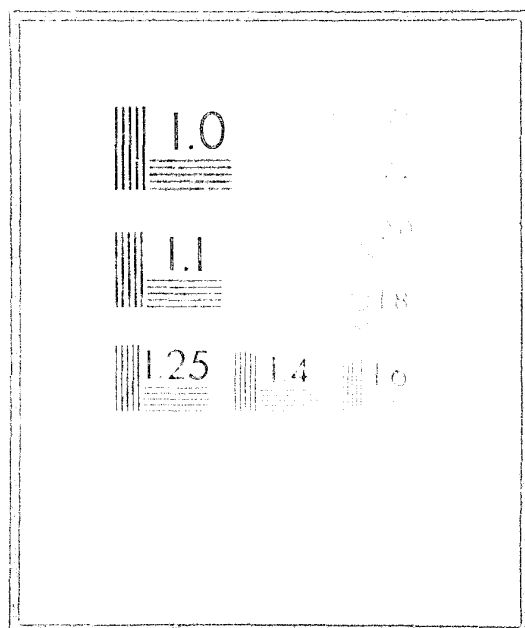


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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENTATION OF NARCOTIC TASK FORCE DATA AS AN AID TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

The present exploratory study represents the response of the Bureau of Criminal Statistics (BCS) to a request by the Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) to collect and present data relevant to the arrest and prosecution of drug offenders that would be useful to that Office in assessing the effectiveness of narcotic enforcement task forces which it funded in nine California counties.

The San Mateo County Narcotic Task Force (NTF) was selected as the county to be studied. It was assumed that the procedures developed for the collection, presentation, and analysis of data with respect to this county could, for the most part, be applied to the remaining eight counties.

Essential differences in NTF and non-NTF personnel, objectives, and procedures were noted. Because of these differences, comparative data presented show characteristics and criminal justice outcomes related to drug offenders arrested by two very different kinds of law enforcement personnel -- one directed solely toward the apprehension of drug offenders, the other toward the apprehension of all types of offenders.

Of the sizable number of comparisons made, some of the more important findings are:

1. From 1972 through 1974, only 0.5 percent of the total number of sworn law enforcement personnel in San Mateo County (NTF) were credited with approximately 15.0 percent of that county's total drug arrests (Table 1 and related discussion).
2. Approximately two and one-half times more NTF than non-NTF credited arrests were disposed of in San Mateo County Superior Court in 1974 (Table 9 and related discussion).
3. Significantly more NTF than non-NTF credited arrests disposed of in San Mateo County Superior Court in 1974 had primary arrest charges that were more serious (Table 10 and related discussion).
4. Significantly more NTF than non-NTF credited arrests disposed of in San Mateo County Superior Court in 1974 were convicted at a more serious level (Table 12 and related discussion).

The above-listed findings, as well as a number of others, have resulted in the conclusion that NTF can be credited with at least three noteworthy accomplishments. These are: (1) the arrest of the more serious drug offender; (2) the arrest of the more elusive drug offender; and (3) the making of higher-quality arrests.

INTRODUCTION

The results of the comparisons made in the present report decidedly show that NTF, relative to non-NTF law enforcement agencies, had a positive impact upon the arrest and prosecution of narcotic offenders in San Mateo County. To a significant extent, certain identifiable objectives of NTF were achieved. The essential evaluative question, however, remains unanswered. This question is concerned with how well these objectives were achieved in relation to the amount of money expended. In other words, were the benefits of NTF to San Mateo County worth the cost? Because the methodology for an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of a program should be an integral part of the initial development and implementation of that program, this is a question that will be difficult, if not impossible, to answer with respect to both NTF and the other county narcotics task forces within the context of the data discussed in this report.

The Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) authorized \$21 million to be spent on drug law enforcement in California during 1971 through 1974. As a result, narcotics enforcement task forces¹ were established in nine counties. In addition to its drug law enforcement functions, each county task force had other objectives. These varied from county to county and included, for example, (1) cooperation with health care services in the use of resources for the prevention and treatment of drug abuse, (2) the development of narcotics enforcement training programs, (3) the encouragement of cooperation between local, state, and federal agencies in the area of drug law enforcement, etc.

OCJP has underwritten the evaluation of a number of these county task forces, each presumably in terms of its specific objectives. In April 1975, OCJP requested the Bureau of Criminal Statistics (BCS) to access its own data bases and other local sources to obtain data for one county's narcotic enforcement task force. These data should be potentially useful in the evaluation of other narcotics enforcement programs.

This report details the Bureau's response to this request -- a pilot study of one county conducted by the Management and Administrative Statistics (MAS) component of the state's Comprehensive Data System (CDS) located in BCS.

Purpose

The specific purpose of the present exploratory study was to collect and present data pertaining to type and amount of drugs confiscated, characteristics of apprehended offenders, and prosecutions. Hopefully, these data would prove useful to OCJP in its attempt to evaluate the drug law enforcement effectiveness of county narcotics enforcement task forces.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Initially, the study design called only for the collection and presentation of enumerative data relevant to the narcotics task force of a given county (e.g., number of arrests, characteristics of arrestees, type and amount of drugs confiscated, etc.). It was assumed that whatever procedures were developed for the collection and presentation of data relevant to one county narcotics enforcement task force could probably be generalized to the remainder. As the study progressed, it became increasingly evident that the collection of comparable data for non-task force law enforcement agencies of the county studied would substantially enhance the analysis. It should, therefore, be recognized that the study design was developmental rather than preset. The final result was the collection, presentation, and analysis of comparative task force and non-task force data of one selected county. In addition to arrest data, information about defendants disposed of in superior court was collected. This information pertained to age, sex, race, prior record, primary

¹A narcotics enforcement task force is a group of non-uniformed sworn personnel responsible to the county sheriff. Its purpose, among others, is to gather information that will result in both the confiscation of drugs and the arrest and prosecution of drug offenders -- especially those more likely to elude routine law enforcement arrest.

arrest charge, type of disposition, and sentence received.

County Task Force Selection

The San Mateo County Narcotics Task Force (NTF) was selected for the study for two reasons. Having been established in August 1971, it was one of the first county task forces. It was therefore assumed that this program would have had sufficient time to be functioning efficiently and, as a result, relatively more valid data would be available. Furthermore, the county's proximity to Sacramento would make the review and collection of data in both NTF and the district attorney's offices less costly.

As indicated in the Introduction, evaluations of several county narcotic task forces have already been made. Although these evaluations played no part in the selection process, it should be noted that NTF was one of those previously evaluated.² The relationship between certain aspects of the present study and the aforementioned evaluation is discussed later in the report.

Description of Data and Data Sources

A description of the data developed and their sources are presented in the Appendix.

Subjects of Study

The emphasis of this report is upon data collected on 277 defendants arrested for drug law violations in San Mateo County and adjudicated in San Mateo County Superior Court in 1974 (126 NTF credited arrests and 151 non-NTF credited arrests).³ The first five tables were included so as to provide background and comparative information regarding the activity of NTF and non-NTF personnel in the area of arrests. Those persons comprising arrests in the first five tables are not necessarily the same persons as those superior court defendants in the remaining eleven tables. One person (an arrestee) may, within a given year, represent several arrests.⁴ Although far less likely, one person may appear as a superior court defendant more than one time within a given year.

It should be noted that emphasis on the selection of superior court drug defendants as subjects has the limitation of excluding from the study all those persons arrested who do not reach superior court. In all probability, the vast majority of arrests are juveniles, those against whom charges are relatively minor, or those against whom charges are judged by the district attorney not to be of sufficient quality, in terms of evidence, to hold up in superior court. On the other hand, the advantages of selecting superior court drug defendants, rather than arrests, as subjects are: the typically serious nature of their offenses; their small number; and ease of data accessibility.

²Evaluation Report. *San Mateo Narcotics Task Force*, Criminal Justice Research Foundation, September 1974.

³NTF credited arrests are defined as those which involve some form of on-the-scene participation by NTF. These arrests for the most part, were based on information developed by the task force. The data were not recorded in a manner that provided for the separate classification of exclusive and assisted NTF arrests. Non-NTF credited arrests are those in which NTF was not involved in any way.

⁴In this report, *arrests* is used in many instances, both tables and narrative, to denote persons arrested – each time they are arrested. Therefore, there are always more arrests than individuals arrested (arrestees).

NTF and Non-NTF Comparisons

The objectives of NTF and those of other law enforcement agencies in San Mateo County were dissimilar in many respects. Even in the drug area, where there is some degree of similarity, objectives differed substantially. The NTF officer was particularly oriented toward arresting the more serious and more elusive drug offender. Both his undercover approach and his more extensive use of paid informants were directed toward this goal. Consequently, the NTF and non-NTF data presented in the various tables in the Findings section show the characteristics and criminal justice outcomes of drug offenders arrested by two very different groups of law enforcement personnel. Because of this fact, the data of these tables must be viewed primarily as comparative, not evaluative.

Tests of the statistical significance of differences in NTF and non-NTF comparisons made in the Findings section of this report are more conservative than would normally be the case. This policy has been adopted because of the dissimilarities in NTF and non-NTF personnel, objectives, and procedures described above. Consequently, the statistical test utilized (chi square), in order to be considered significant, must be of sufficient magnitude to occur less than one time in one hundred by the operation of chance alone.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the total number of drug arrests reported in San Mateo County from 1970 through 1974, and the number and percent of these totals credited to task force and non-task force personnel. It should be noted that data pertaining to the years of 1970 and 1971 are presented only to provide perspective to the data of subsequent task-force years. Since 1972, the first full year of

TABLE 1
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG ARRESTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY, 1970-1974
By Year and Credited Arresting Agency

Year	Total number	Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1974	2,419	384	15.9	2,035	84.1
1973	1,965	291	14.9	1,674	85.1
1972	2,023	303	15.0	1,720	85.0
1971	1,673	61 ^a	3.6	1,612	96.4
1970	1,972	0	0.0	1,972	100.0

^aSince the task force was established in August 1971, the number of NTF arrests is necessarily smaller than those of subsequent years.

its operation, NTF drug arrests ranged from 291 to 384 while the county's total drug arrests ranged from 1,965 to 2,419. During this period (1972-1974), NTF averaged 5 officers per year, as opposed to a county average of about 950 officers per year (data not shown). From these officer counts, it is evident that 0.5 percent of the total number of sworn law enforcement personnel were credited with 15.3 percent of the county's drug arrests.

A further breakdown of the 1974 data of Table 1 reveals that of the total number of drug arrests made in 1974, a larger percent of those attributed to NTF officers were at the felony level (93.2 percent) than those attributed to non-NTF officers (87.9 percent). These data are shown in Table 2. Statistical analysis of the distribution of these data shows the difference between these percents to be statistically significant. The probability of obtaining a difference of this magnitude by chance alone is less than one in one hundred.

TABLE 2
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF FELONY AND MISDEMEANOR DRUG ARRESTS
IN SAN MATEO COUNTY IN 1974
By Credited Arresting Agency

Level of arrest	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Felony	2,146	88.7	358	93.2	1,788	87.9
Misdemeanor	273	11.3	26	6.8	247	12.1
Total	2,419	100.0	384	100.0	2,035	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=9.29, $p < .01$

Other data pertaining to NTF and non-NTF credited arrests are presented in Tables 3-5. Because San Mateo County did not report to BCS on the Monthly Arrest and Citation Register⁵ until July 1974, age, sex, and race information were available only for July through December 1974. It is assumed that these data are representative of 1974 as a whole.

Table 3 presents number and percent distributions of task force and non-task force drug arrests in San Mateo County during this necessarily restricted time period, classified by three categories of age and credited arresting agency. This age breakdown shows that non-NTF agencies arrested a considerably larger percent of younger persons than did NTF personnel (51.8 versus 17.5 percent). Statistical analysis of the overall distribution of these data shows it to be statistically significant. The probability of obtaining a distributional difference of this magnitude by chance alone is less than one in one thousand.

⁵This system of reporting provides data on age, race, and sex of each individual arrested or cited.

TABLE 3
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG ARRESTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY,
JULY THROUGH DECEMBER 1974
By Age and Credited Arresting Agency

Age	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
19 and under ^a . . .	611	46.4	36	17.5	575	51.8
20-24	397	30.2	89	43.2	308	27.7
25 and over	308	23.4	81	39.3	227	20.5
Total	1,316	100.0	206	100.0	1,110	100.0

χ^2 (2df)=84.28, $p < .001$

^aTime limitations placed on this report did not permit a juvenile-adult breakdown of the data of this category. It is believed, however, that such a breakdown would have shown a proportionately larger number of juveniles in the non-NTF group.

Table 4 shows task force and non-task force data by sex. The percent of NTF female arrests exceeds that of non-NTF arrests (28.4 versus 15.8 percent). Statistical analysis of the distribution of the data of this table shows the difference between these percents to be statistically significant. The probability of obtaining a difference this large by chance alone is less than one in one thousand.

TABLE 4
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG ARRESTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY,
JULY THROUGH DECEMBER 1974
By Sex and Credited Arresting Agency

Sex	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	1,082	82.2	146	71.6	936	84.2
Female	234	17.8	58	28.4	176	15.8
Total	1,316	100.0	204	100.0	1,112	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=18.75 $p < .001$

Note: Two NTF cases are excluded because their sex is not known. Because non-NTF figures are obtained by the subtraction of NTF figures from total figures, they are increased accordingly. The effect of these two cases on the test of significance is negligible.

Table 5 reveals that NTF arrested a larger percent of minority group members than did non-NTF agencies (35.0 versus 23.1 percent). Statistical analysis of the ethnic distribution of these data (white versus "all other") shows the difference between these percents to be statistically significant. The probability of obtaining a difference of this magnitude by chance alone is less than one in one thousand.

TABLE 5
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG ARRESTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY,
JULY THROUGH DECEMBER 1974
By Race and Credited Arresting Agency

Race	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	988	75.1	134	65.0	854	76.9
Mexican/American	74	5.6	10	4.9	64	5.8
Negro	217	16.5	50	24.3	167	15.0
Other	37	2.8	12	5.8	25	2.3
Total	1,316	100.0	206	100.0	1,110	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=13.12, $p < .001$

To this point, the findings presented have pertained only to differences between NTF and non-NTF credited drug arrests and their respective characteristics (age, sex, and race). From this point forward, however, NTF and non-NTF comparisons will be made in terms of drug defendants disposed of in San Mateo County Superior Court in 1974.

Tables 6-8 are directly comparable to Tables 3-5 except that the former are concerned with the characteristics of age, sex, and race of superior court drug defendants while the latter are concerned with these same characteristics of drug arrestees.

With respect to age, statistical analysis of the data shown in Table 6 reveals no significant difference. This finding is at variance with that of Table 3 which relates to a similar distribution of drug arrests and is extremely significant. This difference is believed to result from the relatively large number of drug arrests credited to non-NTF law enforcement agencies which fall in the 19-year-old-and-under age group. This belief is confirmed by the fact that when the 19-year-old-and-under age category is removed from both Tables 3 and 6, the respective age distributions of both arrests and superior court defendants are not significantly different. In both instances, the probability of obtaining a difference of this magnitude by chance alone is less than one in one hundred.

TABLE 6
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG DEFENDANTS DISPOSED OF IN
SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Age and Credited Arresting Agency

Age	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
19 and under ^a	18	6.5	8	6.3	10	6.7
20-24	137	49.6	72	57.1	65	43.3
25 and over	121	43.8	46	36.5	75	50.0
Total	276	100.0	126	100.0	150	100.0

χ^2 (2df)=5.50, $p > .01$

^a Only under exceptional circumstances are juveniles adjudicated in superior court.
Notes: The age of one non-NTF defendant is not known.
Percents may not total 100.0 because of rounding.

Table 7 shows the distribution of defendants disposed of in superior court classified by sex and credited arresting agency. Although the percent of NTF female defendants exceeds that of non-NTF female defendants (15.9 versus 9.3 percent), this difference is not statistically significant. It should be noted, however, that the direction of the difference is consistent with that shown in Table 4 which is concerned with drug arrests by sex (28.4 versus 15.8 percent) – the latter percent difference being statistically significant. It is believed that the small number of cases in Table 7 relative to Table 4, particularly female cases (234 versus 34), substantially reduces the probability of obtaining a statistically significant chi square.

TABLE 7
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DEFENDANTS DISPOSED OF IN SAN MATEO
COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Sex and Credited Arresting Agency

Sex	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	242	87.7	106	84.1	136	90.7
Female	34	12.3	20	15.9	14	9.3
Total	276	100.0	126	100.0	150	100.0

χ^2 (df=1)=2.70, $p > .01$

Note: The sex of one non-NTF credited defendant is not known.

It is interesting to observe that the total ethnic distribution of superior court drug defendants shown in Table 8 is strikingly similar to that shown in Table 5. The NTF and non-NTF components of these two tables are quite dissimilar ethnically, however. In the area of drug arrests (Table 5), the percent of NTF credited arrests of whites is smaller than the percent of non-NTF arrests of whites (65.0 versus 76.9 percent), while in the area of superior court defendants (Table 8), the reverse is true (84.9 versus 63.3 percent). This phenomenon is statistically known as an interaction effect. While it is impossible to determine the reason(s) for this interaction on the basis of available data, its primary source can be located.

TABLE 8
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG DEFENDANTS
DISPOSED OF IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Race and Credited Arresting Agency

Race	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	202	73.2	107	84.9	95	63.3
Mexican/American	16	5.8	3	2.4	13	8.7
Negro	53	19.2	15	11.9	38	25.3
Other	5	1.8	1	0.8	4	2.7
Total	276	100.0	126	100.0	150	100.0

$$\chi^2(1df)=16.26, p < .001$$

Note: The race of one non-NTF credited defendant is not known.

Let us assume:

1. The drug arrest data of Tables 3-5 are representative of the entire year.
2. The ethnic distributions of NTF and non-NTF credited drug arrests subject to superior court prosecution (adults) are the same as the NTF and non-NTF ethnic distributions (adult plus juvenile) shown in Table 5.

Upon acceptance of the above assumptions, it is found that 107 of 268 NTF credited arrests of whites were adjudicated in superior court while 95 of 1,708 such non-NTF arrests were so adjudicated (39.9 and 5.6 percent respectively). Similarly, 19 of 144 NTF credited arrests of non-whites were adjudicated in superior court while 55 of 512 such non-NTF arrests were so adjudicated (13.2 and 10.7 percent respectively). Consequently, the ratio of NTF to non-NTF

credited arrests of whites adjudicated in superior court (7 to 1) is considerably greater than the ratio of NTF to non-NTF credited arrests of non-whites so adjudicated (1 to 1). Although this locates the major source of the interactions, the question as to why relatively more NTF than non-NTF credited arrests of whites reach superior court cannot be explained on the basis of data presented in this report. It is believed, however, that an in-depth study directed toward the explanation of this phenomenon merits consideration.

As indicated in the Methods and Procedures section, the design of the present study called for the collection and presentation of data pertaining to type and amount of drugs confiscated. Data, however, were found to have been recorded by case rather than by individual arrest. Each case consequently involved a variable number of arrests. Furthermore, offender counts in one drug category overlapped offender counts in other drug categories to an indeterminate extent. Data collected in this form make comparative analyses between NTF and non-NTF credited arrests or superior court defendants with respect to type and amount of drugs confiscated meaningless. For this reason, these data are not presented.

As shown in Table 3, the vast majority of all non-NTF arrests relative to NTF credited drug arrests involve offenders who are 19 years old and younger. It seems logical to assume that juveniles in this age group also constitute a proportionately larger number of non-NTF than NTF credited drug arrests. Consequently, in order to obtain some idea of the relative percentages of NTF and non-NTF credited drug arrests reaching superior court, the 19-year-old-and-younger group of Table 3 has been removed from the data presented in Table 9. Also, because the data of Table 3 relate only to drug arrests made in the second half of 1974, it was necessary to double these data in order to arrive at the estimated number of drug arrests for the entire year. Any errors in these estimates, other things being equal, should affect NTF and non-NTF arrest data similarly. Based upon both the data shown in Table 9 and the assumptions listed above, a considerably higher percent of NTF than non-NTF arrests are disposed of in superior court (37.1 versus 14.1 percent). The significance of the difference in these percents was not tested statistically because the arrest data were estimated rather than actual. Nevertheless, about 2.6 times more NTF credited arrests reach superior court than do non-NTF credited arrests. While there may be other explanations, it is believed that this is the result of NTF (1) directing its attention to the more serious offender, and (2) making "higher-quality" arrests, that is, arrests better supported by evidence.

TABLE 9
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ARRESTS OF DRUG OFFENDERS 20 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER^a
MADE IN SAN MATEO COUNTY AND ACTUAL NUMBER OF DRUG DEFENDANTS DISPOSED
OF IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Credited Arresting Agency

Description	Total	Narcotics task force (NTF)	Non-NTF agencies
Estimated number of drug arrests ^a	1,410	350	1,070
Actual number of drug defendants disposed of in superior court	277	126	151
Superior court defendants as a percent of estimated drug arrests	19.6	37.1	14.1

^aThe estimated number of drug arrests was obtained by doubling the appropriate data presented in Table 3.
Note: Some of the drug defendants disposed of in superior court in 1974 were arrested in 1973. Similarly, some of the arrests made in 1974 were superior court defendants in 1975.

Evidence to support the contention that NTF directs its attention to the more serious offender is presented in Table 10. In this table, superior court defendants are classified into two groups according to the seriousness of their primary drug arrest charge. The degree of seriousness of the arrest charge is based on a numerical rating determined by BCS which is related to the minimum and maximum sentences associated with that offense. The more serious the offense, the lower the BCS numerical rating. Primary arrest charges with BCS ratings of 6 through 8 are, for the purpose of the statistical analysis of Table 10, considered the more serious -- the remainder the less serious.

Dichotomized on this basis, the data of this table show the more serious primary arrest charges of NTF credited superior court defendants to be 79.5 percent as opposed to 46.6 percent for non-NTF credited superior court defendants. Analysis of these data shows the difference between the percents to be statistically significant. The probability of obtaining a difference of this magnitude by chance alone is less than one in one thousand.

The data of Tables 11 and 12 are concerned respectively with type of disposition and level of conviction. Table 11 shows that the respective rates of convictions of NTF and non-NTF credited defendants are quite similar (88.9 versus 91.4 percent). These percents are not significantly different. This finding is not at all surprising if it is assumed that the same criteria are applied to both NTF and non-NTF credited arrests in determining which cases will be adjudicated in superior court. In fact, the data of Table 9 would seem to support the hypothesis that it was the application of these criteria which eliminated considerably more non-NTF credited arrests.

Despite statistically equivalent conviction rates of NTF and non-NTF credited defendants (Table 11), the data of Table 12 reveal that when these convictions are examined in terms of "level of conviction", an additional analytical dimension is brought into focus. This dimension relates to the

TABLE 10
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DEFENDANTS
DISPOSED OF IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Severity of Primary Drug Arrest Charge (BCS Rating Hierarchy)
and Credited Arresting Agency

BCS rating	Primary drug arrest charge	Total ^a		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6	Sale of narcotics	85	33.6	49	40.2	36	27.5
6	Sale of dangerous drugs	5	2.0	5	4.1	0	0.0
6	Sale of marijuana	37	14.6	26	21.3	11	8.4
8	Narcotics possession for sale	31	12.3	17	13.9	14	10.7
	Subtotal	158	62.5	97	79.5	61	46.6
25	Dangerous drugs possession for sale	1	0.4	1	0.8	0	0.0
25	Marijuana possession for sale	20	7.9	3	2.5	17	13.0
25	Narcotics possession	26	10.3	7	5.7	19	14.5
28	Dangerous drug possession	4	1.6	0	0.0	4	3.1
28	Marijuana possession	44	17.4	14	11.5	30	22.9
	Subtotal	95	37.6	25	20.5	70	53.5
	TOTAL	253	100.0	122	100.0	131	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=32.34, $p < .001$

^aDefendants whose primary arrests charge did not involve drugs were eliminated from the table. There were 24 such cases, 4 NTF and 20 non-NTF.
Note: Percents may not total 100.0 because of rounding.

fact that a larger percent of NTF credited defendants are convicted of a "felony as charged" (83.0 versus 68.1 percent) as opposed to a "lesser felony or misdemeanor." The difference in these percents, as determined by the distribution of frequencies within Table 12, is statistically significant. The probability of obtaining a difference of this magnitude by chance alone is less than one in one hundred. Other things being equal, it would suggest that NTF credited defendants may have resulted from higher-quality arrests, or, as the data of Table 10 indicate, are charged with more serious drug offenses, or a combination of the two.

TABLE 11
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG DEFENDANTS
DISPOSED OF IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Type of Disposition and Credited Arresting Agency

Type of disposition	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Convicted ^a	250	90.3	112	88.9	138	91.4
Not convicted ^b	27	9.7	14	11.1	13	8.6
Total	277	100.0	126	100.0	151	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=0.49, $p > .01$

^aDefendants may be convicted for offenses other than those with which they were charged.
^bThis category consists of cases acquitted, diverted, dismissed, suspended, and other.

The conclusion reached from the analyses of these two tables (Tables 11 and 12), is that, despite similar conviction rates, the difference between NTF and non-NTF credited defendants in terms of level of conviction is substantial.

TABLE 12
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG DEFENDANTS
CONVICTED IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Level of Conviction and Credited Arresting Agency

Level of conviction	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Felony as charged	187	74.8	93	83.0	94	68.1
Lesser felony or misdemeanor	63	25.2	19	17.0	44	31.9
Total	250	100.0	112	100.0	138	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=7.28, $p < .01$

Despite significantly more NTF convictions at a higher level, analysis of the data of Table 13, dichotomized on the basis of institution versus "all other", reveals no statistically significant difference between NTF and non-NTF superior court defendants in terms of "sentence received."⁶ Examination of Table 14, however, makes this finding understandable. It is common knowledge in the field of criminal justice that judges, in general, tend to give considerable weight to the prior record of the offender when a sentence is imposed. To a significant extent, the data of Table 14 show that NTF credited drug defendants occupy the "no prior record" category more frequently (37.1 versus 18.6 percent), and the "major record" category less frequently (32.2 versus 46.9 percent).

TABLE 13
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG DEFENDANTS
CONVICTED IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Sentence Received and Credited Arresting Agency

Sentence received	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Institution ^a	25	10.0	6	5.4	19	13.8
Probation	52	20.8	22	19.6	30	21.7
Probation/jail	120	48.0	64	57.1	56	40.6
Probation/fine	36	14.4	17	15.2	19	13.8
Probation/jail/fine	11	4.4	2	1.8	9	6.5
Other	6	2.4	1	0.9	5	3.6
Total	250	100.0	112	100.0	138	100.0

χ^2 (1df)=4.86, $p > .01$

^aIncludes sentences to state prison, the California Rehabilitation Center, and the California Youth Authority.

Statistical analysis of the distribution of these data shows the probability of obtaining percent differences of this magnitude by chance alone to be less than one in one hundred.

⁶Actually, a smaller percent of NTF than non-NTF defendants were institutionalized. Had the p value of chi square, as set forth in the Methodology and Procedures section, been less stringent than $p .01$, this difference in percents would have been judged significant.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of Tables 10 and 14 indicates that despite more serious arrest charges, NTF arrests reaching superior court have less extensive and less serious prior records. This suggests that the narcotics task force is indeed arresting some persons who, without the existence of NTF, would normally remain at large.

TABLE 14
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DRUG DEFENDANTS
DISPOSED OF IN SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT IN 1974
By Prior Record and Credited Arresting Agency

Prior record	Total		Narcotics task force (NTF)		Non-NTF agencies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No prior record . . .	73	27.1	46	37.1	27	18.6
Minor record ^a	88	32.7	38	30.6	50	34.5
Major record ^b	108	40.1	40	32.2	68	46.9
Total	269	100.0	124	100.0	145	100.0

$\chi^2(2df)=12.27, p < .01$

^aOne or more arrests with no recorded disposition(s), fine disposition, or sentence of less than 90 days in jail or less than two years probation.

^bIncludes sentences of 90 days or more in jail, probation of two years or more, CYA or CRC commitments, and one or more prison commitment(s). Of those with prior prison commitments, three are NTF and 13 non-NTF credited defendants.

Notes: The prior record of two NTF and six non-NTF credited defendants is not known.
Percents may not total 100.0 because of rounding.

It is not intended that the relatively formal style of the present report, as well as the statistical significance of some of its findings, lead the reader to the conclusion that the study design was in any way experimental in nature. That which was pointed out in the Methodology and Procedures section is therefore being repeated at this point -- namely, the present study was entirely exploratory; the design developed as the study progressed; and comparisons between NTF and non-NTF subjects (both as arrests and superior court defendants) yielded considerably more significant differences than would normally be expected, largely because of basic dissimilarities in NTF and non-NTF personnel, objectives, and procedures.

The points made in the above paragraph are meant to reaffirm the exploratory nature of this study, as explicitly stated in its title. The focus has been placed primarily on the development of a "comparative methodology" rather than results per se. This emphasis, however, in no way diminishes the fact that important data have been gathered which have permitted numerous thought-producing comparisons between NTF and non-NTF subjects, both on arrest and superior court levels.

It is believed that comparisons made, supplemented by both additional information and expert knowledge at the county level might, even at this late date, provide the basis for a meaningful assessment of NTF performance. In view of the vast sums of money expended, it would seem that the possibility of a more extensive and intensive follow-up should be considered.

It is the belief of the writers that a positive contribution has been made toward the development of a comparative methodology for use in the evaluation of this program (NTF), as well as the other eight heavily-funded narcotics enforcement programs instituted in California. The expenditure of such vast sums of money (\$21 million) would seem to demand, if at all possible, a valid assessment of their effectiveness.

As stated in the Methodology and Procedures section, San Mateo County was one of the several narcotics task force counties evaluated. The evaluation study reported by the Criminal Justice Research Foundation and referred to earlier is in many respects very different from the present study. Both objectives and methodologies are dissimilar. Furthermore, the time period between studies is considerable (1972 versus 1974). During this two-year period, changes in NTF staff are known to have occurred and, very probably, changes in NTF operating procedures are very likely to have occurred.

This brief synopsis of basic differences in the purpose and method of the two studies is in no way intended to suggest that a comparison of their respective findings and factors associated with them might not prove both informative and worthwhile. It is intended, however, to convey the conviction that such a comparison is not within the scope of this report.

Review of the extensive number of NTF and non-NTF comparisons presented in the Findings section may lead the reader, as it has the writers, to some interesting hypotheses. Unfortunately, without additional data, they cannot be tested. There are, however, a number of comparisons, each of which would seem to indicate, to a variable extent, that NTF achieved three important objectives: (1) the apprehension of the more serious offender (Tables 10 and 12 and related discussions); (2) the apprehension of the more elusive offender (Table 14 and related discussion); and (3) the making of higher-quality arrests (Tables 2, 9, and 12, and related discussions).

From the findings listed above, there is little question that NTF, relative to non-NTF law enforcement agencies, had a positive impact upon the arrest and prosecution of narcotic offenders in San Mateo County. To a significant extent, certain identifiable objectives were achieved. The essential question that remains unanswered, however, concerns how well these objectives were achieved in relation to the amount of money and effort expended. In other words, were the benefits to the county worth the cost? Because the methodology for an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of a program should be an integral part of the initial development and implementation of that program, this is a question that will be difficult, if not impossible, to answer with respect to both NTF and the other county narcotics task forces within the context of the data discussed in this report.

Description of Data Development Procedures

The following represent the three data development procedures utilized:

1. Five-year profiles were developed on San Mateo County adult and juvenile arrests, arrest level, prosecutions, and court dispositions as possible reference data in the assessment of NTF (the San Mateo County Narcotics Task Force).
2. Data were collected on all arrests credited to NTF, or arrests in which they participated, from the program's inception in August 1971 through April 1975. Each NTF arrestee was tracked through the criminal justice system in order to gather information on police releases, district attorney rejections, and lower and superior court dispositions.
3. Because of constraints in time and personnel, comparable data for NTF and non-task force law enforcement agencies were collected for only 1974. This was effected by dividing all 1974 San Mateo County superior court dispositions of drug offenders into two groups -- the first composed of NTF credited arrests; and the second, those credited to all other county law enforcement agencies (non-NTF).

Data Sources

The data described above were obtained from the following five sources:

1. NTF files provided informant data, facts related to NTF arrests, and descriptions of the type and amount of drugs confiscated.
2. Records of local police departments and the sheriff's office provided reasons for the police release of arrestees (Penal Code, Section 849b). Cases were classed as district attorney rejections if booking slips noted a court date, but filing information could not be located in court files.
3. The San Mateo County district attorney's index card file was the major source of superior and lower court numbers which served as identifiers to access court records.
4. San Mateo County Municipal and Superior Court dockets and files were screened for information on reasons for dismissals, charged and convicted offenses, and sentences received.
5. The Offender-Based Transaction Statistics component of BCS provided San Mateo County superior court disposition data for all defendants whose arrests were credited to NTF, as well as those defendants whose arrests were credited to other law enforcement agencies.