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REPORT ON THE OPERATION IDENT

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF MAY, 1973

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ST. LOUIS HIGH IMPACT ANTI-CRIME PROGRAM

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ST. LOUIS HIGH IMPACT EVALUATION UNIT
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Summary

The survey was conducted as part of an evaluation of the Operation Ident project of the St. Louis High Impact Anti-Crime Program. Two questionnaires, one for Ident participants and one for non-participants, were designed by the project staff and the St. Louis Impact Program's High Impact Evaluation Unit, with the advice of a market research company which assisted in the survey.

This report provides information on the objectives of the survey, the procedures used to design the sample and questionnaires, and the insights gained from studying the completed questionnaires (348 in all). The report concludes with a brief discussion of the value of the telephone survey as an evaluative tool and of the cost of the survey.

In general, comparing the group participating in Ident to the non-participants, the results show that:

- prior to becoming participants, the participating households had about the same burglary rates as do the non-participants at present;
- neighbors of participants (most of whom are non-participants) have not experienced burglaries in any greater frequency than those of other non-participants;
- most participants learned of the program through Police-Community Relations activities, the newspaper, and friends or relatives, while most non-participants who knew about the program learned of it through the newspaper and television;
- participants have taken slightly fewer other precautions to protect their premises from burglary than had non-participants; and,
- a larger proportion of participants live in single-family dwellings than do non-participants.

Questions in the survey which related only to one of the groups indicated that:

- most of the participants were engraving their Missouri driver's license number on their valuables, as instructed, and were displaying the "Blue Hand" participation decals on doors and windows;
- about half of the non-participants had heard of the Ident program (through one or more of its promotional efforts); and,
- almost all non-participants expressed a favorable reaction to the program (those who were unfamiliar with it were given a brief explanation) but only two-thirds expressed an interest in participating.

The survey followed shortly after a computer analysis of burglary rates for participating households which indicated that they had exper-

experienced a sixteen percent drop in burglary rate since joining the program, while the city-wide residential burglary rate showed a much smaller decrease (about 3.4 percent).

I. Introduction

The objectives of the Operation Ident project include educating the public with regard to the risk of residential burglary and the reduction of residential burglary by making stolen items easier to identify. Achievement of these objectives requires both an effective public education program and the informed cooperation of participants recruited into the program. The Evaluation Unit, when faced with the problem of assessing the extent to which these objectives were being achieved, considered several alternatives for obtaining related information directly from participants and non-participants. A door-to-door survey was considered too costly and a mailed questionnaire was rejected because of the suspected unreliability of the responses. The following paragraphs describe the telephone survey finally selected as the evaluative instrument.

II. Objectives

The objectives of the survey included measurement of public sentiment regarding Operation Ident; measurement of the success of the various media being used to promote the project; determination of the differences, if any, in the burglary victimization background and burglary prevention efforts of the participants as compared to non-participants; and determination of the number of dwelling units per address.

In addition, the survey sought information from the participants regarding their dates of enrollment, the extent to which they made use of the state driver's license number when engraving property, and their use of the "Blue Hand" decals on doors and windows.

III. Choice of the Samples and Design of the Questionnaires

At the time the survey was being planned there were 2311 registered participants in St. Louis. A computer program was written to provide an alphabetical listing of the participants according to street name. Another program was developed to provide totals of the numbers of participants per police district, census tract, and police reporting area (Pauly block).

The goals, in terms of completed questionnaires, were set at 250 non-participants and 125 participants. Samples for each group were chosen as follows. To insure a proper geographic distribution of the sample of non-participants in the city, 1970 census data on the number of year-round housing units for St. Louis was obtained (the total number of units was found to be 238,441). The totals for each of the city's 126 census tracts were used to compute the percentage of housing units found in each census tract relative to the city total. Since the goal of the non-participant survey was 250 contacts, then, if "a" is the percent of total housing units in a particular census tract, the formula:

$$\frac{x}{250} = \frac{a}{100}$$

may be used to compute the number of questionnaires, x, to be completed in the census tract. This procedure distributes the members of the sample in the same manner as the distribution of housing units in the city.

Because the formula yields values of x which are not necessarily integral, the following round-off procedure was used:

Complete 1 questionnaire	if $0.2 \leq a < 0.6$
complete 2	if $0.6 \leq a < 1.0$
complete 3	if $1.0 \leq a < 1.4$
complete 4	if $1.4 \leq a < 1.8$
complete 5	if $1.8 \leq a < 2.2$

~~In this process, it became necessary to adjust the goal from 250 to 255.~~

In order to provide enough names to complete the required number of questionnaires for each census tract, the numbers obtained from the

process outlined above were multiplied by three.

A reverse telephone directory, a detailed street map showing census tract boundaries, and a street guide were then used to choose the necessary amount of names and telephone numbers for each census tract. The information was next keypunched, and a print-out was obtained for use by the telephone workers.

The participant sample was based on the participation rate in each police district, as well as the number of housing units per police district, which had to be estimated using the same census data as mentioned above.

Employing formulas similar to the one used in the non-participant case, two percentages were computed for each police district, first using the participation rate, and then using the census data. The two resulting figures for each district were then averaged and used to compute the quota for the district. As in the non-participant case, three times the desired number of names was supplied for use by the telephone workers. The goal was adjusted from 125 to 130 due to round-off procedures.

To conduct the telephone interviews, the project staff and the Evaluation Unit decided to assign one half of each of the two questionnaires to a professional market research company and the other half to the St. Louis Women's Crusade Against Crime, a community group which shares responsibility for the project with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

It was agreed that the market research company employed would aid in the development of the two questionnaires, and would conduct a training session for the volunteer telephone workers from the Women's Crusade.

Since the Evaluation Unit had not had previous experience with telephone surveys, a number of St. Louis market research companies were con-

tacted (they were located by looking under "market research" in the Yellow Pages) and invited to bid for the job. Three companies submitted bids; the lowest bidder's proposal was accepted.

IV. Results

After the consultation and training were accomplished, the survey was conducted, resulting in 130 completed participant questionnaires, and 218 non-participant questionnaires. Tabulation was done by hand by members of the Evaluation Unit. A copy of each of the two questionnaires is attached to this report.

Two sets of percentages were calculated for each question. The first indicates the distribution of answers within each group (i.e., participants or non-participants). The second indicates the distribution of participants and non-participants within each possible response.

To test for significant differences in the responses given to questions which were similar on both participant and non-participant questionnaires, a standard chi-square contingency table test was employed. For each such test, significance or non-significance is indicated for the 95 percent confidence level and appropriate degrees of freedom.

A. Questions which were similar on both questionnaires

1. Previous Burglary Experience:

For the participant survey respondents were asked if they had been burglarized in the year preceding their enrollment in the program (question 3); for the non-participant survey respondents were asked if they had been burglarized in the past year (question 1).

a. Results:

Participants answered: 25 (19%) yes; 105 (81%) no

Non-participants answered: 28 (13%) yes; 190 (87%) no

Yes: 47% participant; 53% non-participant

No: 36% participant; 64% non-participant

Chi-square value: 2.57 (not significant)

b. Interpretation:

Before joining Ident, the average burglary rate for participants was not significantly different from that for non-participants. This discounts the likelihood that households which chose to join the program were largely those with less than average burglary rates (a situation which would make the project seem off target).

2. Type of Dwelling:

The answers to questions 8 and 3 on the participant and non-participant questionnaires were totalled with respect to whether the respondent lived in a single or multiple dwelling.

a. Results:

Participants answered: 84 (65%) single; 46 (35%) multiple

Non-participants answered: 106 (49%) single; 111 (51%) multiple

Single: 44% participant; 56% non-participant

Multiple: 29% participant; 71% non-participant

Chi-square value: 8.16 (significant)

b. Interpretation:

The significantly higher number of residents occupying single dwellings in the participant group could indicate a relationship between home ownership and increased concern regarding burglary, or a greater feeling of security on the part of multiple dwelling residents.

c. Additional Information:

The answers to these questions yield estimates of approximately 3.2 dwelling units per address for participants and 4.1 units per address for non-participants. This information will be useful to the Evaluation Unit in computing estimates of the burglary rates per dwelling unit (as compared to per address) since no distinction is made on the

computer crime data tapes between dwelling units with the same street address (i.e., apartment numbers are not included in the addresses).

3. Other Precautions:

Answers to questions 7a on the non-participant and 9a on the participant questionnaires, regarding whether or not other burglary prevention precautions were taken, were compared.

a. Results:

Participants answered: 66 (51%) yes; 62 (48%) no

Non-participants answered: 138 (63%) yes; 79 (36%) no

Yes: 32% participant; 68% non-participant

No: 44% participant; 56% non-participant

Two participants and one non-participant declined to answer this question.

Chi-square value: 4.82 (significant)

b. Interpretation:

Participants appear to have taken significantly fewer other precautions. This could indicate that they tend to rely on Operation Ident for successful burglary prevention, or that the non-participants, having taken a significantly higher number of other precautions, tend to feel secure as a result of their precautions and feel no need for Ident.

4. Types of Other Precautions:

Those who answered that they were taking other precautions were asked what type of methods they were using. This was accomplished in questions 7b for non-participants and 9b for participants. Precautions were classified as: dog, extra locks, alarms, and other. The "other" category included such answers as bars on basement windows, leaving lights on while away, etc. More than one answer was recorded if given by the respondent.

a. Results:

Participants answered 12 (18%) dog; 27 (41%) extra locks; 2 (3%) alarm; 25 (38%) other.

Non-participants answered; 45 (33%) dog; 73 (53%) extra locks; 11 (8%) alarm; 41 (30%) other.

Dog: 21% participants; 73% non-participants

Extra Locks: 27% participants; 73% non-participants

Alarms: 15% participants; 85% non-participants

Other: 38% participants; 62% non-participants

Four participants who had responded "yes" to questions 9a declined to answer 9b and two non-participants who had responded "yes" to question 7a declined to answer 7b.

Chi-square value: 4.49 (not-significant).

b. Interpretation:

The most popular method used by both groups is extra locks while residential alarms are rarely used in either group (only 13 of 204 respondents who had stated that they were taking some other precautions against burglary).

5. Neighbors Burglarized:

Participants in Ident were asked if they knew if any of their neighbors had been burglarized since they (the participants) had joined the program. Non-participants were asked if any of their neighbors had been burglarized in the past year. These two questions were compared, keeping in mind the difference in the time periods involved and the possible differences in interpreting the term "neighbor" on the part of the respondents.

a. Results:

Participants answered: 39 (30%) yes; 87 (67%) no;

and 3 (2%) don't know.

Non-participants answered: 80 (37%) yes; 123 (56%) no;
and 15 (7%) don't know.

Yes: 33% participant; 67% non-participant

No: 41% participant; 59% non-participant

Chi-square value: 2.41 (not-significant)

b. Interpretation:

It was thought that Ident might tend to displace burglaries from participating households to their neighbors. The answers to these questions give no evidence of such displacement; neighbors of non-participants appear to be burglarized about as frequently as those of participants.

6. Promotional Activities:

Participants, and non-participants who indicated they had heard about Operation Ident, were asked how they first learned of the program. Multiple answers were recorded if given.

a. Results:

Participants answered: 1 (1%) billboard; 12 (9%) TV; 4 (3%) radio; 27 (21%) newspaper; 30 (23%) Police-Community Relations; 16 (12%) Women's Crusade Against Crime; 3 (2%) library, police station or fire house; and 77 (59%) other (including friends, relatives, neighborhood organization, school, church, and place of employment).

Non-participants answered: 7 (3%) billboard; 41 (19%) TV; 14 (6%) radio; 45 (21%) newspaper; 9 (4%) Police-Community Relations; 1 (1%) Women's Crusade Against Crime; 5 (2%) library, police station, or fire house; 29 (13%) other.

Billboard: 13% participant; 87% non-participant

TV: 23% participant; 77% non-participant

Radio: 22% participant; 78% non-participant

Newspaper: 38% participant; 62% non-participant

Police-Community Relations: 77% participant; 23% non-participant

Women's Crusade Against Crime: 94% participant; 6% non-participant

Library, police station, fire house: 37% participant; 63% non-participant

Other: 73% participant; 27% non-participant

Chi-square value: (deleting rows in the test with cells containing a number less than 5): 51.96 (significant).

b. Interpretation:

The media having the most impact on the two groups of respondents were television and newspapers. Their reach was somewhat more effective with non-participants than with participants. Police-Community Relations efforts were most effective in reaching the participant group, except for those answers which were grouped into the "other" category (friends, relatives, etc. as listed above). Billboards and radio seem to be ineffective for both groups. Libraries, police stations, and fire houses, though appearing ineffective as a means of publicity in either group, have served well in their prime function as engraving tool distribution centers.

7. Reaction to Operation Ident:

Both groups of respondents were asked about their reaction to the Ident Program. In the case of non-participants who had never heard of Ident, a brief explanation was given before the question was asked.

a. Results:

Only one participant and seven non-participants out of 348

respondents expressed an unfavorable reaction.

b. Interpretation:

Most of the unfavorable reactions were due to a simple lack of enthusiasm toward the project, however, one non-participant felt that placing the "Blue Hand" decal on his residence would show burglars that he had possessions worth stealing.

B. Questions directed to participants only:

1. Use of Identification Numbers:

The identification number suggested for use in marking valuables, has been the individual's Missouri driver's license number. Engraved stolen property, if found, can be traced to the owner via Department of Revenue computerized files. The Ident participants were asked if this was the ID which they used.

a. Results:

Yes: 108 (83%); No: 21 (16%); Don't Know: 1 (1%)

b. Interpretation:

The results indicate very good cooperation in this area. Most who are not using the driver's license number are using social security numbers. Some have the mistaken idea that the driver's license number changes, however, this would occur only if a license expires and a new one issued later or if the licensee changes states.

2. Use of the "Blue Hand" stickers:

Participants in Ident have been asked to place "Blue Hand" decals on their doors and windows for the purpose of informing a would-be burglar that valuable property has been engraved for easy identification, thereby providing a deterrent. The participants were asked whether or not they had used these stickers.

a. Results:

Yes: 106 (82%); No: 24 (18%)

Note: Although these percentages are similar to those for the question regarding use of the driver's license number, the data does not indicate that people who failed to use the driver's license number also failed to post the decals.

b. Interpretation:

Again, the results of this question indicate good cooperation.

C. Questions directed to non-participants only:

1. Non-participant awareness of the program:

Non-participants were asked if they had ever heard of the Operation Ident program:

a. Results:

Yes: 107 (49%); No 111 (51%)

b. Interpretation:

Roughly half of the non-participants had heard of the program, quite a good response, considering the project's limited budget for promotional activities.

2. Willingness to Participate:

Those non-participants who had given favorable responses when asked their reaction to Ident were asked if they would like to join Operation Ident. Those answering "no" were asked "why not?".

a. Results:

Yes: 132 (63%); No 72 (34%); Undecided; 7 (3%)

b. Interpretation:

About two thirds of the respondents indicated that they would like to join. Based on the explanations received for "no" answers, reasons for not wanting to join were generally related to objections to the effort required to obtain and use the engraver or to a feeling of relative security derived from other precautions taken.

V. Cost and Time Considerations

The responsibilities assigned to the market research firm included review of the draft questionnaires, completion of 192 questionnaires using a given list of names and phone numbers, and conducting a training session for volunteer interviewers from the St. Louis Women's Crusade Against Crime. For this work they were paid \$935. Although the fee was not broken down into an amount for the calls and an amount for the other services, if the services had cost \$200, then the average cost per completed questionnaire would have been about \$3.83. The volunteer interviewers completed an additional 156 telephone interviews.

Additional tasks required to conduct a survey such as this include drawing the sample (which can be quite time consuming), designing and pretesting the questionnaires, and tabulating the results. Since some respondents are bound to be suspicious of the interviewer's motives, it will probably prove useful to notify the local Better Business Bureau of the survey prior to beginning the telephone interviews (this was done for the present survey).

The time required to complete the survey was about six weeks, from commencing design of the questionnaire to tabulation of the results. The actual telephoning was completed by the market research firm in about a week, and by the volunteers, in about two weeks. The procedure can be speeded up significantly, at increased cost, by having the sample and questionnaire developed by the contractor.

VI. Value of the Survey

The telephone survey permitted the Evaluation Unit and the project staff to obtain information on the impact of Operation Ident which could not have possibly been obtained from crime statistics and project activity data, the items most commonly available for project evaluation.

It provided an objective assessment of the effectiveness of the information dissemination aspects of the project, and supplied information on both participants and non-participants.

Telephone surveys of this magnitude, of course, provide only an estimate of the results a more complete survey might show. In addition, factors such as the construction of the questions, the attitudes and skills of the interviewers, the methods used to construct the sample, and the possible instability of public opinions may all affect the validity of the results. Despite these problems, business, industry, and government have used telephone surveys successfully for many years. The present experience with the Operation Ident survey indicates that such surveys may well have a valuable contribution to make to the planning and evaluation of crime control programs.

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