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CHAPTER

1

PUBLIC POLICY AND
THE FEAR OF CRIME IN
LARGE AMERICAN CITIES

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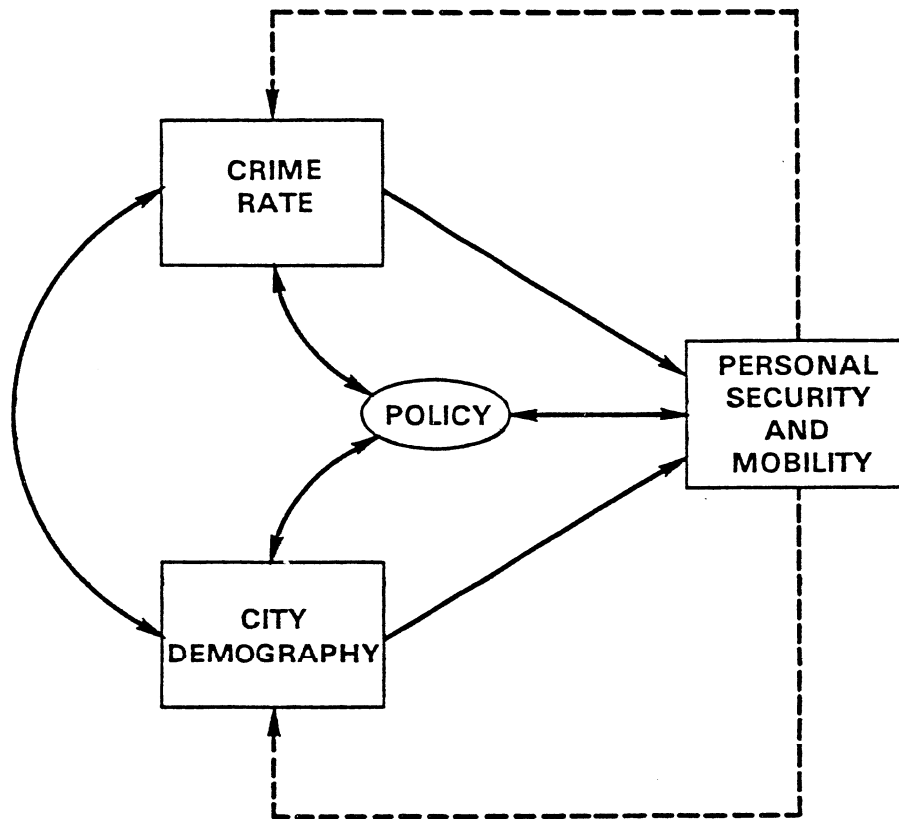
Soundings of public opinion indicate that crime is the number one concern of a plurality of Americans.¹ Gallup informs us that the residents of large cities place it ahead of even unemployment and the cost of living, and the New York *Times* headlined "More New Yorkers Turning to the Right, Despite City's Reputation as Liberal" when it saw the results of its own poll on the problem.² The issue is a recent one: a Gallup poll of big-city residents commissioned in 1949 found that only 4 percent regarded crime as their community's worst problem.³ Crime emerged as an important issue on the public agenda about 1965. It has remained high on the list for over a decade, however, thus showing more staying power than most political, economic, or social ills.

Although it is a constant concern, the sources of discontent over crime are not always clear and neither are the appropriate prescriptions for politicians or administrators who could profit by reducing it. This chapter reviews some new data that speak to the efficacy of policies that have been employed to reduce or ameliorate the impact of the fear of crime in large cities. Most traditional policies attack the problem by attempting to reduce the frequency of victimization. In this category are included efforts to reduce police-response time, increase police manpower, and apprehend criminals. Others attempt to limit the seriousness of consequences of the most frightening offenses. Victim compensation

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FIGURE 1.1

Determinants of the Fear of Crime



Source: Compiled by the author.

schemes and improved facilities for treating the victims of rape are included here. Some address the fundamental causes of crime and personal insecurity, including environmental-design projects and community crime-prevention programs. The remainder get at fear and its consequences directly, providing symbolic bases for feelings of safety and security. This is perhaps the major payoff of investments in intensive uniformed patrolling and streetlighting. These relationships are sketched in Figure 1.1. The data on crimes and victims—which primarily were collected in the federal government's victimization surveys—are organized around six working hypotheses that must be confronted by prospective social engineers in the criminal-justice system:

- (1) Policies have different effects on different types of crime, and often that effect is negligible.
- (2) Different types of crime have different effects on the fear of crime, and that effect varies from group to group.
- (3) The fear of crime is usually generated vicariously and not by direct victimization.
- (4) The fear of crime is affected by many social factors that have little to do with victimization, directly or indirectly.
- (5) The relationship between expressed fear and actual behavior is problematic.
- (6) The causal system underlying the fear of crime is characterized by positive feedback and accelerating rates of change.

After mobilizing evidence supporting these propositions, the chapter concludes with a few modest recommendations that seem congruent with the argument developed here.

THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC POLICIES ON CRIME

Policies have different effects on different types of crime, and often that effect is negligible. The relationship between criminal-justice policy making and the crime rate is at best uncertain. Field experiments and statistical exercises designed to tease out the deterrent effect of increments of man and material or the effects of new crime-control strategies typically uncover only small effects.⁴ One reason for this is that many crimes simply are not deterrable by the criminal-justice system. Many are furtive in nature, and not even their victims are clear about what has happened, when, or by whom. Many take place in private rather than in public places, and thus are not much affected by variations in patrol density or tactics. A substantial number of crimes of violence involve parties who know, love, or are related to one another; motivated by passion, they are not preventable even by programs aimed at the presumed root causes of crime. Finally, many or most crimes are not even reported to the police in the first

TABLE 1.1

The Deterability of Common Crimes

Crime or Offender Attributes	Interpersonal Violence	Robbery	Personal Theft	Burglary	Larceny	Auto Theft
Identification						
percent able to cite offender's						
race	96.0	93.9	52.5	4.8	4.2	7.0
age	90.5	92.1	51.0	4.8	4.1	7.1
Visibility						
percent of offenses occurring						
at home	11.7	10.9	2.1	96.3	4.8	0.9
in building	22.5	18.8	47.7	3.7	27.0	1.5
on street or "near home"	53.8	64.8	39.3	.0	60.0	94.8
other	11.6	5.5	10.8	.0	8.2	2.8
Motive						
percent of offenses in which offender was a						
stranger	59.6	85.3	95.0	89.9	78.4	71.3
(don't know)	(0.0)	(0.1)	(0.1)	(90.5)	(92.9)	(91.8)
Reporting						
percent of offenses reported to the police	40.0	49.6	31.6	45.8	22.5	67.2
Total	3777	1023	512	5789	19601	1198

Note: The "in building" category combines events occurring in schools, hotels, office buildings, and commercial establishments. In the "motive" category, the "stranger" percent figure is based only upon those cases in which the victim knew enough about who did it to render a judgment. The "don't know" figure indicates how often they were unable to do so. The number of cases involved in the calculation of individual percentages may vary slightly from the total number of offenses recorded in that category.

Source: Compiled by the author from 1973 national crime panel personal and household incident data.

place. In those categories of criminal activity for which the justice system depends upon citizens to initiate the investigation process this greatly reduces the impact of official responses to crime.

The furtive character of many crimes means that there often is only a small residual of clues available to the police. If a victim is unable to supply much information about an offender, it is unlikely that an arrest will ever be made, for physical evidence plays a small role in ordinary police work. Typically the victims of property crime are unable to supply such rudimentary data as the exact time of the offense, and the lack of personal contact between victim and offender that characterizes such crimes usually means that no descriptions can be rendered either. The result is that clearance rates for property crimes are much lower than those for personal offenses.

The amount of information that is potentially available to the police for particular kinds of crimes can be analyzed by examining the "don't know" responses to items in a victimization survey. Table 1.1 presents the responses of a national sample of victims to questions about the apparent age and race of those who carried off the caper. It indicates the importance of substantial victim-offender interaction in establishing a base of information for later police investigation. Both assaultive violence and robbery offenses typically leave a strong impression of the perpetrator in the minds of victims. Property offenses almost never lead to a personal identification, on the other hand. In the middle lies personal larceny (purse snatching and pickpocketing), crimes in which victim-offender relationships often are fleeting. In those offenses only about one-half of all victims were willing to hazard a guess about the characteristics of their attackers.

The location of crimes also affects the ability of the criminal-justice system to prevent the occurrence or to respond rapidly following the event. Incidents that occur in public places are more visible to passing patrols and are more likely to involve witnesses and bystanders who may be willing to intervene or call the police. Those in private places, on the other hand, are shielded from view, and it is often difficult for the police to intervene legally unless their services are requested.⁵ The Census Bureau's national victimization survey suggests that a substantial proportion of offenses occur in closed-off or semipublic places where private efforts are more likely to affect victimization rates. As Table 1.1 indicates, burglary, personal theft, and interpersonal violence often occur in less-visible locations. Many purse snatchings occur in office buildings, commercial establishments, schools, or hotels, however. There the vigilance of private security agents, changes in building design (alarm systems, the availability of exits), and routine self-protective practices by employees are likely to affect victimization patterns. In the robbery and larceny categories, most incidents occur in relatively public places. Programs designed to increase the amount of "street watching" in a community, either by patrol officers or community groups, may pay dividends in those cases.

The relationship between victims and offenders is related by inference to the motive behind many crimes, especially those of violence. Incidents that spring from relationships gone awry are probably less sensitive to variations in the certainty and severity of justice-system responses than are crimes of calculation.⁶ While there is some evidence that the Census Bureau's victim surveys greatly undercount incidents within the family and among friends and neighbors, the data may still be useful in comparing the relative concentration of stranger crimes in various categories. The data in Table 1.1 suggest that the only substantial reservoir of nonstranger crime is the interpersonal violence category; there, 40 percent of all offenses registered in the victimization survey for 1973 involved victims and offenders who were at least acquainted. Most of the robberies involving nonstrangers could be described as "school-yard extortion," a serious problem among the young.

The difficulty is that almost none of that extortion nor many robberies are reported to the police. Only in the auto-theft category were a substantial proportion of offenses uncovered in the victim survey reported to the authorities. Petty property thefts were least frequently reported (22 percent), while burglary and robbery hovered around the 50 percent mark.⁷ In all of these crimes the police rely primarily upon citizens to initiate the investigation process. Thus, programs aimed at improving response time, the quality of police service, or the effectiveness of other elements of the criminal-justice system are not likely to have much impact on the overall victimization rate. The data on suspect identification suggest that even full reporting probably would not help much in the case of property crime. The high visibility of most vehicle thefts does lend hope that official or civilian patrol programs might make a dent in that rate. On the basis of this data, robbery also looks like a good bet for effective crime-prevention activity: it involves rational calculation on the part of offenders, it takes place in public or semipublic places, and frequently it could lead to the identification of specific suspects. The weak link in the deterrence chain in the case of robbery appears to be citizen reporting.

SOURCES OF THE FEAR OF CRIME

Different types of crime have different effects on the fear of crime, and that effect varies from group to group. Not all victimizations have the same attitudinal effect, and the impact of that experience varies from person to person. Thus, reducing the frequency of certain crimes will have a higher payoff than others, and programs aimed at selected subgroups in the population will have a greater effect than scattershot crime-reduction policies.

In the 1967 analysis of citizen attitudes, the National Crime Commission noted that only crimes against persons appeared to have any direct impact upon the fear of crime. While property crimes reported in their surveys outnumbered

TABLE 1.2

Victimization and the Fear of Crime

Victimization Type	Correlation (Gamma) with:	
	Feelings of Safety	No Change in Activity
Rape	-.25	-.51
Robbery	-.22	-.32
Personal Theft	-.34	-.40
Assault	-.01	-.09
Burglary	-.13	-.14
Larceny	.04	.01
Auto Theft	.02	-.06
	(n = 23,022)	(n = 23,033)

Source: Compiled by the author from the attitude subsample of the 1973 survey of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Los Angeles. This analysis is based upon a 50 percent sample of that data.

those involving personal victim-offender contact by a wide margin, their attitudinal impact seemed to be slight.⁸ Virtually the same is true among those who were interviewed by the Census Bureau during their survey of victimization and attitudes in the nation's five largest cities, which was conducted early in 1973. The only exception is burglary, which appears to have psychological consequences parallel to—but weaker than—those of personal crime. The incidence of property crime affected the respondent's perceptions of the amount of crime in their neighborhood, but not their personal reactions to it.

Table 1.2 presents bivariate correlations between victimization measures and two indicators of the fear of crime: a composite index that measures the respondents' fear of walking the streets of their neighborhoods during the day and at night (a high score on which indicates feelings of relative safety), and an item probing whether they had changed or limited their activities in the past few years because of crime (a "no" response on which was scored high).⁹ The analysis is based upon a 50 percent sample of the 47,000 respondents who were administered an attitudinal inventory during interviewing in New York City, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia.¹⁰ The independent variables are counts of the number of times each respondent was victimized by each type of offense during the preceding year. These variables ranged in value from zero to four for personal crimes, and up to seven for some property offenses. As Table 1.2 indicates, victimization by rape, robbery, personal theft (pickpocketing and purse snatching), and burglary was related systematically to the fear of crime. As the signs there indicate, victims were less likely than nonvictims to

perceive their neighborhood as a place of safety, and they were more likely to report changes in their behavior. Auto theft, simple larceny, and assault were not so related. The limited effect in the latter cases may be due to inadequacies in the measurement of assault in the victimization surveys, or to the large component of interfamily, nonstranger crime in this category. The importance of burglary victimization in structuring attitudes should not be surprising for it is a crime that violates one of the most important sources of personal security—home walls. The home-as-haven plays an important psychological role in maintaining one's sense of security and order, especially for low-income people who cannot purchase residential distance from high-crime neighborhoods.¹¹

As this suggests, the impact of victimization upon the fear of crime varies from group to group in the population. In general, those who are more physically vulnerable to victimization and those who are more likely to have difficulty bearing the consequences of crime are more terrified when their fears are realized. The effect can be illustrated using mean scores on the five-point "safety" index to compare the attitudes of victims and nonvictims of various types. Women who were victimized by personal crimes had an average score of 4.98 on this measure, the nonvictims 5.5. Among men, the comparable scores were 6.12 and 6.3. Male victims felt less insecure than female nonvictims, and the effect of victimization (the difference between the two scores within each group) was twice as great for females. Similarly, the effect of victimization was 2.5 times as great among those making under \$10,000 per year as among those with family incomes above that mark, and the security score for those over 30 years of age dropped 3 times as far in response to personal crime as that for those under 30.

Based on the five-city data, it thus is apparent that certain groups in the population are much more fearful than others, and the effect of victimization among those groups is more intense. Programs aimed at alleviating the burdens born by persons in those categories should reap large benefits. One approach to the problem would be to reduce victimization rates, especially among the poor, women, and older people. Given that this strategy may not have many significant payoffs, an alternative response to the fear-of-crime problem may be to provide the victims of crime better services. There is important evidence that quality of police service received by crime victims plays an important role in mediating the relationship between victimization and fear. In an analysis of victimization data collected in a St. Louis area study, Roger Parks reports that victims who received thorough and more satisfactory service from police officers who responded to their call were less frightened by the experience as a result. Faster perceived response time was helpful in mediating the impact of victimization as well.¹² Being more vulnerable, the spirits of women, the poor, and the elderly may be especially buoyed by a sign of support and by the promise of competent protection that good service may hold out.

The fear of crime usually is generated vicariously, and not by direct victimization. Measures of direct victimization cannot explain much of the

TABLE 1.3

Personal Victimization and Perceptions of Safety

Perceptions of Safety	Percentage Distribution of Personal Victimization		N
	No	Yes	
Low	1	21	2
	2	18	1
	3	19	1
	4	23	1
High	5	13	1
Total		100%	100%

Source: Compiled by the author from the attitude subsamples of the 1973 survey of New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. This analysis is based upon a 50 percent sample of that data.

variation in measures of the fear of crime, for many more people express great fear than actually are victimized. Although it has not been investigated systematically, it seems that the roots of most people's perceptions of crime and knowledge about victimization lie in vicarious sources: television programs, newspapers, and the secondhand reports of friends and neighbors.

Attitude studies indicate that experience with personal crime (and burglary) is the only consistent predictor to the fear of crime among victimization measures. However, crimes against the person are relatively rare events, even in these five high-crime cities. Within the one-year reference period used in these (and most other) surveys, most people are not involved in a rape, robbery, assault, or personal theft. In the 5-city survey, only 0.2 percent of all respondents (and less than 0.4 percent of all females) reported that they were raped within the past year; for robbery the overall figure was 2.4 percent, for assault 2.8 percent, and for personal theft 1.2 percent. A few of these victimizations overlapped, leaving about 94 percent of all the respondents in these surveys untouched by personal crime during the 1972 reference year.

The difficulty is that a variable with a highly skewed distribution cannot be related in simple fashion to a variable with a normal distribution. This is illustrated in Table 1.3, which relates victimization experience to perceptions of safety, when the former is collapsed into a simple victim-nonvictim dichotomy for all personal crimes. While the data in Table 1.3 indicate a correlation between victimization and perceptions of safety (a gamma of $-.15$, which is brought down by the inclusion of assault cases), it is clear that most people falling in the

low-safety categories were not victimized during 1972. The roots of fear must be found elsewhere.

One source may be the experiences of those we know and love. An indicator of this which may be generated from the Census Bureau's data is the victimization experiences of others in the household of each respondent. When we measure this using a count of the number of robberies and personal thefts suffered by other household members during 1972 (which ranged in value from 0 to 5), we find that perceptions of safety declined steadily with indirect victimization: mean safety scores dropped from 2.9 among nonvictims to 2.0 among those who lived in households where others suffered 3 or more victimizations.

Beyond this there is no direct data on the importance of vicarious experiences in shaping people's opinions about crime. Robert LeJeune and Nicholas Alex indicate that the victims of robbery spend a great deal of time communicating their experience to others, but there is no evidence of the impact of such "war stories."¹³ It seems likely that popular stereotypes about the motives and behavior of criminals, the characteristic features of crimes, and the relative frequency of personal and property offenses are largely passed on through the media, and systematic observations of television programs indicate that information from that source is quite inaccurate.¹⁴ Perhaps information campaigns that "tell the truth" about the crime problem and contribute to a more realistic public assessment of the nature of the crime problem in the United States might contribute to an overall reduction in the aggregate level of fear in urban communities.

Safety and activity are affected by many social factors that have little to do with victimization, directly or indirectly. The fear of crime is mixed up with a number of other fears and aggravations that plague the lives of big-city residents. People do not get along with nor understand their neighbors, they fear what goes on in schools, and they do not like to rub elbows with the people they do in places where they shop or seek recreation. Part of this has to do with the fear of strangers. Strangers are unpredictable: we do not understand their motives and we do not know what they may do. In this sense, people of a different race or class are stranger than those who are not. As a result, the fear of crime is intermingled with racial fears and class-linked differences in behavior.

It is apparent from the Census Bureau's surveys that a number of factors other than crime (as a specific response category) affect people's behavior. For example, the survey asked whether respondents in the five largest cities went out at night for entertainment more or less than they did "a few years ago." Among the 33 percent who indicated that they went out less, 16 percent (5 percent of the total) attributed their decreased mobility to crime. The comparable figure was 11 percent for those who indicated that they do not go downtown to make major purchases. When asked about events close to home people volunteered a number of complaints that were related to perceptions of safety and mobility, but were not specifically "criminal." In response to a question of what they

disliked about their present neighborhood, 28 percent indicated that "crime" was the most important response category. An additional 19 percent said that they were unhappy because a "bad element" was moving into the neighborhood, 9 percent cited their dislike of the character of their neighbors, and 5 percent mentioned problems with the schools. This adds up to 62 percent of all those responding to the question. Persons who chose those responses were more likely than those who did not to fall into low-safety and reduced activity categories, suggesting that the "fear of crime" is a diffuse psychological construct affected by a number of aspects of urban life.

The relationship between expressed fear and actual behavior is problematic. It is not always possible to predict behavior on the basis of attitudes. Our behavior is shaped by a variety of opportunities and constraints that may cause us, perhaps even unwillingly, to act in ways that are discrepant with our expressed fears, beliefs, or preferences. People may fear street crime and still have to take the bus home from work after dark; youths may be victimized frequently, yet they may be drawn by sociability and peer pressure to spend a great deal of time in parks and alleys; the elderly may be relatively safe from actual victimization, but they still may take great precautions to avoid injuries that may be slow to heal or losses they cannot recoup. The more indirect the connection between attitudes and behavior, the less programs aimed at one will affect the other. This may have consequences for policies encouraging the adoption of individual self-protective measures against crime.

The Census Bureau's victimization surveys reveal a substantial correspondence between perceptions of safety and self-reports of behavior. The correlation (gamma) between the composite index measuring perceived neighborhood safety and responses to the question, "Have you limited or changed your activities in the past few years because of crime" (with a "no" response scored high), was +.55 among residents of the five largest cities. Twelve percent of all respondents fell in the two "least safe" categories and yet indicated that they had not. Almost 70 percent of these "discrepant" were female; young, working, unmarried women were most likely to report that their neighborhood was unsafe and yet failed to take "appropriate" countermeasures. This perhaps was a consequence of role pressures that led them to behave this way, while their physical vulnerability to personal crime made them more fearful of the consequences.

One explanation for the general discrepancy between belief and behavior may be that for many persons the fear of crime is a relatively abstract concern. Few are victimized, and not many live with others who have fallen victim to a serious personal crime. In general, consistency in attitude (perceptions of safety) and behavior (limits on activity) increases with exposure to crime. For example, the gamma between the two measures was +.54 among nonvictims, while among those who were victimized by rape, robbery, or personal larceny during the preceding year the correlation increased to +.61. The correlation

between safety and activity also was higher among those who lived in the same household with the victims of personal crimes. Similarly, the suspicion that one's neighbors are likely to be counted among the criminal class was related to greater consistency between perceptions of neighborhood safety and personal behavior. Respondents were asked: "How about any crimes that may be happening in your neighborhood—would you say they are committed mostly by people who live here in this neighborhood or mostly by outsiders?" Among those who insisted that there was "no crime" in their area, the correlation between the two measures was +.49; among those choosing "outsiders" it was +.52; among those indicating that both outsiders and those in the neighborhood were responsible it was +.58; among those who feared only their neighbors it was +.59. The more immediate the source of the threat, the more consistent were attitudes and behaviors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIME-CONTROL POLICY

The implications of this data for crime-control policy are inferential, but speak to a central issue—citizen participation in crime-prevention activities. By popular image, the urban dweller lives in a state of siege, armed to the teeth and locked behind bolted doors. This contrasts with the picture of the average apathetic citizen lamented by criminal-justice professionals—he does not cooperate with officials in crime-prevention efforts, he leaves his keys in his car door or his back door unlocked with alarming frequency, and he does not even report many crimes to the police. Part of the difference between these stereotypes may be the distinction between attitudes or verbalized opinions and behavior. Most people are not victimized and most people do not suspect their neighbors, even in these five high-crime cities. As a result, it may be difficult to convince nonvictims (or, more appropriately, the not-yet-victimized) to invest time or money in defensive tactics or to change their life-styles. Even among victims, defensive tactics are less than universally pursued. In the five cities, 59 percent of the victims of personal crime reported that they had changed or limited their activities due to crime, as contrasted with 48 percent of nonvictims. This effect is somewhat stronger than that uncovered by the Crime Commission in their surveys in the mid-1960s, but neither the strength of the relationship nor the level of defensive activity is high enough to lend credence to extreme views of the paralysis of big-city life.¹⁵ People are concerned about crime, and there is reason to believe that this concern is on the upswing, but life goes on.

The causal system underlying the fear of crime is characterized by positive feedback and accelerating rates of change. The framework for this discussion, sketched in Figure 1.1, is a dynamic model. Crime, racial and class tensions, and communication of those fears not only contribute to the spread of fear and the reduction of personal mobility, but they in turn lead to increasing rates of crime

and demographic and economic changes that further fuel the spiral of fear. The result is that over time we should find exponentially increasing levels of fear in communities that have gotten caught up in that spiral. Although time-series attitudinal data for central cities is lacking, other indicators of social change in large American cities do not portend well for the future.

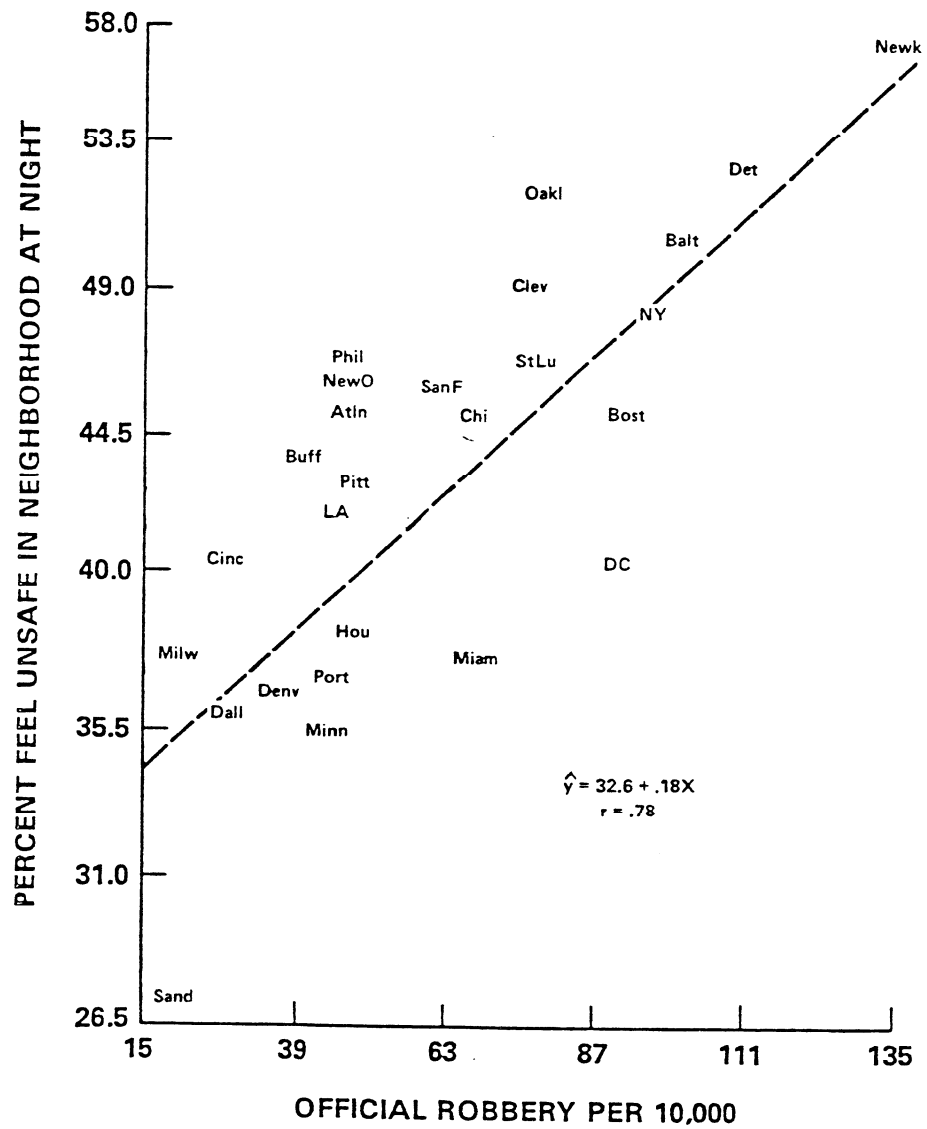
First, rates of reported crime have increased dramatically in certain cities. In Chicago the number of reported homicides rose from 231 in 1946 to over 1,000 in 1973, while the city's population remained virtually unchanged.¹⁶ Crime rates have risen the most in larger communities, and by 1970 the 32 largest cities in the country—which housed 16 percent of the nation's population—experienced 67 percent of all the robbery known to the police.¹⁷ Whether the linkage between crime rates and the fear of crime is through direct victimization or the contagion of vicarious experiences, we should expect fear to increase in some regular fashion with skyrocketing reported crime rates.

Analysis of the attitudinal data collected by the Bureau of the Census in 26 major cities indicates that rates of officially reported crime are strongly correlated with the level of fear in those communities. Figure 1.2 presents a plot of the relationship between officially reported robbery rates in those communities and a measure of citizen safety, the (projected) proportion of the population who indicated that they were afraid or very afraid to walk the streets of their neighborhood alone at night.¹⁸ The official robbery rate in this case probably reflects both true patterns of victimization and the image of the dimensions of the local crime problem that radiates from the police and the media in these communities. As Figure 1.2 indicates, citizens in cities where reported robbery rates were high (including Newark, Detroit, and Baltimore) felt very insecure, while those in low-crime cities (notably in San Diego) felt safe indeed. The slope of the regression line illustrated in Figure 1.2 suggests that a shift of 10 robberies per 10,000 inhabitants is associated with a 1.8 percent change in aggregate levels of safety in these communities.¹⁹ While it is inappropriate to make firm claims about temporal trends from such cross-sectional parameters, it is likely that the positive relationship displayed in Figure 1.2 has remained constant across time within cities as well.

This is troublesome, for projections of existing trends suggest that large central cities will continue to experience rapidly increasing rates of reported crime. One reason for this is that crime and associated problems appear to be linked in reciprocal fashion with patterns of metropolitan suburbanization.²⁰ The impact of this process upon the social ecology of central cities has been mammoth. Suburbanization sorts the population along race and class lines, concentrating the poor and the marginally employable in deteriorating physical plants that are cheaper to abandon than repair. The hearts of large cities are peopled by working-class whites and blacks and Latins of various classes who are unable to escape, while job opportunities expand on the fringes of metropolitan areas where land is cheap and expressway connections are handy. Skilled

FIGURE 1.2

Robbery Rates and the Fear of Crime



Source: Compiled by the author.

labor and the tax base are rapidly following the middle class to suburban areas, pulled by opportunity and pushed by the fear of crime and the financial burden of supporting the services apparently necessary to maintain order in the old neighborhoods. Thus suburbanization is most extensive around central cities with the highest rates of reported crime. Across the nation's 32 largest cities in 1970, the correlation between the crime rate and an index of suburbanization based upon jobs and population was +.62.²¹ The correlation between changes in each between 1946 and 1970 was +.57, suggesting that the relationship between suburban growth and central-city crime patterns has been quite powerful.

The difficulty is that those policies that exist about suburban growth have been drafted to encourage it, and it is unlikely that U.S. governments in their present form can do much to reverse demographic trends. The movement of people and jobs is largely a function of market forces and racial discrimination, which usually work in tandem.²² What limited impact the government has in such affairs has been in the areas of highway construction, mortgage financing, mass-transit policy, and gasoline prices. In the past, these have worked to speed the growth of suburbs, but it is unlikely that incremental changes in any or all of these activities would much affect the course of urban development. Thus the prognosis for large, dense, racially heterogeneous central cities is not good, and it is a sure bet that crime and (perhaps) the fear of crime there will register steady increases for the foreseeable future.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

This review has argued that many of the policies we traditionally pursue to affect the fear of crime have little chance of success, and that much of that fear is probably beyond the control of the criminal-justice system in the first place. It has suggested three viable paths that still appear to be open to policy-makers, however. These include programs that inform the concern rather than the fears of the public; that mobilize them in support of narrow, crime-specific prevention activities; and that provide services to victims, calling for new skills on the part of criminal-justice practitioners.

It is important to distinguish between the fear of crime (as manifested by reduced activity or an unwillingness to venture onto the street) and concern over crime as a public issue. The latter involves how high we place the issue on the public agenda, relative to other ways of spending our money. Too often the latter issue is approached by playing to the former, drumming up levels of public hysteria that for most people (the data indicate) is quite inappropriate. The result: many people are afraid, many more than are victimized by "crime in the streets," and that fear has negative systemic consequences which probably far overshadow its strategic payoffs. A more responsible (and profitable) strategy

would focus upon those high-volume crimes that strike more uniformly throughout the population, and that might be reduced in number through simple self-defensive tactics on the part of potential victims. These include burglary and property thefts, crimes that cost us a lot (which can easily be measured), rely largely upon carelessness on the part of victims, and do not evoke high levels of debilitating fear. This strategy for mobilizing public support of the criminal-justice system recognizes the "positive functions" of concern and attempts to focus upon activities where it may do the most good for the greatest number.

The data presented in Table 1.1 also suggest some ways of setting viable crime-prevention priorities with payoffs in the fear department. Analysis of the victimization survey data indicates that certain classes of crimes may be amenable to government intervention. Almost 27 percent of all property larceny and 6 percent of all personal violence, for example, were reported to have taken place in schools in 1973.²³ Schools are places with controlled access, lockers, and security administrators, all things that governments can improve upon. The data also indicate that robbery is a good bet for deterrent impact—there is a high potential for suspect identification, it often occurs in public places, and it involves rational calculation on the part of offenders. Citizen reporting programs would help close the biggest gap in the apprehension process, for less than one-half of all personal robberies are now coming to the attention of the police.

Finally, Roger Parks' analysis of the impact of the quality and quantity of police service upon the extent to which victimization experiences were translated into generalized fear should suggest training and organization policies to police administrators.²⁴ Perhaps the best model for the kind of police intervention style that is called for is Morton Bard's family crisis-intervention team.²⁵ They are trained to cope with conflicts that arise out of domestic problems, which often calls for negotiating between the disputing parties and arranging for the assistance of other social agencies in the solution of family difficulties. For police officers, victimization is a routine event, and often they simply do not understand the crisis that it evokes in the lives of victims. What the victim needs is information (what to do about insurance, where to locate a good doctor), advice (is his assailant likely to do it again; what should he do to protect himself in the future?), and a prognosis (will he get any property back; will they catch the one who did it; how much of his time will it take if they do?). The evidence suggests that such assistance—which is not the same thing as unwarranted reassurance that all is well—helps a lot in assisting victims in adjusting to their new status.

The fear of crime greatly affects the quality of urban life. It affects it directly through its impact upon our use of the streets and parks, the bustle of social activity, shopping, and recreation, and the diversity and anonymity that have long characterized city dwelling. It affects it indirectly through the debilitating impact of crime upon social intercourse, community morale, and even the economic base of the city. When shops and restaurants close, when downtown

streets become lonely canyons in the evening, and when families rearing children flee the central city, we all suffer the consequences. The fear of crime has a social, political, and economic reality of its own, quite independent of the true dimensions of the crime problem and the efficacy of crime-reduction policies. The development of social indicators of this aspect of the quality of life and the cultivation of programs that succeed in coping with it should be high on the agenda of innovators in criminal-justice administration.

NOTES

1. "Crime Seen Top Problem for Cities," *Washington Post*, July 27, 1975, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, January 15, 1974.
3. *Washington Post*, op. cit.
4. For a collection of two dozen of the best studies by economists, see Lee R. McPheters and William B. Stronge, *The Economics of Crime and Law Enforcement* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1976). Some of the manpower studies are reviewed in James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
5. Arthur Stinchcombe, "Institutions of Privacy in the Determination of Police Practice," *American Journal of Sociology* 69 (1963): 150-60.
6. Lynn A. Curtis, *Criminal Violence: National Patterns and Behavior* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1975).
7. For a more detailed analysis of the data on reporting, see Wesley G. Skogan, "Citizen Reporting of Crime: Some National Panel Data," *Criminology* 13 (February 1976): 535-49.
8. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *Task Force Report: Crime and Its Impact—An Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 87.
9. For a description of the victimization surveys conducted by the Bureau of the Census, see Wesley G. Skogan, "Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime," *Review of Public Data Use* 4 (January 1976): 23-28.
10. The composite index added responses to two questions, "How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?" and "How about during the day—how safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood?" Each item featured a four-point response scale ranging from "very safe" to "very unsafe." The two items were correlated (γ) +.78.
11. Lee Rainwater, "Fear and the House-as-Haven in the Lower Class," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 32 (January 1966): 23-31.
12. Roger Parks, "Victims and the Police," in *Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime*, ed. Wesley G. Skogan (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1976).
13. Robert LeJeune and Nicholas Alex, "On Being Mugged," *Urban Life and Culture* 3 (October 1973): 259-387.
14. Joseph Dolminick, "Crime and Law Enforcement on Prime-Time Television," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37 (Summer 1973): 141-50.
15. President's Commission, op. cit., p. 86.
16. Chicago Police Department, *Annual Report* (Chicago: Chicago Police Department, 1947 and 1974).
17. These figures were calculated from the *Uniform Crime Report 1970* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation), and Bureau of the Census, *General Population*

Characteristics: United States Summary (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972).

18. The attitude measures were computed from unpublished item marginals supplied by the Census Bureau.

19. This inference is based upon the observed regression equation, $y = 32.6 + .18X$.

20. For an elaboration of this argument, see Wesley G. Skogan, "The Changing Distribution of Big-City Crime: A Multi-City Time-Series Analysis," unpublished ms., Northwestern University, 1976.

21. The index of suburbanization is a composite score combining standardized values of the proportion of each Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area's (SMSA) population and jobs that were located outside the central city.

22. For an insightful study of these market forces in the housing sector see Harvey Molotch, *Managed Integration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

23. Richard W. Dodge, Harold Lentzner, and Frederick Shenk, "Crime in the United States: A Report on the National Crime Survey," in *Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime*, ed. Wesley G. Skogan (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1976).

24. Parks, op. cit.

25. Morton Bard, "Training Police as Specialists in Family Crisis Intervention: A Community Psychology Action Program," *Community Mental Health Journal* 3 (1967); Raymond Parnas, "Police Discretion and Diversion of Incidents of Intra-Family Violence," in *Police Practices*, ed. John C. Weistart (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974), pp. 95-121.