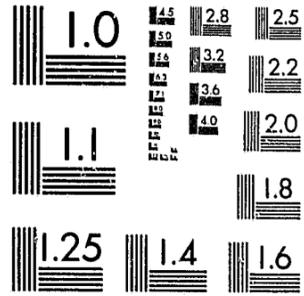


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Delinquency, Adult Crime Be II A COMPARISON OF TWO OFFENSE SERIOUSNESS SCALES

Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bulletin

The Severity of Crime

January 1988

How serious is a murder? Or a rape? Or, for that matter, a petty theft? Do such questions have any meaning? Would their answers have any utility?

The public's ranking of the severity of crimes was measured through a national survey. The National Survey of Crime Severity (NSCS) was conducted in 1977. It described 204 illegal events—from play-

The severity index represents an innovative way of looking at crimes. It points toward prior and reaffirms basic values. The time about which they are early concerned, and white-collar program thrusts a program of the Department of Justice. Some of the work is needed.

Does punishment promote juvenile delinquency?

A More Precise Evaluation of the Effects of Sanctions

TABLE 1. SERIOUSNESS OF POLICE CONTACTS: ORDINAL RANKING OF CATEGORIES AND THE OFFENSES INCLUDED IN EACH

Score	Offense Category
6	Felony Against Persons: The following offenses of 6 when treated as felonies by the police. Homicide
	Robbery
	Felony Against Property: The following offenses of 5 as felonies by the police. Burglary

96013

A COMPARISON
OF
TWO OFFENSE SERIOUSNESS SCALES

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NCJRS

NOV 23 1984

ACQUISITIONS

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A Comparison of Two Offense Seriousness Scales

Kathleen Anderson

Introduction

There are three general approaches to scaling seriousness of offenses: the survey approach, the legalistic approach, and the personal assessment approach. We will examine and compare examples of the first two of these three approaches.

The seriousness scale presented in The Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, January 1984, The Severity of Crime and in abbreviated form in Report to the Nation on Crime and Justice, NCJ-87068, October 1983, pp. 4-5, will be compared with the Racine offense seriousness scale in this paper. The scale described in The Severity of Crime was developed by the Center for Studies in Criminology and Criminal Law at the University of Pennsylvania and directed by Marvin E. Wolfgang and Robert M. Figlio. It is based on a sample of 60,000 people who were asked to respond to a large number of survey items (one sentence descriptions of criminal acts) by ranking them on a subjective/relative basis. The 60,000 sets of responses were accumulated, averaged, and a rank-order was assigned to the items based on their average scores. The final product was a scale of 204 items that range in seriousness scores from .2 to 72.1. Hereafter, this system of seriousness rank will be referred to as the BJS-WF Scale. An abbreviated version is presented on the following pages.

How serious are various types of crimes?

The public's ranking of the severity of crimes was measured through a national survey

The National Survey of Crime Severity (NSCS) was conducted in 1977. It described 204 illegal events—from playing hooky from school to planting a bomb that killed 20 people in a public building. This survey of a nationwide sample of people is the largest measure ever made of how the public ranks the seriousness of specific kinds of offenses.

Severity scores were developed by asking a national sample of people to assign scores of any value they felt was appropriate to specific questionnaire items. Because of the large number of items in the severity scale, no one was asked to respond to all

the items. One innovation of the survey was that people were allowed to assign any value they felt appropriate to an item—the scale had no upper limits. Mathematical techniques were used to take everyone's answers and convert them to ratio scores that reflect the feelings of everyone in the sample. These scores were derived from geometric means that were calculated from the various scores assigned by the people who responded to the questionnaire.

The National Survey of Crime Severity found that many diverse groups of people generally agree about the relative severity of specific crimes

However, the severity scores assigned by crime victims are generally higher

than those assigned by nonvictims. For most people, the severity of a crime of theft depends on the dollar value of the loss rather than on the background of the person making the judgment.

There are some differences, however, among different groups of people.

- The severity scores assigned by blacks and members of other racial groups are generally lower than those assigned by whites.
- Older people found thefts with large losses to be slightly more severe than did people of other age groups.

How do people rank the severity of crime?

Severity score and offense

72.1—Planting a bomb in a public building. The bomb explodes and 20 people are killed.

52.8—A man forcibly rapes a woman. As a result of physical injuries, she dies.

43.2—Robbing a victim at gunpoint. The victim struggles and is shot to death.

39.2—A man stabs his wife. As a result, she dies.

35.7—Stabbing a victim to death.

35.6—Intentionally injuring a victim. As a result, the victim dies.

33.8—Running a narcotics ring.

27.9—A woman stabs her husband. As a result, he dies.

26.3—An armed person skyjacks an airplane and demands to be flown to another country.

25.9—A man forcibly rapes a woman. No other physical injury occurs.

24.9—Intentionally setting fire to a building causing \$100,000 worth of damage.

22.9—A parent beats his young child with his fists. The child requires hospitalization.

21.2—Kidnaping a victim

20.7—Selling heroin to others for resale.

19.5—Smuggling heroin into the country.

19.5—Killing a victim by recklessly driving an automobile.

17.9—Robbing a victim of \$10 at gunpoint. The victim is wounded and requires hospitalization.

16.9—A man drags a woman into an alley, tears her clothes, but flees before she is physically harmed or sexually attacked.

16.4—Attempting to kill a victim with a gun. The gun misfires and the victim escapes unharmed.

15.9—A teenage boy beats his mother with his fists. The mother requires hospitalization.

15.5—Breaking into a bank at night and stealing \$100,000.

14.1—A doctor cheats on claims he makes to a Federal health insurance plan for patient services.

13.9—A legislator takes a bribe from a company to vote for a law favoring the company.

13.0—A factory knowingly gets rid of its waste in a way that pollutes the water supply of a city.

12.2—Paying a witness to give false testimony in a criminal trial.

12.0—A police officer takes a bribe not to interfere with an illegal gambling operation.

12.0—Intentionally injuring a victim. The victim is treated by a doctor and hospitalized.

11.8—A man beats a stranger with his fists. He requires hospitalization.

11.4—Knowingly lying under oath during a trial.

11.2—A company pays a bribe to a legislator to vote for a law favoring the company.

10.9—Stealing property worth \$10,000 from outside a building.

10.5—Smuggling marijuana into the country for resale.

10.4—Intentionally hitting a victim with a lead pipe. The victim requires hospitalization.

10.3—Illegally selling barbiturates, such as prescription sleeping pills, to others for resale.

10.3—Operating a store that knowingly sells stolen property.

10.0—A government official intentionally hinders the investigation of a criminal offense.

9.7—Breaking into a school and stealing equipment worth \$1,000.

9.7—Walking into a public museum and stealing a painting worth \$1,000.

9.6—Breaking into a home and stealing \$1,000.

9.6—A police officer knowingly makes a false arrest.

9.5—A public official takes \$1,000 of public money for his own use.

9.4—Robbing a victim of \$10 at gunpoint. No physical harm occurs.

9.3—Threatening to seriously injure a victim.

9.2—Several large companies illegally fix the retail prices of their products.

8.6—Performing an illegal abortion.

8.5—Selling marijuana to others for resale.

8.5—Intentionally injuring a victim. The victim is treated by a doctor but is not hospitalized.

8.2—Knowing that a shipment of cooking oil is bad, a store owner decides to sell it anyway. Only one bottle is sold and the purchaser is treated by a doctor but not hospitalized.

7.9—A teenage boy beats his father with his fists. The father requires hospitalization.

7.7—Knowing that a shipment of cooking oil is bad, a store owner decides to sell it anyway.

7.5—A person, armed with a lead pipe, robs a victim of \$10. No physical harm occurs.

Almost everyone agrees that violent crime is more serious than property crime

However, people make distinctions about seriousness depending on the circumstances of the crime. For example, an assault is viewed as more serious if a parent assaults a child than if a man assaults his wife, even though both victims require hospitalization. These differences are greater for assaults that result in death.

In deciding severity, people seem to take into account such factors as—

- The ability of the victim to protect him/herself
- Extent of injury and loss
- For property crimes, the type of business or organization from which the property is stolen

- The relationship of the offender to the victim.

"White-collar" crimes, such as fraud against consumers, cheating on income taxes, pollution by factories, pricefixing, and accepting of bribes, are viewed as seriously as (or more seriously than) many of the conventional property and violent crimes.

Within particular categories of crime, severity assessments are affected by factors such as whether or not injury occurred and the extent of property loss. For example, all burglaries or all robberies are not scored at the same severity level because of the differing characteristics of each event (even though all of the events fit into the same general crime category).

7.4—Illegally getting monthly welfare checks.

7.3—Threatening a victim with a weapon unless the victim gives money. The victim gives \$10 and is not harmed.

7.3—Breaking into a department store and stealing merchandise worth \$1,000.

7.2—Signing someone else's name to a check and cashing it.

6.9—Stealing property worth \$1,000 from outside a building.

6.5—Using heroin.

6.5—An employer refuses to hire a qualified person because of that person's race.

6.4—Getting customers for a prostitute.

6.3—A person, free on bail for committing a serious crime, purposefully fails to appear in court on the day of his trial.

6.2—An employee embezzles \$1,000 from his employer.

5.4—Possessing some heroin for personal use.

5.4—A real estate agent refuses to sell a house to a person because of that person's race.

5.4—Threatening to harm a victim unless the victim gives money. The victim gives \$10 and is not harmed.

5.3—Loaning money at an illegally high interest rate.

5.1—A man runs his hands over the body of a female victim, then runs away.

5.1—A person, using force, robs a victim of \$10. No physical harm occurs.

4.9—Snatching a handbag containing \$10 from a victim on the street.

4.8—A man exposes himself in public.

4.6—Carrying a gun illegally.

4.5—Cheating on Federal income tax return.

4.4—Picking a victim's pocket of \$100.

4.2—Attempting to break into a home but running away when a police car approaches.

3.8—Turning in a false fire alarm.

3.7—A labor union official illegally threatens to organize a strike if an employer hires nonunion workers.

3.6—Knowingly passing a bad check.

3.6—Stealing property worth \$100 from outside a building.

3.5—Running a place that permits gambling to occur illegally.

3.2—An employer illegally threatens to fire employees if they join a labor union.

2.4—Knowingly carrying an illegal knife.

2.2—Stealing \$10 worth of merchandise from the counter of a department store.

2.1—A person is found firing a rifle for which he knows he has no permit.

2.1—A woman engages in prostitution.

1.9—Making an obscene phone call.

1.9—A store owner knowingly puts "large" eggs into containers marked "extra-large"

1.8—A youngster under 16 years old is drunk in public.

1.8—Knowingly being a customer in a place where gambling occurs illegally.

1.7—Stealing property worth \$10 from outside a building.

1.6—Being a customer in a house of prostitution.

1.6—A male, over 16 years of age, has sexual relations with a willing female under 16.

0.9—A youngster under 16 years old runs away from home.

0.8—Being drunk in public.

0.7—A youngster under 16 years old breaks a curfew law by being out on the street after the hour permitted by law.

0.6—Trespassing in the backyard of a private home.

0.3—A person is a vagrant. That is, he has no home and no visible means of support.

0.2—A youngster under 16 years old plays hooky from school.

Source: *The seriousness of crime: Results of a national survey* (forthcoming) Center for Studies in Criminology and Criminal Law, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. The entire questionnaire will be published verbatim in a forthcoming technical report of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. (The entries here have been slightly edited.)

In the Racine research a legalistic approach was utilized in the assignment of seriousness scores. In this approach consideration was given to whether the offense was a crime against property or person and whether it was a felony, misdemeanor, or a status offense. This resulted in a scale from 1 to 6 (most serious level) with 1 = contact for suspicion, investigation, or information, 2 = juvenile status, 3 = minor misdemeanor, 4 = major misdemeanor, 5 = felony against property, and 6 = felony against person. (See Table 1 of Assessing on the following page.) The Racine rank ordering of offense seriousness will from now on be referred to as the Racine Scale. This approach to scaling incorporates a police assessment of seriousness since the police have the discretion to report some offenses such as drug use as either a felony or a misdemeanor. If treated as a misdemeanor, they become a major misdemeanor.

Beyond our general interest in the seriousness of delinquent and criminal behavior is our concern with the relationship of the seriousness of offense types to the resultant severity of sanctions. Some sort of offense severity and severity of sanctions ranking process must be developed because it would be very difficult to examine this relationship event by event or to resort to a gross classification (such as felony or misdemeanor) since the latter might tend to lead to an attenuation of the correlation between seriousness and severity of sanction. The legalistic approach upon which the Racine Scale is based and the survey approach represented by the BJS-WF Scale are two examples of more refined scaling procedures.

TABLE 1. SERIOUSNESS OF POLICE CONTACTS: ORDINAL RANKING OF SIX MAJOR CATEGORIES AND THE OFFENSES INCLUDED IN EACH

Score	
6	<u>Felony Against Persons:</u> The following offenses are given a score of 6 when treated as felonies by the police. Robbery Assault Sex Offenses Narcotics/Drugs Homicide Escapee Suicide
5	<u>Felony Against Property:</u> The following offenses are given a score of 5 when treated as felonies by the police. Burglary Theft Auto Theft Forgery Fraud Violent Property Destruction
4	<u>Major Misdemeanor:</u> The following offenses are given a score of 4 when treated as misdemeanors by the police. Forgery Escapee Theft Narcotics/Drugs Weapons Assault Fraud Violent Property Destruction Burglary
3	<u>Minor Misdemeanor:</u> The following offenses are given a score of 3 when treated as misdemeanors by the police. Obscene Behavior Disorderly Conduct Vagrancy Liquor Violations Sex Offenses Moving Traffic Violations Other Traffic Offenses Gambling Family Problems Other
2	<u>Juvenile Status:</u> The following offenses are given a score of 2 when the alleged offender is under 18 years of age. Vagrancy Disorderly Conduct Incorrigible/Runaway Truancy
1	<u>Contact for Suspicion, Investigation, Information:</u> The category is given a score of 1 when the complaint report indicates a contact for any of these reasons.

A comparison of the Racine Scale and the BJS-WF Scale has two primary benefits: first of all, if a similarity is found between the two rankings of levels of seriousness it lends support to the validity of both of the scaling attempts. Secondly, since the Racine Scale represents the legalistic approach and the BJS-WF Scale takes a survey approach, an examination of the amount of agreement or correlation between the two scales may allow for some conclusions about the relationship between popular opinion on the seriousness of offenses and legal definitions of seriousness of offenses. This is the first step in determining whether official response (i.e., police dispositions and court sanctions) is a reflection of popular attitudes, structured legal considerations, both of these, or is simply random occurrence.

Comparison of BJS-WF Scale and Racine Scale

In order to compare the two scales the items in the BJS-WF Scale must be linked to the appropriate police contact types of the 1942, 1949, and 1955 Cohort data of the Racine study. Once this matching is completed the comparison of the two scales can proceed in either one of two directions but in either case the first step was to assign to each of the BJS-WF items a police contact type (Vagrancy, Homicide, etc.) and contact level of seriousness (felony against person, felony against property, major misdemeanor, minor misdemeanor, status offense, contact for suspicion, investigation, or information).¹ In order to translate

¹ Type of contact, Appendix A: Assessing the Relationship of Adult Criminal Careers to Juvenile Careers, Code Book.

the BJS-WF items into offense events to which the typology of BJS-WF contacts could be applied, simplification was necessary. This proved to be one of the two major problems in the comparison of the two systems of offense events. In the BJS-WF Scale items the following aspects were fairly explicitly represented: 1) the legal act or acts, 2) the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, 3) the number of perpetrators, 4) the amount of money involved if it was a crime against property, 5) the place of the crime (residence or non-residence), and 6) the final effect of the crime (whether it resulted in death, serious injury, injury, or no injury and if death was the result of the incident, the number of deaths involved). Variation in any of these aspects affects the average BJS-WF Scale seriousness score assigned to a particular item. Unfortunately, not all these aspects are explicitly included in the coded contact data of the Racine study, hence the need for simplification of the BJS-WF Scale items.

The second problem evolved from the nature of the criminal incidents in and of themselves. In the items chosen for the BJS-WF Scale it is often the case that the act of original intent and the effects of that act justify assigning more than one contact type to a single incident. The problem of multiple offense types per single incident also occurred during the coding of police contacts for the Racine study and led to the assignment of multiple-contact codes to individual contacts. To deal with these multiple codes when assigning seriousness to the Racine

contact types the multiple codes were collapsed and the most serious offense was the basis of the seriousness level assigned to the contact. In the interests of comparability, the same approach was considered for use with the BJS-WF Scale items. That is, only a single contact type was assigned to each offense item and the contact type assigned was the most serious of those contained in the offense incident.

This approach was not the only one possible and consideration was given to the use of two others, one based on a multiple-code typing of the BJS-WF Scale items and the other based on a typing of BJS-WF Scale items by originating criminal act. (For example, if a robbery occurs with a resultant death to the victim, only the robbery and not the homicide would be considered in the coding of type of contact.)

The first alternative approach would be to retain the multiple contact types for each single BJS-WF Scale item. This approach would have the advantage of retaining more of the detail of the items of the BJS-WF Scale. It would, however, have the disadvantage of making much more complex the process of assigning a seriousness based on the six levels of seriousness in the Racine Scale. This would only be practical if we were looking at each offense incident, item by item. Referring to item 72.1 of the BJS-WF Scale (a bomb explodes in a building and 20 people are killed), seriousness would have to be some derived, systematic combination of the two levels of seriousness represented, in this case a level equal to 5 for violent property destruction and a

level of 6 for homicide. Any systematic combination would, of necessity, be arbitrary. More importantly, this approach to coding contact type of the BJS-WF Scale items would, when the seriousness of the items is considered, cause a problem with comparability to the Racine data.

Although this approach is not good for assignment of a seriousness score based on the Racine rank-ordering 1-6 to each BJS-WF Scale item, it is useful in assigning a BJS-WF Scale rank-order to the contact types represented in the data of the Racine study. If each BJS-WF Scale item is classified according to the one or more types of offenses that constitute the criminal incident, then the BJS-WF Scale item seriousness score will be included in the average BJS-WF Scale seriousness for each contact type represented. If multiple contact types in the BJS-WF Scale items are retained and used to classify each item, it is still possible to compute an average BJS-WF Scale score for each contact type.

With the second alternative approach, instead of referring to the most serious of the offenses in an item only the originating offense and not the consequences would be considered. For example, item 72.1 of the BJS-WF Scale items is a Violent Property Destruction that resulted in the deaths of 20 people. Instead of being coded as a Homicide it would be coded as a Violent Property Destruction. The difference in offense seriousness would be a change from a level of 6 to a level of 5. Unfortunately, if the crime of origin (in the Violent Property

Destruction example) is used the "intent" of the perpetrator may become a pivotal matter which is too nebulous for the legal system to deal with and too difficult to ascertain by the respondents to the short items of the BJS-WF Scale. In our example (the Violent Property Destruction and 20-person Homicide) the offender may have intended to do only property damage or his purpose may have been to commit murder. Another item in the BJS-WF Scale that illustrates the problems involved in this approach is item 19.5. Item 19.5 involves reckless driving with the resultant death of an individual. If offense of origin were used, this would be classified as a traffic contact, which is only a minor misdemeanor. If, on the other hand, the most serious aspect of the incident, the homicide, were used it would be classified as a homicide, which is a felony against a person. This alternative approach was not deemed practical and therefore was not applied in the conversion of the BJS-WF Scale items to the Racine police contact types.

Procedure I: Comparison of BJS-WF Scale and Racine Scale of Seriousness

After each of the BJS-WF Scale items had been assigned or matched to the 30 police contact types, the BJS-WF Scale scores and Racine rank-order categories of seriousness were compared. Because the BJS-WF Scale survey items tended to include incidents of a civil rather than criminal nature and items of "white collar" crime, the matching was incomplete and not all of the items could be included in one of our 30 original types (there were 21 such items). The items in the BJS-WF Scale were divided

into quintiles based on the ordinal ranking of the BJS-WF Scale scores. Since it was found that only the five most serious rank-order categories were represented in the BJS-WF Scale items, the Racine rank-order of seriousness was limited to only the five levels represented by the BJS-WF Scale items. (From now on in the analysis the Racine rank-order of seriousness will be limited to only the five most serious contact categories.) All items in the highest BJS-WF Scale quintile were assigned a BJS-WF Scale seriousness score of 5, items in the next highest quintile were assigned a seriousness score of 4, and so on. These scores were compared to the Racine rank-order categories of contact seriousness, item by item (Table 1). If there is a similarity between the average BJS-WF Scale score of seriousness and the Racine Scale of seriousness it is to be expected that a rather high positive correlation would occur. Kendall's Tau was .592 (Table 2). This implies a fairly strong linear relationship between the BJS-WF Scale of Seriousness (the survey approach) and the Racine Scale (the legalistic approach).

Procedure II: Comparison of BJS-WF Scale and Racine Scale of Seriousness

The two scales were also compared by averaging the BJS-WF Scale scores for each contact type. A "weighting" of each of our contact types could be arrived at by using the average score of each BJS-WF Scale item that would be included in a particular contact type category. To accomplish this, two of the three approaches to the assignment of BJS-WF Scale items to Racine police contact types discussed earlier were used. These two

TABLE 1. BJS-WF SCALE SERIOUSNESS SCORES BY QUINTILES AND RACINE RANK OF TYPE SERIOUSNESS SCORES¹

Quintile 5		Quintile 4		Quintile 3		Quintile 2		Quintile 1	
BJS	RAC								
72.1	5	17.7	5	9.7	4	6.6	5	2.9	3
52.8	5	17.5	5	9.7	4	6.6	4	2.8	4
47.8	5	17.1	5	9.7	5	6.5	5	2.4	3
43.9	5	16.9	4	9.7	4	6.4	2	2.2	3
43.2	5	16.9	5	9.7	4	6.2	4	2.2	3
39.2	5	16.8	5	9.6	4	6.2	3	2.1	3
35.7	5	16.6	5	9.4	4	6.1	2	2.1	2
35.6	5	16.5	5	9.4	5	6.1	4	1.9	2
33.8	5	16.4	5	9.3	5	5.7	2	1.9	4
33.0	5	15.9	3	9.2	4	5.5	2	1.9	3
32.7	5	15.7	4	9.0	4	5.4	5	1.7	2
30.5	5	15.7	5	9.0	4	5.4	5	1.7	2
30.0	5	15.6	5	8.9	5	5.3	4	1.7	3
27.9	5	15.5	4	8.6	5	5.1	2	1.6	2
26.3	5	14.6	5	8.5	5	5.1	5	1.6	2
25.8	5	14.1	4	8.5	3	5.0	4	1.6	2
25.2	5	13.9	4	8.3	4	4.9	3	1.6	3
24.9	4	13.7	5	8.2	3	4.7	2	1.5	5
24.8	5	13.5	4	8.0	4	4.6	3	1.5	2
24.5	4	13.3	5	8.0	5	4.5	4	1.4	5
24.5	4	12.7	4	7.9	4	4.4	4	1.4	5
22.9	5	12.2	4	7.9	3	4.4	4	1.4	3
22.3	4	12.0	4	7.9	5	4.4	5	1.3	5
21.2	5	11.9	5	7.6	4	4.3	4	1.3	5
21.0	5	11.8	5	7.5	5	4.2	4	1.1	2
20.6	5	11.8	5	7.4	4	3.8	2	1.1	2
20.1	5	11.7	5	7.3	5	3.6	3	1.1	2
19.5	5	11.4	4	7.3	3	3.6	3	1.1	1
19.5	5	11.3	5	7.3	4	3.6	4	.9	1
19.5	5	10.9	4	7.2	5	3.5	2	.8	1
19.0	5	10.8	4	7.2	4	3.3	4	.8	2
18.3	5	10.5	5	7.1	5	3.3	3	.8	2
18.0	5	10.4	5	6.9	5	3.3	5	.7	1
17.9	5	10.3	5	6.9	4	3.2	4	.6	2
17.8	5	10.3	4	6.9	4	3.1	4	.5	2
17.8	5	10.3	4	6.8	3	3.1	3	.3	2
				6.7	5	3.1	4	.2	1

¹ Racine rank category has levels 1 through 5 instead of levels 1 through 6 because rank category 1, contact for suspicion, investigation, or information, is not represented in the BJS-WF Scale items. Some of the BJS-WF Scale items could not be classified by our contact types and were also eliminated. The number of items eliminated equalled 21 of the 204 total BJS-WF Scale items.

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF BJS-WF SCALE SERIOUSNESS SCORE BY RACINE RANK-ORDER OF SERIOUSNESS

BJS-WF Seriousness Score (1-5)	Racine Rank-Order of Seriousness (1-5)				
	1	2	3	4	5
5	0	0	0	4	32
4	0	0	1	14	21
3	0	0	5	18	14
2	0	8	7	15	7
1	5	16	9	2	5

Kendall's Tau B = .592, which implies a positive category-rank linear relationship.

methods will be referred to as BJS-WF Approach 1 and BJS-WF Approach 2 (see Table 3). Approach 1 to dealing with BJS-WF Scale scores assigned each item of the BJS-WF Scale to the contact type which represented the most serious offense included in each offense incident. At this point it should be mentioned that not all of the police contact types were represented by items in the BJS-WF Scale. The contact types not included when Approach 1 was used were Drugs (major misdemeanor), Violent Property Destruction (major misdemeanor), Forgery (major misdemeanor), Traffic (minor misdemeanor), Vagrancy (status offense), Disorderly conduct (status offense), Liquor (felony), and Contact for suspicion. Only 23 contact types remained for the analysis. Approach 2 to dealing with the BJS-WF Scale scores retained the multiple contact classifications of the BJS-WF Scale items when more than one offense type was involved and based the

TABLE 3. RANK-ORDERING OF RACINE CONTACT TYPES ACCORDING TO BJS-WF SCALE SERIOUSNESS SCORES

APPROACH 1			APPROACH 2		
Contact Type	BJS-WF Rank	Rac. Rank*	Contact Type	BJS-WF Rank	Rac. Rank
Homicide	23	5	Homicide	24	5
VPD, F	22	4	VPD, F	23	4
Assault, F	21	5	Sex Off., F	22	5
Sex Off., F	20	5	Traffic, M	21	2
Robbery	19	5	Assault, F	20	5
Drugs, F	18	5	Robbery	19	5
Fraud, F	17	4	Drugs, F	18	5
Assault, M	16	3	Fraud, F	17	4
Forgery, F	15	4	Assault, M	16	3
Auto Theft	14	4	Theft, F	15	4
Theft, F	13	4	Forgery, F	14	4
Burglary, F	12	4	Auto Theft	13	4
Fraud, M	11	3	Burglary, F	12	4
Sex Off., M	10	2	Fraud, M	11	3
Burglary, M	9	3	Sex Off., M	10	2
Weapons	8	3	Burglary, M	9	3
Theft, M	7	3	Weapons	8	3
Liquor, M	6	2	Theft, M	7	3
Dis. Cond., M	5	2	Liquor, M	6	2
Gambling	4	2	Dis. Cond., M	5	2
Incor-Runaway	3	1	Vagrancy	4	2
Vagrancy	2	2	Gambling	3	2
Truancy	1	1	Incor-Runaway	2	1
			Truancy	1	1

* Racine rank categories originally had levels 1 through 6 but since level 1, contact for suspicion, investigation, or information is never represented in BJS-WF Scale items, scale for Racine rank categories was converted to a scale of 1 through 5 for this comparison.

assignment to contact type on whatever contact types were present in the offense incident. When Approach 2 was used there were 24 contact types, including the same 23 contact types used for Approach 1 but with the addition of the Traffic contact type (see Table 3). (Traffic is included and ranked at such a high level

because the only BJS-WF Score item which contained a traffic offense resulted in the death of a victim.) Once the averaging process was completed, the Racine contact types were ranked by the relative size of these computed BJS-WF Scale average scores. This made possible a new "BJS-WF Scale Ranking" of our contact types which were then compared to the results of the original (Table 1, Chapter 4, Assessing) ranking of the contact types used in the Racine study. Also, an average BJS-WF Scale score was computed for each of the five levels of seriousness used with the Racine data. The rank-order of the average BJS-WF Scale scores agreed with the Racine rank-ordering by contact seriousness

TABLE 4. RANGE, MEAN, AND MEDIAN OF BJS-WF SCALE SCORES WITHIN RACINE TYPE SERIOUSNESS SCORES

	TS-5	TS-4	TS-3	TS-2	TS-1
BJS-WF Range	1.3-72.1	1.9-24.9	1.4-15.9	.3-6.4	.2-1.1
BJS-WF Mean	17.71	8.47	4.70	2.53	.70
BJS-WF Median	16.40	9.00	3.30	1.60	.80
N	80	53	21	24	5

category (Table 4).

Either of these two approaches to comparison permits an examination of the degree of congruity found between the two systems of seriousness ranking. The first technique answers the question of the similarity of these two approaches (legalistic vs. survey) with respect to scaling of criminal events and if a direct positive relationship is found, reflects well on the validity of both systems. The second technique also accomplishes this and additionally lends itself to a further refinement and

discrimination of the ranking of the seriousness of criminal offenses. This rank-ordering of contact types by BJS-WF Scale average seriousness scores also allows for a meaningful assessment of the relationship between BJS-WF Scale seriousness scores and the Racine study severity of sanctions scale.

Relationship Between BJS-WF Scale of Seriousness and Racine Severity of Sanctions Scale

Before further consideration of this relationship, several qualifications should be made. First, as mentioned earlier, there is not absolute congruity between the BJS-WF Scale items and the Racine contact types. Some BJS-WF Scale items cannot be included in the Racine contact categories and some of the Racine contact types are not represented in the BJS-WF Scale items. This has some effect on a comparison of given levels of seriousness in the BJS-WF Scale scoring procedure. Secondly, the BJS-WF Scale assignment of seriousness is based not just on offense types but also on other factors such as personal relationships between victim and perpetrator, etc. These elements are not present in the Racine study categorization of offenses and thus may create an ineradicable disparity between the two scales of seriousness which impacts on the relationship between the BJS-WF Scale of seriousness and the Racine severity of sanctions scale.

At this point it should also be mentioned that the BJS-WF Scale items over-represent offenses of a very serious and somewhat unusual nature while the police contacts of the Racine data tend to be, overall, of a less serious, more mundane nature

TABLE 5. PERCENT OF BJS-WF SCALE ITEMS FALLING IN EACH SERIOUSNESS LEVEL OF RACINE SCALE

	Racine Seriousness Rank					Items Excluded
	5	4	3	2	1	
%	40.2	29.2	6.4	11.7	1.9	10.3
N	82	60	13	24	4	21

(Table 5). For example, the BJS-WF Scale does not include Traffic offenses or very many Disorderly Conduct offenses, two contact types which appear frequently in the Racine data. In fact, of all of the BJS-WF Scale items that could be translated into contact types represented in the Racine data, 40% are assigned to the most serious category (5 - felony against person). Perhaps part of the explanation for this lies in the "range" of the seriousness of offenses included in some of the legalistically defined criminal contact types. For example, in the area of sex offenses if a male over 16 has sexual relations with a willing female under the age of 16, it is considered to be a felony-level sex offense and is given the same seriousness score as a violent rape.

In the consideration of whether or not a relationship is present between seriousness of offense and severity of sanction, BJS-WF Approaches 1 and 2 provide the basis for the seriousness ranking.

The relationship between the justice system response (as represented in the Racine severity of sanctions scale, 0-75) and the seriousness of the criminal offense (based on BJS-WF Approaches 1 and 2 to rank level of contact seriousness) was examined first by means of a gross categorization of police disposition and court sanctions into three levels of severity to see if there is any discernible pattern of variation as offense seriousness rank increases. The three levels are counseled and released, dismissed by court, and all other court dispositions. Not only do these three levels represent increasing levels of response severity, they also indicate the degree of involvement with the system as a whole. At level 1 (Counselled and released) there is police involvement, at level 2 there is police and court involvement, and at level 3 there is involvement with police, court, and court imposed sanctions (Tables 6A and 6B). From Tables 6A and 6B it is apparent that juveniles were likely to penetrate the official framework more deeply than adults once they were officially involved. This may reflect differences in due process or the possibility that official involvement with juveniles was delayed and even avoided as long as possible compared to adults simply because they were children and unofficial responses were deemed more appropriate. This is evidenced by the higher percentge of counseled and release for juveniles than for adults, contact by contact, and by the generally higher percentage dismissals for adults compared to juveniles. Overall, there appears to be no discernible pattern

TABLE 6A. DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE SANCTIONS BY CONTACT TYPE AND POLICE AND COURT DISPOSITIONS (DISMISSALS VS. OTHERS)

	Police Dispositions			Court Dispositions				
	N 0-75	0	%	N 1-75	01	%	N 2-75	%
Homicide	1	0	---	1	0	---	1	100.0
VPD, F	9	7	77.8	2	1	50.0	1	50.0
Assault, F	9	5	55.6	4	1	25.0	3	75.0
Sex Off., F	13	9	69.2	4	2	50.0	2	50.0
Robbery	32	12	37.5	20	2	10.0	18	90.0
Drugs, F	43	24	55.8	19	10	52.6	9	47.4
Fraud, F	6	6	100.0	0	0	---	0	---
Assault, M	80	57	71.3	23	5	21.7	18	78.3
Forgery, F	14	3	21.4	11	0	---	11	100.0
Auto Theft	107	23	21.5	84	11	13.1	73	86.9
Theft, F	38	15	39.4	23	9	39.1	14	60.9
Burglary, F	198	90	45.5	108	16	14.8	92	85.2
Fraud, M	2	2	100.0	0	0	---	0	---
Sex Off., M	30	26	86.7	4	0	---	4	100.0
Burglary, M	20	13	65.0	7	3	42.9	4	57.1
Weapons	30	22	73.3	8	3	37.5	5	62.5
Theft, M	569	440	77.3	129	31	24.0	98	76.0
Liquor, M	167	115	68.9	52	14	26.9	38	73.1
Dis. Cond., M	1157	1099	95.0	58	15	25.9	43	74.1
Gambling	6	6	100.0	0	0	---	0	---
Incor-Runaway	1113	1011	90.8	102	21	20.6	81	79.4
Vagrancy	107	95	88.8	12	7	58.3	5	41.7
Truancy	39	34	87.2	5	0	---	5	100.0
Dis.Cond.,SO	20	20	100.0	0	0	---	0	---
Vagrancy, SO	1	1	100.0	0	0	---	0	---
Liquor, F	0	0	---	0	0	---	0	---
Drugs, M	6	4	66.7	2	2	100.0	0	---
Forgery, M	2	0	---	2	1	50.0	1	50.0
Traffic	258	34	12.7	234	30	12.8	204	87.2
VPD, M	20	4	20.0	16	2	12.5	14	87.5

0=Counselled and released; 1=Dismissed; 2-75=Court Sanctions

TABLE 6B. DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT SANCTIONS BY CONTACT TYPE AND POLICE AND COURT DISPOSITIONS (DISMISSALS VS. OTHERS)

	Police Dispositions			Court Dispositions				
	N 0-75	0	%	N 1-75	1	%	N 2-75	%
Homicide	3	2	66.7	1	0	---	1	100.0
VPD, F	7	1	14.3	6	6	100.0	0	----
Assault, F	15	7	46.7	8	5	62.5	3	37.5
Sex Off., F	9	5	55.6	4	2	50.0	2	50.0
Robbery	46	14	30.4	32	14	43.8	18	56.3
Drugs, F	111	27	24.3	84	39	46.4	45	53.6
Fraud, F	9	5	55.6	4	2	50.0	2	50.0
Assault, M	72	49	68.1	23	11	47.8	12	52.2
Forgery, F	22	7	31.8	15	8	53.3	7	46.7
Auto Theft	28	8	28.6	20	10	50.0	10	50.0
Theft, F	31	16	51.6	15	10	66.7	5	33.3
Burglary, F	72	36	50.0	36	19	52.8	17	47.2
Fraud, M	29	14	48.3	15	8	53.3	7	46.7
Sex Off., M	55	16	29.1	39	15	38.5	24	61.5
Burglary, M	2	1	50.0	1	0	----	1	100.0
Weapons	47	16	34.0	31	11	35.5	20	64.5
Theft, M	157	80	50.9	77	14	18.2	63	81.8
Liquor, M	128	38	29.7	90	24	26.7	66	73.3
Dis. Cond., M	1678	1397	83.3	281	52	18.5	229	81.5
Gambling	9	2	22.2	7	4	57.1	3	42.9
Incor-Runaway	2	2	100.0	0	0	----	0	----
Vagrancy	71	37	52.1	34	11	32.4	23	67.6
Truancy	0	0	----	0	0	----	0	----
Dis. Cond., SO	0	0	----	0	0	----	0	----
Vagrancy, SO	0	0	----	0	0	----	0	----
Liquor, F	0	0	----	0	0	----	0	----
Drugs, M	17	6	35.3	11	8	72.7	3	27.3
Forgery, M	3	1	33.3	2	1	50.0	1	50.0
Traffic	836	67	8.0	769	103	13.4	666	86.6
VPD, M	37	17	45.9	20	6	30.0	14	70.0

0=Counselled and released; 1=Dismissed; 2-75=Court Sanctions

between either percentage of counseled and released or percentage of dismissals and ranked seriousness of police contacts (BJS-WF Approach 1).

Another way of examining the relationship between relative seriousness of police contact types (BJS-WF Approach 1) and the severity of sanctions was to consider the median and mode of the sanction severity for each contact type (Tables 7A and 7B). When Racine the severity of sanctions scale includes dismissals the modal category for 18 of the 23 contact types was dismissal. Because of the small number of sanctioned offenses for some of the contact categories and because of the dispersion of sanction type, the mode is not an especially effective way to consider the relationship. For this reason the modal category was not included in Tables 7A and 7B. When the severity of sanctions scale did not include dismissals the modal categories center around the middle of the severity of sanctions scale. The same problems persist in this case as in the first instance (dismissals included) and resulted in multi-modal categories for almost one-third of the contact types. Whether dismissals are or are not included, nothing can be inferred about modal category from the seriousness level rank of a particular contact type.

The median category of severity of sanction when dismissals are included (1-75) shows little relationship to the ranked seriousness of offense. When the Racine severity of sanctions scale does not include dismissals, however, a more or less discernible pattern of increasing severity of sanction as offense seriousness increases does emerge.

TABLE 7A. RACINE POLICE CONTACT TYPES AND THE MEDIAN OF THE RACINE SEVERITY OF SANCTIONS SCALE (1-75)

	NUMBER AND MEDIAN SANCTIONS					
	Total		Juvenile		Adult	
	N	Med	N	Med	N	Med
Homicide	2	33	1	---	1	---
VPD, F	8	1	2	1	6	---
Assault, F	12	1	4	2	8	1
Sex Off., F	8	1	4	1	4	1
Robbery	52	33	20	33	32	33
Drugs, F	103	4	19	1	84	6
Fraud, F	4	1	0	---	4	1
Assault, M	46	6	23	26	23	6
Forgery, F	26	26	11	26	15	1
Auto Theft	105	26	84	26	21	1
Theft, F	38	1	23	26	15	1
Burglary, F	176	12	132	26	44	1
Fraud, M	15	1	0	---	15	1
Sex Off., M	43	7	4	33	39	6
Burglary, M	8	2	7	2	1	---
Weapons	39	12	8	2	31	12
Theft, M	209	12	129	26	80	6
Liquor, M	143	3	52	12	91	3
Dis. Cond., M	340	6	58	6	282	6
Gambling	7	1	0	---	7	1
Incor-Runaway	104	26	104	26	0	---
Vagrancy	46	3	12	1	34	3
Truancy	5	38	5	38	0	---
Traffic	1101	6	266	3	834	6

TABLE 7B. RACINE POLICE CONTACT TYPES AND MEDIAN OF THE RACINE SEVERITY OF SANCTIONS SCALE (2-75)

	NUMBER AND MEDIAN SANCTIONS					
	Total		Juvenile		Adult	
	N	Med	N	Med	N	Med
Homicide	2	33	1	---	1	---
VPD, F	1	---	1	---	0	---
Assault, F	6	36	3	33	3	34
Sex Off., F	4	46	2	68	2	25
Robbery	36	36	18	33	18	58
Drugs, F	54	33	9	26	45	33
Fraud, F	2	12	0	---	2	12
Assault, M	30	26	18	33	12	13
Forgery, F	18	33	11	26	7	46
Auto Theft	84	33	73	33	11	34
Theft, F	19	30	14	30	5	12
Burglary, F	141	26	116	26	25	12
Fraud, M	7	6	0	---	7	6
Sex Off., M	28	13	4	33	24	12
Burglary, M	5	26	4	26	1	---
Weapons	25	26	5	26	20	23
Theft, M	164	26	98	26	66	6
Liquor, M	105	6	38	17	67	6
Dis. Cond., M	273	6	43	26	230	6
Gambling	3	3	0	---	3	3
Incor-Runaway	83	26	83	26	0	---
Vagrancy	28	6	5	33	23	3
Truancy	5	38	5	38	0	---
Traffic	968	6	236	6	731	6

To determine the relationship between the seriousness ranking of BJS-WF Approaches 1 and 2 and the Racine severity of sanctions scale, Spearman's Rho, a standardized index of the strength of a monotonic relationship between two variables, was

TABLE 8. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN LEVEL OF SERIOUSNESS OF CONTACT TYPES AND SEVERITY OF SANCTIONS**

RACSCALE	BJS Approach 1		BJS Approach 2		BJS Approach 2*	
	Rho	Tau	Rho	Tau	Rho	Tau
1-75	.095	.079	-.065	-.051	.087	.074
2-75	.351	.269	-.203	-.138	.348	.268

* BJS Approach 2* is the same as BJS Approach 2 without traffic contacts included.

** All correlations are significant at the .001 level or higher.

used (Table 8). The first correlation (.095) was based on the seriousness scale of BJS-WF Approach 1 (shown in Table 3). The second correlation was based on BJS-WF Approach 1 but with dismissals eliminated from the sanction scale. When this was done, the amount of correlation rose to .351. In both of these instances offense seriousness and severity of sanction are positively correlated.

When the rank of contact seriousness derived from the implementation of BJS-WF Approach 2 was used with the severity of sanctions scale 1-75 which includes dismissals, the results were surprising. The two variables, seriousness of contact type and

severity of sanctions, were found to be inversely related with a negative correlation of -.065. When the same correlation was done using Racine severity of sanctions scale 2-75 which does not include dismissals, the correlation coefficient was -.203. The switch in the relationship between seriousness of contact and severity of sanction (from positive/direct to negative/inverse) may be explained by the fact that the Traffic contact type is included in BJS-WF Approach 2 and is ranked at the fourth most serious contact type level (Table 3). Although Traffic is both in public opinion and legally considered to be a "less serious" offense and the type of sanctions generally received reflects this appraisal, the ranking of traffic offenses using the BJS-WF Approach 2 was based on only one incident, item 19.5. Unfortunately, item 19.5 was reckless driving with a resultant death and, while it can be assumed that the relatively high BJS-WF Scale score of this item was due to the death and not the reckless driving, under Approach 2 it is classified under both types of contact. To determine whether or not the placement of Traffic at the fourth highest rank of seriousness accounts for the change in the direction of the relationship, Approach 2 was modified by eliminating Traffic from the seriousness scale (BJS-WF Approach 2*). With traffic excluded from the BJS-WF Approach 2 ranking of contact types, the correlation (including dismissals on the severity of sanctions scale), is .087. When dismissals are eliminated, the correlation rises to .348.

Spearman's Rho allows for a conclusion about the strength of the monotonic relationship between the two variables but does not imply anything about the linearity of the relationship. To measure the strength of the category-rank linear relationships between seriousness and severity of sanctions, Kendall's Tau was used. (It is to be expected that the relationship may be somewhat attenuated because number of categories of seriousness does not equal number of severity ranks.) When BJS-WF Approach 1 was used as a measure of seriousness and the sanction scale included dismissals, Tau B = .079. Without dismissals Tau B increased to .269. When BJS-WF Approach 2 was used there was a negative correlation equal to $-.051$ with dismissals included, and a correlation of $-.158$ when dismissals were not included. When the modified BJS-WF Approach 2 (BJS-WF Approach 2*) is used the relationship changes direction and becomes positive once more. As before, there is a weak relationship when the correlation is done with dismissals included in the sanction scale, Tau B = .074, and a somewhat stronger relationship when dismissals are excluded, Tau B = .268 (Table 8).

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, there is evidence of a fairly strong, positive relationship between the survey approach (BJS-WF Scale) and the legalistic approach (Racine Scale) to the scaling of offense seriousness (Tau = .592). This may indicate some agreement between the popular opinion of contact seriousness and the legal system appraisal of seriousness even given a certain

lag problem between changing popular "moral" standards and their implementation through the judicial system.

When the relationship between peoples' view of seriousness and a rank-order of severity of sanctions was considered, evidence of a relationship was not as apparent and depended to some extent on the definition of the two variables, 1) rank seriousness of contact types and 2) severity of sanctions.

Peoples' view of seriousness was represented by a translation of the BJS-WF Scale of offense items by seriousness into two new rankings (BJS-WF Approaches 1 and 2) of the Racine police contact types. A third approach, BJS-WF Approach 2 without Traffic contact type (BJS-WF Approach 2*) was also used to represent seriousness. The rank-order of severity of sanctions was based on the sanctions associated with offenses committed by the members of the three cohorts of the Racine data who were sanctioned, both with and without dismissals.

When BJS-WF Approach 1 was used there was a positive, although not particularly strong, relationship between seriousness of offenses and severity of sanctions, whether or not dismissals were included. When BJS-WF Approach 2 was used, seriousness and severity of sanctions were negatively correlated. In a search for an explanation of the change in the direction of the relationship (from positive to negative correlation), BJS-WF Approach 2 was modified by eliminating Traffic contact types from the seriousness scale. BJS-WF Approach 2* to seriousness, when correlated with severity of sanctions scale, did yield a positive

relationship, and this relationship exhibited only slightly less strength than that found between BJS-WF Approach 1 and severity of sanctions (Table 8). In summary, when all three correlations are considered there is evidence of moderate-to-weak relationship between peoples' view of the seriousness of criminal offenses and the official responses of the justice system to criminal offenses.

All of this suggests that additional research on the factors related to decision-making in the justice system must precede and be a part of any attempt to understand the effectiveness of sanctions as now administered by the courts.