

TOWARD THE FORMULATION OF CRIME INDICATORS: ROBBERIES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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The collection of crime statistics in the USA is a costly and complex operation which involves 32,000 police units voluntarily cooperating with the FBI, and reporting according to well established procedures detailed in the Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook. Yet this massive effort amounts to little more than mediocre "bookkeeping," as Robert K. Merton appropriately calls it, since it does not provide more reliable information on causes and conditions of crime trends in the nation.¹

However, when we consider that a large number of police departments throughout the U.S. do not publish systematic reports on their activities on a regular basis (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the LAPD are outstanding exceptions in this respect), the FBI Uniform Crime Report stands out as the only source of useful information on occurrence of crime in the nation. The utility of the U.C.R. ends here. For, when one attempts to draw validated conclusions from the U.C.R. the difficulties become almost unmountable. Sellin, Wolfgang and Cressey have done considerable work to highlight some of the fallacies and shortcomings that weaken these modes of public reporting, unfortunately with little or no results.²

The researcher who looks to the Uniform Crime Report for a concise and valid indicator of crime trends is soon disenchanting with the rather primitive devices used in the report, such as the crude "crime index" and the even more misleading "crime clock." For a striking regularity obtains in the substance and in the modality of reporting; they inevitably suggest that crime is rising consistently and, one would conclude, almost inevitably, year after year. It is difficult to dispel the feeling that official crime reporting in the USA serves primarily the function of intensifying the fears and apprehensions in the nation's populace, thus facilitating the justification and acceptance of ever mounting requests for more taxpayer's money to finance a progressively less effective system of law enforcement and protection of the citizens. Strength of police personnel and cost of police operation has gone up over the past ten years at a faster pace than the population of the country and even faster than crime itself. It is this state of disguised ignorance that led Sellin to remark that "the U.S. has the worst criminal statistics of any major country in the Western world."³

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this is not a bookkeeping
it's a report
new
idea

The shortcomings of our crime statistics notwithstanding, they represent the only hard information we have at our disposal on a crucial sector of social life. However much we may want to criticize, the lack of reliability and validity of these statistics, decisions of major importance are continuously being made on the basis of these data. It is evident that, until an alternative and effective way of gathering reliable data on deviant behavior is devised and put into operation our nation will be guided by available official statistics in its development of policy to enhance the level of safety from crime. The present task of the social scientist is clearly a twofold one: 1. to press for systematic, accurate reporting of crime according to a compatible and uniform format throughout the country; and 2. to interpret crime trends for the nation in a professional and meaningful way by devising intelligible and, as far as possible, simple indicators of the risk characteristics of a given area. This report aims to contribute toward the second goal, while striving indirectly to highlight the urgency of pursuing the first objective.

A closer scrutiny of crime statistics suggests two general hypotheses: 1. A crime index based on geographical variations and on variations in criminal behavior (crime-specific crime index) is bound to be more informative than the currently crude crime index which lumps together all major crimes for relatively large areas. 2. Variations in crime frequency from place to place ought to reflect variations in factors most closely associated with crime incidence. These factors can, in turn, be used as valid predictors of crime trends. When we consider that the safety of a given area is of prime consideration in the choice process by which individuals and families decide where they will reside, the utility of well conceived crime indicators toward apprising the quality of life in a given area becomes self evident. Furthermore it is clear that, however well financed our efforts to stem the deterioration of the quality of life of our nation, they will be ineffective unless we have at our disposal better knowledge of conditions fostering crime.

As a first step in this direction, we designed an exploratory study of comparative incidence of robberies in the various communities of Los Angeles County with the aim to establishing differential susceptibility to high or low rates of robberies in the above communities.

The study of robbery.

The selection of robbery for the purpose of developing crime indicators was prompted by several reasons. First, robbery is the one crime that combines violence against the person with loss of property. Second, robbery is the only violent crime against the person where the victim is most often unknown to the assailant, and consequently is apt to generate more fear and apprehension.

Other violent crimes such as murder, rape, and assault involve very often persons who are related to each other or have at least some passing acquaintance with each other. Third, with the exception of very small children, the exposed population in the case of robbery is coextensive with the actual population of a given area, while for most other crimes the exposed population differs considerably from the total population of the area. Fourth, robberies were selected for analysis because of the low discrepancy frequently observed between robberies committed and robberies reported or known to the police. Unlike other crimes for which a wide discrepancy obtains between the two statistics, robberies are (after murders and after theft) the most visible crimes, to the extent that the victims report with sufficient regularity most such events. Sellin and Wolfgang have argued that offenses most likely to be reported in a constant ratio to the total committed were those which inflict some bodily harm on a victim and/or cause property loss by theft, damage or destruction, a hypothesis that seems to be well corroborated by occasional crime surveys.⁴ Finally, in the view of prominent criminologists robbery is rightly seen as the "bellwether offense in the crime index" in America today, although it may not necessarily represent the most "costly" crime: in 1965 the amount of money lost to robberies in the nation was estimated at approximately \$50 million, indeed a small fraction of the total cost of crime.⁵

We therefore came to the conclusion that, within the central concern of a state of the region report, namely the generation of indicators of quality of life for a given region, a well formulated index for robberies in a given area ought to provide a significant and economic reading on one of the major sources of fear among our people, and suggest a viable methodology toward generating additional indicators of safety and/or risk.

The research design.

For the purpose of this project the area of interest was limited to Los Angeles County. County-wide reporting of crime incidence requires a simple aggregation of detailed data found in the U.C.R., but we were interested in a mode of reporting that would provide accurate reading of variations between sufficiently small communities in the county, while at the same time giving indications of conditions that appear associated with variations of crime between communities. To this end we established a comparative ranking of the communities, identified relationships between crime data and census data, and compared our findings with data on perception of crime, derived independently in the course of a county-wide survey.

Scope of the research.

Our study was limited to the 77 incorporated communities within Los Angeles County and the 17 police reporting districts of the city of Los Angeles (an area coextensive with the 70 planning divisions of the city). The 48 unincorporated places in the County were not included because they were too anomalous with respect to the concept of "community" we were using, namely a politically and socially identifiable unit which forms the most specific referent of identification for people living there, and for which Crime statistics and Census statistics on a comparable geographic basis are available. Within the County of Los Angeles, police jurisdictions do not completely coincide with community boundaries nor with the divisions used by the Bureau of Census. The boundaries between Census Tracts and Police Reporting Districts show great variance and only fractional overlap. The work of establishing common units of measurement and identical areas of discourse, therefore, presents grave problems that continuously bring home to the researcher the desirability and pressing need to legislate homogeneous jurisdictions for the various public service operations (such as Census, Police, Education, Health, Welfare, etc.) as an absolute precondition for a reliable and meaningful social accounting.

In order to gather county-wide data four sets of reports had to be used, that is the Reports of the Los Angeles Police Department, the Reports of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the Reports of Independent Police Departments of incorporated cities not under contract with the County Sheriff, and, naturally, the U. C. Report. The multiplicity of reports is not as critical a problem, however, as the variations in modes and categories of reporting followed by the various police jurisdictions.

The research process.

Our research of robbery rates proceeded through three major steps: in the first step we put together data on robberies for the 77 incorporated communities in the County and the 17 policedivisions in the City of Los Angeles for the fiscal years 1961 and 1970, the closest match to the Census years. We ranked the 94 locations on the basis of robbery rates per 1,000 population, arranging them in descending order from the highest to the lowest rate, on the basis of the 1970 census data (see Table I). Rates of increase in population and in robberies between 1961 and 1970 were calculated for each community. A simple inspection of trends as illustrated in Table I is very illuminating, for it suggests hypotheses and highlights anomalies.

The second step consisted in selecting the six highest and six lowest ranking communities for further analysis using the 1970 census data. From among the information provided by the census we selected variables having to do with community population distri-

bution, age groups, economic status, education, employment, housing and poverty level. In the last step we compared the statistics for robberies in the various communities with the data of a sample of respondents from the same communities on their perception of safety in the community. In selecting the 12 communities with respectively the highest and the lowest incidence of robberies, we left out sections of Los Angeles city and bypassed a few communities outside Los Angeles, because they were significantly out of proportion for comparison or because we did not have complete data for them.

The findings.

Table I vividly illustrates the legitimacy of our questioning the current use of "crime index," which pretends to gauge crime rates by lumping together all seven major crimes (while) ignoring population variations between communities at different times. Some of the communities studied, for instance, have experienced considerable percentage increase in population during the past decade, but have experienced a significant decrease in robberies (e.g. Walnut, Claremont, Monterey Park, Artesia, Rosemead, El Monte, Wittier, Hawthorne, Rolling Hills). On the other hand we came across communities where the population had actually decreased, while robberies have increased considerably. Many sections of the City of Los Angeles represent this situation.

The considerable range of variation between high-robbery rate communities such as Compton and Central Los Angeles, on the one hand, and low-robbery rate communities, such as Glendora and Arcadia, confirms the hypothesis that crime-specific and comparatively originated indices can tell a different and more meaningful story than do indicators derived through illegitimate aggregation of statistics and geographical sites. The conventional FBI "crime index" for the area all but submerges the fine distinctions and the anomalies that stand out when specific crime rates are calculated for specific locations on the basis of specifically exposed population.

The inescapable conclusion of our study is that population alone is not a valid base for defining meaningful indices of crime rates and threats to the quality of life in a given area. Specific subpopulations by communities and at different times evidence considerable variations, which are all but neutralized when indices are devised on the basis of illegitimate aggregations.

TABLE I
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
RANKING OF GEOGRAPHIC COMMUNITIES BY INCIDENCE OF
ROBBERY PER 1,000 PERSONS (1970 DATA)

Community	Population		Percent Increase	Robbery /1,000		Percent Increase
	1961	1970		1961	1970	
Vernon	228	261	14.0	26.316	65.134	147.5
Central (L.A.)	145203	32444	-77.7	5.8125	35.35	508.2
Industry	734	714	- 3.0		16.81	
Newton (L.A.)	76890	85535	11.2	7.413	13.164	77.6
77th (L.A.)	227250	209416	- 7.7	5.395	11.241	108.4
Southwest (L.A.)	174670	185818	6.4	5.988	8.691	45.1
Compton	71812	78611	9.0	2.312	8.396	263.1
Wilshire (L.A.)	253009	224162	-11.4	2.304	6.179	168.2
Hollywood (L.A.)	176274	188768	7.1	2.008	5.260	162.0
Inglewood	63390	89985	42.0	1.041	5.123	392.1
Huntington Park	29920	33744	13.0	1.771	5.068	186.2
Rampart (L.A.)		194667			4.906	
Lynwood	31614	43353	37.0	0.981	4.360	344.4
Culver City	32163	31035	- 4.0	1.492	4.285	178.2
Pasadena	116407	113327	- 3.0	0.558	4.059	627.4
San Fernando	16040	16571	3.0	0.810	3.802	369.4
Hollenbeck (L.A.)	84883	109131	28.6	1.543	3.546	129.8
Hawaiian Gardens	uninc.	8811			3.518	
Gardena	35943	41021	14.0	1.447	3.437	137.5
Santa Monica	83249	88289	6.0	1.634	3.409	108.6
Long Beach	344168	358633	4.0	1.485	3.329	124.2
Lawndale	22091	24825	12.0	1.313	3.021	130.1
Commerce	8899	10536	18.0	2.247	2.942	30.9
Bell Gardens	26467	29308	11.0	0.491	2.866	483.7
Signal Hill	4647	5582	20.0	0.646	2.687	315.9
South Gate	52831	56909	6.0	0.743	2.636	254.8
Harbor (L.A.)	111484	129778	16.4	1.785	2.558	43.3
Venice (L.A.)	131926	203515	54.3	0.857	2.476	188.9
Paramount	27249	34734	27.0		2.447	
Beverly Hills	30817	33416	8.0	0.649	2.304	255.0
Pomona	67157	87384	30.0	0.566	2.243	296.3
Cudahy		16998			2.177	
Montebello	32097	42807	33.0	0.841	1.869	122.2
Pico Rivera	49150	54170	10.0	0.529	1.809	242.0
Hawthorne	33035	53304	61.0	1.483	1.801	21.4
Monrovia	27079	30015	11.0	0.665	1.799	170.5
Bell	19622	21836	11.0	0.764	1.786	133.8
Santa Fe Springs	16365	14750	-10.0	0.489	1.695	246.6
Redondo Beach	46986	56075	19.0	0.532	1.694	218.4
North Hollywood	123789	174020	40.6	0.921	1.643	78.4
Northeast (L.A.)	162178	150424	- 7.2	0.660	1.589	140.8
Foothill (L.A.)	218678	191717	-12.3	0.585	1.565	167.5
Bellflower	44846	51454	15.0	0.914	1.555	70.1
W. Los Angeles	218710	215313	- 2.6	0.562	1.551	175.9
Carson	38059	71150	87.0		1.546	
Rosemead	15111	40972	171.0	1.059	1.538	45.2
Norwalk	88739	91827	3.0	0.586	1.535	161.9

TABLE I (Cont'd.)

Community	Population		Percent Increase	Robbery /1,000		Percent Increase
	1961	1970		1961	1970	
Baldwin Park	33951	47285	39.0	0.648	1.459	125.2
Van Nuys (L.A.)	179659	241859	34.6	0.612	1.447	136.4
El Monte	14040	69837	397.0	2.707	1.418	- 47.6
Downey	82505	88445	7.0	0.436	1.413	224.1
Maywood	14598	16996	16.0	1.164	1.412	21.3
La Puente	24524	31092	27.0		1.383	
Hermosa Beach	16166	17412	8.0	0.742	1.378	85.7
San Gabriel	22511	29176	30.0	0.267	1.302	387.6
Irwindale	1313	784	-40.0	0.762	1.276	67.5
South El Monte	4831	13443	178.0	2.070	1.190	- 42.5
Alhambra	54807	62125	13.0	0.566	1.175	107.6
Duarte	13939	14981	7.0	0.861	1.135	31.8
Manhattan Beach	33934	35352	4.0	0.442	1.131	155.9
Azusa	20551	25217	23.0	0.584	1.031	76.5
El Segundo	14043	15620	11.0	0.142	1.024	621.1
West Valley (L.A.)	252418	265458	5.2	0.321	1.013	215.6
Burbank	90155	88871	- 2.0	0.399	0.968	142.6
Whittier	33663	72863	116.0	0.624	0.961	54.0
Lomita	uninc.	19784			0.960	
Torrance	100991	134584	33.0	0.386	0.959	148.4
Artesia	10020	14757	47.0	0.998	0.949	- 4.9
Palmdale		8511			0.940	
Glendale	119442	132752	11.0	0.225	0.859	280.0
Lakewood	67126	82973	24.0	0.343	0.856	149.6
West Covina	50645	68034	34.0	0.395	0.838	112.2
South Pasadena	19423	22979	18.0	0.257	0.827	221.8
Covina	20069	30380	51.0	0.299	0.823	175.3
Devonshire (L.A.)		147475			0.807	
La Mirada		30808			0.714	
Temple City	31838	29673	- 7.0	0.251	0.708	182.1
San Dimas	uninc.	15692			0.637	
Monterey Park	37821	49166	30.0	0.502	0.610	21.5
Glendora	22259	31349	41.0	0.269	0.542	101.5
Arcadia	41005	42868	5.0	0.341	0.537	57.5
Gerritos	uninc.	15856			0.505	
Palos Verdes Est	11357	13641	20.0		0.440	
La Verne	6460	12965	101.0	0.155	0.386	149.0
Claremont	12746	23464	84.0	0.000	0.341	
Rolling Hills Est	3972	6027	52.0	0.252	0.332	31.7
Sierra Madre	9781	12140	24.0		0.329	
San Marino	13507	14177	5.0	0.222	0.282	27.0
Walnut	987	5992	507.0		0.167	
Avalon	1539	1520	- 1.0	0.0	0.0	
Bradbury	621	1098	77.0	0.0	0.0	
Hidden Hills	uninc.	1529		0.0	0.0	
Rolling Hills	1690	2050	21.0	0.0	0.0	

Patterns of association and predictors of robbery trends.

With the help of 1970 Census data, we explored possible associations between "community" characteristics and rates of robberies. Table I again indicates that rates of robberies in the 94 localities studied have changed considerably over the past ten years, but also that the range of variation between these rates has widened considerably in the same period. The percent increase in robbery rates shows even greater variation from community to community, for the two times studied, from a decrease of 47% in El Monte (where population has increased by 39%), to an increase of 627% in Pasadena (where population has increased by 3%), and an increase of 621% in El Segundo (where population has increased by 11%). We surmised that a comparison between high-robbery-rate communities and low-robbery-rate communities would provide some clues to these variations, and possibly lead to the establishment of a predictive equation of high and low robbery prone communities. Using a Biomed regression program we were able to establish a correlation matrix for each socio-economic-demographic variable for which we had Census information and which could be thought of as influencing robbery rates. Two dependent variables were considered throughout; the absolute number of robberies (frequencies), and the number of robberies per 1,000 persons (rates). Tables II, III, and IV show the original data on robbery and some of the more important socio-economic-demographic variables for the communities analyzed.

TABLE II

ROBBERIES AND POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS FOR SELECTED COMMUNITIES LOS ANGELES COUNTY

<u>High Robbery Communities</u>	<u>1970 Robberies</u>	<u>Robberies /1,000-1970</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>White Population</u>	<u>Black Population</u>	<u>Spanish Surname Population</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Number of Families Below Pov- erty Level</u>
Compton	660	8.396	78,493	20,470	56,135	10,656	17,182	2,934
Inglewood	461	5.125	90,014	77,606	10,027	11,059	24,400	1,303
Huntington Park	371	5.068	33,796	32,926	45	12,134	8,957	999
Lynwood	189	4.360	43,385	42,522	167	7,639	11,722	951
Culver City	133	4.285	31,350	29,911	143	4,187	8,647	500
Pasadena	460	4.059	113,254	90,945	18,352	12,991	28,479	2,199
<u>Low Robbery Communities</u>								
LeVerns	5	0.386	12,931	12,769	74	2,084	3,274	202
Claremont	8	0.341	23,480	22,732	335	1,336	5,169	166
Bolling Hills Estates	2	0.332	6,015	5,935	0	262	1,506	32
Sierra Madre	4	0.329	12,140	11,847	18	865	3,132	104
San Marino	4	0.282	14,242	14,195	0	868	3,965	76
Walnut	1	0.167	5,992	5,804	91	472	1,411	80

TABLE III

INCOME AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS - SELECTED COMMUNITIES LOS ANGELES COUNTY

	1970 Robberies	Robberies /1,000-1970	Mean Family Income	Number of Families Owner-Occ. Below Pov.	Number of Families Renter-Occ. Below Pov.	Number of Renter- Occupied Units	Number of Persons-Unit Renter-Occ.	Number of Renter-Occ. Units With No Auto
<u>High Robbery Communities</u>								
Compton	660	8.396	9,332	1,240	2,420	8,469	3.39	2,259
Inglewood	461	5.723	11,783	814	2,467	23,377	3.77	3,326
Huntington Park	171	5.068	9,489	364	1,708	10,950	3.06	3,536
Lynwood	189	4.360	10,713	539	1,190	7,915	2.68	1,209
Culver City	133	4.283	13,874	236	623	5,757	2.40	777
Pasadena	450	4.059	14,236	1,461	4,132	24,939	2.15	6,801
<u>Low Robbery Communities</u>								
LaVerne	5	0.386	11,925	150	153	1,061	3.22	180
Claremont	8	0.311	16,980	140	393	2,406	2.31	445
Rolling Hills Estates	2	0.332	25,102	32	0	110	4.25	0
Sierra Madre	4	0.329	15,842	177	223	1,759	2.24	199
San Marino	4	0.282	32,923	90	30	374	2.72	23
Walnut	1	0.167	15,237	48	74	306	3.41	20

TABLE IV

EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH POPULATION - SELECTED COMMUNITIES LOS ANGELES COUNTY

	1970 Robberies	Robberies /1,000 1970	Number Males 14-24	Number Females 14-24	Males 16-21 Not HS Grad Unemployed	Fem. 16-21 Not HS Grad Unemployed	Males 16-21 H.S. Grad Unemployed	Fem. 16-21 H.S. Grad Unemployed	Males 25+ w/ Less 3 yrs HS
<u>High Robbery Communities</u>									
Inglewood	660	8.396	7,455	8,774	354	645	440	843	8,399
Compton	461	5.123	7,781	8,360	134	314	160	540	8,741
Wilmington Park	171	5.068	2,373	2,879	75	331	57	237	5,886
Van Nuys	189	4.360	3,603	3,937	84	248	82	284	5,535
Alhambra	133	4.285	2,706	2,861	55	91	92	138	2,868
Pasadena	460	4.059	9,970	10,229	203	350	252	637	9,576
<u>Low Robbery Communities</u>									
La Verne	5	0.326	1,214	1,294	18	66	56	79	1,243
Claremont	8	0.341	2,486	2,662	34	34	30	81	680
Rolling Hills Estates	2	0.332	603	580	0	0	16	27	333
San Juan Capistrano	4	0.329	1,120	1,189	0	21	4	49	567
San Marino	4	0.282	1,162	1,160	10	0	22	5	313
Walnut	1	0.167	656	497	5	17	10	30	224

Highlights of findings.

From our correlation tables, definite trends emerge which appear to confirm some well known patterns in crime incidence. Within the 12 communities studied, the ethnic and the economic composition of the population show a significant degree of association with rates of robbery.

TABLE V

Correlation Coefficients Between Robberies and Ethnic and Economic Composition of 12 Sample Communities

<u>Demographic Variable</u>	<u>Robberies/1000</u>	
	<u>High Robbery Areas</u>	<u>Low Robbery Areas</u>
White population	-0.50	0.45
Spanish population	0.21	0.65
Black population	0.88	0.11
Mean family income	-0.66	0.12
% Families below poverty level	0.87	-0.12
Mean Number Persons/Renter occupied units	0.59	-0.14
% Families owner occupied below poverty	0.75	0.21

Yet another strong association was found to obtain between the percentage of unemployed people and robbery rates in high robbery communities. Irrespective of whether we consider the rates of unemployed males or females, high school graduates or not, they all show a strong positive coefficient of correlation ranging between 0.67 and 0.95. On the other hand, when we look at low robbery communities, that correlation diminishes and in many cases becomes almost insignificant.

Finally, the percentage of families below poverty level in a given community shows a strong positive association with high robbery rates in high robbery communities, and a negative association in low robbery communities. In summary, the indication is very strong that the ethnic composition of a given community, the economic level of its families, and the percentage of unemployed (especially among young) are valid predictors of heavy occurrence of robberies within that community. This can be translated to say that members of

communities having these characteristics are exposed to a considerable higher probability of being robbery victims than is the case with people living in other communities. We have no way of identifying specifically who these victims are, whether they belong to the community, or happen to be outsiders. The indication, however, is very strong that people living in less fortunate communities not only have to endure a lower level of economic affluence, but are also more exposed to man-made threats and risks that deteriorate further the quality and desirability of their environment.

Perception of crime compared with data.

An additional essential element of our study was the comparison of our quantitative data with data on perception of crime, as recorded by the LAMAS IV Survey conducted by the Survey Research Center of UCLA. We concerned ourselves with two Survey questions of primary importance to perception of man-made hazards and risks in the community. These two questions were to gauge the respondents' perception of neighborhood safety, and the knowledge of neighborhood crime when compared to other neighborhoods.

Our basic criterion was to split the 94 communities arbitrarily into two groups of high and low robbery rates using a rate of 1.5 robberies per 1,000 persons as the dividing line. Next, we listed these two groups in the ten LAMAS Sampling Regions, and then constructed two tables (Table VI and VII) portraying the distribution of perception of safety and crime, expressed as percentages of the total number of respondents in a given Region.

TABLE VI
DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY (FROM LAMAS SURVEY)
IN HIGH AND LOW ROBBERY COMMUNITIES (FROM POLICE REPORTS)

Question: How safe is this neighborhood as a place for you and your family to live?

Low Robbery Communities According to Police Reports

LAMAS Sampling Region

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Alhambra	El Segundo	Hermosa Beach	Downey	Baldwin Park	Temple City
Burbank		Manhattan Beach	Maywood	El Monte	San Dimas
Glendale		Leimitt	Artesia	La Puente	Glendora
So. Pasadena		Torrance	Lakewood	San Gabriel	Arcadia
Monterey Park		Palos Verdes Est.	La Mirada	Irwindale	La Verne
		Rolling Hills Est.	Cerritos	So. El Monte	Claremont
		Rolling Hills		Dearte	Sierra Madre
				Azusa	San Marino
				Whittier	Walnut
				W. Covina	Bradbury
				Covina	

Perception of Safety

Very Safe	16.7	19.7	31.4	17.5	21.5
Safe	39.8	30.8	37.1	34.2	34.6
Fairly Safe	35.2	37.6	28.6	33.6	36.4
Unsafe	7.4	6.8	1.9	8.8	7.5
Very Unsafe	0.9	5.1	1.0	0.9	0.0
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

High Robbery Communities According to Police Reports

Pasadena	W. Los Angeles	Inglewood	Van Nuys	Industry
San Fernando	Hollywood "	Culver City	Compton	Pomona
Montebello	Venice "	Gardena	Huntington Pk.	Pico Rivera
	W. Los Angeles	Santa Monica	Lynwood	Monrovia
		Lawndale	Hawaiian Grdns.	Santa Fe Springs
		Beverly Hills	Compton	Rosemead
		Hawthorne	Bell Gardens	
		Redondo Beach	Signal Hill	
			So. Gate	
			Paramount	
			Cudahy	
			Bell	
			Bellflower	
			Cerritos	
			Norwalk	

6.
Van Nuys L.A.
West Valley L.A.
Devonshire L.A.
Hidden Hills

7.

8.

9.

10.
Palmdale
Avalon

17.4
33.8
43.0
5.8
0.0

100.0

19.1
36.8
35.3
5.9
2.9

100.0

6.6
31.5
43.4
13.2
5.3

100.0

10.1
16.5
55.7
13.9
3.8

100.0

11.9
28.6
48.4
7.9
3.2

100.0

North Hollywood LA
Foothill L.A.

Long Beach

Central L.A.
Rampart L.A.
Hollenbeck L.A.
Harbor L.A.
Northeast L.A.

Newton L.A.
77th L.A.
Southwest L.A.

DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME COMPARED TO OTHER
NEIGHBORHOODS IN HIGH AND LOW ROBBERY COMMUNITIES

Question: How much crime do you think there is in this neighborhood compared to other neighborhoods in the Los Angeles Area?

Low Robbery Communities According to Police Reports

LAMAS Sampling Region

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Alhambra	El Segundo	Hermosa Beach	Downey	Baldwin Park
Burbank		Manhattan Beach	Maywood	El Monte
Glendale		Lawita	Artesia	La Puente
South Pasadena		Torrance	Lakewood	San Gabriel
Monterey Park		Palos Verdes Est.	La Marada	Irwindale
		Rolling Hills Est.	Cerritos	So. El Monte
		Rolling Hills		Duarte
				Azusa
				Whittier
				W. Covina
				Covina
				Temple City
				San Dimas
				Glendora
				Arcadia
				LaVerne
				Claremont
				Sierra Madre
				San Marino
				Walnut
				Bradbury

Perception of Crime:

Less than Most	22.6	35.0	39.2	25.0	30.5
Less than Some	51.9	23.9	40.2	45.5	41.0
About the Same	17.0	22.2	12.7	22.3	22.8
More than Some	6.6	6.8	6.9	4.5	3.8
More than Most	1.9	5.1	1.0	2.7	1.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

High Robbery Communities According to Police Reports

Pasadena	Wilshire L.A.	Inglewood	Vernon	Industry
San Fernando	Hollywood L.A.	Culver City	Compton	Pomona
Montebello	Venice L.A.	Gardena	Huntington Pk.	Pico Rivera
	W. Los Angeles L.A.	Santa Monica	Lynwood	Monrovia
		Lawndale	Hawaiian Gardens	Santa Fe Springs
		Beverly Hills	Commerce	Rosemead
		Hawthorne	Bell Gardens	
		Redondo Beach	Signal Hill	
			South Gate	
			Paramount	
			Cudahy	
			Bell	
			Bellflower	
			Carson	
			Norwalk	

6.
Van Nuys L.A.
West Valley L.A.
Devonshire L.A.
Hidden Hills

7.

8.

9.

10.
Palmdale
Avalon

26.4
42.2
24.8
6.6
0.0
100.0

29.8
40.3
19.4
7.5
3.0
100.0

8.1
31.1
44.6
13.5
2.7
100.0

12.0
37.3
22.7
22.7
5.3
100.0

17.2
41.0
31.1
8.2
2.5
100.0

North Hollywood L.A. Long Beach
Foothill L.A.

Central L.A.
Rampart L.A.
Hollenbeck L.A.
Harbor L.A.
Northeast L.A.

Newton L.A.
77th L.A.
Southwest L.A.

General trends in perception of safety and crime.

The comparison of the LAMAS IV Survey with actual crime (robbery) data shows some interesting general trends:

1. Perception of neighborhood safety and crime is skewed toward a feeling of greater safety and less crime than is justifiable on the basis of the police data.
2. Communities with low robbery rates have more accurate perceptions of levels of safety and amount of crime.
3. Central and south central Los Angeles (City) people perceive high crime rates in their communities, but at the same time they perceive much less crime risk than their perception and the actual data would suggest.

In sum, perception of amount of crime and levels of safety seems to fall off as the crime rate increases, indicating the existence of some threshold of tolerance for crime or an avoidance reaction.

Divergence between actual crime incidence and perception of crime has been suggested by various studies. Our research seems to corroborate it considerably. It would appear that, all in all, we may be on our way to accepting high crime incidence as part of the American way of life.

Summary and conclusion.

It must be made clear that, in spite of our effort at processing available data in a meaningful and detailed manner, the procedure is only suggestive of alternate ways for generating indicators of safety and crime propensity in a given area. The use of official statistics in conjunction with independently derived socio-economic-demographic information obtained through the census has led to better analysis of risks and threats to an individual in a community, and a beginning attempt on a predictive model for both individuals and policymakers.

The results of this study do not per se represent new findings: the substance of our conclusions is generally shared knowledge, though impressionistic in large measure. However, the goodness of fit observed in our equations suggest that the information available through official crime statistics is not so unreliable after all, and can be used to estimate, within broad margins of error of course, the degree of risk of crime of a given area on the basis of known social characteristics.

The preceding account illustrates some of the initial steps we have taken in the direction of developing crime indicators of greater usefulness than the ones currently available. Far from showing complete results, this report illustrates work in progress, pointing to possibilities more than to substantive findings.

Our work program for the coming months calls for the formulation of differential ranking of the various communities in the County of Los Angeles (and in the City of New York) on the basis of all seven "index" crime (felonies). We intend to obtain crime specific indices for all the communities, and also a cumulative crime index obtained through weighing the social disruptiveness of each crime on a standardized scale. Eventually we expect to define comparatively where each of the 94 places in Los Angeles County (and a similar number in New York City) stands with respect to freedom from crime and safety from victimization.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 R. K. Merton, in New Perspectives for Research on Juvenile Delinquency, ed. by H. Witmer and R. Kotinsky, (Washington, D.C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1956, p. 32)
- 2 See for instance Thorstein, Sellin and Marvin E. Wolfgang, The Measurement of Delinquency (N. Y. Wiley 1964), and Donald R. Cressey "Crime" in Contemporary Social Problems, ed. by Robert K. Merton and Robert A. Nisbet (N.Y. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), L. Radwinowicz and M. E. Wolfgang (eds.) The Criminal in Society, Volume I. (N. Y. Basic Books, 1971)
- 3 Life, September 9, 1957, p. 49
- 4 Roger Hood and Richard Sparks, Key Issues in Criminology (N. Y. McGraw-Hill, 1971, p. 35)
- 5 John E. Conklin, Robbery and the Criminal Justice System (N. Y. J. B. Lippincott, 1972, p. 3)

APPENDIX 2.

COMPARATIVE ROBBERY TRENDS FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK
AND THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES.

When completed this study will offer the opportunity to draw a close comparison between the two largest metropolitan areas in the nation. Recently, however, the New York City Rand Institute has made available a limited amount of census data for the City of New York by Police Precincts (N.Y. Times, July 30, 1973). By combining some of these data with data from our study we managed to generate two master tables which offer a preview of variations and similarities between the two metropolises. (Table X-1 and X-2)

A simple aggregation of data highlights the variability of robbery victimization risk in the five boroughs during census year 1970.

Table X-0. Variations in robbery rates for the five boroughs of the City of New York in 1970.

Borough	Population 1970	Total Robberies	Robberies per thousand
Manhattan	1,534,314	31,738	20.7
Bronx	1,471,616	13,578	9.2
Brooklyn	2,596,906	19,528	7.5
Queens	1,982,347	8,919	4.5
Staten Island	295,443	339	1.1
Total N.Y.C.	7,880,626	74,102	9.4

RANKING OF PRECINCTS BY INCIDENCE OF ROBBERY
PER 1,000 PERSONS; NEW YORK CITY

Precinct	Population		Percent Change	Robbery/1,000		Percentage Increase
	1961	1970		1961	1970	
14M	16,709	23,583	+41.1	5.8	79.6	1,269.6
28M	85,795	57,472	-33.0	3.2	43.3	1,255.7
*18M	56,615	43,649	-22.9	4.0	41.2	930.1
*1M	11,228	12,256	+9.1	6.4	37.2	180.2
25M	110,844	81,811	-23.4	1.5	32.1	2,085.7
32M	109,078	106,987	-1.9	2.4	28.9	1,088.3
*26M	85,169	74,422	-12.6	.2	25.0	12,200.3
81Bk	43,568	39,505	-9.2	1.3	24.8	1,763.7
73Bk	113,547	95,745	-15.6	1.0	23.2	2,322.1
30M	84,762	74,254	-12.3	2.0	22.6	1,025.0
9M	88,567	97,182	+9.7	1.4	21.8	1,458.9
23M	124,689	114,960	-7.8	1.0	20.2	1,855.8
24M	141,718	116,318	-17.9	1.8	18.8	939.6
88Bk	68,328	58,703	-14.0	1.4	18.5	1,378.5
*81Bk	97,103	65,833	-31.2	1.1	17.9	1,582.7
103Q	126,254	154,954	+22.7	.9	17.7	1,875.7
42Bk	152,418	154,151	+1.1	1.4	17.0	1,354.1
7M	67,332	56,584	-16.0	.8	16.7	1,921.7
40Bk	94,135	79,941	-15.0	1.4	16.2	1,085.0
6M	56,664	55,564	-1.9	1.5	16.1	983.0
10M	46,406	39,615	-14.6	1.5	16.1	821.8
28Bk	65,868	54,167	-17.7	1.2	15.7	1,265.8
48Bk	140,991	149,793	+6.2	.7	15.2	2,022.9
*77Bk	125,361	108,810	-13.2	1.3	14.9	1,065.2
20M	112,090	97,893	-12.6	1.8	14.4	737.9
*17M	45,020	59,881	+33.0	4.7	13.5	190.3
41Bk	134,625	134,729	0.0	.4	13.4	2,918.8
75Bk	163,323	166,681	+2.0	.6	13.1	2,355.0
41Bk	161,240	170,839	+5.9	1.1	12.0	1,042.8
71Bk	147,862	166,530	+12.6	.6	11.5	1,681.5
13M	88,629	68,279	-22.9	1.3	10.5	711.7
5M	52,942	51,407	-2.8	1.4	10.2	613.0
46Bk	135,582	113,675	-16.1	.4	9.1	2,344.3
75Bk	108,592	107,956	-.9	1.7	8.6	113.7
*94Bk	93,029	65,088	-30.0	.6	8.2	1,280.5
15M	139,803	146,966	+5.1	.8	7.8	874.2
34M	154,625	152,291	-1.5	.6	7.3	1,066.5
60Bk	72,390	82,831	+14.4	.8	7.2	812.7
67Bk	99,854	87,942	-11.9	.4	6.5	1,524.3
104M	34,547	52,127	+50.8	.1	5.7	3,881.5
108Q	81,414	74,924	-7.9	1.0	5.7	448.7
90Bk	115,694	128,305	+10.9	1.3	5.6	825.3
83Bk	111,027	145,084	+30.6	.5	5.5	897.0
69Bk	88,715	115,597	+30.3	.5	5.1	924.0
43Bk	197,769	220,902	+11.6	.5	4.7	936.0
106Q	127,388	149,028	+16.9	.4	4.5	1,072.0
105Q	206,603	220,996	+6.9	.2	4.5	2,111.5
*99Bk	87,091	77,528	-10.6	.5	4.1	440.5

RANKING OF PRECINCTS BY INCIDENCE OF ROBBERY
PER 1,000 PERSONS† NEW YORK CITY

Precinct				Robbery/1,000		Percent Increase
	1961	1970	Change	1961	1970	
110Q	161,464	203,593	+26.0	.5	3.9	752.8
107Q	164,946	162,475	1.4	.3	3.8	1252.5
47BK	180,199	194,056	+7.6	.3	3.6	934.9
76BK	80,115	70,908	-11.4	.3	3.6	1009.8
100Q	36,344	46,568	+28.1	.3	3.3	1086.9
114Q	219,941	223,548	+1.6	.4	3.2	680.4
50BK	85,788	96,207	+12.1	.8	2.8	239.4
72BK	118,880	102,990	-13.3	.4	2.5	557.1
102Q	87,639	85,343	-2.6	.4	2.4	564.3
112Q	164,051	176,392	+7.5	.5	2.4	375.8
104Q	110,150	103,913	-5.6	.4	2.1	476.8
109	147,193	175,402	+19.1	.4	2.1	471.6
111	141,644	153,099	+8.0	.2	2.0	901.9
70BK	130,593	136,339	+4.5	.4	2.0	398.0
126SI	125,352	144,168	+15.0	.3	1.8	540.4
68BK	154,360	157,281	+1.8	.7	1.8	169.2
45BK	67,102	79,785	+18.9	.5	1.7	247.4
63BK	119,931	136,972	+14.2	.5	1.6	242.9
61BK	182,889	185,039	+1.2	.4	1.4	245.0
64BK	147,875	140,528	-4.9	.5	1.3	163.7
62BK	178,415	177,402	-.5	.3	1.2	275.7
122SI	75,139	123,286	+64.0	.1	.5	660.6
123SI	21,500	27,989	+30.1	.000	.4	=

* Precincts boundary lines are those of 1972. Changes in boundary lines of precincts since 1960 necessitated corresponding adjustments in the number of crime and population for precincts marked with an asterisk.

** Low number of robberies in precinct 26 in 1960 reflects its recent organization. Extremely large percent increase in the decade, though technically accurate, is misleading.

*** Key to precinct locations: M=Manhattan; B=Bronx; Q=Queens; BK=Brooklyn; SI=Staten Island

Population Characteristics: Selected Communities (Police Precincts)NEW YORK CITY

<u>Robbery Rate</u>	<u>Precinct</u>	<u>1970 Robberies</u>	<u>Robberies /1,000-1970</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>White Population</u>	<u>Black Population</u>	<u>Spanish Speaking Population</u>	<u>Median Income</u>	<u>Number of Fam'ls Below Poverty Level</u>
High	14(MS)	1,875	79.5	23,503	18,965	1,027	2,693	10,966	479
	28 M	2,488	43.3	57,472	919	53,672	2,742	5,648	4,026
	18(MW)	1,798	41.2	43,649	33,478	1,652	7,220	9,819	2,577
	1 M	456	37.2	12,256	10,714	205	880	9,030	323
	25 M	2,725	32.1	84,811	13,342	33,555	37,424	5,447	6,953
	32 M	1,007	28.9	106,987	1,391	99,582	6,635	6,539	7,001
	63 SI	219	1.6	136,972	130,490	273	3,886	12,655	2,590
	61 Q	258	1.4	185,039	176,270	1,576	4,843	11,373	5,274
	66 BK	188	1.3	140,528	129,352	557	8,348	9,306	5,969
	62 BK	220	1.2	177,402	167,236	1,296	6,373	10,004	6,032
	222 SI	62	.5	123,286	115,982	2,252	3,487	12,778	1,578
	123 SI	12	.4	27,589	25,494	655	1,473	12,324	452