

INTERVIEW SURVEY APPROACHES IN CRIMINOLOGY —
FINAL REPORT

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Project Director

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READING ROOM

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Washington, D.C. 20036

Acknowledgments

As in any large project the present effort has benefited from the aid of a large number of individuals--we are indebted in major ways to many more individuals than can be listed here. This circle was particularly large in that we were dependent upon many organizations and individual researchers for providing us with reports of their work and for telling us about the work of others.

Principal assistants to the project director at the Bureau of Social Science Research were Susan S. Oldham, Sally Ward, Maureen A. Eby and, during the final months of the project, Karen L. Goldenberg. Professor Margaret Conway performed the major searches and summaries of data from public opinion polls. Marjolein Colyn of the Netherlands performed most of the abstracting and coding of European studies. Computer programming of our inventory system was the responsibility of Richard C. Jones and Fiona S. Wu. The body of the report lists the names of those who contributed papers and enlightening discussion to our 1972 Symposium.

Our contacts with the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration have been attended to intelligently and graciously by Fred Heinzelman and Ann Sadowsky of that agency.

I. Introduction and Specific Aims

This study has inventoried and reviewed applications of the sample interview survey method to studies of crime, delinquency, criminal justice, law enforcement, and closely related areas. Its objective was to take stock of the rapid accumulation of experience, particularly since 1965, in interviewing members of the general public for knowledge relevant to criminology. We are interested in studies dealing with civic order, delinquency, crime, law enforcement, administration of justice, and closely related topics.

During the first year, we attempted to identify as exhaustively as possible published or unpublished work that has gone on in this area; to secure available data and reports; to devise a comprehensively useful scheme for classifying studies and their products; and to explore the possibilities presented for comparative and longitudinal analyses of data that have been collected. In addition, in conjunction with scientific association meetings, discussions of methodological and substantive aspects of the topic were arranged among persons working in the area.

During the second year of work covered by the present report, the remaining steps performed were as follows:

1. The Inventory (Biderman, et al., 1972) was extended to include current and newly located studies and more extensive coverage of foreign works.

2. Secondary analyses were made of data disclosed by the review to be particularly suitable for illuminating key substantive and methodological issues in studies of public involvement and concern with crime problems.

3. A special symposium was conducted involving contributions from 12 American and foreign specialists in an effort to distill and evaluate the implications for several criminology areas of these extensive, new sources of data developed from the general public.

4. Specific assistance was rendered to various national, state and local bodies as well as university scholars and private organizations that were conducting or planning surveys.

5. Contributions were made to discussions at scientific professional meetings of uses of the survey method in criminology.

6. Dissemination of products of the project is being made through the LEAA reference service, to a specific list developed during the project of persons and organizations active in the field and through associations active in the field. A draft manuscript is being reviewed for book publication. Information developed by the project will be used in the future for publications in professional periodicals. The abstracts developed for the Inventory are being integrated into the LEAA Reference Service's system.

7. A proposal will be made for maintaining the Inventory as an open and continuing system.

II. Program Impact

By our attention to studies which do not select subjects on the basis of their preidentified roles in the law enforcement or criminal justice systems, we are focusing on an original function of the sample survey method. This is to provide information flow from a more extensive and representative population than that registered by otherwise formally organized agencies of attention. The survey approach also eliminates various screens, filters and

valences on the inputs of individuals which are characteristic of the communication and feedback systems of formal organizations. Many public agencies have used or are contemplating use of sample surveys to offset limited and selective characteristics of the information they receive on the experiences, reactions and preferences of the public. Neither the full potential of these approaches nor their limitations are as yet appreciated. The present study will apprise such users of particular properties of survey approaches in applications to the crime field which should be taken into consideration for their valid use. The study has also suggested additional areas in which survey approaches may usefully supplement or complement information systems in the crime field.

Survey-based information has also remarkably extended in recent years the data base available for scholarly studies of crime problems. Such knowledge has helped stimulate interest and activity in this field among those for whom criminological problems were at most a remote interest. The present study may contribute further toward engaging the interests of social scientists with diverse theoretical orientations in work on the problem of crime.

Steps toward achieving the above impacts of the project have formed an inherent part of the approach.

We anticipate that the results of our review will substantially improve the usefulness of the interviewing survey device to policy and practice in the many areas of law enforcement and criminal justice which are relying increasingly on such data. Among these uses are:

1. to estimate the incidence and distribution of unregistered crime, by self-reports of delicts and self-reports of victimization.

2. to gauge the economic and social impact of crime by self-reports of direct losses, costs of protective measures, and changes in behavior arising from fear of crime; to establish empirical bases for ranking classes of crimes in terms of the seriousness of their consequences.

3. to identify experiences, attitudes, information and misinformation of various segments of the public affecting their cooperation with agencies and programs of crime control, criminal justice and corrections; to evaluate the effects of new programs.

4. to identify factors underlying respect for and observance of law.

Because there are such rapidly proliferating uses of interview survey approaches in the crime field, much of the impact of our work has been on a current direct contact basis--visits and correspondence--rather than through the slower mechanisms of publication. We have drawn upon the results of our study for advice to members of the scientific community and to federal, state, local and private agencies which are planning uses of interviewing surveys. We expect that the uses of our Inventory will multiply with the publication of our study products.

Particularly close coordination has been maintained with the LEAA-Bureau of Census crime surveys.

Illustrative of the organizations to whom we have rendered assistance on the conduct of criminological surveys or for searches of the results of such surveys are:

National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards
The Washington Post
School of Architecture, University of California, Los Angeles
Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation Evaluation Team, Columbia University
Human Resources Research Institute
Arthur D. Little Co.
Social Science Research Council (British)
Lemberg Center, Brandeis University
University of Edinburgh
University of Pennsylvania
State of Nevada, Bureau of Governmental Research & Service
State of Connecticut Research Commission
State of Illinois
Office of Crime Analysis, District of Columbia
Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs
Police Foundation
Russell Sage Foundation
Social Science Research Council
Committee on Incarceration
SISWO (The Netherlands)
Institute of Criminal Science, University of Copenhagen
Canada Council
National Science Foundation
Social Affairs Division, OECD

During the project, the project director organized roundtable discussions of its topic at annual meetings of the American Association for Public Opinion Research and the Society for the Study of Social Problems (both 1970 and 1971), and a session at the annual meeting of the American Statistical Association. Papers were presented at the 1971 Congress of Corrections, the International Congress of Criminology and a summary paper on the project will be presented in August 1972 at the International Congress of Psychology. Papers based on the project have also been invited for the 1972 meeting of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Law of the International Sociological Association and the 1st International Symposium of Victimology to be held in 1973. Informal reports were given to the National Science Foundation Social Indicators Conference and the Joint British-American Social Science Research Council Conference on Social Indicators in 1971.

III. Products

A. Inventory. A comprehensive inventory of survey applications in crime, law enforcement and criminal justice and closely related areas was prepared covering work done in the United States and other countries, both published and unpublished and planned as well as completed work. The printed report included abstracts of reports of 298 "public opinion polls" and 231 other interview or questionnaire studies. Computerized descriptions of these studies were included in the Inventory report, with extensive indexing for use in either machine or manual searches. Because of the number of pertinent surveys located in our search, particularly for the most recent period, an accumulation of 175 studies remained unprocessed for the Inventory at the conclusion of the present project. A listing of reports of these studies was included in the published Inventory.

B. Symposium. In March, 1972, the project conducted a Symposium on Studies of Public Experience, Knowledge and Opinion of Crime and Justice. Members of the Symposium panel had each been asked several months earlier to prepare a paper summarizing and reviewing critically a particular topical area. Professor Kutchinsky was unable to attend and his paper was summarized by Susan Oldham and defended during the discussion by Albert Gollin.) A copy of the program is shown on the next page.

P R O G R A M

Symposium

on

STUDIES OF PUBLIC EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE
AND OPINION OF CRIME AND JUSTICE

March 17-18, 1972

MAYFLOWER HOTEL
Pennsylvania Suite
1127 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Sponsored by:

Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc.
1200 Seventeenth Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

With support of a grant from:

National Institute of Law Enforcement
and Criminal Justice
U.S. Department of Justice

Friday, March 17

I. INTRODUCTION

9:00 - 10:00 How Surveys of the General
Public Have Been Used in
Studying Crime and Justice

Albert D. Biderman
Bureau of Social Science
Research, Inc.

10:00 - 10:30 Coffee

II. INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

10:30 - 11:30 Surveys of Self-Reported
Delicts

Albert J. Reiss
Yale University

11:30 - 12:30 Surveys of Self-Reported
Victimization

Richard Dodge
Bureau of Census
Anthony Turner
Department of Justice

12:30 - 1:45 Lunch

III. KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

1:45 - 2:45 Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding
Law and Law-Breaking

Berl Kutchinsky
University of Copenhagen

2:45 - 3:45 The Police and their Publics
as Reflected in Attitude and
Opinion Research

Harold Mendelsohn
University of Denver

3:45 - 4:00 Coffee

4:00 - 5:00 Norms and Attitudes Toward
Business-Related Crimes

Erwin O. Smigel
Harvard University

John E. Conklin
Tufts University

5:00 - 6:00 Attitudes Toward Law: A
Comparative View Based on
Polish Surveys

Adam Podgorecki
University of Warsaw

Saturday, March 18

IV. BEHAVIORS

9:00 - 10:00 Fear of Crime and its
Effects on Citizen Behavior

Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr.
University of Pennsylvania

10:00 - 11:00 Organized Citizen Responses
to Perceived Crises of
Crime and Policing

Gary T. Marx
Harvard University

Dane Archer
Harvard University

11:00 - 11:30 Coffee

11:30 - 1:00 General Discussion

Symposium Staff

Albert D. Biderman
Chairman

Susan S. Oldham
Symposium Arrangements

Sally Ward
Symposium Secretary

BUREAU OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH, INC.
1200 Seventeenth Street, N. W.
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223-4300

Robert T. Bower, Director

Much of the time of the Symposium was devoted to discussion of the papers by the panelists and by about 35 other participants from the LEAA, other government agencies and the research community. On the basis of the discussion at the meeting, revisions of the papers were undertaken. It is anticipated that these papers will eventually be published in book form.

C. References (Technical Papers)

Biderman, Albert D., et al. Interim Report of An Inventory of Surveys of the Public on Crime, Justice and Related Topics. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, October 1971.

Biderman, Albert D., et al. An Inventory of Surveys of the Public on Crime, Justice and Related Topics. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice. May 1972.

Biderman, Albert D. "A Proposed General Measure of Interpersonal Violence." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Science Research. June 1971.

Biderman, Albert D. "Time Distortions of Victimization Data and Mnemonic Effects." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Science Research. July 1970.

Biderman, Albert D. "The Impact on Criminology of Surveys of the General Public." Paper to be presented at the 20th International Congress of Psychology, Tokyo, Japan, August 13-19, 1972.

Biderman, Albert D. "Notes on Incidence and Prevalence Measures in Surveys." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Science Research. November 1971.

Biderman, Albert D. & Goldenberg, Karen L. "A Statistical Profile of Surveys of the Public on Crime, Justice and Related Topics." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Science Research. July 1972.

Conway, M. Margaret. "Public Opinion on Crime and Law Enforcement in the United States." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Science Research. June 1971.

Symposium Papers

Surveys of Self-Reported Delicts -- Albert J. Reiss, Yale University

Surveys of Personal and Organizational Victimization -- Richard
Dodge, Bureau of Census & Anthony Turner, Department of Justice

Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Law and Law-Breaking -- Berl
Kutchinsky, University of Copenhagen

The Police and their Publics as Reflected in Attitude and Opinion
Research -- Harold Mendelsohn, University of Denver

Norms and Attitudes Toward Business-Related Crimes -- Erwin O.
Smigel, Harvard University & John E. Conklin, Tufts University

Attitudes Toward the Law -- Adam Podgorecki, University of Warsaw

Fear of Crime and its Effects on Citizen Behavior -- Frank F.
Furstenberg, Jr., University of Pennsylvania

END

7/11/50