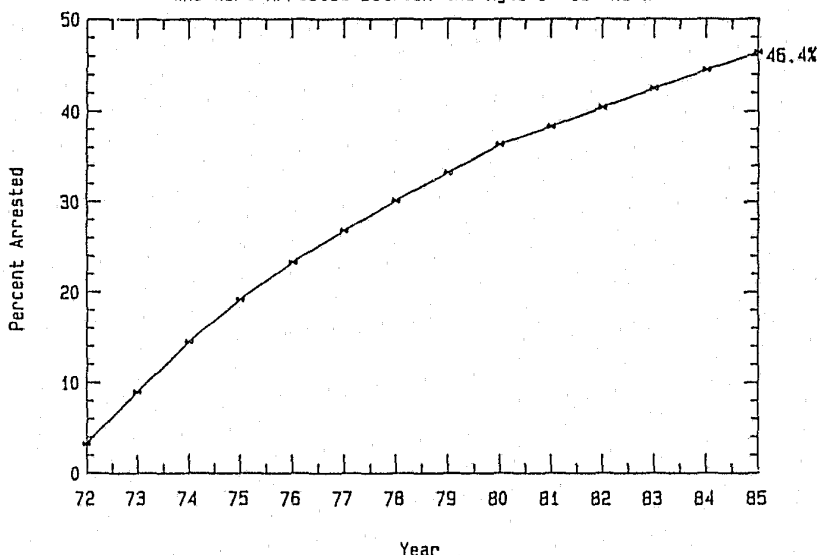DIVISION OF
**CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
SERVICES**

**NEW YORK
STATE**

RESEARCH NOTE

THE PREVALENCE AND INCIDENCE OF ARRESTS AMONG ADULT MALES IN NEW YORK STATE

Cumulative Percent of Males Born in 1956
Who Were Arrested Between the Ages of 16 and 29

46.4%

Percent Arrested

Year

NCJRS

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Background

A recent study entitled <u>The Prevalence and Incidence of Arrest Among Adult Males in California</u> found that between 1974 and 1985, more than one third of the adult males born in 1956 had been arrested in that State at least once. The probability of a black male being arrested during that same time period was two out of three - approximately double that of white males. Furthermore, the study supported the findings of previous research suggesting that a subset of offenders account for a large proportion of the total arrests.

In the California study, emphasis was placed on estimating the probability of arrest over time and being able to differentiate between the "<u>prevalence</u> of arrest - how many people will be arrested at least once in a given time period - and the <u>incidence</u> of arrest - how often any single individual will be arrested."

The New York Study

The present study replicates the California study as closely as possible while using data and qualifiers specific to New York State. Such an approach is desirable for a number of reasons. First, the New York study uses arrest and population data that pertain solely to New Yorkers. Second, the ability to track arrest histories over a long period of time is readily available using the New York State Computerized Criminal History (CCH) database and requires no new data collection. And third, there are significant differences between the two states in areas such as categorization of race, categorization of offense, and the age at which an individual is considered an adult.

Methodological and Definitional Issues

In an effort to replicate the California study for New York State purposes, a cohort was selected that consisted of males born in 1956 who were later arrested in New York State between 1972 and 1985. The criminal histories of these individuals were tracked over this 14 year span to determine the proportion arrested at least once, the extent to which offenders were rearrested, and the types of crime for which individuals were arrested.

In order to estimate the prevalence of arrest among individuals in the cohort, it was necessary to estimate the number of people who were the same age as the cohort and living in New York State during each year examined in the study. Estimates were derived using population estimates (in 5 year age groupings) from the National Planning Association and information from the 1970 and 1980 national census reports. It should be stressed that the population figures were estimates and that calculations using these estimates provided values that were not "exact" values.

For purposes of analysis, the white racial category included Hispanic, and the nonwhite racial category included black, Asian, and "other" race groups. This categorization was necessary to maintain compatibility between the race and ethnicity information on which estimates were based and the race and ethnicity information available for the arrestees.

The New York study included all "fingerprintable" offenses as defined in the New York State Criminal Procedure Law Section 160.10. This

includes all felonies, all misde-
meanors defined in the Penal Law,
misdemeanors defined outside of the
Penal Law that would constitute a
felony if there were a previous
conviction for such an offense (e.g.,
driving while intoxicated), and two
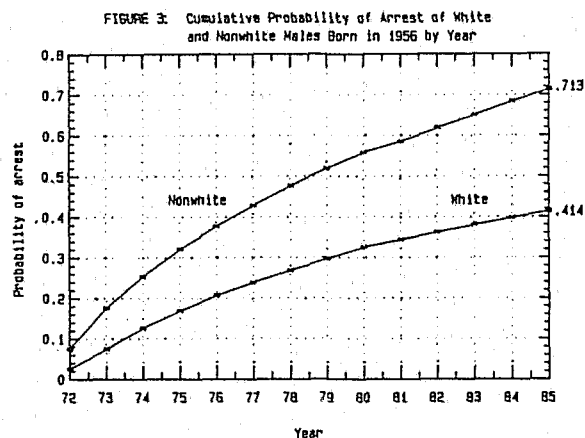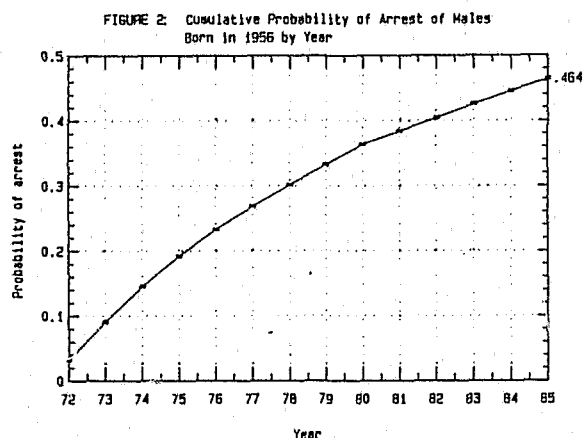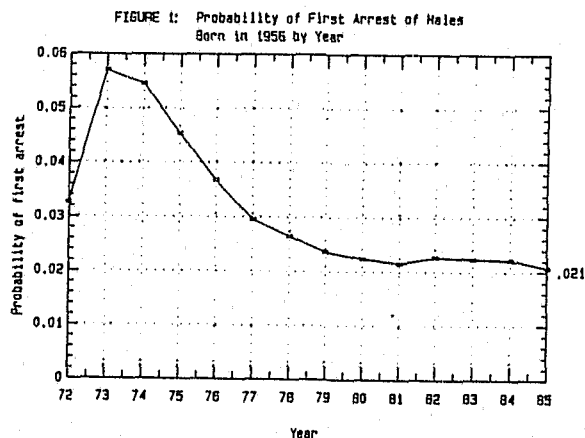loitering provisions.

Findings

Prevalence

Figure 1 illustrates the pro-
portion of males, born in 1956, who
were arrested at least once in a 14
year span between 1972 (the year they
were legally considered adults) and
1985. The probabilities were
calculated by dividing the number of
males in the cohort that were arrested
for the first time in a given year by
the estimated total number of males
living in New York State who were at
the same age as the cohort.

The data indicate that in 1972,
3.3 percent of the cohort experienced
their first arrest at age 16. The
percentage jumped to 5.7 percent the
following year when the cohort was 17
years of age. In subsequent years,
the percentage of new arrests declined
until 1980 when it leveled of at
approximately 2.2 percent.

Figure 2 displays the cumulative
effect of Figure 1. Instead of
displaying the probability of first
arrest for each year separately, it
sums the probability for all preceding
years. The end result is that 46.4
percent of the male population born in
1956 were arrested at least once
between the ages of 16 and 29.

There is a large difference in the
prevalence of arrest between whites
and nonwhites. Figure 3 illustrates
that for all white males studied,
approximately 4 out of 10 were
arrested at least once prior to their
30th birthdays. Approximately 7 out
of 10 nonwhite males were arrested at
least once during the same time

FIGURE 1: Probability of First Arrest of Males Born in 1956 by Year

FIGURE 2: Cumulative Probability of Arrest of Males Born in 1956 by Year

FIGURE 3: Cumulative Probability of Arrest of White and Nonwhite Males Born in 1956 by Year

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period.

For the more serious Index arrests (murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and grand larceny) the cumulative probability of a first arrest dropped from 46.4 percent for all crimes combined to 16.9 percent for Index arrests only. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 5 provides similar information on Index arrests for each racial group. In this instance, 12.5 percent of the whites were arrested for an Index offense prior to their 30th birthdays. For nonwhites, 38.6 percent were arrested for the same type of offenses (more than three times that for whites).

Incidence

For the purpose of this study, incidence refers to the number of times that an individual is arrested. It was calculated by tallying the total number of arrests for each individual in the cohort between 1972 and 1985.

Table 1 provides information on the incidence of arrest for the entire cohort. It indicates that 55.2 percent of those arrested were arrested only once and that the remainder of those arrested, 44.8 percent, had been arrested two or more times. White arrestees were more likely to be arrested only once (58.2 percent) when compared to nonwhite arrestees (46.2 percent).

Furthermore, the mean (average) number of arrests for all arrestees in the cohort was 2.7. The mean number of arrests for nonwhites was much higher than that for whites - 3.8 versus 2.4. One explanation is that there was a relatively large number of nonwhites that had a high number of total arrests per individual. Such a circumstance inflates the average values. Another approach by which to view this

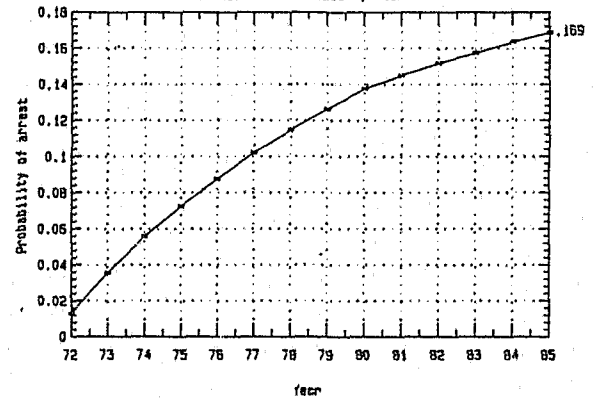FIGURE 4: Cumulative Probability of Index Arrest of Males Born in 1956 by Year

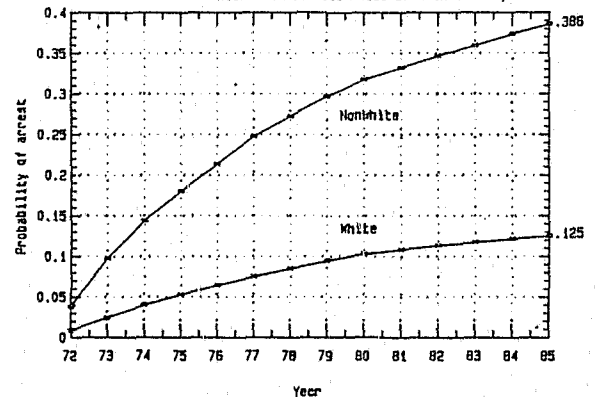FIGURE 5: Cumulative Probability of Index Arrest of White and Nonwhite Males Born in 1956 by Year

TABLE 1
INCIDENCE OF ALL ARRESTS AMONG ALL ARRESTEES
By Race

Arrestees with x arrests	Comprised number and percent of arrestees		Accounted for number and percent of arrests	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
TOTAL POPULATION				
1..........................	37,881	55.2	37,881	20.2
2..........................	11,017	16.0	22,034	11.8
3..........................	5,741	8.4	17,223	9.2
4..........................	3,617	5.3	14,468	7.7
5..........................	2,440	3.6	12,200	6.5
6..........................	1,674	2.4	10,044	5.4
7..........................	1,287	1.9	9,009	4.8
8..........................	988	1.4	7,904	4.2
9..........................	805	1.2	7,245	3.9
10+..........................	3,217	4.7	49,267	26.3
TOTAL..........................	68,667	100.0	187,275	100.0
Mean number of arrests			2.73	
Median number of arrests			1.41	
NONWHITE POPULATION				
1..........................	8,104	46.2	8,104	12.2
2..........................	2,495	14.2	4,990	7.5
3..........................	1,547	8.8	4,641	7.0
4..........................	1,099	6.3	4,396	6.6
5..........................	807	4.6	4,035	6.1
6..........................	612	3.5	3,672	5.5
7..........................	525	3.0	3,675	5.5
8..........................	403	2.3	3,224	4.9
9..........................	348	2.0	3,132	4.7
10+..........................	1,620	9.2	26,407	39.8
TOTAL..........................	17,560	100.0	66,276	100.0
Mean number of arrests			3.77	
Median number of arrests			1.77	
WHITE POPULATION				
1..........................	29,709	58.2	29,709	24.6
2..........................	8,522	16.7	17,044	14.1
3..........................	4,194	8.2	12,582	10.4
4..........................	2,518	4.9	10,072	8.3
5..........................	1,633	3.2	8,165	6.8
6..........................	1,062	2.1	6,372	5.3
7..........................	762	1.5	5,334	4.4
8..........................	585	1.1	4,680	3.9
9..........................	457	0.9	4,113	3.4
10+..........................	1,597	3.1	22,860	18.9
TOTAL..........................	51,039	100.0	120,931	100.0
Mean number of arrests			2.36	
Median number of arrests			1.36	

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issue is to use the median number of arrests - a method that is unaffected by extreme scores. Using this approach, the difference in the number of arrests between white and nonwhite was smaller: 1.4 arrests vs. 1.8 arrests, respectively.

Table 2 provides information on the incidence of arrests for Index arrestees only. By definition, both the total number of Index arrests and the number of arrestees who were rearrested for an Index crime were less than that for all crimes combined. Fifty nine percent of those who committed an Index offense were not rearrested for another Index offense within the time period studied. More whites (63.9 percent) had only one arrest for an Index offense than did nonwhites (51.0 percent). The median number of arrests was 1.3 for whites and 1.5 for nonwhites.

Chronic Arrestees

Table 3 provides information on the distribution of all arrests. For example, there were 68,667 individuals who were arrested at least once and who comprised the total number (100 percent) of all those arrestees. These individuals were arrested 187,275 times constituting 100 percent of all the arrests. Interestingly, 10,411 individuals were arrested five or more times. These individuals represented 15.2 percent of the total cohort, and more than half (51.1 percent) of the total number of arrests. This would support the theory that there exists a relatively small subgroup of offenders who were responsible for a disproportionate percentage of the arrests. However, support for this theory hinges on how "chronic arrestee" is defined. Because the majority of the offenders (55.2 percent) were arrested only once and accounted for a small proportion (20.2 percent) of all arrests, a minority of the offenders (44.8 percent) were arrested more than once

TABLE 2
INCIDENCE OF ARRESTS AMONG INDEX ARRESTEES
By Race

Index arrestees with x index arrest	Comprised number and percent of index arrestees		Accounted for number and percent of index arrests	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
TOTAL POPULATION				
1	14,735	59.0	14,735	27.5
2	4,241	17.0	8,482	15.8
3	2,079	8.3	6,237	11.6
4	1,294	5.2	5,176	9.6
5	835	3.3	4,175	7.8
6	565	2.3	3,390	6.3
7	360	1.4	2,520	4.7
8	257	1.0	2,056	3.8
9	184	0.7	1,656	3.1
10+	415	1.7	5,229	9.7
TOTAL	24,965	100.0	53,656	100.0
Mean number of arrests			2.15	
Median number of arrests			1.35	
NONWHITE POPULATION				
1	4,849	51.0	4,849	20.0
2	1,655	17.4	3,310	13.7
3	900	9.5	2,700	11.1
4	638	6.7	2,552	10.5
5	439	4.6	2,195	9.1
6	324	3.4	1,944	8.0
7	207	2.2	1,449	6.0
8	141	1.5	1,128	4.7
9	102	1.1	918	3.8
10+	244	2.6	3,175	13.1
TOTAL	9,499	100.0	24,220	100.0
Mean number of arrests			2.55	
Median number of arrests			1.48	
WHITE POPULATION				
1	9,864	63.9	9,864	33.5
2	2,586	16.7	5,172	17.6
3	1,179	7.6	3,537	12.0
4	656	4.2	2,624	8.9
5	396	2.6	1,980	6.7
6	241	1.6	1,446	4.9
7	153	1.0	1,071	3.6
8	116	0.8	928	3.2
9	82	0.5	738	2.5
10+	171	1.1	2,054	7.0
TOTAL	15,444	100.0	29,414	100.0
Mean number of arrests			1.91	
Median number of arrests			1.28	

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF ALL ARRESTS
By Race

Arrestees with x or more arrests	Comprised number and percent of arrestees			Accounted for number and percent of arrests	
	Number	Percent	1972 Pop Percent	Number	Percent
TOTAL POPULATION					
1	68,667	100.0	40.8	187,275	100.0
2	30,786	44.8	18.3	149,394	79.8
3	19,769	28.8	11.8	127,360	68.0
4	14,028	20.4	8.3	110,137	58.8
5	10,411	15.2	6.2	95,669	51.1
6	7,971	11.6	4.7	83,469	44.6
7	6,297	9.2	3.7	73,425	39.2
8	5,010	7.3	3.0	64,416	34.4
9	4,022	5.9	2.4	56,512	30.2
10	3,217	4.7	1.9	49,267	26.3
NONWHITE POPULATION					
1	17,560	100.0	71.4	66,276	100.0
2	9,456	53.8	38.4	58,172	87.8
3	6,961	39.6	28.3	53,182	80.2
4	5,414	30.8	22.0	48,541	73.2
5	4,315	24.6	17.5	44,145	66.6
6	3,508	20.0	14.3	40,110	60.5
7	2,896	16.5	11.8	36,438	55.0
8	2,371	13.5	9.6	32,763	49.4
9	1,968	11.2	8.0	29,539	44.6
10	1,620	9.2	6.6	26,407	39.8
WHITE POPULATION					
1	51,039	100.0	35.6	120,931	100.0
2	21,330	41.8	14.9	91,222	75.4
3	12,808	25.1	8.9	74,178	61.3
4	8,614	16.9	6.0	61,596	50.9
5	6,096	11.9	4.2	51,524	42.6
6	4,463	8.7	3.1	43,359	35.9
7	3,401	6.7	2.4	36,987	30.6
8	2,639	5.2	1.8	31,653	26.2
9	2,054	4.0	1.4	26,973	22.3
10	1,597	3.1	1.1	22,860	18.9

and accounted for a very large proportion of all the arrests. For example, 44.8 percent of the individuals studied were arrested two or more times and were responsible for 79.8 percent of all the arrests. Depending on how "chronic arrestee" is defined, the "small" subgroup of offenders who were theorized to account for a large proportion of the total arrests may be a larger group of offenders than previously thought.

Concerning race, nonwhites were rearrested at a higher rate than whites. Whereas 25 percent of nonwhites were arrested five times or more and constituted 66.6 percent of all nonwhite arrests, 12 percent of whites were arrested five times or more and accounted for 42.6 percent of all white arrests.

Table 4 provides information on the distribution of Index arrests. Though the numbers and corresponding percentages were less than those for all crimes combined, similar patterns existed. A majority of the Index arrestees (59 percent) were arrested for an Index offense only once. A minority (41 percent) were arrested two or more times and accounted for 72.5 percent of all the Index arrests. Nonwhites were rearrested for Index offenses at higher rates than whites.

New York State Versus California

For purposes of comparison, a second set of New York State data was created in an effort to more closely match the data used in the California study. Though definitional differences existed between the two data sets in the areas of categorization of race, population estimates, and type of arrest considered, the differences were small enough such that a comparison could be made.

Concerning prevalence of arrest, Table 5 illustrates that a higher proportion of New York State males were arrested at least once by age 29

TABLE 4
DISTRIBUTION OF INDEX ARRESTS
By Race

Index arrestees with x or more index arrests	Comprised number and percent of index arrestees		1972 Pop Percent	Accounted for number and percent of index arrests	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
TOTAL POPULATION					
1	24,965	100.0	14.9	53,656	100.0
2	10,230	41.0	6.1	38,921	72.5
3	5,989	24.0	3.6	30,439	56.7
4	3,910	15.7	2.3	24,202	45.1
5	2,616	10.5	1.6	19,026	35.5
6	1,781	7.1	1.1	14,851	27.7
7	1,216	4.9	0.7	11,461	21.4
8	856	3.4	0.5	8,941	16.7
9	599	2.4	0.4	6,885	12.8
10	415	1.7	0.2	5,229	9.7
NONWHITE POPULATION					
1	9,499	100.0	38.6	24,220	100.0
2	4,650	49.0	18.9	19,371	80.0
3	2,995	31.5	12.2	16,061	66.3
4	2,095	22.1	8.5	13,361	55.2
5	1,457	15.3	5.9	10,809	44.6
6	1,018	10.7	4.1	8,614	35.6
7	694	7.3	2.8	6,670	27.5
8	487	5.1	2.0	5,221	21.6
9	346	3.6	1.4	4,093	16.9
10	244	2.6	1.0	3,175	13.1
WHITE POPULATION					
1	5,444	100.0	10.8	29,414	100.0
2	5,580	36.1	3.9	19,550	66.5
3	2,994	19.4	2.1	14,379	48.9
4	1,815	11.8	1.3	10,841	36.9
5	1,159	7.5	0.8	8,217	27.9
6	763	4.9	0.5	6,237	21.2
7	522	3.4	0.4	4,791	16.3
8	369	2.4	0.3	3,720	12.6
9	253	1.6	0.2	2,792	9.5
10	171	1.1	0.1	2,054	7.0

Table 5

Percent of Males Arrested at Least Once Between 1974 and 1985 by Arrest Type by Race

All Arrests

California - 35.4%		New York - 43.1%
white = 33.9%		white - 38.1%
nonwhite - 65.5		nonwhite - 67.6%

Index Arrests

California - 16.5%		New York - 15.1%
white - 14.8%		white - 11.0%
nonwhite - 40.8%		nonwhite - 35.6%

than a comparable group of California males. When restricting analysis to Index arrests only, this difference disappears. Concerning race, differences in prevalence of arrests were evident for both states.

Concerning incidence of arrest, Table 6 shows that a higher proportion of New York State males had only a single arrest than a comparable group of California males. This was also true within distinct racial groups. For Index arrests, there was no difference overall between the two States. Within racial groups, New York State males were more likely to have been arrested only once for an Index offense.

Table 6

Percent of Males Arrested
Only Once Between 1974 and
1985 by Arrest Type by Race

All Arrests

California - 50.9%   New York - 56.5%
    white - 52.3%   white - 59.7%
 nonwhite - 39.7%   nonwhite - 47.4%

Index Arrests

California - 59.9%   New York - 60.6%
    white - 62.5%   white - 65.2%
 nonwhite - 47.9%   nonwhite - 53.2%

Finally, very similar findings existed concerning the extent of chronic offenders within the arrest populations of California and New York State.

Conclusion

The number of individuals arrested in New York State was surprisingly large. Almost half (46.4 percent) of a cohort of males born in 1956 were arrested at least once in New York State between 1972 and 1985. Approximately half of those arrested were not subsequently rearrested, whereas the remainder continued to be rearrested at varying rates. This lends support to the theory that a small subgroup of persons are responsible for a disproportionately large percentage of the total arrests. Though the probability that an individual was arrested for a serious crime was smaller than the probability of an arrest for all offenses combined, it was still relatively high (16.9 percent). Finally, there was a clear distinction between white and nonwhite members of the cohort. Nonwhites were more likely to have been arrested, to have been arrested for an Index offense, to have been rearrested, and to have been rearrested for an Index offense.

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