



Visiting Fellowship Program Report

Victimization Surveys and Criminal Justice Planning

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I. INTRODUCTION*

One of the most important advances in the last decade of criminal justice research has been the development of survey research tools for gathering data on crimes and victims. Before 1965, most of what we knew about these subjects was based upon information found in police files. Some data on delinquency had been obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to youths, but most of our knowledge about homicide, rape, robbery, and other major crimes was drawn from official records of incidents reported to the police.

The variety of research based upon official files is extensive. At the community level, the relationship between crime and such variables as ethnic succession, social disorganization, and environmental quality was mapped by sociologists at the University of Chicago.¹ Cross-national studies of crime and economic fluctuations began in the 1930's and have come into vogue again since 1971.² At the individual level, data on arrestees and prisoners have been of major interest to criminologists. Much of what we know about their victims can be attributed to the police of Philadelphia and to Marvin Wolfgang and his students. A series of reports from that group have provided (although not without criticism) much of the conceptual order and data about murderers, rapists and robbers, and the targets of their depredations.³ Lynn Curtis has expanded the data base on reports of criminal violence to include many more cities, while Marvin Wolfgang has moved beyond police files to tap other institutional records of delinquency in Philadelphia.⁴ Franklin Zimring has mined police reports about the use of firearms, while economists such as Isaac Ehrlich claim to have teased evidence of the deterrent effect of police activity and legal sanctions out of crime reports aggregated at the state level.⁵

While research in this area remains vigorous, no one has been particularly satisfied with the quality of data contained in police files or with the limited generalizability of research based upon them. Much (perhaps most) crime is not reported to the police, and records of reported events are often erroneous or missing.⁶ European sociologists have dubbed these hidden incidents the "dark figure of unreported crime."⁷

In response to this concern, and in recognition of the need to collect new kinds of crime data as well, the Crime Commission launched a series of survey studies of the American population in 1966. One of these, conducted by Albert Biderman of the Bureau of Social Science Research, was essentially a methodological investigation. Residents of high-crime areas in Washington, D.C., were questioned in a variety of ways in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the survey technique.⁸ A parallel survey was conducted by

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¹ C. SHAW, F. ZORBAUGH, H. MCKAY & L. COTTRELL, *DELINQUENCY AREAS* (1942).

² Sellin, *Research Memorandum on Crime in the Depression*, 27 SOCIAL SCI. RESEARCH COUNCIL BULL. *Passim* (1937).

³ M. AMIR, *PATTERNS IN FORCIBLE RAPE* (1971); M. WOLFGANG, *PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE* (1958); A. Normandeau, *Trends and Patterns in Crimes of Robbery*, 1968 (unpublished thesis in University of Pennsylvania Library). For a critical review of Amir's analysis, see Reiss, Book Review, 80 AM. J. SOC. 785 (1974).

⁴ L. CURTIS, *CRIMINAL VIOLENCE: NATIONAL PATTERNS AND BEHAVIOR* (1974); M. WOLFGANG, R. FIGLIO & T. SELLIN, *DELINQUENCY IN A BIRTH COHORT* (1972).

⁵ Ehrlich, *The Deterrent Effect of Criminal Law Enforcement*, 1 J. LEGAL STUDIES 259 (1972); Phillips & Votey, *An Economic Analysis of the Deterrent Effect of Law Enforcement on Criminal Activity*, 63 J. CRIMINAL LAW, CRIMINOLOGY & POLICE SCIENCE 330 (1972); Zimring, *Is Gun Control Likely to Reduce Violent Killings?*, 35 U. CHI. L. REV. 721 (1968).

⁶ Skogan, *Measurement Problems in Official and Survey Crime Rates*, 3 J. CRIM. JUSTICE 17, 20-23 (1975).

⁷ Biderman & Reiss, *On Exploring the Dark Figure of Crime*, 374 ANNALS 1 (1967).

⁸ PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, *FIELD SURVEYS I: REPORT ON A PILOT STUDY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ON VICTIMIZATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD LAW ENFORCEMENT* (1967).

Albert Reiss in Washington, Boston, and Chicago to explore citizen's attitudes toward crime and to measure the frequency with which they were victimized.⁹ Philip Ennis of the National Opinion Research Center directed a survey of 10,000 households, which was designed to produce estimates of the incidence of crime in the nation as a whole.¹⁰ The resulting figures were substantially higher than official counts, a fact which generated a great deal of interest in victimization surveys and renewed skepticism about what is to be found in police files.

While these contrasting crime counts created some excitement in the media, researchers were more interested in the potential for gathering new information on crimes, victims, and criminals. Counting crimes is an important aspect of any victimization survey, but the approach also may be useful for such tasks as: (1) assessing the costs of crime attributable to direct losses, injuries, insurance premiums, and crime-reduction measures; (2) gathering direct descriptions of offenders, thus acquiring the first new data on criminals since 1930; (3) eliciting descriptions of their *modus operandi*, including use of weapons, means of access to targets, the efficacy of alarms, and the utility of resistance; (4) discovering who calls the police and why, what happens when they do (and do not), and whether they are satisfied with the results.

As we shall see, these are empirical questions of considerable significance for the operation of the criminal justice system. They have to do with how effectively that system can cope with the crime problem, and they affect our ability to evaluate that effectiveness in a systematic way. This essay describes some of the information about crimes, victims, and offenders which can be collected in sample surveys and explores some of their concrete applications to criminal justice problems. It discusses the use of victimization surveys to assess the dimensions of the crime problem, to identify high-priority activities, and to assess the effectiveness of crime prevention programs. It also examines some of the limitations of victim surveys—what they cannot do, and what they have not yet done adequately. It is aimed at the concerns of criminal justice planners and administrators, who ask: "What can be done, and can we afford it?"

Many of the examples discussed below are drawn from published and unpublished research reports

and from my own analysis of the survey data gathered by the Federal government. Since the Crime Commission's report, victimization surveys have been conducted in several areas of the country. There has been considerable interest in victim surveys abroad as well.¹¹ In addition to exploring patterns of victimization, the surveys have focused upon such problems as the reporting of crimes to the police, the satisfaction of citizens with police services, and the evaluation of community crime prevention activities.¹² The largest and most elaborate of these surveys have been conducted by the United States Government. Since July, 1972, hundreds of thousands of Americans have been questioned about their experiences by the Bureau of the Census. Interviews, complementing a continuous national panel survey, have been completed in 26 major cities. Several published descriptions of these activities are available.¹³ While they are not as bold or innovative as some efforts, the Census Bureau's surveys are providing us with a wealth of new data on crimes and victims, and they illustrate some of the uses to which victim survey technology can be put at the local level.

⁹ PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, *FIELD SURVEYS III: STUDIES IN CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS*, VOL. 1 (1967).

¹⁰ PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, *FIELD SURVEYS II: CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES—A REPORT OF A NATIONAL SURVEY* (1967).

¹¹ H. SCHWIND, W. AHLBORN, H. EGER, U. JANY, V. PUDEL & R. WEISS, *DUNKELFELDFORSCHUNG IN GOTTINGEN 1974–1975* (1975); R. SPARKS, H. GENN & D. DODD, *SURVEYING VICTIMS* (1976); Congalton & Najman, *Who Are the Victims* (1974) (Statistical Report No. 13 of the Department of the Attorney General and the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research).

¹² Schneider, *Victimization Surveys and Criminal Justice System Evaluation*, in *SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME* (W. Skogan ed. 1976); Schneider, Burcart & Wilson, *The Role of Attitudes in Decision to Report Crimes to the Police*, in *CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND THE VICTIM* (W. McDonald ed. 1976); Smith & Hawkins, *Victimization, Types of Citizen-Police Contacts, and Attitudes Toward the Police*, 8 *LAW & SOC. REV.* 135 (1973); Ostrom & Parks, *Suburban Police Departments: Too Many and Too Few*, *URBAN AFFAIRS ANNUAL REV.* 367 (1974).

¹³ Argana, *Development of a National Victimization Survey*, in 3 *VICTIMOLOGY: A NEW FOCUS* 171 (E. Viano ed. 1975); Skogan, *Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime*, 4 *REV. PUB. DATA USE* 23 (1976); Skogan, *supra* note 6.

II. APPLICATIONS

There are many possible applications of sample survey techniques to criminal justice problems. As with any new tool, neither their potential nor their limitations are as yet sufficiently understood. Survey interviews have been employed by social researchers for at least three generations, and the general boundaries of the reliability and validity of the data they produce are reasonably well known. The particular problems attendant to the substantive concerns of researchers in the criminal justice field—primarily those occasioned by the furtive nature of crime, the strong social component involved in the definition of criminal acts, and the rarity of criminal incidents—are surfacing only now. The numerous substantive problems awaiting attention have attracted most researchers, however. Around every corner lurks another “empirical question” calling for an answer. The history of other fields with similar patterns of development (for example, voting behavior research in the 1940’s and 1950’s) suggests that only after the appearance of a rash of descriptive studies which map the basic terrain will attention begin to shift to careful methodological exegesis and identification and elaboration of central theoretical concerns. Those preliminary descriptions are only now beginning to appear. Most of the initial effort relevant to planning and evaluation seems to be concentrated on three major topics. Surveys have been employed to generate new measures of the incidence or risk of crime; to gather information about crimes which will improve our ability to design and evaluate crime control activities; and to reveal something about victimizations which go unreported to the police and their effect upon official crime statistics.

A. The Risk of Victimization

The basic purpose of most victimization surveys is to produce estimates of the number of crimes of various types which occur in a jurisdiction. Because these estimates are based upon interviews with ordinary citizens, it is possible to report them in consumer-oriented fashion. While criminal justice agencies are primarily interested in incidents, offenders and their threat to the community, the consumers of government services are concerned about risks and potential costs.

Until the development of reliable survey measurement techniques, our knowledge about crime, victims, and offenders was confined to data collected by the F.B.I. from local police departments through the Uni-

form Crime Reporting System. Two generations of criticism of those statistics has led to widespread skepticism about the utility of official crime data. Critics have pointed variously to underreporting, overreporting, misreporting, and nonreporting problems in its collection and publication.¹⁴ Both in the district and the central office, police administrators may disregard crime reports, exaggerate their significance, “downgrade” them into organizationally or politically acceptable categories, or record them only when an arrest can be counted. At the national level, participation in the crime reporting system is voluntary, and many jurisdictions contribute data which is quite sketchy. Others send in none at all.¹⁵ And, of course, the entire enterprise is dependent upon the willingness and ability of citizens to report crimes to the police in the first place, a factor which even the F.B.I. agrees is a serious source of error which may lead us to misjudge a great number of basic issues.

The use of population surveys to gather direct information about people’s experiences with crime provides a fresh opportunity to judge the dimensions of the “crime problem” free of those intervening organizational encumbrances. Survey measures of the incidence of crime are, of course, estimates; random samples of a population are utilized to generate figures for the entire group, a process which may be performed within well-known and relatively narrow margins of error. The national victimization survey conducted for the Crime Commission had this goal, and the Commission’s reports prominently featured such estimates. The continuing national survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census produces similar estimates, which are published in occasional reports issued by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Based upon that survey, it is projected that the year 1973 witnessed about 153,000 rapes, over 1,300,000 assaults, and about 7,820,000 burglaries and 1,200,000 robberies of homes

¹⁴ Wilkins, *New Thinking in Criminal Statistics*, 56 J. CRIM. LAW, CRIMINOLOGY & POLICE SCIENCE 277 (1965); Wolfgang, *Uniform Crime Reports: A Critical Appraisal*, 111 U. PA. L. REV. 708 (1963).

¹⁵ In 1973, for example, the FBI’s reports were based upon only 80 percent coverage of rural areas and 90 percent coverage of smaller cities. In large cities the coverage was 96.8 percent. See UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, *UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS FOR THE UNITED STATES 1973* at 58 (1974) [hereinafter cited as *UNIFORM CRIME REPORT 1973*].

and commercial establishments.¹⁶ In general, these estimates are three times those reported through the Uniform Crime Reporting System for the same period.¹⁷

Other than indicating that he should be three times more concerned about crime than previously indicated, those new figures hold little meaning for the citizen-consumer, however. It is only when they are transformed into measures of risk that the breath of life whips through those dreary social statistics and places them in an intelligible context. Before the emergence of survey data on crime, the standard transformation applied to official statistics was per capitization; robberies or burglaries were reported on a "per ten-thousand" basis. Dividing crimes by population is a common device for "controlling" for the different size of reporting jurisdictions, and variations in the resulting figures are interpreted as indicators of whether cities have more or less crime than we expect. In addition, the F.B.I. and others take delight in interpreting those ratios as measures of the risk of an individual personally experiencing a crime. In the 1973 *Uniform Crime Report*, for example, it is noted that "[i]n 1973, 47 out of every 100,000 females in this country were reported rape victims."¹⁸ Both of these interpretations of crime-to-population ratios are misleading. The use of population ratios is not always a satisfactory basis for standardizing jurisdictions in order to compare meaningfully their crime problems, and such ratios are not accurate or even generally useful indicators of the risk of victimization. The development of victimization surveys has led us to rethink how we should calculate and report crime statistics. In particular, the logic of the enterprise encourages us to report crime rates based upon meaningful denominators, to analyze victimization experiences in light of the exposure of potential victims to risk, to weigh the risks faced by individuals by their ability to absorb loss, and to place the probability of criminal victimization within a broader context, that of one risk among many which are faced by all human beings, risks to which all of us must succumb eventually.

First, there is the problem of rates. The most meaningful crime statistics are those which are related to the number of potential opportunities for victimization in a jurisdiction. The more accurately we are able to relate the frequency of a type of crime to the supply of targets in an area, the more meaningfully we will be able to talk about loss probabilities and the more clearly we will be able to pinpoint law enforcement priorities. Take, for example, the problem of auto theft. In jurisdictions with well-developed mass

transportation facilities there are fewer automobiles parked on the streets and "available" to be stolen. In such communities the auto theft rate (per capita) will appear low and may not appear to be much of a problem, even though the risk of a car being stolen may in fact be quite high. This is precisely the case, as revealed by the Federal government's victim surveys conducted in the nation's five largest cities early in 1973. Table 1¹⁹ compares two methods of calculating the motor vehicle theft rates for those cities. The first reports vehicle thefts for every 1,000 persons 12 years of age and older (the lowest age group interviewed in the survey was 12-year-olds). This yields a survey rate based upon a traditional population base. It is a measure of the dimensions of the problem for the community as a whole. The second column in Table 1 indicates the vehicle theft rate in each city per thousand motor vehicles. The two approaches to calculating a crime rate yield strikingly different information. Not only are thefts-per-vehicle

Table 1—Measures of Vehicle Theft Rates

City	Thefts per 1,000 population	Thefts per 1,000 vehicles
New York City	12	53
Chicago	16	45
Philadelphia	19	49
Los Angeles	20	34
Detroit	22	47

much more common (describing the true risk of loss), but the ranking of the cities on this particular problem changes dramatically. On a per capita basis, residents of New York City were least troubled by this particular crime, while those of the Motor City were first

¹⁶ These figures are drawn from computer tabulations of incident estimates supplied by the United States Bureau of the Census. The only published report to date on the 1973 national victimization survey is UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES: 1973 ADVANCE REPORT (1975) [hereinafter cited as CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES 1973].

¹⁷ Skogan, *The Victims of Crime: Some National Panel Data*, in CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS (A. Guenther ed. 2d ed. 1976).

¹⁸ UNIFORM CRIME REPORT 1973, *supra* note 15, at 13.

¹⁹ The data are reported in UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS IN THE NATION'S FIVE LARGEST CITIES 32, 107 (1975) [hereinafter cited as CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN FIVE LARGEST CITIES]. Household victimization rates given there have been recomputed as rates per thousand persons using the population estimates employed by the Census Bureau in this volume.

in vehicle victimization. The more realistic measure of risk, on the other hand, places New Yorkers in first place (for there are many auto-less families in New York who enjoy a victimization probability of zero), while the City of Los Angeles (with more two and three-car families) drops to last place.

One strength of victimization surveys is that they may be used to generate estimates both of the numerator for the calculation of crime rates—the number of victimizations—and the denominator, or the number of potential targets. With the right survey questions we can talk more accurately about bicycle thefts per thousand bicycles, bank robberies per bank, and rapes per thousand females. As a result, consumers gain a clearer understanding of their risks, and law enforcement officials can contrast the magnitude of the risk faced by potential targets to the magnitude of the problem for the community as a whole.

More complex is the problem of measuring victimization probabilities relative to exposure to risk. The threat of victimization is not equally distributed in time or space. Both criminals and crimes are unevenly concentrated in various parts of a community; generally, variation in the crime rate within a city is greater than variations in the crime rate from one city to another. In similar fashion, the frequency of crime varies from day to day and hour to hour within each day. Thus, depending upon where and when they sleep, work, and play, people are differentially exposed to being victimized. Other factors, like one's social roles or position in the occupational structure, affect victimization probabilities as well. Single women are more likely than their married sisters to be assaulted, for they are more often out at night in circumstances which facilitate victimization, and they are more likely to be found with persons with whom their relationship is uncertain. Likewise, taxi drivers and gasoline station operators are among those whom must accept relatively high risks of being robbed as "part of the job." Published victimization reports typically cite rates for major age, race, sex, and income groups. These social categories are less than satisfactory surrogates for the differential exposure of individuals to risk, which is the real concern.

The concept of exposure to risk may illuminate the problem that crime presents for the elderly, and it illustrates the limitations of relying upon surrogate measures of risk. Older persons often express great anxiety about victimization, and attitudinal studies indicate that the fear of crime is quite high among those over 65. The physical infirmities that accumulate with age increase the vulnerability of the

old to crimes like purse-snatching, street robbery and assault. Victimization surveys and studies of incidents recorded in police files both indicate that rates for the elderly are quite low, however. The 1973 national survey conducted for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration revealed that households headed by persons over 65 enjoyed the lowest burglary and theft rates of any age category, and that rates for robbery, assault and purse snatching all decreased sharply in frequency with age.²⁰ The reason for this apparent paradox may be that the elderly, because of their fear and infirmity, are less exposed to risk. They stay at home and behind locked doors, thus deterring household crime and greatly reducing their exposure to personal attack and crimes by strangers. It may well be that oldsters face extremely high risks when they are exposed, and that shopping, strolling, and ordinary social intercourse are dangerous enterprises for many of the urban old. Yet conventional survey measures would indicate that the elderly have relatively "unimportant" crime problems. It is necessary to elaborate our measures of risk in order to chart victimizations relative to exposure before such serious shortcomings in the data can be corrected.

The calculation of those rates would be an extremely complex task, and it is difficult to point out any examples of such research. Most analyses of the effects of exposure to risk have been based upon inferences from the social characteristics of victims. In 1973, for example, married women were assaulted at a rate of 9.1 per 1,000, while women who had never been married suffered a comparable rate of 31.0, and divorced or separated women a rate of 51.7.²¹ What is required are surveys that measure the number of hours which respondents spend in particular physical locations (on the street, in bars, in their homes), estimates of the number or proportion of their daily contacts which are with strangers or casual acquaintances, whether they park their automobiles on the street or under lock and key, whether they live in public housing projects or high-security high-rises, and other indicators of their vulnerability to specific types of victimization. These could be employed to produce victimization rates for persons with selected lifestyles. Similarly, victimization rates could be calculated for model social types ("home managers," "high school students," or "suburban commuters") which capsulize common social, economic, and spatial activities.

²⁰ CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES 1973, *supra* note 16, at 15-16.

²¹ *Id.* at 17.

In addition to assaying the risk of victimization, surveys are being employed to examine variations in the ability of persons to absorb loss. This primarily involves an examination of the distribution of insurance against losses through property theft, studies of the reimbursement of medical expenses incurred in personal crimes, and an accounting of the relationship between financial losses and the income of crime victims. My own computer analysis of the 1973 national victimization survey indicates that insurance against property theft is distributed in predictable fashion: whites, high income families, and married persons are more likely to be insured when they fall victim to burglary or theft.²² There also appears to be considerable variation across cities in the likelihood that the victims of property crime will be insured against loss. Among the 26 communities surveyed by the Bureau of the Census between 1972 and 1974, insurance protected the fewest victims (16 percent) in Newark, while in Detroit and Buffalo 32 percent of all victims claimed to possess coverage against the type of loss they incurred.²³ The reasons for this variation in insurance protection are unclear, but it may be related to intercity differences in the cost of coverage, people's ability to pay, industry marketing practices or state regulation.

In general, the costs of property crime are borne more heavily by those who are in a position to pay them. Table 2²⁴ relates several measures of crime-related costs to the incomes of their victims. It indicates, for example, that the average value of stolen

goods or cash taken during a burglary increases with income; not surprisingly, those who have more worth stealing lose more when someone breaks into their house. The average amount lost by those with family income under \$3,000 was \$157 in 1973, while those making more than \$20,000 lost an average of \$408. Table 2 also reports that high income people are more likely to be insured against burglary. About 10 percent of all burglary incidents affecting the lowest income families were covered by insurance, while that figure rose above 50 percent in the highest income category. This was not enough to cover the differences in the amount stolen shown in Table 2, however; the net loss for burglary (subtracting what was recovered through insurance) rose steadily with income in 1973, ranging from \$380 to \$90 from top to bottom.

The relationship between income and the consequences of personal victimization is less clearcut. Table 2 presents two indicators of the seriousness of personal crimes reported in the Census Bureau's 1973 national sample. The first is a summary measure of incident seriousness which takes into account such factors as weapon use, the extent of injury, and the value of stolen property. Table 2 presents the average seriousness score for incidents suffered by persons in each income category. Incidents affecting those in the highest income bracket were less serious than all others, but there are otherwise few significant differences from group to group. The second measure, the proportion of incidents suffered by each group that led them to require medical care, shows a similar pattern. Although those in the lower income groups fared worse on this variable and those in the highest income groups were somewhat less likely than others to seek medical assistance, overall there were few striking differences.

Finally, data gathered in victim surveys may be used to place the incidence of crime within a more con-

Table 2—*Income and Seriousness of Victimizations*

Yearly Family Income (Dollars)	Burglary		Personal Crimes	
	Average Amount Stolen (Dollars)	Percent of Victims Insured	Average Seriousness Score	Percent Requiring Medical Attention
\$0- 2,999	157	10.2	5.30	35.8
\$3,000- 7,499	273	18.2	5.28	36.6
\$7,500- 9,999	285	25.9	5.18	33.6
\$10,000-11,999	286	32.1	5.23	31.4
\$12,000-14,999	264	36.0	5.12	31.7
\$15,000-19,999	396	49.3	5.05	28.3
\$20,000 and over	408	51.5	4.94	32.6
(N)	(3,353)	(3,495)	(4,981)	(1,398)

Note: "Average Loss" figures are only for burglaries where something actually was taken; "Percent Insured" is for all burglary victims; the "Average Seriousness Score" was computed for all victims of personal crimes for whom there were complete data; the "Medical Attention" question was asked only of victims who reported that they were injured. The number of incidents (weighted in several ways to reflect population distributions) upon which the analysis is based is given in each case. These figures were computed by the author from tapes containing the national survey data for 1973 collected by the Bureau of the Census.

²² This analysis was performed on a file containing all regular and series incidents in the 1973 National Crime Panel data which fell in the "property crime" category: burglary, larceny, and auto theft. Computer tapes from this and all Census Bureau victim surveys are available from DUALabs Incorporated, 1601 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia.

²³ These data were computed from files containing all regular incidents uncovered in each of the 26 surveyed cities. For a complete list of the cities, see Skogan, *Sample Surveys*, *supra* note 13.

²⁴ The data in Table 2 were computed by the author from files containing all regular and series incidents in the 1973 National Crime Panel data.

crete perspective. Falling victim to a criminal is only one of the risks we run as human beings. The threat of victimization is like that of contracting cancer or of being run over by an automobile: it is a calculable risk of living which we can affect only partially. In order to place the incidence of crime in context, I have gathered a variety of health statistics and figures on the frequency of important vexatious events. These indicators all refer to the period 1970-1973, and they are roughly comparable to the data on crime collected by the Census Bureau. In order to increase their comparability they are all reported in Table 3²⁵ as incidents per thousand in the population. As we have seen above, such rates are not very good measures of risk for individuals; however, they do indicate the relative magnitude or frequency of key social problems, and figures like them may provide guidance for policy-makers charged with optimizing our investment in social programs.

Table 3—*Rates for Crimes and Other Untoward Events*

Incident	Rate per 1,000 circa 1973
death by homicide	0.1
death by suicide	0.1
death in a motor vehicle accident	0.3
survey rape rate	1.0
death by cancer	1.7
illegitimate births	2.0
divorce	4.4
death from heart disease	4.9
survey robbery rate	6.9
survey serious assault rate	10.4
unemployment	21.2
injury in traffic accidents	25.5
survey total assault rate	26.0
traffic accidents	126.6
accidental injury of all forms	315.0

Table 3 reports rates for accidents, injuries, unemployment and various causes of death and compares them to the frequency of rape, robbery and assault. In relative terms, rape falls between two pathologies on which we have invested considerable resources in recent years—cancer deaths and deaths on the highway. Rapes in 1973 were three times as common as motor vehicle fatalities, which led to legislation requiring the installation of seat belts and the construction of safer vehicles. Rape was only slightly less frequent than deaths from cancer, a disease which is the object of a heavily-financed research program. Robbery was similar in relative frequency to deaths from heart disease, while assaults were about as common as unemploy-

ment and injuries in traffic accidents. Finally, an accident survey in 1972 revealed an injury rate for incidents which restricted their victim's activity or required medical attention of 315 per thousand. This was approximately 30 times the robbery rate the next year.²⁶

By breaking down these aggregate figures to statistics about the frequency of events among particular social categories, it is possible to contrast the relative magnitude of various social problems for key groups. For example, among married women the frequency of divorce was about 25 times as great as the threat of being raped (rates of 16.9 and 0.7 per thousand respectively) and 7 or 8 times the robbery rate (2.2) for that group.²⁷ The illegitimate birth rate was 26.4 per 1,000 unmarried women in 1970 (the most recent year for which the data is available)²⁸—five times the rate of either rape or robbery among that group in 1973.²⁹ In short, the incidence of serious personal crime can be far less frequent than that of many demoralizing or incapacitating events which mar our lives.

Such exercises may play a role in one of the most difficult aspects of social planning, the need to make choices. People and groups constantly clamor for the eradication or amelioration of the ill effects of a variety of pathologies. The resources available to do this always are more limited than those demanded. It is therefore always necessary to judge the seriousness of a social ill and the cost of its treatment in light of the costs and benefits of competing choices for action. The

²⁵ The rape, robbery, and assault data reported in Table 3 are drawn from CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES 1973, *supra* note 16, at 12. The birth, divorce, unemployment, traffic accident, and traffic injury figures were calculated by dividing totals for each by the United States population (in thousands) for 1970. The traffic-related figures were drawn from UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES 562 (1974) [hereinafter cited as STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES]; birth information came from the same source at 56, and injury data at 84. The remainder of the figures in Table 3 were found in INFORMATION PLEASE ALMANAC ATLAS AND YEARBOOK (1975); unemployment figures were reported at 74; homicide at 7:30; suicide at 731; motor vehicle deaths and illegitimate births at 722; cancer, accident and heart disease at 725-726; divorce at 711. All figures are for 1973, except illegitimate births (1970), suicide (1972), and motor vehicle fatalities (1972).

²⁶ STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES, *supra* note 25, at 84.

²⁷ *Id.* at 66; CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES 1973, *supra* note 16, at 17.

²⁸ STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES, *supra* note 25, at 56.

²⁹ CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES 1973, *supra* note 16, at 17.

development of comparative measures which place the incidence of crime within a context is the first step in systematic policy analysis. The issue extends far beyond the simple rates presented in Table 3, for it is clear that those events differ in their individual and collective consequences. Events must be weighted by some measure of their seriousness as well as by their frequency. Next, the marginal cost of preventing each must be calculated. Knowing the cost of prevention, we can then balance the number of times we would incur that cost (frequency) and the benefits of doing so (reduction in weighted seriousness) to arrive at some optimum strategy for public investment. The knowledge necessary to do this is virtually nonexistent at every step. However, victimization surveys are reducing the level of our ignorance of several key aspects of the problem. These surveys are useful in measuring the frequency of events and in gathering data on the individual costs of crime. The difficult problem of how to prevent those crimes remains to be solved. The strategies employed by governments to prevent crime are linked at least implicitly to theories about crime and its deterrence. The kind of theory that is operative makes a great difference. Crime prevention strategies range from installing burglar alarms to building swimming pools in ghettos, and the choice between them is linked to what we think will make a dent in our measure of success. The status of the theoretical underpinnings of law enforcement activity in the United States is clear: it is in complete disarray. One school blames crime on broken homes and families, while economists claim that it is a question of how much crime pays vis-a-vis working for a living.³⁰ Data collected by victim surveys cannot resolve any of these issues. People only know what happened to them, something about who did it, and how it was done. Surveys collect data at the point of the event, and they do not shed much light on complex causal chains leading to root causes.

Estimation of the frequency of crime and the rate at which it affects major groups in the population was a major concern of the Crime Commission when it conducted the first victimization survey in 1965. Most of the published reports based upon the surveys currently being conducted by the Bureau of the Census have had a similar focus. Detailed analyses of the methodology used in these and other surveys has led many interested scholars to be somewhat wary of claims that such surveys reveal the "true" rate of crime, however. They do reveal *more* incidents than other methods of estimation, but a number of important technical and conceptual issues have yet to

be resolved. Section III of this report will summarize many of them; suffice it to note that "victimization" is a complex social process and that the rates and percentages presented above are subject to considerable error.

B. Data for Planning and Evaluation

A second major rationale for victimization research is the need for more information about crimes, victims, and the performance of the criminal justice system. The need for new sources of data for planning and evaluation is critical. At the same time that reported crime rates are increasing, the ability of the police to solve them in their traditional fashion is decreasing. The police measure their performance at this task by the "clearance rate," or the proportion of offenses which they can attribute to some suspect. Clearance rates for the most common offenses are usually quite low. The national clearance rate for burglary, for example, is only 18 percent, and it has been dropping steadily for nearly a decade.³¹ This decline has been occurring while criminal justice expenditures have been skyrocketing, suggesting that more of the same is not very useful. What is required is information about criminal incidents which is relevant to preventing them, information about victims which will be useful in protecting them, and information about the operation of criminal justice agencies which will enable us to evaluate their performance in terms of meaningful goals, using standards which more directly measure their attainment.

Victimization surveys provide one vehicle for collecting data of this sort. For example, interviews with crime victims have been used to generate new data on offenders. Before this development, virtually our only information about the perpetrators of serious crimes was that gathered about arrestees or the populations of prisons. Crimes involving personal confrontations between victim and offender, however, usually leave behind some impressions about the miscreant which can be gathered in an interview. While descriptions of some characteristics of offenders may be cloudy, the data are not filtered by all of the social, organizational, and chance factors that determine which of them will be apprehended and questioned. Not surprisingly, the survey data paint a picture of criminals which features more elderly, white,

³⁰ For a survey of theories of crime causation and an assessment of the "state of the art" in criminology, see J. WILSON, *THINKING ABOUT CRIME* (1975).

³¹ *UNIFORM CRIME REPORT* 1973, *supra* note 15, at 22.

and female characters than that drawn by data on arrestees.³²

Victims' descriptions of offenders may be used to develop typologies of crimes based upon the organization, skill, experience, tools, and motive which lie behind them. In dealing with robbery, for example, it may be important to distinguish between gangs and bandits. The former are usually youths; they tend to prey on those their own age or younger; they work in their own neighborhoods; they usually do not have guns; their "take" is small (so they may work frequently); and what they do typically is not reported to the police. Bandits, on the other hand, usually work alone or in pairs; they tend to be young adults; they look for commercial targets or adult victims promising to yield high dividends; they seek out their victims across a wider territory; and they use guns. While peer recognition may be a strong motive for gang involvement, bandits are more likely to be committed to crime as a career. Finally, the survey data indicate that a larger proportion of bandits than gang members are whites.³³

Survey data can also give us a better description of the characteristics of events. Surveys may include questions about the context within which crimes have occurred—whether they took place in public space or behind closed doors. Detailed information about the use of weapons in personal crimes has been gathered, along with reports of injury and the value of stolen goods. Some have elicited descriptions of the quality of police responses to victimization for those crimes which were reported to the authorities. Surveys have also been employed to gather more general attitudinal and perceptual data from victims and nonvictims alike.

While there are many potential applications of this information for planning and evaluation, three issues that should take high priority include (1) the development of crime measures which are related meaningfully to deterrence strategies, (2) the identification of high-risk subgroups in the population where the investment of resources will pay high dividends, and (3) the collection of new, independent measures of the effectiveness of criminal justice agencies.

Crimes vary in the type of law enforcement activity they demand, and they differ in the extent to which the application of any deterrent measures are likely to have much impact. Crimes in certain physical locations may be affected by one enforcement strategy and not by others. Certain types of offenders may commit characteristic crimes, suggesting where programs aimed at them should have an effect. Some offenses may require skill, equipment, or organization which can be directly

attacked. In each case, measures of the frequency of specific crime types are required to plan the allocation of resources and to evaluate the impact of crime-specific activities.

The location of offenses, for example, is related to the potential impact of traditional police patrol tactics and the payoffs which may accrue to new, community-based "neighborhood watch" programs which attempt to involve citizens in detecting and reporting criminal events. In general, offenses which occur in public places, visible to bystanders or passing patrol cars, should be most affected by such activities. The empirical questions which may be addressed by sample surveys include: (1) how much and what percentage of various crimes occur in such locations, and (2) whether doubling police resources, organizing community patrols, or passing out whistles reduces the frequency of these crimes or merely moves them indoors. The national data collected by the Census Bureau for 1973 suggest that many serious crimes occur in public or semi-public places. Table 4³⁴ reports my computation of the proportion of personal offenses which oc-

Table 4—Location of Personal Crimes

Location	Frequency
In home, hotel room, or vacation home	11.1
Near home	8.5
In office or inside commercial establishment	17.2
Inside school	6.9
On street, in field, park, playground, or schoolyard	46.1
Other	10.2
Total	100.0%

cured on the street, in buildings of a public or semi-public nature, and in or around their victims' homes. It indicates that it may be possible at least to inconvenience a great number of potential felons by increasing our watchfulness over public places. This is important, for it is difficult for the police in American society to do much about events which transpire in private space

³² This comparison is based upon unpublished tabulations of victims' impressions of their assailants and upon arrest data recorded in UNIFORM CRIME REPORT 1973, *supra* note 15, at 128-35.

³³ These profiles are drawn from the author's analysis of victims' impressions of their assailants in the 1973 National Crime Panel incident for personal crimes. "Gangs" in this analysis are simply groups of three or more offenders.

³⁴ The figures presented in Table 4 were computed by the author from files containing all regular and series incidents in the 1973 National Crime Panel incident data for personal crimes. "Personal crimes" in this analysis are rape, robbery, assault, purse snatching, and pickpocketing.

until they are invited to do so.³⁵ Survey data of this sort could also serve as benchmarks for the evaluation of activities aimed at decreasing street crime, for it is vital to know whether we deter it or simply force it indoors.

The relative mix of gangs and bandits involved in robbery in a community will affect the impact of various deterrent programs such as community recreation centers or gun control. The same is true if we focus upon interpersonal violence, where the crucial variable appears to be whether the offense is committed by a stranger or by someone bound to the victim by webs of kinship or acquaintanceship. The causal mechanisms behind each type of violence are quite different, and the role of the police in dealing with each kind of conflict differs as well. While the police may play an important role in mediating between the parties to domestic disputes, it is unlikely that street patrols (or stiffer sentences) will have much of an effect on their frequency. As the next section of this report indicates, the methodology for gathering data on disputes between friends and neighbors is not well developed. The importance of this variable for understanding the dynamics of assault and rape is such that the development of better survey techniques for probing these sensitive areas should be a high priority issue.

A second important application of victimization surveys to criminal justice planning is the identification of high-risk high-payoff targets. Crime does not strike randomly in the population; some people are more likely targets than others, and some fall victim on repeated occasions. Surveys may be employed to isolate the attributes of high-risk subgroups, investigate the nature of their problems, and identify characteristic difficulties in their relationship with criminal justice agencies. The allocation of resources in the direction of those high-risk targets may be highly cost-effective.

The sample surveys conducted by the Census Bureau have been used to generate estimates of the rate (incidents per 1,000 targets) at which persons and commercial establishments suffer from various offenses. While the victimization rate for many subgroups in the population is quite high, it is apparent from those surveys that commercial establishments, especially in big cities, are victimized very frequently. Business and other organizations are high-risk targets, and commercial offenses make up a substantial percentage of all the burglaries and robberies which take place in cities. A high proportion of those incidents are quite serious in nature. Such establishments thus are important places to begin new efforts to control

major crime, and the intensive analysis of commercial victimization data may pay large dividends.

The large gap between commercial and personal or household victimization rates is illustrated in Table 5,³⁶ which presents figures for four major American cities. Except in Chicago, where commercial crimes were reported less frequently, the organizational robbery rate changes from four to five times that suffered by individuals. In all of the cities the commercial burglary rate is three to four times that of households. Table 5 also indicates that commercial crime constitutes a substantial fraction of all the burglary and robbery which occurs in these cities. In New York City, which is the most highly commercialized community in the group, more than one-third of all robbery and over one-half of all burglary uncovered in the surveys was directed at commercial organizations. Chicago was the lowest in each category. The evidence is that most commercial crime strikes a small fraction of the businesses and institutions in a community. Nationally, over 98 percent of all commercial establishments were not burgled or robbed during 1973.³⁷ Thus, all of the victimizations recorded in these surveys were contributed by about 2 percent of the owners and managers interviewed. In sum, commercial crime is frequent, highly concentrated, and it is an important component of a community's total crime problem.

The data presented in Table 5 also suggests that most of this crime is serious in nature. Two measures of seriousness are employed: the value of property or cash stolen and the use of weapons. In every city, commercial crime was more serious than its personal or household analog. The proportion of commercial robberies involving large cash losses was 15 to 20 percent higher than that for robberies striking individuals; commercial burglaries were 10 percent more likely to involve losses over \$50; commercial robbery was 34 percent more likely to involve the use of a weapon.

³⁵ A. REISS, *THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC* 100-02 (1971); Stinchcombe, *Institutions of Privacy in the Determination of Police Administrative Practice*, 69 AM. J. SOC. 150, 151-53 (1963).

³⁶ The data in Table 5 are drawn from CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN FIVE LARGEST CITIES, *supra* note 19. Victimization rates are reported at Tables 16, 20, and 23; the percentage distributions of victimization in personal and commercial categories were calculated from the figures in those tables. The percentage distribution of losses and damages by type of crime are reported at Table 4. Weapon use in personal crimes is analyzed at Table 13; weapon use in commercial crimes is reported at Table R.

³⁷ Commercial victimization probabilities are to be found only in unpublished tabulations supplied by the United States Bureau of the Census.

These findings have some implications for criminal justice planning. The data on commercial establishments suggest that a large number of offenders might be deterred by programs aimed at hardening a few high-risk targets, and that their crimes are precisely those we are most interested in preventing. In the commercial group, retail stores (most prominently convenience grocery stores and gas stations) lead the list of targets. Surveys could reveal the hours of operation of such establishments, countermeasures which they have taken against victimization, and the characteristics of high-risk operations that lead to their

Table 5—Selected Attributes of Commercial Crimes in Major Cities

Crime Attributes	Chicago	Detroit	New York	Phila.
Victimization Rates				
Commercial Robbery	77	179	103	116
Personal Robbery	27	32	24	28
Commercial Burglary	315	615	328	390
Household Burglary	118	174	68	109
Percent of Total Victimations				
Robbery-Percent of City				
Total Which Was Commercial	14	24	36	23
Burglary-Percent of City				
Total Which Was Commercial	23	27	54	34
Percent of Victimations with Loss and Damage Above \$50				
Commercial Robbery	64	64	69	67
Personal Robbery	38	43	41	35
Commercial Burglary	70	65	71	63
Household Burglary	49	58	61	54
Percent of Robberies Classified "Armed Robbery"				
Commercial Robbery	83	87	87	91
Personal Robbery	50	56	62	48

Note: Rates are per 1,000 targets.

vulnerability. The data indicate, for example, that most establishments now employ few sophisticated anti-theft devices. The proportion of commercial operations which reported they were equipped with alarms, for example, was only 11 percent in Philadelphia, 12 percent in Chicago, and 16 percent in New York City.³⁸ Business establishments may also be motivated to cooperate in crime-reduction ventures. They are much more likely to be insured than individuals, and they now report victimizations to the police at a much higher rate. They are in fixed locations, accessible to police patrols, and they may be watched, wired, and redesigned to reduce their vulnerability to intrusion. The Federal government has sponsored research on such target-hardening approaches to crime prevention. Lock-and-door standards, reliable alarms, electronic

surveillance equipment, better safes, and even simpler measures, such as reducing the amount of cash on hand and increasing the visibility of cash registers from the street, have proven to be effective.³⁹

This does not mean that cooperation of merchants in these efforts will be automatic. In a recent study of the deterrence of robbery in convenience grocery stores, it was calculated that the average cost of such efforts was greater than the loss in most stores. Although an impressive series of field experiments had demonstrated the effectiveness of a variety of crime-reduction tactics, the management of the store chain involved in the experiment was loath to spend the money required to make the effort permanent.⁴⁰ This does not mean that individual establishments, especially owner-operated stores located in high-risk neighborhoods, will not be willing to invest the necessary funds; deterrent efforts there would reap the most visible benefits.

The larger issue is whether that part of the effort which must be borne by the public is appropriate for governments to make. It may be that identifying and assisting those who currently are being victimized at a high rate will simply displace the attention of offenders to other, less difficult targets. If law enforcement activity merely moves crime around rather than prevents it, there are no net gains from the enterprise. Such displacement is likely when the motive behind crimes is profit, when crimes are planned rather than impulsive in execution, and when their perpetrators are professionals rather than amateurs. The indirect evidence from the surveys reveals that commercial offenders tend to be the less deterrable types. While we cannot simply throw in the towel because crime-specific deterrent activities may shift some bandits from here to there, the possibility that the overall

³⁸ CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN FIVE LARGEST CITIES, *supra* note 19, at 128-32.

³⁹ UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DIVISION OF BUILDING TECHNOLOGY, OFFICE OF POLICE DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH, A DESIGN GUIDE FOR IMPROVING RESIDENTIAL SECURITY (1973); Crow & Bull, *Robbery Deterrence: An Applied Behavioral Science Demonstration*, 1974 (a report by the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, La Jolla, California, to the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration). Eliot, Strack & Witter, *Early Warning Robbery Reduction Projects: An Assessment of Performance*, 1975 (a report by the MITRE Corporation, McLean, Virginia, to the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration);

⁴⁰ Crow & Bull, *supra* note 39.

crime rate will remain unaffected must be part of any calculation of the benefits of such programs.

The third major application of victimization surveys is in the area of evaluation research. Many of the surveys conducted to date have collected a new sort of evaluational data, the attitudes and perceptions of the consumers of justice system activity.⁴¹ In addition to producing estimates of the incidence of crime, surveys can be employed to find out what people think of it. Interviews typically include items measuring perceptions of the crime rate (Is it going up or down?), fear of victimization (Do you walk after dark in your neighborhood?), the priority given crime as a governmental problem (What is the most important issue?), and the impact of crime on the community (Where do you shop? Do you want to move? Do you visit your neighbors?).

Surveys also are used to gather people's perceptions and opinions about criminal justice agencies, primarily the police. It makes sense to ask some of these questions of a cross-section of the community, for most of us have a sense of the quality of local policework and know whether we want to spend more money on policing or on street repairs. Other questions are useful for assessing the quality of specific programs or experiences and are reserved for those who have been victimized or have called the police for some reason. In several communities, projects have been conducted to assess the quality of police-citizen contacts. Samples of those who have called for assistance have been interviewed to measure the speed, courtesy, thoroughness, and effectiveness with which the police responded to their problems.⁴² In other projects, observers have traveled with police patrols and recorded the characteristics of each police-citizen encounter. These studies have focused upon courtesy, the use of force, and the decision to make an arrest. This technique has the advantage of monitoring police-initiated contacts, such as traffic stops, searches, and on-view arrests.⁴³ In another set of studies, random samples of respondents have been requested to recall their contacts with the police or the courts, and to reconstruct their experiences. This has the advantage of generating comparable data on non-contactees and contactees of various types.⁴⁴ These designs have methodological weaknesses, but the goal of each is the same: to probe police-citizen contacts and to isolate those factors which seem to lead to consumer satisfaction and effective outcomes. Neither may always be maximized by an arrest, for the police are called upon to perform a variety of functions in addition to "crime fighting." The difficulty is that most measures of individual or organiza-

tional performance in the criminal justice system are based upon the processing of crimes or arrests. Surveys provide a handle for measuring such qualities as the efficiency with which services are provided, information is exchanged and disputes are mediated.

C. Reporting to the Police

One of the best developed areas of victim research focuses upon the reporting of crimes to the police. It has always been clear that reporting practices play an important role in shaping our knowledge of the volume and nature of criminal activity. Official crime statistics are based upon "crimes known to the police." Some incidents come directly to the attention of the authorities without any action by their victims, including those detected in progress by police patrols, events which are confessed by perpetrators who have fallen into the arms of the law already, and crimes (such as arson) which come to light only after investigation. Most arrests, moreover, come as a result of police initiative. The majority of those taken into custody are charged with traffic offenses, disorderly conduct, public intoxication, and other crimes in which the collective order rather than an individual citizen is victimized. However, most of the crimes which attract public attention and lead to demands for police action—including burglary, theft, and crimes of assaultive violence—come to the attention of the authorities only at the option of victims, their friends and relatives, or other witnesses.

The decision to report an incident to the police has been the object of considerable interest since the beginning of victimization surveys. The nonreporting of criminal incidents has several important consequences: (1) it limits the deterrent impact of the legal system

⁴¹ This very large literature is summarized in Skogan, *Public Policy and Public Evaluation of Criminal Justice System Performance*, in *CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY* (J. Gardiner and M. Mulkey eds. 1975).

⁴² Bordua & Tift, *Citizen Interviews, Organizational Feedback, and Police Community Relations Decisions*, 6 *LAW & SOC. REV.* 155 (1971); Furstenberg & Wellford, *Calling the Police: The Evaluation of Police Service*, 7 *LAW & SOC. REV.* 393 (1973); Ostrom & Whitaker, *Does Local Community Control of the Police Make a Difference? Some Preliminary Findings*, 17 *AMER. J. POL. SCI.* 48 (1973).

⁴³ G. KELLING, T. PATE, D. DIECKMAN & C. BROWN, *THE KANSAS CITY PREVENTIVE PATROL EXPERIMENT: A SUMMARY REPORT* (1974); Black, *The Production of Crime Rates*, 35 *AMER. SOC. REV.* 733 (1970).

⁴⁴ Walker, Richardson, Williams, Denyer & McGaughey, *Contact and Support: An Empirical Assessment of Public Attitudes Toward the Police and the Courts*, 51 *NO. CAR. L. REV.* 43 (1972).

upon crime (the police cannot respond to unreported crimes, nor identify suspicious persons); (2) it limits the access of some citizens to supportive and rehabilitative services due the victims of crime (they often cannot collect insurance, or compensation for injury); (3) it impedes rational criminal justice planning, causes artificial variations in the apparent crime rate across cities and greatly complicates the evaluation of anti-crime programs which may affect reporting as well as the crime rate (Did the victimization rate change, or did the rate at which crimes were reported to the police?).

Every victimization survey has probed patterns of reporting and nonreporting. In the Federal government's studies the questioning proceeds in the following manner. Each respondent is presented with a series of specific queries to reveal whether or not any crimes of interest have occurred. Each positive response is followed by a number of detailed questions about the incident which allow it to be categorized accurately and which elicit information about its characteristics and consequences. For instance, questions determine whether the incident was brought to the attention of the police and if not, why not. It is clear that reporting behavior varies considerably. The probability that an incident will be reported to the police depends upon the type of crime, the characteristics of the incident, the attributes of the victim, the nature of the context, and the city within which the victim lives. The reporting rate may be increasing over time as well.⁴⁵ One consequence of all this is that any meaningful interpretation of an official crime statistic, or the comparison of two such figures, must be extremely circumspect.⁴⁶

The surveys reveal, for example, that the majority of crimes remain unreported. In the 1973 national survey, the only common personal or household crime which was reported to the police in the majority of cases was automobile theft—about 90 percent of all successful vehicle thefts were reported. Robbery was reported 49 percent of the time, while assaults uncovered in the survey were brought to the attention of the police in 4 cases out of 10.

Only 3 percent of all property thefts not involving personal contract or burglary were reported. Crimes victimizing commercial establishments were reported at a higher rate than those affecting individuals. In 1973, 80 percent of commercial burglaries and about 85 percent of commercial robberies were reported to the police.⁴⁷

Surveys thus indicate that a great number of criminal incidents are not coming to the attention of the

police. Even if they were being reported, they would not necessarily become official crime statistics. Police officers may "ignore" a number of them after they determine that no actionable offense has occurred.⁴⁸ However, others would appear in official crime statistics. As a consequence of nonreporting, those figures greatly underrepresent criminal events. Not only do their perpetrators evade the attention of the police, but nonreporting undermines the intelligence function served by the crime reporting system as well. Many police departments and other criminal justice agencies use crime statistics to plan. In those agencies, men and equipment are allocated to various districts or beats on the basis of crime patterns, which are often weighted to reflect the seriousness or deterrability of the events which occur in various neighborhoods. Areas in which victims underreport will be undermanned, a factor which may lead to decreased response time and to further deterioration of the deterrent capability of the police in their vicinity. Crime statistics also are used by municipal officials to make projections about future manpower and equipment needs. Thus, underreporting may lead to false economies in the future as well.⁴⁹

The important role that nonreporting plays in biasing crime statistics also greatly limits the utility of police-gathered figures in the evaluation of specific anti-crime measures. One of the strengths of victimization surveys is that they can bypass the organizational processes within police departments which help

⁴⁵ Block, *Why Notify the Police: The Victim's Decision to Notify the Police of an Assault*, 11 CRIMINOLOGY 555 (1974); Hawkins, *Who Called the Cops? Decisions to Report Criminal Victimization*, 7 LAW & SOC. REV. 427 (1973); Schneider, Burcart & Wilson, *supra* note 11; Skogan, *Citizen Reporting of Crime: Some National Panel Data*, 13 CRIMINOLOGY 535 (1976); Smith, *Reactions to Burglary: Calling the Police*, in CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND THE VICTIM (W. McDonald ed. 1976); Sparks, Ginn & Dodd, *supra* note 12; Ziegenhagen, *Individual Responses to Criminal Victimization*, in CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND THE VICTIM (W. McDonald ed. 1976); Congalton & Najman, *Unreported Crime* (1974) (Statistical Report No. 12 of the Department of the Attorney General and the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research).

⁴⁶ For an analysis of the required circumstances, see Skogan, *The Validity of Official Crime Statistics: An Empirical Analysis*, 55 SOC. SCI. Q. 25 (1974).

⁴⁷ These figures were calculated from unpublished tabulations supplied by the United States Bureau of the Census.

⁴⁸ See Skogan, *supra* note 6, at 22.

⁴⁹ See, for example, the chapters on planning and forecasting in UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, QUANTITATIVE TOOLS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING (1976).

shape official crime statistics. In addition, such surveys can help us gather data which overcome difficulties introduced by fluctuations in citizen reporting practices. Working backwards, the data may be useful in reinterpreting official crime statistics, especially increases or decreases in reported crime which may arise from sources other than the victimization rate.

One threat to the validity of any evaluation is that the program under investigation may change the nature of the process by which its product is measured.⁵⁰ In the case of crime, people—and especially victims—are part of the measurement process. In the event that a program under evaluation affects their behavior as well as that of prospective criminals, the interpretation of those measures is difficult. This behavior change probably occurs in most citizen-based anti-crime programs which call for public awareness and purposive individual activity, and which depend upon an interest in participation. If such programs stimulate increased crime reporting, true changes in the crime rate may be disguised.

A survey conducted in Portland to evaluate the effectiveness of a crime reduction program—Operation Identification—documented this effect. The program involved encouraging people to attend community meetings at which anti-theft measures were discussed and assisting them in marking their household goods with an identification number which would brand them as stolen merchandise and facilitate their return if they were stolen. The evaluation survey, conducted by Dr. Anne Schneider of the Oregon Research Institute, found that this O-I program reduced the burglary rate for participating households and increased the rate at which crimes which did occur were reported to the police.⁵¹ Table 6⁵² summarizes her data on the latter point.

Table 6—Effect of an Identification Program Upon Burglary Reporting Rates

Level of Program Involvement	Percent of Burglaries Reported to the Police
No participation	65
Only heard of program	67
Engraved property or had sticker or went to meeting	79
Any two actions	83
All three actions	87

Dr. Schneider analyzed the effect of knowing about the program, attending a meeting, marking property and displaying a sticker indicating participation in the program upon reporting rates for burglary. Each addi-

tional level of participation appears to lead to increased crime reporting. Schneider also suggests that changes over time in the burglary reporting rate in Portland have had a profound effect on official burglary statistics. She demonstrates that increases in the official burglary rate during 1973–1974 can be attributed to changes in the burglary reporting rate. Based upon “corrected” police figures, city-wide burglary totals actually went down over time, not up as previously indicated.⁵³

Variations in crime reporting also may complicate the interpretation of intercity variations in rates of reported crime. In certain categories there are substantial differences in the proportion of crimes which are reported to the police in various cities. Table 7⁵⁴ presents some comparable figures for five large cities surveyed by the Census Bureau early in 1973. It indicates the percentage of crimes in selected categories for which the police were notified, based upon responses to the survey questionnaire.

Table 7—Intercity Variations in Individual Reporting Rates

Crime	Percent Reported In:				
	Chicago	Detroit	Los Angeles	New York	Phila.
Total Robbery	52	60	48	47	50
Robbery—					
Successful					
with Injury	69	75	64	50	64
Robbery—					
Attempt with					
No Injury	27	39	27	33	27
Rape	53	55	46	61	55

The surveys indicate that robbery reporting rates varied considerably across these cities. Only 47 percent of all individual robberies were reported to the police in New York City, while in Detroit the figure stood at 60 percent. If the victimization rates in the two cities were the same (they were not—Detroit’s was higher), the latter community’s standing in the Uniform Crime Report would be boosted by her citizen’s reporting practices. To further complicate the picture, New Yorkers apparently reported rapes at a higher rate

⁵⁰ D. CAMPBELL & J. STANLEY, *EXPERIMENTAL AND QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS FOR RESEARCH* (1963).

⁵¹ Schneider, *supra* note 12.

⁵² The data in Table 6 were drawn from Schneider, *Evaluation of the Portland Neighborhood-Based Anti-Burglary Program* 17 (1975) (unpublished report issued by the Oregon Research Institute, Eugene, Oregon).

⁵³ Schneider, *supra* note 12.

⁵⁴ The data in Table 7 were drawn from *CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN FIVE LARGEST CITIES*, *supra* note 19, at 61.

than did residents of other large cities. This suggests that we cannot simply discount a city's reported figures by some constant proportion.

Table 7 also represents reporting rates for two sub-categories of personal robbery: those in which the thief was successful and injured his victim in the process and those in which the robbery attempt was thwarted and no injury was inflicted. In general, the seriousness of an incident is a powerful determinant of reporting rates; in this case, the most serious robberies in the data were reported to the police more than twice as often as the least serious robberies. Other components of seriousness which consistently are related to the notification of the police include the degree of injury inflicted, whether medical care is required, whether a weapon is used, and the amount of money stolen. In light of the importance of seriousness in determining whether or not a crime is reported to the police, it is plausible that some variation in crime reporting may be related to differences in crimes in various cities. Substantial intercity differences are to be found in weapon use, for example. Robbery in New York City characteristically is carried out by threats with a knife, and a gun was employed in only 12 percent of all personal robberies there in 1972. Cleveland was highest on the list of 26 cities for gun use in robbery (38 percent); Detroit also had a high incidence of gun use (28 percent). In Milwaukee most personal robberies were conducted without weapons.⁵⁵

Table 7 employs another measure of the seriousness of criminal incidents, the extent of injury inflicted on victims, to control for inter-city differences in crime patterns. New York is again at the bottom of the list; only 50 percent of all of its most serious robberies were reported. Detroit heads the list with 75 percent.

City differences in reporting are affected by other factors. The strongest determinant of the reporting of property crime is insurance; insured households are much more likely to report offenses in order to facilitate the collection of their claims. As we have seen, there is substantial variation across cities in the proportion of victimized households which are insured,

with Detroit at the top (again) at 32 percent and New York City near the bottom at 22 percent.⁵⁶ Reporting rates are somewhat affected by the personal attributes of victims as well. There is a tendency for older and married persons to report more of their experiences to the police, and cities with more people who fit that description will have higher official crime rates.⁵⁷

Whatever their origin, reporting practices play an important role in shaping official city crime statistics. Interpretation of these statistics is complicated greatly by the fact that they are affected by local police department policies and that reporting practices vary by crime type, by attributes of the offense, and by the personal attributes of their victims. Whether they are employed for social research, planning, or evaluation, the substantive conclusions implied by those figures must meet the challenge that they are artifacts of the measurement process. Victimization surveys have been conceived and conducted in order to meet these deficiencies in the measurement of crime. They are subject to their own methodological limitations, including both the failure of victims to remember events and their occasional unwillingness to describe them to the interviewer. However, they do bypass the organizational obstacles to crime measurement posed by police departments and record events which are not reported to the police. They also contain much more information about crimes and especially victims than do police records, and that data has proven to be useful in understanding the dynamics of nonreporting. Because they are based upon interviews with victims, however, the data cannot speak to a second major source of error in published crime reports: police recording practices. That is an organizational and political problem which requires a different kind of understanding and which can be affected only by structural reform.

⁵⁵ These data on weapons were computed from files containing all regular incidents uncovered in each of the 26 surveyed cities.

⁵⁶ These data on insurance were computed from files containing all regular incidents uncovered in each of the 26 surveyed cities.

⁵⁷ Skogan, *supra* note 45, at 539.

III. CONDUCTING VICTIM SURVEYS

As a research tool, victimization surveys are still in an infant state. Concerted efforts to develop and test relevant survey methodologies and to think systematically about the theoretical and practical applications of the data which they are capable of producing began only about a decade ago. Scholars and planners who are interested in applying those techniques must be aware of three large "buts" which should modify the enthusiasm with which they have been greeted in the research community: First, the methodology for producing reliable data of the sort discussed here is complex, and not all of the conceptual issues involved have been resolved; second, sample surveys are not very useful for studying many important problems; third, they can be very expensive to conduct.

A. Methodological and Conceptual Problems

The technical issues involved in victim research are numerous.⁵⁸ They include the problems of forgetfulness, telescoping, differential interview productivity, and interaction between sampling problems and response bias. Victimization surveys are based upon the assumption that criminal incidents are clearly definable events. Samples of the victims of those events are employed as informants and asked in an interview to report upon their experiences. Lying between the event and the report are numerous human processes.

Forgetting is a major factor in the measurement of crime through interviews with participants. Surprisingly, most victimizations are not very notable events. The majority are property crimes in which the perpetrator is never detected, the financial stakes are small, and the costs of calling the police greatly outweigh the benefits. The result is that our memory of the details of these events, then the very fact that they occurred, fades quickly from our minds. The extent of the forgetting problem has been investigated through "reverse record checks" of crime victims. This technique involves selecting samples of persons who are known to have been the victims of specific crimes. Usually, police records of reported incidents are used. If the focus of the study is time-dependent memory fade, the samples are chosen in such a way that the crimes are distributed across time. The victims of those incidents are interviewed using a standard questionnaire form. The crucial question is, "What proportion of the criterion events are recalled in the interview, and how rapidly does the recall decrease over time?" Detailed hy-

potheses about forgetting, such as the supposition that our memory of trivial events fades faster than that of more serious crime, can be tested by selecting victims of different types of crimes over different time periods.

These experiments suggest that the most efficient "reference period" for victimization surveys focusing upon common crimes is one year.⁵⁹ A reference period defines the span in the immediate past for which respondents are asked to recall events, and most of the methodological evidence suggests that events can be recalled effectively over a one-year term. There is some evidence that the details of those events may be forgotten more rapidly. For example, the ability to recall the date on which an incident occurred drops sharply after about six months.⁶⁰ The Bureau of the Census employs a six-month reference period in its national survey in order to provide a more accurate temporal placement of each event.

A reference period is established by some "bounding" technique. Early victim surveys employed an oral boundary—each respondent was asked to remember events which had transpired "in the past year." Methodological studies have demonstrated, however, that there is a strong tendency of victims interviewed in this way to move forward events which occurred before the beginning of the reference period into the reference period, or to recall inaccurately the date of a victimization so that it qualifies for the survey.⁶¹ The Census Bureau now employs personal interviews rather than oral instructions to bound interviews conducted in their national survey. Residents of a household are interviewed once simply to establish a benchmark for succeeding visits by an interviewer. They then become part of a "panel" which is reinterviewed five times at six-month intervals before they are dropped from the sample. At each visit respondents in the household are asked to recall events which have transpired since the last interview. By sharply defining the

⁵⁸ For a detailed examination of the methodological foundations of the federal government's victimization survey program, see the evaluation report on those surveys issued by the National Academy of Sciences. That report may be obtained from the Committee on National Statistics, National Academy of Sciences, 2100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.

⁵⁹ UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, *SAN JOSE METHODS TEST OF KNOWN CRIME VICTIMS 6-8* (1972).

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ See PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, *supra* note 8, at 39-41, 58-60.

scope of the reference period, this technique greatly reduces the tendency of respondents to introduce out-of-range events into the data.

The effect of individual differences in interview productivity are less well understood and go uncorrected in the surveys conducted by the Census Bureau. Some respondents make better "subjects" than others. Highly educated or more articulate respondents usually report richer and more detailed information, feel more at ease in the interview situation and make the interviewer feel more at home as well.⁶² The result is that the volume and accuracy of survey data often is partially dependent upon the class of the respondent. This appears to have affected the quality of the Census Bureau's victimization data as well. It seems, for example, that whites recall a larger proportion of their experiences than blacks. White respondents in the survey have an inexplicably high assault rate, but the majority of those offenses are relatively inconsequential events. Black victims seem to recall fewer experiences, albeit most of the serious ones.⁶³ Further methodological studies are required which analyze reverse-record data by the attributes of victims in order to isolate the differential recall error attributable to respondent characteristics.

Another shortcoming common to survey research which takes on some significance in this case is sample bias. Most surveys tend to undercount certain groups, notably youths, males, and blacks. They are more difficult to find at home, and more difficulty is encountered in securing their cooperation in interviews. As a result, the decennial Census of the Population tends to undercount them. The difficulty is that hard-to-enumerate groups also generally suffer much higher victimization rates than the bulk of the population. Males, blacks, and youths are much more likely than others to fall victim to most crimes, but they are less likely to be found and questioned. The national victimization estimates of the Bureau of the Census contain some corrections for non-interviews, but the strong interaction between the biases of survey sampling and the substance of the problem at hand means that the data are notably deficient in speaking to the crime problems of several high-risk subgroups of the population.

Methodological problems in victim surveys are related to larger conceptual issues, including the nature of crime itself. The surveys conducted for the Federal government have proceeded on the assumption that criminal incidents can be defined solely in behavioral terms. From this emerges the measurement technique

employed in the surveys. People are asked, for example, if they have been hit by a rock or a bottle, or if something has been taken from them. The frequency of victimization is inferred from these descriptions of transactions. "Crime," on the other hand, is also a social and legal concept based upon the intentions of the parties and the relationships between them. Parents and teachers, for example, may threaten and physically discipline youths with whom they have the "proper" relationship without anyone thinking that a "crime" has occurred. There is reason to suspect that many transactions which would not be labeled "criminal" by the participants themselves may be so counted by victimization surveys. One of the most frequently volunteered reasons for failing to report victimizations to the police, for example, is that "it wasn't a police matter."

The data also suggest that other incidents which may be defined as criminal are being overlooked deliberately by their victims during the interviews. The relationship between the parties involved is again crucial. One of the factors explored by the reverse-record technique is the impact of the relationship between victim and offender on the rate at which the former recalled known incidents in an interview. This is important, for we suspect that a number of assaults and a substantial percentage of all rapes involve victims and offenders who are friends, neighbors, or even relatives. Domestic disputes, for example, make up a considerable fraction of all the calls for police service recorded in big cities on a given Friday night.⁶⁴ Interviews with known victims indicate, distressingly, that there is a strong tendency for crimes involving acquaintances to be "forgotten" in personal interviews, even when they are already known to the police. As a result, victimization surveys gathering data on assault and rape underestimate the overall rate for these crimes, and overestimate the proportion of events instigated by strangers. This is important because this "stranger-nonstranger" distinction is related to the deterrability of crime and the extent to which it generates fear in the community. Certainly, the picture of crime which emerges in these surveys is serious enough with-

⁶² S. SUDMAN & N. BRADBURN, *RESPONSE EFFECTS IN SURVEYS* (1974).

⁶³ In the Washington, D.C. survey, for example, black respondents reported an assault rate of 9 per 1,000, while whites recalled 21 per 1,000. The two groups had identical rates for aggravated (more serious) assault, but whites recalled 15 minor assaults per 1,000 and blacks only 3. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, *CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS IN 13 AMERICAN CITIES* 247 (1975).

⁶⁴ Reiss, *supra* note 35, at 70-83.

out overestimating the relative amount of street violence which takes place.

B. Limitations of the Technique

Many of the technical difficulties which have plagued victimization research are solvable in principle. For example, more sophisticated interviewing techniques, including the use of "randomized probes" which insure the confidentiality of responses to personal or potentially embarrassing questions, may improve the quality of the data on intra-family aggression.⁶⁵ Other limitations on the scope of the data are inherent in their mode of collections, however. Personal interviews with random samples of the population can be an excellent source of information on events with individual, knowledgeable, passive, aggrieved victims. Yet many important criminal justice problems involve quite different kinds of crimes and victims.

First, the majority of arrests arise from crimes which do not victimize individuals. In 1973 about 53 percent of all arrests in the United States were for such "victimless" crimes as public intoxication, gambling, prostitution, curfew law violations, and disorderly conduct.⁶⁶ These are offenses against the collectivity, or by another view they are offenses which persons commit against themselves. In any event, such crimes are detected largely by police investigation or observation, and arrests are effected without a complaint by a victim. Interviews covering the experiences of the population are not a very effective way to study public drunkenness, yet the charge was the most common⁶⁷ rationale for making an arrest (almost 1,200,000 of them) in 1973. Victim surveys are not very useful, as a result, for estimating the potential number of persons that the police, the courts, and correctional and rehabilitation agencies might have to deal with if some change in policy (for example, an expansion or contraction of the scope of the law concerning these behaviors) took place. If, on the other hand, domestic disputes or petty larcenies were to be diverted from the criminal justice system, victim surveys and data on citizen reporting could tell us something about the potential size of the pool of offenders affected.

Some of the aforementioned offenses are also difficult to count or analyze through survey interviews because they necessarily involve the complicity of the parties involved in the transaction. Gambling, prostitution and drug use demand the cooperation of a network of buyers and sellers to distribute goods and services that are profitable or pleasurable for all concerned. The collection of data through interviews with

any of the participants would call for confessions of participations in illicit activity. This is particularly unlikely to be fruitful when the interviewer is a representative of the government. Data have been collected on criminal acts by youths through the use of paper-and-pencil questionnaires administered in large, anonymous groups. These self-reports of delinquency are backed by little evidence which supports claims that they are either reliable or valid measures, however.⁶⁸

Finally, accurate estimates of the incidence of crime in a population can be made from the reports of samples only when the fact that a crime has occurred is equally clear to all its victims. Criminals whose very acts avoid detection are perhaps the most successful of all. If their victims do not know that a crime has occurred, or if they do not correctly identify their predicament and realize that they have been criminally victimized, interviews may not uncover an event which has (by an external standard) occurred. This problem limits our ability to use victim surveys to measure the incidence of such crimes as consumer fraud. People may not know that they have been shortweighted, overcharged, or sold goods that have been used or have exceeded their shelf life. Or they may know that something has gone amiss, but they may fail to identify it as a criminal act. In certain areas of life, the criminal or noncriminal status of many behaviors is not widely understood. The study of corporate price-fixing, impure foods, dangerous drugs, political influence peddling, or even air pollution would not be aided to any great extent by a victim survey.

In the end, however, the major factor which will limit the application of victimization survey data to criminal justice system planning problems is their cost. Sample surveys can be an extremely expensive way to gather data on crime. The major determinant of the cost of a survey is the size of the group chosen to be interviewed. Interviewing is a labor-intensive activity;

⁶⁵ For a good discussion of the problems of measuring interpersonal violence, see Biderman, *When Does Interpersonal Violence Become Crime?—Theory and Method* (1973) (unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Sociological Association, Cambridge, England).

⁶⁶ UNIFORM CRIME REPORT 1973, *supra* note 15, at 128. This calculation is based upon the sum of arrests in 1973 for prostitution, gambling, narcotics, liquor laws, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, suspicion, curfew and runaway laws, and driving under the influence.

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ Chambliss & Nagasawa, *On the Validity of Official Statistics*, 6 J. OF RESEARCH ON CRIM. AND DELINQUENCY 71 (1969). The authors argue that the mismatch between questionnaire data and official statistics debunks the latter, but it is just as plausible to turn their argument on its head.

surveyors must locate sample households, find someone at home (which often requires returning several times), make appointments for those interviews which cannot be conducted on the spot, and run down hard-to-find household members. These costs mount rapidly in victimization research, for most of those who are questioned have nothing to report. Tables 3 and 5 reported the rate per thousand for several personal crimes. These rates speak indirectly to the sample-size problem, for a rape rate of 1.8 per thousand females implies that in order to accumulate enough incidents to conduct any analysis of their characteristics (100 cases or so) it will be necessary to interview about 110,000 randomly selected persons, or one-half that many females. This is a very large undertaking. Most national surveys make do with 1,500 to 2,500 respondents, but they focus upon consumer preferences, ratings of the President's performance, or common attributes which most people possess. Using samples of the general population to search for rare events is quite a different matter. Crimes such as burglary are more common than rape, and a sample of 3,000 households or so will produce useful data on common property crimes. As this implies, sample size is a function of the crime one desires to study and its frequency in the target population. Surveys which focus upon more "popular" crimes, such as burglary and assault, or which examine only central cities or high-crime neighborhoods will be more feasible to conduct.

Any decision to narrow the focus of a victimization survey to the neighborhood level would have drawbacks, however. The problem is that the size of the sample required to make reliable inferences about the population from which it was drawn is not proportional to the size of the jurisdiction. The logic of sampling theory is counter-intuitive on this point: a national survey requires no more respondents than a study of Cincinnati, or even a rigorous investigation of that city's North Side. To produce reliable small-area data for a large community might require the Federal government's entire investment in victim surveying.

This is unfortunate, for the police—potentially the most important consumers of victimization data—rely upon small area data for most of their planning and operational activities. Men and equipment are allocated to various sectors in order to maximize a department's ability to respond to crime. Victim data could be used to generate allocation formulae based upon their ability to deter crime by visible patrols (street crime) or by the seriousness of the crime prob-

lem in various neighborhoods (a weighted frequency). They also could be employed to identify neighborhoods where reporting rates are low, and which are therefore underprotected when resources are allocated on the basis of official statistics. They could reveal citizens' attitudes toward crime and the police; gathered from small areas, such data could pinpoint areas for concentrated community relations activity by the police. Area data could even be used to evaluate the performance of policemen and their administrators. If citizen satisfaction with police service were to become one of the criteria by which district commanders are fired and promoted, there might be considerable improvement in the deportment of the men under their command.

Area data also usually are required to evaluate the effectiveness of specific crime-reduction programs. As we have seen, such data help assess the spillover effects of programs on reporting rates, and it is difficult to imagine how many programs could be evaluated validly without at least a modest survey component in the project. The problem is again one of crime frequency and sample size, however. Victimization is difficult to measure even before the introduction of a crime-prevention program, and the samples required to assess reliably its impact on that rate usually must be very large.

The only cost breakthrough on the horizon involves the use of the telephone. Telephone interviews are simpler and cheaper to conduct than personal interviews, and it is easier to supervise their completion and to monitor their quality as well. Calls are made from a central location, which strikes travel costs from the budget, and it is very cheap to pursue "callbacks" when no one is at home. Interviewers find it less stressful to conduct evening interviews or to make contacts in high-crime neighborhoods when they are working over the telephone, and the telephone is often the only way to get past doormen or building guards.

The only question about telephone interviewing is whether the data is good. Critics traditionally have argued that poor people do not have telephones, rich people have unlisted numbers, and those who are contacted are reluctant to give confidential information to an anonymous caller. The degree of the bias introduced by these factors is not clear. The extent to which the poor are without telephones is an empirical question, and there are standard techniques for compensating for the underrepresentation of certain groups in a sample (as is done now for youths and blacks, who are underrepresented in personal-interview surveys as well). The problem of unlisted numbers can be over-

come by the use of random-digit dialing; rather than calling lists of randomly-selected persons, researchers simply dial randomly-selected numbers to achieve the same effect. The validity of data gathered over the telephone is the central issue. This and other technical issues currently are being investigated by the Police Foundation of Washington, D.C., as part of an effort to develop victimization survey methodologies which are cheap and reliable.⁶⁹ One of the promising aspects of this work is that telephone surveys can be conducted selectively, focusing upon small areas of a community.⁷⁰ If it is possible to draw telephone numbers organized by geographical areas, the generation of small-area victimization data through surveys may be feasible after all.

Surveys greatly expand the scope of information which can be gathered both on crime and on citizen preferences. The difficulty is to relate this data in some meaningful way to the day-to-day activities of criminal justice agencies. Knowing about general patterns of victimization or satisfaction in a community is no substitute for the ability to link that knowledge to the activity of a specific officer or administrative district, or to a particular program.

⁶⁹ Tuchfarber, Klecka, Bardes & Oldendick, *Reducing the Cost of Victimization Surveys*, in *SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME* (W. Skogan ed. 1976).

⁷⁰ DuBow & Reed, *The Limits of Victim Surveys: A Community Case Study*, in *SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME* (W. Skogan, ed. 1976).

IV. CONCLUSION—THE FUTURE OF VICTIM RESEARCH

Victimization surveys have only begun to make their contribution to our understanding of crime, the problems of victims, and the effectiveness of law enforcement programs. Nevertheless, some of the main lines along which they should develop as a research tool during the next few years are already clear. First, there should be increased emphasis upon the refinement of the methodology employed in victim surveys and an elaboration of their coverage, both conceptual and geographical. Second, there is already evidence of growing interest in victimization surveys among state and local authorities, and it appears that surveys like those discussed here will be conducted in a variety of jurisdictions on a routine basis. Third, there will be greater emphasis upon the analysis of the data collected in the victimization surveys conducted by the Federal government. Already plans are underway to disseminate more widely the information collected by the Census Bureau and to encourage original analyses of the data by scholars and criminal justice practitioners.

One of the first priorities in the field of victimization research should be the mounting of a sustained program of methodological research and development. Preliminary work on the reliability and validity of the data collected through conventional techniques has indicated a number of flaws in existing data. Rapes are greatly undercounted, assaults and other crimes involving non-strangers are not being enumerated fully in the surveys. In addition, there appears to be a great deal of inter-respondent variance in the validity of the data which is associated closely with race and class variables.⁷¹ As I pointed out above, there is no evidence of the reliability of the measures of such crucial factors as the reporting of crimes to the police, the perceived age or racial attributes of offenders, or even the attitude items tapping citizens' perceptions of crime and the police. Further work needs to be done on the utility of telephone surveys, for the cost of face-to-face interviews on the scale required by victimization research is prohibitive except at the Federal level.

The techniques for conducting much of this research are well known. Reverse-record checks of the type already conducted by the Census Bureau can be used to measure the ability of a survey instrument to elicit reports of known events. These data can be used to determine if white respondents are indeed more willing than blacks to discuss certain affairs with interviewers and to estimate the extent of the undercount. Randomized groups of known victims also can be interviewed by different techniques—over the phone, by mail, and

in person—in order to determine the turn-down rate and the recovery power of the survey in each instance. The reliability of the perceptual data on offenders will be more difficult to assess. There is ample evidence that eyewitnesses and victims are quite prone to err in their assessment of offenders,⁷² and it is likely that the Federal government's survey data on that topic are subject to considerable error. The problem is particularly acute for government surveyors, for the data on the racial distribution of victims and offenders can be politically quite sensitive as well. The same can be said for the data on victim-offender relationships, for the relatively high rate of stranger violence in the data—which undoubtedly is an artifact of the inability of the Census Bureau's surveys to measure accurately nonstranger crime—provides further fuel for rhetoric about "street crime." The responsibility that the government shoulders for producing only reliable data on such topics is clear, but no program for guaranteeing or documenting that quality yet exists.

One of the most exciting aspects of victimization research has been the explosion of interest in conducting such surveys at the state and local level. In several communities interviews are conducted routinely to evaluate the effectiveness with which those who request police services are assisted.⁷³ Such follow-up studies can reveal patterns of dissatisfaction with police activity and can be used to monitor the speed with which individual officers respond to complaints and their demeanor in the presence of victims and witnesses. Several communities also are conducting full-blown victimization surveys as part of a general program to evaluate the effectiveness of governmental services. Typically conducted by telephone, these surveys cover a variety of topics in addition to criminal justice programs.

In addition to service-delivery studies, a number of major evaluation projects which should add considerably to our understanding of the dynamics of crime and the criminal justice system are now underway. Sample surveys have been used to plan them and they are being employed to evaluate their direct and indirect consequences. Several evaluation efforts are focusing upon the effectiveness of Crime Prevention

⁷¹ See the authorities cited in notes 62 and 63, *supra*; Sparks, *Crimes and Victims in London*, in *SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME* (W. Skogan ed. 1976).

⁷² Buckhout, *Eyewitness Testimony*, 231 *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* 23 (1974).

⁷³ See the authorities cited in note 42, *supra*.

Through Environmental Design (CPTED) programs. The theoretical foundation for this approach to crime control lies in Jane Jacobs' analysis of the role of community life in the maintenance of order in urban areas.⁷⁴ She observed that the flow of people through a neighborhood and the use they make of its sidewalks, parks, and other public space is shaped by its physical layout and the variety of activities which are available there to attract and amuse them. The more diverse the opportunities for shopping, socializing or recreating, the more different kinds of people of all ages will be attracted to the area. When this activity takes place in public areas or in small shops which open on the street, it encourages face-to-face contacts and development of passing acquaintanceships. This reduces the anonymity of the neighborhood and discourages random trouble-making. It facilitates the "self-policing" of the street by shopkeepers and bystanders. The longer into the night this takes place, the less residents or passers-by will feel isolated and vulnerable. Diverse public activity also will encourage more intensive "street watching" by residents of the area and by persons drawn to the excitement. In particular this will facilitate the identification and collective supervision of youths in the neighborhood. Based on her experience in New York City, Jacobs argues that properly "designed" urban neighborhoods (although they usually arrive at that happy condition by chance) enjoy lower crime rates and higher community identification and morale. Her ideas have been elaborated by Oscar Newman, who has examined in detail how the physical design of multi-family buildings increases their residents' watchfulness over one another and extends their sense of "territoriality" over hallways, entranceways, parking lots, and green spaces surrounding them.⁷⁵ These ideas are extremely important, for they emphasize how to prevent crime from occurring rather than how to run criminals to earth more efficiently. They speak directly to the problem of maintaining collective security in the absence of a garrison state and they promise to assist rebuilding community morale and reducing the pervasive isolation and alienation which plague many high crime neighborhoods.

A number of CPTED projects will be evaluated for the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. In Portland, Oregon, a demonstration project will focus upon a deteriorating commercial area. The program involves the creation of small, more personal mini-plazas within the district, the erection of well-lit transit shelters, and the construction of secure pedestrian passageways. Victimization data col-

lected by the Census Bureau have been used to plan the project.⁷⁶ In Hartford, Connecticut, residential neighborhoods will be redesigned. The physical layout of two neighborhoods will be altered to change the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic through them. The layout will be planned in cooperation with neighborhood groups which will in turn advise an experimental neighborhood team-policing group. A similar project is being conducted in one neighborhood in Minneapolis.⁷⁷ The success of the Hartford project will be evaluated by surveys which gather data on victimization rates, perceptions of crime, and patterns of interaction between neighbors in the experimental areas and the remainder of the community. Two preliminary surveys already have been conducted to gather baseline data.⁷⁸

Oscar Newman currently is investigating victimization patterns in 24 federally assisted, low- and moderate-income housing projects in Newark, St. Louis, and San Francisco. He is looking for physical, social, and management factors which enhance security in high-density residences. In addition to official records and systematic observations of the movement of people and their behavior in public places, Newman is conducting victimization surveys to gather crime data and information on the fears and preferences of residents of the projects and of people in the immediate neighborhood.⁷⁹ Four high schools in Broward County, Florida, are being studied in the same fashion.⁸⁰

At the community level, victimization surveys are being used as one component of the evaluation of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration's High Impact Cities program. In the project, about twenty million dollars was spent in each of eight selected cities during 1972-1974. The goal of the program was to

⁷⁴ J. JACOBS, *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES* (1961).

⁷⁵ O. NEWMAN, *DEFENSIBLE SPACE: CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH URBAN DESIGN* 51-77 (1972).

⁷⁶ For further information contact CPTED Program Office, Westinghouse Electric Company, Suite 508, 1911 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia.

⁷⁷ For further information contact CPTED Program Office, Westinghouse Electric Company, Suite 508, 1911 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia.

⁷⁸ For further information contact The Hartford Institute of Criminal and Social Justice, 15 Lewis Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

⁷⁹ For further information contact The Institute for Community Design Analysis, 853 Broadway, New York, New York.

⁸⁰ For further information contact CPTED Program Office, Westinghouse Electric Company, Suite 508, 1911 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia.

reduce the frequency of certain target crimes (including burglary, stranger-to-stranger violence, and street robbery) by 5 percent within 2 years and by 20 percent in 5 years.⁸¹ Evaluations of many of the component programs in each city were conducted.⁸² In addition, a "macro-level" evaluation is being conducted using victimization survey data collected in 1972 and 1975 (and perhaps in 1978 as well). The surveys will enable evaluators to examine target crimes in some detail, contrasting stranger with non-stranger violence or crimes which take place in private as opposed to public places. They also will facilitate the examination of trends in unreported crime and pinpoint changes in citizen reporting practices. They thus may provide an explanation for the fact that crime rates seemingly skyrocketed in some of the cities during the course of the experiment.

Three important evaluations using victim surveys have been conducted by the Police Foundation of Washington, D.C. One which has attained some notoriety is the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment, the results of which sometimes are interpreted as saying "policing doesn't make any difference." In the experiment, three police districts used different patrol strategies. Residents of one received greatly increased patrol protection; patrolling in another remained at the usual level; and in the remaining area there were no routine patrols. Squad cars entered this area only in response to specific complaints. Surveys were used to gather information about victimization, citizen attitudes, and perceptions of the quality of police service in each district. The survey findings matched those based upon data collected through special interviews with those who called the police and those who came into contact with officers on the street: there was no discernible effect of variations in patrol activity over a one-year period.⁸³

The second experiment was conducted in Cincinnati, where a Neighborhood Team Policing unit has been operating in a high-crime residential and commercial area since March, 1973. A team of officers has been delegated responsibility for round-the-clock policing of the project area. They operate autonomously and are charged with developing close community ties and delivering services in a personal manner. Since the beginning the Urban Institute has been conducting regular surveys to identify victimization trends for residents of the area and for small shops located along its commercial streets. The surveys also have gathered data on perceptions of the level of crime, the fear of crime, and evaluations of police service. The results to date have been mixed. Businessmen and ordinary citi-

zens in the test area feel somewhat safer, and they believe that the police respond more quickly to complaints. However, it is not clear that the crime rate is much affected by the program, and citizen hostility toward the police has not been reduced.⁸⁴

The third Police Foundation study analyzed the effectiveness of a controversial policing tactic, field interrogation (otherwise known as "stop and frisk"). Critics of aggressive field interrogation argue it alienates the poor and blacks, who are more frequently singled out for attention, and that it violates the constitutional rights of all citizens. Proponents of the strategy think that stop-and-frisk assists in the apprehension of offenders, deters potential criminals, and is legal and practically necessary. A 9-month interrogation experiment was conducted in three areas of San Diego. In one district officers were trained in minimizing conflicts caused by field questioning; no interrogations were conducted in another area; and normal practices were continued in a third "control" district. An analysis of reported crimes concluded that the absence of interrogations contributed to a rise in certain "suppressible" crimes, but that the reported crime rate was not affected by different interrogation practices. Arrest rates were not affected significantly by any changes in interrogation practices. An attitude survey conducted in the three experimental areas indicated that ratings of police performance and attitudes toward street interrogations were not affected by differences in policy from district to district, and that most San Diego residents accepted the practice.⁸⁵

A quite different evaluation of institutional performance is Richard Knudten's study of the treatment of victims by the criminal justice system. In a real sense,

⁸¹ THE HIGH IMPACT ANTI-CRIME PROGRAM (a project description issued by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Washington, D.C., 1974).

⁸² E. CHELIMSKY, HIGH IMPACT ANTI-CRIME PROGRAM NATIONAL LEVEL EVALUATION: FINAL REPORT, 1976 (a report issued by the MITRE Corporation, McLean, Virginia, to the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration).

⁸³ Kelling, Pate, Dieckman & Brown, *supra* note 43.

⁸⁴ Clarren & Schwartz, *Measuring a Program's Impact: A Cautionary Note*, in SAMPLE SURVEYS OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME (W. Skogan ed. 1976); A. SCHWARTZ, S. CLARREN, T. FISHGRUND, E. HOLLINS & P. NALLEY, EVALUATION OF CINCINNATI'S COMMUNITY SECTOR TEAM POLICING PROGRAM: A PROGRESS REPORT AFTER ONE YEAR (1975) (Working paper 3006-18 issued by the Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.).

⁸⁵ J. BOYDSTUN, SAN DIEGO FIELD INTERROGATION: FINAL REPORT (1975) (issued by the Police Foundation, 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.).

many people fall victim to that system as well as to crime. They are called repeatedly as witnesses for trials which fail to materialize; prosecutors pay little heed to their preferences about the grounds under which the state chooses to proceed, or even about the scheduling of cases; and bargains between prosecution and defense often are struck without consultation or even notification of those involved. As part of the study interviews from the Census Bureau are returning to the homes of victims uncovered during a survey conducted in Milwaukee in 1974. The victims will be quizzed in detail about their experiences: were the police called (or why not); was someone apprehended; how far was the case pursued in the criminal justice system; how satisfied were they with the performance of officials at each stage of the process? This survey should give us a complete picture of the flow of victims through the criminal justice system, with data on who drops out at each point, and why.⁸⁶

More extensive analyses of the problems of victims may be encouraged by the Federal government's newest program to disseminate that data collected in their victimization surveys and to assist criminal justice

researchers in using it to address local problems. All of the official reports on victimization published by the government are based upon tabulations prepared by the Census Bureau for its Crime Analysis Group. Others may gain access to the original data tapes through DUALabs, Inc.,⁸⁷ a non-profit company organized to acquire, document, and distribute large government data files. Computer tapes of all descriptions containing data collected in the national or city surveys may be acquired at cost through this organization, which also will provide limited technical assistance in their interpretation and use. Representatives of local criminal justice agencies may also request specific tabulations tailored to their interests. Easy access to this data should encourage researchers to pursue their own analysis of patterns of victimization and promote our knowledge of crime and its consequences.

⁸⁶ For further information contact The Center for Criminal Justice and Social Policy, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

⁸⁷ For further information contact DUALabs, Inc., 1601 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia.

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