

# **CRIME IN ILLINOIS 1982**



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## NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REPORTS

The Illinois Department of Law Enforcement requested assistance from the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, to determine the effects of the Chicago Police Department's reporting practices on the state crime picture. The research reports authored by Wesley G. Skogan, PhD, and Andrew C. Gordon, PhD, are included unedited by Department of Law Enforcement personnel. The reports represent the authors' points of view, not the official positions or policies of the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research or the Illinois Department of Law Enforcement. Information on the research reports may be obtained from the Department of Law Enforcement.

The research reports reference findings of audit report (A-82-35), "Detective Division Reporting Practices" (April 1983), an internal audit of selected Chicago Police Department crime recording practices. Further information on the audit report should be requested from the Chicago Police Department.

## Report Number 1

A Review of:  
"Detective Division Reporting Practices"  
A Report of the Chicago Police Department's  
Crime Classification Audit

by  
Wesley G. Skogan, PhD  
and  
Andrew C. Gordon, PhD

11 July 1983

### Introduction

This document presents detailed comments regarding the recently-released report of the Chicago Police Department (CPD), *Detective Division Reporting Practices* (14 April 1983). The CPD report describes an internal audit of selected crime recording practices which was conducted by the Department. The audit comes as a response to criticisms of those practices by others. While we are critical of certain aspects of the audit and the report, the Department is to be lauded for its generally thorough, timely, and systematic response to those criticisms. It is because the audit was conducted in a rigorous and empirical fashion following an explicit research design, and because the Department presented its findings "warts and all," that we are able to be so specific in our criticisms. Casual data gathering and a more perfunctory report would have been difficult to fault specifically, and less revealing of anything of significance. This report *did* reveal things of significance, and already measures have been taken in response to its conclusions. We can only commend the openness with which the audit was conducted and the rapidity of that response.

This document touches upon a number of specific issues. First it reviews the purpose of the audit — what problems were addressed, and what the audit was to accomplish. Then it examines the procedures employed in conducting the audit and the strategic decisions they reflected. It explores in some detail the follow-up interviews which were conducted with complainants in selected cases, for those lie at the heart of the audit. Then we consider the process by which unfounding decisions were "supported" or "not supported" by the auditors, and the analyses of that support which are presented in the audit report. A major section then reviews the lessons of the recent past, examining unfounding rates in Chicago since 1981. This section estimates the impact of unfounding upon verified incident totals for the city. It also examines the implications of changing patterns of unfounding evident in quarterly CPD reports to the FBI.

### Purpose of the Audit

The immediate stimulus for conducting the CPD audit was a series of media reports charging that the Department was "killing crime." It was alleged that the CPD was underreporting crime for the city, although the exact administrative mechanism by which this was apparently being accomplished was unclear at the time. Later, charges were also leveled by the media that the Department was falsely enhancing its apparent efficiency by claiming too many clearances.

The Department's response was to organize an internal examination of its crime recording practices — the "audit." Auditors reviewed samples of cases selected from Department files and decided whether unfounding decisions or claims of multiple clearances could be supported by the evidence. The auditors were members of the Chicago Police Department assigned to the Auditing and Internal Control Division of the Bureau of Administrative Services. The evidence consisted of complete case files and follow-up interviews the auditors conducted with the complainants in their sample of cases.

The auditors defined their task very narrowly. It was not apparent from the outset exactly *how* the CPD was "killing crime," and the details of that process are available only in the audit report. However, the audit does not appear to have considered the entire crime-recording process, nor did it review all of the means by which incidents are cleared. Its focus is entirely upon unfounding and multiple clearances. Evidence was mobilized in each case to determine whether or not those classifications were supportable. However, there is no positive evidence of the integrity of other stages in the recording and classification process. Further, the remainder of this report suggests that the evidence mobilized concerning unfounding and multiple clearances is itself of limited value. There were many shortcomings to the methods employed in conducting the audit. There are a great many unanswered as well as unexamined questions about how criminal incidents are processed by the Chicago Police Department.

### Audit Procedures

The unfounding audit was conducted by sampling instances of unfounded incidents and reviewing the appropriateness of each decision to unfound. The random selection of cases for independent review appears to have been adequate for the study of unfounding decisions. There was a close correspondence between a Data Systems Division computer count of unfounded incidents and Detective Division reports (page 15). This suggests some confidence in the over-all flow of records. However, the report gives no details about the size of each incident "population" from which the samples were selected, nor does it report the size of the sampling interval by which they were chosen. The samples seem large enough for simple analysis by type of crime and area, but would be inadequate for a more detailed analysis of factors related to incorrect unfounding.

We support the decision in this audit to review cases for the 4 January-10 November, 1982, period. However, the selection of cases as much as a year old for follow-up doubtless contributed to the high frequency with which the auditors could not find listed complainants (see below). A regular audit program should review more recent cases, which would increase the interview completion rate and gather verifying information while it is still fresh in the minds of complainants. It should be noted that while data were gathered for incidents from the entire period, there is no analysis of the data over time in the report. However, an examination of Department Return A forms submitted to the FBI (see below) indicates there was an apparent decline in quarterly unfounding rates for most types of crime through all of 1982. An analysis of unfounding over time — taking advantage of the selection of cases over an entire year — might reveal something about this shift.

### Interviews With Complainants

Interviews with complainants lay at the heart of the CPD audit process. The auditors clearly were correct in conducting such interviews, rather than relying upon an internal review of records to reveal something about the unfounding process. But the low rate at which complainants actually were contacted casts a shadow over the entire report. Moreover, there is reason to be concerned about the quality of the interviews which were conducted, and so little information is given about the interviewing effort that it is difficult to say much about the consequences of the low contact rate. Most importantly, there is no discussion at all of the most critical step in the entire audit process — how decisions about the veracity of each unfounding were made.

As the report notes, CPD auditors failed to complete follow-up interviews with fully 41 percent of all complainants in the sample. The auditors concluded they were "unable to determine" the supportability of unfounding decisions when complainants could not be reached by telephone, in person, or through the mail. We will refer to these cases as "uncontacted." The proportion of uncontacted cases ranged from 31 percent (theft) to 53 percent (robbery). The audit was able to support the classification decisions of the Department in only 18 percent of cases, due in part to this high noncontact rate. If we examine only cases in which complainants were recontacted and audit review decisions made, that support rate rises to 31 percent. About 66 percent of rape cases, 22 percent of robberies, 26 percent of burglaries, and 25 percent of larceny theft unfoundings were "supported" among contacted cases. Figure 1 presents both estimates of the unsupportability of Detective Division unfounding decisions: that indicated in the report (based upon all cases), and that revealed by the fully audited cases (those in which complainants were successfully interviewed). In concluding that only 18.1 percent of all unfounding decisions were supportable (Table 1), the CPD audit may have been too harsh. (See Figure 1).

TABLE 1

### Estimated Verified Incidents by Crime Category in 1982

Type of Offense	(A) Official Number Reported	(B) Official Percent Unfounded	(C) Audit Number Checked	(D) Audit Percent "Correct"	(E) Estimated "Correct" Percent Unfounded	(F) Official Verified Incidents	(G) Estimated "Correct" Verified Incidents	(H) Percent Increase in Verified Incidents
Rape	1953	43.1	202	66.3	28.6	1112	1394	25.4
Robbery	23606	30.9	302	22.2	6.8	16307	22001	34.9
Burglary	37907	14.9	446	26.0	3.9	32249	36429	13.0
Larceny	102713	10.0	453	25.4	2.5	92388	100145	8.4

Source:

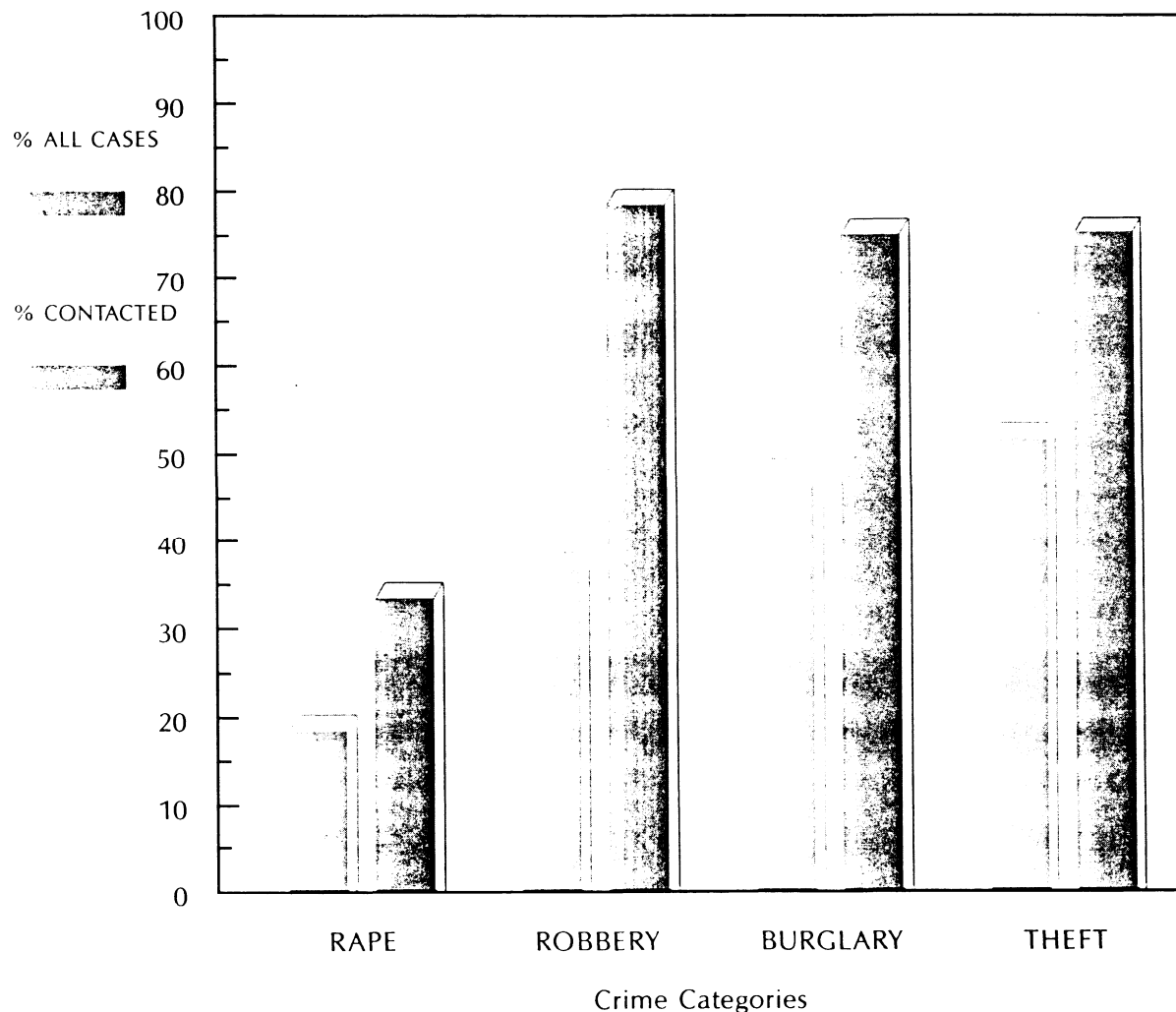
- (A) CPD, Return A form, 1982 Annual, Column 2
- (B) CPD, Return A form, 1982 Annual, Column 3 divided by Column 2
- (C) CPD, Table 1, Audit Report, Row 1 plus Row 2
- (D) CPD, Table 1, Audit Report, Row 2 divided by Row 1 plus Row 2
- (E) Column B times Column D
- (F) CPD, Return A Form, 1982 Annual, Column 4
- (G) Column A times 1.0 minus Column E
- (H) Column G minus Column F, divided by Column F

Figure 1

## UNSUPPORTED UNFOUNDINGS BY CRIME TYPE

Two estimates based on Audit A-82-35

Percent Unfounded



It should be noted that the CPD audit report reveals a significant interaction between unfounding and this non-contact rate. Interviews with detectives indicate they frequently justify unfounding decisions by their inability to contact victims. This was the second most frequent rational for unfounding cases, just trailing "insufficient evidence" (page 37). If we assume that victims whom detectives cannot locate also were often unlocatable by the auditors, it is likely that the auditors' "cannot locate victim" cases were disproportionately incorrectly unfounded. Thus, more complete interviewing of victims might have served to decrease rather than increase the rate at which the audit could support unfounding classifications.

Further, the report's description of the interviewing process does not give us much confidence in the results of interviews which were completed. The report indicates CPD auditors were given virtually no training in conducting interviews (the report mentions a "one hour briefing" at page 17). Auditors apparently were not closely supervised while conducting the interviews, and gathered largely unstructured and difficult to record data. (Their key interview question was "Will you explain to me what happened?"). In addition, there also does not appear to have been any independent check on the completion of interviews, the quality of interviews, or the auditor's non-interview rates.

Finally, the report inadequately documents those non-interviews. They are extremely significant, so frequent as to cloud almost completely the conclusions of the report. But there is no analysis of noncontacts, the reasons for them, the diligence of attempts to find complainants, differences between "can't finds" and "refusals," or other information that might clarify the process. We appreciate the problems involved in tracking down and interviewing crime victims. Since 1970 the US Census Bureau has conducted similar victim follow-up interviews as part of its National Crime Survey Program. Their non-interview rate resembles that of the CPD unfounding audit. It stood at about 32 percent in studies conducted in Baltimore and Washington, DC, and 36 percent in San Jose. However, such studies are more successful at finding recent crime victims than those victimized 12 months in the past. Doubtless the interview completion rate in a regular audit, following up recent cases, would be substantially higher.

#### Validity of the Unfounding Review

One of the most troubling aspects of this report is its lack of discussion of how decisions to "support" unfounding classifications were made. That decision by a CPD auditor was the key to the entire review process. Support or nonsupport decisions seem to have hinged upon a reading of case files and interviews with complainants. However, the report is inadequate at describing how these decisions were made. There is no indication that these decisions were reviewed, or that differences among auditors were investigated. There does not seem to have been a systematic checklist of factors which were to be considered in making each decision, nor a record of why each decision was made as it was. They were "auditor's findings" (page 17), which is a very vague way of conducting an important and expensive study.

Instead, when the audit's procedures were developed the verification of support and nonsupport decisions should have been built into the process. Systematic checklists of factors relevant to those decisions should have been developed. Auditors should have been held responsible for completing that checklist in every case. The reasons for each support or nonsupport decision should have been recorded systematically, and then analyzed and reported upon. Large samples of cases should have been "double reviewed" to check the veracity of audit decisions, and "trouble cases" which often led to disagreements in coding should have been identified and reviewed. Such double-coding sessions also would have been a valuable way to train new auditors, and — if standardized model cases were employed — they could have been used as a tool to identify the sources of disagreement among auditors.

There also was no discussion of one of the most striking findings of the report with regard to the supportability of unfounding decisions — the wide range of such support across crime categories. In particular, fully-reviewed rape classification decisions were supported at a high rate (66.3 percent). This finding clearly calls for some discussion, if only because it seems to point to a department success in controlling the unfounding problem.

#### Data Analysis

The analysis of the data as presented in the audit report revealed several significant findings. One was that unfoundings as a result of the Department's Summary Investigation process were considerably less likely than others to be supported at audit. Another was that personal contacts with complainants produce more supportable crime classification decisions by detectives. However, the absence of "base rate" information renders these and other findings hard to interpret. For example, from the report it is impossible to tell if personal contact with victims increases or decreases the unfounding rate, or if summary investigations contribute as many founded as unfounded incidents. The report presents tables describing the relationship between supportable unfounding and many key variables, but it is impossible to tell how significant those effects are numerically upon the overall count of "verified crimes" without knowing how frequent they are in all kinds of cases.

Some tables in the report are difficult to interpret due to their inadequate documentation. For example, Table 10 asks "was the victim contacted by detectives?" The most frequent answer was that the auditors were "unable to determine" that critical fact from the written report. However, no reference is made to the findings of the follow-up interviews on that very point. At page 17 the audit report indicates each complainant was asked if he or she was contacted by a detective. The reader cannot tell if the findings are reflected in Table 10.

A larger issue is that there is no analysis of the relation between claims made by complainants in the interviews and facts stated in the case files under review. For example, there is no analysis of the correspondence between statements on incident reports that contact was made with complainants and their reports of those contacts. In the context of this audit it would be very revealing to know if positive mentions of victim contacts on incident reports were true or false. The conclusion of the report (at page 43) refers to other mismatches between detective's reports and data gathered in the CPD audit which suggest less-than-thorough case processing. For example, the audit revealed cases in which original offense reports and detective's supplemental reports differed with respect to the gender of the victim, and where the latter referred to nonexistent addresses or persons. A more systematic review of such errors, through a validation study of a variety of factual materials relevant to crime classification, should be undertaken.

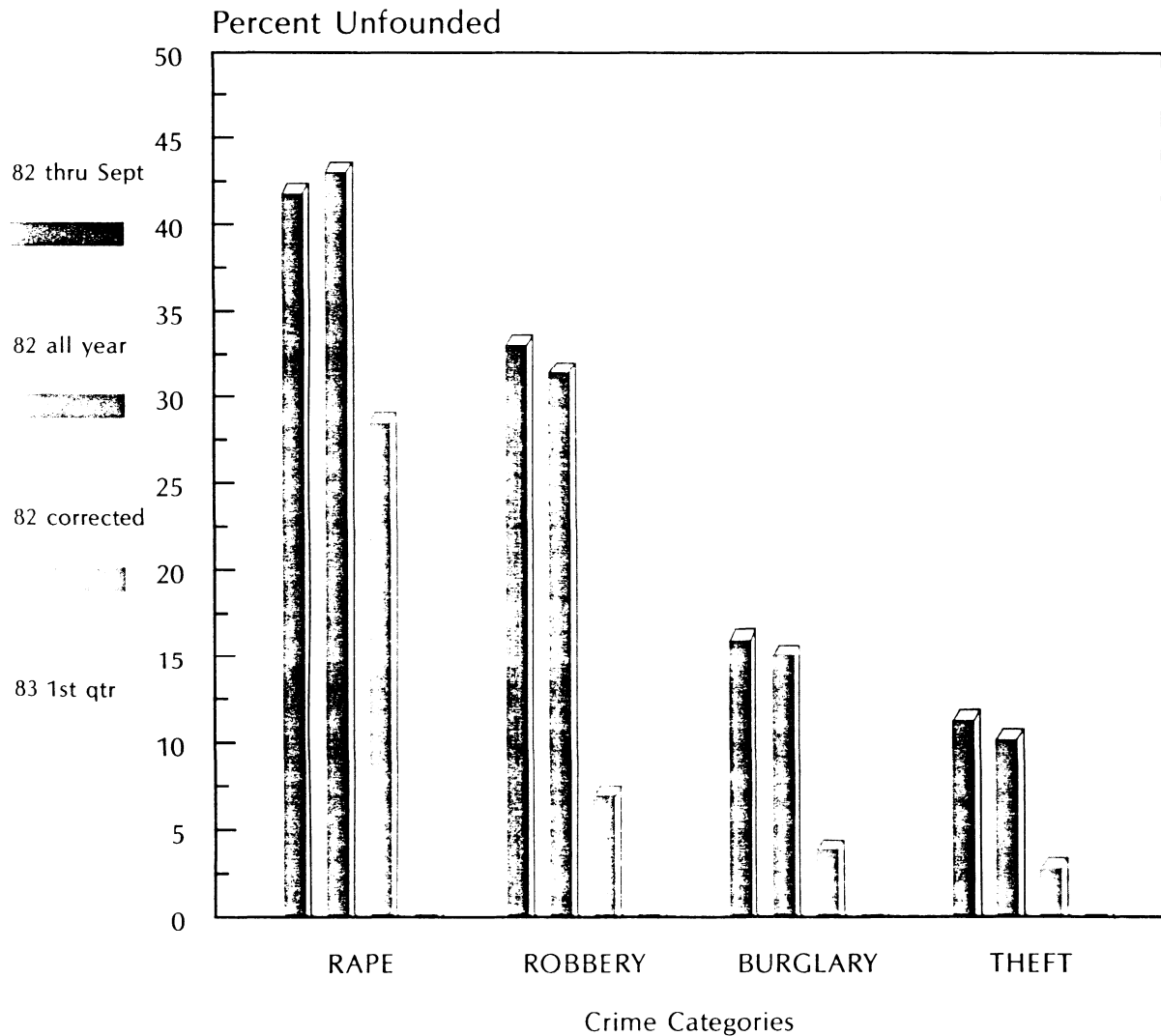
#### Analysis of Existing Patterns of Unfounding

It is also useful to examine potential strengths of the old reporting system, with an eye toward identifying potential weaknesses in the proposed new system. There is evidence of the *potential* integrity even of the old reporting system, which was so insufficient in practice. To illustrate this important point we will re-examine the Return A reports for 1982. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

## Unfounding Rates: '82 and 1st Quarter '83

Derived from Audit A-82-35 and Return A



In Figure 2 we report 4 different percentages of unfounded crimes for each of the crime categories detailed in the audit: Rape, Robbery, Burglary, and Theft. For each crime category in Figure 2, Column 1 represents the unfounding rate for all of 1982 from the Return A annual summary, and Column 2 represents the unfounding rate from January 4 to November 10, 1982, the period used in the audit. These percentages are essentially similar. The data in Column 3 are derived from our analysis of the audit findings as follows: In Table 1 of the audit we are given the percentage of "Not Supported" unfoundings in each crime category, together with those called "Supported" and "Unable to Determine" (Victim Not Contacted). Dividing "Not Supported" by the total of [Supported + Not Supported + Not Supported/(Not Supported + Supported)] gives us the proportion of determined outcomes which could not be supported. For Rape, for example,  $68 / (68 + 134) = 33.7\%$  of the unfoundings are unsupported in this audit. Applying that figure to the reported unfoundings in the 1982 annual Return A audit results in a revised estimate of 28.6% unfounded Rapes for that period. Hence column 3 for Rape in Figure 2.

Column 4 reports the obtained unfounding rate for each crime category during the first quarter of 1983. During this quarter the old system of reporting was still in place. But the investigative report had been aired in November, 1982, and all relevant personnel were undoubtedly aware of the public concern generated about the issue of misreporting. Note that in this atmosphere the 1st quarter 1983 unfounding rates for all crimes are *substantially below* those for 1982 or any other previous year. Without time series data extending over a sufficient number of reporting quarters it is impossible to interpret the data for any single period. But it does appear from the decrease evident in Column 4, in some crime categories approaching the recalculated 1982 data, that *the accuracy of the unfounding data in the first quarter of 1983 was enhanced even under the old reporting system when the institutional will existed to do so*. The authors of the Systems Analysis conclude that "The Chicago Police Department system for Uniform Crime Reporting compares favorably with other systems in place and with the International Association of Chiefs of Police 'model' system." On the basis of the summaries of systems in six other major cities as reported in that document, we agree with that assertion. The systems in these cities have strengths and weaknesses as compared to Chicago's, but as is evident in the data from the first quarter of 1983, the problems which have distorted the data from the Chicago Police Department are not solely nor perhaps even largely structural. For that reason, just as the old system always provided a series of opportunities to authenticate the unfounding data, we believe that even the new improved system can be subverted unless the inclination persists to ensure its integrity.

In Table 1 we summarize one strategy for estimating the impact of inappropriate unfoundings on the official verified incidents to be published in *Crime in Illinois 1982*. (See Table 1).

Column F of Table 1 contains the official verified incidents, and the numbers in Column G estimate the actual number of incidents, correcting Column A by the percentage unfounded derived in Column E. The final column, Column H, thus contains an estimated percent increase in verified incidents in each of these crime categories for 1982. Based upon these calculations, the percentage increase obtained in incident counts for rape is 25 percent; for robbery it is 35 percent; for burglary 13 percent; and for larceny-theft 8 percent. It must be noted that these "corrections" take into account only the apparent frequency of unfoundings not supported by the CPD audit. They do not account for other problems which doubtless cloud the data. For example, they do not reflect the misclassification of offenses, the possible "downgrading" of serious cases into less serious offense categories, or the unwillingness of citizens to report many crimes to the police in the first place. Also, the data on unfounding used to make the calculations in Table 1 are based upon samples of incidents. Within the range of the resulting sampling error in those estimates of unfounding lie many thousands of different estimates of the "corrected" level of verified crime. Finally, the CPD audit was limited to four categories of crime. The unfounding rates it could support apply only to those types of incidents, and are not generalizable to crime as a whole. One example of an important, high-volume, Part I crime which was *not* included in the unfounding audit is assault. Return A forms submitted by the Chicago Police Department to the FBI indicate assault cases are unfounded at a substantial rate. As a result, the "ball park" figures presented in Table 1 cannot be interpreted as an "accurate" measure of crime in Chicago in 1982, but only as a better approximation of that figure.

### Trends in Unfounding Over Time

Quarterly Return A reporting forms submitted by the Chicago Police Department to the FBI provide more extensive information on patterns of unfounding for specific types of crime — data which can be examined over time. Return A data over time are presented in Figures 3 through 9. (See Figures 3 and 4).

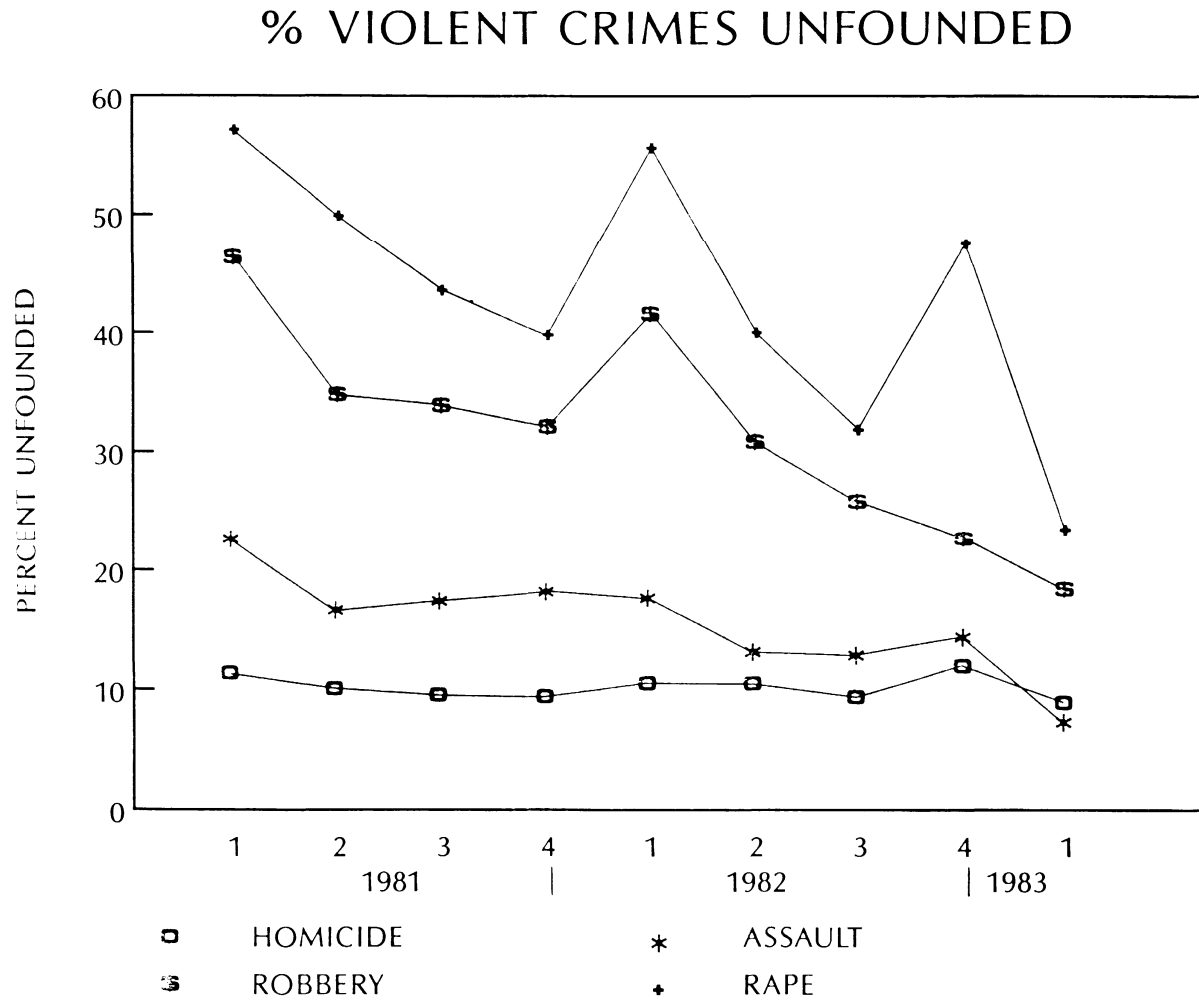
Figures 3 and 4 illustrate quarterly unfounding rates for major UCR crime categories. They suggest several things. First, there appears to have been a general decline in rates of unfounding in Chicago over the entire period for many types of crime. See in particular the figures for robbery, larceny, and burglary. Reported unfounding levels for these types of crime all declined fairly steadily during the period, and by 50 percent or more. Reported rates of unfounding for assaults held steadier, but also seem to have been generally downward. For rape the pattern was far more unstable, but also inclined downward. Motor vehicle theft unfoundings exhibited a great deal of cyclical change. Unfounding rates for homicide were quite constant, at about 10 percent.

But there are some striking irregularities in these patterns. There is a notable *lack* of an expected downward shift in unfounding during the first quarter of 1983, in response to the impending audit report and in the wake of public investigations of the Department's crime recording performance. These rates of unfounding were the lowest for this entire period, to be sure, but it is difficult to know to what extent this is a continuation of the apparent long-term (since 1981) trend downward. Moreover, something systematic appears to have happened in the first quarter of 1982. At least four of the unfounding series presented in Figures 3 and 4 showed a clear upward "blip" in that quarter, a jump in level of some significance for the verified crime count for that period and for yearly totals. This clearly calls for further research.

Data exhibiting such patterns of trends and peaks are impossible to interpret fully without more data, including observations extending both directions in time. Their careful interpretation also would require more detailed



Figure 3



contextual knowledge of events and personnel in the Department during this period. We are uncertain about the causes and the extent of this apparent downward trend, but we would like to know more about it. Note that the trend is so steep for certain offenses — such as burglary, larceny, and robbery — that it must be of recent origin. That is, projecting the unfounding rates presented in Figures 3 and 4 back in time would quickly push them to 100 percent! The annualized Return A data for 1978-1980 presented in the audit (page 13) reassure us that this is not this case, and in fact suggest that this downward trend is indeed a recent phenomenon. The data clearly indicate that some other pattern of unfounding must have characterized earlier periods. This can only be clarified through examination of more comprehensive data. (See Figures 5 through 9).

Figures 5 through 9 examine subcategories within each UCR offense group in further detail. They indicate the same general forces often were at work across offenses. See, for example, robbery cases as detailed in Figure 6.

In examining proposals for a new reporting system, it is important to note that the system which had been in place already provided several nodes where efforts were apparently made to ensure the integrity of crime data. Data presented in the Figures above reveal relatively low rates of unfounding for the 1st quarter of 1983, at levels for some crimes which approach the recalculated 1982 data, and one should remember that these unfounding levels were obtained under the system which is being overhauled. In that system, *rules* existed with respect to the form of reporting for various types of incidents (e.g., breach of the peace vs. criminal offense). Written reports from

Figure 4

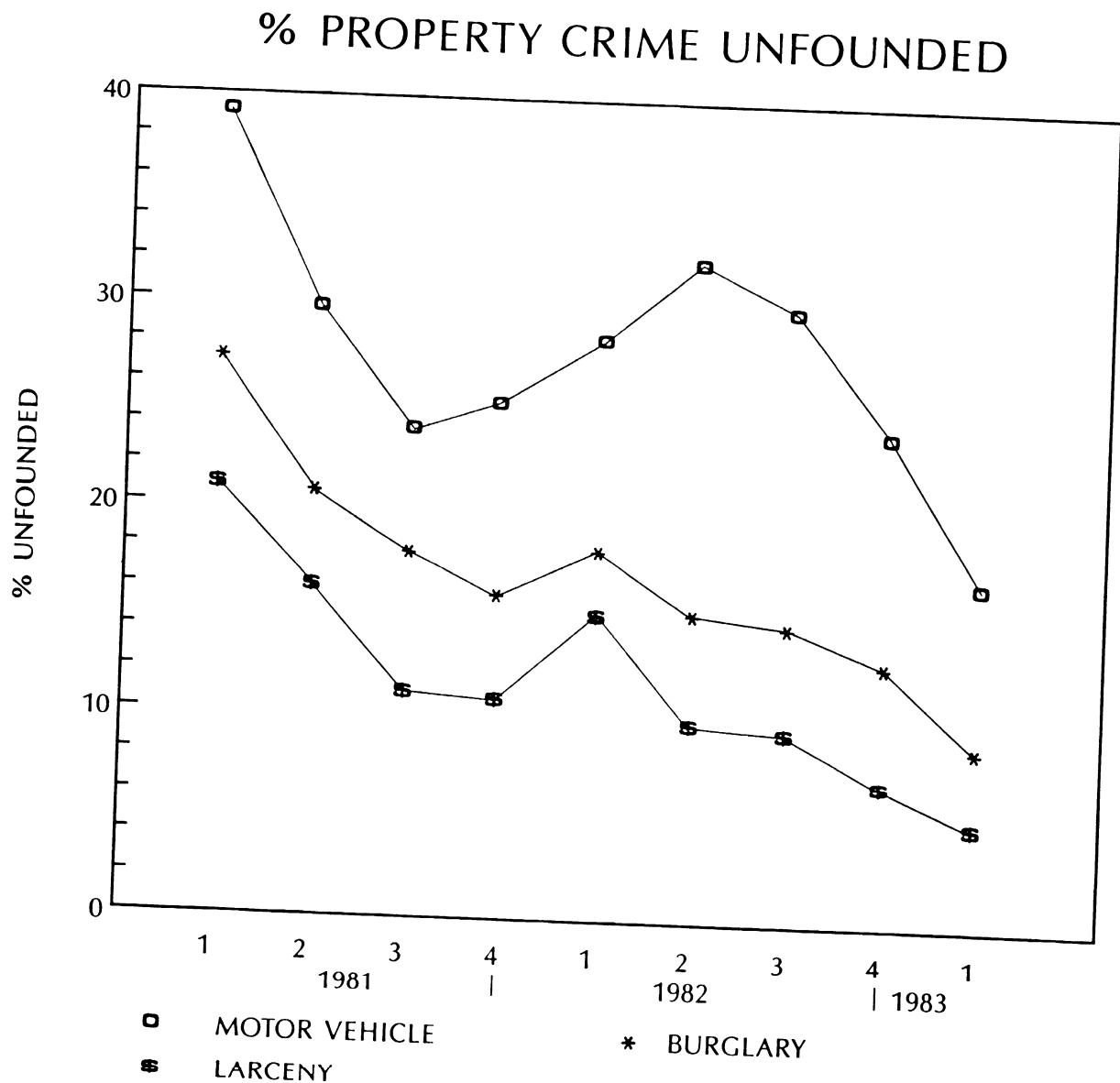
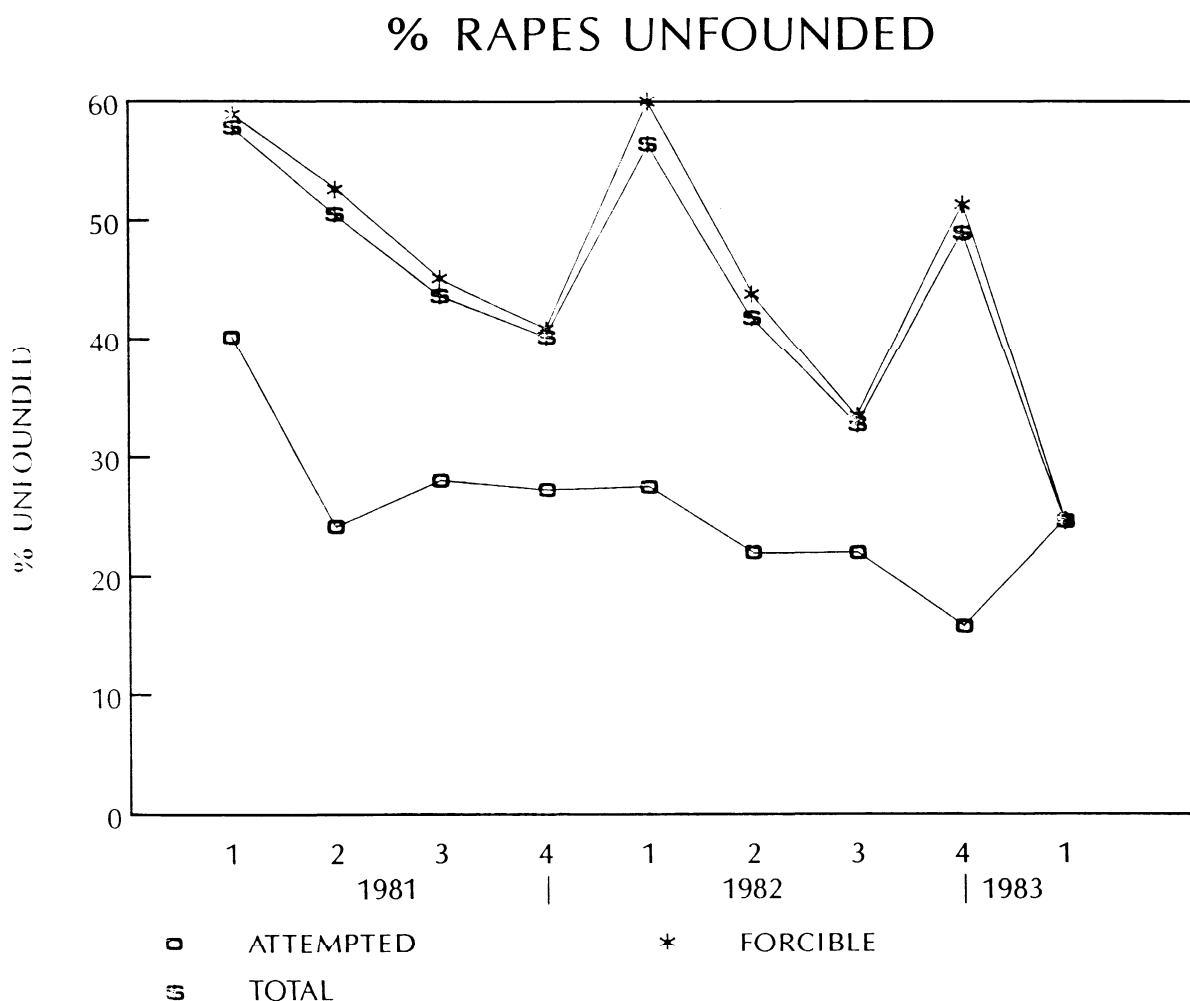


Figure 5



preparing officers were reviewed for approval by supervisors who could return the reports for correction. Copies of the case reports were sent to the Data Systems Division, and to the appropriate case management sergeant in the detective unit who determined which type of investigation was warranted. The assigned investigator had seven calendar days to complete a written *supplementary report*. If a supervisor found the report wanting, it could have been returned to the detective for *correction*. In short, the existing system had a variety of stages and strategies where the integrity of the crime reports could have been insured, were personnel so inclined. No system will work well when members of its staff are "going through the motions" rather than working toward *organizational goals*, and when supervisors are willing to accept routine verbal "formulas" to justify that inaction. We wish to stress that

in that respect, the recommended new system is similar to the old: although additional steps are being taken to incorporate checks by departmental personnel outside of the direct line of command, it still relies on the willingness of personnel to engage in a thorough, self-critical internal audit.

#### The Multiple Clearance Audit

Part of the CPD audit report is devoted to multiple clearances. The sample of multiple clearance cases is quite small (74). More importantly, the auditor's research did not seem well suited for learning much about the problem.

Figure 6

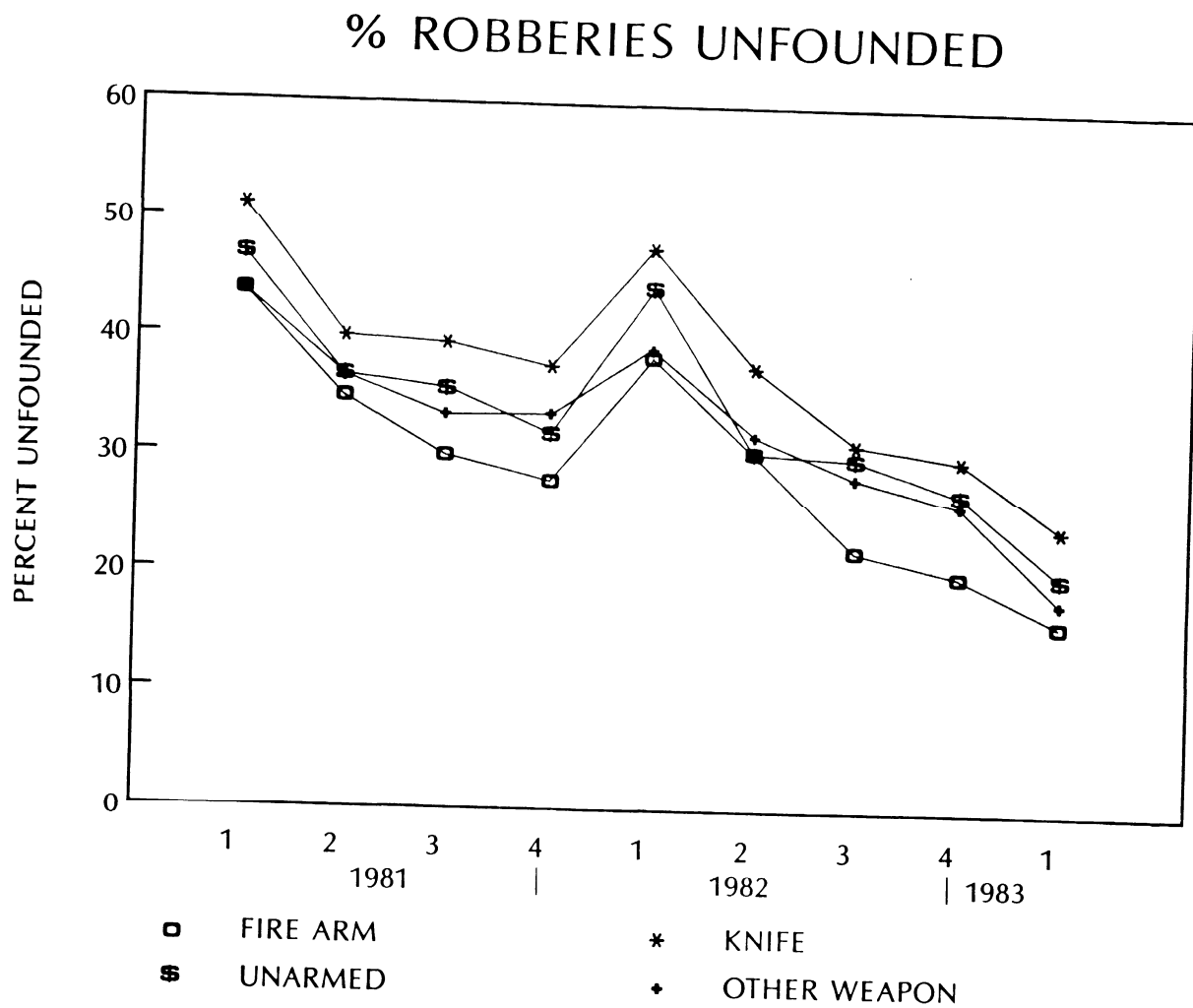
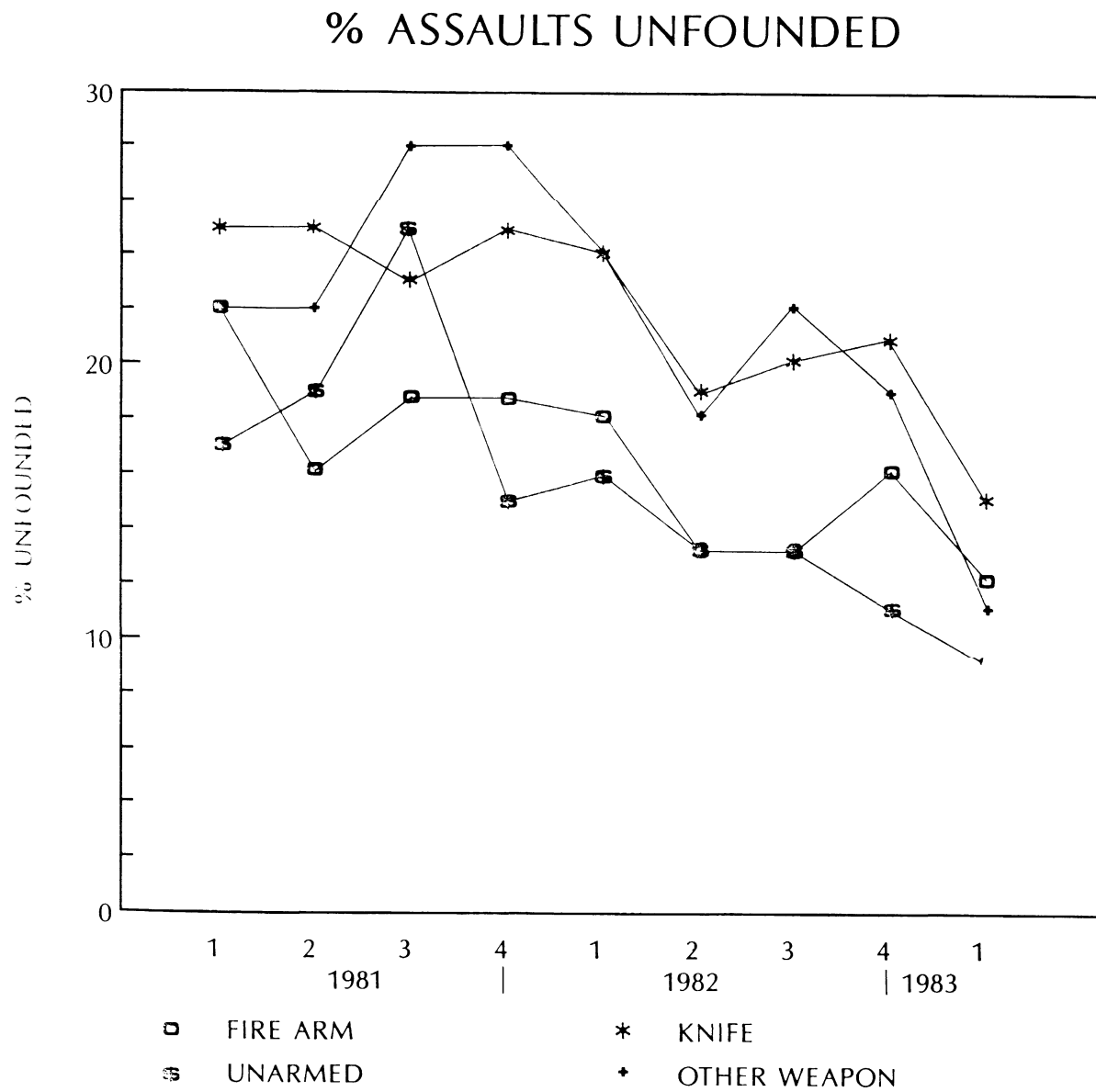


Figure 7



Multiple clearances are largely a police administrative matter. The issue is whether a combination of line-up identifications, offender interviews, and MO analyses are properly used to attribute certain patterns of offending to particular individuals (page 21). What the auditors did was sample multiple-clearance cases and interview complainants, asking them if they were contacted by detectives and told of an apprehension in their case. On the basis of this, "support" or "non-support" decisions were made with respect to multiple clearances. It is not clear how interviews with individual victims could clarify whether or not particular offenders indeed were responsible for a rash of crimes. These interviews shed further light on detective contacts with victims, but reveal little about the validity of their clearances.

### Conclusion

The audit report prepared by the Chicago Police Department came to a number of important conclusions and presented appropriate recommendations. The auditors found the quality of Detective Division investigations was low, and that case reports were often of poor quality and sometimes patently false. The Division displayed little sensitivity to the plight of victims. Case review procedures and the supervision of detectives was inadequate. The case management system employed by the Division to pre-screen cases to determine their validity and assess their potential for solvability was not working properly. There was evidence that many of the crimes apparently solved

Figure 8

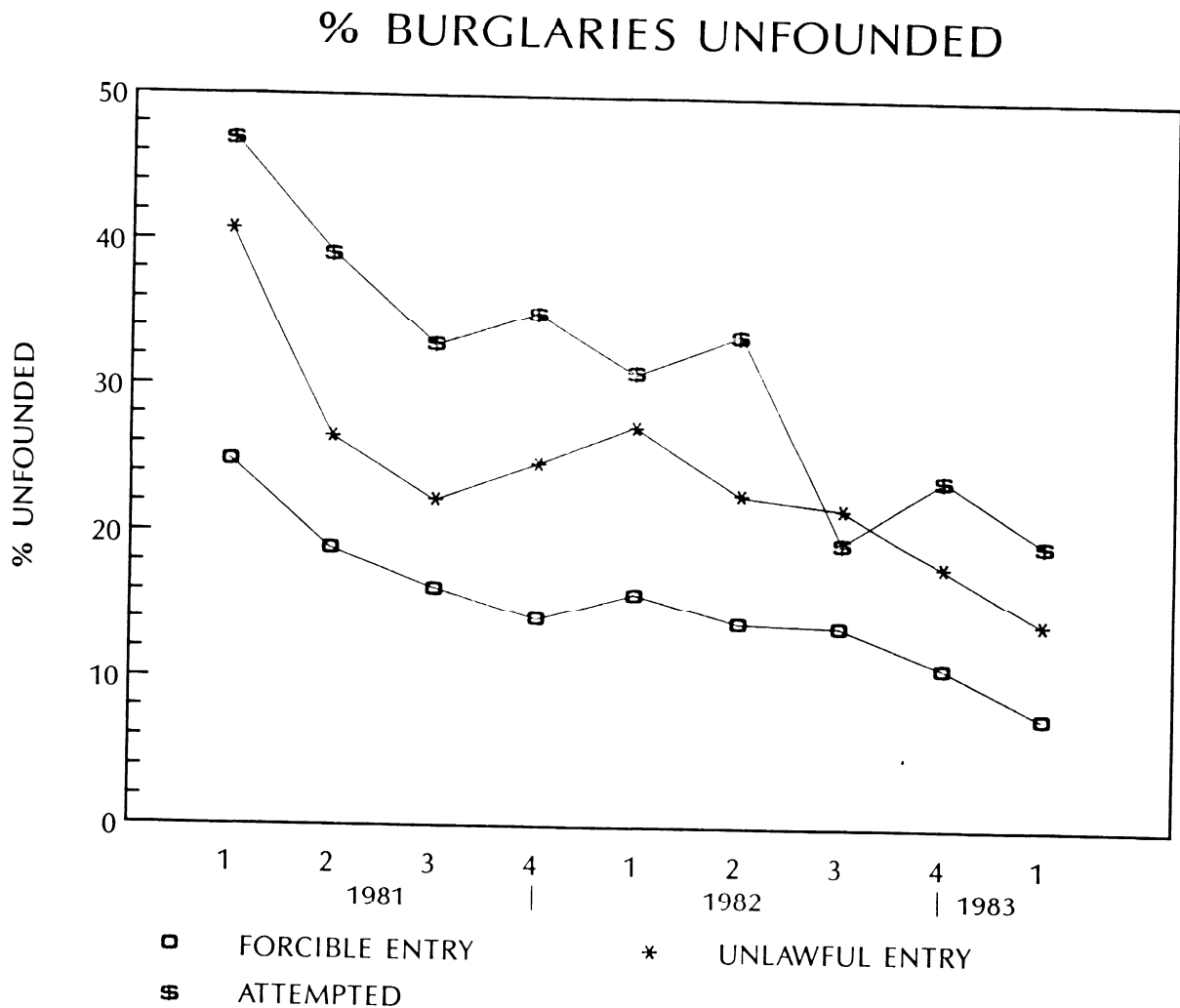
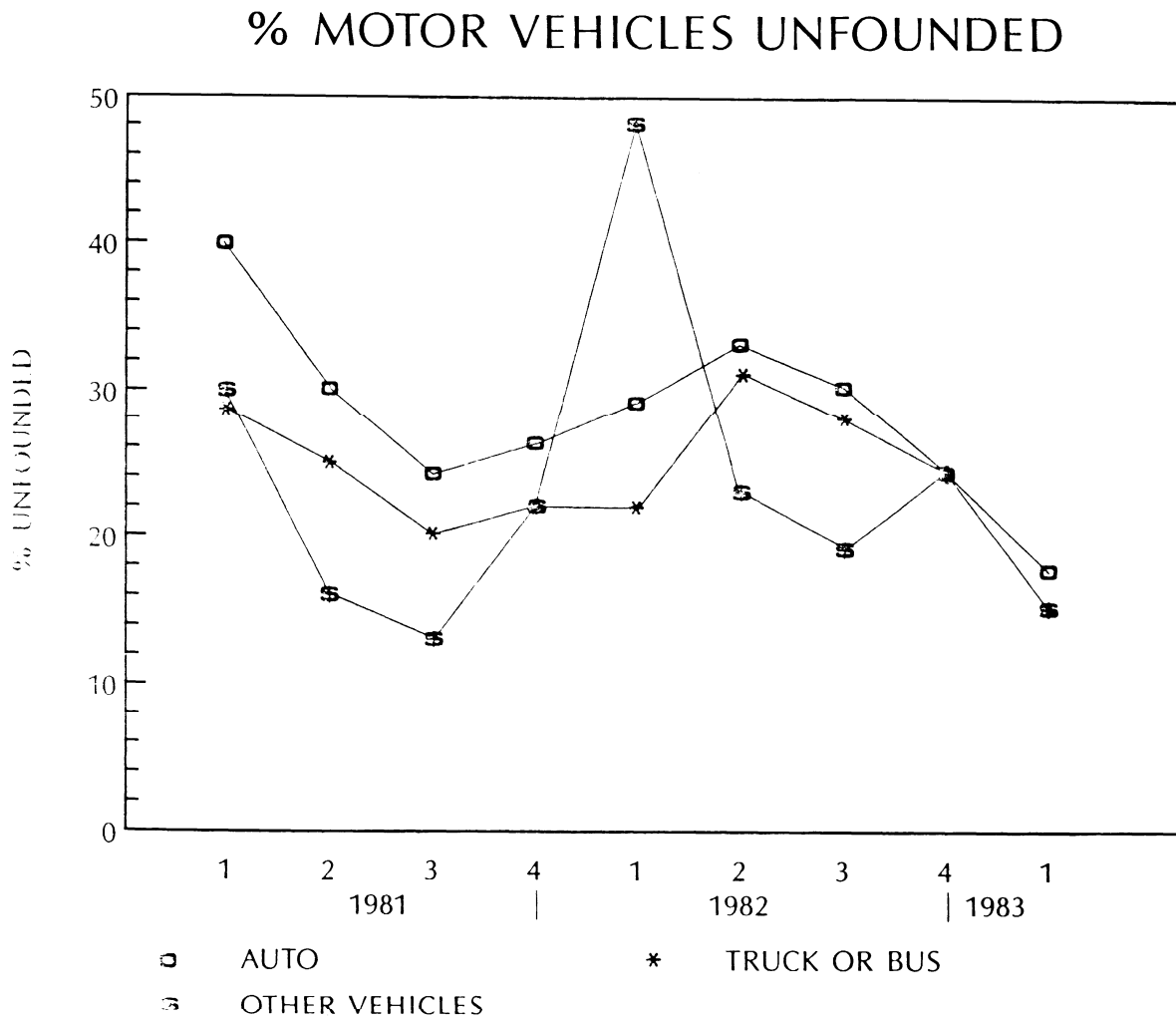


Figure 9



via multiple clearances should have been administratively closed without claiming such success. Finally, interviews with detectives indicated that some believed they were expected to unfound a substantial number of cases.

For all of its methodological limitations, the CPD audit thus revealed a number of significant facts. Its findings are reflected in new crime recording procedures now being developed by the Chicago Police Department. Moreover, there is evidence that lower levels of unfounding — and, by inference, improved investigatory performance — could have been achieved even under the old procedures, if the motive to do a better job had been present. A regular and fully independent audit of crime recording performance is one way of encouraging better crime recording practices.

## Report Number 2

### Issues in the Recording of Crime

#### Comments on the Chicago Police Department's Unfounding and Multiple Clearance Audit Report

### Issues in the Recording of Crime

The recently-released report by the Chicago Police Department (CPD), "Detective Division Reporting Practices" (14 April 1983), is limited in a number of ways. While laudable in its intent, the audit does not appear to have gone far enough in reviewing the process by which crimes become official statistics in the City of Chicago. The auditors defined their task narrowly, and in doing so missed a chance to shed additional light upon that process. This document reviews some of the broad limitations of the CPD audit. It examines stages in the crime recording process which were overlooked completely in the audit and others which were touched upon only lightly or otherwise slighted. It concludes that the limitations which were built into the CPD audit from the outset severely limit what we can learn from it. Numerous stages in the crime recording process still have not been closely scrutinized, and it remains unclear how much events and personnel at work at those stages shape the apparent count of verified crimes in the City.

There are fundamental limitations to this audit imposed by definitions of which police actions were to be reviewed. Only decisions about the unfounding of events initially classified as "criminal incidents" were reviewed, and not decisions about whether to treat events from the outset as "breaches of the peace" instead. Only selected crime categories were reviewed for evidence of incorrect unfounding, and at least one type of crime for which that is likely to be a major problem — assault — was ignored. The audit overlooked completely another fundamental problem in police recordkeeping — misclassification of offense types. Sometimes offenses are recorded in the wrong categories, a practice which comprehensive audits should be designed to detect and correct. Finally, the audit did not consider the issue of citizen crime reporting. There is evidence that a great deal of crime is not reported to the police in the first place. Some nonreporting reflects perceptions on the part of victims that their problems will not be taken seriously; they will not be well treated by investigating officers, and that little will come of their effort to be cooperative. As a result, the ill-considered unfounding of crime incidents and the poor detective practices revealed by the CPD audit may have themselves served to discourage victim reporting — and thus further reduced the apparent level of crime in the City.

One of the earliest decisions patrol officers make about an event is whether to treat it as a "breach of peace" (a condition to be returned to normal) or a "criminal incident" (a potentially actionable offense). As described in the audit report (page 6-9), if patrol officers decide upon the former classification no incident report is prepared and no Records Division ("RD") number is assigned to the case. There were practical reasons why only criminal incidents were investigated in this audit. Little information is captured about the first type of case, and it would be difficult to reconstruct the appropriateness of the responding officers' actions with respect to them. However, this remains a highly discretionary decision with unknown effects upon the overall count of "verified crimes." It is sometimes charged that patrol officers systematically overlook potential offenses, thus reducing the incident count in their sector. A thoroughgoing audit would be designed to review even those earliest decisions in the crime-recording process.

The decision to exclude assault cases from consideration in this audit is much less defensible. The grounds for choosing types of crime for review (presented on page 14) seem to apply to assaults as well. Assaults are extremely numerous, so the "frequency" rationale for incident selection does not exclude them. There were more than ten thousand aggravated assault complaints made in Chicago in 1982, all of which potentially were Part I Index Offenses, and they all fell within the jurisdiction of the Violent Crimes unit of the Detective Division. Moreover, there are high levels of unfounding in this crime category. Chicago Police Department Return A forms for calendar 1982 indicate 10239 aggravated assaults were referred to the Detective Division, 18.8 percent of which were unfounded. An additional 55027 simple assaults were reviewed, of which 13.3 percent were unfounded. It is the case that assaults often involve relatives or acquaintances, whom victims frequently hesitate to bring later action against, and it is sometimes difficult to allocate criminal responsibility to particular parties in violent disputes. Domestic disputes are concentrated in this category, and always present the police with crime recording problems. But the complexity of these cases indicates even greater need to monitor unfounding decisions in the assault category. The decision to exclude assaults suggests that this audit *overestimates* the proportion of correctly unfounded incidents by a substantial margin.

The report also makes no mention of the possible misclassification of incidents. Misclassification occurs when an incident is placed in the wrong UCR or Departmental crime category. For example, it is often found that the UCR "theft" category contains a number of misclassified burglary cases. In certain crime categories the problem of misclassification is potentially as significant as that of incorrect unfounding, and any independent review of police recording practices should have been designed to capture such errors.

With respect to the case management system employed by the Detective Division, no review was conducted of the decision to assign cases for administrative investigation, or for summary or field investigation. Because of the important discretion exercised at this point in the crime recording process (e.g., cases "unfounded on their face," "low in solvability," or in which the victim "refuses to prosecute" are assigned for Administrative Review), this step, too, requires close scrutiny.



Finally, the audit makes no reference to the problem of nonreporting. There is clear evidence that many crimes go unreported by their victims or by witnesses. In the Chicago victimization survey conducted by the US Census Bureau in early 1975, victims who were interviewed indicated that 53 percent of robberies were reported to the police, as were 54 percent of aggravated assaults and 50 percent of purse snatchings. There are a number of reasons for this nonreporting which are unrelated to the quality of police service and are not the responsibility of the police. However, research indicates substantial numbers of incidents go unreported because people believe their problems will not be treated seriously, because nothing positive seems to result from crime reporting, or because they have had bad experiences in the past when they have contacted the police.

The findings of the audit with regard to the practices of detectives thus take on larger significance. The auditors report that followup investigations often were of slipshod quality. It appeared that detectives were often not contacting victims. There was clear evidence that such contact was made in only 649 of the 2386 sample case reports reviewed in the audit (Table 10). Many cases were being unfounded for implausible or "formula" reasons. The CPD audit cites "standardized" narratives in supplementary reports which were used to "explain" unfoundings in the record: If the complaint was that lawn tools, grills, or furniture were burglarized from a garage for example, the supplementary narrative would often claim that neighbors saw the items in the backyard and took 'protective custody' of same; if the complaint was that merchandise had been stolen from an automobile or truck, the supplementary narrative would often claim that the victim recently visited a suburb and that the possibility exists that the offense occurred there. Studies of decisions by victims to report crimes to the police indicate the belief that the police give poor service discourages such reporting. The limited multiple clearances study conducted by the CPD also revealed that many victims of crimes in which arrests were made were not recontacted. This could only add to the widespread perception that little which is positive results from reporting crimes. This discourages such cooperation in the future.

The consequences of this are clear. Actions by the police to limit the apparent volume of verified complaints — which led to the audit being conducted — also may be linked to the volume of complaints which are registered by victims in the first place. The result is "verified crime" figures which grossly underrepresent the true volume of crime in the community.

### Report Number 3

Recommendations:  
Lessons of the CPD Audit

#### Introduction

As we have commented in other reports in this series, the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) audit of Detective Division Crime Reporting Practices (A-82-35) is a commendable document in several respects. The auditors produced an incomplete but nonetheless substantial review of unfounding and multiple clearance practices in the Detective Division. Specific examples of self-criticism by the CPD are evident, and recommendations to modify department practices to effect more accurate reports are included. These recommendations, in Section III, include (A) An operational procedural manual with appropriate training of all personnel (B) Performance standards for detectives (C) Required tests of the integrity of the reporting system, including interviews with randomly selected victims and additional training and/or disciplinary action where appropriate (D) A "stringent review process" in a case management approach with a "responsive feedback system" (E) Informing the public about the realistic likelihood of a personal follow-up investigation of reported criminal offenses (F) Periodic pre-announced and unannounced audits by the auditing and Internal Control Division in addition to periodic review by staff of the Bureau of Investigative Services, and (G) A system for controlling multiple report clearances, including random telephone verification of victim contacts.

These suggested modifications are all fully justified. They are warranted by the reporting deficiencies in the present system noted in the Conclusion to the audit (Part VII). Highlighted deficiencies include the brevity and poor quality of the reports, insufficient documentation of victim contact, and the lack of an independent audit of the Detective Division. This issue — the need for an independent audit — is also featured in the Systems Comparisons Analysis of seven major cities (audit A-83-9, page 15): "Chicago has no external review or audit of the system. It is totally dependent on line and staff review."

The audit of the Detective Division Crime Reporting Practices is admirable because of the evident willingness to document departmental practices and policies which undercut the likelihood of accurate unfounding practices. In analyzing multiple clearing practices, for example, the audit suggests that "All victims were contacted, where possible, and declined to prosecute" too often recurred in supplementary reports when insufficient efforts were made to contact the victims. The audit cites "standardized" narratives in supplementary reports which were used to "explain" unfoundings in the record: If the complaint was that lawn tools, grills, or furniture were burglarized from a garage for example, the supplementary narrative would often claim that neighbors saw the items in the backyard and took 'protective custody' of same if the complaint was that merchandise had been stolen from an automobile or truck, the supplementary narrative would often claim that the victim recently visited a suburb and that the possibility exists that the offense occurred there.

Other critical problems in reporting practices, each of which can impact the integrity of the unfounding data, were evident to the auditors. Supplementary reports were often obviously incomplete or internally inconsistent, for example. In addition, the CPD audit suggests that the detectives are insensitive to the plight of victims, "evidenced by the number of cases which are classified as unfounded because of lack of cooperation". Moreover, the auditors noted a perception among detectives that they are expected "to unfound, clear, and reclassify a certain (unspecified) percentage of the cases, and that "solved" classifications are preferred to "unsolved".

It is important that the designers and implementers of any new system recognize that the exigencies which resulted in these findings are likely to persist. With that in mind, they should fashion an auditing strategy which will nevertheless mitigate the number of inappropriate unfoundings.

The independence of the auditors is particularly crucial. In their Systems Analysis of other cities, the authors claim that the personnel in the auditing and Internal Control Division of the Chicago Police Department "are outside of the reporting chain of command and can perform their function as disinterested and impartial parties". We strongly disagree that this is a sufficient degree of independence. Although it is surely of some utility to employ auditors outside the direct line of authority, relying solely on CPD personnel is clearly an insufficient remedy.

The journalists who did the "Killing Crime" report performed a truly independent audit, and such entirely external (even adversarial) efforts will probably be necessary from time to time for any issue as important and politically charged as crime rates. But there are other ongoing procedures which can effect the degree of independence one should insist upon in such an audit.

The Systems Analyses of other major cities' Uniform Crime Reporting procedures make it clear that examples of independent auditing procedures are available. In addition to the internal checks in the model system proposed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, for example, the I.A.C.P. model includes "subsequent audits by the I.A.C.P.". Another example: City E in the CPD Systems Analysis incorporates the "critical review/audit" of "fixed percentages of randomly selected cases" (where) "victims, witnesses, etc. are interviewed to determine the veracity/accuracy" of the detective's reports, and "announced and unannounced inspections and/or audits (are) conducted at the district level." These steps are similar to those suggested in the revised system for Chicago. But the context for this system includes a State Department of Law Enforcement which is "obligated by statute to review and audit all state law enforcement agencies. State Department of Law Enforcement auditors select random reports for re-contact, review and auditing." We believe that this final, sufficiently independent step is necessary if a system is to have an appropriate level of integrity and credibility.

### Recommendations

It is in the context of the audit of the CPD Detective Division Reporting Practices, the analysis of U.C.R. Reporting Systems in Seven Major Cities, and our own experience in this area that we make the following recommendations.

(1) The recommendations outlined in Section III of audit A-82-35 should be implemented. These several steps provide an important advance over the existing system.

(2) Criteria for acceptable ranges of unfounding for each crime category should be established based on prior experience in Chicago, and on rates in other major cities. Deviations from those criteria should receive timely review. Records should be maintained so that it is possible to detect substantial anomalies at the level of individual detectives. These reviews could be carried out entirely *within* the Chicago Police Department.

(3) A routinized, ongoing procedure to ensure the integrity of unfounding data should involve persons *outside* the police department (perhaps from the Department of Law Enforcement, as in City "E" — which was not identified in the CPD report). These audits should incorporate the following:

(a) A stratified random sample of incidents, including all Crime Categories and Breaches of the Peace, should be selected in the month following the classification of incidents. Even though some cases are not officially completed in one month, our experience suggests that the basic classification will rarely change after that time.

(b) The paper trail of these selected incidents should be checked for completeness and internal consistency. This analysis should include every crucial step in the construction of each case, including initial and subsequent classifications of the incidents and forms of review recommended within the Detective Division.

(c) Energetic efforts should be made to reach as many of the randomly selected complainants and victims as possible. It would be far better to have a small sample nearly all of whom were interviewed than a large sample as infrequently recontacted as those in the CPD audit. It is widely acknowledged that more recent cases can be reached far more easily and more often than cases in the distant past. The CPD audit included cases more than one year old. The percentage of completed interviews would be substantially increased under the time line envisioned in these recommendations.

We believe that the effective implementation of an independent review procedure such as this would result in a feedback loop which would inhibit the aberrations in data keeping which have now been amply demonstrated within the Chicago Police Department. Even a small sample of cases diligently pursued in this manner would have a salutary effect on each stage in the data generation and recording process within the Chicago Police Department.