looks at the rate of increase for each, an immediate conclusion might be that the appropriate target crime should have been auto theft. Such an assessment is open to question on more than one dimension. First, the fact remains that there are more burglaries than auto thefts. Second, research conducted during the past seventeen years reveals that burglary is very much resented by the public and its existence stimulates bitter denunciation of crime control by the citizenry (see, for example, Smigel, 1956; Rosenthal, 1969; Conklin, 1971; Furstenberg, 1971; and Conklin and Bittner, 1973). Summarized by The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice is the proposition that burglary is "...a significant... reason for America's alarm about crime" (Task Force Report: The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society, 1967: 4).

The above two reasons could be viewed as sufficient evidence for the selection of burglary as the specific target crime of the Fargo Police Department. One additional point, however, warrants important consideration. During the course of gathering information for this preliminary evaluation, it came to this reviewer's attention that the personnel of "Operation Identification" are addressing the issue of bicycle theft. The importance of this for assessing the appropriateness issue is that data on bicycle theft are included under "Larceny." Analysis of statistics on larceny revealed that in 1972 there were 143 bicycle thefts and 731 in 1973, an increase of 588 or 411.2%. When one combines the data on burglary with that on bicycle theft, one is led to conclude that the Crime Prevention Unit's use of "Operation Identification" for burglary is an appropriate selection. When one considers the variance within the categories of larceny, the public concern over burglary, the official statistics on burglary and bicycle theft which show the greatest amount, increase, and growth rate in recent years, then there is no quarrel with the goal selection--when operationalized--of the Fargo Police Department.

EFFORT

Before addressing the performance aspect of "Operation Identification" it is important to examine the effort which has been provided for the program. As Suchman (1967: 61) states: "This represents an assessment of input or energy regardless of the output."

"Operation Identification" has two officers which are assigned to it: Lt. John Pavek and Officer James Kuchera. Although the grant period began on August 1, 1973, it is important to note that Officer Kuchera was not specifically assigned to the program until the third week of November. In addition, Officer Kuchera attended a crime prevention program in Michigan from December 3 through December 14.

Along with these events, additional occurrences delayed the full operationalism of the program. The availability of a vehicle for staff use, problems in delivery of the van which was finally delivered on February 21, 1974, low quality secretarial staff, and construction renovation, all have combined to restrict progress. This reviewer has witnessed, on a first hand basis, all of these problems but can also indicate that, from all available evidence, they have been resolved. The point of this reference is that they very much explain why "Operation Identification" did not achieve a thrust until the first week of January, 1974, five months after the grant period commenced.

On the more positive side, it can justifiably be said that the budgeted and non-budgeted personnel (i.e., Sgt. Robert Olson*) have been very active in communicating the availability of the program to the public. Initially, some segments of the public voiced

*Sgt. Olson, while not a salaried staff member of the project, devotes three-fourths of his time to "Operation Identification."

suspicion of the police department's wishing to collect too much private information. The personnel of the program specifically identified that no personal information was being solicited until after a crime was committed. Once the public understood this, cooperation followed.

As far as effort by the general personnel of the department is concerned, it is worth noting that the regular force has attended a crime prevention training program conducted by Lt. John Pavek. In his assessment, cooperation from the officers has been and remains excellent.

Cooperation by the business community has also been excellent. On February 9, 1974, the Fargo Jaycees assembled at the police department and distributed the engraving units to approximately one hundred business and residential locations. The Fargo city departments have all used the engraving units. Several private contractors have purchased their own engraving units. The Insurance Adjustors Association purchased fifty such units and plans to acquire an additional fifty. Cooperation from the local news media has been extended and employed in communicating to the public. Furthermore, the administration of North Dakota State University cooperated with the program by having 1800 students engrave their personal possessions in the dormitories.

The following is a schedule of events by Lt. John Pavek and Officer James Kuchera concerning their efforts in "Operation Identification."

Lt. John S. Pavek

- 8-1-73 Talk with landlords, regarding security of apartment buildings and other related problems, 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., 25 people attended.
- 11-6-73 Talk with Bell Telephone Company officials on Operation Identification, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- 11-6-73 Depot talk with youth, 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- 11-8-73 City Attorney Meeting on security ordinances, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- 11-8-73 Public Library Conference on Crime Prevention, 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
- 11-9-73 Meeting with Catholic School Board, security at Shanley High School.
- 11-9-73 Public Library Conference on Crime Prevention, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- 11-13-73 Fargo National Bank, regarding security of bank by employees.
- 11-17-73 Seigels Clothing, regarding Shoplifting.
- 11-20-73 Meeting with Bob Rust, regarding Citizen Crime Committee.
- 11-24-73 Meeting with West Acres merchants, regarding shoplifting.
- 11-27-73 First Federal Savings & Loan, meeting of all security people of savings and loans companies and also banks, regarding: Security of the above.
- 11-28-73 St. Mary's School PTA Meeting, explain new Crime Prevention Bureau, 44 people attended.
- 12-3-73 Town House Motel, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Seratoma Club, explain new Crime Prevention Program.
- 12-3-73 Meeting of insurance adjusters at Bowler, 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., 15 people attended.
- 12-4-73 Moorhead State College, regarding Information of Crime Prevention, 30 students attended.
- 12-5-73 North High School, 7:45 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., 30 students and 22 students attended, regarding Crime Prevention and Help to the Community.
- 12-5-73 Check on security at Lamplighter Apartments for owner.

Lt. John S. Pavek, Continued

- 12-6-73 Meeting with Bell Telephone employees, regarding engraving, 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
- 12-7-73 South High School, 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., regarding Police Community Relations.
- 12-11-73 School for all officers, regarding Crime Prevention and Role of Policemen, 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m., 45 officers attended; 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., 27 officers attended.
- 12-12-73 Same as above, 42 officers and 31 officers attended.
- 12-13-73 Meeting with Shanley High School Board, regarding Bomb Scare and What to Do.
- 12-17-73 St. Mary's School, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., regarding Shoplifting.
- 12-21-73 Meeting with Fargo-Moorhead Association of Architects, regarding Crime Prevention and Ways to Cooperate with Each Other.
- 12-28-73 City Planning Meeting, regarding Crime Prevention.
- 1-9-74 Bell Telephone, 90 women attended, regarding Operation Identification.
- 1-9-74 Fraternity House, 1372 12th Avenue, regarding Police Problems.
- 1-14-74 Meeting with architect Seifert on building code.
- 2-6-74 Meeting with Seifert on security aid.
- 2-6-74 City Planning Commission meeting.
- 2-9-74 Fargo Jaycees distribute engraving units.
- 2-11-74 Meeting with Senator Burdick, regarding What is the Crime Prevention Bureau doing for the City of Fargo.
- 2-21-74 Bell Telephone Company meeting with employees, regarding Crime Prevention.

Officer James D. Kuchera

- 11-8-73 Public Library Conference on Crime Prevention, 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
- 11-9-73 Public Conference on Crime Prevention, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- 11-13-73 Fargo National Bank, regarding Security of Bank by Employees.
- 11-17-73 Seigels Clothing Store, regarding Shoplifting.
- 11-27-73 First Federal Savings and Loan, regarding Security of a Savings and Loan Bank.
- 11-28-73 St. Mary's School, City PTA, Explain Crime Prevention, 44 people attended.
- 12-28-73 City Planning Commission, regarding Crime Prevention in New Development.
- 1-9-74 Fraternity House, North Dakota State University, regarding Crime Prevention.
- 1-10-74 St. John's Hospital, Alcoholism Unit.
- 1-14-74 Meeting with architect Seifert on building code.
- 1-18-74 Meeting with Fargo-Moorhead Builders of lock ordinance.
- 2-5-74 Channel 4 TV, Operation Identification.
- 2-6-74 Meeting with Seifert on security aid.
- 2-20-74 Clay County Safety Council, 25 people attended.

In assessing the effort of the personnel in this program, one must conclude that, while the thrust of the operation was tardy, it has been highly active and effective as of this report. It is worth underscoring that a major input has been provided by Sgt. Robert Olson, who is not a salaried member of the program grant. With the limited staff available to this project, his efforts have provided a major and positive impact.

EFFICIENCY

In evaluating the efficiency of this program, one must, in part, address the deployment of the personnel. As implied in the section on "EFFORT" much energy and time has been consumed in planning for the thrust of the operation. In short, approximately five months were necessary in additional planning for the operation of the program. Stated differently, the personnel assigned to the program, when assigned, were not allowed sufficient "lead-time" to optimally prepare for the program's implementation. The grant period, which was for nine months has been characterized by the use of five months for additional planning. From one perspective, the consumption of this time and energy may be assessed as lacking full efficiency. On the other hand, available evidence suggests that this was necessary in order to have the program and the personnel arrive at a stage of operationalism.

A more central question of efficiency regarding the efficient deployment of personnel concerns the future status of the project. This reviewer has been informed that a continuation grant is being considered, which, in part, contains a request for two additional police officers. The rationale for this is that if the crime prevention van is to be made available to police departments in other communities, two officers will have to be assigned to the van as it travels throughout the state. In this reviewer's judgement, if the van is to be made available, additional personnel will be necessary. To rely on existing personnel to operate the van in other communities will be an unrealistic expectation. As pointed out previously, a non-salaried staff member of the Fargo Police

Department is devoting a major proportion of his time in order to insure the success of the program. To expect additional input from existing staff, which are now operating efficiently, would be an unwarranted taxation of resources. What remains an unclear issue to this reviewer, in all frankness, is why two additional staff are necessary for the successful and secure operation of the van. The necessity of two staff have been attributed to the importance of having one person outside the van to deal with the public and one person inside to demonstrate to the public and protect the equipment. As the salaries of personnel would be a major budgetary item, this request will have to be reviewed quite carefully. One possible alternative is to request the soliciting police department to provide one police officer to be outside the van and thus allow the member of the Fargo Police Department to remain inside, the location which seems the more crucial of the two. Whether this suggestion is realistic needs further consideration. The obvious point is that two more staff will constitute a major cost increase in overhead. The necessity and efficiency of these is a legitimate question which, in this reviewer's judgement, has not been satisfactorily answered.

Evaluating the performance of "Operation Identification" is quite difficult. Data are available through 1973, five months after the program commenced. Remembering, however, that the thrust of the field operation did not substantively materialize until the first week of January, 1974, seriously constrains the amount of assessment which can be conducted on program results. Evidence pertaining to results is nevertheless presented so that consideration to continued funding can be provided by appropriate parties. The data for this are based on official statistics from the Police Department and information collected from interviewing administrators at North Dakota State University where the majority of engraving effort has occurred. Table 2 presents the statistics on burglary and bicycles per month during 1972 and 1973.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF BURGLARY AND BICYCLE THEFTS STATISTICS IN 1972
AND 1973 FOR FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

	1972		1973	
	Bicycle	Burglary	Bicycle	Burglary
January	1	23	4	18
February	3	15	0	25
March	31	14	85	52
April	56	31	97	27
May	85	39	115	43
June	133	25	76	43
July	65	27	85	76
August	130	37	81	47
September	118	24	68	36
October	77	17	98	38
November	44	14	16	44
December	0	15	6	27
TOTAL	143	281	731	476

The above data when placed in the operational context of "Operation Identification" do not warrant interpretation regarding the impact of the program. Two issues, however, deserve careful attention. First, Table 2 does document that burglary and bicycle thefts have markedly increased during the past year. While recognizing the well known limitations of official statistics, it does not seem justifiable to view these increases lightly. A second point of importance is the peak monthly periods of bicycle theft. The point here is that the empirical test of the program's impact on this crime specific category is yet to arrive for appropriate assessment.

In attempting to assess the results of the program on the campus of North Dakota State University, this reviewer contacted the campus security personnel and the housing administrators. Mr. Allen Spittler of the Campus Security indicated that the program has been "very successful." When asked if any data were available, he was unable to provide any which would allow for a pre- and post-measurement analysis. Mr. Maynard Niskanen of campus housing revealed that the program was well received and the students were "very enthusiastic" about it. Mr. Brad Johnson of the housing office also supported the program. He continued by saying that, at the moment, it is "...hard to say what the impact is, but we will be better able to tell in the spring, at least for bicycle thefts." All three individuals indicated that the program has made their job "easier." These comments and assessments would lead one to evaluate the performance as successful. Empirical data on dormitory and bicycle thefts, however, would be better crime indicators of the impact of the program.

In sum, it is this reviewer's judgement that the above data justify the program's existence and continuation. The existence of better data would obviously facilitate a more definitive assessment. The lack of such data in assessing a nine month project which has been substantively operational for only two months should not be viewed as criteria for program termination; unless, of course, there is a financial constraint which causes such a conclusion.

This criterion, as used by Suchman (1967: 63) "...refers to the degree to which effective performance is adequate to the total amount of need." Realizing that program effectiveness cannot be adequately assessed at this time, it is still appropriate to address the adequacy of the effort. The restrictions of the personnel identified previously under "EFFORT" have functioned to very much restrict the adequacy of the effort. To be sure, many engravings have occurred, but the total amount of need is not fully explored. This is recognized and admitted by the personnel of the Fargo Police Department. When queried as to the major source of frustration for the personnel of "Operation Identification," the response indicated that they desired more time to achieve greater coverage. The widespread engraving program in some businesses, e.g., Northwestern Bell and on the campus of North Dakota State University, are impressive but not adequate for the total community. Residential placement is in need of greater effort and successful placement. Furthermore, as Captain Allen Spitter of the NDSU campus security indicated, the next stage on the campus should be to identify office equipment. While the vulnerability of such to burglary is unknown, the suggestion is not without merit.

The point here is that the assessment of program adequacy is low. This is not surprising given the previously identified problems which have seriously constrained the operationalism of the program.

This preliminary evaluation of "Operation Identification" at the Fargo Police Department is a double-edged report. On the one hand, this assessment documents that the program is appropriately targeting the staff energies and efforts. It also reveals that much headway has been made since operationalism. The personnel of the unit, both budgeted and non-budgeted, have efficiently worked on marshalling appropriate departmental and community resources in order to achieve program success.

Shortcomings exist, however. The delay in operationalism of the plans, while apparently justifiable, prevented a sufficient period of time from elapsing so that impact could be legitimately assessed. A conclusion based on available statistics would be very premature. Adequacy is yet to be attained, although available evidence suggests that a greater proportion is being achieved each week. These shortcomings, while serious, are recognized and being corrected.

In this reviewer's assessment, continuation of the "Operation Identification" program is warranted. To terminate, in light of the input to date, does not seem justified. More time is needed to await the presentation of data (which at the moment simply do not exist) on the impact of the program. A remaining question, should continuation be prescribed by appropriate parties, is the need for two additional personnel. In this observer's judgement, the necessity and efficiency of such a request is open to legitimate question. The program is needed, the use of two additional staff is not, for the moment, so evident.

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