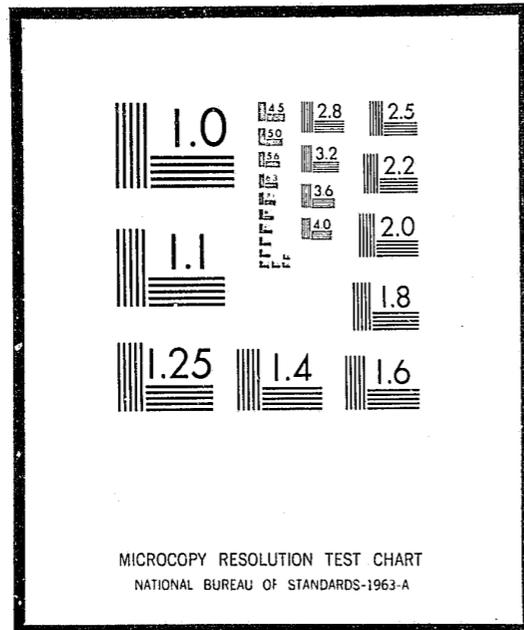


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LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE  
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Date filmed

7/9/76

## Executive Summary of the STAFF REPORT

June 1974

### Police Consolidation Project

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ORIGINAL

## FOREWORD

This Executive Summary was written to provide a brief overview of the Police Consolidation Staff Report for those who do not have the time to read the more detailed and lengthy unabridged Report.

The Police Consolidation Project has also published four volumes of supporting research and data. They are:

Pension Study

Organizational Resource Inventory

Reports of the Subcommittees

Police Clientele Inventory

A limited number of copies of the Staff Report is available through the Police Consolidation Project, 202 Chamber of Commerce Building, Portland, Oregon 97204. Phone (503) 248-4576.

## SYNOPSIS OF CONCLUSIONS

The Staff Report was written in June, 1974, after the proposed City-County Charter was rejected. The failure of the governments to consolidate is taken into account in the recommendations. The major conclusions concerning methods of improving police services in Multnomah County are:

1. POLICE LINE FUNCTIONS<sup>1</sup> SHOULD BE REORGANIZED
  - to allow service delivery to be more responsive to individual and community needs.
  - to allow citizen participation.
  - to allow closer cooperation between the police and other social service agencies.
  - to reduce the number of personnel in management, supervisory, specialized enforcement, and overhead positions.
  - to reduce the number of organizational hierarchy levels.
  - to increase the number of service delivery personnel.
2. POLICE ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES<sup>2</sup> SHOULD BE MERGED WITH THOSE OF THE PARENT GOVERNMENTS
  - to allow police activities to reflect the policies and priorities of government.
  - to allow qualified civilians to perform Administrative Activities.
3. A PUBLIC SAFETY SUPPORT AGENCY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED to provide Support Activities<sup>3</sup> to a variety of governmental agencies.

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<sup>1</sup>Patrol, Detectives, Juvenile, Traffic, Vice, Narcotics, Crime Prevention, Intelligence.

<sup>2</sup>Planning, Personnel, Training, Inspections, Internal Affairs, Financial Administration, Public Information, Legal Services.

<sup>3</sup>Communications, Records, Data Processing, Crime Lab, Evidence and Property Control, Detention, Identification and Photography.

3. (Continued)
  - to achieve significant cost savings.
  - to allow qualified nonsworn personnel to hold support jobs.
  - to provide coordination among interrelated Support Activities.
4. A COUNTYWIDE POLICE PERSONNEL SYSTEM SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED
  - to permit increased career paths within and among police agencies.
  - to allow the police agencies to function more compatibly with agency goals and employee characteristics.
  - to facilitate complete police consolidation.

Although all of the above suggestions can and should be implemented even without complete police consolidation, complete consolidation of police will maximize improvement and cost savings.

### I. Introduction

The Police Consolidation Project was established to prepare plans for consolidation of police functions and initiate those mergers approved by policy officials. From the outset the Project was designed to be independent of governmental consolidation. Planning activities were structured to produce recommendations for improving police even if voters rejected the City-County Charter.

The goal of the Police Consolidation Project is not merely to merge existing police agencies, but rather to reorganize police to be responsive to community needs, cognizant of citizen rights, considerate of employee needs, efficient and effective; yet flexible enough to adjust to changing priorities and meet the long term police service requirements of Multnomah County.

The Police Consolidation Staff Report has been prepared to assist local governmental officials in establishing policy for the improvement of police operations. Therefore, the recommendations contained therein are related to policy positions which will provide direction for implementation of improvements in local police. Once policy issues have been resolved detailed implementation reports can be finalized and implementation initiated.

## II. Environment

An analysis of local organizational change trends over the past century reveals an evolution of governmental organizational arrangements. Early organizations were small, informal operations that relied heavily on the personalities of individuals. Police agencies were nonspecialized and provided a broad range of services for citizens in need. Personality was an important consideration in not only the selection of organizational leadership but also in determining the type and quality of service police officers provided to the public.

As the local governmental organizations grew in size, they slowly changed from their personality orientation and adopted the classical bureaucratic characteristics. The agencies of government became more highly specialized, rationalistic and legalistic. Several studies of local police agencies made recommendations based on bureaucratic principles. This approach to organization resulted in efforts to completely remove the influence of personality from organizations. Attempts were made to define every detail of organizational activity with procedures and rules. Selection and promotion of personnel were heavily dependent on written examinations. Criticism of the inflexibility and inadequacy of this approach has created pressure for change.

Currently the organizational change patterns are in the direction of more flexible, participatory organizations. Temporary management techniques such as project management and working task forces are being used as alternatives to the rigid autocratic organizational designs of the bureaucratic model. Both citizens and governmental employee involvement in decision making is increasing. Public organizations are beginning to move away from a rigid adherence to the bureaucratic principles.

Local police agencies appear to be clinging more closely to the bureaucratic philosophy of organization than most other human service organizations. However, the evidence suggests that overall police effectiveness and productivity will be improved by changes which are consistent with:

1. High citizen power
2. Highly mobile citizenry
3. High concern for minorities
4. Personalized treatment of clients

5. Democratically derived power
6. Increased individual responsibility
7. Decreased emphasis on hierarchies of authority and status
8. Situational organizational structures
9. Problem and consumer orientations
10. Increased employee discretion
11. More tolerance of differences
12. Dynamic goal definitions
13. Increased opportunities for influence on priorities
14. Employee and citizen participation in management decisions
15. Service rather than crime orientation
16. High openness and low secrecy

## III. Role and Goals of Police

The available evidence and staff research related to police responsibilities, public and police expectations, and police abilities indicates the police role and goals are filled with conflicts and inconsistencies. For example, police have a responsibility for maintaining social order, arresting law violators, and protecting citizen rights. The achievement of one of these objectives often runs counter to the achievement of another. This situation increased the difficulty of providing an efficient and productive police organization.

A police dispatch study and a more limited study of people who actually received police assistance show that a minority of the requests made on local police agencies are related to crime. This conclusion is consistent with similar research conducted in other areas of the country. Apart from the issue of what citizens request of the police, it appears police agencies are in a better position than other agencies to answer citizen requests on a twenty-four hour a day basis. In addition, most citizens feel since they pay police salaries, police should serve their needs; therefore most citizens expect and depend on the police to respond to their requests for all types of service.

The management personnel of local police agencies express support for continuing to perform both criminal and noncriminal functions. Even a majority of the police officers who would prefer to restrict their activities to criminal matters, recognize obligations for performing other functions. These officers appear

to appreciate the fact that their clientele expect services which they, more than any other governmental employees, are capable of providing. Therefore, they accept the responsibility of providing general services to their communities and citizens.

The Goals, Organization and Coordinating Committee supported the following conclusions about the police role and responsibilities:

1. The most important responsibility of the police is the preservation of human life.
2. The police responsibility for the maintenance of social order is conditioned by a responsibility for protecting individual rights and ensuring social justice. Therefore, the maintenance of order clearly does not obligate or authorize the police to regiment society. Democratic societies expect the police to protect the right of citizens to behave in individualistic, even deviant ways if such individualism and deviancy do not injure others or deprive others of the right to just treatment.
3. Police organizations are in a unique position to support other governmental agencies with information about citizen problems and needs that they should address.
4. Law enforcement is an important function of the police; however, physical arrest is only one strategy that is used to enforce laws. The state law requires police to "enforce" the criminal code, but it does not specifically direct police to "arrest" every person who violates a law. Therefore, police officers can legitimately exercise discretion if it results in the enforcement of laws.
5. Police must work with and for citizens as much as they serve the government. Police must strive to assist citizens in developing communities that are liveable places where citizens do not have to be afraid of being abused, attacked, placed in jeopardy of injury, or denied fair treatment. Police methods must stress

cooperation with citizens based on trust rather than fear, and they must emphasize prevention rather than suppression. Police should be more concerned about obtaining voluntary rather than forced compliance with laws. The existence and authority of the police depend on public approval of of police actions and behavior and in general on the police ability to secure and maintain public respect.

Based on the preceding conclusions, specific goal statements were developed for local police agencies. They are:

1. Provide emergency actions and services, not readily available from other agencies, that may save human life.
2. Provide programs and actions directed at the causes and conditions of delinquency and crime that will result in the prevention of juvenile delinquency, criminal deviancy and crime.
3. Provide programs and actions to acquire information about criminal behavior and responsibility and expeditiously handle that information in a manner consistent with the best interests of involved persons, the community and society.
4. Respond by direct involvement, advice, or referral to those situations which if left unattended would logically result in serious mental anguish, disorder, injury, property damage, or loss of individual rights for people within the jurisdiction.
5. Provide actions and programs for coordination between and support for agencies that seek to facilitate social justice and justice processes.
6. Provide order maintenance programs and actions to reduce danger and facilitate normal community and social operations during periods of unusual disruptive occurrences such as civil protest, natural disaster, riot, and war.

7. Provide programs, procedures and activities that will result in efficient, effective and fair management of the police organization and satisfaction of personnel career needs.

The Report offers the following recommendations related to local police goals and objectives:

1. The preceding conditions and goals should be reviewed and endorsed by policy and police officials. Appropriate changes should be made in ordinances related to police responsibilities and modifications should be initiated in police policies and procedures.
2. Police organizational arrangements should be modified to insure greater congruence of goals, structure, and police activities. This recommendation should be adopted with or without consolidation of police operations and without regard to whether or not the preceding goals are adopted.
3. Methods should be adopted by the police to ensure continuous development and updating of police objectives in a manner that will maintain their consistency with the organizational goals.
4. Methods should be established for monitoring the extent of goal and objectives accomplishment and assessing the effectiveness of various organizational strategies.

#### IV. Consolidation Options

In light of the recent defeat of the City/County Charter, the Police Consolidation Project researched the value of continued efforts to improve local police through mergers and consolidation of police functions, and reached the following conclusions:

1. The voters' rejection of the City/County Charter cannot be construed as a rejection of consolidation as a method for improving the police and reducing the cost of police services for taxpayers.

2. The traditional approach to consolidation which entails simply merging police operations will not produce as effective a police operation as a more complex design of centralizing police Staff Functions\* and decentralizing to the neighborhood level police Line Functions.
3. The concept of consolidation is a viable method by which sound reorganization and improvement of police can occur.
4. The degree of efficiency with which the current disjointed, fragmented, duplicative police functions can be improved will be inversely related to the complexity of the authority structure responsible for decisions about changes.

The question is not "should police consolidation occur?" rather it is "To what extent should police consolidation occur immediately?" The staff has defined three options, which are in reality positions on a continuum between the current organization of police services and complete police consolidation, for the consideration of policy makers. They are:

Option #1. Establish a single police agency for the City of Portland and Multnomah County.

This option would entail the City and County entering into an agreement to establish a consolidated police agency with the responsibility for providing police services in both jurisdictions. The option would be carried out in the following fashion.

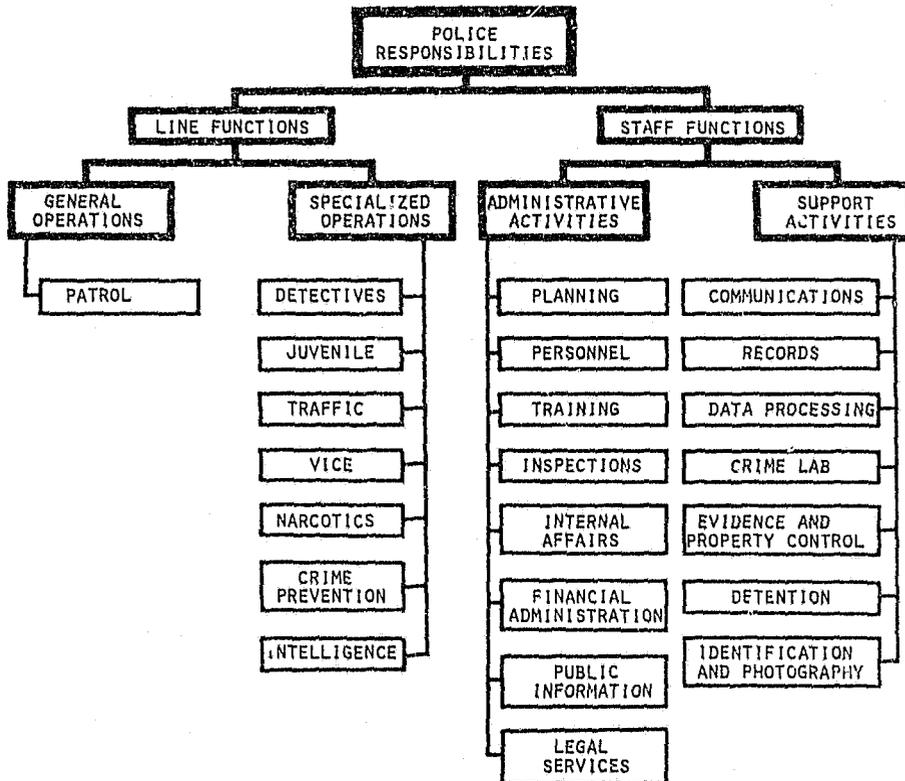
1. The positions of Portland Chief of Police and Multnomah County Sheriff would be combined in a position of police director.

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\* For a schematic description of Staff Functions and Line Functions see Chart 1.

CHART 1

POLICE FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION CHART



2. The Chairman of the County Commission would agree with the Mayor's appointment of the Chief. The appointee would then be sworn in as sheriff.
3. All sworn personnel in the Portland Police Bureau would be deputized.
4. The county would assume responsibility for future hiring, personnel, and the financial administration for police.
5. The current Portland Police Bureau officers would be maintained in the Portland pension system; however, new officers could choose between the Multnomah County Sworn Law Enforcement Officers' Retirement System and the State Public Employees Retirement System for police.
6. A cost sharing model based on current expenditure ratios would be established for funding the agency.
7. Both the City and County would agree to continue and support the consolidated police organization for a minimum of four years, after which either government could dissolve the relationship on six months written notice.

Option #2. Establish a Public Safety Support Agency to consolidate and coordinate Support Activities while reorganizing and maintaining independent police Line Functions.

This option would entail the City and County agreeing to establish a single agency to organize and manage Support Activities for emergency and quasi-emergency public safety and criminal justice agencies. The police Line

Functions would remain separate under each government. Administrative Activities for each police department would be merged with counterpart units with each jurisdiction. The salient features of this arrangement would include:

1. A position of coordinator of Public Safety Support Activities would be established under the Mayor of Portland and the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Multnomah County.
2. The coordinator would be provided with the responsibility and authority for organizing and managing Support Activities subject to the direction of the Chairman of the County Commission and the Mayor of Portland.
3. Support Activities that would be provided directly would be communications (dispatching) records, data processing, evidence and property control, and identification. Support Activities subject to the functional control of the Coordinator would be criminalistics, equipment acquisition and maintenance, prisoner detention and processing, and facility acquisition, management and maintenance.
4. The City/County Agreement would be for a specific number of years and the jurisdictions party to the agreement would be obligated to phase out their Support Activities in accordance with the plans initiated by the Public Safety Support Agency.
5. The Agency would establish its own positions and, whenever possible, personnel who are currently performing the functions for

individual police departments would be transferred to the Public Safety Support Agency.

6. The Agency's services would be available to a broad range of public safety agencies rather than simply to the police.

Option #3. Improve and continue ad hoc mergers and reductions of duplicative efforts of police Support Activities but reorganize and maintain independent Line Functions in each jurisdiction.

This option would entail City and County officials agreeing on the Support Activities that should be consolidated and preparing a long range plan for such consolidations. Each activity will be handled as a separate project. The projects would be organized so as to result in a reasonably equitable distribution of costs. Other specifics of this option are:

1. The areas that should be consolidated are communications, records, data processing, evidence and property control, criminalistics, equipment acquisition and maintenance, prisoner detention and processing, identification, warrant service and extradition and facility acquisition, management and maintenance.
2. The jurisdictions involved should negotiate a precise contract for each merger project which specifically sets forth the objectives of the project, the budget, communication channels, and management authority.
3. The contract should also establish the obligations and the length of commitment of the parties to the contract. It should be designed to reduce excessive bureaucratic

review. All agencies should be able to ascertain the amount of service they will receive.

4. The reporting responsibility of the project directors should be precisely defined. It should be clear who has the authority to order the director to perform what functions. Committee procedures and power should be clarified.
5. Projects should be managed by people who are competent in the technical area rather than simply police managers who are assigned by one of the participating agencies.
6. Plans should be comprehensive, systemic and long ranged. In addition, they must be followed unless there is specific, well-conceived justification for modification.
7. The jurisdictions involved should agree to drop funding of any independent projects or operations which would duplicate the services provided by the projects.

The arguments for and against each of these options can be summarized as follows.

OPTION #1: Complete Consolidation

ARGUMENTS FOR	ARGUMENTS AGAINST
- Easiest and least expensive to administer.	- Reduces direct political control by elected officials.
- Result in most coordinated reorganization.	- Will result in most controversy and resistance to change. Police Managers would likely be strongly opposed to this approach.
- Will reduce duplication and yet facilitate responsiveness to needs of people.	

OPTION #1 (Cont.)

ARGUMENTS FOR	ARGUMENTS AGAINST
- Will reduce red tape for citizens.	- Will complicate enforcement and training problems.
- Will facilitate long range planning.	- Will create personnel management problems that are likely to be more severe than under either of the other options.
- Has potential for most savings.	

OPTION #2: Single Public Safety Support Agency with Separate Line Functions.

- Would increase influence of elected officials over Support Activities.	- Reduces control of police management over Support Activities.
- Increases the utility of police Support Activities for the entire government by making it possible for many other governmental units to use the services.	- Reduces relationship and communication between police and support personnel.
- More consistent with long range plan for complete consolidation than ad hoc merger of functions.	- Increases time elected officials must devote to providing policy direction for Support Activities.
- Would be less expensive to manage than ad hoc mergers.	- Creates a fear among police that the support staff will be of inferior quality or quantity. Police managers would likely be opposed to this approach.
- Would leave control of Line Functions and Administrative Activities with the individual jurisdictions.	

OPTION #2: (Cont.)

- Would place responsibility for coordinated performance of Support Activities and remove competition among support projects from the political arena.
- Would reduce time governmental officials would have to devote to project management.
- Would facilitate cooperation between police and nonpolice user agencies.

OPTION #3: Ad Hoc Consolidation with Separate Line Functions.

- Would result in less duplication of Support Activities than currently exists.
- Would offer potential for reducing police costs while maintaining at least the same level of service.
- Most likely of three options to be supported by police managers.
- Would keep most of the Support Activities under command of a police agency.
- Would leave police Line Functions and Administrative Activities under the individual jurisdictions.
- Individual projects require high time investment by elected officials and administrators.
- Management expense might offset savings from the elimination of duplication.
- Requires a number of individual agreements and policy groups.
- Failure rate of ad hoc arrangements is high.
- Would not make Support Activities available to the broadest number of governmental users.

OPTION #3: (Cont.)

- Places individual projects in competition with each other for funds.
- Fragments authority over projects.
- Complicates long range planning and implementation of plans.
- Fails to provide the job security needed to attract the most competent people available.

All of the three options are consistent with existing legal restrictions. If accompanied by appropriate changes in Line Functions and Administrative Activities any of the three options would result in more responsive police services. They all offer potential for reducing costs, although Option 1 would ultimately reduce costs more than either of the other options; and Option 2 would logically be less expensive than Option 3. However, Option 1, complete consolidation of the police, appears to be superior to either of the other two options in the area of ease of administration. Although initially efforts to completely consolidate the police would probably encounter the most resistance, in the long run consolidation could save years of frustrating merger efforts and reduce the overall costs and administrative time investments significantly. Therefore, the following recommendation is offered.

The Portland Police Bureau and Multnomah County Division of Public Safety should be completely consolidated in a manner described for Option 1.

As an alternative to this recommendation the second best approach is outlined in Option 2. If neither Option 1 nor Option 2 is deemed acceptable, Option 3 will represent an improvement over the approaches currently being followed. However, the improvement of overall police operational effectiveness under any of these options will be dependent on concurrent reorganization of police Line Functions and Administrative Staff Activities.

## V. Internal Organization

Current police operations in the City and County have a variety of shortcomings that should be addressed by new organizational designs. The major problem areas can be summarized as follows:

1. The administrative philosophy of many police managers is authoritarian, and based on bureaucratic organizational and management theory. Given the general social environment, the progressive orientation of local governmental leaders, and the quality--particularly intellectual level--of local police officers such a philosophy is inappropriate.
2. Local police agencies tend to operate in a highly autonomous fashion. In the absence of specific instructions from higher authority most police managers are not concerned about insuring that their actions support policies of the overall government. Nor are they concerned about identifying and responding to community and citizen needs and priorities. They tend to arbitrarily reject advice and information from nonsworn people if it in any way conflicts with traditional police wisdom. These situations are both a consequence of and maintained by the structures and procedures of local police agencies which are organized in a fashion that isolates, insulates, and protects police managers.
3. Although the highest priority police goals and the largest proportion of the citizen requests and police workload are related to order maintenance and service, local police agencies are organized and invest the largest proportion of their resources in criminal apprehension. An excessive amount of resources is invested in overhead command structures and specialized functions. The situation is further complicated because those officers who are responsible for providing general police services have been organized and assigned by a planning based primarily on crime

statistics rather than community needs or workload information. While most police managers verbally support the goals and priorities and recognize the absence of an established relationship between arrest rates and crime levels, it appears that they have based organizational arrangements more on tradition, self interest, and plagiarism than systematic planning.

4. Organizational policies and practices related to the selection assignment, promotion, work performance and control of personnel have failed in many respects to provide fair treatment of citizens and employees while producing desirable results. Procedures fall short in providing adequate guidance or protection for either personnel or citizens. Nearly ninety-nine percent of all sworn police officers in the City and County are white, and the highest ranking black police officer is a sergeant. Proportionally, women have not fared as well as blacks in the personnel system. Promotion criteria emphasize years of experience as a sworn officer and test taking ability more than successful work performance, credentials or ability. The sporadic functioning and inconsistent results of control devices indicate a need for improvement in this area.

Recommendations for reorganizing local police must address these problems in a manner consistent with the conclusions and consolidation options of previous chapters. The following recommendations were written at a level of abstraction sufficient for policy makers to provide direction without usurping the management prerogatives of police officials and managers.

### Recommendations for reorganizing Line Functions.

The alternatives available for reorganizing Line Functions to address the identified problems and conditions are limited. Regardless of the specific option chosen for consolidation, police Line Functions should be decentralized and organized around communities. The job structure should be redesigned to reduce frag-

mentation of efforts and facilitate the quick and adequate completion of police activities. Whether Line Functions of local police agencies are consolidated or not, the conclusions and recommendations of the report are appropriate.

Local police organizations currently invest an excessive amount of resources in management and supervisory personnel. Many of the managers and supervisors can be reassigned to operational positions and their work performed by clerks or other management personnel. Nonmanagement and nonsupervisory functions can be achieved more efficiently by clerks, civilians or lower ranking personnel, thereby releasing management and supervisory personnel for service delivery activities. Therefore, it is recommended:

1. The ratio of management and supervisory personnel to bottom level subordinates should be reduced. Spans of control should be based on the type of work performed. The practice of using higher ranking personnel to fill nonsupervisory positions should be discontinued.
2. The number of levels of hierarchy should be reduced to no more than four ranks.

These actions would reduce the number of links in the communication system and reduce the distortion in communications. In addition, they would provide more personnel for the supervision and performance of direct police services.

Local police are too highly specialized in law enforcement and investigative functions. The current level of specialization reduces uniformed patrol officers to report takers. It creates inefficiency in communications and processing of work. It severely reduces the number of uniformed personnel available to respond to and assist citizens who seek police aid. To correct this situation the Report recommends:

The amount of specialization in police Line Functions should be reduced by incorporating specialist responsibilities into patrol officer jobs and returning specialists to uniformed generalist patrol operations.

Managers who have devoted the vast majority of time in recent years to office assignments do not have the perspectives nor the information about problems and methods of patrol officers who spend their working hours delivering police services. In many instances management personnel do not have the educational preparation of patrol officers. Even in those situations where management personnel and patrol officers have similar educational credentials, the patrol officer's education is often more contemporary. Special function committees can provide a structure that will bring current operational information and experience to bear on management problems. In addition, the use of committees should improve organizational communication and the commitment of police officers to the organization. Committee meetings, including staff meetings should be open to all police personnel. The Report recommends:

The use of temporary special purpose committees containing patrol officers to perform functions currently the exclusive responsibility of overhead personnel should be increased.

Citizens in different communities reflect a variety of cultures, economic conditions, social problems and values. The police organizational structure should permit reasonable variations in operational policies and procedures to address these differences. Officers and supervisors should be given a stable assignment where they can establish rapport with and an understanding of the people in a community. Area responsibility needs to be built into the total organizational design. The Report recommends:

Organizational arrangements should place greater territorial and functional responsibility for serving police clients or patrol officers and their first line supervisors.

The current patrol allocation plans do not reflect any substantial consideration of community boundaries, economic or cultural situations, school districts, political boundaries, census tracts, or other subdivisions. Even though communities have differences in economic, cultural, and other demographic characteristics which create differences in police problems, the police have universal priorities and standard operating procedures for the entire jurisdiction. In many areas

the police officers are not familiar with the community and do not know citizens. Although a variety of social service agencies exist in many communities, most patrol officers are not familiar with the services they offer and do not make use of them in handling police problems.

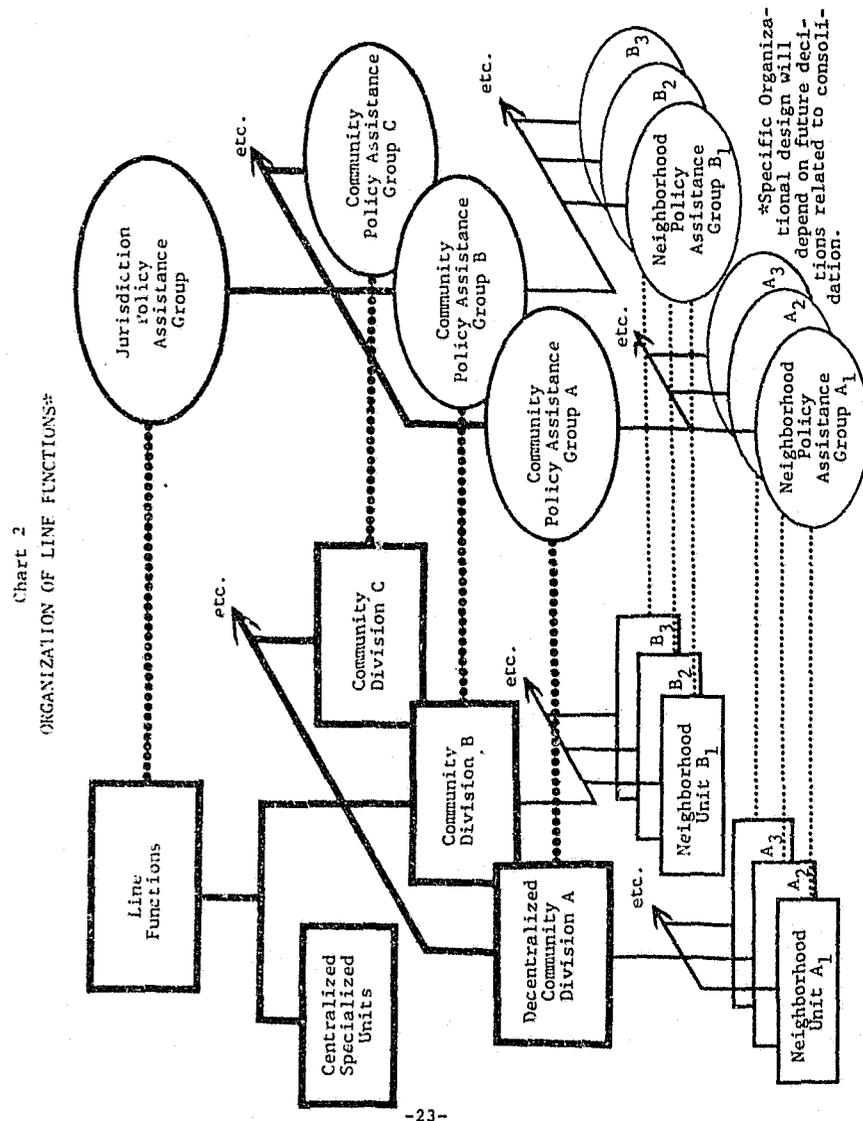
The current organizational arrangement is not conducive to efficient communication between officers working at various times in an area and from other citizens. Transfer policies and work practices further reduce efficient delivery of police services. These situations reduce flexibility and restrict the ability of police to respond to citizen desires and needs. The Report recommends:

Patrol operations should be reorganized to facilitate (1) establishment of policy differentials that will render police services more relevant to the needs and expectations of individual communities, (2) citizen participation, communication, and influence with police officers in their communities, (3) police officer familiarity with the communities and the people whom they serve, and (4) cooperation between the police and other city and county social service agencies. (See chart 2, page 23.)

A reorganization of patrol operations as outlined in the preceding recommendation should not only increase police effectiveness, but also facilitate future planning and improvements in police operations. Restructuring the police patrol operations for improved interfaces with the community and other community assistance agencies should increase the value of police as a part of local government.

Administrative Activities Organization Recommendations.

Although the preceding methods for improving police Line Functions are applicable regardless of whether or not local police agencies completely consolidate, the recommendations related to police Administrative Activities (planning, personnel, training, financial administration, public information, inspections, and internal affairs) are directly dependent on which of the three consolidation options will be implemented.



Administrative Activities play a critical role in the management of the overall organization and maintaining the quality of police operations. Therefore, the Administrative Activities should be structured to ensure that the police organization's philosophical orientation, efforts and activities are kept consistent with the policies of the government or governments responsible for overall direction of the police operations.

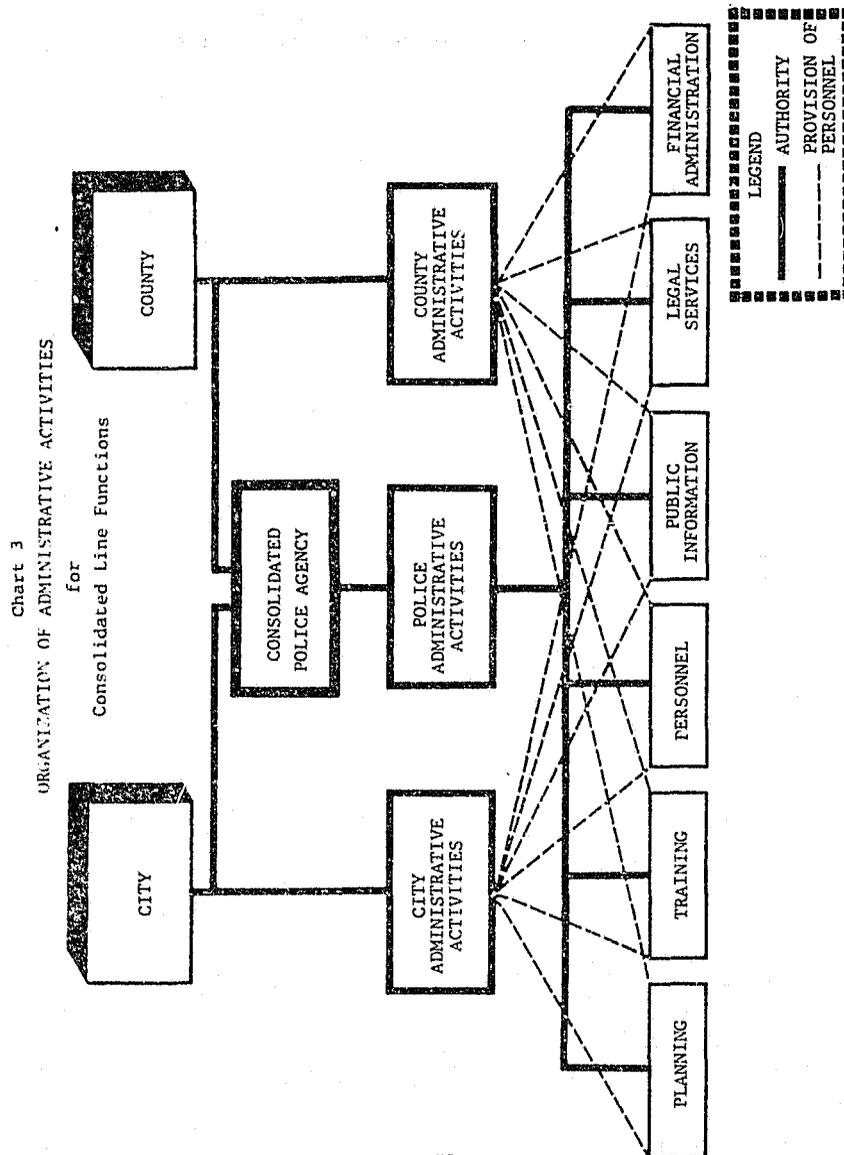
If the police Line Functions are completely consolidated as is recommended in Option 1, Administrative Activities should be completely consolidated and interfaced with their counterpart Administrative Activities at the City and County levels of government. If the police Line Functions are not consolidated (Option 2 or 3), the Administrative Activities of the City Police Bureau should be merged with their counterpart units at the City level, and the Division of Public Safety Administrative Staff should be merged with their counterpart units in the County Government.

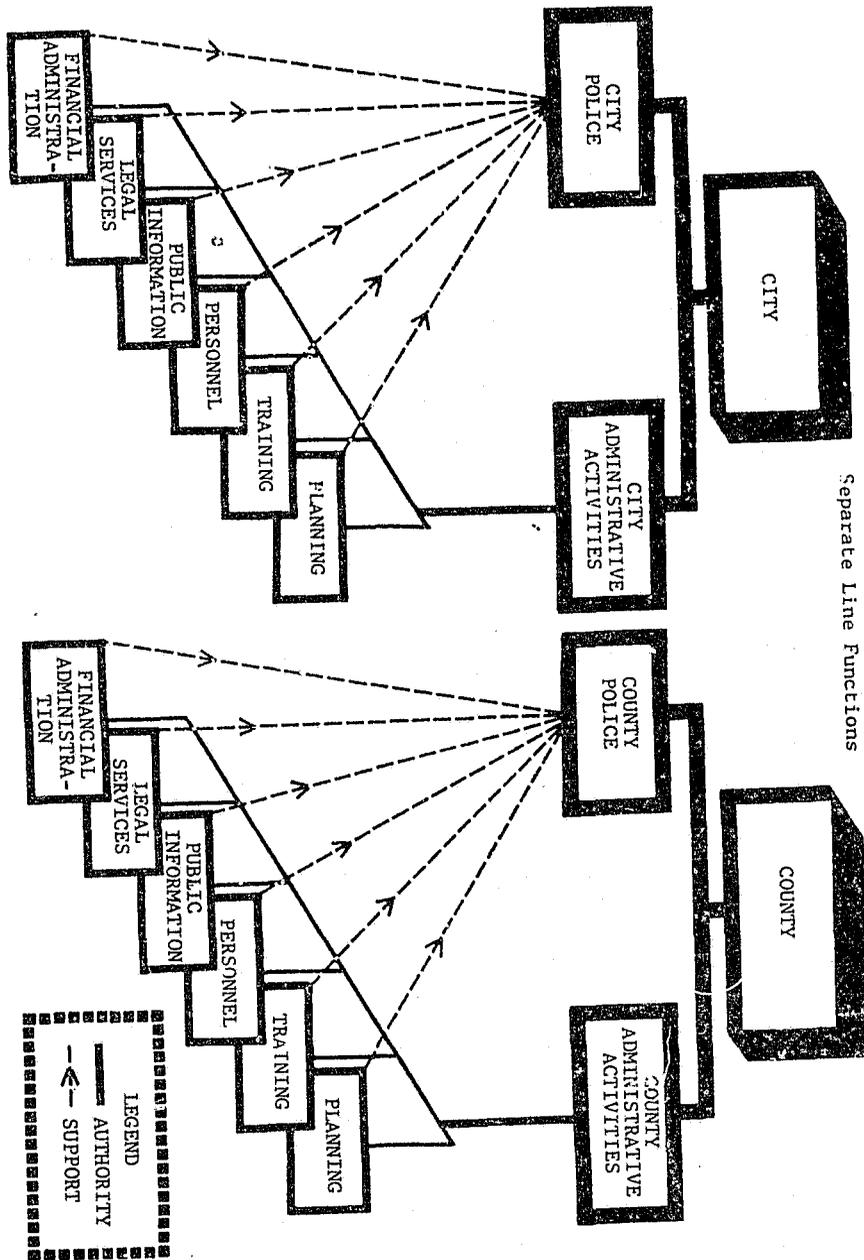
Administrative Activity Recommendation. If police Line Functions are consolidated into one police agency (Option 1), Administrative Activities should be placed under the direct control of the police director with Administrative Staff provided by the City and County (See Chart 3, page 25.)

Alternative Administrative Activity Recommendation. If police Line Functions are not consolidated into one police agency, Administrative Activities should be merged with their counterpart units in the respective City or County Government (See Chart 4, page 26.)

Regardless of which of the above two recommendations apply, the following recommendations are applicable.

1. Administrative Activity units with similar functions in the City of Portland, Multnomah County, the Portland Police Bureau, and the County Division of Public Safety should be physically located in the same facility in close proximity to each other.





2. Similar Administrative Activity units of the city, county and police should hold periodic joint staff meetings to ensure that their efforts are cooperative and coordinated.
3. Positions in Administrative Activity units, including supervisory positions, should be classified as non-sworn although sworn police officers should not be precluded from filling such positions if a sworn officer seeking a position is the most qualified candidate in terms of skills, knowledge, and credentials. However, sworn officers assigned to such positions should receive an appropriate adjustment in their remuneration.
4. Personnel for Administrative Activity units, with exception of police officers assigned temporarily to such units for special projects, should be hired by governmental staff administrators rather than the police.
5. The police inspectional functions should be staffed by both sworn and nonsworn personnel and organized as part of the planning unit.
6. Police internal investigations should be staffed by sworn police personnel and the operation should be organized to be directly responsible to the chief police administrator.
7. The local governmental officials should consider the possibility of establishing inspectional and citizen complaint units to perform government wide control functions for their respective jurisdictions.

Recommendations for Organization of Support Staff

The organization of police Support Activities (communications, records, data processing, criminalistics/ crime laboratory, evidence and property control, detention, identification and photography) is also dependent on which of the three consolidation options are chosen. If either Option 1 (a completely consoli-

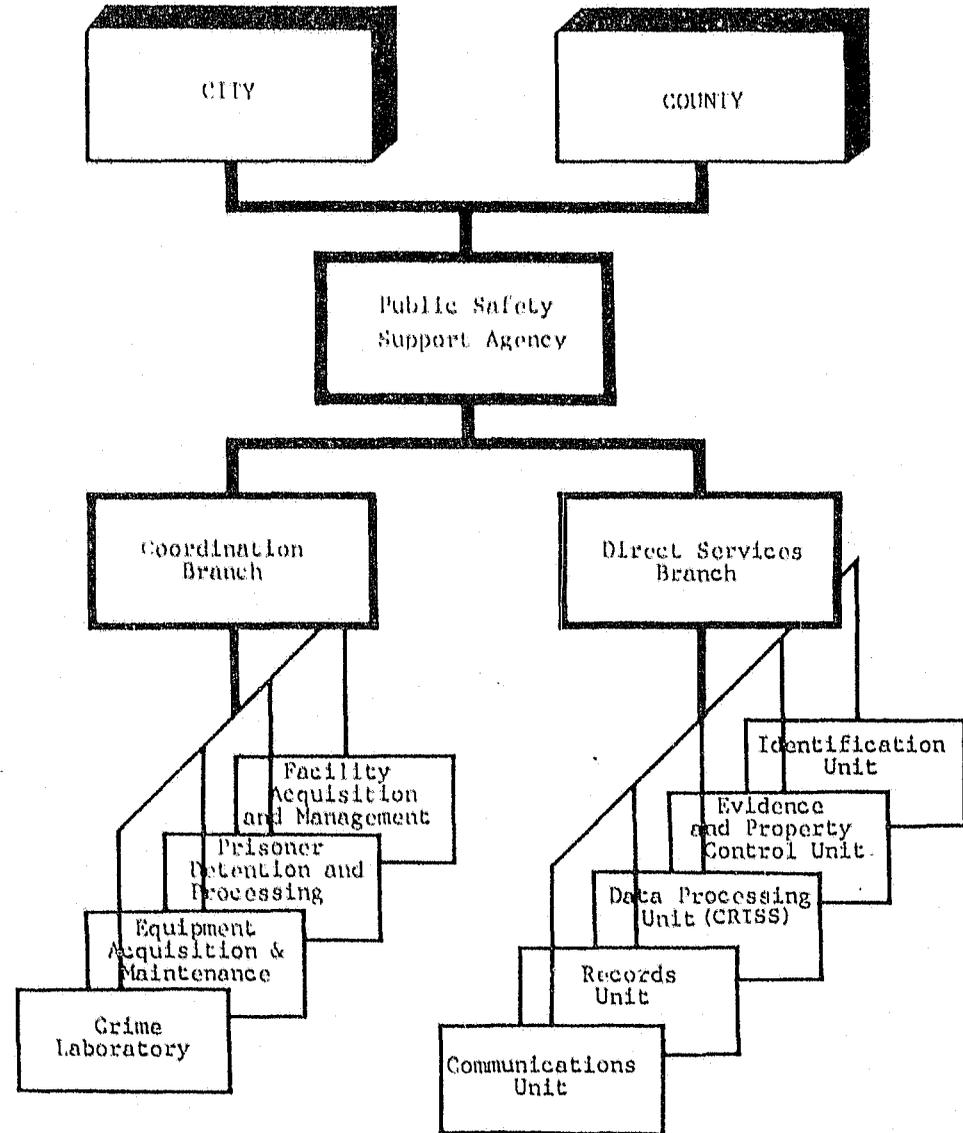
Chart 5  
 CONSOLIDATED PUBLIC SAFETY SUPPORT AGENCY

dated police agency) or option 2 (a Public Safety Support Agency) are to be implemented, the Support Activities should be organized under a Coordinator of a Public Safety Support Agency. If option 3 (Ad Hoc Merger of Support Activity Units) is to be implemented each support function merger will be a separate project.

To date larger police agencies have conducted their own Support Activities. However, many other agencies of government either have or need the same type of Support Activities as the police. For example, if they are to operate most efficiently, such governmental agencies as fire, animal control, children's services, and mental health need radio dispatching and communication with their field personnel. It is unrealistic to think that local governments can afford to provide each individual agency with its own twenty-four hour a day dispatching center, especially when one such center could be shared by all. The same is true of the criminalistics services of a crime laboratory, the records services of a data processing unit, and nearly all other Support Activities. Therefore, Support Activities should be organized to serve the broadest number of agencies possible.

Support Activities Organization Recommendation. If either option 1 or option 2 is implemented, a City-County Public Safety Support Agency should be contractually established under a Coordinator who is vested with the power to (1) assume direct management control of and reorganize communications, records, data processing, evidence and property control, and police identification records and activities, and (2) functionally supervise police facility acquisition and management, police prisoner detention and processing, police equipment acquisition and maintenance, and the regional crime laboratory for the City and County. (Chart 5, page 29.)

Alternative Organization of Support Activities Recommendation. If option 3 (Ad Hoc Merger of Support Activities) is to be implemented it should be organized in the following fashion: (1) Communications, records, and data processing should be organized as a single information services unit under the City-County Data Processing Authority, (2) police evidence and property control should be placed under the



functional supervision of records, (3) criminalistics support should be organized and implemented in the manner recommended by the Metropolitan Crime Laboratory Commission, (4) police vehicle acquisition and maintenance functions should be assumed by the Portland Bureau of Fleet Management, (5) Detention and identification functions should be placed under the Multnomah County Division of Public Safety, and (6) Warrant service and extradition functions should be assumed by the Multnomah County Division of Public Safety.

Previous ad hoc efforts to merge police Support Activities have been controversial and the success rate of such projects has been extremely low. Over the past twenty-five years, although approximately nine major cooperative ventures that have been undertaken only one can be considered basically successful.

The high failure rate has been the result of (1) weaknesses in long range planning, (2) inadequate consideration of systemic relationships with other functions before beginning mergers, (3) failure to develop sound long range commitments to use the merged units, (4) failure to assign specific responsibilities and adequately define authority in the merged areas, (5) the imposition of elaborate, ill-defined committee and task force structures without a division of responsibilities and authority between the committees and the project staff, and (6) the assignment of responsibility for mergers to skilled police practitioners who did not have sufficient backgrounds in the technical areas being organized. Future efforts to merge, reorganize and consolidate Support Activities will continue to be inefficient unless these problems are corrected.

#### Personnel.

It is important to have a match between police personnel, the police organization and the police clientele. An arrest oriented police agency will have community relations problems if its clientele place a higher priority on expeditious and complete police responses to their requests for service. Egalitarian employees will not perform successfully in an authoritarian organization. Therefore, the police personnel system or systems must be specifically designed to complement the police organizational plans.

The relative uniformity of citizen expectations about the need for competent police managers and officers, the trends towards eventual complete standardization of local police agencies, and the proposed standardization of local police, are indications of the need for a standard personnel system for all police agencies in Multnomah County. The Report recommends:

Police Career systems and personnel practices should be redesigned to (1) make more extensive use of knowledge and skills of operational personnel, (2) relate selection methods specifically to all positions, (3) limit the requirement of sworn officer status to those positions which require arrest powers, and (4) facilitate the rewarding of good, goal oriented job performance.

Not only does a disproportionate amount of police activities involve minorities, the public confidence in the police was found to be lowest among minority citizens. This difference in confidence levels may be due to a feeling that police do not provide equal service for minority people, and a related belief that even when police respond to situations involving minorities, their methods tend to discriminate against minority persons. Some people construe the absence of minority employees from local police agencies as confirmation of these beliefs.

As previously indicated no police personnel system in Multnomah County can provide convincing evidence of nondiscrimination on the basis of either race or sex. Nor can any personnel system provide substantial evidence that its hiring and promotional practices are selecting the most competent people available. The Report recommends:

Police personnel procedures should be redesigned to eliminate racial and sexual discrimination as well as any appearance of racial and sexual discrimination.

The Social Development Corporation, a consulting firm employed by the Police Consolidation Project, is currently striving to develop the details of a career system which is compatible with these personnel recommendations.

## VI. Summary

This Chapter in the Staff Report is a simple review of the Staff recommendations.

## VII. Implementation

### First Step.

The Police Consolidation Project Policy Group should review this report, indicate the option it wishes implemented, and state its position on each of the related recommendations.

### Second Step.

Subject to the direction of the Policy Group, the Police Consolidation Project staff should be given the responsibility and authority to stop conflicting police planning and changes, to perform final detailed implementation planning, and to supervise the subsequent implementation of those plans.

### Third Step.

The Policy Group should designate the order in which it wishes planning and implementation of the following areas to proceed:

- (1) Organizational Structure(s)
- (2) Management System(s)
- (3) Personnel Development (Training) System
- (4) Information System (Communications, Records, Data Processing)
- (5) Complaint System
- (6) Evidence and Property Control System
- (7) Career System
- (8) Other or Alternative Areas

### Fourth Step.

The staff will then prepare a detailed implementation plan for each of those areas in the order specified.

### Fifth Step.

After approval by the Policy Group, the staff will supervise implementation of each plan, working directly with the agencies and employees involved.

### Sixth Step.

Upon completion of work on the designated areas, the Police Consolidation Project staff will prepare a police consolidation manual and the required final reports. (The Police Consolidation Project grant is scheduled to end in April, 1975.)

It should be emphasized that successful completion of the Police Consolidation Project will depend on both the governments and the police agencies giving high priority to the recommended steps above. Any delays on decisions related to the project will seriously hamper efforts to expediently improve police services in Portland and Multnomah County.

## Appendixes

- A. Recommendations and Guidelines for Contracts.
- B. Illustrative Agreement for Establishment of a Consolidated Police Agency.
- C. Illustrative Agreement for Employment of a Director of Police for a Consolidated Police Agency.

## Bibliography

**END**

SURVEY STUDIES OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME\*

Final Report

by

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31964-31970

READING ROOM

## ABSTRACT

This report presents a compendium of scholarly articles prepared while the author was a Visiting Fellow, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, during 1974-1975. These essays focus upon survey studies of the victims of crime: the incidents which affect them, their perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system, the reporting of crimes to the police, the costs and consequences of victimization, and the use of survey studies of crime for criminal justice planning and evaluation.

## INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays is submitted as a report of my activities during my Visiting Fellowship at the National Institute, 1974-1975. It does not resemble the product proposed in my Fellowship application, for much of the data required to perform the proposed analysis did not become available until late in the Fellowship period. Rather, I worked with the material at hand, which was largely advance tabulations of crime panel projections for 1973 and tabulations of the city-level data collected by the Census Bureau. Because of the limitations imposed by the tabulations, these reports focus upon bivariate relationships in the data, and they do not explore at all an original topic of interest, citizen's attitudes toward crime and the police. Multivariate analyses of the incident data, and the role of attitudes in the decision of victims to report their experiences to the police, remain problems to be explored.

While a number of persons have contributed to my understanding of the crime panel data and have helped to create an environment within which my work could proceed, I would like to thank in particular: Winifred Reed and Richard Barnes of the National Institute, Dawn Nelson of N.C.J.I.S.S., and the squads of staff members at the Institute who have listened to my expositions of the data and contributed ideas of their own.

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1. Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime

31965

This essay describes the household and commercial victimization surveys conducted for L.E.A.A. by the Bureau of the Census. It will be published in The Review of Public Data Use, October, 1975.

2. The Victims of Crime: Some National Panel Data

31966

This article uses L.E.A.A.'s national crime survey to describe the volume and character of crime in the United States, the nature of its victims, and the consequences of victimization. It will appear as Chapter 9 of Criminal Behavior and Social Systems (2nd Edition), edited by Anthony L. Guenther (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976).

3. Citizen Reporting of Crime: Some National Panel Data

31967

This essay examines the determinants of citizen reporting of victimizations to the police. It will appear in Criminology.

4. The Dimensions of the Dark Figure of Unreported Crime

31968

This section explores the consequences of non-reporting for the victims of crime and for the community as a whole. It will appear in Crime and Delinquency.

5. Measurement Problems in Official and Survey Crime Rates

This article explores the sources of error in U.C.R. and victimization-survey crime data and discusses some of the difficulties inherent in attempting to compare the two. It will appear in the Journal of Criminal Justice, Spring, 1975

6. Public Policy and Public Evaluations of Criminal Justice System Performance

31969

This section reviews the research literature on the uses of interview data in the evaluation of police activities. It will appear in Crime and Criminal Justice Policy, edited by John Gardiner and Michael Mulkey (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books/D.C. Heath, 1975).

7. The Use of Victimization Surveys in Criminal Justice Planning

31970

This report summarizes some thoughts on the uses of material gathered in victimization surveys for the evaluation of criminal justice system performance and for criminal justice planning. It will appear in Quantitative Tools for Criminal Justice Planning (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

In addition to the victimization-related writings included in this report, the following general scholarly reports were written, and appropriately attributed to the Visiting Fellowship Program

1. Book Review: Prisoners of Society, by Martin Davies. To appear in Social Science Quarterly.
2. Article: "Groups in the Policy Process: The Police and Urban Crime," in Louis Masotti and Robert Lineberry (editors), Perspectives on Urban Policy (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books/D.C. Heath, 1975).
3. Article: "Efficiency and Effectiveness in Big-City Police Departments," to appear in Public Administration Review.
4. Final manuscript preparation: Chicago Since 1840: A Time-Series Data Handbook, to be published by the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois, 1975.

31965

SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME

CHAPTER 1  
SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME

In July, 1972, the Census Bureau began one of the largest interview programs ever conducted, the crime victimization surveys of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. The national survey is designed to generate estimates of quarterly and yearly victimization rates for individuals, households, and commercial establishments. In addition, special surveys have been conducted in twenty-six communities, producing victimization rates and other crime data for many of the nation's major central cities. While the city surveys are "one shot" cross-sectional studies of the experiences of their citizens during a particular year, the national program is on-going; the residents of 10,000 households are interviewed each month in a rotating panel design, producing continuous reports of the crime experiences of ordinary citizens. The individual and household interview schedules are designed to elicit detailed accounts of six categories of offenses: rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, and auto theft. The commercial survey instrument focuses upon only two crimes, burglary and robbery. In addition to the personal or organizational characteristics of the victims of these offenses, the data include self-reports of the value of stolen property, the extent of personal injuries, medical costs, insurance claims and collections, the restitution of lost property, the attributes of offenders, the reporting of incidents to the police, and self-defensive measures taken by victims. Attitude questionnaires were administered to one-half of the respondents over sixteen years of age in the city surveys; they probe perceptions of crime, the fear of crime, and the effect of crime upon personal mobility. Because they are intended to gather information about relatively rare events--serious crimes--the samples drawn for these studies are very large. Tapes

containing the data are now being prepared by the Bureau of the Census, and soon will enter the public domain.

This report describes these samples, and advances a few ideas about the data and their organization. It also summarizes key methodological problems about which users should be aware, and lists several publications which refer to the survey.

#### The National Household Sample

The household sample focuses upon the victimization experiences of persons as individuals and as collective units. The households in the sample were chosen through a multi-stage stratified cluster procedure. In addition to standard dwelling units and mobile homes, the sample may include group quarters such as flop houses, communes, and dormitories. The households are divided into panels of approximately 10,000 units, one of which is interviewed each month. All household members twelve years of age and over are questioned about their experiences during the preceding six months. Re-interviews are conducted with each panel for up to three years, then they are dropped from the sample and replaced by a new group of respondents.

The heart of the interview schedule is the "incident screen," a list of questions probing the experiences of each respondent. Individuals are asked eleven questions, including:

(During the last six months) Did you have your pocket picked, or purse snatched?

Did anyone beat you up, attack you, or hit you with something such as a rock or a bottle?

In addition, a household informant is quizzed about burglaries, auto thefts, and other incidents which are treated as victimizations of the group as a whole. Each affirmative response to a screen item is followed up by a series of detailed questions which elicit reports about the incident, perceptions of

the offender, and consequent financial losses and physical disabilities. The resulting information is used to catalogue the event: the data to be released by the Census Bureau are coded in one of thirty-six categories, which can be recombined to produce analytic typologies or to create classifications compatible with those employed by the F.B.I. in the Uniform Crime Report.

#### The National Commercial Sample

The commercial study focuses upon burglary and robbery. The national sample was selected by a stratified, multi-stage cluster procedure conducted by the Business Division of the Bureau of the Census. The sample potentially includes a broad range of organizations. In addition to retail establishments, it may include wholesale suppliers, manufacturing establishments, museums and theatres, medical centers, coal mines, and in principle the 1972 break-in of the Democratic National Committee's headquarters could have been included in the data. These establishments were chosen from a sampling frame developed in 1948, however. Although it <sup>was</sup> ~~has~~ been updated somewhat <sup>in 1964</sup> (primarily in large cities), the age of the sampling frame is a major weakness of this phase of the victim study.

The selection procedure yielded an initial sample of 14,000 interviewed commercial units. In each place, owners or managers are questioned about events which victimized the organization during the preceding six months; robberies of employees or customers are treated as individual rather than commercial crimes, although injuries to the former "in the line of duty" are recorded. The commercial respondents are divided into six panels, but unlike the household sample, the commercial group is not rotated.

#### The City Household Samples

In addition to the national household and commercial surveys, interviews were also conducted in twenty-six major cities. These communities were selected for a variety of reasons: some because they were the focus of

special federal crime-reduction programs, some because they are large and have an extraordinary impact upon the crime rate of the nation as a whole, and others because they gave the collection a good geographical and demographic spread. A list of these cities and the dates during which interviews were conducted in them is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1 goes about here  
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Households in each of the cities were selected from 1970 Census computer tapes which contained information about the units which entered the sample. They were chosen at random in predetermined proportions to fill 100 strata defined by the race and income of their heads, whether they owned or rented their quarters, and the size of the family group. This sample was updated by the inclusion of a randomly-selected group of units chosen from lists of building permits issued since the 1970 census. Again, the range of households which were eligible for inclusion was wide, primarily excluding residents of jails and units selected for the national survey. Response rates for the city samples were quite high, averaging about 95 percent of all households which could have been questioned. Each city sample numbers about 10,000 interviewed households and 21,000 individual respondents. Each was quizzed about his or her victimization experiences during the preceding twelve months. It is important to note that data from the city studies refers to the experiences of city residents, not to crimes which took place in those cities. Incidents reported in the surveys include many which took place elsewhere, while crimes which victimize commuters, tourists, and others who do not live within the boundaries of the central city are necessarily excluded by the nature of the sampling frame. Among other things, this makes it perilous to compare survey victimization figures with official police statistics.

TABLE 1  
Victim Survey Cities

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Cities Interviewed July-September, 1972

Atlanta  
Baltimore  
Cleveland  
Dallas  
Denver  
Newark  
Portland, Oregon  
St. Louis

Cities Interviewed January-March, 1973

Chicago  
Detroit  
Los Angeles  
New York  
Philadelphia

Cities Interviewed January-March, 1974

Boston  
Buffalo  
Cincinnati  
Houston  
Miami  
Milwaukee  
Minneapolis  
New Orleans  
Oakland  
Pittsburgh  
San Diego  
San Francisco  
Washington, D.C.

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### The City Commercial Sample

Commercial establishments were selected in each city using the Census of Business sampling frame that was employed in the national sample. Interviewers were sent to selected areas of each community to compile lists of all visible establishments. Samples of these units were chosen, taking care to avoid establishments which belonged to the national commercial sample. Areas which had been annexed to the central cities since 1948 were examined for commercial areas, which were also sampled. Interviews were conducted with owners or managers, gathering information about burglaries or robberies which had affected their operations during the previous twelve months. The refusal rate was low, averaging less than four percent. In the end, representatives of about 2,500 commercial establishments were interviewed in each of the twenty-six cities.

### Data Organization

There are several ways to organize data collected in the victim surveys, some of which are necessary for answering certain questions, but are inefficient for probing others. The largest files will contain information on all interviewed units, including those which were victimized and those which were not. Household files of this type will be hierarchical: each record will contain data describing the household and its head, which will be followed by descriptions of a varying number of individuals in the household, each of whose attributes will in turn be followed by a varying number of data characters describing their victimization experiences, if any. Files of this sort may be utilized to examine differences between victims and non-victims of various offenses. Smaller and more efficient files may be constructed to explore the characteristics of victims or incidents only. For example, an Incident File would link the attributes of each incident with those of its victim; an

individual or household would be in the file as often as they were the target of a crime, and there would be one record for each incident. Such a file could be used to explore the characteristics of incidents (Were they reported to the police, or not?) and the relationship between the attributes of incidents and the attributes of their victims (Were the victimizations of whites more likely to be reported than the victimizations of blacks?).

Incident Files as well as "full files" containing information on all respondents will be released by the Bureau of the Census. In every case the records will include weights which must be used to adjust them to their proper proportion in the population. The weights reflect the probability of a unit being selected and they provide estimates for similar units which were not interviewed. In addition, incidents are weighted by the inverse of the number of victims they involved. Because crimes with two victims, for example, are twice as likely to be uncovered in a random sample of the population as those with only one victim, it is necessary to adjust for their differential chance of appearing in the data. The weights calculated by the Bureau of the Census also will provide population estimates of the frequency of each incident or victimization.

Also crucial to the organization of any data set from the national crime survey is the time frame to which it refers. Two concepts are important, the "collection period" and the "reference period" for a set of data. Because the interviews gather retrospective reports, information collected at one point refers to some prior period of time, always six months in length in the national study. Data for a particular calendar reference period--say, 1974--would be gathered from persons interviewed between February, 1974, and June, 1975. Those reports may be organized in Incident Files containing information about events which occurred within the reference period of interest. Files organized

around persons or households, on the other hand, may contain incidents from variously overlapping reference periods, for reports gathered from respondents in more than one collection period will refer to different calendar months. Unless only respondents from a single monthly panel are used in an analysis, the incidents in the file will have occurred during different parts of a year. This has serious implications if crime patterns are highly seasonal, or if there is a strong secular trend in the data. Reports gathered in each city study, on the other hand, share virtually identical collection and reference periods.

#### Methodological Caveats

Users of the crime survey data should be aware of two clusters of methodological problems which plague any survey effort of this type: non-recall and mis-recall. The focus of the crime surveys has been the incident, an event which is presumed to have a reality apart from its interpretation by its participants and the intrusion of interviewer and questionnaire upon its verbal reconstruction. Because the survey must use people to gather information about these events several important social and psychological processes are in fact at work in this reconstruction effort.

The first difficulty is that the survey does not elicit self-reports of all the events which it purports to measure. There is evidence that it under-enumerates minor or unsuccessful offenses, incidents which have not occurred recently, events which were initiated by their eventual victim or in which he shares blame, and crimes of violence and theft which involve friends, neighbors, lovers, or family members. Some of this may be due to memory failure; people forget trivial or temporally distant events of all sorts. Some may be definitional; the targets of theft or violence within acquaintanceship circles may not think of themselves as "victims" or their antagonists

as "criminals." Many events may be under-reported as well because people choose not to tell the interviewer about them. These phenomena were investigated in a series of "reverse record checks" in which victims of crime (as recorded in police files) were questioned in order to determine if the event would be recalled in the interview. Assaults within family and friendship networks often were not recalled, even though they previously had been brought to the attention of the police. In addition, analysis of reports of victimization during the 1973 reference period suggests that black respondents may be under-recalling less serious offenses, especially those in the assault category. Data on interpersonal violence in the crime surveys must be interpreted with care.

In addition to the non-recall problem, errors are often encountered in the reports which are made to the interviewers. One major source of error is temporal telescoping, a phenomenon always encountered in survey studies which attempt to reconstruct past events. All survey studies of crime employ reference periods, spans of time for which respondents are asked to recall their experiences. There is a strong tendency on the part of many of those questioned to bring into the discussion events which occurred outside of the reference period--to "telescope forward" events which happened before it began, and to "telescope backward" those which took place after the cut-off point. The resulting figures then overestimate the crime rate for the period as a whole. Within the reference period, this leads us to overestimate the rate during the earliest and latest months as well. The only solution to the problem is to increase the saliency of the bounding points. In the national crime panel, this is accomplished by the use of a bounding interview. Data collected during the first visit of an interviewer to a household is not used for estimation purposes; rather, it is used in the subsequent interview

to establish a benchmark for the reference period. During each successive reinterview of a panel, the interviewer inquires about events which have taken place since the last visit. This technique, accompanied by the scheduling of interviews immediately following the close of the reference period, generates much more accurate (and lower) estimates of the crime rate.

The difficulty is that the interviews in the city studies were unbounded. Respondents in each of the twenty-six cities were asked to recall their experiences for the preceding year, but that recall period had not been demarcated by the visit of an interviewer. Because the city studies were not designed as panel efforts, future interviews in the same cities will be unbounded as well. This serves to inflate estimates of the crime rate for these cities relative to those established by the national panels, and the two should not be compared. A related problem is that a portion of the interviews included in the national data were unbounded as well. The national panel is a sample of physical, not social, households. The persons interviewed are those who happen to inhabit those spaces, and when they move they usually are replaced in the sample by those who succeeded them in the same dwelling. These new residents are treated as replacements for those who lived there previously, and interviews with them are used in the crime-estimation process even though they were unbounded. This will serve to inflate artificially the estimated crime rate. In addition, there is some evidence that unbounded interviews also will be less accurate in their temporal placement of events within the reference period.

There are a number of other problems common to survey work which plague the crime survey data. The telephone has been used extensively to conduct interviews with hard-to-reach respondents, and there is no good evidence of the effect of this upon the quality and quantity of the data.

Panel mortality is a serious problem, for in a highly mobile society a three-year rotation cycle is a long one. Despite the relatively large size of the samples covering a particular reference period, the number of incidents which were uncovered in many crime categories is often painfully small. For example, the survey turned up only 22 rapes in New York City and 54 in Detroit. While these produced city-wide estimates of 5,800 and 2,500 rapes respectively, the standard errors of population estimates based upon such sample n's are very large, and it is impossible to do any detailed analyses of the characteristics of events in these categories. Finally, many of the perceptual items and self-reports of behavior gathered in the survey are of unknown reliability and validity. Data on the attributes of offenders is particularly suspect, for the proportion of victims offering "don't know" responses to questions about the age and race of their assailants is very low.

For all of their difficulties, the victimization surveys represent a bold attempt to bypass traditional official sources of information about crime and to gather often experimental new data on the experiences of ordinary citizens. As the data are more fully analyzed, feedback about its strengths and weaknesses, and new ideas about problems which need to be explored and methodologies which are appropriate to the task, will help shape the future of the survey program.

Selected Documents

Descriptive Articles and Analyses

Argana, Marie G., "Development of a National Victimization Survey," in Emilio Viano and Israel Drapkin (eds.) Victimology: A New Focus, Vol. 3 (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975, 171-179).

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"Crime in the Nation's Five Largest Cities: Advance Report" - April, 1974

"Crime in Eight American Cities: Advance Report" - July, 1974

"Criminal Victimization in the United States, January-June, 1973" - November, 1974

"Criminal Victimization Surveys in the Nation's Five Largest Cities" - July, 1975. This is the most detailed of the city studies, and contains a great detail of technical information. Available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service and the United States Government Printing Office.

"Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1973 Advance Report" - July, 1975

"Criminal Victimization Surveys in Thirteen American Cities" - August, 1975

31966

CHAPTER 2

THE VICTIMS OF CRIME: SOME NATIONAL PANEL DATA

THE VICTIMS OF CRIME: SOME NATIONAL SURVEY FINDINGS\*

Wesley G. Skogan

Since the mid-1960s, the problem of "crime on the streets" has been a recurrent theme on the American political agenda. In their platforms, candidates for office have espoused wide-ranging solutions to control crime. Their proposals range from restoring the death penalty or augmenting police departments to radical social and economic reform. This political excitement has been translated into a variety of specific crime-reduction programs. At the local level, rape crisis centers and victim-representation programs have been instituted to provide supportive services for the unfortunate targets of crime. Methadone-maintenance programs have been initiated to respond to the perceived needs of drug users. Halfway houses have been created to facilitate the adjustment of prisoners returning to the community. Police communications hardware and equipment have been upgraded to enable them to respond more rapidly to calls for police assistance, on the presumption that such activity will prevent many crimes from occurring in the first place. The federal government's role has been primarily financial; it has provided billions of dollars for state and local agencies to initiate and evaluate the effectiveness of such programs, and it has encouraged the diffusion of workable ideas throughout the crime-control establishment.

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\* This essay was written while the author was a Visiting Fellow at the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Washington, D.C. That agency bears no responsibility for its contents or conclusions.

This new attention to performance of the criminal justice system has highlighted an old problem. In spite of the introduction of innovative programs, we still lack many of the most rudimentary measures necessary to decide what programs work and how our society is progressing toward reducing crime. Since the 1930s, the primary source of information on crime, criminals, and their victims has been the yearly UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS collected from local police departments by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Participating departments supply the FBI with the number of crimes of various types that have come to their attention, the number of those that have been "cleared" (attributed to a firm suspect), and some simple information on the victims of homicide and the recovery of stolen property. They also report the social characteristics (age, race, and sex) of persons arrested for those crimes. These data define the limits of our knowledge about national crime patterns; those limits are quite narrow, and the data themselves are often suspect. In 1967 a Task Force of the Crime Commission concluded:

[T]he United States is today, in the era of the high speed computer, trying to keep track of crime and criminals with a system that was less than adequate in the days of the horse and buggy . . . . In some respects the present system is not as good as that used in some European countries 100 years ago.<sup>1</sup>

⌘ The manifold problems of official crime statistics led the Commission to support a series of sample surveys to gauge independently the volume and distribution of crime. In those surveys, interviewers visited randomly selected samples of households and questioned adult "informants" about the

individual victimization experiences of household members, and about burglary and other crimes against property that were perpetrated against the household unit. The resulting data were used to explore the personal characteristics of the victims of various types of crime, and to generate new measures of the crime rate for the sampled jurisdictions.<sup>2</sup>

This new source of data on crime closes several gaps in official statistics and circumvents important political and organizational processes that lead the police to undercount or undervalue many kinds of crime in their reports to the FBI. Because participation in the uniform crime reporting system is voluntary, coverage of the United States is far from complete for many key statistics. Sample surveys, on the other hand, can be representative of the entire population. Large, carefully drawn samples yield data that are more reliable than "complete enumerations," which miss many areas and often elicit incomplete, illegible, or inaccurate accounts of local activity. Further, because they deal with relatively small samples, surveyors can afford to focus upon each individual case in greater depth, thereby eliciting much more thorough descriptions of events. Police departments traditionally have only collected detailed information on victims, offenders, use of weapons, and physical location of crimes in the case of homicide.

Survey measures of crime are also more useful than official statistics in making inter-city comparisons of crime rates and characteristics of crime incidents. The voluntary self-reporting system used by the FBI is plagued by two problems that make comparisons questionable. First, the quality of information kept by local departments varies. The second impediment is differences between standard definitions of specific crimes employed by the FBI for national accounting purposes and the definitions

imposed by state criminal codes and city or county ordinances. What is classified as a "robbery" will vary from place to place, and it is not clear that local recordkeeping systems can always be adequately translated into standard form when the Uniform Crime Reports are compiled. Interview questionnaires, on the other hand, may easily be standardized and deployed in similar fashion across jurisdictions.

Another advantage of surveys is their independence from local authorities. Data gathered and analyzed by organizations that are not affected by the area's political machinations are not sensitive to local variations in law enforcement politics or police administrative practices. It is easy for the police to cheat. Attempted burglary can be catalogued as vandalism, robbery as purse-snatching, and grand larceny as petty larceny.<sup>3</sup> Rape complaints can be discouraged by rough handling, burglary reports can be "lost," and even homicide can be written off as "suicide" or "hit-and-run" when there is no next-of-kin to raise a ruckus. All of these techniques are useful when they serve the political purposes of the police to "reduce crime," and they may be reversed to achieve the opposite effect as well. Cheating can also take place at the grass-roots level. In departments where the performance of district commanders is evaluated by their ability to manage the local crime rate, they will do so. As one Chicago police officer recently testified, "It's impossible under the present system to write factual and honest official reports and stay out of the commander's office very long."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, even honest official figures can be accumulated only for those crimes that come to the attention of the police. This is both a weakness and a strength of police-based crime statistics. Its weakness lies in the massive undercounting of certain kinds of crime. We have long suspected that many crimes are never reported to the police; European

sociologists dubbed this officially unrecognized activity the "dark figure" of crime. In their present organization, the police are primarily a reactive force, intervening upon citizen request. Police rarely observe such events as robbery or burglary, but rely upon victims or their confidants to report crimes to them through calls for assistance. When such calls are not made, the police can neither record nor respond to criminal activities. Unlike official statistics, surveys gather information on many of these unreported victimizations. As we shall see below, nonreporting rates may be as high as eighty percent for some crime categories, and here surveys provide us with the only useful data on victims and offenders.

Surveys of the type reviewed here, however, cannot record many other kinds of crime. They cannot, for example, count crimes without victims. In their "proactive" role, the police detect many events which are not reported to them, but which they must seek out: drug use, public drunkenness, traffic offenses, prostitution. They also determine that events were crimes through intensive investigation; this is how we know, for instance, that a fire was the result of arson. Thus police statistics are the only suitable accounting device for some kinds of crime. In addition, there are other classes of events for which neither official nor survey measures are suitable. It is often impossible to classify an event without knowledge of the perpetrator's motives. When a merchant arrives at his store in the morning and finds a broken front window, shall we label it attempted burglary (a serious crime) or vandalism (not so serious)? When another merchant conducts an inventory and discovers shortages, should we attribute them to shoplifting, to employee theft, or were the goods simply "lost" rather than "stolen"? In the absence of knowledge about specific events, even detailed information about the magnitude of a loss is not very useful.

Crimes are furtive activities. Offenders attempt to control information that may link them with criminal activity, and when they are successful no measurement technique will betray them.

Within these limitations, surveys of crime still may reveal detailed information on suitable events which is of considerable importance. Since 1972 the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the Bureau of the Census have been conducting national and city-level studies of this type. Twenty-six large cities have been chosen for analysis, and approximately 33,000 interviews with city residents and 2,000 interviews with business owners and managers have been conducted in each of those communities. A continuing series of interviews is also being conducted with a national panel of 150,000 individuals and 17,500 business representatives. They are questioned every six months in rotation in order to produce quarterly estimates of the crime rate for the United States as a whole. These interviews focus upon a selected set of relatively serious crimes: rape, robbery, assault, burglary, and theft. The section of the survey questionnaire which measures victimization was rigorously pretested in three cities to establish procedures that would most accurately assess crime. Questions have been designed particularly to encourage respondents to remember past events, to recall exact dates and details, and to overcome any embarrassment they might feel about discussing their experiences with an interviewer. In addition to reporting specific crime incidents, victims are asked to describe their assailants, the extent of their financial loss and physical injury is probed, it is ascertained if they filed (and if they collected) any insurance claims, and they are asked if anyone reported the event to the police. Together, this information gives us a new and more detailed picture of criminal victimization patterns in the United States.

HOW MUCH CRIME IS THERE?

The victimization surveys uncovered considerable disparity between the number of criminal incidents reported to interviewers and official FBI statistics. Extrapolations from the samples indicate that about 37,500,000 criminal events occurred in the United States during 1973 alone. The vast majority of these were crimes against property and therefore did not involve personal contact between a victim and an offender. Together, burglary of households (6,400,000 incidents) and commercial establishments (1,400,000), the loss of motor vehicles (1,300,000), and petty thefts from individuals (over 22,000,000) accounted for 85 percent of the total. Only four percent could be classified as "personal thefts" (robberies, purse-snatches, and other predatory offenses involving direct confrontations between victims and criminals). Slightly over four million instances of interpersonal violence (rapes and assaults) were recorded (11 percent of total reported victimizations). Assaults were far more frequent than rapes, and a surprising number of both (about 70 percent of rapes and 75 percent of assaults) appear to have been unsuccessful, resulting in little or no physical injury.

Undoubtedly this large figure still falls far short of recording all crimes that occurred in the United States during 1973. Rape is probably not well measured in a victim survey, although many more incidents were reported to interviewers than surfaced through official reporting channels in 1973. In general, self-reporting procedures for measuring events are biased when they embarrass the respondent, when the events involve relatives or acquaintances who may be compromised, when the respondent/victim may have been partially responsible for precipitating the event, or when the boundaries that socially define the event are uncertain and shifting. These factors all contribute to measurement error for both rape and assault,

and undoubtedly lead victim surveys to underestimate the total number of potentially reportable events in the population. On the other hand, the very large numbers reported above may seriously overestimate other classes of offenses. Before they report a crime as having occurred, the police routinely investigate the circumstances surrounding an event; in many cases they conclude that a formal complaint is not required (i.e., no crime has been committed). No such screening is used in these victim surveys, although other surveys employing expert judges to determine if a legally actionable offense has occurred have similarly dismissed a number of citizen-recalled incidents.<sup>5</sup>

It is unlikely, however, that the lack of screening could account for the magnitude of differences between official and survey crime rates revealed here. In some serious categories the ratio of crime uncovered in the interviews to incidents officially recorded is over three to one. While it is impossible to compare official and survey crime figures in every case, Table 1 presents such comparisons for those crimes where it is reasonable to do so.

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Table 1 about here  
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As the figures in Table 1 indicate, survey estimates of the crime rate overshadow official counts in every category. Survey data revealed about three times as many rapes, assaults, burglaries, and robberies than reported in UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS. The only crime with a significantly smaller gap between the two figures is vehicle theft. It has been argued that police statistics on auto theft, like those for homicide, are relatively

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF OFFICIAL AND SURVEY CRIME TOTALS  
FOR SELECTED CATEGORIES, 1973\*

Crime	Survey U.S. Estimate	Official U.S. Total	Ratio	Comments
Rape	153,000	51,000	3.0:1	Should be comparable; both count only individuals; much evidence that both undercount.
Assault	1,313,180	416,270	3.2:1	Both count individuals; official definition requires serious injury or use of weapon; survey estimate is for events with comparable characteristics.
Burglary	7,818,026	2,540,000	3.1:1	Official figures have a wider base, and should total more -- the survey figure is for households and businesses only, while the official total includes organizations, governments, etc.
Robbery	1,214,884	382,680	3.2:1	Official base is wider, as for burglary.
Motor Vehicle Theft	1,330,470	923,600	1.4:1	Official base is wider -- the survey figure is for auto theft from individual owners only, while official totals include thefts from businesses and organizations.

\* SOURCE: Official figures are from the UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS for 1973; survey totals were calculated from tabulations supplied by the Bureau of the Census for the 1973 Annual National Crime Panel.

accurate reflections of events that take place in the world. It appears that the magnitude of the loss, the importance of the automobile in daily life, and the widespread belief that a police report must be filed for insurance purposes encourage high reporting rates for auto theft. If the other stages in the crime-recording process function smoothly, this should result in more accurate official figures for vehicle losses.

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF CRIME?

The picture of victimization that emerges from the 1973 national crime survey is a familiar one: the burden of crime is unequally distributed in American society, falling heavily upon those who already bear the consequences of other forms of social inequality. The victims of crime are disproportionately young, black, and poor. Further, each of these factors appears to contribute independently to the chances that an individual is the victim of a crime. The effects of age, race, and social status accumulate for those at the bottom of the ladder, leading to extremely high victimization rates for selected subgroups in the population. Let us look at these in succession.

Young people are disproportionately the victims of assaultive violence. Table 2 reports assault victimization rates (the number of victims divided into the number of persons) for different age groups. Assault rates are extremely high for persons in the sixteen to nineteen age cohort, approaching six per hundred. The rate drops off steadily with age, and it is very small for persons over fifty. There are several reasons for this inverse relationship between assault victimization and age. First, youthful victims are often in close proximity to high-risk offenders, who are also disproportionately other youths: they are on the street, in school yards, and in

competitive events with their exuberant peers. Second, until a out age sixteen, physical differences between persons of differing ages are often pronounced. Therefore, twelve-year old children will be quite vulnerable to harrassment by their immediate elders for several more years.

The differential distribution of interpersonal violence across age cohorts is also presented in Table 2; the proportion each group represents in the sample population is contrasted to the proportion each represents in the pool of assault victims. The contrasts are striking: young people

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 Table 2 about here  
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are about twice as likely to be assault victims as their numbers in the population would lead us to expect. Persons between ages twelve and twenty-four (who make up 30 percent of the sample population) suffer 60 percent of all assaults recalled in the interviews. Any official policy designed to reduce the overall assault rate in the United States must speak to the particular security needs of the younger component of the population. As we shall see, this will be extremely difficult.

The pool of high-risk victims is further defined by sex: the victimization rate for crimes involving assaultive violence is twice as high among males (3.6 per hundred) as among females (1.9 per hundred). The same proportions describe robbery victimizations as well. Females outdistance males only in two crime categories represented in this survey, rape and purse-snatching (some male victims of each were interviewed).

Rapes which were reported for 1973 were twice as common among black women as among whites. Rape rates were much higher among divorced and single women than among the married, and victims were concentrated in the sixteen to twenty-four age group. Marital status undoubtedly reflects differential

TABLE 2

AGE AND VICTIMIZATION, 1973\*

Age	Assault Rate	Percent of Total Population (Age 12 and over)	Percent of Assault Victims
12-15	4.81	10.2	18.3
16-19	5.80	9.6	20.7
20-24	5.28	10.7	21.0
25-34	3.01	17.3	19.4
35-49	1.67	20.8	13.0
50-64	.84	18.8	5.9
65 and over	.38	<u>12.5</u> 100.0%	<u>1.8</u> 100.0%

\* SOURCE: Calculated from tabulations prepared by the Bureau of the Census from the 1973 Annual National Crime Survey. Percentages do not total exactly to 100% due to rounding errors.

opportunities for victimization: single women are more likely to be out at night unescorted or in the presence of males with whom their relationship is uncertain, and are the most accessible targets for attack. The assailant is usually a lone offender: about 80 percent of reported rapes were described in this way, while an additional 10 percent involved two offenders. The victims reported that the offender was a stranger about two-and-one-half times as often as they recalled some previous relationship with him. Strangers may be involved in a far smaller proportion of rapes than these surveys indicate. There is some evidence that rapes in which the victim and the offender are acquainted or related are less likely to be recalled in an interview than the same crimes committed by a stranger. Such crimes by known perpetrators are also less likely to come to the attention of the police.<sup>6</sup>

These attributes of rape help explain why its deterrence presents a difficult problem for the criminal justice system. The structural pre-conditions of such victimizations involve women's roles, which are certainly less constrained than in the past. This may account in part for the rapid rise of official rape figures in recent years. In addition, the lone, unknown offender is the most difficult to identify and apprehend, reducing the potential impact of police rape-deterrence programs.

The relationship between race and criminal victimization is also clearly patterned: blacks are more likely than whites to be the victims of crime. Table 3 presents victimization rates by race for the largest categories of serious crime -- robbery, assault, and burglary. In each case,

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 Table 3 about here  
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TABLE 3

RACE AND VICTIMIZATION, 1973\*

Type of Offense	Victimization Rates (per 100)		
	Blacks	Whites	Ratio
Assault	3.22	2.64	1.2:1
With a Weapon	1.73	.91	1.9:1
Robbery	1.44	.60	2.4:1
With a Weapon	.85	.29	2.9:1
Burglary	13.55	8.77	1.5:1
Breaking and Entering	6.30	2.56	2.5:1

\*SOURCE: Computed from tabulations prepared by the Bureau of the Census from the 1973 Annual National Crime Survey.

rates for blacks exceed those for whites. Table 3 further distinguishes rates for robbery and assault with a weapon and burglary involving breaking and entering. In each of these subcategories, blacks are more likely to be victims. In fact, the ratio between black and white victimization rates is higher in these more serious subcategories (i.e., those involving use of a weapon or breaking and entering) than overall rates for the crimes. Further, the evidence indicates that blacks suffer disproportionately from the serious consequences of crime. Figure 1 presents an analysis of the medical problems of the victims of assaultive violence. It reveals a familiar pattern: blacks are more likely to be the victims of such crimes, more likely to suffer a serious assault, more likely to be hospitalized overnight, and less likely to be insured.

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 Figure 1 about here  
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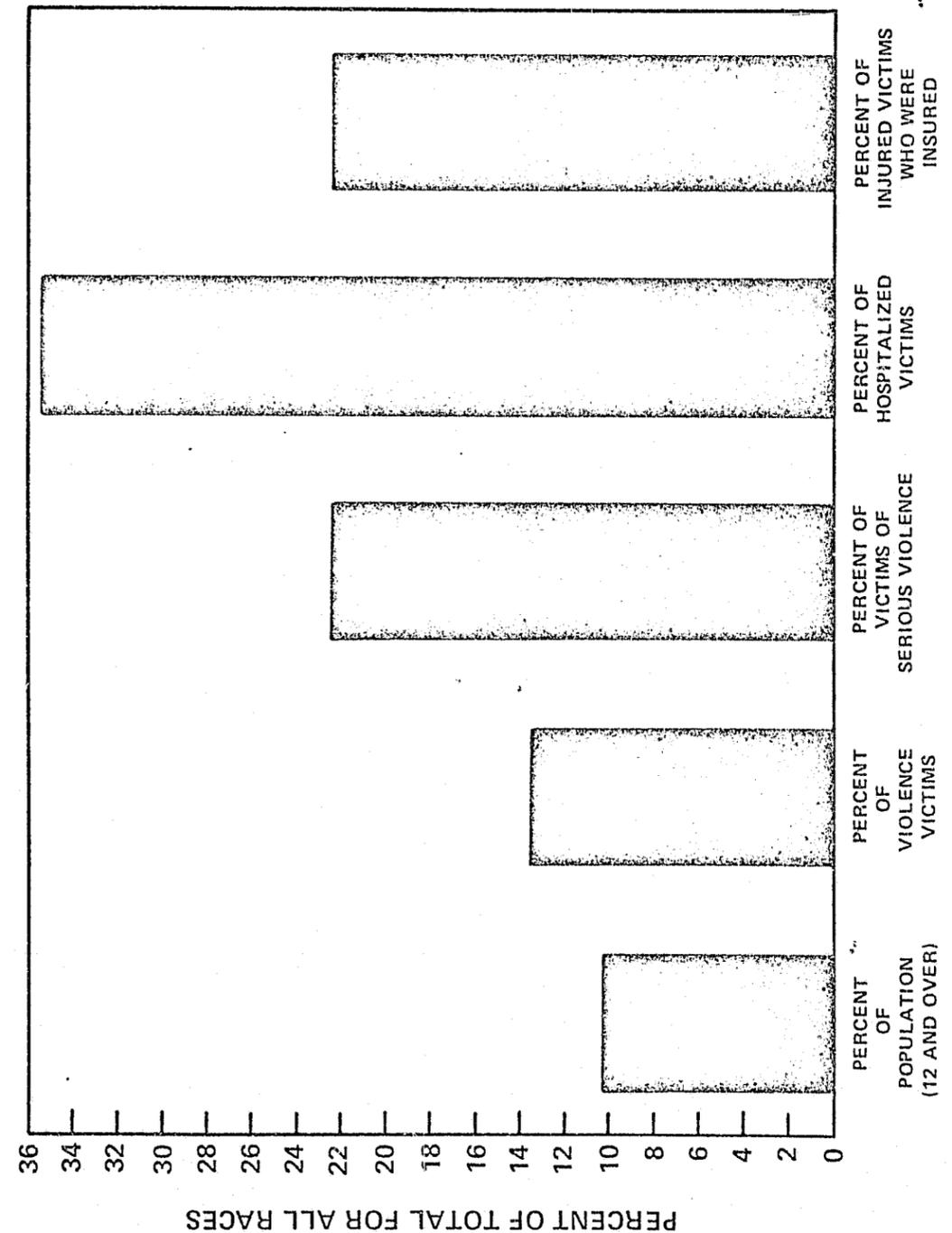
For a great variety of offenses, black Americans disproportionately suffer the burdens of crime.

The high level of victimization endured by blacks is in part a class phenomenon. In general, lower-income people are more likely than others to be the victims of crime, especially interpersonal violence and personal theft. Several types of property theft, on the other hand, most frequently strike upper-income individuals.

There is an inverse relationship between income and personal violence. Violent victimizations drop as income increases; members of families with incomes over \$25,000 suffer only about 60 percent of the rate borne by persons earning less than \$3,000. In contrast to assaults, automobile theft and common property theft increase in frequency as we move up the income ladder.

FIGURE 1

THE CONSEQUENCES OF VICTIMIZATION FOR BLACKS:  
 THE BLACK VICTIMS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE IN THE 1973 NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY



These rates seem to reflect the cultural and economic circumstances in which Americans at polar extremes of the income distribution find themselves. Working-class males are more likely to grow up within a cultural milieu which demands that they assert their manhood in a physical manner, and the data indicate that violence within family and acquaintance networks is much more common in lower-income homes. High-income families, on the other hand, are desirable targets for property crime -- they have more to steal.

If we simultaneously control for the effects of race and income on victimization rates, the 1973 survey data indicate that each factor is independently important. Both for property offenses and interpersonal violence, rates vary in the fashion described above for blacks and whites within income groups, and for high and low-income people within the same racial group. Comparisons of victimization rates within these groupings suggest that income is more important than race in determining the probability of becoming a victim. However, the fact that income is more important should not minimize the effect of race revealed in this survey, for most black families in America do not have very much money. In this national sample, 67 percent of all black households fell into the low-income category (annual income less than \$7,500), while 23 percent of all white households and only 8 percent of all black households fell into the high-income category (annual income over \$15,000). That white victimization rates for many property crimes are relatively high because whites have more to steal is a two-edged comment on crime in America.

#### WHERE IS THE ACTION?

Although crime occurs in every corner of the nation, the highest crime rates are concentrated in large cities. Crimes are easy to commit

in cities because more strangers are about (making it easier to avoid identification), more goods are available to be stolen, and more people make a point of not knowing their neighbor's business (making it easier to live a "life of crime"). Cities are also places where the rich and poor come into contact daily, increasing opportunities for crime as well as accentuating the differences in their lifestyles.

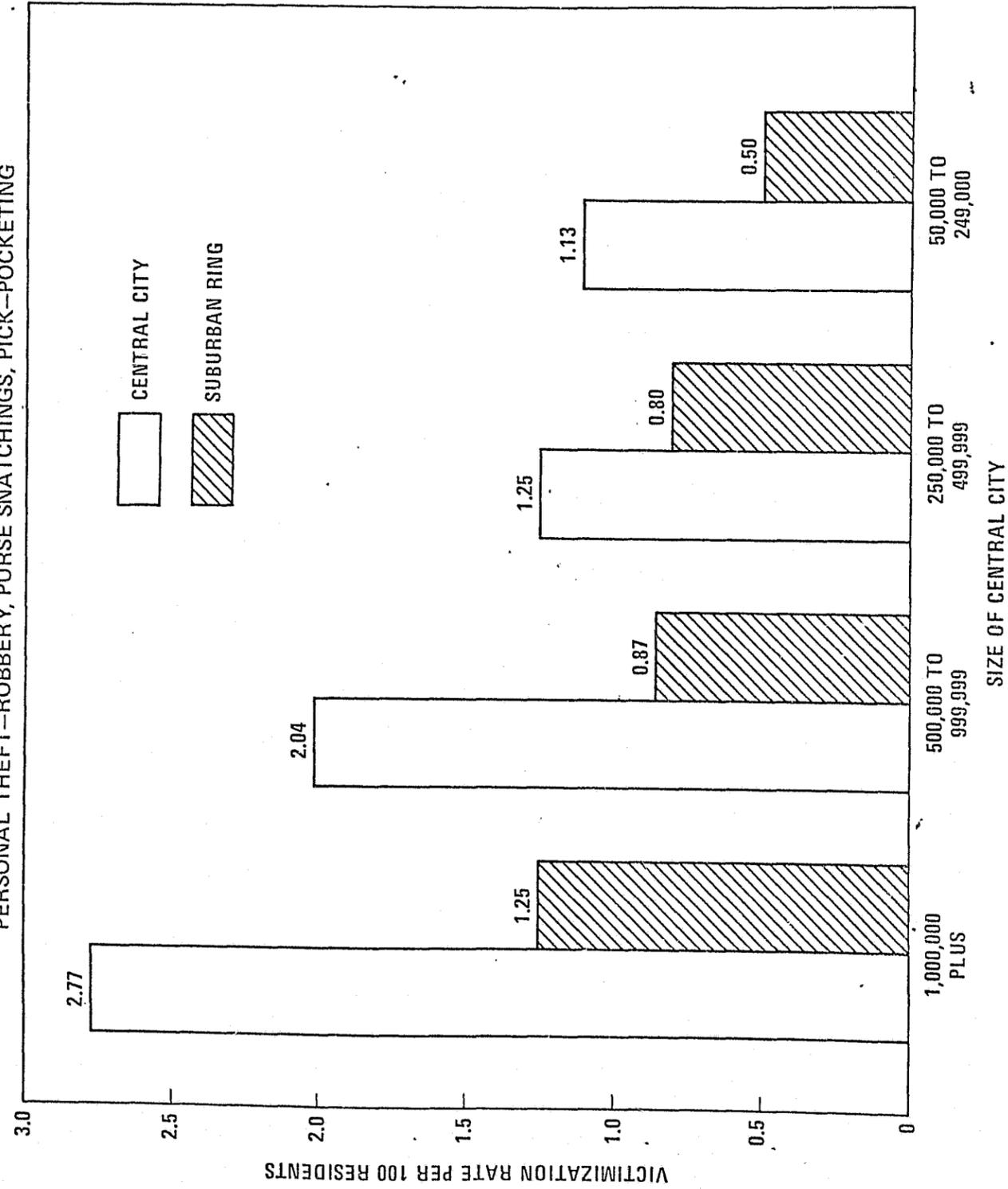
The relationship between city size and crime is reflected in surveys of the citizenry. Victimization rates are higher among residents of cities than among residents of rural areas; urban rates for interpersonal violence are about one-third higher than those in the country; personal thefts are four times as common in cities; property crime rates in rural places are only about 70 percent of city rates. Rates also increase with city size. Figure 2 shows victimization rates for residents of various-sized cities and their suburban rings. (Note that these rates represent the location of

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Figure 2 about here  
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victims' residences rather than the location of crimes -- the two will differ somewhat, and these data will overestimate suburban crime rates and underestimate central city rates.) As Figure 2 indicates, personal theft increases steadily with city size, and the highest rates are achieved by residents of America's urban giants. The relatively high rates of victimization experienced by residents of the rings surrounding these communities reflects the changing character of suburbanization. Many of the suburbs immediately contiguous to our largest cities have acquired a distinctly urban flavor; they tend to be industrial, they contain many apartment units,

# CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION 1973 BY SIZE OF PLACE

PERSONAL THEFT—ROBBERY, PURSE SNATCHINGS, PICK—POCKETING



and they often house lower-income families. These characteristics, in conjunction with the possible displacement of crime to the suburbs as a result of improved central-city policing, may account for high rates of victimization among suburban residents.

## WHO CALLS THE POLICE?

Most of the crimes examined here typically are not uncovered by police action, but are brought to their attention by victims or their confidants. Only those that achieve official notice enter police recordkeeping systems. Unreported crimes probably contribute the bulk of those that appeared on the "survey" side of Table 1 but that did not appear in "official" totals. Not only are unreported crimes excluded from our social accounts, but they are also unlikely to lead to an arrest. Nonreporting thus limits the deterrent capability of the police.

The determinants of reporting behavior are not well understood. Most research on the problem by criminologists in the past can be summarized as follows: individual reporting rates are shaped by (1) the personal characteristics of individual victims (e.g., race, class, age), (2) the relationship between victims and offenders (webs of kinship or acquaintance), and (3) characteristics of the incidents themselves (e.g., the outrage they engender, or their seriousness). Each of these factors is likely to play some role in the reporting decision, and their relative importance may vary from crime to crime. Understanding their influence upon reporting practices is crucial, for such actions shape our knowledge of the dimensions of the crime problem and the potential responsiveness of society to changes in criminal activity.

Analysis of the national crime survey data for 1973 indicates that most of the personal characteristics of individual victims are unrelated to reporting. Women are only slightly more likely than men to report offenses, and income does not appear to play a significant role in shaping reporting behavior. Surprisingly, neither does race. We would not be astonished if blacks were more unwilling than whites to mobilize the police. Based upon their own experience or accumulated folklore, many black Americans have learned that relationships with the police involve distressing calculations: Will their complaints be taken seriously? Will they face police hostility? Is it wise to become known to the police under any circumstances? For a wide variety of offenses, however, blacks are not noticeably less likely than whites to report their experiences to the police.

The only consistent individual predictor of whether a crime was brought to the attention of the authorities was age. Crimes that affect younger people are not reported as frequently as those that victimize their elders. Table 4 divides reporting rates for all crimes against persons (personal theft and interpersonal violence) by age groups. Reporting rates

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 Table 4 about here  
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are dramatically lower for those under twenty; in that group, less than one-third of these contact crimes are reported to the police. Table 4 also indicates the survey estimate of the number of victimizations suffered by each age group. The findings are extremely significant, for the young are also disproportionately the victims of crimes against the person. In 1973, youths between ages twelve and nineteen (mostly males, disproportionately black) experienced 35 percent of all personal-contact victimizations, and

9-16

TABLE 4

AGE AND REPORTING RATES: CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS, 1973\*

Age	Percent Reported	Number of Victimitizations
12-19	31.5	2,161,940
20-34	49.2	2,304,350
35-49	56.6	747,490
50-64	53.3	494,850
65 and over	53.6	247,300

\* SOURCE: Computed from tabulations prepared by the Bureau of the Census, from the 1973 Annual National Crime Survey.

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very few of these incidents became known to the police. The reporting practices of young people thus exercise an enormous influence over the official violent crime rate in the United States; currently, they keep the rate deceptively low, but an increase in youthful reporting could cause official figures seemingly to skyrocket.

One of the major interests of students of crime has been the social relationships between victims and offenders -- the bonds of friendship and kinship that unite them. Offenders and their prey often have certain commonalities. They are usually the same race and frequently reside in the same neighborhood. Neither are they always strangers to one another. Close victim-offender relationships are common in murder cases: it is not unusual for 75 percent of the homicides in large cities to involve friends, lovers, relatives, or business partners. It has been assumed that these social bonds frequently inhibit reporting offenses to the police; people do not want their friends or spouses sent to jail, or they define such encounters as "private matters" beyond the scope of the law. National crime survey figures for 1973 indicate that the incidence of crime within personal circles is relatively high. About 40 percent of all assaults, 25 percent of rapes, and 20 percent of violent robberies involved victims and offenders who were not strangers. The survey also indicated, however, that such ties between victims and criminals do not appear to inhibit the reporting of most offenses to the police. For example, about 41 percent of the assaults involving strangers were reported, and about 39 percent of the assaults involving relations or acquaintances were reported. The only dramatic difference in reporting rates that appeared in the 1973 figures was for rape. In rape cases, attacks by strangers were reported about 20 percent more often. Again, a methodological caveat is in order: there is some

evidence that crimes perpetrated by friends or relatives are underenumerated in the survey, and victims may be more likely to recall in the interview those acquaintanceship crimes that they reported to the police. This would contribute to the pattern of reporting for rape described here. Even if this is the case, it still appears that close victim-offender relationships do not have the dramatic effect on reporting rates that we anticipated.

The strongest and most consistent determinant of citizen reporting to the police is the seriousness of the offense. There are at least four major dimensions of seriousness: the value of stolen or damaged property, the extent of personal injury, the use of a weapon which threatens bodily harm, and the extent to which the crime intrudes into the secure lifespaces of the victim. Victim surveys reveal that the greater the loss, harm, threat, or insecurity generated by an event, the more likely it is to be reported to the police.

It is not surprising that the value of the loss plays an important role in the reporting decision. Deciding to call the police involves a cost-benefit calculation: the individual weighs the costs of reporting in terms of time, anticipated hostility from the police, and fear of reprisal from the offender or his friends, against the benefits which might accrue from the action (the probability that the offender will be caught and ultimately convicted, or that the property will be recovered). If the amount of the loss is relatively small, reporting costs will most likely outweigh reporting benefits. This is particularly true in the case of property offenses, where the lack of personal contact between victims and offenders makes it virtually impossible to identify suspects. Arrest or clearance rates for such offenses are very low, and the proportion of stolen property recovered is small.

The simple effect of the value of the loss on reporting rates is illustrated in Table 5, which compiles reporting rates for all property thefts in the 1973 survey according to loss values. The reporting rate for

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 Table 5 about here  
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successful thefts with small losses (less than ten dollars) was only 8 percent. In the \$50-99 range it approached 50 percent, and above \$250 it averaged over 80 percent.

The introduction of other elements of seriousness into the equation greatly increases reporting rates, regardless of the value of the loss. Property crime involving an invasion of the home is more readily reported than simple theft away from home. Personal contact crimes that led to serious injury were reported at higher rates than similar offenses that did not result in injuries. Finally, the use of a weapon in a crime appears to have escalated reporting rates in the 1973 data. Table 5 also presents survey estimates of the reporting rate for non-violent robbery. The figures indicate that the use of a weapon in both successful and unsuccessful robberies increased the reporting rate by 20 to 30 percent. Clearly the threat of harm induced by the display of guns and knives encourages citizens to report incidents to the police.

In sum, the evidence on citizen reporting suggests that the process is highly rational. With the exception of age, reporting rates do not appear to be substantially related to the personal characteristics of individual victims; instead, they are incident-specific. Reporting rates are higher for personal contact crimes, where identifications and arrests are easier to effect. They increase with the value of the loss, when the security of the home is breached, and when the offender threatens serious harm or is considered a menace to the community.

TABLE 5

INCIDENT SERIOUSNESS AND REPORTING RATES, 1973\*

All Household and Personal Property Theft

<u>Value and Loss</u>	<u>Percent Reported</u>
Less than \$10	7.8%
\$10-49	19.8
\$50-99	45.4
\$100-249	61.5
\$250 and above	82.4

All Robbery Without Personal Assault

<u>Combinations</u>	<u>Percent Reported</u>
Attempted; no weapon	24.4%
Successful; no weapon	39.2
Attempted; weapon	41.0
Successful; weapon	67.8

\* SOURCE: Computed from tabulations prepared by the Bureau of the Census from the 1973 Annual National Crime Survey.

## CONCLUSIONS

Until the development of victim surveys, official police records were the only source of information about the distribution of crime and the success or failure of crime-reduction programs. For certain kinds of illegal activity official statistics remain our only accounting; crimes without victims or crimes that can be uncovered only through police investigations are more difficult to measure by alternative techniques. Valuable new information about other types of crime can be gleaned from interviews with samples of the population. These surveys are unencumbered by many of the well-known limitations of official crime statistics. They make it possible to gather information on incidents that were not reported and therefore could never enter our system of official accounts. They also record the characteristics of events that were ignored or discounted by the police, whether for political or organizational reasons.

Extrapolations from the 1973 national crime survey suggest that the volume of crime in America was about three times larger than recorded in official reports. The total was very large, even though many incidents we would label "criminal" were not covered by the survey. But more important than numbers of incidents are data on the details of those events that are recounted in surveys. One of the chief criticisms of the FBI crime statistics is the paucity of specific information about the distribution of crimes and victims, and the consequences of crime for society. Although they are based upon samples, victim surveys may give us a better picture of these details than more extensive but less accurate enumerations.

Several examples of this detail have been reported here. We have seen the highly skewed inverse relationship between age and distribution of assaultive violence. The victim surveys revealed many more assaults than

enter official records, and a considerable proportion affected those under twenty-five. Young people are much less likely than individuals in other age brackets to report any kind of victimization to the police, thereby disguising untold numbers of incidents. Any change in this pattern of nonreporting could cause official crime statistics to fluctuate wildly because of the differential distribution of events. Any concerted societal attack on the problem of assaultive violence would have to deal with this problem, for programs to encourage reporting assaults would have to begin with those under twenty-five. The prompt reporting of events would be necessary to make any crime-reduction policy successful. Other studies of attitudes toward law and the criminal justice system suggest that this would be difficult to achieve. Youths of all races and backgrounds always prove to be the most alienated and suspicious subgroup of the population when we probe their relationships with the police and the courts. Victim surveys would enable us to detect changes in these attitudes, in victim-reporting practices, and in the victimization rate for young people. This data would be important because of the tremendous effect such shifts might have on the utility of official crime statistics.

The victim surveys suggest further limitations of crime-reduction policies. Patterns of victimization are far from random, but rather reflect enduring features of the social structure. In the absence of changes in several fundamental social processes, it is unlikely that crime will disappear easily. We have seen, for example, that the probability of victimization is related to the social roles that persons play and the range of victim behaviors those roles demand. Certain roles for women lead them into circumstances under which they are highly vulnerable to rape; commercial

establishments with lone operators that are open at night are vulnerable to robbery. Women's roles are related to very fundamental characteristics of the social order, and the directions in which they are evolving are more likely to drive victimization rates up than down. In the absence of a decline in the demand for liquor, groceries, or gasoline (perhaps the latter is likely), opportunities for criminal profit in commercial establishments are not likely to decline either. The distribution of property crime also reflects the social order. Evidence about the frequency of serious theft and the amounts lost in those episodes suggests that target selection is quite rational, and that as long as the distribution of wealth in the society is skewed, the distribution of its victims of property crimes will follow.

Information on these and other topics will continue to flow from the crime surveys, for they are a continuing enterprise. The first results from the 1973 national survey were released in 1974, and in ensuing years a regular cycle of surveys and reports will be established. The national surveys will produce new time-series social indicators, monitoring changes in the victimization rate and patterns of victimization, while more detailed city studies can be used to evaluate the impact of specific governmental programs. In addition, they may be used routinely by local police departments to allocate resources in response to the distribution of crime. We are only beginning to realize the many uses to which this new tool can be put.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. TASK FORCE REPORT: CRIME AND ITS IMPACT --- AN ASSESSMENT (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 123.
- 2 See Philip H. Ennis. CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES: A REPORT OF A NATIONAL SURVEY (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967).
- 3 David Seidman and Michael Couzens. "Getting the Crime Rate Down: Political Pressure and Crime Reporting," LAW AND SOCIETY REVIEW, 8 (Spring, 1974): 457-493.
- 4 CHICAGO TRIBUNE, March 30, 1973.
- 5 See Ennis, op. cit.
- 6 "San Jose Methods Test of Known Crime Victims," STATISTICS TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Statistics Division, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, 1972).

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CHAPTER 3

CITIZEN REPORTING OF CRIME: SOME NATIONAL PANEL DATA

## CITIZEN REPORTING OF CRIME; SOME NATIONAL PANEL DATA

The decision of individuals to report criminal victimizations to the police has been the object of considerable interest. From the outset, survey studies of citizens' crime experiences and their reporting practices have identified patterns of massive nonreporting (Ennis, 1967). It is clear that large amounts of often serious crime does not come to the attention of the authorities, are not registered in our indicators of social health, and do not lead to arrests or other official deterrent action.

This nonreporting has several consequences. First, it determines the volume and distribution of the "dark figure" of officially unknown crime. Any fluctuation in the official rate of crime (including the much-heralded "decrease in the rate of increase" registered in 1972) may simply reflect changes in citizen reporting practices and the size of this pool of unknown events. Reporting decisions determine the volume of cases facing the police and the courts and the nature of their activity. As Albert Reiss (1971) has suggested, these highly discretionary activities are perhaps the most important in the entire crime-and-justice system. Changes in citizen reporting could overload existing facilities for receiving information about crime and doing something in response. Differential nonreporting also shapes the character of the police mandate. Increases in the reporting of disputes between acquaintances, assaults within families, and the "theft" of property by people's estranged spouses, would lead the police even further into the kinds of crisis intervention roles they appear to abhor.

This report summarizes the most recent data on nonreporting produced by the National Crime Panel Study conducted by the Bureau of the Census. It examines the impact of several hypothesized determinants of reporting rates, many of which previously have been investigated only in isolated, city-

specific studies. Many of those studies also conceptualized nonreporting as a social pathology, something to be explored as a problem in individual failure. This analysis indicates that nonreporting is a social process which is patterned in consistent ways, and that it reflects the experiential world of crime victims in direct and realistic fashion. People report or not for good reason.

#### THE PROBLEM AND THE DATA

It is useful to think about the determinants of crime reporting in three ways. First, we can examine the extent to which behavior is a function of the characteristics of individuals. Blacks, for example, may be less willing than whites to mobilize the police, based upon their own or friends' experiences or upon accumulated group lore. Youths often face similar calculations: will their complaints be taken seriously, will they face uncomfortable demeanor problems, is it wise to become known to the police regardless of the circumstances? This mode of analysis requires that we match the attributes of individuals to their behavior vis-a-vis formal authority.

Second, we can examine the extent to which this action is a function of the relationship between the victim and the offender. It is clear from previous surveys and intensive studies of particular crimes that criminals and their victims do not come together in random fashion. Crime is an interactional process which often reflects enduring rather than discontinuous social contact. It also is often precipitated by the eventual victim's careless or aggressive behavior (Curtis, 1974). The decision to report such events is simply one of a number of alternatives open to the "losers" in such encounters.

Finally, it is important to consider the effects of the nature of the

incident itself. Crimes differ greatly in their severity: the extent to which they violate the person, property, or propriety of the victim or standers-by. They also vary in the probability that any concrete return is likely to accrue to the victim in response to his mobilization of the police. Where the likelihood of the recovery of property or the arrest of an offender is slight, there is little practical incentive for shouldering the additional burden of reliving one's experiences for the police.

The data used to probe these relationships were pooled from six monthly random samples of the American population. Each month from July through December of 1973, every resident over eleven years of age in a sample of 10,000 households was interviewed by Bureau of the Census personnel and asked to recall victimization experiences during the past six months. This recall period was "bounded" by an earlier visit of an interviewer, and the interview schedule itself has been subjected in an extensive series of methodological and validity checks (C.f., San Jose Methods Test..., 1972; Crimes and Victims, 1974). The respondents and the incidents have been weighted to reflect their true distribution in the population. Given the size and extent of the sample (it was drawn from 376 different primary sampling units scattered throughout the country), these population estimates have very low standard errors, and with this data it is possible to talk confidently about the distribution of relatively uncommon events (such as robbery) even within detailed sub-groups of the population.

The tables which follow test a number of specific hypotheses about citizen reporting and the characteristics of victims, of victim-offender relationships, and characteristics of the incidents themselves. In each case an appropriate measure of association will be presented describing the strength of the relationship.

The tables also will report national population estimates of the incidence of events and the distribution of victim characteristics for the year 1973.

#### NONREPORTING: THE EFFECTS OF VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS

Much of the discussion about nonreporting has focused upon victim characteristics--the social types whose crime experiences do not come to the attention of the authorities. Presumably they enjoy fewer of the ameliorative activities of the state and those who prey upon them are less likely to suffer the deterrent sting of official action in response.

One major social cleavage which has been thought to reflect this differential burden is race. Blacks have historically suffered poor relations with the police, and bad experiences continue to characterize police-community relations in the ghetto. It is commonly argued that fear of the police is so high among racial minorities that it inhibits the reporting of their crime experiences.

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that race is in fact unrelated to citizen reporting practices. In many important sub-categories, blacks are if anything slightly more likely than whites to report their experiences to the police.

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Grouping all crimes against persons (defined in Table 1), we observe no impor-

TABLE 1

#### REPORTING AND VICTIM-CHARACTERISTICS\*

All Crimes Against Persons: Rape, Assaultive Robbery, Assault, Personal Theft (Non-Assaultive Robbery, Purse Snatching, Pocket Picked)

<u>Race</u>	<u>Percent Report</u>	<u>Percent No Report</u>	<u>Victimizations U.S. Pop. Est.</u>
White	44.2	55.8 (100%)	5,024,220
Black	45.1	54.9 (100%)	920,850

C=.006

All Crimes Against Persons

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percent Report</u>	<u>Percent No Report</u>	<u>Victimizations U.S. Pop. Est.</u>
12-19	31.5	68.5 (100%)	2,161,940
20-34	49.2	50.8 (100%)	2,304,350
35-49	56.6	43.5 (100%)	797,490
50-64	53.0	47.0 (100%)	494,850
65 plus	53.6	46.4 (100%)	247,300

$\theta = .21$

\*A small number of "don't knows" have been excluded from the calculation of these percentages, although they have been included in the estimates of the frequency of the independent variables in the population.

"Theta"

tant racial differences in reporting; the difference is 3 percent among crimes involving assaultive violence and 2 percent among personal thefts. Given the importance of racial differences in a host of other social processes, these differences are trivial.

Sex differences in reporting practices are more consistent. Across all categories, women appear to be about 5 percent more likely than men to report victimizations to the authorities. Both groups fail to report the majority of most crimes, however. These differences are in accord with research on the socialization of individuals to legal norms: in general, women are more compliant and deferential to legal authority.

The effect of age differences upon reporting practices reported in Table 1 may reflect the same phenomenon. Data there make it clear that youths are largely responsible for the minority status of reported crime. Due to (1) their large numbers and high rates of victimization, and (2) their low likelihood of relaying information about them to the police, youths between the ages of 12 and 19 account for a substantial proportion of all officially unrecorded crime. Persons in this age category suffered 35 percent of all personal victimizations in 1973, and reported only 31 percent of them. This occurred despite the fact that young people suffer disproportionately from assaultive violence, which in general is highly reported. This helped keep the group's reporting rate as high as it was; the 12-19 age group reported only 22 percent of the non-assaultive robberies, purse snatchings, and picked pockets they suffered. The high reporting rate among oldsters probably reflects the ease of their relationship with the police and their confidence that they will not be penalized by it, for they tend to suffer fewer violent personal assaults.

Reporting rates do not vary in any consistent fashion across income

levels, although members of extremely high income families (\$25,000 plus per year) tend to differ from others, reporting fewer of their violent personal victimizations (only 25 percent) but more of their personal property losses (43 percent). This may be explained by differential patterns of victimization. Although patterns in the middle of the income distribution are not clear, victims at the upper end of the spectrum appear to be attacked less violently (or else they give up their money more easily) than those at the bottom: 28 percent of the victims of robbery making above \$25,000 a year in 1973 were also physically assaulted, while 42 percent of those making less than \$3,000 were beaten as well as robbed. Also, high income victims lost more money or goods of greater value than poor victims. As we shall see, such variations in the seriousness of a victimization greatly affect their probability of being reported to the police.

#### REPORTING AND VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS

Victims and their offenders have a great deal in common. Studies of interpersonal crimes have revealed that they are usually of the same race, that much crime takes place between residents of the same neighborhood, and that often people in similar positions in the occupational structure prey upon one another (Schafer, 1968). One of the major interests of victimologists has been the social relationship between victims and offenders--the bonds of friendship and kinship that usually forestall violent or pecunious aggression, but which occasionally break down. Studies of crimes of violence recorded in police files have suggested that homicides (Wolfgang, 1958), rapes (Amir, 1971), and assaults (Pittman and Handy, 1964), are common among neighbors, lovers, and family members.

It has been assumed that these social bonds also inhibit the initial contacting of the police, leading official files still to greatly under-

represent such cases. Criminal acts between the members of a social network often reflect the dynamics of continuing interpersonal relationships, and the decision to report such events to the police may require a much more complex calculus than anonymous violence or theft. Deciding to report may require recognizing that a family is no longer a viable social unit, or that the neighbors are too intolerable for continued coexistence; the intrusion of the police may make those ruptures permanent, while it is problematic that routine police work is capable of resolving their causes. These socially submerged crimes have been one of the major interests of victimologist-surveyors.

National Panel figures for 1973 indicates that while the incidence of crime within a web of kinship or acquaintanceship is high (about 33 percent of all incidents of crimes against persons), the effect of victim-offender relationships upon reporting rates is less dramatic than has been assumed. Table 2 presents reporting rates for several categories of personal crime, divided according to the nature of that relationship. "Stranger" in Table 2 encompasses all offenders not known to their victims and those known "by sight only."

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The effect of the relational distance between victim and offender upon the willingness of the former to mobilize the police is only about 4 percent in most categories. Again, the majority of incidents are not reported to the police, even when the offender is a stranger. The notable exceptions occur when incidents combine assaultive violence and theft (robbery and an attack,

TABLE 2

## REPORTING AND VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS

Crime	Percent Incidents By Strangers	Strangers Percent Reported	Not Strangers Percent Reported	Incidents U.S. Pop. Est.
All crimes against persons	67.4	42.4	38.6	5,105,440
All assaultive violence	61.2	44.8	38.9	4,016,710
(Rape)	75.4	47.8	30.9)	153,050
Assaultive violence with theft	83.1	64.0	48.7	359,400
Assaultive violence-no theft	59.1	41.8	38.6	3,657,310
(Assault)	59.8	41.4	38.8)	3,517,990
Personal Theft-no Assault	90.1	36.9	34.8	1,088,730

or rape and theft). These offenses tend to be perpetrated by strangers, and they are often reported (64 percent) when they are. Rape also deviates from the pattern, primarily as a result of its very low reporting rate under non-stranger circumstances. This is to be expected given the complicated and highly personal nature of such relationships and the likelihood that the processing of such cases by the criminal justice system will put a great deal of stress upon women who do report.

The pattern revealed in the simple assault category runs counter to most discussions of that crime, however. As Table 2 indicates, many assaults (about 40 percent) take place within friendship or family networks. The effect of acquaintanceship upon patterns of reporting for assault are minor. It has long been assumed that intra-familial beatings and altercations among friends and neighbors come to the attention of the police only under very special circumstances. These data indicate that they are actually just about as likely to be reported as attacks by strangers; the difference in reporting rates is only about 2 percent.

The limited effect of victim-offender relationships upon reporting behavior apparent in much of this data casts some doubt upon many common assertions about crime which does not come to the attention of the authorities-- that much of it reflects disputes which are resolved privately, or that the social relationship between victim and offender keeps it from being defined as "criminal" by the immediate parties. Only under limited circumstances (and, as Table 3 indicates, only among relatively infrequent crimes), does the decision to report appear to be particularly complex.

## REPORTING AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CRIMINAL INCIDENTS

Other than the general assertion that incidents which are "serious" are more likely to be reported, little systematic attention has been focused upon the effects of the characteristics of criminal incidents themselves on the probability of their coming to the attention of the authorities (but see: Richardson, et. al., 1972). More emphasis has been placed upon the social attributes of victims and offenders, most of which prove to be unimportant. This is curious, for while most characteristics of individuals have weak to nonexistent relationships with reporting, incident characteristics are strongly and consistently related to this action, and the process appears to reflect rational and reasonable citizen conduct.

It is important to clarify, first, the dimensions of seriousness. There appear to be at least four which accrue to the incident itself, as opposed to circumstantial contingencies such as the availability of medical care or the possession of insurance: the value of stolen or damaged property, the extent of personal injury, the use of a weapon which threatens death, and the extent to which the crime intrudes into the secure lifespace of the victim. The greater loss, harm, threat, or insecurity generated by an incident, the more likely it is to be reported to the police.

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Data testing these hypotheses are reported in Table 3. First it summarizes the effect of three of the dimensions of seriousness upon reporting rates for a particularly important personal crime, robbery. Financial loss

TABLE 3

## REPORTING AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INCIDENTS

## Personal Incidents: Robbery

	Percent Reported To the Police	Incidents U.S. Pop. Est.
22.6	unsuccessful, no assault, no weapon	157,440
35.0	unsuccessful, no assault, with weapon	109,410
37.7	successful, no assault, no weapon	152,840
51.0	successful, minor assault, no weapon	153,160
61.6	successful, no assault, with weapon	185,410
75.0	successful, major assault, no weapon	29,680
71.6	successful, major assault, with weapon	162,830

## Non-Personal Property Crime: Burglary, Larceny, Auto Theft

Location	Percent Reported	Percent Not Reported	Incidents U.S. Pop. Est.
In or around the home	35.0	65.0 (100%)	14,196,520
Elsewhere	20.3	79.7 (100%)	19,032,600

C = .16

## Non-Personal Property Crime: Larceny Only

Value Of Item	Percent Reported	Percent Not Reported	Incidents U.S. Pop. Est.
\$1 - 9	6.6	93.4 (100%)	7,230, 810
\$10 - 24	13.4	86.6 (100%)	4,247, 430
\$25 - 49	26.4	73.6 (100%)	3,013, 400
\$50 - 99	44.2	55.8 (100%)	2,471, 850
\$100 - 249	58.7	41.3 (100%)	1,846, 900
\$250 - 999	66.8	33.2 (100%)	665, 640
\$1,000 plus	72.8	27.2 (100%)	118, 880

C = .46

is collapsed into two categories: was the robbery attempt successful or not? Injury is classified as major, minor, or none at all. Whether or not the offender deployed a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon (a broken bottle, ball bat, etc.) is indicated as well. The effect of each element appears to be additive--as incidents increase in seriousness, moving from unsuccessful, non-assaultive, less threatening events to more serious ones, reporting rates mount steadily. At the bottom, only 23 percent of the least serious robberies were reported; at the top, 72 were taken to the police. The only exception is a minor reversal at the top of the scale, which may reflect the low incidence (and large sampling error) of major assaults (leading to hospitalization) without a weapon. The cumulative effect of these dimensions of seriousness for personal crimes is clear; they are powerful predictors of the decision by victims to report their experiences to the police.

Table 3 also presents a test of the strength of the final aspect of event seriousness, the extent to which it intrudes into the private life-space of the victim. The phrase "a man's home is his castle" reflects one of the functions which property boundaries and the walls of one's domicile perform--they provide security. Events which breach that security and threaten loss or harm within people's most personal territory should be threatening indeed, and this threat should be reflected in their willingness to mobilize the police in response.

Table 3 examines this hypothesis using national survey data on the incidence of non-personal property crimes: burglary, larceny, and auto theft. It compares the reporting rates of incidents which occurred on the immediate grounds or within the home of the survey respondent who recalled it with reporting rates for incidents which occurred away from home (at work, while shopping, etc.). Although the financial loss involved in most of

these crimes is minor, leading to low over-all reporting rates for such events, incidents which occurred in or around the home were 15 percent more likely to be reported to the police. The unease or insecurity generated by the occurrence of crimes in private space appears to be an important dimension of seriousness and a useful predictor of reporting rates.

Table 3 also uses data on simple larceny theft to present a more detailed breakdown of the other major dimension of seriousness for non-personal property crimes: the value of the loss. Larceny involves no forcible entry, no threatened victims, no personal injury; the primary consequences of larceny can be measured by the dollar value of the goods or cash stolen. As Table 3 indicates, this loss is clearly and positively related to the tendency of victims to inform the police about their experiences. Losses of small value are virtually never reported (7 percent of those worth less than ten dollars), while those at the top of the scale are reported almost three-fourths of the time.

#### REPORTING AND RATIONALITY

This essay has summarized national survey data on the correlates of one of the major discretionary acts which shapes American criminal justice-- the decision to report a victimization to the police. Reporting appears to be related only weakly to the characteristics of individual crime victims. The very young are less likely than everyone else to report their experiences, and extremely high income persons (a numerically small group) are more likely than others to report property offenses but are less willing to call the police in response to personal victimizations. Women report more victimizations to the police than men, but the differences are small. Racial differences do not explain this form of police-community contact at all.

The effects of victim-offender relationships upon reporting were strong for certain sub-classes of relatively infrequent crimes, but in the main the "dark figure" of unreported crime does not differ much from that which is officially known on this dimension.

Characteristics of victims' experiences, on the other hand, were highly related to their evocation of the police. Crimes which threatened their person, violated their personal space, inflicted injury, or cost them money, were reported at relatively high rates. Attributes of their experiential world rather than social or symbolic forces appear to motivate the victims of crime, suggesting that the decision to report may be a highly cognitive, reality-testing process. Far from a pathology, it may reflect people's judgments about the use of their time, and the police's time as well.

This cognitive interpretation of victim behavior is supported by a final bit of evidence, responses to the probe "Why not?" given when victims told an interviewer that a crime was not reported to the police. They indicate that victims acted on the basis of what appeared to them to be reasonable assumptions about their crimes. One common option was that the incident "wasn't important enough." Choice of this response was clearly related to the seriousness of the event. For example, fully one-third of the non-reporting victims of larcenies under \$50 chose this reason; only 13 percent of those losing more than \$50 did so.

Victims also appear to react to their own, and reasonably accurate, estimate of the chances that anything will come of their report. Table 4 relates the proportion of non-reporters who indicated that they failed to act because "nothing could be done" to the F.B.I.'s clearance rate for the same offenses (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1974).

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The latter is a rough measure of the solvability of an offense. In general, crimes which were solvable elicited few "nothing can be done" responses, while crimes with very low clearance rates--such as burglary--generated this reason almost one-half of the time. The simplest interpretation of Table 4 is that people do not report when they think nothing will happen as a result, and that they are often right.

TABLE 4

Crime	Percent Saying "Nothing Can Be Done"	F.B.I. Clearance Rate 1973
Assault	19%	63%
Rape	23	51
Robbery	41	27
Larceny	33	19
Burglary	48	18
Auto Theft	48	16

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## CHAPTER 4

## THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DARK FIGURE OF UNREPORTED CRIME

## THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DARK FIGURE OF UNREPORTED CRIME

### INTRODUCTION

A great deal of the criminal activity which takes place in American society evades the attention of monitoring systems devised to measure its volume and distribution and to record the identity of its victims. The existence of this reservoir of unrecorded crime has a number of vexsome consequences. It limits the deterrent capability of the criminal justice system, for it shields offenders from police action. In the increasingly large number of cities which distribute police manpower and equipment in response to demands for service, it contributes to the mis-allocation of resources and leads to the understatement of protection due certain victims under "equal crime coverage" policies. It may help shape the police role. Like other occupations, police work is affected by the nature of the tasks which face practitioners; the selective non-recognition of certain classes of activity in their environment may enable the police to avoid organizational and individual innovations that the serious confrontation of these problems would demand. The victims of crimes which do not become officially "known" to the criminal justice system also are ineligible for many of the supportive and ameliorative benefits supplied by public and private agencies. Finally, the pool of unrecorded criminal incidents shapes "socialized" costs of crime; private insurance premiums and the cost to the public of victim compensation programs are affected by the number and character of events which remain hidden from view.

The development of new techniques for the measurement of crime may shed some additional light upon the magnitude of problems associated with the "dark figure" of unrecorded crime. Population surveys can provide new information on one portion of the dark figure, those incidents which occur (and are

recalled in an interview) but which were not brought to the attention of the police. There are other sources of error which obscure our knowledge of criminal events, to be sure. But there is some reason to believe that citizen non-reporting is more important than most police nonrecording practices in determining the magnitude of official crime statistics.<sup>1</sup> This essay explores some of the characteristics of unreported incidents, using data from a national survey of the victims of crime. It examines the social consequences for victims and for society of the entry or non-entry of events into the crime recording process. To the extent that the operation of the criminal justice system and related institutions is shaped by claims for service, the volume and character of reported and unreported crime is a powerful determinant of the burdens and benefits of criminal victimization.

### KNOWING ABOUT CRIME

The problem is well known: activities which are by some criteria a crime may occur without registering in the systems devised to count them, reducing the accuracy of inferences from the data. This elusive sub-total was dubbed "the dark figure of crime" by European criminologists.<sup>2</sup> The recognition of the threat to valid inference posed by this pool of unmeasured events has stimulated the development of new procedures for probing its dimensions and increasing care on the part of the users of official crime data. It is now always necessary to refute systematically all plausible, error-based rival interpretations of research findings based upon reported crime data.

The dark figure of criminality has been examined by the use of techniques which elicit anonymous confessions of delinquency directly from offenders. These self-reporting studies generally suggest that inferences based upon arrest data unduly skew the distribution of criminality in the direction of minorities and the poor.<sup>3</sup> While European scholars long insisted that

statistics (which "correct" the errors of the police in construing events and making arrests) were the best measure of the true distribution of crime, observational studies of charging decisions, preliminary hearings, and plea bargaining have laid that argument to rest.<sup>4</sup> Field studies of patrol performance indicate the enormous impact of police organization and tactics upon arrest totals, and even on the decision that a crime has occurred.<sup>5</sup> Finally, both proactive and reactive procedures have been developed to provide ways for the victims or witnesses of crime to register their experiences. "Heroin Hot Lines" and consumer fraud complaint offices are data-collection devices which open channels for citizen-initiated inputs, while victimization surveys only require the passive participation of those respondents chosen to represent their fellow citizens.

These efforts are important, for errors in the measurement of crime-related phenomena may have serious consequences: they create and conceal major social problems, and they complicate the interpretation of crime statistics and the validity of statistical inferences made from them. Errors in our knowledge of the volume and distribution of criminal incidents may disguise considerably human misery and they limit our ability to understand even the most basic facts about society.

The social consequences of the failure of citizens to record their experiences may be considerable. First, the failure of events to register with the authorities virtually assures their perpetrators immunity from the attention of the police. While they may be harassed on general grounds or in response to other suspicions, those who prey upon individuals who will not or cannot relate their experiences to the police enjoy considerable advantages. This is well understood by criminals who victimize youths, homosexuals, minorities, or their fellow felons, and it redoubles the burden of the social and economic disadvantages that those victims already bear. While the empirical evidence on

deterrence processes is mixed, it is too early to write off the pursuit of a great number (in fact, probably a numerical majority) of offenders.<sup>6</sup>

Those whose victimizations do not enter the system may also receive less routine protection in return. Increasingly, big-city police departments allocate manpower and equipment in response to the distribution of demands for their services. These are measured primarily by crimes known to the police, usually weighted to reflect their "seriousness" or the probability that a swift response will produce an arrest. Victimization which are not reported to the police can attract neither future deterrent effort in the neighborhood nor event-specific responses from the criminal justice system.

Reporting practices may also shape the police mandate. The self-image of the policeman is that of a "crime fighter"; police officers see themselves as strong, masculine protectors of the weak against criminal predators.<sup>7</sup> In reality, a great deal of their time is spent resolving or suppressing conflicts which have little to do with this role model: assaults in bars, husbands beating their wives (and wives killing their husbands), disputes between neighbors over land or property, and charges of rape lodged by (former) lovers. In fact, a large number of behaviorally "illegal" activities take place between persons who know, live with, or are related to one another. There is growing recognition in police circles that traditional forms of police intervention into these ongoing relationships may be unproductive, and that new styles of police operation may be required.<sup>8</sup> Police officers and police unions, on the other hand, usually resist the grafting of "social work" onto their role and struggle to define their mission in ways more congruent with their preferred self-image.

A problematic aspect of this role conflict is the extent to which differences in reporting rates reinforce one task definition or another. Reporting practices in part set the agenda for police work. If problems

brought to the police reflect the universe of problems only selectively, this will have some impact upon police operations. In this case, if the pool of reported crimes is more likely to contain victimizations perpetrated by anonymous assailants, the workload facing the police will artifactually favor the perpetuation of the traditional police role; on the other hand, changes in reporting practices might divert from the pool of unreported events those calling for different kinds of skills, making new demands upon police departments.

Nonreporting may also affect the distribution of ameliorative programs which are designed to confer financial benefits, psychological support, or special protection for the victims of crime. For example, public and private rape crisis intervention units cannot fulfill their intended functions in the absence of information about incidents; special tactical units cannot provide protection for unknown victims of serial attacks or apprehend offenders who prey upon frequently victimized, nonreporting establishments. Funds for the rebuilding of public and private space to render them more "defensible", high-intensity street lightening, and other efforts to physically structure neighborhood safety, all may be allocated in response to measured need.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the American states are implementing programs for the compensation of the victims of physical attacks.<sup>10</sup> Like private insurance programs, public victim compensation schemes (which socialize the cost of our inability to protect individuals from violence) depend upon the assertion of claims by those who suffered injury. Variations in victim-reporting practices will affect insurance premium rates and the cost to the taxpayer of public claims, as well as the distribution of individual benefits.

Information about the volume and distribution of criminal incidents, in short, plays an important role in shaping the response of private agencies and the state to a major social diseconomy, crime. Events which do not

register on social indicators, which are not officially "known," will evade attempts to redress their dysfunctional consequences.

#### THE DATA

The data employed here to probe the dimensions of unreported victimization were gathered through a national sample survey. The survey instrument was designed to measure the incidence of crimes against households and individuals in the United States. Conducted by the Bureau of the Census, the program involves continuing interviews with all residents 12 years of age and older in a rotating national panel of 60,000 households.<sup>11</sup> The large sample is necessary to uncover a workable number of such rare events as robbery and rape, and to make inferences from the sample to the population which are subject to reasonable sampling errors. The interview schedule is designed to elicit self-reports from victims of some of the crimes which the F. B. I. has placed on their Part I list: rape, robbery, assault, larceny, burglary, and auto theft. Homicide, a well-understood and infrequent event (and one which leaves no victim) was not considered. The survey items have been subjected to an extensive series of methodological tests.<sup>12</sup>

Estimates of the magnitude of unreported crime are based upon respondent's recollections of their actions; after eliciting details of the incidents from their victims, interviewers inquired if they were brought to the attention of the police. Each incident may thus be treated as "reported" or "unreported," giving us an empirical handle on events which could not become official statistics.

This measure of unreported crime is itself subject to error. In some circles it is socially desirable to recall that one reported an event to the authorities, and this will inflate survey estimates of "crimes which should be known to the police." More important is the problem of non-recall. Methodological tests of the victimization survey instrument indicate that certain

classes of events, notably rape and assaults between friends or relatives, sometimes are not recalled even in anonymous, face-to-face interviews.<sup>13</sup> The practice in this survey of asking respondents only to recall serious crimes, "bounding" the visit of the interviewer with a previous visit to encourage victims to remember their experiences, and requiring brief periods of recall (in the national survey, only six months), alleviates many of the methodological short-comings of earlier victimization surveys.<sup>14</sup> But the "doubly dark" figure of crime which is reported neither to the police nor to an interviewer remains elusive.

#### VOLUME AND DISTRIBUTION OF UNREPORTED CRIME

Table 1 presents some basic data on the volume and distribution of unreported crime in the United States for the year 1973. The percentages and totals presented there are population estimates, projected from the national sample. The figures indicate that the crimes measured by the survey were quite extensive (over thirty-four million incidents in 1973), and that most of them went unreported. Based on their victim's recollections, only thirty-two percent of these incidents were reported to the police. Even if the police did not err in classifying and processing incidents which are brought to their attention, only one of these crimes in three would appear in official statistics.

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 Table 1 goes about here  
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Table 1 also indicates that non-reporting varies considerably by offense type. The most highly reported crime is auto theft, sixty-eight percent of which was reported in 1973. Ennis found reporting rates for auto theft approaching 100 percent, but this measure--which strictly follows Uniform Crime Reporting criteria--includes attempts, which are much less completely reported.<sup>15</sup>

TABLE 1

#### THE VOLUME AND DISTRIBUTION OF UNREPORTED CRIME 1973

Crime	Incidents U.S. Pop. Est.	Percent Incidents Reported to Police*	Percent of Non-Reported Crime
Auto Theft	1,330,470	68	1.8
Robbery	950,770	49	2.0
Burglary	6,433,030	46	14.6
Rape	153,050	44	0.4
Assault	3,517,990	40	8.8
Larceny	22,176,370	18	72.4
TOTAL	34,561,680	32%	100%

\*These percentages exclude a small number of "don't know" responses. Those incidents have been included in the population estimates, however. Note that the survey data are not altogether comparable with Uniform Crime Report figures, especially in the case of larceny. SOURCE: Calculated by the author from advance incident tabulations supplied by the Bureau of the Census.

undercounting of the crime experiences of black citizens. While these data cannot speak to the organizational effectiveness of the police once complaints have been entered, they indicate clearly that race is not related in any simple way to patterns of crime reporting.

Table 2 compares the distribution of reported and unreported household offenses (burglary, larceny, auto theft) across racial categories. For this class of offenses, nonreporting in fact is slightly skewed in the direction of whites. The extremely low correlation between reporting and race (Contingency Coefficient = .03) indicates that this cleavage is not substantially related to the burdens and benefits attendant to crime reporting. The effect is similar across many sub-divisions of crime, including personal crime, crimes of passion and profit, and across major U.C. R. categories; rarely does nonreporting vary by more than two percent across racial lines.

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Table 2 goes about here  
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This lack of co-variation suggests that nonreporting does not play a major role in shaping the distribution by race of goods and services made available by governments in response to the crime problem. Nonreporting does not deflate the apparent need of blacks for increased police protection, and it does not guarantee greater immunity from apprehension for predators in the black community. Crime remains hidden from the authorities, and thus cannot be employed to allocate squad cars or justify foot patrols, but the burden of this misallocation does not fall along racial lines. Likewise, the data suggest that victim compensation programs are unlikely to reinforce existing disparities between blacks and whites; the "eligibility" of victims from both groups is unaffected by the distribution of officially known events.

TABLE 2

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNREPORTED CRIME

<u>All Household Incidents v. Race of Household Head</u>							
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>		<u>U.S. Pop. Est.*</u>			
Reported	89.2	10.8	(100%)	8,750,960			
Unreported	91.3	8.7	(100%)	20,552,410			
C = .03							
<u>All Personal Incidents v. Relationship Between Victim and Offender</u>							
	<u>Stranger</u>	<u>Not Stranger</u>		<u>U.S. Pop. Est.*</u>			
Reported	69.3	30.7	(100%)	2,080,770			
Unreported	65.8	34.2	(100%)	2,972,790			
C = .04							
<u>Household Larcenies v. The Value of Stolen Items</u>							
	<u>\$1-9</u>	<u>\$10-24</u>	<u>\$25-49</u>	<u>\$50-99</u>	<u>\$100-249</u>	<u>\$250+</u>	<u>U.S. Pop. Est.*</u>
Reported	11.8	12.1	17.3	23.7	23.6	11.5	4,910,530
Unreported	45.4	24.2	14.6	9.0	5.0	1.6	16,695,660
θ = .62							"thez"
<u>Robbery (Without Physical Assault) v. Use of a Weapon</u>							
	<u>Weapon</u>	<u>No Weapon</u>		<u>U.S. Pop. Est.*</u>			
Reported	51.8	48.2	(100%)	243,780			
Unreported	30.2	69.8	(100%)	355,480			
C = .21							

\*The total of these excludes a relatively small number of "don't know" responses. SOURCE: advance tabulations supplied by the Bureau of the Census.

Data presented in Table 2 also indicates that the pool of unreported events does not harbor a great deal of serious crime, incidents which cause substantial social harm but which remain hidden. First, unreported property crime tends to involve relatively small amounts of money. Table 2 presents the distribution of the value of household goods lost to thieves, divided into reported and unreported categories. The vast majority of unreported larcenies of this type involve small financial loss; almost 85 percent of the lost merchandise was below fifty dollars in value. Less than seven percent of these thefts involved more than one hundred dollars. It should not be surprising that this and other victim surveys indicate that "it wasn't worth the effort," "it was inconvenient," or "it was unimportant" are frequently volunteered excuses for nonreporting. It also should be noted that fifty dollars is usually the lower limit for insurance claims, which may explain why the relative volume of unreported theft drops at that point.

The bulk of unreported personal crime also appears to be less serious than incidents which were brought to the attention of the police. The victims of these events are less likely to be injured, they lose less if there is a robbery or theft (and those incidents are more likely to be unsuccessful attempt), and unreported incidents are less likely than reported ones to breach the security of the victim's home. Table 2 presents a breakdown of another measure of the seriousness of crime, the use of a weapon. Crimes involving weapons are much more likely to result in injury or death and to undermine the morale of the community. These effects are recognized in many states by statutes which impose more harsh penalties upon felons who employ guns. Table 2 indicates that a substantial number of unreported robberies do involve the use of a weapon (about thirty percent), but that many more (by twenty-two percent) reported events can be counted as serious by this measure. While a

significant amount of crime involving weapons continues to remain unknown to the police, incidents which come to the attention of the authorities are much more likely to be of a serious nature.

To the extent that the police role is shaped by the nature of their task, reporting practices may shape police work by determining the distribution of problems facing officers. If nonreporting reduces the proportion of domestic disturbances or other non-stranger crimes entering the criminal justice system, pressure for the adoption of crisis-intervention or dispute-settlement roles for police officers may be reduced. Table 2 reports the distribution of unreported and reported crime across the relationship between victims and their assailants. The category "stranger," in this case, includes unknown attackers and those known only "by sight." As Table 2 illustrates, differences in the distribution of reported and unreported crime were slight. Sixty-nine percent of all personal crimes which were reported to the police involved strangers, while sixty-six percent of unreported incidents were of the anonymous variety. Within the personal crime category only simple rape (not involving theft) differed markedly by offender: unreported rapes were fourteen percent more likely to involve non-strangers than reported rapes. The comparable difference for personal larceny (picked pockets, purse snatchings) was only 0.8 percent. It does not appear that general increases in reporting rates would greatly affect the distribution of demands for radically different forms of police service, although it certainly would affect their volume.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It has long been argued that official statistics fail to reflect the volume of events in the population which are by some definition a crime. A major source of this error has been attributed to the non-reporting of events to the police. While some types of criminal events are relatively fully

reported (homicide, successful auto theft), for others the modal event is not brought to the attention of the authorities. In a 1973 national survey of crime victims, the reporting rate for simple larceny theft was only eighteen percent.

There has been considerable speculation about nonreporting and its consequences for crime victims and the operation of the criminal justice system. The vast pool of unreported crime (estimated by this survey to approach twenty-four million incidents in 1973) could conceal a great deal of human misery, isolate deserving victims from the ameliorative activities of the state, shield dangerous criminals from official attention, and shape the operation of the criminal justice system by defining the nature of its day-to-day workload. All the pernicious consequences of nonreporting could overlay existing social cleavages, redoubling the burdens of those who already suffer disproportionately from other social evils.

While it is not possible to speak to all of these issues in detail through the analysis of survey data, figures from the 1973 victimization survey conducted by the Census Bureau suggest otherwise, and indicate that general shifts in reporting rates would not greatly affect the present distribution of known crime across many social and behavioral categories. The pool of unreported crime is predominately composed of minor property offenses. Those crimes against persons which go unreported appear to be of less social significance than those which are brought to the attention of the police. The victims of unreported personal crime are much less likely to have been injured, their financial losses are small, and weapons are less likely to have been employed by their offenders. The pool of unreported incidents does not appear to conceal a disproportionate array of intra-acquaintance offenses, and changes in reporting habits may not dramatically affect the relative mix of crime-

fighting and social-working demanded of the police. However, it should be noted that some serious methodological problems cloud the interpretation of this aspect of the data. Finally, across a number of crime categories, there were virtually no racial differences in the distribution of known and officially unknown incidents; whatever the burdens of nonreporting, they do not appear to reinforce racial cleavages.

A great deal of research remains to be done on the social and individual consequences of nonreporting. Those who report crimes become inmeshed in stressful social and organizational processes. They must confront the police, and they may face prosecutors, courts, and the hostile glares of their assailants. Given the debilitating round of appearances and continuances facing victims or witnesses in many criminal courts, and the fear that threats of reprisal may generate along the way, it is important to discover if the ultimate adjustment to their new status arrived at by the victims of crime is any happier than among those whose problems never come to the attention of the state. There is good reason to suspect that it often is not. There also have been no experimental or post hoc analyses of the effects of programs aimed at increasing the rate at which citizens report crimes to the police, except upon the impact of fluctuations in reporting upon official crime statistics.<sup>16</sup> It is important that we discover the effects of media campaigns, police-community relations programs, and the implementation of victim-compensation schemes upon the rate at which the problems of particular subgroups in the population come to the attention of the police. There simply is no data upon which to estimate the temporal stability even of the simple relationships reported here.

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## CHAPTER 5

### MEASUREMENT PROBLEMS IN OFFICIAL AND SURVEY CRIME RATES

## MEASUREMENT PROBLEMS IN OFFICIAL AND SURVEY CRIME RATES<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper analyzes sources of error in the two major methods we use to measure crime in America—official police statistics and victimization surveys. The two produce quite different pictures of the volume and distribution of crime, but it is not clear that this is because victim-based statistics are "accurate." Each measurement procedure has its characteristic errors, some of which it shares with the other. Comparisons of official and survey data on crime are helpful in revealing the dimensions of these error terms, and they point out the analyses which must be conducted if we are to specify their exact proportions.*

### MEASUREMENT PROBLEMS IN OFFICIAL AND SURVEY CRIME RATES

The development of sample surveys which measure the volume and distribution of crime in the United States will provide social scientists and public administrators with valuable new data. In particular, the National Crime Panel and Central City samples currently being monitored by the Bureau of the Census should produce a rich body of information on aspects of criminal and victim behavior which previously escaped systematic analysis. This data base may be used to confront a host of problems for which current statistics are unsuitable.

An immediate use of survey estimates of crime rates, however, has been to compare them to official statistics. Reports released by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration have stirred public interest by their contrast with police figures on crime of the type summarized in the F.B.I.'s yearly *Uniform Crime Report*. Such comparisons inevitably reveal wide gaps between rates registered by the two sources. National or city-level survey

figures overshadow official police statistics by a substantial margin. This type of analysis has been encouraged by the government's decision to calculate U.C.R.-compatible figures from citizen surveys, although this is perhaps the least useful application of the data. The observation that there are varying discrepancies between official and survey crime estimates does not tell us where the error lies. Every statistic (and this includes survey as well as police figures) is shaped by the process which operationally defines it, the procedures which capture it, and the organization which processes and interprets it. Survey and police crime-measurement procedures produce different figures, but the reasons for this and their implications require analysis. A discussion of how survey and official crime statistics differ and why we obtain these discrepancies may clarify both their comparability and their interpretation, and may speak to their improvement in the future.

### MEASUREMENT ERROR AND OFFICIAL CRIME STATISTICS

The presence of error of considerable magnitude is not unique to measures of crime, although a half-century of continuous criticism has focused more attention upon the errorful nature of crime measures than enjoyed by most social statistics. Measurement is the process of mapping an empirical system into a symbolic system. It involves the application of definitions to delineate aspects of the empirical system which are of interest, and a series of "If. . . Then. . ." rules matching selected attributes of those phenomena to symbols. The resulting symbols, usually numbers, always map the richness of the referent system simplistically and inexactly.

In measurement terms, all of these observed scores are composed of two elements: they are partially "true score" (reflecting what we wish to observe) and partially error. Even rapidly repeated, apparently identical measurements of the same phenomenon will produce different numerical readings. The degree to which they are similar—our ability to reproduce our findings—is the "reliability" of a measurement process. Reliability tests, for example, would gauge the extent to which various police patrol teams classify the same set of events in the same manner. While the ability to examine events twice and find the same thing is the *sine qua non* of good measurement, even reliable measures may not be useful. The procedures may not be measuring the actual object of interest, or the resulting figures may be artifacts of the measurement process. Police districts with ambitious commanders may consistently produce low crime totals. This is a validity problem. In order to obtain valid, non-artifactual measures we employ multiple and differing techniques, cross-checking our findings at every turn (Bohrnstedt, 1970).

Disciplines with well-developed measurement traditions have evolved routine procedures for coping with these problems. Economists have stressed reliability; they require measures which are stable and comparable across time (Morgenstern, 1963). Psychologists emphasize validity. The intangibility of the psychological domain heightens concern that its apparent orderliness may be an artifact of specific methods of investigation. Sophisticated psychological measurement combines the fruits of interviews, projective evaluations, and physical observations (Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

The measurement of crime is a substantive and methodological problem of interest to researchers in a variety of disciplines. Perhaps as a result, most of the effort expended upon measurement problems has been conducted outside of any coherent measurement model. Scattered validation studies of official statistics have been reported. Price (1966) compared state-level property-crime totals with insurance rates and uncovered only moderate cor-

relations. But such criterion validation requires a dependent measure which is relatively error-free, and in this case "crimes known to the police" are probably a better indicator of the underlying distribution of events than the independent validator. A better example of criterion validation is the California Criminal Statistics Bureau's comparison of police and American Bankers Association's figures on bank robbery. The latter appears to have been clearly defined and exhaustively enumerated, and it proved to be reflected quite accurately in official statistics (California Criminal Statistics Bureau, 1967).

Validity studies of official measures of more typical events, those which are less clear-cut and involve more discretion on the part of police officers and administrators, have been less hopeful. Comparisons between official records and self-reports of delinquency or informal police "contact" reports indicate that official figures greatly underestimate the volume of events which might be uncovered in other ways (Chambliss and Nagasawa, 1969; Quinney, 1970).

Our current system of gathering and publishing official statistics on crime was a response to such problems. The invalidity of local department's efforts at data collection and the limited reliability of the reported figures led to the development of the Uniform Crime Reporting system in the late 1920's. This system improved reliability, but sacrificed validity. Standardized definitions, data-collection forms, and data-gathering techniques produced city-level crime totals which are usually comparable from year to year, and inter-city comparisons undoubtedly are vastly improved by the U.C.R. system. But several important compromises were made in the formulation of this statistical system. The data are still gathered by local authorities, participation in the network is not mandatory, and the F.B.I.'s only option in the face of fraud is not to publish the reported figures (Pittman and Handy, 1965). As early as 1931 the Wickersham Commission called for the creation of a centralized data collection service and rigorous data-quality control (United States National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, 1931). The misreporting and under-reporting apparently endemic in current official statistics has led to their widespread devaluation.

#### SURVEY MEASURES OF CRIME

Continuing dissatisfaction with official measures led to the development of alternative techniques to gauge the scope and distribution of crime. The most important of these is the population survey, a measuring device (with its own characteristic reliability and validity problems) which yields different pictures of crime.

The use of sample surveys to study crime reflects dissatisfaction both with the accuracy of official figures and the paucity of information they reveal. The yearly *Uniform Crime Report* does not speak to questions about the characteristics of victims of crime. Offender data is available only on arrestees, although victim testimony might shed some light on the characteristics of successful criminals. Finally, little data is reported on the physical and social circumstances under which most crimes occur, even though this has tremendous implications for their solution and deterrence.

It appeared to the President's Crime Commission that population surveys potentially could speak to all of these inadequacies, and in the mid-1960's the Commission funded several pilot projects and a national sample survey to test their utility.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the federal government has inaugurated a regular surveying program on a national scale and has funded several local and state-level investigations.<sup>3</sup>

It was inevitable that the victim-based data gathered by these large-scale surveys would be used to gauge police-reported crime statistics. Suspicion of official statistics has become widespread and appreciation of the errors in crime data particularly well-known, much more so than the caution of researchers who regularly employ attitude measures and self-reports of behavior. The latter deal skeptically with data and demand elaborately scaled, multiple-item indicators of concepts before they use them with any confidence. The questions on the Crime Panel surveys elicited a much larger volume of events than reported by police, so it is widely assumed that they are "more accurate" measures of the true volume of crime in society. But such gaps are inevitable. Despite the surface similarity of the resulting figures, the measurement operations and their errors differ greatly when we compare police and survey procedures for estimating crime rates. The social and organizational processes which stand between events occurring in the world and our survey or official maps of them produce quite different kinds of crime statistics.

#### SOURCES OF MEASUREMENT ERROR

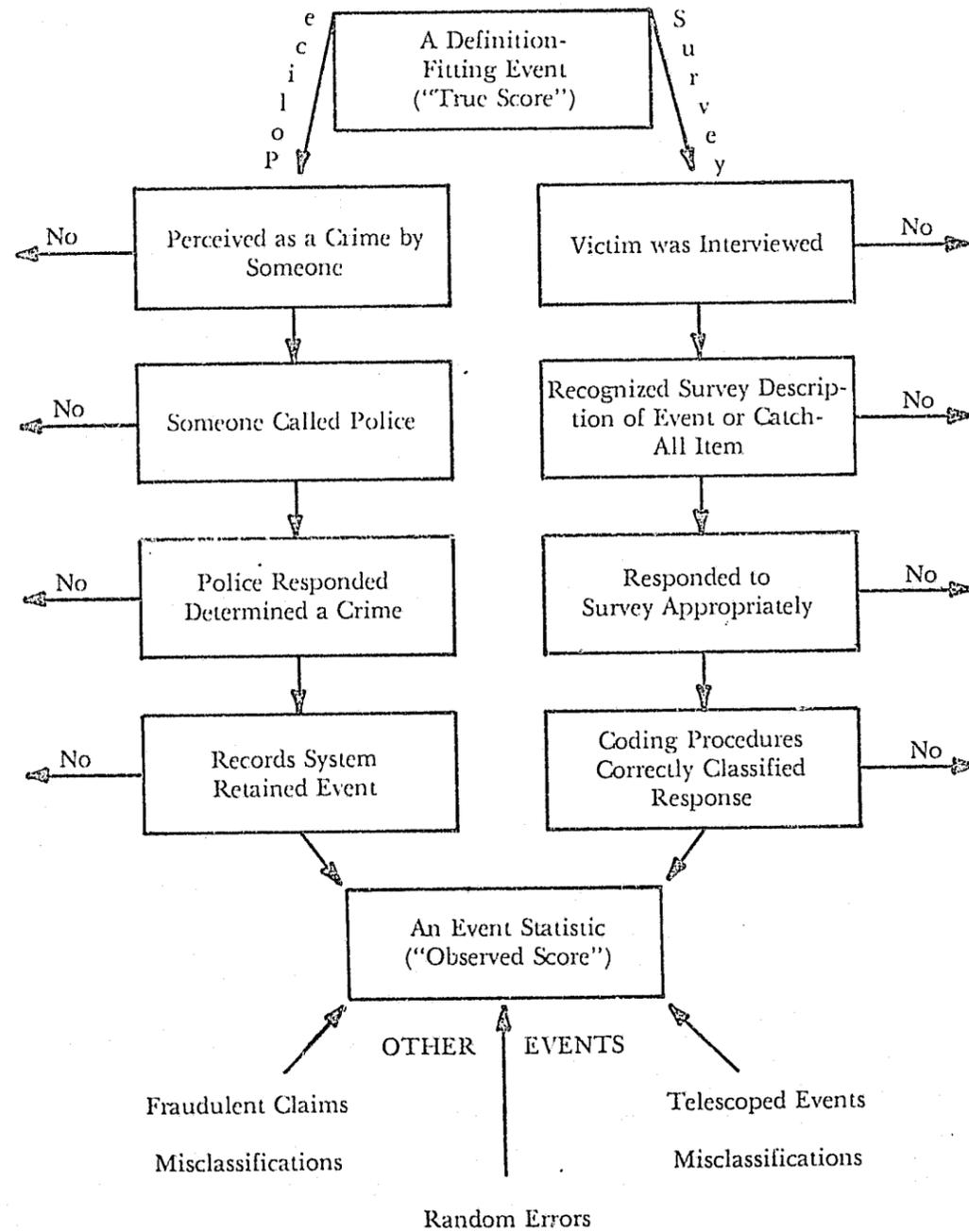
In the course of mapping crime events into a numerical system, both official and survey measurement procedures generate considerable error. If we think of error as the gap between a true score and an observed score for an event, Figure 1 may be a useful summary of what we know about its sources. At each step, an exit from the measurement process leads to error. On the survey side, measurement error has been investigated in a series of pilot studies which began in 1966. Our knowledge of error-generative processes on the police side is older, but it has been enhanced considerably by studies of victim behavior and systematic observations of police work during the past decade.

The first stages in the official measurement process lie in the hands of civilians: the victims of crime, their relatives, neighbors, and bystanders. The first public filter through which events must pass is perceptual: someone must know that a specific incident has taken place. This is in part an information problem. For example, a great deal of larceny from commercial establishments (shoplifting and employee theft) is discovered only in the form of inventory shrinkage (Dodge and Turner, 1971). In this case we know that crime is taking place, but *events* remain unknown and uncountable. The general difficulty is that discrete events may escape detection, while continuous indicators of their occurrence—like dollar losses per quarter or shortages at audit—cannot be enumerated under our current system of social accounts. The problem is also conceptual: people must define an event as falling into the domain of events about which "the police must do something." This appears to inhibit the reporting of consumer fraud, and it is the difference between crime and "ripping-off." Attitudinal studies of the legitimacy of theft or fraud upon large private and governmental bureaucracies indicate that there is far from universal agreement about the labeling of some behaviors in our society (Smigel and Ross, 1970). The problem of who does the perceiving is also of interest. Pilot surveys in Dayton and San Jose revealed that 25% of all personal crime and 20% of all property crime is reported by someone other than the victim (*Crimes and Victims*, 1974). The motives which lead non-victims to send for the police are simply unknown.

The decision to call the police has been the focus of considerable research, for it is probably the most important factor shaping official statistics on crime. In the Dayton-San Jose pilot surveys conducted in 1972, victims recalled that about 60% of all robbery, 56% of all larceny, and 40% of all household burglaries were *not* reported to the police. Their reasons

FIGURE 1

SOME SOURCES OF MEASUREMENT ERROR



for failing to do so were numerous: the largest categories chosen were "not serious enough" (25-30%), "nothing can be done" (25%), or that the harm or loss was slight (10%) (*Crimes and Victims*, 1974). Other analyses of the reporting problem have focused upon the race, class, or even personality characteristics of victims rather than their manifest responses, although the utility of this approach is not particularly clear. It appears that the characteristics of the event are controlling: who did it (relative or stranger); why it was done (economics or passion); what was the damage to person, property, or propriety; and what were the participants' estimates of the burdens and benefits of invoking the police? Only a portion of the latter calculation—that involving the victim's fear of the police—would appear to be a straightforward race-and-class problem. Despite much discussion of this factor, neither Ennis' (1967) national survey nor the Dayton and San Jose studies revealed more than 2% giving that response (*Crimes and Victims*, 1974).

Observational studies of police behavior indicate that even after the police are called the outcome of the crime-measurement process remains problematic. Crime recording becomes an organizational activity. Black's (1970) and Black's and Reiss' (1970) descriptions of police-citizen encounters in Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C. indicate that extra-legal factors greatly influence a policeman's decision to write a formal report. They are loathe to file a report when the relational distance between the participants in a dispute is small, in part because they know that it is very unlikely that the case will be pursued in the courts. They tend to defer to the dispositional preferences of the complainant, who often mobilizes the police only to warn or threaten another party. Both complainants who are deferential to the police and higher-status victims are more likely to be successful in persuading the police to file a report. The police also act upon their own assessment of the complainant's culpability. Often responsibility for personal crimes or their outcomes may be apportioned among the parties, and police respond to the division of blame (Curtis, 1974). Finally, in cases where juveniles are parties to a dispute the police tend to defer to the dispositional preferences of adults at the scene.

These observations suggest another reason why official statistics on crime should be lower than survey estimates. Unlike survey enumerations, where the victim's claim ultimately must be recorded on his terms, police "measurement" takes place within the context of the event. Complainants are surrounded by witnesses and bystanders who contribute their interpretations of events. Surprisingly often the suspects themselves are present to offer countercharges and alternative explanations. The decision to file a formal report is "judicial" in the sense that an officer weighs claims and counter-claims before making a disposition in a case. Patrol officers quickly learn to be suspicious of the motives of complainants, for their authority is often invoked for private purposes; claims of victimization are not taken at face value (Rubinstein, 1973). As the *Uniform Crime Report* does not present predisposition case totals, but only "founded" complaints for each city, we have no idea of the dimensions of this process. Scattered reports of large departments on hand indicate that the effect of "unfounding" is considerable: approximately 25% of rapes, 13% of robberies, and 19% of gun assaults reported to the police were discounted in these cities. They probably would generate self-reports of victimization, but they did not become official statistics.

Technical considerations, including difficulties with the classification scheme employed in gathering official statistics, may introduce measurement errors on the police side as well. The Uniform Crime Reporting System imposes a set of definitions which do not match the legal pigeon-holes into which the police must sort events. The translation from local to national terminology appears to vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction,

enhanced by local differences in training and data quality control (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1973). Errors of this sort will shift over time within cities as well. I would interpret the tremendous variation and apparently random distribution of "manslaughter by negligence" totals reported in the *Uniform Crime Report*, for example, to be a function largely of variations in local practice.<sup>4</sup> Survey studies of crime, on the other hand, utilize standardized measurement operations which may vary among interviewers, but should not vary considerably across cities. Because these error terms differ, further "gaps" will appear between figures from the two sources.

The final source of error on the police side is organizational and political. The ability of official records systems to retain information once it has been entered is problematic. In 1966, a department audit of stationhouses in New York City revealed 20-90% under-reporting of events in their files (Wolfgang, 1968). These and other discoveries suggest that crime is an organizational problem in police departments. Especially in cities where commanders are evaluated on their ability to reduce crime, we observe a consistent tendency toward underreporting or the down-grading of offenses by police departments (Seidman and Couzens, 1974). Events also disappear individually in response to political influence or bribes, but this is less likely to skew the totals in common types of crime.

The dramatic impact of variations in police record-keeping procedures upon crime statistics is illustrated by "before-and-after" studies of cities which have overhauled their systems. Many of these were noted by researchers for the Crime Commission in their discussion of crime statistics (President's Commission, 1967). New York City's 1950 reorganization, for example, boosted that department's robbery totals by 400%, larceny 700%, and assault with a weapon 200% (Wolfgang, 1968). The Commission correctly perceived such overhauls as part of a more general phenomenon: the increasing professionalism of big-city police departments. A working hypothesis would be that as departments centralize their administration, automate their information systems, and encourage more legalistic behavior on the part of beat patrolmen, error in the official measurement of crime should be reduced significantly.

#### SURVEY MEASUREMENT

The sources of measurement error on the survey side have been investigated in a series of national and city-level studies. In some, alternative techniques are employed in different random samples of a population and the results are compared. In others, police records are sampled to locate respondents who are known to have been victimized. They are then interviewed and their recall patterns analyzed. Each method gives us a different check of the reliability and validity of survey measures of crime.

These investigations suggest that the first question we must ask is, "Will the victim be interviewed?" This raises both data collection and sampling problems. In early studies, a randomly selected adult often was used as an informant for an entire household. Interviewers quizzed this respondent about the victimization experiences of each family member. In the Dayton-San Jose surveys, half of the sample households in each city were completely enumerated; interviewers questioned every household member over the age of 13 to elicit self-reports of victimization. Apparently, informant fatigue or lack of information about other household members is a substantial problem, for individual questioning elicited significantly more events. The differences were so marked that future federal surveys will employ complete household enumerations despite their increased cost.

Sampling deficiencies, on the other hand, have not been remedied. In the city-level studies conducted by the Bureau of the Census household sampling procedures are employed, and the sampling frame is bounded by the territorial limits of the central city. But an average of 13% of the daytime populations of the nation's core cities are commuters (Kasarda, 1972). In Chicago, for example, over 400,000 workers leave the city at sundown. Tourists and other transients account for another fraction. Although they may be victimized and can report their experiences to the police, they are currently not eligible for interviewing.

Even if they enter the sample, victims of crime may not recall the event. As Albert Biderman et al. (1967) have noted, one striking finding of the victimization pretests was the relatively low salience of many crime events. In practice, most respondents seem to find it difficult to remember incidents of victimization other than recent cases. The problem of memory fade has been investigated in two ways. First, known victims have been selected from police reports and interviewed. Their recall rates have climbed from 62% (Washington) to 74% (San Jose), reflecting successive improvements in the Census Bureau's questionnaire. Second, respondents have been required to recall known events within time frames ranging from three months to one year. These tests reveal a sharply decreasing recall rate for temporally distant events. The same phenomenon may be observed by plotting the date of occurrence of each event recalled by randomly selected respondents. Monthly crime rates estimated from survey responses drop sharply as an inverse function of time (Ennis, 1967). Accurate survey measurements require brief recall periods. This means that very large samples are required to provide yearly crime estimates. The current compromise for the National Crime Panel is six months; respondents in the city studies are asked to recall events for an entire year. Police estimates, on the other hand, are subject to few of these difficulties.

Reverse checks of police records also indicate that recall rates in an interview setting are sensitive to variations among the events themselves. They suggest that responses may not be forthcoming even if an event is recalled. Victims appear to be unwilling to report clashes with friends or relatives, for example. In San Jose, those whom the police noted had been victimized by strangers recalled the event during an interview 75% of the time; only 22% of the cases where the police recorded that the offender was a relative were recalled, and 58% of those cases involving an acquaintance. Rapes were revealed cautiously; in the San Jose pilot survey all recalled rapes were described as "attempted." It should be noted that these variations are similar to those which appear to affect the willingness of victims to relate their experiences to the police as well. Disputes within families and rapes are both highly under-reported. And, as it was noted above, the police appear to be less willing to file formal reports when disputants are acquainted. In this case, survey and official procedures both systematically undercount the same classes of events. This is a serious measurement problem.

As noted in Figure 1, the final step in the survey measurement of crime involves the coding and classification of reported victimizations. It is difficult to judge how successfully this process reflects the event. In his report to the Crime Commission, Ennis (1967) related a modest test of the inter-coder reliability of his classification scheme. Teams of lawyers and detectives were successful in classifying citizen-reported victimizations in the same U.C.R. categories as his research staff about 65% of the time. In a validity test of the more advanced San Jose Survey instrument, Census personnel classified 259 of 292 recalled victimizations into the same categories as the local police who initially recorded them. Since we have no confidence that police and the interviewer were told exactly the same story, this is a remarkable correspondence. Coupled with the face validity of the current survey

instrument—the items are drawn to tap the dimensions which define Part I offenses in the *Uniform Crime Report*—this suggests that the classification stage of the process is probably less troublesome than most.

A final and potentially important source of error in both survey and official measures is the intrusion of other events into the observed score for a city or household. On the police side, fraudulent claims may be registered. People may misuse the police in personal vendettas, they may invent stories to disguise their own culpability, or they may attempt to register excessive insurance claims. In addition, actual events which lie outside the domain of interest may be misclassified as falling within it. The most serious problem on the survey side is "forward telescoping." Method checks of all kinds indicate that the tendency of respondents to recall events which occurred outside of the reference period of the survey and to claim that they occurred within the specified interval is quite strong. Experiments with the Census' Quarterly Household Survey panels indicate that "bounded" interviews may avoid distortions of this kind. Respondents who are asked to recall events which have occurred since an interviewer's *last visit* report as few as one-half the number of victimizations recalled by those who are quizzed about the same period but who previously have not been questioned (Turner, 1972). Given the low salience of most crime events and their steep forgetting curve, victims require signposts to guide their recall.

#### ESTIMATING ERROR MAGNITUDE

Like all measures, estimates of crime rates contain error. Given the magnitude of the sources of error discussed here, it is remarkable that official and survey measures of crime covary as closely as they do. The existence of these multiple measures may help us estimate in very rough fashion the magnitude of the error in each. Additional methods tests and analyses of existing data may contribute further to our understanding of the dimensions of error.

Crosschecks of recall errors in the survey measurement process indicate that the rate at which interviews "recover" events is fairly high. In the San Jose pilot survey of 1971, of the 394 known victims who were located for questioning, 292 recalled the event in some form (San Jose Methods Test, 1972). Table 1-A presents the recall rate for various subcategories of events. Note that rates for frequent crimes, larceny and burglary, were higher than those for less frequent events. Table 1-A also presents the total number of personal and household victimizations recalled by the residents of San Jose proper in the standard population survey phase of the pilot study. These are then projected into "corrected" totals which roughly take into account patterns of non-recall. As the column totals indicate, the San Jose survey may have recovered approximately 75% of the five classes of events of interest. This is a *very rough* indicator of the recovery power of the victimization survey instrument, one that requires further refinement.

Table 1-B examines the respondent's contributions to errors in survey measures of crime. The memory curve plotted in Table 1-B indicates that recall periods exceeding three months may lead to the substantial undercounting of offenses in the population. A test of the ability of those recalling events to place them in the proper month—an essential check of the ability of surveys to provide time-series estimates of the type anticipated—indicates that recall accuracy degrades sharply after about three months as well (Turner, 1972; Ennis, 1967). These curves, which were computed from data in the report of the San Jose pilot study, suggest that the six-month recall period used in the National Crime Panel and the 12-

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