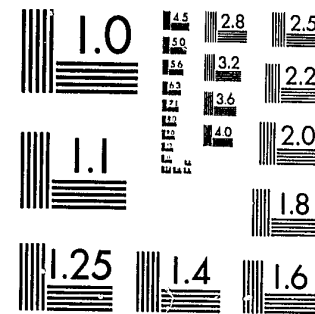National Criminal Justice Reference Service

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COPING WITH CRIME: FEAR AND RISK

MANAGEMENT IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

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COPING WITH CRIME: FEAR AND RISK MANAGEMENT
IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

Introduction

The concept "fear of crime" has received a great deal of attention
in social and evaluation research as well as in ordinary discourse and
political life. It has received this attention, almost independent of crime
itself, because of its impact upon the daily lives of many Americans.
Unlike serious criminal victimization, which strikes only an unfortunate
few in any given year, pollsters always find a disconcertingly large pro-
portion of the population reporting they worry about the problem. Many
who seem the most concerned about crime also are those for whom it
objectively does not appear to pose much of a threat--including women and
the elderly, who report relatively low rates of victimization in the Census
Bureau's crime surveys. As a result, whenever surveys or other opinion-
monitoring techniques are employed to examine crime, fear of crime measures
are almost certain to be employed as research or evaluative tools. The
fear of crime seems to be a social phenomena worthy of study in its own
right, and a profitable target for public policy.

Most recent social and evaluation research employing the rubric of
fear actually conceptualizes it in one of two distinct ways: as an object
of concern or as an estimate of risk. Those who conceptualize fear as
estimates of risk of victimization essentially ask respondents, "How likely
is it to happen to you?" For example, in a recent evaluation of a community
crime prevention program in Hartford, Conn., Fowler et. al. (1978) measured
the impact of the program on fear using a measure of risk. They asked
each respondent, on "a scale from 0 to 10," to estimate "during the course

-2-

of a year, how likely it is that someone would break into your (house/
apartment) when no one is home?" Estimates of risk also were gathered
to evaluate the Kansas City Preventive Patrol experiment (Kelling et. al.,
1974).

Those who think of fear as concern about victimization, on the other
hand, essentially ask, "How bad is it for you around here?" A typical
operationalization in this genre is the common survey question, "How safe
do you feel or would you feel alone on the streets of your neighborhood at
night?" This wording was recently used by Anne Schneider (Schneider and
Reiter, 1975) in a correlational evaluation of the impact of a high-
intensity street lighting program in Portland, Oregon.

These two conceptualizations of fear would seem to tap quite different
phenomena. "Concern" questions ask about the world "out there" and how it
might make you feel if you were exposed to its dangers. Risk questions,
on the other hand, ask how likely they are actually to happen to you.
The effect of crime on our lives would seem to be the things that intercede
between the two. These are things that people do in response to their
assessment of how bad things could be that bring their risks within
acceptable limits. We call these "coping with crime."

Based on how we assess our environment, there are at least two things
that people can do on a daily basis to cope with crime: they can act
to reduce their exposure to risk, and they can engage in defensive tactics
when they find themselves in an exposed position. By exposure to risk
I mean physical positioning in a high-risk environ (which is both a temporal
and spatial concept), while by defensive tactics I mean behaviors which
are intended to reduce one's vulnerability to predation within a given
environ. For personal crimes, exposure to risk is greatest in bad

neighborhoods, after dark, and in other conditions thought to promote danger. Defensive tactics against personal crimes include efforts to appear less desirable as a victim ("dressing down"), or too formidable (walking in a group). Together these comprise "risk management strategies," or the things people do to reduce their likelihood of being victimized. They are more likely to do these things when concern about potential victimization is high; however, while pursuing risk management strategies may reduce estimates of risk of victimization, the two should remain positively correlated. Defensive tactics do not always work perfectly, and almost everyone is forced by circumstance occasionally to brave the outside world. Coping with crime, however, should substantially ameliorate the linkage between concern about potential victimization and estimates of actual risk.

To reiterate:

a) the motivating force behind risk management maneuvers is concern about potential victimization; it is "exogenous" to this scheme, driven by such factors as neighborhood crime levels, personal vulnerability to attack, and episodic events;

b) concern stimulates attempts to manage risks, and those who limit their exposure to risk and engage in defensive tactics perceive less actual risk than their assessment of potential risks would lead us to predict;

c) those who assess their environment discomfortingly will continue to see themselves facing larger risks even in the face of these efforts, for they cannot always be pursued, and some times they fail.

Finally, all of these efforts should affect rates of victimization. One of the reasons why vigorous pursuit of risk management strategies should reduce perceived risks is that they should reduce victimization. While there are not data adequate for testing this assumption, available

evidence suggests that highly defensive and slightly exposed groups like the elderly in fact enjoy low rates of victimization as a result.

The Data

The data to test these hypotheses are drawn from a random digit dialing telephone survey of residents of three central cities: Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. The survey was conducted during the Fall of 1977, and has an effective sample size of about 1370, spread evenly across the three communities. A randomly-selected adult was interviewed within each sampled household. (For a more detailed discussion of the survey, see Skogan, 1978).

Each of the four concepts to be examined here was measured by two or more items in the survey. The measure of risk of personal victimization is constructed of responses to two questions. Each respondent was asked:

> For the next question I'd like you to think of a row of numbers from ZERO to TEN. Now, let the zero stand for NO POSSIBILITY AT ALL of something happening, and the ten will stand for it being EXTREMELY LIKELY that something could happen. On this row of numbers from zero to ten, how likely do you think it is that...

This introduction was followed by capsule descriptions of the crimes of rape, robbery, burglary, and assault by a stranger. Responses to these questions were then used to form an additive scale measuring risk of personal victimization. Estimates of the probability of being raped had to be dropped, for that question was asked only of women. Perceived risk of burglary, on the other hand, seemed relatively independent of the remaining personal crimes. Estimates of risk of victimization for robbery and stranger assault were strongly correlated, and together they formed a scale with a reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of .83.

The measure of defensive tactics was constructed from responses to four questions. Each respondent was asked:

> Now I have a list of things that some people do to protect themselves from being attacked or robbed on the street. As I read each one would you tell me whether you personally do it most of the time, sometimes, or almost never?

> When you go out after dark, how often do you get someone to go with you because of crime?

> How about taking something with you at night that could be used for protection from crime--like a dog, whistle, knife or a gun. How often do you do something like this?

> How often do you avoid certain places in your neighborhood at night?

Responses to these questions were correlated an average of +.39, and factor analysis indicated that they were single-factored. Added together they formed a scale with a reliability of .71.

The measure of exposure risk was constructed from responses to two questions:

> During the past week, about how many times did you leave your home and go outside after dark?

> In the past two weeks, about how many times have you gone somewhere in your neighborhood for evening entertainment--to go to a show or somewhere like that?

In each case the exact number of trips was recorded. The two measures were only moderately correlated, +.35, in part because only a few people sought nighttime entertainment in their locality. Added together, responses to the two items formed a scale with a reliability of .55.

Concern about potential victimization is measured by responses to two questions:

> How safe do you feel, or would you feel, being out alone in your neighborhood at night--very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

> How about during the day. How safe do you feel, or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood during the day--very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

Responses to those two items were very highly correlated, and together they formed an additive index with a reliability of .70.

These four indicators can be used to test the hypotheses about the relationship between concern about crime, risk management strategies, and estimates of risk. The bivariate correlations between each of them are presented in the lower quadrant of the matrix in Table 1. There it can be seen that concern about potential victimization is moderately correlated with estimates of risk of victimization, but that both are correlated as expected with measures of risk management. Those who report making more defensive moves also report going out less and thus limiting their exposure to risk as well.

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Table 1 goes about here

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The best estimates of the strength of these relationships are reported above the diagonal in the matrix. These correlations have been corrected to correct them for attenuation attributable to measurement error. The reliability of each measure sets an upper limit on the magnitude of the correlation it can potentially exhibit with another variable. Correction for attenuation adjusts the observed correlations in terms of these upper limits, to better approximate the correlation between the true score components of each of the measures. The formula for doing so is,

Table 1

OBSERVED CORRELATIONS, RELIABILITY ESTIMATES,
AND CORRECTED CORRELATIONS

		CORRECTED CORRELATIONS				Reliability Estimates	Mean	St. Dev
		Concern	Exposure	Tactics	Risk			
OBSERVED CORRELATIONS	Concern		-.54	.71	.55	.70	3.42	1.40
	Exposure	-.34		-.53	-.24	.55	4.99	4.12
	Tactics	.50	-.33		.42	.71	1.80	.659
	Risk	.42	-.16	.32		.83	3.16	2.88

(N=1178)

$$r_c = \frac{r_o}{\sqrt{Rel_1 \times Rel_2}}$$

where r_o is the observed correlation, Rel_1 and Rel_2 are reliability estimates for each measure, and r_c is the corrected correlation (Bohrnstedt, 1970).

Based upon these corrected estimates of the true correlation between the variables, concern about crime seems to be a powerful predictor of both exposure to risk and defensive tactics; those correlations are -.54 and +.71, respectively. As people become more concerned about the threat of crime in their neighborhoods they are likely to do something about it.

The psychological effect of engaging in these risk-management maneuvers can be assessed by examining how they serve to reduce levels of fear reported by urban dwellers, relative to their reading of the dangers of their environment. To do this we examine the effect of controlling for our measures of exposure to risk and defensive tactics upon the correlation between levels of concern and estimates of actual risk, using multiple regression. This analysis indicates that engaging in risk management strategies does ameliorate levels of risk to some extent: the correlation between concern and risk drops from +.55 to +.40, when we take into account what people do to bring the latter within acceptable limits. However, living in a fear-provoking environment still continues to be a major determinant of people's assessments of their likelihood of being victimized by personal crime, regardless of their best efforts.

The relatively small reduction in the strength of this environment-risk assessment linkage contributed by people's actions, 27 percent, suggests the limits of personal actions to cope with crime. The fear of

crime problem may be exacerbated by the fact that people cannot do much as individual citizens to reduce their perceived risks, given the environment within which they must lead their daily lives.
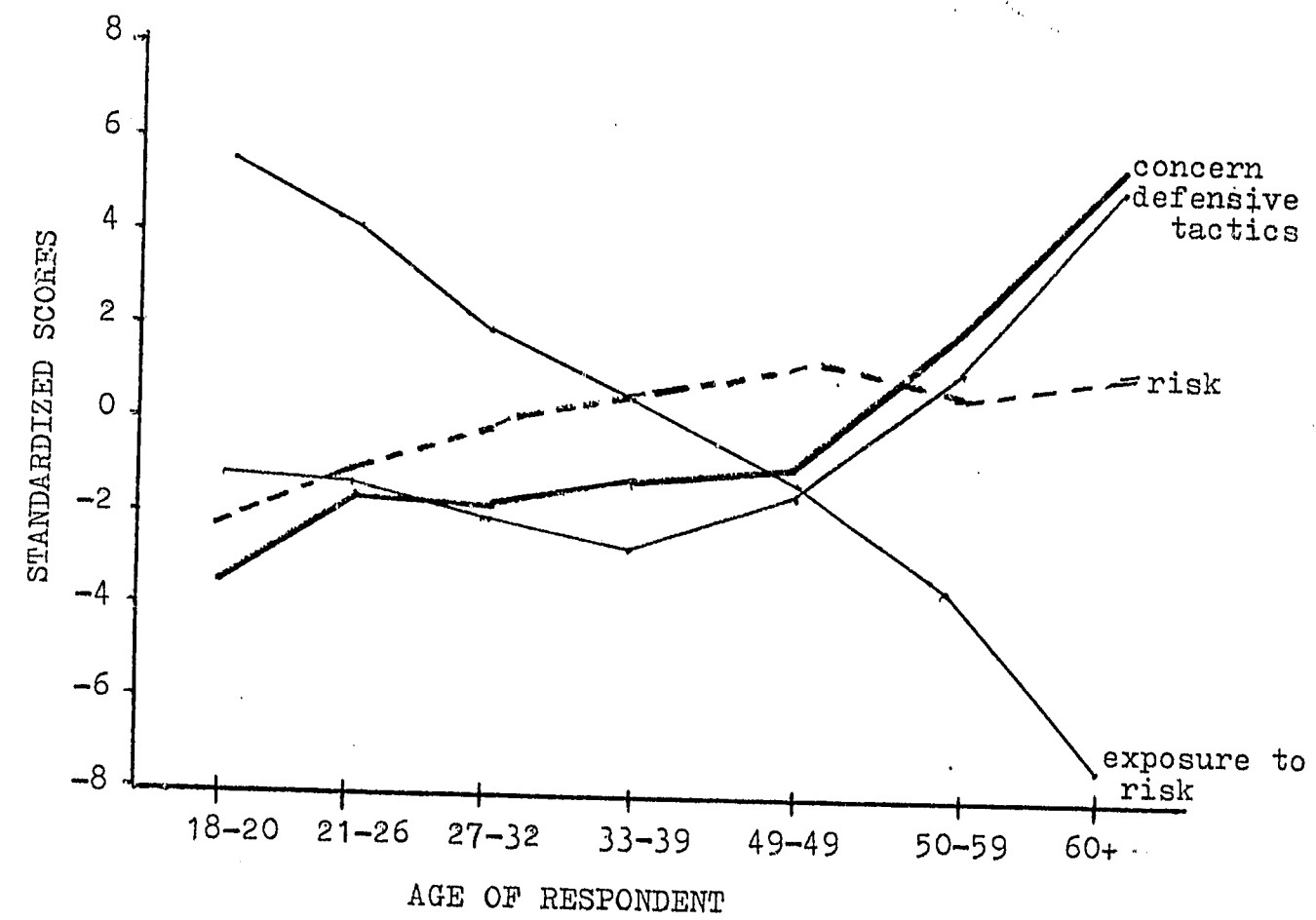
A search for subgroups in the population who do cope fairly successfully with crime revealed, interestingly, that it is the urban elderly for whom the gap between concern about crime in the neighborhood and estimates of personal risk of attack is the most extreme. Figure 1 charts the variables examined here, by age. In each case, the indicators have been converged to standardized scores to facilitate displaying them on the same scale.

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Figure 1 goes about here

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As we can see in Figure 1, concern about crime stays relatively constant across younger age categories, then begins to rise after age 50. The extent to which our respondents reported engaging in defensive tactics parallels concern about neighborhood crime quite closely. Exposure to risk drops steadily with age, generally paralleling concern with crime (but dropping "too" rapidly among younger age groups). Estimates of risk generally rise with concern about crime through the forties; however, after that point they fail to rise with increasing concern about crime, but rather pursue a more moderate course. It is among the elderly, who are by far the least exposed to risk and the most prone to take defensive measures when they are exposed, that estimates of risk of victimization are most "brought under control" relative to concern about neighborhood crime.

It may be, therefore, that estimates of risk of victimization are effected only when levels of risk management are extremely high. Among

FIGURE 1
FEAR AND RISK MANAGEMENT, BY AGE

those over sixty, 58 percent replied that they "never go out" in response

to our questions about exposure to risk, which was twenty-five percentage

points higher than those in the next most limited category. In the

aggregate only 20 percent of those under sixty reported similar levels

of immobility. Differences by age were just as extreme for the component

measures of the defensive tactics scale, especially that asking about

"going with someone" because of crime. In fact, by these measures only

25 percent of the elderly were at all vulnerable to victimization by

street crime--the remainder either never went out or always went with

an escort.

   If these extreme levels of defensive maneuvering and very low levels

of exposure to risk explain why the elderly report lower estimates of

risk of victimization than they "should," they may also explain why

rates of victimization are so low among this group as well. All recent

analyses of the fear-of-crime problem among the elderly have pointed to

the seeming discrepancy between their levels of fear (here "concern") and

levels of victimization. This analysis suggests that the crucial mediating

linkage between the two may be the fact that elders "cope with crime"

more successfully (or at least more extensively) than most.

   This proposition is impossible to test with any extant data, however.

First, survey measures are necessarily retrospective measures, asking

respondents about what has happened to them in the recent past, while most

surveys ask about behaviors and life styles in the present tense. Thus,

these data are more suitable for examining what victimization does to

people's behavior than it is for asking what people's behavior does to their

chances of being victimized. For probing the latter we need panel data which

links people's responses to questions about victimization and activity

patterns over time.

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END

routinely referred.[11] No precise measure of agency availability exists, but interviews with agency personnel provide relevant information. More than half of the agencies included were privately sponsored, and 9 percent were operated by police agencies; the remainder were operated by other public agencies. They offered a wide variety of services. More than four-fifths provided crisis counseling, while about 60 percent offered psychological counseling services and assistance in obtaining welfare. Half provided temporary shelter and assistance in obtaining employment.

A common complaint about referral agencies is that they accept clients only from specific locales, not from broad areas that subsume several police jurisdictions. Police referral operations are therefore thought to be hampered by confusing eligibility requirements. Another complaint is that referral agencies are frequently closed when the police want to use their services (after 5 pm and on weekends) (Norman, 1972; Bard, 1970; Liebman and Schwartz, 1973).

Table 10 belies the complaints about geographic coverage; 63 percent of the agencies studied provided services to areas equal to or larger than an entire county.[12] Only 10 percent were restricted to a neighborhood or designated service area not coterminous with municipal boundaries or larger areas. Very few agencies were actually neighborhood-based; exceptions were three settlement houses in Rochester and a victim assistance program in St. Petersburg that had selected a high-crime neighborhood in the city as its target area. With the exception of the Family Crisis Intervention Team organized by the Rochester Police Department, all social service agencies organized by police departments were restricted to the sponsoring department's jurisdiction.

> Table 10 About Here

Many of the agencies restricted to a single city or neighborhood were branches of an organization that served the entire county or metropolitan area. For instance, the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, under a decentralized service delivery arrangement, had two service networks in each of the two counties in metropolitan Tampa-St. Petersburg. District 5, for example, split Pinellas County into a north county network serving Clearwater, Tarpon Springs, and Largo, and a south county network serving St. Petersburg and Pinellas Park.

Data on agencies' hours of operation and their areas of primary interest lends some support to those who complain about agency unavailability during certain periods. More than half of the agencies whose primary concerns were juvenile problems, family crisis, victim assistance, and aiding the elderly were open only during regular business hours Monday through Friday.[13] Yet only 30 percent of observed encounters concerning juvenile problems and domestic violence occurred between 8 am and 5 pm; the remainder occurred after many of these agencies had closed for the day, effectively removing the possibility of receiving referrals. Conversely, more than half of agencies whose primary concerns were public intoxication, mental health, runaways, and problems of the indigent were open 24 hours a day.

Although some agencies for juveniles and family crises were open 24 hours daily during the week, only a few were open on weekends. However, 40 percent of observed encounters involving these problems occurred on Saturdays and Sundays. Since police encounters with problem juveniles or quarreling families are common during nighttime or weekend shifts, complaints

that few referral agencies are open during these times may be justified. Representatives from agencies that operate 24 hours daily were no more likely than others to perceive that their organizations received a large proportion of their clients from the police, however. This may reflect the fact that the most common means of police referral does not involve direct contact between police officers and helping agencies. Rather, most referrals involve police provision of information to citizens who then contact the agency themselves.

Even though most of the agencies interviewed were mentioned by officers as ones to which they commonly made referrals, representatives of nearly 80 percent of them said that they received less than half of their clients through police referral. Although clients referred by police comprised a larger share of the case load of public agencies than of private ones, police referrals were only a small portion of social service agency business. This is partly a reflection of the low incidence of police referral. Nearly all agency officials interviewed had authorized police to offer their name and address to potential clients, but felt that they received cases infrequently from police. Forty percent of these officials indicated that police under-utilized their agencies' services. There was thus a divergence of opinion between officers who said they routinely made referrals in cases involving juveniles, domestic problems, and public inebriation, and agency representatives who generally felt that their services were underutilized by police. This is likely the result of the large number of suggested referrals, those in which the police did not take direct action to place citizens in contact with helping agencies.

Departmental Policies, Guidelines, and Structure

Interviews with police administrators and field observation of patrol officers revealed no clear-cut departmental referral policy. The only

consistent guidelines were those mandated by various state laws. New York and Florida, for example, require that persons found drunk in public be taken to detoxification centers rather than arrested. However, officers have considerable discretion in deciding whether a person is drunk, which requires referral, or whether he is disorderly, which allows arrest. Further research into the effects of departmental referral policies is required before their impact can be adequately assessed.

Several departmental structural variables affect referral. With the increasing emphasis on social service provision by police agencies, many departments have established their own internal units that can either provide social services directly to citizens or assist persons referred to other units of the department. Since very few departments sampled had established such units, conclusions must be tentative. It appears that officers from departments with internal social service units, such as family crisis intervention teams or victim assistance programs, refer at a rate nearly three times that of officers from departments with no special units. Increased internal referral, however, does not result in increased referral to outside agencies. Apparently officers are more comfortable referring to units with which they are more familiar or which they perceive as effective. Internal referral is also a function of department size; larger departments are often more specialized and their rate of internal referral is correspondingly higher than that for smaller departments.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

Conclusions derived from research presented in this paper are tentative and suggestive. Initial observation of more than 900 full patrol shifts in

24 police departments across three metropolitan areas suggests that referral by patrol officers during encounters with citizens is infrequent. When compared with other officer actions, however, referral is not uncommon. Referrals were observed in 13 percent of police-citizen encounters and involved 11 percent of their participants. When only direct referrals were considered (those in which police take active steps to attach citizens with helping agencies rather than simply suggesting the liaison and facilitating it through information provision), the referral rate dropped by more than half. Whether this finding is typical of referral rates in other departments awaits additional investigation.

No clear-cut determinant of referral rates emerged. Characteristics and attitudes of encounter participants had almost no bearing on the likelihood that a referral would occur. Victims were more likely than other participants to be referred. Additionally, whether the participant was known to police, especially as a prior complainant, increased the chance of a referral. While most of the small literature on patrol officer referral discusses social service agency involvement, figures showed that referral was most common in encounters involving violent crimes such as rape, robbery, and assault. Differences among categories of encounters, however, are not large. Victims were referred more often than other participants especially when they were upset, angry, or emotionally distraught, as is likely with violent crimes. On the other hand, citizens who had information they wanted from, or wanted to offer, the police were also referred frequently. Referrals in these instances were probably limited to information exchange only. Referrals can thus vary significantly in scope and purpose.

The lack of clear findings suggests a retrenchment from the general discussion presented here. While it is important to provide an empirical

description of a phenomenon that has been described only in the vaguest terms, at least one scholar has suggested that to understand crucial issues in policing requires a problem-oriented approach (Goldstein, 1979). The approach taken here was to examine the full range of police-citizen encounters, to look for those in which a referral was made, and to try to explain why. This was a necessary step in understanding the extent to which patrol officer referral exists and the types of problems that are most often referred. But to understand referral and to investigate its impact requires, following Goldstein, selecting a specific problem, noting those encounters involving that problem in which a referral occurs, and examining the activities of both police and participants. Of course, Goldstein readily admits that this sort of research requires extremely costly methods of identification and elaboration. An initial step in this direction might be to choose a particular problem for which referral is hypothesized to be appropriate, such as instances of domestic violence or family crises, select those encounters in which a referral occurs, and compare them to those in which no referral occurs.

Also necessary for future research is precise delineation of departmental referral policy. Although most administrators interviewed at least paid lip service to referral, they produced few clearly-specified written policies or procedures regarding referral other than those dictated by state law (usually in the case of alcoholics or the mentally ill). Research is required that determines the extent to which departmental referral guidelines exist.

Finally, there is clear need to assess referral's effectiveness in meeting the goals for which it was designed. Does patrol officer referral

reduce the impact of the criminal justice system upon the individual? Is the citizen helped significantly when referred? What are the effects of referral for police? Is manpower freed for assignment to other duties? Is patrol officer time spent handling encounters significantly reduced when a referral is made? Does referral reduce overall police workload, shifting it to other sources? The police must decide if referral is a viable means of handling certain situations, determine what those situations are, decide who should be allowed to make referrals and when, and set about to make them effective.

Police referral is a definitionally vague concept, plagued not only by competing scholarly interpretations, but by intransigent administrators, suspicious police officers, confused community agency personnel, and a public that must often wonder what to expect from its police. What is required is further research to determine those police-citizen encounters in which referral is viable and acceptable to citizens, police, and community agency personnel. This dictates an understanding of laws mandating referral in specific instances. We need to specify the problems to which referral can apply, investigate to see if it is indeed applied, and then, most importantly, ascertain referral's effectiveness in meeting citizen and departmental needs. Referral must not, as Goldstein (1979: 251) warns, become an end in itself. If referral is trumpeted as a means of reducing problems of both citizens and police, then fails to produce, nothing will have come of it except raised expectations that end in bitter disappointment. The police, and those who study their habits, must concern themselves with the consequences of referral if it is to become an accepted, respected, and effective means of police response.

Table 1

Frequency of Police Referral

Referral Type	Encounters N	Encounters Percent	Individuals Involved in Encounters N	Individuals Involved in Encounters Percent
Total Referrals	741	13	811	11
Direct Referrals	307		312	
Suggested Referrals	434		499	
No Referral	4,947	87	6,574	89
Total	5,688		7,385	

Table 2

Percentage of Citizens Involved in Encounters
Who Were Referred, by Type of Problem

Type of Problem	Percent of Citizens Referred	Percent of all Referrals
Violent Crimes	17	4
Nonviolent Crimes	12	16
Interpersonal Conflict	11	13
Medical Assistance	15	5
Traffic Problems	10	21
Dependent Persons	16	4
Public Nuisances	10	10
Suspicious Circumstances	3	9
Assistance	14	8
Citizen Wants Information	15	3
Citizen Wants to Give Information	15	3
Internal Operations	4	4
		100

Table 3

Types of Problems in Encounters, by Type of Agency Receiving Police Referrals
(in percentages)

Type of Problem	Internal Social Service	Internal Law En- forcement	Community Social Service	Other Law En- forcement	General Public Service	Private Service	All Agencies
Violent Crimes	25	13	20	32	4	7	(55)
Nonviolent Crimes	3	40	4	17	3	32	(121)
Interpersonal Conflict	20	11	22	26	0	21	(115)
Medical Assistance	0	2	42	23	2	31	(52)
Traffic Problems	0	14	12	5	11	60	(160)
Dependent Persons	18	12	57	8	0	6	(49)
Public Nuisances	21	13	8	31	15	11	(70)
Suspicious Circumstances	11	74	0	16	0	0	(18)
Assistance	3	17	13	8	26	33	(81)
Citizen Wants Information	6	29	9	26	21	9	(33)
Citizen Gives Information	7	47	0	20	13	13	(26)
Internal Operations	17	50	0	25	0	8	(11)
Percent of Total	8	20	15	21	8	27	100
Total	(65)	(165)	(124)	(169)	(67)	(221)	(811)

Table 4

Effect of Citizen Characteristics on Likelihood of Referral

Characteristics	Percent Referred	N
Sex		
Male	10	4,653
Female	13	2,726
chi square = 16.02 (sig. at .001)		
Race		
White	11	4,807
Black	11	2,405
Other Nonwhite	9	157
chi square = 0.92 (NS)		
Age		
12 and Under	7	210
13 - 18	11	863
19 - 35	10	3,241
36 - 65	12	2,662
66 and Over	14	384
chi square = 10.87 (NS)		

Table 5

Percent of Encounter Participants Referred, by Role in Encounter and Type of Problem

Citizen's Role in Encounter	Violent Crimes	Nonviolent Crimes	Traffic Problems	Assistance	Information	Total Pct.	N
Victim	17	15	27	19	28	18	2,118
Suspect, Potential Offender	10	6	6	17	9	10	1,874
Other (Witness, Informed Person)	8	5	8	14	7	9	2,781
Total	1,282	2,501	1,553	1,245	692		6,773
chi square	19.44	58.13	113.12	4.12	38.30	154.49	
significance	.001	.001	.001	NS	.001	.001	

Table 6

Percent of Encounter Participants Referred, by Emotional State, Demeanor, and Type of Problem

Participants' Emotional State	Violent Crimes	Nonviolent Crimes	Traffic Problems	Assistance	Information	Total
Calm	11	9	10	13	11	10
Upset or Angry	16	13	14	25	8	16
Other	8	4	23	20	17	14
Total	1,282	2,500	1,553	1,242	691	7,265
chi square	6.60	5.32	3.92	14.47	0.36	26.43
significance	NS	NS	NS	.001	NS	.001
Participant's Demeanor						
Businesslike	13	9	11	14	11	11
Pleading, Afraid	18	9	20	32	29	18
Detached	9	7	3	21	6	8
Other	6	5	9	19	0	11
Total	1,282	2,501	1,550	1,242	691	7,266
chi square	5.38	1.41	7.32	11.41	3.07	15.05
significance	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	.001

Table 7

Effect of Officer Characteristics on Likelihood of Referral

Characteristics	Percent Referred	N
Race		
White	11	6,239
Black	9	729
Other Nonwhite	9	117
chi square = 4.69 (NS)		7,085
Age		
22 - 25	10	1,439
26 - 30	11	3,096
31 - 40	12	2,189
41 - 54	10	378
chi square = 4.56 (NS)		7,102
Years on Force		
Less than 1	9	240
1 - 5	10	4,371
6 - 10	12	1,918
11 - 22	12	573
chi square = 6.82 (NS)		7,102
Educational Level		
High School or Less	11	1,470
Some College, AA	10	3,763
College Graduate	12	1,513
Some Graduate School	17	356
chi square = 9.32 (NS)		7,102

Table 8

Officer Attitudes on the Value of Police Referral, by Type of Problem and Percent of Each Type Referred

Type of Problem in which Referral Made

Referral is a Waste of Officer's Time	Violent Crimes	Nonviolent Crimes	Traffic Problems	Assistance	Information	Total Pct.	N
Strongly Agree	23	7	5	7	11	11	165
Agree	10	11	9	12	8	10	1,168
Disagree	10	9	10	15	10	11	4,020
Strongly Disagree	21	7	12	15	13	12	1,602
Total	1,210	2,378	1,492	1,197	678		6,955
chi square	24.76	4.00	2.07	2.29	2.27	4.22	
significance	.001	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	

Table 9

Effect of Officers' Prior Acquaintance with Citizens on Police Referral

	Percent Referred	N
Citizen not Known	11	6,344
Citizen Known as Suspect	13	276
Citizen Known as Prior Complainant	21	316
Citizen Known as Friend	8	142
Citizen Known, Unclear How	10	255
chi square = 33.75 (sig. at .001)		7,333

Table 10

Geographic Area Served by Referral Agencies

Area Served	Number of Agencies	Percent of Agencies
Part of City	10	10%
Entire City	13	13%
Part of County	15	15%
Entire County	33	32%
Area Larger Than County	32	31%
	103	100%

[1] Several studies have examined what patrol officers do (often measured by the frequency and type of dispatched runs they receive) and how they allocate their time while on patrol (Wilson, 1968; Bercal, 1970; McManus, 1970; Webster, 1970; Reiss, 1971; Allen and Percy, 1979). Officers are commonly portrayed as arresting suspects, preserving evidence, issuing citations, writing reports, controlling traffic, and providing first aid. That officers also refer citizens to reduce the impact of the criminal justice system, reduce police involvement, provide assistance, or furnish information is usually overlooked by those who chronicle police activities. McManus (1970) reports that referral is generally downplayed by citizens as well. He cites a public opinion survey which ranked 32 police functions by order of importance; referral of citizen complaints (no other type of referral was mentioned) ranked only 24th.

[2] The social problems, chosen after a careful literature search, were: public intoxication, mental illness, drug abuse, family crises, juvenile delinquency, runaways, victim assistance, aid to the elderly, aid to the indigent, and suicide prevention (see Eric J. Scott, et al., 1979, Case Disposition: An Assessment of Literature on Police Referral Practices).

[3] For a discussion of the characteristics and practices of the referral agencies sampled, see Eric J. Scott and Analee Moore (1980), Patterns of Police-Referral Agency Interaction, U.S. Government Printing Office, forthcoming.

[4] An encounter was defined as any face-to-face interaction between a citizen or group of citizens and a police officer that pertained to a public safety matter. Operationally, three verbal exchanges were required except in important interactions such as shots being fired or a physical fight.

[5] Additional research into patrol officer activities is required to determine the "normal" level of referral. Referral must be compared with other means of police case handling, including arrest, warning, counsel and release, and report taking. Handling between 10 and 15 percent of incidents by referral may be the norm for officers in most departments. Police Services Study data allow comparison of the frequency of referral with that of other patrol officer actions during encounters. While officers made referrals in 13 percent of observed encounters, arrests were made in only 5 percent and assistance provided in only 9 percent. Officers furnished information in 31 percent of the encounters; warned, ticketed, or lectured citizens in 30 percent; and mediated citizens' problems (settling arguments, comforting and reassuring persons, talking persons into leaving the scene) in 17 percent. Referral clearly is more common or just as common as some more widely recognized officer actions. Limiting consideration to direct referrals only, however, places referral toward the bottom of the list of common actions taken during encounters.

[6]For example, a juvenile who is picked up by a patrol officer for a status offense may be remanded to the youth division. If a youth officer then refers the juvenile for counseling, this referral is not included in the analysis. We are concerned only with patrol officer referral.

[7]Analysis of individuals rather than encounters allows discussion of participants' characteristics, including sex, race, and age. Analysis at the encounter level is limited to discussion of the types of problems referred.

[8]See Eric J. Scott (1980) Calls for Service: Citizen Demand and Initial Police Response for a detailed discussion of the types of service calls included within each of the 12 categories.

[9]Consider, however, that calculations in this table are based on small sample sizes. The largest number of referrals per problem category was 160 while the smallest was 11. Realizing that these figures resulted from observation of 7,385 citizens involved in 5,688 encounters that occurred in 24 police departments over a period of three months, it is clear not only that conclusions must be tentative, but that the larger sample size needed for more definite conclusions will be very costly indeed to obtain.

[10]Encounter types were grouped for ease of display. Violent crimes here include interpersonal conflicts. Nonviolent crimes include all property crimes plus incidents classified as suspicious circumstances or public nuisances. Traffic problems include only those encounters listed under this category in previous tables. Assistance includes general and medical assistance plus aid to dependent persons. Information covers both offering and receiving information plus encounters involving internal police operations.

[11]Given the large number of helping agencies present in each research site, it was quickly determined that identifying and interviewing each agency would be impossible. In Rochester, the smallest of the three sites, an initial census was attempted, but the number of agencies was still prohibitively large. Only those mentioned frequently by officers and other knowledgeables were selected for interviewing.

[12]Discussion here is limited to agencies that provide at least 1 of the 10 services noted in Footnote 2. Of course ambulance firms, tow truck operators, and other providers of emergency services are usually available on a 24 hour basis. Other service agencies, such as those discussed here, may not be as readily available.

[13]Agencies which primarily handle these problems represent more than half of the total in our sample. More than 60 percent of agencies handling juveniles, the most common primary interest area, were open only during daytime hours.

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