

In Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime. Ed. Wesley G. Skogan
Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1976

✻ Chapter 6

Crime and Crime Rates*

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Victimization surveys were conceived to provide new and more accurate measures of the incidence of crime. Direct interviews with victims enable us to bypass the fallible data-gathering activities of local police departments and gather wide-ranging and detailed information on the experiences of citizens both with crime and with the criminal justice system. One of the first uses of the victimization survey data collected for the federal government by the Bureau of the Census was to compare them with the official crime statistics published yearly by the FBI. This was an obvious first step, for the discrepancy between crime estimates made through surveys and crime reports filed with the FBI was quite large. The Census Bureau's National Crime Survey uncovered about three times as many crimes as had been recorded by the police.¹ The media focused on the differences between official and survey crime figures for specific cities. The *New York Times*, for example, printed the two side by side for eight large cities. In a front page article, David Burnham argued that the publication of such statistics would increase pressure on local criminal justice agencies to improve their performance and end FBI and local police department domination of crime statistics.²

This chapter examines the relationship (1) between official and survey measures of crime and (2) between each type of measure and the "true" crime rate. The chapter also examines the consequences of these observations for criminal justice planning, management and evaluation.

There are three factors that make the relationship between crime statistics

*This chapter was prepared under Grant Number N1-99-0032 from the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

and the crime rate problematic: variations in the rate at which citizens report their experiences to the police; differences in the way police departments receive, evaluate and account for citizen's reports; and methodological quirks that make each measure a less than accurate indicator of the crime rate. The quantity each of these methods is trying to measure—the true crime rate—is always unknown. It can only be observed through one or another pair of methodological spectacles. The method that gets us closest to those events is the victimization survey. Such surveys have been conducted in a number of communities, both in the United States and abroad. Richard Sparks' chapter in this volume discusses his work in London, and Anne Schneider's essay is based upon a survey that she carried out in Portland, Oregon.³ The federal government's surveys have been conducted by the Bureau of the Census with the support of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). Since 1972, the Bureau has carried out a series of surveys designed to produce yearly estimates of the national victimization rate. Dodge, Lentzner and Shenk summarize some of the Bureau's findings in the first chapter of this book. Between 1972 and 1974, the Census Bureau also conducted special surveys in twenty-six major cities, using a somewhat different methodology. Barbara Boland's essay is based upon those interviews. City residents were asked questions focusing on six major crimes: rape, assault, robbery, burglary, simple property theft and motor vehicle theft. In addition, local businessmen were questioned about the incidence of burglary and robbery in their places of business. The commercial and household surveys together give us a fairly thorough enumeration of the frequency of robbery and burglary.⁴ This chapter uses the data for these two crimes in examining the relationship between survey and official crime rates.

CITIZEN REPORTING TO THE POLICE

Interviews with victims indicate that many incidents uncovered by surveys are not reported to the police. Burglary and robbery are about average in that respect. The national victimization survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census in 1973 found that about 49 percent of all personal robberies reported in the survey had also been reported to the police. About 46 percent of the household burglaries uncovered in the interviews had been brought to the attention of the authorities. Crimes affecting commercial establishments were reported at a higher rate—robbery in 86 percent of all cases and burglary in 79 percent.⁵ In contrast, some crimes, e.g., auto theft, were reported at a higher rate. Personal thefts (picked pockets, snatched purses) were reported only about 32 percent of the time.

It has always been known that underreporting has an effect on official crime statistics. The crimes chosen by the FBI for inclusion in the Crime Index were selected, in part, because they seemed *relatively* well reported. At the same time,

everyone involved in collecting and analyzing official statistics was aware that crimes as diverse as rape and simple property theft often went unreported. The issues were, Are we being led astray by *systematic* errors? Is underreporting patterned in ways that systematically bias studies that use crime statistics to measure relative rates of crime, studies that use changes in reported crime to evaluate the effects of crime prevention programs or decisions about how the criminal justice system ought to allocate its resources? The fact of undercounting may be less important than its distribution in time and space.⁶

These issues played an important role in the federal government's decision in the early 1970s to launch a program of research and methodological development in the area of crime measurement. The federal victimization surveys included questions to determine which incidents recalled during an interview were reported to the police. The survey's results have a bearing on several important questions:

- Does nonreporting work to the disadvantage of minorities and the poor, who may be receiving less police protection than they require?
- Might crime prevention programs increase reporting rates at the same time they reduce the incidence of victimization, thus confounding the evaluation of those programs?
- Do different citizen reporting practices affect police crime statistics in various locations in different ways?

The victimization surveys indicate that reporting practices do differ from city to city. The reporting rate for robbery (including personal and commercial offenses) was very high in Miami (76 percent), Washington (73 percent) and Atlanta (71 percent); but the robbery reporting rate was only 52 percent in Portland and San Francisco and 55 percent in Los Angeles and Newark. Only 51 percent of all burglaries were reported in Houston, while Miami again topped the list at 67 percent.⁷ Overall, only about 60 percent of all big city burglary and 62 percent of all robbery was reported to the police, thereby becoming *eligible* for inclusion in official crime statistics. Crimes like these almost always come to the attention of the police through citizen complaints; the national data for 1973 indicated that only 1.6 percent of personal robberies and 0.4 percent of household burglaries were discovered at the scene by the police. Any analysis of the differences between official and survey crime rates must begin with this basic source of discrepancies between the two.

The reasons for nonreporting are numerous. People may not call the police because they feel that nothing can be done about the incident or because they plan to pursue private revenge.⁸ They may fear their assailants may return to harass them after appearing before a magistrate; or they may be afraid of the police; or they may be afraid of what the police might discover once summoned. People also fail to report crimes to the authorities because they seem trivial. The time and effort involved may seem to exceed any potential gain.

Understanding the reasons for underreporting is important. As we have seen, nonreporting is a major factor shaping official crime statistics, and it may be important to know if the conditions affecting it are changing and what this portends for reported crime levels. It also is necessary to understand the dynamics of crime reporting because those practices may be influenced by the very programs we institute to fight crime and insure justice. If fear of retaliation is an important motive for nonreporting, then policies that return offenders to the streets may have important implications for citizen cooperation with the police. On the other hand, a primary consequence of crime prevention programs is an increase in the rate at which victimizations are reported to the police. Communities which "get tough on crime" may end up looking worse for their efforts.

My analysis suggests that the primary determinant of most reporting and nonreporting is the seriousness of the offense. Individual attributes such as race, sex, income and (although it did account for something) age are secondary in importance to the nature of the incident itself. In both national and city data, the controlling factors were the amount of financial loss involved in a crime, whether force was used, whether a weapon was employed, the extent of physical injury and whether the assailant was a stranger. Factors such as invasion of one's home or being threatened with death have a major impact on crime reporting.⁹

A crucial question is whether these factors vary enough from community to community to affect aggregate levels of crime reporting. Apparently many do. The data collected in twenty-six communities indicates that intercity variations in levels of violence, stranger crime, use of weapons, financial loss and racial fear are sufficient to explain much of the variation across cities in the "willingness" of citizens to report crime. Guns, for example, play an important role in crime, especially in offenses against commercial establishments. They enable lone offenders to control merchants, customers or truculent victims they accost on the street; they are "equalizers." Cities vary in the extent to which guns are employed in robbery. In Cleveland, 38 percent of all personal robbery involved a gun. New York City was a knife town, and Milwaukeeans enjoyed the good fortune of experiencing mainly unarmed, "strong-arm" robberies. Nationally, 68 percent of all personal robberies in which a gun was used were reported to the police as compared with 40 percent of those not involving weapons. Not surprisingly, the correlation at the city level between the robbery reporting rate and the proportion of all robberies involving the use of a gun was +0.50.

Measures of the seriousness of interpersonal violence also correlate strongly with reporting rates at both individual and city levels. The surveys collected a great deal of data on the extent of the personal injury suffered in rapes and assaults. Such injuries varied in seriousness from very slight (in unsuccessful attacks or assaults yielding only minor scratches) to very consequential (leading to broken bones, internal injuries, loss of teeth and hospitalization). Victims in

some survey cities were more seriously injured than in others. The proportion of assaults falling into the "aggravated" category because of injury (those leading to the serious consequences described above) ranged from only 11 percent in San Francisco and 13 percent in San Diego, Portland, Milwaukee and Minneapolis to 21 percent in Philadelphia, St. Louis and Baltimore, and 25 percent in Newark. Nationally, 82 percent of all serious assaults were reported to the police, as compared to only 43 percent of all minor ones.¹⁰ The correlation at the city level between the proportion of rapes and assaults in the serious category and the reporting rate for the same set of crimes was a powerful +0.73.

Similar differences appear when we examine another element of the seriousness of interpersonal violence—the relationship between victim and offender. Assaults by strangers, which almost invariably occur on the street or in some other public place, are among the most feared crimes, and the reduction of stranger crime was a primary goal of LEAA's high impact city anticrime program of the early 1970s. The survey data have methodological weaknesses in measuring the extent of crime among friends, neighbors or relatives, but they show substantial variation in the proportion of rapes and assaults attributed to strangers.¹¹ At the top were New York (84 percent) and Boston (79 percent); at the bottom, Atlanta (59 percent) and Houston (60 percent). The correlation at the city level between reporting to the police and this measure of seriousness was +0.34. Multivariate analysis of the joint effect of weapon use and stranger attacks upon the proportion of rapes and assaults reported to the police indicates that each is a significant predictor of victim behavior; together they explain 66 percent of the variance in reporting (a multiple correlation of +0.81).

Other measures of seriousness were also related to reporting practices. The correlation between the proportion of simple property thefts reported to the police and the proportion involving losses of over \$50 was +0.49. The correlation between the proportion of household burglaries reported and the proportion involving forced entry was +0.54.

One of the strongest relationships, and one that seems to portend badly for the urban condition, reflected the racial fears of whites. There is considerable evidence that a high proportion of crimes in the survey cities were committed by blacks. In most cases, the victims were other blacks, who, in general, suffer substantially higher victimization rates than whites. However, some crimes involved white victims and black offenders. The proportion of such black-white crimes varied by city; it was low in Minneapolis and Denver (38 percent in each), and high in Washington (79 percent), New Orleans (77 percent) and Detroit (74 percent). The rate at which whites reported crimes to the police was higher in cities where blacks were more likely to be involved. The reporting rate for black victims was not significantly affected. The city level correlation between the proportion of whites victimized by blacks and crime reporting was +0.66 for whites and +0.04 for blacks. The racial characteristics of offenders appear to be a powerful predictor of white reporting behavior in the twenty-six cities.

It should be clear that this measure was related to the racial composition of the cities. As the contrast between Minneapolis and Washington illustrates, the proportion of crimes committed by blacks should be higher in towns with larger black populations. The correlation between the percentage of blacks in a city and the reporting rate was also positive, suggesting that whites may report more frequently in largely black communities. Even when we control for the racial composition of the city, however, the proportion of white victimizations involving black offenders continues to independently affect the reporting practices of whites.

POLICE RECORDING PRACTICES

A second set of factors affecting the relationship between crime rates and official crime statistics are the practices of local police. Police departments act as political and organizational filters through which citizen complaints must pass before becoming part of the official count of "crimes known to the police." There are several devices for accomplishing this end. Offenses reported to the police can be shifted from one statistical category to another, they can be "downgraded" or they can be ignored. The police may choose not to fill out required forms, not to file them or not to account for them when reporting to the FBI. These activities can occur at various levels within the organization: patrolmen, their immediate supervisors or top administrators "downtown." Whatever their locus, such practices should have a powerful impact upon the official crime rate for a jurisdiction. Relatively thorough police departments should publish figures that coincide with survey measures of the crime rate. Where policies or practices discourage honest accounting, larger discrepancies should be expected.

A substantial amount of police underreporting can be attributed to the beat patrolmen who observe or respond to complaints. Part of the filtering process is official. Only complaints in which a legally actionable incident has occurred should be recorded. The remainder are considered "unfounded" and are not included in official reports. Observational studies of patrol operations indicate that a number of extralegal criteria also are applied to this decision. The police generally attempt to avoid unnecessary or unproductive work, to forestall complaints about their behavior and to maintain control of situations on the street. The most serious victimizations are usually recorded, but many never become officially "known."^{1 2}

Pressure on patrol officers to discount or ignore potentially bona fide complaints usually comes from the district commander's office. This pressure may become intense when the performance of middle level managers in police organizations is evaluated by their ability to keep the crime rate down. It was easier to disguise crime reports before the days of centralized radio dispatching systems. Then, complaints were received and filed in district stationhouses and

only summary reports were sent downtown.¹³ During the 1920s, the prosecutor in Chicago would occasionally "raid" local stations and publish the discrepancies he found, between those figures when it seemed politically profitable to embarrass the city administration.¹⁴ Now that citizens call central dispatch centers, it has become necessary for district commanders to see that their men ignore or downgrade more incidents.

Connivance in underrecording of crime often extends to the top of the department. Top administrators in police departments must be sensitive to political winds, which usually carry the message that crime rates should be kept low. When reformers take office, however, the official rate often rises rapidly; complaints that formerly were disregarded are recorded, and the police tend to become more energetic in searching out crime and making arrests. The Crime Commission documented some of these flurries of crime recording, as well as their frequent decline as the new order becomes more settled in office.¹⁵ The commission argued that longer range, more fundamental processes were also at work in police departments. They noted the rise of police professionalism throughout the nation and suggested that a consequence of this movement might be an apparent increase in the crime rate.¹⁶ Professional departments are more interested in data collection and recordkeeping, for they use such information to allocate resources and evaluate personnel. Professionalism also implies a greater reliance on formal rather than informal disposition of complaints, which should increase the proportion of police-citizen encounters resulting in written reports.¹⁷ Together, these long range forces should enhance the correspondence between survey-generated measures of "reported" crime and official crime data.

With a few assumptions, data collected in the victimization surveys can be used to test this hypothesis. The measure of police-recording practices used here is the ratio between the robbery and burglary counts presented for cities in the *Uniform Crime Report* (UCR) and the (projected) number of crimes that survey respondents claimed they reported to the police.¹⁸ These figures are indicators of the discrepancy between survey data and published crime figures that *may* be attributable to police nonrecording. The major assumptions are: (1) the universe of crimes that each purports to measure is (approximately) the same, (2) the survey-based incident count is (relatively) accurate, and (3) we can trust most victims to tell us which crimes were and were not reported to the police. The next section of this chapter examines these methodological problems in some detail; for now, suffice it to say that the resulting measures of police practices vary substantially by city, and the readings they give for individual police departments correspond with other impressions we have about their operational style.

Table 6-1 presents the data upon which this analysis is based. For each of the twenty-six surveyed cities, it notes the percentage of personal and commercial robberies and burglaries that were reported to the police and the ratio of the number that appear in police records to that total.¹⁹ The cities are ranked

Table 6-1. Measures of Police Recording and Citizen Reporting Practices

City	Police Recording		Citizen Reporting	
	Robbery	Burglary	Robbery	Burglary
Newark	100	75	56	65
Washington, D.C.	98	65	73	64
St. Louis	95	79	66	61
Cleveland	74	47	60	59
Detroit	73	62	66	62
Los Angeles	71	67	55	55
Baltimore	71	51	66	66
New York City	69	50	60	62
Miami	64	79	76	67
Chicago	64	39	58	57
Boston	61	45	65	63
Pittsburgh	60	57	70	56
Portland	59	64	52	57
Buffalo	59	48	58	58
Dallas	56	61	64	57
Oakland	55	63	66	64
Houston	55	63	62	51
New Orleans	51	56	61	53
San Francisco	51	59	53	56
Denver	49	61	57	62
Atlanta	46	57	71	61
Minneapolis	44	54	62	56
San Diego	40	49	57	55
Cincinnati	39	41	58	67
Philadelphia	38	35	59	59
Milwaukee	19	22	61	58

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Crime in Eight American Cities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1974); U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Crime in the Nation's Five Largest Cities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April, 1975); U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Criminal Victimization Surveys in 13 American Cities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 1975).

according to the police recording rate for robbery. The two measures of police cheating are strongly related ($r = +0.66$), indicating that the ranking is not an artifact of a particular type of crime and that honesty in recording may be a general rather than crime-specific characteristic of police departments. The scores of some of the highest and lowest departments fit the stereotypes of those agencies. At the top, Washington, D.C., has a vigorous and professional department, and St. Louis has long conducted internal audits of its crime-recording practices.²⁰ Both Philadelphia and Milwaukee produce notoriously unbelievable crime reports each year, and they appear at the bottom of this ranking.

The distorting effect of recording practices on official crime statistics is of the same relative magnitude as that of citizen reporting practices. For the twenty-six cities, the proportion of reported robberies that were recorded by the police averaged 63 percent and that for burglary, 56 percent. About the same proportion of events are lost from the system at each stage, although the effect of citizen reporting on the number of events is greater because it acts as "first filter" in the crime measurement process. It is also important to note that the variation among cities is much greater regarding police recording than it is for citizen recording. City level reporting rates for robbery vary by only about 20 percent, and reporting rates for burglary vary even less. However, recording practices differ dramatically from city to city. As we shall see, this has important implications for the use of official crime statistics in research and evaluation.

The determinants of recording practices are difficult to measure. The politics of crime, political responsiveness of the police chief, actual reward structure of the department and professionalism of beat patrolmen are hard to observe even in one city.²¹ Moreover, these determinants are subject to rapid reversals. It is possible, however, to explore some of the hypotheses advanced by the Crime Commission and to consider the relationship between basic indicators of department organization, resources and policies and police recording practices.

For example, the commission speculated that increased police professionalism should lead to increased crime recording, lending greater accuracy to official crime data.²² Professionalism in police departments is a complex issue, but two indicators of the extent to which police organizations pursue modern personnel policies can be measured directly: the departments' recruitment of minority personnel and their employment of civilians.²³ The former reflects openness to change, responsiveness to external demands and the ability of departmental administrators to enforce controversial policies; the latter indicates a desire to raise the level of skill applied to specialized tasks within police departments. The two are positively correlated, suggesting that innovation is a general characteristic of some police departments. When the two measures are combined to form an innovativeness index, the resulting measure is correlated +0.49 with robbery recording and +0.57 with burglary recording.²³ For the twenty-six cities, innovation in personnel policymaking is significantly related to the production of more accurate crime statistics.

The problem may also be one of resources. Systematic recordkeeping, data production and the use of those tools for planning and evaluation are expensive activities. Perhaps only departments with ample resources are capable of collecting higher quality crime data or are interested in the use of these data within the organization. At the city level, the correlation between recording rates for robbery and resource measures is strong and positive: +0.66 for the number of departmental employees for each 10,000 residents and +0.44 for dollar expenditures per capita. The correlations between these resource measures and recording rates for burglary are much lower, however, which may suggest

that the relationship represents merely a quirk in the data. Somewhat surprisingly, the correlation between recording practices and the extent to which computers are used by the departments is negative.

Just as citizens are more likely to report more serious victimizations, police departments are somewhat more likely to record incidents as crimes in their community become more serious. Departments in cities where crimes are more frequently serious generally recorded more incidents relative to the victimization survey estimate. Not all of the correlations were statistically significant, but they pointed consistently to higher recording levels in cities where guns were employed, where forcible entry burglaries were the norm, where thefts involved higher financial losses and where whites were victimized more often by blacks.

METHODOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

The relationship between survey estimates of the crime rate and official police accounts also is affected by the manner in which the data are gathered. The survey figures include methodological artifacts, or miscounts introduced by the measurement process itself. There were also differences in what the two enumerations covered. They measure incidents affecting slightly different populations and, therefore, there always will be some discrepancies between the resulting estimates. The major technical difficulties with the survey data probably do not affect the relative ordering of the twenty-six cities on either the reporting or recording dimension. If their effects are spread randomly across the cities, the relationships reported here will describe accurately the dynamics of reporting and recording.

One methodological issue is "temporal telescoping" by victims. The surveys asked respondents to recall victimizations that occurred in the "past year." There is a strong tendency for victims of crimes that occurred more than one year ago to misrecall the date of those events and mentally pull them forward into the suggested reference period.²⁴ This "forward telescoping" leads to an overstatement of the crime rate for the reference year. Since reports to the police are more accurately placed in time (most complaints come immediately after the incident), telescoping artificially increases the ratio of survey crimes to officially recognized crimes. However, telescoping is a psychological process, and there is no evidence that it is more frequent in some cities than in others. Thus, this phenomenon probably does not affect the relationship between our measure of police recording and the distribution of other key variables.

Victims also do not report some of their experiences to an interviewer. Studies of the ability of interviewers to elicit accurate recollections indicate that the Census Bureau's victimization surveys substantially undercounted incidents of interpersonal violence involving friends and relatives.²⁵ Moreover, simply because memories of incidents fade with time, distant events were undercounted as well.²⁶ Undercounting seems unlikely to vary dramatically by city and should

not affect the cities' relative rankings. Nevertheless, if the ability or willingness of respondents to recall events is affected by factors such as race or class, patterns of nonrecall may be city-specific. There is some evidence that this may be the case for incidents of assault, but there is no evidence that such is the case for robbery and burglary.

The final question concerning the survey data involves the veracity of victims' claims that they (or someone else) reported their experiences to the police. There has been no methodological research on the validity of these claims. In some social circles, reporting may be expected and desirable. Nonreporters from such groups may tend to exaggerate their public-spiritedness. The opposite also may occur, and the aggregate effect of these distortions is unknown.

A serious methodological issue is the comparability of coverage of victim surveys and police reports, for they gather data from somewhat different groups. Police figures cover crimes that occur (and have been reported and recorded) *within a city*. Thus, complaints from victimized commuters, tourists, convention delegates and other transient visitors to the central city are included in the published reports. Victim surveys, on the other hand, gather data from city *residents* and business representatives. They were questioned about their experiences during the preceding year, wherever they occurred. The two reference populations generally overlap, but the degree of correspondence differs from place to place. In some communities (Newark, Miami, Washington, Boston), over half of the labor force commutes into the city, while commuters make up a relatively small proportion of the labor force in Houston, San Diego, Baltimore and Chicago.²⁷ Extensive commuting should affect our measure of police recording practices for personal crimes, for it will "artificially" (from the survey's point of view) increase the ratio of official crimes to survey crimes. Police departments in cities with extensive tourism or commuting should score well on the robbery measure, for they are in fact recording unsurveyed victimizations fairly frequently. The correlation between the relative size of the commuter work force and police recording is indeed positive ($r = +0.38$ for robbery). While not statistically significant (a correlation of this size could occur by chance fairly frequently with only twenty-six cases), it tends to back the hypothesis that comparisons between survey and official crime counts are confounded by differences in their reference populations. Any systematic attempt to compare data collected by surveys and by the police must take this crucial incongruity into account. There are a number of other minor technical differences between the data-gathering techniques used in survey and police measures, but none appear to be important.²⁸

THE CONSEQUENCES OF REPORTING AND RECORDING PRACTICES

This chapter has examined the relationship between crime rates as measured by victim surveys and crime rates gathered and published by local police depart-

ments. Citizen reporting and police recording practices seem to deflate official reports by about the same proportion, although the net effect of citizen nonreporting is greater than that of police nonrecording because it serves as a "first filter" on the information flow. The discrepancy between the survey crime rate and police figures is fraught with consequences, for the community and for the police. Recording practices affect the apparent effectiveness of the police—when departments encourage the collection of more accurate crime statistics, they suffer as a result. Thorough police recording practices may also encourage more citizen reporting, which further erodes their apparent effectiveness. Finally, the fact that some police departments manipulate their official statistics more blatantly than others indicates that those figures are even less useful for planning and evaluation than we had suspected.

Table 6-2 presents some correlations between measures of police recordkeeping accuracy and measures of the effectiveness of the twenty-six police departments. One of the strongest effects of complete recording is that it *decreases the clearance rate* for robbery and burglary. The clearance rate is the proportion of offenses in a crime category that the police believe they can attribute to a particular offender. It is safe to assume that police departments record and process crimes in which an identification is made or a suspect arrested and that many of the crimes that are not recorded are impossible to solve. Thus, more accurate crime recordkeeping raises the ratio of crimes to suspects, making the organization look less effective. It also strongly affects the official crime rate for cities. Table 6-2 indicates that cities where the ratio of recorded to reported crimes is high were also the "highest crime" areas based on published statistics. Each measure of effectiveness "builds in" these relationships because official crimes are a numerator or denominator on each side of the ratios being correlated—which simply restates the dilemma facing police administrators.

The data collected in the Census Bureau's surveys also suggest that high recording levels may affect another measure of departmental performance,

Table 6-2. The Consequences of Police Recording Practices

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Recording Rate for</i>	
	<i>Robbery</i>	<i>Burglary</i>
Traditional Effectiveness		
Crime clearances	-0.61	-0.60
Official crime rate	0.78	0.70
Citizen Perceptions		
Percent think crime has limited their behavior	0.48	—
Percent feel unsafe in their neighborhood	0.50	—
Percent rate the police "good"	-0.53	—
Citizen Reporting Rates		
Interpersonal violence	0.60	0.32
Personal theft	0.45	0.25

Source: Calculated from unpublished tabulations supplied by the Bureau of the Census.

citizen attitudes and perceptions. At the city level, perceptions of crime and ratings of police performance are highly related to official crime statistics. Those figures are the only way that most of us form general impressions on the safety of our community and how it stands relative to other places. In the surveyed cities, the official robbery rate was positively correlated with aggregate responses to questions about the lack of safety in the respondents' neighborhoods at night ($r = +0.70$) and changes in their behavior due to crime ($r = +0.63$). Cities with high official robbery totals were also less likely to give their local police a good rating ($r = -0.42$). One way cities qualify as "unsafe" is by recording more accurate crime statistics; hence the relationship between the robbery recording rate and measures of fear and ratings of the police illustrated in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2 also indicates that departments that record most of the crimes coming to their attention may thereby encourage their citizens to report more incidents to the police. Table 6-2 indicates the positive correlations between police recording rates and citizen reporting of two distinct personal crimes that often go unreported—interpersonal violence (rape and assault) and personal theft (pocket picking and purse snatching). (We cannot use robbery and burglary reporting rates, as they were used to calculate the recording measures in the first place.) The measures in Table 6-2 are independent and suggest that honest departmental behavior may encourage increased citizen cooperation. A consequence of having this reputation for honesty in processing complaints may be an "inflation" (relative to other communities) of the crime rate.

One of the most important implications of the data in Table 6-1 is the serious threat that variations in department recording procedures pose to the validity of comparative measures of the crime rate. Differences in how departments handle complaints have a larger effect on the ranking of cities in the UCR than intercity differences in citizen reporting rates. There have been proposals to develop "correction" formulas for official crime data that would generate more accurate measures of the true crime rate. Proponents of this strategy have focused upon the filtering effect of citizen reporting, arguing that surveys could generate estimates of nonreporting for very specific types of crimes. Those corrections could then be applied to reported events, yielding data comparable to that collected in expensive victimization surveys. The difficulty is that it is the departmental nonrecording of complaints, not citizen nonreporting, that determines how cities will eventually be ranked with regard to crime. Corrections applied to published figures will not reveal the proper ordering of communities. Official crime statistics seem to tell us more about police departments than they do about crime.

NOTES

1. Wesley G. Skogan, "The Victims of Crime: Some National Survey Findings," in Anthony L. Guenther, ed., *Criminal Behavior in Social Systems* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976), ch. 9.

118 *Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime*

2. David Burnham, "Federal Surveys to Gauge Crime Levels in Big Cities," *New York Times*, January 27, 1974, p. 1.
3. See also, Paul Smith and Richard Hawkins, "Victimization, Types of Police Contacts, and Attitudes Toward Police," *Law and Society Review* 8 (Fall 1973): 135-52 (Seattle study); and A.A. Congalton and J.M. Najman, "Who Are the Victims?" Statistical Report 13, Department of the Attorney General and the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1974 (Sydney study).
4. For a general discussion of all the surveys, see Wesley G. Skogan, "Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime," *Review of Public Data Use* 4 (January 1976): pp. 23-28.
5. These and other national statistics are based upon my own computer analysis of the victimization survey data for 1973.
6. Wesley G. Skogan, "The Validity of Official Crime Statistics: An Empirical Investigation," *Social Science Quarterly* 55 (June 1974): pp. 25-38.
7. Data on reporting rates for cities were calculated from figures in official publications. U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Crime in Eight American Cities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1974); U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Crime in the Nation's Five Largest Cities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April, 1975); U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Criminal Victimization Surveys in 13 American Cities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 1975).
8. Eduard Ziegenhagen, "Individual Responses to Criminal Victimization," in William McDonald, ed., *Criminal Justice and the Victim* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, forthcoming).
9. Wesley G. Skogan, "Citizen Reporting of Crime: Some National Panel Data," *Criminology* 13 (February 1976): pp. 535-49.
10. These and other statistics are based upon my own computer analysis of incidents in the surveys.
11. Anthony Turner, "San Jose Methods Test of Known Crime Victims," *Statistics Technical Report No. 1* (Washington, D.C.: Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, 1972).
12. Donald Black, "The Production of Crime Rate," *American Sociological Review* 35 (August 1970): pp. 733-47; Donald Black and Albert J. Reiss, Jr., "Police Control of Juveniles," *American Sociological Review* 35 (February 1970): pp. 63-77; and Harold Pepinsky, "Police Decisions to Report Offenses" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972).
13. David J. Bordua and Albert J. Reiss, Jr., "Organization and Environment: A Perspective on the Police," in David J. Bordua, ed., *The Police: Six Sociological Essays* (New York: John Wiley, 1967), pp. 28-40.
14. *Criminal Justice* 54 (March 1929): p. 10 (a monthly newsletter published by the Chicago Crime Commission).
15. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *Task Force Report: Crime and Its Impact—An Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 22-25.

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.; and James Q. Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968).
18. The official data were drawn from yearly issues of the *Uniform Crime Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, yearly). The data were selected to match the reference periods covered by the surveys, which ranged from mid-1971 to 1973.
19. All of the figures in Table 6-1 were calculated from data in published sources. See note 7, above.
20. Arthur C. Meyers, Jr., "Statistical Controls in a Police Department," *Crime and Delinquency* 8 (January 1962): 58-64.
21. For an excellent study of Washington, D.C., see David Seidman and Michael Couzens, "Getting the Crime Rate Down: Political Pressure and Crime Reporting," *Law and Society Review* 8 (Spring 1974): 457-93. While they document the sins of the city, especially for larceny recording, these data suggest that in context the district does well.
22. The President's Commission, p. 22.
23. Each was Z scored, then added together to form the index.
24. See a discussion of this process in Chapter Eight. See also Albert Biderman et al., *Report on A Pilot Study in the District of Columbia on Victimization and Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement, Field Surveys I* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967).
25. Anthony Turner, "San Jose Methods Test of Known Crime Victims," *Statistics Technical Report No. 1* (Washington, D.C.: Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, June, 1972).
26. Biderman, et al.
27. These figures were calculated from data in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Subject Reports 6-D: The Journey to Work* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 1973), table 1.
28. These differences include coverage by age (the surveys gathered data only for those twelve years of age and older, while the UCR includes all age groups), and the fact that eight cities had reference periods that did not correspond with calendar years (I averaged UCR figures over the relevant years).