THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF ROBBERY -

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A SUMMARY

By

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THE CENTER ON ADMINISTRATION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
University of California, Davis

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The Prevention and Control of Robbery

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PROJECT STAFF

There can be little doubt that citizens are today less safe in the streets than they were two decades or even one decade ago. The populace on the whole knows this and is concerned about it. The polls indicate that for many the fear and fright engendered by lack of safety is one of the dominant aspects of their lives. And for some the fear of strangers, and of sudden attack, is an ever present, constant companion. These citizens stay home at night, go out no more than absolutely required, and hope for some tranquility and safety.

One major cause of this concern and fear is the crime of robbery. People are afraid of muggings, yokings, stickups and other ways in which criminals seek to take property face to face by the use of force or fear. This fear and this concern is not limited to any class or race or location. It affects both young and old, white and black, suburbanite and city dweller. It affects particularly the weak and the vulnerable, those least able to defend themselves.

This crime has increased enormously during the past decade. In 1960 the number of robberies reported nationally was around 100,000. During the next six years, 1960-1967, the number climbed to 200,000. The climb over 300,000, however, took only three years until 1970, and 1971 saw a climb to nearly 400,000. And while in 1972 the number dropped back to 374,000, the overall increase between 1960 and 1972 is almost 250 percent. Taking into account population changes the percentage increase is over 200 percent and half again as much as the increase in any other violent crime.[1] Some of this increase is undoubtedly

attributable to changed reporting standards. But even after this is taken into account, the change is immense.

Despite these increases, however, and the fear and concern to which they give rise, relatively little is known today about either robbery or robbers--where it happens, how, why or how to stop it. More, and often considerably more, has been written about any number of other kinds of crime: homicide, shoplifting, gambling, theft, prostitution, and others. There is no repository of information about the crime of robbery, and relatively little expertise among either the agencies charged with preventing or correcting robbery or the academic world. In the United States today there are dozens of scholars concerned about the cardinal, the bluejay, the boll weevil and the properties of lead and zinc. There are virtually none, however, in the field of robbery or street crime. [2]

The rate of increase in robbery according to latest reports has slowed. The degree to which robbery in America exceeds that in other major countries, however, gives great cause for concern. Comparisons with other great cities of the world are staggering. New York in 1970 reported over 86,000 robberies, while Chicago and Detroit each had more than 23,000. Oakland, California, with a population of around 350,000, had about 2,500. London with a population 20 times greater had less than 2,400. Tokyo, Berlin, Stockholm, and Vienna all reported less than 1,000, as shown in the table below.

These differences are too great and too consistent to be written off as mere reporting or definitional differences,

Robberies in Large Cities

City	Year	Population	Number of Robberies	Robberies per 100,000 Persons
Berlin	1969	2,100,000	669	32
Chicago	1972	3,367,000	23,531	699
Detroit	1972	1,511,000	17,170	1,136
Edmonton	1970	204,000	635	311
Glasgow	1970	908,000	1,356	149
Hamburg	1972	1,780,000	1,363	77
Liverpool	1970	667,000	465	70
London	1970	7,379,014	2,372	32
Manchester	1970	590,000	336	57
Manila	1970	1,330,788	3,190	240
New York	1972	7,895,000	78,202	991
Oakland	1972	362,000	2,907	803
San Diego	1972	697,000	1,225	176
Stockholm	1966	1,200,000	426	35
Tokyo	1970	8,800,000	472	5
Toronto	1970	2,300,000	1,374	60
Vancouver	1969	980,000	770	79
Vienna	1970	1,600,000	275	17

and are confirmed in important ways by other kinds of evidence, particularly observational reports by persons familiar with many different cities. [3] They raise enormous questions which go to the whole fabric of our society. In a country which we like to think of as the greatest in the world, the government is failing miserably in the most important task of any government: that of protecting the lives and property of its citizens. In the most wealthy and most powerful nation in the history of man, the heart of the central city at night has become a near wasteland.

This study has primarily been concerned with describing the patterns of robbery in a single American city--Oakland, California--and the response of the criminal justice agencies in that city to the crime. It is an exploratory study designed

to produce the kind of detailed, integrated information necessary for serious thinking and planning about the subject. Its purpose has not been and could not be that of answering all of the many basic questions about robbery and its impact on our society. These await additional and much greater attention. The findings of the study do, however, bring to light some important things that have been unknown or little understood:

--First, the picture of robbery in fact is enormously different from that generally assumed. The variance within the city, for example, is particularly great. In a three-year period in which the robbery rate in Oakland was one of the highest in the country, two-thirds of the half-block sized areas in the city had no robberies or pursesnatches at all. Thus, for many parts of the city robbery was a rare event. On the other hand 25 percent of the robberies and pursesnatches occurred in four percent of the half-block sized areas in the city, and over 50 percent along 36 major streets. Even for these areas, however, only one half-block sized area averaged as many as one offense per month, and few were even close.

--Second, while some view robbers as bold and fearless, robbery attacks, in fact, prey heavily on the old and the weak. More than one-third of the noncommercial robberies and pursesnatches in Oakland involving females involved victims who were 65 or older and more than half involved victims who were over 55. Many occurred while the victims were shopping or doing other necessary chores.

--Third, most robbery apprehensions are made as the result of immediate action by citizens and the police--between 60 and 90 percent in most cities. Detectives and follow-up investigations are rarely as central to the apprehension process as is commonly thought.

--Fourth, it seems clear that despite many claims to the contrary, decisions of the Supreme Court have contributed little or nothing to either the increase in robbery in recent years or the disparity between U.S. and foreign rates.

Other important study findings include the following:

--Male victims were much more spread out in terms of age than female, primarily because many young males were robbed while in the vicinity of late hour bars or areas of prostitution.

--Pursesnatching, which in many instances is technically not robbery, is often not regarded as a particularly serious offense. Many pursesnatching incidents ultimately result in injury, however, and the dividing line between those pursesnatches which result in harm and those which do not is often quite fortuitous.

--Similarly, strongarm robberies which are often viewed as less serious than armed robberies more frequently result in some injury to the victims--66 percent compared to 17 percent for armed robberies.

--The victims of robbery and pursesnatching were predominantly white--with roughly three-quarters of the incidents in Oakland in both 1964 and 1969 involving white victims. Personal robberies of black females were particularly rare.

--Roughly four-fifths of the incidents, as reported by
the victims, involved black offenders.

--By far the most common reason given in interviews with
robbery offenders for committing the robberies was a desire
or need for money. Two-thirds gave this as their motivation.
Adults gave money as a reason for robbing far more often than
did juveniles (74 percent of the adults, 45 percent of the
juveniles).

--Nearly one-quarter of the adult offenders said they were
addicts and were robbing for drugs. None of the juveniles
were addicts.

--Three-fourths of the adult robbers were not working.
Less than half of the unemployed robbers said they were actually
looking for work. Many of those not looking were not because
they were hooked on heroin. Of those looking for work, some
reported having tried steadily over a period of as much as
six months without success.

--Overall, the juveniles seemed more likely than did the
adults to have somewhat mixed reasons for doing the robberies.
They frequently seemed less sure why they had even been in-
volved.

--One-quarter of all the offenders interviewed reported
being high on drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol at
the time of the robberies. Thirteen percent more were drunk
at the time.

--The peak times for robberies of individual males in
the summertime is from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.; in the winter from
6 p.m. to 2 a.m. In both seasons there is a sharp increase

at sunset but the peaks seem more related to the kinds of
activities available at nighttime than to darkness itself.

--The two most intense areas of robbery were basically
skid-row, late hour bar and prostitution districts. Robberies
in these areas were virtually all of males.

--Robberies of females are more dispersed than those of
males. They are concentrated in the shopping hours and in
the open on the street. November and December are particu-
larly high months.

--Commercial robbery is even more concentrated than robbery
as a whole--all occurring within 12 percent of the half-block
areas. More occurs on the outlying commercial and thoroughfare
streets, however, than in the central business district.

--Because they generally use major thoroughfares as boun-
daries, common statistical units such as police beats and
census tracts greatly obscure the location of robberies and
pursesnatches.

--Half of all robbery suspects caught in Oakland are
arrested either at the scene of the crime or in the immediate
vicinity. Two-thirds are arrested at the scene, in the imme-
diate vicinity or are known to the victim.

--Identification evidence is by far the most important
kind of evidence for charging robbery suspects.

--Confessions are relatively unimportant, being judged
as essential for only five-to-ten percent of the charged sus-
pects.

--Physical evidence is rarely important in robbery cases.

--Thirty percent of all adult robbery suspects caught are released without being charged.

--In addition to those not charged another 20 percent of the adult suspects are not convicted, making a total of over 40 percent not convicted.

--One-half to three-fourths of those not convicted are released because of some problem of evidence that does not appear to be related to guilt.

--There is great confusion as to the purpose of detectives and the amount of detective manpower necessary for the crime of robbery, and departments vary widely with respect to these matters.

--Resistance in a robbery is more likely to be harmful than helpful. According to victims interviewed, physical resistance, such as trying to hit the robber, struggle or hold on to property, generally led to more injury. Yelling or screaming, on the other hand, generally brought no adverse reaction and occasionally helped the situation.

--Over half the adult robbers reported no planning at all, and almost two-thirds reported that before the robbery they didn't think about getting caught. A number hadn't even started out to do a robbery.

--Almost three-fourths of the robbers interviewed committed the robberies in their own towns, including 80 percent of the individual robbers but only two-thirds of the commercial robbers. Forty-two percent of the individual robbers and over one-third (37 percent) of the total, were in their own neighborhoods.

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--Nearly 40 percent of the robbers who used a "gun" in their incidents used a weapon that was either not loaded or that was simulated. Juveniles rarely carried guns but when they did they were usually loaded.

--Roughly one-fourth of the adult robbers interviewed and half of the juveniles reported that someone had been hurt during their robberies. The most common reason given by them for the victim being hurt was resistance.

These findings are in one sense paradoxical. They show that despite the enormous increases in incidence of the crime that even in high robbery areas it is relatively rare in terms of time and space--occurring infrequently or not at all in most of the city and only once or twice a month in the city blocks of highest incidence. Yet at the same time the figures also show the likelihood of any individual in the city being victimized within the year to be relatively high--ranging from one in 146 for the general population to one in 24 for certain high risk populations such as females over 65. In this situation there need be little wonder why the populace exhibits a high degree of fear and concern.

What the city or the populace can do about this is another question. One major suggestion, given the particular vulnerability of the old, is to work with this population on special methods of protection. In the short range this might include such things as the formation of self-protection groups that do their shopping and other activities together, the provision of special escorts, or even the development of special credit arrangements that would limit the amount of cash that this

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group would have to carry. In the long range it must include such things as housing patterns and other social arrangements.

A second major recommendation is that of improving the likelihood of prosecution and conviction after arrest. Far too many of the offenders who are caught escape prosecution and conviction. A great deal more can be done about this through the use of better identification methods, through better preservation of identification evidence, and in other ways.

In addition to these major recommendations, which could have important impacts if adopted, many other suggestions can be drawn from the data, including such things as the need for methods other than beats and census tracts for recording the location of robberies, the need to reevaluate the role of detectives and the need to consider pursesnatching more seriously. Beyond these, however, it seems clear that more study and more analysis is required if further progress is to be made. More has been learned about what is likely not to work than what will. The rarity of the event in terms of time and space sharply curtail the usefulness of many traditional methods of protection such as police patrol. These facts also indicate severe limitations in terms of such newer concepts as hardening the target or even developing defensible space. Areas encompassing thousands of visits by many different individuals in a month but only a single robbery seem relatively immune to such approaches.

One need not despair, however. At least once before in our history, rates for robbery were very high and this crime was brought under control. In the early 1930's rates in many cities approached those of today. Somehow for reasons that we really do not know, but presumably connected with recovery from the depression, robbery came under control, so that by 1940 the rate had declined markedly. It is only recently that rates for this crime have climbed above these early levels.[4] Even today, it is largely only in cities of 100,000 or more that the rate of robbery is above that of the earlier level.

This earlier experience suggests that with enough will and enough effort robbery rates can again be reduced, that the streets of America can become--if not completely safe--at least a lot safer than they now are. Accomplishing this, however, will require more attention, more planning, and a great deal more in resources than has ever been available to date.

Of the major concerns consistently listed in the past ten years as uppermost in the national mind--Vietnam, the economy, and safety in the streets--by far the least in terms of national resources and attention has gone into the safety in the streets issue. The nation annually spends $70 to 80 billion a year for national defense, but only $11 billion or so for the whole of the criminal justice system. The total of the direct expenditures attributable to robbery probably does not exceed $300-400 million.[5] The amounts spent specifically for the purpose of improving the capability of the criminal justice systems for preventing and controlling robbery total infinitely less, and with the important exception of drug programs, probably

do not exceed $10-15 million--about the level of national spending for bobby pins.

Whether the criminal justice system has or can mobilize the necessary resources is a major open question. To date far too much time and effort has been invested in ideological approaches for this to be accomplished. Liberals have all too often spent their energies in denying that the problem exists, while conservatives, on the other hand, have invested equal or greater time in promoting overly simple, and often illusory, remedies. If only half this effort could be harnessed to a careful examination of the problem and the development of programs based on facts rather than rhetoric, the possibilities of reaching a solution would be infinitely greater.

The earlier experience with robbery also suggests another rather obvious fact--that reducing robbery is necessarily related to issues in the larger society. If America truly wants safer streets, it must deal with these issues also. As the President's Crime Commission said five years ago:

> The criminal justice system has a great potential dealing with individual instances of crime, but it was not designed to eliminate the conditions in which most crime breeds. It needs help. Warring on poverty, inadequate housing and unemployment, is warring on crime. A civil rights law is a law against crime. Money for schools is money against crime. Medical, psychiatric, and family counseling services are services against crime. A community's most enduring protection against crime is to fight the wrongs and cure the illnesses that tempt men to harm their neighbors.[6]

THE ROBBERY SETTING, THE ACTORS AND SOME ISSUES

Crime in the streets in America today is not just a slogan but an ever-present fear and concern--both in the ghetto and in the suburbs.

Fear of personal attack is at the heart of this concern. According to one study, citizens asked about crime "were most of all afraid of personal attacks, assaults which they believed might befall them if they were on the streets at night and particularly if alone."[1]

Most street crimes of this sort--stranger-to-stranger crimes involving sudden, unexpected, and unprovoked attacks on citizens-- arise out of robbery or robbery-type situations. According to the President's Crime Commission:

> The risk of sudden attack by a stranger is perhaps best measured by the frequency of robberies since, according to UCR and other studies, about 70 percent of willful killings, nearly two-thirds of all aggravated assaults and a high percentage of forcible rapes are committed by family members, friends or other persons previously known to their victims.[2]

Using rough estimates based on studies of individual cities and the 1968 UCR rates for metropolitan areas, the rate of crime in the streets involving the risk of serious harm can be estimated nationally at about 225 incidents per 100,000 persons per year. Of this total, robbery, homicides arising out of robbery, and pursesnatches--which are functionally no different from robbery and which involve a risk of serious harm--totaled more than 80 percent. Robbery alone totaled more than 45 percent.[3]

These estimates should not be taken overprecisely. There is no regular, reliable, complete data on crime in the streets. They do, however, indicate something of the magnitude of the problem, and the extent to which both crime in the streets and stranger-to-stranger crime involving the risk of serious physical harm is a robbery-type crime.

Robbery is not, comparatively speaking, a terribly expensive crime in terms of money stolen. Nationally it probably accounts for somewhere between $50 to $100 million as compared with $500 million to a billion or more for burglary and $1 to $2 billion for crimes such as employee theft, embezzlement, and larceny.[4] Robbery's chief significance arises out of the risk of personal injury that it poses for its victims. Nationally it is estimated that about 10 percent of all willful homicides result from robbery attempts.[5] There are in addition some indications that this percentage is increasing and that some portion of the recent increase in homicide rates in the United States is due to an increasing number of homicides associated with robbery.

Data on harm other than death from robbery is less complete but studies in several cities indicate some degree of physical injury occurs in as many as one-fourth of all robberies.[6] Contrary to the opinion of many there also appears to be some significant amount of injury associated with purse-snatching. This crime under the penal laws of most states is not classified as robbery unless there is some form of direct confrontation placing the victim in fear or there is some direct use of force. Even where this does not occur,

however, there appears to be a significant danger of harm-- partly because the victims of pursesnatching are so often the elderly.

How can this frightening crime be better controlled? With more policemen? The President's Crime Commission calculated that the average policeman would see a robbery in progress about once every 14 years.[7] With a faster police response time? Perhaps, but little has been known of the relationship between response time and robbery. With alarm systems? Present alarm systems do not appear to work too well but no one knows why. TV monitors of the streets? Which streets and at what time? With higher penalties? Not enough is known about robbers to know whether or how they are affected by the penalty structure. At the present time it is not even possible to say which robbers are caught and which are not.

It seems obvious that if anything is to be done about robbery and the deterioration in the quality of life in the United States that the fear of personal attack is now causing, there must be a great deal of information available about robbery--where and how it happens, to whom, under what conditions, by whom, and for what reasons. Only with this kind of information is it possible for the police or any other social control agency to develop significant additional effectiveness against robbery. Moreover, without this kind of information it is not even possible to draw up the requirements for new technological, tactical, or program developments. Given the degree of importance that this crime now has assumed in the country,

it seems almost ludicrous that the kind of basic information needed is not yet available.

This study was undertaken in order to begin answering some of the many outstanding questions. The central thesis of the study was that if robbery is to be controlled it must be studied in as many of its facets as possible. Robbery is not an isolated event that occurs and is over. The robber comes from some place and goes to some place. He has some kind of reason for what he does. The victim also comes and goes. He also has a reason for being where he is. The places from whence they come and to which they go and at which the robberies occur all have characteristics. Witnesses may or may not be involved. Somehow the police are contacted (or in some cases not contacted for some reason). They respond in a certain way or in varying ways as do other agencies that are brought into the situation.

These parts are all interrelated. Any one of them may be the key to stopping a robbery or it may take a combination of factors. Prevent the victim from going to the location. Alter the character of the location. Improve the police response. Divert, deter or change the offender.

Only looking at all the factors in association with each other, however, is it possible to map strategies of control and to determine which strategy or tactic is likely to do the job best and in which situations. To think of robbery as a single phenomenon or to try to find a cause, a cure or a simple description of a robber is as foolhardy as to attempt this with crime in general.

Knowledge is no guarantee that a solution can be found, but it seems likely that no effective program of control can be found in the absence of knowledge.

The City of Oakland

The study is based primarily on data from Oakland, California--one of the two major inner core cities of a metropolitan area of more than 3,000,000 people, the sixth largest in the country. Oakland is a city of some 350,000 population, a large minority group population (now estimated at 35-40 percent), and has the poverty and other problems common to many large cities. In the late 1960's it consistently had one of the highest robbery rates in the country, and a level of robbery which is only a little below that of today. The city has a highly professional police department and a record keeping system that is generally regarded as one of the better systems in the state and nation.

The Robbery Event

Like the picture nationally and elsewhere in California, the number of robberies in Oakland increased dramatically during the sixties--going from 533 in 1960 to 2,906 in 1972, an increase of more than 600 percent. Some of this increase took place during the early sixties but by far the largest amount occurred in the last half of the period. The greatest increase in robbery between 1960 and 1972 was in the strongarm category which increased 944 percent. Armed robberies increased 239 percent during this period and pursesnatches

276 percent. Despite a slower rate of increase armed rob-
beries outnumbered strongarm robberies until 1971, when the
pattern reversed. If analyzed in terms of the kind of victim
involved rather than the weapon used, robberies of individuals
showed a much greater increase in the 1960 to 1969 time period
than did commercial robberies--766 percent as compared to
202 percent.

High among the victims of robberies and pursesnatches
are the weak and the elderly. This is particularly true for
females. In 1969, the victims in two-thirds of the purse-
snatches and over half of the strongarms involving females
were 55 or older. The proportion of incidents with females
as victims had also increased considerably since 1964. Whe-
ther this tendency toward weak and elderly victims indicates
an increasing disposition on the part of offenders to seek
out this kind of victim or a further concentration of potential
victims of this kind in the inner city is not altogether
clear.

The age pattern for personal male robberies was quite
different. Almost a third of these incidents involved victims
who were 19-40 years of age. About a fifth were over 55.
Possibly some of the age disparity between males and females
is accounted for by the lower number of older males in the
population. Some of the difference, however, also appears
to be accounted for by the tendency of young males to frequent
questionable areas, often in the night-time, in search of
women, liquor and possibly drugs.

Both in 1964 and 1969 roughly three-quarters of the incidents in the Oakland sample involved victims who were white. In view of the high percentage of blacks living in Oakland, these figures raise the question of whether blacks are actually not being robbed or if they are simply not reporting robberies when they occur.

Roughly four-fifths of the incidents in the 1969 sample involved black robbers. Based on descriptions given by the victims there was little variation among armed, strongarm or pursesnatch incidents--over 80 percent in all three categories involved black robbers in 1969 and over 70 percent in 1964. While whites were described as being involved in less than 20 percent of the total number of commercial robbery incidents, more than half of all whites described as being involved in any kind of robbery were involved in a commercial incident.

Generally the robbers, as described by the victims, were adults. In 1969, for example, over 60 percent of personal male incidents studied and over 80 percent of commercial, residential and transportation robberies involved adult robbers. Personal robberies of females is the only category in which incidents with juveniles were as numerous as incidents with adults. In 1969, the number of incidents in this category involving juveniles was larger than the number involving adults. Armed robbery incidents, on the other hand, rarely involved juveniles.

The robbers tended to be predominantly male. Less than one percent of the incidents in 1969 involved female robbers

who were alone. In the few incidents which involved female robbers, they were generally in partnership with male robbers.

While victims generally tended to be alone (in over 75 percent of the 1969 incidents), robbers tended not to be. In 1969, for example, almost two-thirds of the incidents involved robbers who were in pairs or groups. Robbers were rarely outnumbered by their victims. Generally, when the number of victims increased, so did the number of robbers.

There were rarely witnesses to robberies in Oakland mentioned in the crime reports. Over 80 percent of the robberies studied had no apparent witnesses.

Robbery is almost wholly a stranger-to-stranger crime. While the crime report provides only a guess, there was rarely any indication of a previous association of any kind and, in many instances, the report indicated that the offenders were persons unknown and unrecognized by the victims. Roughly 20 percent of the personal male robberies, however, did involve some previous association. Frequently this prior involvement was quite minimal--hitchhikers, brief drinking companions, prostitutes and so forth.

In 1969, gas stations, drive-in, walk-in diners, liquor stores, grocery stores and bars and restaurants made up over half of all the commercial robberies. This represents a trend toward commercial robberies in a broader variety of settings than had been seen in 1964 when over 60 percent had occurred in only three types of premises--liquor stores, grocery stores and gas stations. Roughly a tenth of the 1969 commercial

robberies occurred on noncommercial premises. These were
generally robberies of newspaper boys and of deliverymen and
occurred on the street.

The robberies of persons other than those of a generally
commercial nature are primarily street robberies. Nearly
80 percent of all personal robberies of females were on a
public street while 60 percent of the personal robberies of
males also were.

The commercial robberies were almost always armed, while
personal robberies, particularly of females, involved weapons
much less frequently. Roughly half of the personal male rob-
beries involved weapons while only a tenth of the personal
female robberies did.

Guns were the most common weapons, particularly in com-
mercial robberies, being involved in over 85 percent of these
cases in 1969. Other types of weapons were often involved,
however. In personal male robberies in 1969, for example, roughly
a third involved cutting instruments--usually knives--as the
most serious type of weapon present. Almost three-fifths
of the armed personal female robberies in 1969 also involved
weapons other than guns. Generally the weapons were used to
intimidate only, actual force being used in less than half
of the incidents studied; and in 1969, in less than 25 percent
of the commercial robberies.

When guns were used, they generally were used to beat the
victim rather than to shoot him. Actual force was more common
when the weapon was a knife or something other than a gun than
when the weapon was a gun. The most frequent use of actual

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force was in personal male robberies--occurring in roughly three fourths of the cases in 1969. Overall, however, force was more common in strongarm robberies than in any of the armed robbery categories.

The most common reason for the use of force appeared to be to establish initial control. Over half of the strongarm robberies involved the use of force before any warning to the victims that a robbery was in progress. Many strongarm robberies also involved the use of force to overcome resistance (about a third). Establishing initial control and overcoming resistance of some kind was also a major factor in the use of force in about a third of the armed cases.

In 1969 there were 3,292 robbery and pursesnatch cases which did not result in any fatality. There were also seven cases in which a victim was killed. Four of the seven were shot, two were beaten, and one was knocked down and sustained fatal head injuries.

While the proportion of robbery and pursesnatch victims killed is small, these cases show the possible dangerousness of the crime. These seven cases constituted only two-tenths of one percent of all the robberies and pursesnatches in the city. They made up nearly eight percent, however, of the city's 88 homicides for the year. These seven cases also demonstrate that armed robberies are not the only potentially serious ones. Almost as many robbery victims died as a result of physical force as from armed force. One of the deaths resulted from a pursesnatch-type incident, pointing up the

potential danger from these types of incidents which are often viewed as frightening but generally harmless.

Other serious injuries are relatively rare in robbery cases but nonetheless a problem. In the majority of cases there is no injury at all, but at least four percent of the personal male robberies in 1969 resulted in hospitalization of the victim as did smaller portions of the commercial and other robberies. Roughly 23 percent of the personal male robbery victims and 16 percent of the personal female victims may have had injuries severe enough to warrant a doctor's attention. Generally, these injuries appear to have been relatively minor ones such as cuts and bruises. Actual injury seems to have been least in the commercial robberies, with fewer than 10 percent in 1969 resulting in injury of any kind.

Most victims did not resist in any way--including in 1969, for example, roughly three-fifths of the personal robbery victims and almost three-fourths of the commercial robbery victims. When there was resistance, it was generally passive in nature--refusing to hand over a wallet or trying to hold onto a purse. Roughly a tenth of the female victims in personal robberies also yelled or screamed. It was rare for victims in any type of robbery to resist with a weapon of any kind. The highest category in 1969 was commercial robberies for which about five percent of the incidents involved resistance with a weapon. Resistance occurred less often in armed robberies than in strongarm robberies.

In most cases resistance appeared to have no effect on the amount of injury to the victim. In those cases in which

there was an effect due to victim resistance, the victim was likely to sustain more injuries rather than less. Overall, it would appear that resistance at best has no effect, rarely lessens injuries and not infrequently causes more injuries.

Resistance did help, however, to minimize the loss in about one-fourth of the 1969 robberies. Mostly, it had no apparent affect on loss. Overall, in personal robberies the occurrence of more injury outweighed the minimization of loss. Hence, it would appear that resistance is more likely to be harmful than helpful to personal robbery victims. In commercial robberies where resistance had any affect at all, it tended to minimize the loss more than to increase the amount of injury. There was still some risk, however, and it would seem unwise to draw any broad conclusions about the wisdom of resistance.

Not surprisingly, the commercial robberies tend to show higher losses than do the personal robberies. Over half of the personal female robberies in 1969 show losses of $20 or less and roughly half of the personal male robberies show losses of $50 or less. For the commercial robberies, on the other hand, the midway point comes at about $100 or less.

The majority of the cases are not cleared ("solved"). There was some variability by type. Personal female robberies were least likely to be cleared.

The Robbery Offender

What little information there is about robbery offenders generally describes those who have been arrested and those who have passed through the criminal justice system. Given the

fact that clearance rates for robbery are generally only 30 percent or lower, the obvious problem with this data is that there is no way of being sure that those arrested are representative of the robber universe. It could be that those arrested are younger or less experienced or less adept at robbery than those who are not arrested. Since arrests are not necessarily convictions, it is also sometimes argued that descriptions based on arrests say more about the possible biases of enforcement agencies than about actual offenders themselves. It is also, of course, possible that those arrested do in fact represent robbers in general and are not significantly different in any way.

Perhaps the most direct way of describing the robber as he actually appears is to make use of the eyes of the victims. Only a few studies have been done which have attempted to describe the robber as seen by the victim. These sources have generally been based on information collected by the police at the time of the robbery. They are based on all robbers described rather than caught robbers, and this picture is obviously more complete in many ways than any other available.

Robbers as described by victims are almost always male. They appear also to be predominantly black. Studies done in Philadelphia for 1960-1966 and Syracuse for 1964-1968 both show over 80 percent of the described robbers as black, as did the Oakland data for 1969. It is difficult to say how this racial pattern compares to other crimes. Burglars are rarely seen and thus rarely described at the burglary event. The same appears true of auto and other thieves.

Robbers, as described by their victims, appear to be in their late teens and early twenties predominantly. Age data based on victim descriptions is necessarily approximate because age is difficult to ascertain by what a person looks like and even more so under the circumstances in which robberies occur. Nevertheless some impressions are possible and there is no particular reason to expect that robbers would any more frequently be described as older than younger or vice versa.

Robbers also appear to work largely in groups—at least of two or three. Less than half of the offenders in one study of Oakland data involved only one offender.

Overall the impression gained from the descriptions given by victims is that robbers are predominantly young, black men, perhaps evenly divided between those who use weapons to intimidate their victims and those who use actual force to effectuate the robberies.

This picture is similar to that given by the arrest-based data which also shows robbers as predominantly young, male, and black. Nationally, in 1971, for example, the Uniform Crime Reports show roughly one-third of the males arrested for robbery to be under 18. By comparison, however, only 20 percent of offenses cleared in 1971 were cleared by the arrest of a juvenile. This suggests that juveniles are more easily apprehended, that they more often rob in groups, or that they more often confess all their robberies or implicate their partners. These figures also may explain why the arrest-based data seems to show a lower age for robbers than did the event-based data.

Roughly two-thirds of those arrested for robbery nationally in 1971 were black. Arrests of whites accounted for almost one-third (32 percent) in the same year while arrests of all other races accounted for only two percent. While robbery arrests of blacks are clearly out of all proportion to their percentage of the population, robbery arrests still net a sizeable number of whites. And as indicated earlier, robbery arrests of blacks are not high relative to the event-based descriptions which run as high as 85 percent in some places.

In order to go beyond the kind of information available from victim descriptions and arrest records, this study sought to learn about robbery and robbers from robbery offenders themselves. While a considerable amount has been learned about other kinds of crime in this way, very little has been done with the robbery offender. For the sake of convenience and because of problems defining the universe, no attempt was made to interview robbery offenders who had not been apprehended. Because we were interested in the robbery event as well as the offender, the decision was made to use the event as the basis for establishing the offense designation rather than the label applied in the court process. This means that some offenders in the sample were not convicted of robbery. All offenders included, however, were involved in an event which could have been (and generally was) called a robbery in the jurisdiction in which it occurred. In order to include as wide a range of offenders arrested for robbery as possible, offenders given local sentences (probation, jail or a combination) were interviewed as well as those in prison. This was done for both

adults and juveniles. The final number of offenders inter-
viewed was 113--82 adults and 31 juveniles.

The interview relied heavily on questions about the rob-
bery for which the robbers had been recently convicted. Hence,
those who denied guilt were not interviewed. There were 68
denials and 16 refusals to be interviewed. It is possible
that some of the denials represent indirect refusals.

Motivation. By far the most common reason given for
committing the robberies was a desire or need for money. Two-
thirds of the robbers indicated that their primary motivation
was money. Adults more frequently cited money as the primary
motivation than did juveniles--three-fourths compared to 45
percent.

Of those who said money was the primary motivation, only
about 15 percent--all adults--were working. Most were in
part-time or very low-paying jobs, however.

About one-fourth of the adults interviewed said they
wanted money to buy drugs. Most were addicts who needed heroin
(18 of 19). Only a few of the juveniles (2 of 31) reported
wanting to buy drugs. None were heroin addicts. The adult ad-
dicts ranged from those saying they needed only a few dollars
a day to support their habits to those who needed $200 or more
a day. The reasons for choosing robbery rather than some other
activity varied--most had been supporting their habits through
other illegal activities but turned to robbery because it
was quick money.

Nearly half the adults were seeking money for something
other than drugs. One-fifth of these, almost 10 percent of all

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adults interviewed, expressed a need for food or shelter.
Others wanted things like clothes, a car, a place of their
own to live in and similar things. Two had been involved in
other crimes and wanted money to leave the state to avoid
arrest. Several of the adults said they were attempting to
recover money which they claimed was either theirs or owed
to them. They did not think of themselves as doing robberies
at the time.

One-fourth of the adults indicated money was not the
real purpose of their robberies--either directly or indirectly.
Three said they were depressed or disillusioned. Others
denied that the incident in which they were involved was a
robbery. These incidents generally arose out of arguments or
ambiguous situations, such as one in which a young man stole
jewelry and a wig from a woman he tried to pick up who rejected
his advances.

Several expressed doubt, after the fact, about why they had
done the robberies. Had they not been arrested, they may have
continued to think that their actions had been somewhat rea-
sonable. But from the post-conviction perspective, they saw
that what they had done was against the law.

Nearly 5 percent (3 of·82) of the adults said that companions
had started robberies without any warning to them at all, and that
they then went along with the robberies. Another adult who had
done no previous robberies got involved because he owed a favor
to a friend.

Almost half of the juveniles (14 of 31) said they wanted
money; most apparently wanted extra spending money. None of the

juveniles who have money as their primary reason for doing the robberies were employed.

The other half of the juveniles said their reasons were not primarily for money. Most of these had at least part-time jobs. Two just appeared to be looking for excitement or something to do. Two more said the robberies arose out of fights with schoolmates. Another said he was drunk and the robbery arose out of a fight with a stranger. Two were angry with their victims. Five of the juveniles cited the influence of friends--some just going along with what their friends were doing while others were trying to prove they could do robberies. One rather sophisticated 15-year-old was in the process of showing his partner--an adult--how to do a robbery. Overall, the juveniles seemed more likely than did the adults to have somewhat mixed reasons for doing the robberies. They frequently seemed less sure of why they had been involved.

Nineteen adults and ten juveniles--one-quarter of the total sample--reported being high on drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol at the time of the crimes. Twelve of the adults and three of the juveniles, another 13 percent, of the sample, were drunk.

Planning. Few of the robbers interviewed reported doing any substantial planning. Over half said they did none at all. This category includes the 18 adults and 14 juveniles who said they had not intended to do robberies. It also includes, however, a sizeable number of others. Roughly another quarter reported relatively modest planning: finding a partner, thinking about where to leave the car, and perhaps some minimal

discussion of who would do what, and whether or not to use a weapon. An additional five percent planned somewhat more thoroughly, including such things as a quick casing of the robbery sit, some sort of disguise and some thinking through of what to do if anyone came by during the robbery. The planning involved both in this category and the relatively modest one usually took place the same day as the robbery, and frequently within a few hours of it.

Only three adult robbers, less than three percent of the total, reported a great deal of planning. All three were commercial robbers as were those few who reported some planning. The remaining eight percent of the robbers had established methods of operation which had already worked. They reported little additional planning when approaching their current robberies because they had already worked out a successful general approach.

Both the adults and the juveniles rarely thought in advance that they might actually be apprehended. Only 18 percent of the adults and 13 percent of the juveniles reported having any advance worries about the likelihood of being arrested. Almost as many thought about the possibility but decided it was unlikely.

Surprisingly a sizeable number of those interviewed indicated that they had not started out with any intent to commit a robbery. And a number of these were in fact involved in somewhat ambiguous situations. The adults were far more likely to have intended robberies than were the juveniles. Roughly 76 percent of the adults had intended robberies, while only about 58 percent of the juveniles had.

Location. Almost three-fourths of the robbers interviewed committed the robberies in their own towns, including 80 percent of the individual robbers but only two-thirds of the commercial robbers. Forty-two percent of the individual robbers and one-third of the commercial robbers reported being in their own neighborhoods. There was only a slight difference between adults and juveniles who reported they were in another town-- about 28 percent of the adults and 22 percent of the juveniles. Many said, however, that they were not in the other towns for the express purpose of committing the robberies. Several were visiting friends or relatives or were passing through when the robbery decision was made.

Partners. Almost one-fourth of the robbers interviewed had no partners. The predominant pattern, however, was to have one partner. Close to half reported having one partner. This was far more common among the adults (50 percent) than among the juveniles (32 percent). Robbery was somewhat more a group phenomenon among the juveniles than among the adults. Close to half of the juveniles had two or more partners.

Generally the partners were present at the scene of the robberies. Ten of the 82 adults and two of the 31 juveniles reported having partners who stayed in their cars, however. In 11 of these cases, there was only a single getaway driver. In the other case, there were three partners waiting in the car. From what was said, in all 12 of the robberies with getaway drivers the partners who were not at the scene of the crime probably were never seen by the victims. In addition, one of the

robbers interviewed reported that he was the getaway driver rather than his partner. Thus, in 13 out of 113 robberies there was at least one participant who was probably unseen.

Nine of the 23 juveniles with partners reported that at least one partner was an adult. Generally the adult partners were 18 or 19; the oldest was 23. In two of the nine cases, the adult partner suggested the robbery. In two other cases, it is not clear whether the suggestion came from the adult or the juvenile partner. And in the remaining five cases, the suggestion came from a juvenile. Of the five adults who said they had at least one juvenile as a partner, two said the juvenile suggested the robbery, one said it was a joint idea and the remaining two adults said they suggested it. Overall, just over 10 percent of the robbers interviewed were in mixed adult-juvenile partnerships or groups. There was no clearcut pattern of the adults leading the juveniles into the robberies, however.

Use of Weapons. Nearly 40 percent of the robbers who used a "gun" in their crime used a weapon that was either not loaded or that was simulated. Thus, of the 58 gun cases, nine involved weapons that were not loaded, four simulated weapons and three toy weapons. The juveniles rarely carried weapons that were unloaded.

Twenty-four of the 113 robbers said they had no weapons. Fourteen of this 24 also said that their robberies were impulsive acts. It is not clear whether these robbers would have had weapons if they had acted less impulsively. It is equally unclear, however, as to whether they would even have done the robberies if they had thought it over first.

Whether Anyone Hurt. Two-thirds of the adult robbers and just over one-third of the juvenile robbers reported that no one was hurt during the robberies. The victim was apparently more likely to have been hurt when there were two or more robbers involved according to the adult robbers interviewed. No one was hurt in over three-fourths of the cases which involved only one robber while the percentage dropped to roughly two thirds in cases involving two or more robbers.

The most common reason given for a victim being hurt was resistance by the victim. Close to half of the 22 adult robbers and one-third of the 15 juveniles who reported that a victim was hurt said that was the reason. Overall it would appear that the adult robbers interviewed did not use gratuitous force. Only one adult reported an excess of force for the sake of force. But this case was the exception. Most of the robbers interviewed reported little or no force at all.

Arrest Histories. Only four of the 82 adults and three of the 31 juveniles indicated that they had no prior arrests. Almost half of the robbers interviewed reported having been arrested six or more times, and several reported as many as 20-30 arrests. Many of the adults reported prior arrests for juvenile offenses, and many were for such minor things as being under the influence. A large number did, however, report prior felony arrests. Among the adults, furthermore, roughly 28 percent reported previous arrests for robbery. Thirteen percent of the juveniles reported a prior robbery arrest.

Over half of the adults responding and roughly two-thirds of the juveniles said that someone in their immediate families

had been arrested. Some of them reported that several family members had been. It would appear that a large number of robbers come from a subculture in which arrest is not an uncommon occurrence. Few reported, however, that other family members had been arrested for robbery.

Street Robbery Victims in Oakland

Perhaps the most frightening form of robbery is the street robbery. This kind of sudden attack by unknown persons goes against all the most critical assumptions necessary to ordinary everyday society and threatens its very fabric. Because of the special importance of street robbery a sample of street robbery victims was interviewed to learn directly their perceptions about the robberies in which they were involved.

Ninety-three street robbery victims in Oakland, California, were interviewed. They tended to be predominantly female and elderly. The 64 females were generally (over 82 percent) victims of pursesnatches while the 29 male victims interviewed were divided between armed and strongarmed robbery incidents. Males were somewhat under-represented in the final sample of victims interviewed as they were more difficult to trace.

Two-thirds of the victims interviewed reported that they had been subjected to force of some kind, and at least one-third to something more than minimal force. In the 25 armed incidents, use of weapons occurred in roughly half of the cases. Generally, when armed force was used, it involved a weapon other than a gun and physical force was also used.

More than half of the incidents resulted in some type of injury to a victim, but of these less than one-half required no medical treatment. Seven of the victims required hospitalization. All were over 61 years of age and their hospitalization ranged from overnight to more than 90 days. Generally, however, although a large number of incidents resulted in some injury, the injury was not serious.

About one-fourth of the incidents involved a total loss of property valued at less than $10 and about 60 percent involved property valued at $50 or less. Over 80 percent involved actual cash losses of $50 or less. On the average, cash losses tended to be greater in the armed street robberies and less in the strongarm incidents--almost three-fourths of the latter consisted of cash losses of less than $10.

More than one-half of the robberies involved more than one robber. The incidents with female victims more often (53 percent) involved only one robber than did the incidents with male victims (17 percent).

Most victims estimated that they were in contact with the robbers for a very brief time. One-third of the victims were unable to estimate even how long the time was. Most of the victims of armed incidents did make estimates, however, and almost half reported that the armed incidents took more than three minutes and none took less than 30 seconds. Of those making estimates in the nonarmed incidents, the time in contact with the robber was generally reported as less than three minutes.

Roughly four-fifths of the victims were alone at the time of the robbery. Nearly half, however, indicated that they were robbed while other people were nearby. Twenty-six victims reported that someone nearby tried to help in some way-- 12 of the incidents involved someone other than a victim chasing after the robbers. Only three victims reported that someone was around who could have helped but didn't.

Almost all (95 percent) of the victims said they were familiar with the area in which they were robbed. Moreover, most victims were in areas to which they frequently went.

Roughly one-third were in the area in which they were robbed for the purpose of shopping, while an additional 20 percent were on their way to or from work. The percentages would probably, however, have been somewhat different had more of the male street robbery victims been available to be interviewed.

Four of the victims interviewed were asked to testify in court. Of the remaining 89, 76 said they would be willing to do so if asked. Of those who said they would not be willing, the most common reason for refusing was fear of reprisal. Several also expressed concern that their testimony might be erroneous.

It was believed that the victim's close experience with the crime of robbery might have precipitated some valuable suggestions for deterrence. All in all, however, the suggestions of the victims as a group were both general and conventional (e.g., stricter judicial system, people should be more careful).

When asked what impact the robbery had on their daily lives, most indicated that they had taken some kind of action to protect themselves in the future. The most common change made was to carry money and valuables in less accessible places. Other changes were to carry less money and to be more cautious in general.

Almost half of the victims reported that they waited at the scene of the robbery for the police to be notified and to arrive. About a fifth, however, returned home before notifying the police. This may be due to the fact that many of them lived near the scene of the robbery.

About one-third of the victims reported that the police never recontacted them after the initial investigation. Police reports, however, show a higher percentage of recontacts than this, and it is possible that the victims did not recall quick phone calls or did not consider this real recontact. Purse-snatch victims reported less recontact than did armed or strong-arm victims.

A question sometimes raised is whether police would be more effective if more foot patrolmen were used. Only six of the 93 victims, however, reported that the robberies occurred in places observable only by a foot patrolman.

Over one-half of the victims reported they were completely satisfied with the police investigation and about another fourth were fairly satisfied. Nearly one-third of the armed robbery victims were dissatisfied, however, in some way. The biggest single source of dissatisfaction was in the non-apprehension of the robber. Twelve victims thought the police could have

done more during the followup and nine thought the police could have done more at the scene.

An effort was made to determine how much useful information could be obtained from victim interviews that would not be available from the police crime reports. This comparison showed that while much of the information is repeated, there are several areas in which substantial disagreement occurs. The three specific areas in which the interviews appeared to give more information concerned injuries to the victims, possible witnesses, and the use of weapons by the robbers. All of these could be items as to which the victim's information changed after the police report was written. Treatment of injuries, even minor, may have occurred after the report was written and the victim didn't bother to mention them when recontacted. Possible witnesses may have left the scene before the police arrived without leaving their names or the police may have considered the information they had to be relatively minor. The crime report was more valuable on information concerning the investigation of the robberies. This is largely because the victim seemed to lack knowledge of these followup activities either through memory loss or through not having been informed.

Innovations in Robbery Control

One of the most significant innovations in robbery prevention and control in the past decade has been the development of no change plans for transit companies and certain kinds of retail establishments. A no-change plan appears to have developed

first in the mass transit bus industry and has virtually solved the bus robbery problem. Even after three years, the system appears to have virtually eliminated bus robberies without transfer of robberies to passengers according to a survey undertaken as part of this study. No other countermeasures tested by the companies have had any comparable effect on bus robberies.

The experience of Standard Oil of California indicates that exact change systems could also have an important effect on robberies of service stations where properly implemented. In 1969, for example, an exact change plan was developed in San Diego during nighttime hours and eventually extended to other areas in the West. Robberies dropped from 117 in 1969 to 24 in 1970 and 16 in 1971. There appear to be no adverse side effects (such as injuries of employees who have no cash to produce), and no other countermeasures tested appear to be as successful. A number of other companies have also developed programs of this kind. Some station managers are reluctant to institute such a policy, however, and the spread of exact change programs to other service stations has been relatively slow.

A number of taxi companies have also experimented with programs modeled after the exact change plan--generally, however, along the lines of making limited change rather than no change. Yellow Cab of California, for example, reported a 67 percent decrease in robberies as a result of its limited cash ($5) program in Los Angeles. Other taxicab innovations included a signal code tie-in with the police and the use of bank credit cards. These were reported to be helpful in cutting robberies but no figures were available.

Another innovation which appears to have some important uses also comes from the private sector. "Secret witness" programs initiated by newspapers and TV stations have had successful results in solving difficult robberies among other crimes. One newspaper's program is credited with the solution of 41 robberies. These types of programs fill a gap between the public and the police by providing an anonymous link with the police. While they are based on a reward system, they might be successful with less reward and continued anonymity.

Other innovations were not examined systematically or in detail. Within the criminal justice system itself, however, there appear to have been few innovations directed specifically at robbery. One important exception, with broader crime control ramifications, has been the utilization of specialized patrol units in a number of cities. Generally, these units are freed from regular patrol duty and targeted against a specific crime problem--often robbery. There has not yet been very much quantitative assessment of these specialized units either in general or of specific tactics. There is, however, widespread belief among police administrators that they are effective in controlling robberies and in increasing robbery arrests. Helicopters are another innovation with possible utility in robbery cases. In one city, for example, the helicopter was involved in some ways in perhaps as many as 10 percent of robbery arrests in the city.

There have been a variety of other innovations--installation of cameras in banks; new types of alarms, some of which broadcast precoded messages; increased street lighting; and

citizen patrols, among others. On the whole substantial claims are made with respect to some of these, but very little is known about those innovations.

Inquiries were also made in this study of a large number of manufacturers, alarm companies and other firms dealing with security-related equipment concerning innovations in this area, and many responses were received. These contained very little hard information, however, about robbery prevention and control.

Robbery Investigation: Some Organizational Issues

There is an increasing awareness that detectives are not as central to the apprehension process as was once thought. Studies undertaken in several cities indicate that between 70 and 90 percent of all robbery arrests are made by patrol units. Some small percentage of these were aided by investigations conducted by detectives but overall the arrests generally came about as a result of patrol-type activities.

This kind of data and other data now being generated in various team policing experiments around the country pose the most basic organizational question concerning detective operations--that is whether there should be detective operations for a crime such as robbery. Some observers have already concluded that major detective forces are not necessary, at least in all but the very largest cities.

Serious examination of these issues about the role of detectives in the control of crimes such as robbery could require massive changes in current police operations around the country. Few such changes are in fact taking place, however.

In no other area of police operations do there appear to be so many myths or so much resistance either to change or serious self-examination. Despite the fact that detective ranks contain many of the ablest, most intelligent and most dedicated officers and executives in police work today, the service as a whole seems unwilling to confront the serious issues involved. Undoubtedly this is in part because of the entrenched political power in many departments of the existing detective bureaus. These bureaus seem unwilling to change themselves, and management often lacks the power to make changes. There is little outside pressure for doing so.

The detective service may ultimately be the chief victim of its own unwillingness to face up to these problems, for as more becomes known about the extent to which detectives are not very central to the apprehension process as it now stands, the greater the demand for trimming the ranks of detective units is likely to grow. While there is the possibility that a more rational allocation of priorities, new investigative techniques or other alterations in methods of detective operation might produce significantly different results, this can come about only if the problem of detective effectiveness is recognized and addressed.

The general question of effectiveness is by far the most important of those that need to be addressed, and its resolution is obviously central to all other organizational issues. There are a number of other issues, however, that are important within the general approach now taken by most departments.

These include:

--The allocation of responsibility between patrol and detective units.

--Whether robbery investigation is handled better in centralized or decentralized detective units.

--Whether robbery investigation is handled better in specialized or general detective units.

--What the optimum form of organization for a specialized robbery detective unit is.

--How much manpower should be allocated to robbery cases.

How much detective manpower should be assigned to robbery cases is a particularly key issue for any department and is necessarily related to overall decisions of detective manpower allocation. Various methods have been applied to compute investigative manpower--number of cases is multiplied by average amount of time expended with administrative and other time also computed, frequency of selected part I crimes for selected police agencies is reduced to an index or ratio, and lastly an arbitrary percentage of the total sworn personnel is assigned to crime investigations.

The results of this process differ widely by city. Oklahoma City, for example, allocates only 2 percent of its force to detective units while Cincinnati allocates about 18 percent. These differences are so substantial that it is surprising that virtually nothing is known about them.

Considering the crudity of the guidelines for allocation of manpower to detective units generally, it is not surprising that there are even fewer guidelines for allocation of manpower to specialized units such as robbery squads in departments in which such specialized units are employed.

There is no standard definition of a case or of what a detective is supposed to do with a given kind of case. Obviously these factors are related to how many cases a detective can handle.

Now that the true situation about the relatively small role of detective involvement in the apprehension process for some important crimes is becoming known and that important increases in the overall capabilities of patrol officers have taken place, what remains is the need for a serious rethinking of the entire detective function. What can it and what can it not accomplish? What ought its real duties be? What procedures and organization should it live by? If this examination is undertaken seriously and the results faced up to honestly and forthrightly, it seems possible that a stronger, more effective detective force could emerge. In any event it seems clear that the result will necessarily be a stronger, more effective police service.

THE HANDLING OF ROBBERY ARRESTEES: SOME ISSUES OF FACT AND POLICY

A great deal of attention and money has been focused recently on the apprehension portion of the criminal justice process. Arrest statistics, clearance rates, response times and new equipment designed to make apprehensions more feasible are very much a part of everyday talk.

The extent to which offenders who are arrested are not charged or prosecuted but are instead released from custody, however, is a relatively little noticed statistic. In California in 1970, for example, there were 13,086 adult robbery arrests. Of these, 4,246 or about 32 percent were released from custody without being charged. This percentage is not unique to robbery as the release without charge rate for other serious offenses is also high. It is nonetheless an important fact.

A study was undertaken to examine some of the questions raised by these figures. It sought first to examine the way in which robbery cases in which apprehensions were made were handled by the police and the district attorney, and to describe the charging process. It sought also to deal with some of the important policy questions involved: The reasons for release and the extent to which this large number of released cases represents innocent persons as opposed to possibly guilty parties who are caught but for some reason cannot be prosecuted, and to the extent that the released cases are good ones, it sought to examine the extent to which these cases might have been salvaged.

The principal data for the study were cases investigated by the Robbery Detail of the Oakland Police Department between December

20, 1971 and March 31, 1972. During that time period there were 151 apprehensions. More than half (83) of the robbery suspects caught were arrested either at the scene of the crime or in the immediate vicinity. By far the greatest number of apprehensions are made quickly near the scene by patrol rather than later after investigation by detectives. An important role is often played by victims and witnesses--over one-third of all suspects were either pointed out by a victim or witness or known to them by name. This role is often not fully recognized or acknowledged. Although citizens frequently aid in the apprehension of the suspects, the person responsible for the first physical detention of the suspects in over 95 percent of the cases was a police officer. Roughly 70 percent of the adult suspects were charged and the remaining 30 percent were released without charging.

The kind of evidence most often available was identification evidence. This was present alone or in combination with other evidence for 123 of the 145 suspects for whom detailed information was available. Interrogation evidence was present for 76 suspects and physical evidence for 66. In most cases, there was more than one kind of evidence present, including about one-fifth of the cases for which all three types of evidence were present.

If one were to ask any of the investigating sergeants of the Robbery Detail what is the most important factor for a case to have when a charge is sought, his answer would be an identification of the suspect. With a positive identification of the suspect, a concrete connection is established between the crime and the suspect. It was upon this connection that most of the charges in

the sample were based. Furthermore, in the 15 instances in which

there was a charge but only one linking factor connecting the

suspect to the crime that sole linking factor was always a positive

identification. Fifty-eight percent of all identifications were

by the victim, 38 percent by a witness, and the remaining four

percent by a crime partner.

The importance of an identification of the suspect is reflected

in the manner in which robbery investigations are conducted. Once

an identification is obtained, for example, the victim or witness

giving that identification will not usually be asked to repeat

the identification during the investigation, apparently for fear

that the identification might be lost because of the often confusing

circumstances of lineups and mug shot presentations. A second,

and related, indication of the importance of the identification is

the emphasis placed on the field identification in the investigative

process when a suspect is apprehended shortly after the crime.

Most positive identifications were made on the street within

one hour of the crime. Selected mug shots were the next best

source of positive identifications and lineups were rarely a

source of positive identifications and were used only as a last

resort. In a total of 225 identification attempts made for the

sample studied, 122 were on-scene identifications. There were

41 identification attempts utilizing mug shots and 36 lineups.

Of the 55 instances in which there was no positive identification,

27 involved lineups, 14 mug shots and 14 field identifications.

Confessions are relatively unimportant, being judged as

essential for only 5-10 percent of the charged suspects. Physical

evidence appeared to be even less important in robbery cases.

Slightly less than half of the cases in which an adult suspect was released were attributable to the lack of an identification, highlighting further the importance of this factor in the charging process. Refusal of the victim to cooperate in the prosecution and unavailability due to being out of town or not locatable were other major reasons for release of adult suspects.

Sixty adult suspects were charged, including about 75 percent of those arrested for armed robbery but only about 60 percent of those arrested for strongarm robbery. There was a slight tendency for the district attorney to charge a less serious crime than that for which the suspect was arrested. There were an almost equally large number of cases, however, in which a more serious crime was charged. Overall there were 24 changes in crime classification between arrest and charging out of the total of 60 charged suspects.

Nearly one-fourth of the adult charged suspects for whom disposition information was available were either acquitted or dismissed. Forty were convicted and other dispositions occurred for eight. A comparison of the charge placed by the district attorney with the offense of conviction shows that 23 adult suspects were convicted of the same offense as charged while 17 obtained charge reductions. These reductions are not so much a product of overcharging on the part of the police or district attorney but rather the natural output of the plea bargaining system. Although the offense designation is somewhat less important in the juvenile cases, a substantial number of these cases also involved less serious charges at disposition than at the beginning of the proceedings.

Given the fact that nearly one-third of the original arrests involving adult suspects were screened out of the system and not charged, it seems somewhat surprising to find that of those cases that were charged over 20 percent ultimately ended in acquittal or dismissal. The reasons were unclear for almost half of the 12 cases, but for three there was a failure of a previous identification and for another three there was a victim credibility or unavailability problem. In one case there was a decision that the suspect had committed no crime.

A sample of 130 robbery cases in Los Angeles County which resulted in the district attorney refusing to issue a complaint were studied to supplement the above data from Oakland. The Los Angeles cases involved a total of 181 suspects. The majority (86) of the cases were rejected either because of an identification problem or because of some kind of victim problem--unavailability, refusal to cooperate in the prosecution, unreliability for some reason, etc. A substantial number (42) were rejected because the district attorney felt that a crime had not been committed or that some element of the crime was missing. As can be seen, nearly one quarter of the Los Angeles cases were rejected because the police or the district attorney concluded that they had the wrong suspect or that no crime had been committed. Equally important, however, is the fact that for the other 75 percent of the cases the reasons for rejection had nothing to do with believing that the suspect was not the right person. Rather the reasons for rejection in these cases had to do with evidentiary problems.

Two facts seemed clear as a result of the two studies undertaken: (1) that about half of those arrested for robbery

offenses are ultimately either not charged or not convicted, and
(2) that one-half to three-fourths of those who are not convicted
drop out not because the defendant has been shown to be innocent
but because the victim was unavailable or unwilling to cooperate
in the prosecution, there is some credibility problem relating to
his testimony, or some identification problem in the case. What
makes the rate of release in these cases even more surprising is
that in a substantial number of cases in which some kind of prose-
cution problem occurs, there is at some point in the process an
identification which is positive.

Several possibilities for salvaging the prosecution of these
cases are proposed. The first is to make a photographic record of
the field identifications. Such a procedure should help to protect
the initial identification, could be used in some instances as
independent evidence of identification and could perhaps serve as
an inducement to reluctant witnesses to cooperate in the prosecution,
particularly those who worry later that their testimony might be
erroneous because of faulty memories.

A second proposal is that the victim's identification be
established clearly. This should help to salvage those cases
in which a victim becomes unavailable because of an incorrect name
or address recorded in the crime report. The use of this proce-
dure should be cautiously approached, however, so that embarrassed
victims or witnesses will not choose to suppress the initial report
and so that the victim will not be made a suspect himself.

The third proposal is to prosecute more cases. Some agencies
have adopted a "sure thing policy" which is to charge only those
cases which have a high likelihood of winning in court. One

alternative policy would be to take every arrest to court regardless of the chances of conviction at trial. Another alternative would be a medium prosecution policy which would involve prosecuting more but not all cases, thus lowering the standard of probability required to proceed. The adoption of either alternative would require the addition or shifting of resources in the prosecutor's office and, if successful in producing additional convictions, could well create resource problems at later stages. This points up a dilemma faced by the prosecutor in robbery as well as in other cases. With limited resources, he must make hard choices. Should he proceed, for example, with a weak robbery case or a strong petty theft case?

The fourth proposal is to maximize early identifications. The early field identification is often both the most certain and the most fair. Any kind of early identification effort, however, is likely to be preferable to some kind of later effort.

One problem which runs through a great many of the robbery problem cases is the value of eyewitness testimony, particularly eyewitness identification testimony. Traditionally courts have been wary of this kind of evidence. This wariness is attributable largely to the frailties of human perception and the possibilities inherent in many eyewitness identification situations for suggestion.

Historically this concern exhibited itself in the form of cautionary instructions to the jury to weigh the credibility of the eyewitness evidence in the same fashion that it weighed the other evidence. More recently the United States Supreme Court has established a set of exclusionary rules concerning the use of eyewitness testimony in criminal cases. Taken together, the decisions in the Wade trilogy created a situation in which counsel

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was required for some identifications but not for others. Until recently it was also widely assumed that there was an implied limit on the kinds of situations in which the field identification for which the presence of counsel was not required was permissible. This issue was finally decided by the Supreme Court in Kirby v. Illinois in which the Court held that the Wade rules applied only to post-indictment cases.

Following the Supreme Court's lead in Wade and its progeny, other courts have emphasized both the weaknesses of eyewitness testimony and the preference for lineup evidence over that gained in the field identification. Both of these propositions seem open to some question.

There can be little doubt that there have been many cases of mistaken identity by eyewitnesses. It takes a very long leap in logic, however, to conclude from this that identification by strangers is inherently untrustworthy. The fact that there have been 100 misidentifications means one thing if the total number of identifications was 105 and another if the total is 100,000 or 1,000,000. The issue isn't, however, how many misidentifications are too many, but rather what the quality of eyewitness evidence is. To the extent that the statements about eyewitness evidence imply that there are other kinds of evidence which are more trust-worthy or less subject to danger, the statements simply aren't proved. That proposition may be true but has rarely been discussed, much less demonstrated and there is some reason to believe that circumstantial evidence is no more trustworthy if not less.

This is not to say that there should not be concern about how identifications are made, however, or that it is not possible to improve the degree of fairness in the making of identifications. It is rather a plea that the questions be looked at from a broader perspective, that they not be decided on the basis of a single instance or two but rather on the basis of their overall tendency.

The courts have shown a preference for lineups rather than field identifications but it is not at all clear that one is fairer than the other and it seems likely that in many cases the field identification, which is essentially tolerated rather than encouraged, is both fairer to the defendant and more effective insofar as the police are concerned. Most robbery apprehensions are made either at the scene or in the vicinity of the crime, and most identifications are made in the field at that time. In the majority of these situations, at least insofar as one can judge by looking at the records of the cases, the field identification procedure seems preferable both from the point of view of the defendant and the police to a lineup held at a later time, partly because the field identification involves the least possible delay in making the identification attempt. The witness' perception is the freshest and an innocent suspect's appearance least likely to match that of the offender. The suspect's clothing is relevant in the field identification and in general the factual context much richer.

Because of the rules designed to minimize the possibilities for unfairness, the lineup is a highly artificial situation. Aside from increasing the likelihood of the witness making no identification, it seems likely that this procedure increases the possibility of confusion and error.

Ultimately the issue depends more on how the witness perceives the acts than on what the police do. In both the field identification and the lineup a suggestion is present. What we do not know, however, is how witnesses and victims react in the identification situation to various kinds of suggestions. At this stage we know neither that there is a reaction nor that any reaction present is either uniform or in any particular direction. There is a fair amount of evidence to suggest that witnesses do not always take the suggestion, but that on the contrary many are mindful of the possible consequence of error and that they therefore take care to identify carefully and are unwilling to identify at all if they are not sure.

While it is not possible to say with any confidence how careful or uncareful witnesses as a group are, it does seem fair to say that there are at least two other factors which a priori seem as important to an accurate identification as any possible susceptibility to suggestion--the time involved between the event and the identification attempt, and the number of identification attempts that have been made.

It would appear highly desirable that more research into the questions involved be undertaken. It would also appear that until there is some further evidence of real prejudice to the defendants involved, prosecutors and police should judiciously take advantage of the opportunities opened up in the Kirby case for further use of the field identification procedure. Because the possibility of prejudice is present, however, it is desirable that further improvement in recording and identification procedures in all identification attempts be made.

During the past decade there has been a great deal of contro-
versy concerning the impact of various decisions of the United
States Supreme Court upon the criminal justice process. Some
authorities have spoken of these decisions as "handcuffing" the
police and have found in these decisions the reasons for substan-
tial increases in the crime rate. Other authorities have belittled
these views and suggested that the decisions have had little or
no appreciable effect upon the apprehension and prosecution of
criminals.

On the basis of this study and other data, the answer would
appear to be that the extent to which these controversial Supreme
Court decisions were involved in robbery cases is very little.
Not a single case in the Oakland or Los Angeles samples turned
on a question of search and seizure, involved any serious legal
issues concerning interrogation or excluded evidence, or a lost
identification by virtue of the rules governing lineups and
identifications. Undoubtedly there are robbery cases in which
the rules fashioned by the Supreme Court are a problem. The cases
in the sample, however, totaling more than 250 suspects in two
different jurisdictions in which no problems were apparent suggest
that the frequency with which these decisions are an issue in
robbery cases is very low.

Volume III

THE GEOGRAPHY OF ROBBERY

Where crime occurs is important. Despite this importance
there has been relatively little study of the spatial patterns
of crime within the city, particularly in recent years and particu-
larly of specific crimes. Consequently, a study was undertaken
to determine the patterns of robbery in a medium-sized American
city, Oakland, California. Records for robberies and pursesnatches
during the years 1966-1968 were located upon a map of the city
which contained an X-Y coordinate network. The grids in the net-
work comprised approximately a half block each.

The most significant spatial fact about robbery in Oakland
is that for most parts of the city robbery is a relatively rare
event. Despite high robbery rates during the three-year study
period, more than two-thirds of the grid areas showed no robberies
or pursesnatches. Only 2,059 of the approximately 6,200 grid
areas had a robbery or pursesnatch during the period and of this
number 864 had only one such event. Thus only 19 percent of the
possible grid squares contained more than one robbery or purse-
snatching in three years. Overall more than 25 percent of the
robberies and pursesnatches occurred within less than four percent
of the inhabited grid squares. Even in these grid squares, how-
ever, robbery was not a daily or even generally a monthly event.
Only one grid square averaged as many as one offense per month
and few were even close.

Nor were the areas which did have robberies during the study
period evenly distributed throughout the city. They tended to be
concentrated in the older part of the city near San Francisco Bay

and to diminish with increasing distance from the Bay. Even within the general areas of concentration, however, there were large areas with little or no robbery.

Robbery in Oakland was also heavily concentrated on a few major streets. Thirty-six major traffic and business arteries contain about 50 percent of the robberies--even though these streets cover a distance of only 76 miles, less than one-fifteenth of the total street distance in the city. This concentration was greater for armed robbery than for strongarm or pursesnatch. If the neighboring areas of these few streets are considered and robberies within a half block on either side included, the amount of robbery accounted for increases to 67 percent.

Thirty-one percent of all robberies occurred in areas of the city classified as commercial landuse. Those areas classified as industrial, park, vacant, freeway and low density residential were all very low in robbery occurrence. The second ranking landuse type varies by type of robbery. High density residential landuse was the second ranking for male nonarmed robbery, low medium density landuse second for female nonarmed, and medium density residential second for armed robbery.

The specific settings for the offense were street and sidewalk, liquor store, small grocery store and gas station. The most important premise type for robbery as a whole is the street and sidewalk. This type accounts for 71 percent of the male and 83 percent of the female nonarmed robberies. Only 24 percent of the armed robberies occurred in the street and sidewalk category, primarily because the armed robberies tended also to be commercial robberies.

Commercial robbery is even more concentrated than robbery as a whole. All of the city's commercial robberies for the study period occurred in only 12 percent of the grid squares for the city. Commercial robbery is also highly concentrated along the major thoroughfare streets. A total of 75 percent occurred on or within a half block of a major street. The outlying commercial and thoroughfare streets of the city appeared to attract much greater amounts of commercial robbery than did the central business district. The establishments which have the highest commercial robbery rates are those which tend to locate independently of other businesses. This is especially true of the three major victimizatio[n] types of gas station, liquor store and small grocery store. Together these three types of establishments accounted for 50 percent of the commercial robberies.

While individual robberies are more frequent than commercial robberies, they are far less concentrated. Individual robberies occurred in over 27 percent of the city's occupied grid squares. With the exception of two particular areas of high concentration, the distribution of individual robberies closely followed the pattern for commercial robberies--along the major thoroughfare streets and decreasing in frequency with distance from the Bay. Ninety percent of the individual robberies in the two areas of high concentration were against male victims. There are no similar concentrations of female individual robberies. Both of the areas contain a number of bars and taverns, both have some skid row aspects and both serve as a meeting place for prostitutes and their customers.

Individual male robbery is the only type with a relatively

high percentage during the summer. Commercial and individual
female robberies are high in both the fall-winter and summer
periods.

A number of other studies have been done of spatial patterns
of crime within a city. One was done in 1929 by Shaw and McKay
in Chicago (studying juvenile delinquency) and another in 1960
by Schmid in Seattle (studying several crime types). In com-
parison, the city of Oakland has had a growth pattern that has
generally moved outward in a series of expanding circles. The
pattern for robbery in Oakland is very similar to Schmid's for
Seattle--with commercial and male individual robbery decreasing
sharply from the commercial heart of the city to the suburban
fringe, while individual female robbery occurs in both the com-
mercial center of the city and the midland areas of the city with
very little occurring in the low density residential areas.

By far the largest amount of crime area analysis that takes
place is that performed by police departments. At one level this
may be through the use of pinmaps which record each individual
crime, usually for a short period of time, and for the purpose
of picking up any short term problems or trends that should be
dealt with more or less immediately. At another level this will
be through the regular maintenance of statistics for an area such
as a beat or a census tract. These may be used to some extent for
short term analysis but are also likely to be used over longer
periods such as a month or year for general comparative purposes
and for such things as manpower allocation.

The use of standard areas such as beat or census tracts in
this kind of way facilitates comparison with other data that is
also maintained with reference to the same kind of area unit,
including other crimes, population data, social and economic data,
and a myriad of other possible things ranging from fire alarms to
peanut consumption. Census tracts in particular are useful in
this kind of way.

The extent to which area units of this type only approximate
the equality necessary for meaningful comparisons is often over-
looked, however. If beat 19 is the largest in the city in terms of
area and at the same time has the greatest number of robberies in
the city, it is not at all unusual to hear that beat 19 is "high in
robbery", even if it has a relatively low density of robbery per
unit of area. For some purposes, of course, the density may be
irrelevant. But the distinction may be missed, even when it is
the central issue.

A second problem with respect to the use of standard areas
relates to the homogeneity of the phenomenon within the area. The
recording of the data by beat or census tract implies to some ex-
tent that the crime occurs uniformly over the area. This assump-
tion of homogeneous distribution within a census tract or police
beat can be very misleading for robbery.

This problem of homogeneity within the area of analysis is
multiplied many times over when the distribution of the phenomenon
has linear tendencies, and is made even worse if the line of the
linear pattern also happens to be the boundary of the various areas.
Both these problems occur with respect to robbery in Oakland.

The pattern of robbery when plotted by the actual location of
the offense is linear with concentrations focused upon the major
streets of the city. This pattern of concentration is not evident

when viewing the maps of robbery plotted by census tract and police beat areas. Oakland's major street, for example, is also a boundary for several of the census tracts. In each of the census tracts that use this thoroughfare as a boundary there is very little robbery away from this street. The census tract map of the area, however, necessarily generalizes the occurrence of robbery over the entire area of the census tracts involved. Thus, a census tract map shows large areas bounded by the major streets as having a relatively high robbery frequency, when over 70 percent of each tract shown has relatively little robbery.

The same problem exists when robbery is plotted by police beat areas which are larger in size than census tracts. When police beat areas are used for mapping, the robberies which occur about the major streets are even further generalized into larger areas.

Clearly census tracts and police beats distort the actual pattern of robbery so that some nonrobbery areas are shown to have high robbery rates. There are no existing standard units for describing urban areas, however, which do not contain the same kind of limitations.

To deal with this problem, the St. Louis Police Department has developed a system of small areas called "Pauly" blocks, each approximately four to six city blocks in size. Even the Pauly blocks, however, generalize highly clustered events such as robbery into possible nonevent areas. The size of the Pauly block area is sufficiently small, however, that a reasonably accurate city-wide pattern may be determined.

More recently the St. Louis department, in order to obtain even more precise information, has developed a method of mapping

the site of traffic calls and criminal activity which uses the actual location of the offense. Maps are produced for each of the nine districts of the city by a computer pen plotting system using actual addresses. When there are more than five events within a quarter of a mile in radius a circle is drawn upon the map in that area. Areas of dense occurrence are characterized by the numbers of circles.

For the purpose of the present study, a unit of analysis was sought that would minimize any invalid generalization of the robbery pattern, be independent of the street pattern of the city, but which would nevertheless allow some generalizations to be made. The use of a grid system of fine gradation was ultimately decided upon. A coordinate system capable of displaying a linear distribution and large enough to be practical for coding was then sought. Little guidance was found, however, for development of an optimal size of study unit.

What general guidelines there are seem accurate enough, but not very helpful in concrete cases. Thus, the level of detail of the data on a map is said to depend upon a combination of the scale of the available base map and the requirements of the mapping symbolism. Since a map is an abstraction of reality in which the symbol represents the occurrence of a real phenomenon, both the size and character of the symbol and the adoption of an appropriate scale to display the symbol are important.

While a square grid coordinate system is independent of the street pattern, its utility varies with the size of the grid unit. The larger the area of each grid unit, the less clear the clustering of robbery about the streets. As the size approaches a census

tract in area, the robbery distribution obviously becomes similar to the distribution of the census tract map and the focus upon the major streets is lost. As the size of the grid unit decreases the street focus becomes clearer. Since the street focus of robbery tends to cluster within a half city block of the major streets, a grid area which approximates this size was chosen.

This method of analysis and those now being used by the St. Louis department are still in their infancy. Their cost and their ultimate potential on any basis of wide-scale use either for short-range tactical problems or for longer range analysis and planning has not yet been determined. They seem to offer, however, a great deal of promise and to warrant further experimentation and development.

THE RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND
OTHER AGENCIES TO ROBBERY

In a recent year there were about 5000 radio dispatches in the city of Oakland for robbery offenses. For the same year there were about 2200 robbery offenses reported, 800 robbery offenders apprehended, 400 charged, and 200 convicted.

By now this phenomenon of progressive narrowing down is well known and accepted as a normal part of the criminal justice system. Parts of the process have been fairly well described and are at least generally understood. Other parts remain almost totally unexplored and unclear.

Even for those parts of the system which have been generally described, however, there is relatively little information concerning the impact of the process on specific crimes. Undoubtedly the process is at least in part general and to that extent information concerning specific crimes is unnecessary. From what is known about the system, however, it seems highly likely that the system operates in substantially different ways for some crimes than for others.

The purpose of the studies in this volume was to describe the operation of the system with respect to the crime of robbery. These studies were seen as crucial to an understanding of the relevance of the system to the problem of control and prevention of robbery. In particular in a system characterized by wide discretionary powers and which often operates in fact in ways very different from either formal administrative structures or formal legal powers, the task of describing actual operations was seen as a crucial one. The perception that operators in the system have of the crime of robbery and the relative priority which they attach to it and why

was seen as a particularly important fact. It seems obvious but it is often overlooked that in a highly discretionary system the perceptions of a crime and the attitudes and policies adopted with respect to it have highly important effects upon decisions made about that crime. Without an understanding of these factors, it is not possible to place other information--statistical or otherwise-- in sufficient perspective to understand the phenomenon itself.

The studies in this volume should not be taken as describing the current criminal justice system with respect to robbery in Oakland. Neither do they describe the system at any particular time in the past. Rather they are a collection of descriptions of particular parts of the system made by different people at different times. Because the system and its organization is in constant change, almost daily in fact, it is not easily possible to make a completely accurate current description and it is possible that the present system looks very different in some respects.

Even where the system has been changed, however, the studies show a great deal about the questions with which the various agencies must deal and the kinds of interchange that take place between agencies.

Mobilizing the Police: Robbery Dispatches and Robbery Reports

When a citizen is robbed at gunpoint or mugged in the street, the police come into action only when they learn of the situation. Generally this is through a phone call. The result is the radio dispatch of a patrol car to the location to see if the officer can help. In order to answer questions relating to how a robbery gets reported and what accounts for a discrepancy of as much as two-and-

a-half to one of robbery situations reported to reports filed, a detailed analysis of robbery dispatches and robbery reports was made for a three-week period in June 1969.

The study showed that while only one-third of the robbery dispatches resulted in a robbery report, about half resulted in a crime situation of some kind. Eighty-six of the 106 crime reports filed as a result of the 234 robbery dispatches were robbery reports. Nine of the remaining 20 were classified as pursesnatches, a crime closely related to robbery and often virtually indistinguishable.

The largest single category (over half) of those not resulting in a robbery report or a crime situation were false electronic alarms. Because alarms loom so large in robbery dispatches, they were given special attention. Of the 234 robbery dispatches made by the communication section during the study period, 63 percent were based on calls from an alarm company. Nearly 90 percent of these calls were false. False alarms have two major causes-- equipment error or subscriber error. Equipment error is not too common. Subscriber errors are occasionally caused accidentally but many more are caused by the inappropriate use of the alarm, such as triggering the alarm because a store customer was suspected of trying to pass a forged check. While most of the inappropriate uses involve possible criminal activity, they are not the kind of situations that require the same degree of emergency response that an armed robbery does. No one is more disturbed than a policeman who responds to a robbery alarm by driving at high speeds, at physical risk to himself and others, only to find that someone has called him for minor or false reasons.

The data also indicated that the majority of all robbery dispatches--including those which do result in robbery reports and those which do not--are dispatched on a priority basis. Examination of the cases in which the dispatch is on a non-priority basis indicates that delay in receipt of the report rather than nature of the crime is the principal reason for the non-priority dispatch assignment.

Because some robbery reports do not originate with a robbery dispatch, the problem of where robbery reports come from was also studied. The largest single group derived from robbery dispatches (64 percent). About 80 percent come from a radio dispatch of some kind (generally reported as another type of crime situation) and about one-sixth derive from non-dispatch situations, such as flagging down an officer on the street, walking into the police station or having an officer witness the robbery in progress.

Functionally there is great similarity between offenses which are charged as robbery and pursesnatches which are charged as grand theft from the person. During the period studied there were a total of twenty-one pursesnatch reports resulting from dispatches. Almost half of these (9) were dispatched as robberies and an equal number were dispatched as pursesnatches.

Robbery: Getting Caught

The question of how robbers are apprehended, like the question of apprehension of criminals generally, is not well understood.

A study, based on robbery clearances during a two-month period in 1969, was undertaken in an attempt to fill in some of the missing blanks. During this period, 422 actual cases were filed of which 106 were cleared--a clearance rate of 25 percent which was comparable to the rate for the entire year.

Even the simple question of how robbery suspects are caught has at least three possible meanings: (1) how are the police brought into action; (2) how are the suspects identified and connected with the incident; and (3) how are the suspects physi-cally brought under control of the police? This study focussed essentially on the second question.

Suspects can be identified and connected with a case in several ways. One occurs when a suspect is apprehended in connection with a specific robbery. Another is when a suspect is arrested for an incident and then suspected of committing other similar robberies and is questioned about them or put in a lineup. The first might be called a "primary" clearance and the second, a "secondary" clearance. Fifty-nine of the cases involved "primary" clearances through the apprehension of a single suspect or a team of suspects who were prosecuted. These cases were analyzed to pick out the most vital and critical role in the identification and charging of the robbery suspects.

The victim is the single most important category in the group of possible roles. The victim role was decisive in 35 out of the 59 cases in a variety of ways such as flagging an officer and pointing out the suspect or identifying mug shots. In some cases, the victim gave a good enough description so that the

suspect was caught in the vicinity either immediately after the robbery or within the next couple of hours. Occasionally the victim can identify the suspect by name. A witness played a decisive role in 12 cases. Police initiative was judged as decisive in 18 of the 59 cases in which robbery suspects were identified and charged with the offense. Their most common role was in catching a suspect based on the victim's description. In five of the cases, it appeared that robber ineptitude was the decisive factor in the apprehension. Some were ones in which the robber bungled the robbery generally and some were ones in which he robbed someone who knew who he was.

The time of capture was also studied. All of the 38 identifications and captures made within four hours of the incident were made by patrol officers. Thirty-four were made on or close to the scene of the robbery without any break in the chain of events from the occurrence and reporting of the incident to the identification and capture of the suspects. The remaining 21 incidents involved apprehensions made after 12 hours had elapsed. In roughly half of these delayed apprehensions, identifications of ʹuspects by the victims accounted for the arrests--five with named suspects, two in which the victim accidentally spotted the suspects later, and four mug shot identifications. Six cases involved a miscellany of police work and investigations following the initial report. The role that detectives play in the apprehension process clearly does not appear to be anywhere near as great as that of patrol.

The 59 cases discussed above also resulted in the clearance of an additional 20 robberies ("secondary" clearances) of which

seven resulted in extra charges being made. The remaining 13 additional robberies were cleared as "prosecuted for another charge" (the robbery for which the actual apprehension was made). There was no evidence of the robbery detectives attempting to aid their clearance records by clearing a number of reports on spurious identifications or confessions.

Ten additional cases cleared by the police department during the time of the study did not involve the suspects in the 59 cases already cited. Three were "prosecuted for another charge" clearances and six were incidents prosecuted by an outside agency and, in this sense, also involving prosecution on other charges.

Twenty-three of the clearances studied resulted in no prosecution--13 in which the victim refused to cooperate and 10 in which the district attorney refused to file a complaint.

The Investigation of Robbery

When a crime occurs in Oakland a uniformed patrolman is dispatched to cover the situation. He will go to the scene, interview the victim, and if possible pursue the offender. In all cases he will also submit a written report on the occurrence. The completion of this report by the patrolman on the beat is not, however, the only phase between the crime and the prosecution. If the offender is not in custody, specialized robbery investigators take over in an attempt to locate and arrest the offender. If the offender is in custody, the robbery investigators are charged with preparing the case to go to the district attorney. Field observations and discussions with the detectives were undertaken to outline how these functions are carried out.

The attempt to solve the crime is done both inside the office

and outside the office. The first thing the investigator does is to review the crime report and familiarize himself with the facts of the case. He will look particularly at the description of the suspect and also at any special words used by the robber. From this he might be able to connect the case with a known robber or at least some other similar cases. He might also look at the teletype messages which come into the office every day. They contain descriptions and modus operandi of suspects who are in custody of other departments. The teletype probably will not be checked for a simple pursesnatch or strongarm robbery, but can often be significant in some bigger cases.

Modus operandi is considered very important. It is thought that "robbers continue to rob" and that they tend to use the same M.O. each time. Also at the detectives' disposal are the field contact files. Patrolmen will sometimes stop a suspicious person or car and ask for identification, destination or the like. This information is recorded. The detective will look to see if someone answering to the description of the robber or a car described in the crime report is mentioned in the field contact reports, particularly if it was from the same vicinity or time as the robbery.

There is thus a great deal of investigation which can be done directly from the crime report. This is not to say that each of these steps is or should be followed in every case. The procedures are geared to narrowing the field of mug shots for the victim or a witness to view. If the witness says he would not be able to identify a suspect, then the above steps are generally skipped.

After this preliminary review of the case, the detective will usually try to contact the complainant to review the case and ask for further details. If the victim thinks he might be able to make an identification, he is asked to come down to the station to view mug shots. In addition, the investigators will often call witnesses for additional information or to view mug shots. The department has a general file of mug shots and the robbery detail has a more specific one of its own. The victim or witness may go through either one although the latter is preferred by the investigators. In addition to mug shot files, the robbery detail keeps "gun and car books". A victim may not be able to tell the police off-hand what kind of gun or car was used but will recognize a picture if available.

Most of the robbery investigation is geared to identification. Often an identification will be the only real evidence when the suspect is arrested. In many cases the victim or witness can be of great help and is indeed the only lead and his cooperation is essential in finding the robber. One investigator noted that victims and witnesses seem to be more willing to cooperate than in the past.

The methods of investigation noted above are what might generally be called the standard operating procedure in robbery cases. There are also other sources of information which, while not regularly usable, are nevertheless valuable--people calling in with relevant information, informers, parental cooperation.

Most investigative work is done on the phone. But some work goes on outside the office as well. Much of the outside work

consists of personal visits to victims or witnesses. Generally the investigator will be seeking the same kind of information he gets over the phone and in view of the time differential involved, it seems easy to understand after observation why most investigative work is done by phone.

Getting an identification is only step one in the pre-arrest process. The second step, of course, is to locate the suspect and make the actual arrest, which can be based either on a warrant or on probable cause. Since a warrant involves administrative red tape, probable cause is generally used. Once the suspect is in custody, the robbery investigator's job takes on a new dimension. He must prepare the case for charging and eventual prosecution. This usually involves three phases--interrogation of the suspect, a lineup and the actual charging with the district attorney.

The robbery detail is divided into four two-man teams. They are not partners per se, but many of the investigators consider the other person in the team as a partner in name if not in function. The teams are assigned to areas of the city. Through this system it is hoped that they will become familiar with the people in the area, the troublemakers as well as the innocent victims. This area allocation is a relatively new one. In the past, the investigators were "type-specialists". The detail does still maintain one specialist who is in charge of all cases in which the police have recovered a gun.

The Prosecution of Robbery

After arrest the next step in the processing of a robbery

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offender is the prosecution. At this point the police begin to lose their control over cases and as the judicial process progresses the control of the police diminishes further. They do still play a large role in the first stage which is the issuance of a complaint (charging). This is a function of the Municipal Court Section of the district attorney's office. At the charging stage the Municipal Court district attorneys and the police necessarily work closely together. The charging process is critical because the decision made here determines the course a case will take. At this point it can be dismissed, prosecuted as a felony or a misdemeanor or a juvenile matter.

When a complaint is issued in Oakland the case is usually a strong one because the standard used here is whether or not a conviction could be obtained before a jury. Occasionally other considerations will be taken into account, however, such as the character and reputation of the defendant.

The office has a policy of not making more than four or five counts on any one complaint. There are two reasons: the sentences usually run concurrently and it is time consuming to call witnesses and present evidence at a trial for more than five counts.

If a case appears to be weak, the district attorneys will sometimes instruct the police on what is needed to make the case prosecutible. If further investigation turns up the necessary evidence, then the case will proceed. Otherwise a charge will not be issued.

Once the complaint is issued, the defendant is arraigned.

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The defendant is advised of his right to be represented by an attorney and bail is considered. Next the defendant appears with counsel to enter a plea. If the plea is not guilty, then a date is set for a preliminary hearing.

If, however, the district attorney has decided to issue a misdemeanor complaint rather than a more serious robbery charge, the trial will be conducted at the Municipal Court rather than the Superior Court and will be conducted at the time that a preliminary would be heard in a felony case.

The purpose of the preliminary is to determine if there is sufficient cause to hold this defendant to answer for the crime he is charged with. Both prosecution and defense attorneys are present, the defendant is present and witnesses may be called by both sides. If a defendant is held to answer at the preliminary, he is then instructed to appear at the Superior Court, usually in three weeks, to be arraigned and have a date set for trial.

The role of the district attorney at the preliminary is to establish sufficient cause to believe that a felony has been committed and that the defendant committed it. Handling preliminary examinations is a difficult and to most deputy district attorneys a boring task. From four to seven preliminaries may be scheduled for each day. The district attorneys are expected to conclude all the cases scheduled plus preparing cases to be heard in two weeks. Therefore, each day the district attorney is expected to handle ten to 15 cases. With such a caseload, plea negotiations become a necessity.

Plea negotiations cut across the entire system. They are a method of streamlining the whole judicial system. The power of

an individual deputy district attorney is most dramatically displayed in the plea negotiation process. The factors which lead him to accept a particular "deal" are not easy to generalize and are at least in part personal to the deputy district attorney involved. On the whole, it was felt that robbery cases are settled by guilty pleas at about the same frequency as other crimes, although armed robbery tends to be settled more often by guilty pleas than does strongarm robbery.

The major problem in prosecuting robbery cases is identification of the offender by victims and witnesses. Some Municipal Court district attorneys feel that robbers deliberately pick victims who will be unable to identify them. In their view this explains the large number of robberies of drunks and elderly people. It also explains the number of robbery-murders in which the offender escapes detection by killing the victim. One district attorney felt that the only way a prosecution is brought against a strongarm robber is if he is caught at the scene of the crime.

When questioned directly on how serious they regard robbery, all district attorneys stated it was a most serious crime. However, when talking about robbery outside the context of a specific question about its seriousness, most district attorneys tend to describe it as they would any other crime.

When the case reaches the Superior Court, the defendant is again arraigned. At that time he has another opportunity to enter a guilty plea. If he does not his case is assigned for a jury or a court trial depending upon his preference. Pre-trial conferences and plea negotiations are frequent, however, at this

stage in the proceedings. Negotiations usually begin at the Municipal Court but are rarely settled there. Of those robbery cases resulting in Superior Court convictions, roughly 70-80 percent are on the basis of guilty pleas.

When a case is scheduled for trial, the calendar district attorney assigns it to a trial deputy and an inspector. The inspectors play a role similar to that of the police: they review the police procedure, talk to witnesses, seek to gather physical evidence, use information and talk to the defendant. They also perform another role which is to make sure that the witnesses will show up even if they have to go out and pick them up but generally by keeping them informed of the proceedings and notifying them when they are really needed.

The trial deputy's case preparation includes overseeing the activities of the inspector, interviewing witnesses, and, most important in robbery cases, making sure that there is a strong identification of the defendant as the robber.

It should be noted that the prosecution of the case is sometimes complicated by the procedure of assigning different district attorneys at each level—charging, Municipal Court and Superior Court. This means that additional time is spent reviewing cases and that each attorney carries a large responsibility for being sure that the case is adequately handled so that the next attorney in the process can pick it up.

It is difficult to study the processing of a certain type of crime in a system designed to handle all types of crime. The people most directly connected with the process don't think

or act in terms of any particular crime. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate how these people feel and approach a particular type of crime, in this case robbery. Another factor which hinders the drawing of any broad conclusions is that each district attorney acts differently. There are few uniform office policies to direct attorneys.

Perhaps the best way to describe the processing of robbery cases is that it is a highly personal system. Each case is a composite of the personalities of the police, the district attorney, the defense attorney, and the defendant. And the outcome of any case is dependent in part on the relationships between these parties.

The typical robbery described by deputy district attorneys is the armed robbery of a liquor store. Strongarm robberies appear to be drunk rolls or prostitution-related and a purse-snatching is the taking of an elderly lady's purse by a juvenile. Those robberies in which physical injury or death result have the highest status with deputy district attorneys. Most other robbery cases are considered run of the mill. The only critical issue in robbery cases is the identification of the offender by the victim and witnesses.

The fact that most Municipal Court district attorneys and police believe that robbers receive petty sentences appears to have a detrimental effect on the investigation and prosecution of robberies. Some seem to have a "doesn't matter" attitude and are generally unaware of the relatively stiff sentences meted out in Superior Court.

Lack of manpower is another problem. Police, judges, district attorneys, and public defenders are all asked to do jobs which are beyond their manpower capabilities. One area where more manpower would have an effect is in plea bargaining. With more attorneys and judges, the pressure to bargain would not be as great. If fewer pleas were accepted, perhaps the police and Municipal Court district attorneys might be more satisfied with the sentences imposed.

Probation Handling of Youths Charged With Robbery

Youths arrested for robbery offenses are almost always turned over to the county probation department. In California and many other states, the role of the probation department in juvenile cases is much broader than that of any agency in the adult criminal process. Initially, the probation department has an extremely broad discretion to decide how the case should be handled, including dismissing the case entirely, placing the youth on informal probation without going to court, or petitioning the court to assert jurisdiction. In this role, the probation department is the rough equivalent of the district attorney deciding whether or not to charge, but its discretionary authority is even broader and more widely recognized.

Field observations and discussions with probation officers were conducted in a Bay Area County Probation Department to determine what happens to youths arrested for robbery and pursesnatching and what, if any, differences exist between these cases and others. To the extent that differences did show up, they tended to arise from two principal sources: the presence and intensity of violence

in such offenses, and considerations of evidence, which in robbery and pursesnatching cases often took on special features because of the importance of identification by victims and witnesses.

The deputy doing the initial screening performs essentially two main functions: determines whether the case warrants further action by the probation department and, if so, decides whether to detain the juvenile pending further action.

Although the police departments are supposed to forward the appropriate crime reports when the juvenile is referred, the reports are often missing. Even assuming they are not, however, the screening deputy is still faced with the problem of assessing whether sufficient evidence of the offense is available. He doesn't generally have time to do more than read the police reports and interview the suspect. Occasionally, however, he will do some further investigation on his own.

There appears to be a policy that if the juvenile has never had contact with the probation department before, he will rarely be held at this stage in the process. However, when the suspect is involved in a robbery or pursesnatching, a petition is almost always filed and the youth almost always detained pending a detention hearing (and usually then detained pending the delinquency hearing). This seems to hold true whether the offense is a first one or not.

The precise considerations involved in the charging process are not easy to state, but offense and prior record are particularly important. Beyond the question of whether to file a petition or not is what the charge should be. Technically, all juvenile violations of the penal code are simply violations of section 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, but studies

have shown that in practice the specific offense label is looked to later by police, intake personnel, the court and correctional officials. If a juvenile has a previous entry for malicious mischief or some petty offense, he may be treated as though he is a first time offender. If the file includes a previous robbery offense, however, then this is another matter. Generally if any force or violence or a weapon were involved, the offense noted will be robbery. Some probation officers made a distinction between "situational" robberies and those committed by juveniles who they believed were dangerous and likely to rob again. The former were, of course, likely to be treated more lightly.

The increased involvement of lawyers in the juvenile process has also had an impact on the charging policies of the probation department although there is some confusion about their actual impact. Generally it would appear that when the district attorney will be presenting the case in court he makes the decision and when the probation officer presents the case, he decides how to charge. Contested cases are generally presented by the district attorney.

If it is determined after the initial screening that a petition should be filed, the case will be assigned to a senior deputy probation officer in the Boy's Investigation Unit for court investigation and further action. Active probation clients who are currently receiving field supervision may have their cases investigated by the field supervisor. If an active client is involved with a co-participant who is a new case, however, the departmental policy is that both cases will be handled by the investigation unit. Most robbery cases, even if the juvenile is

already on probation, will be handled by the investigation unit. Some of the investigation unit probation officers seemed to feel that the field supervisors are too liberal in their handling of repeat cases.

Some cases are designated "special problem cases" and given special handling at both the intake and investigation stages and are assigned to experienced deputies who are expected to know what evidence is important, what elements of the offense can be established, which witnesses to subpoena, and when to talk the matter over with a senior deputy or the district attorney. Most robberies and pursesnatches are considered serious enough to be designated as special problem cases.

One might be tempted with what has been said up to now to conclude that there are definite policies with respect to robbery cases. This would overstate the case, however. Basically, probation officers do not think so much in terms of specific violations, whether robbery or anything else. If the case is particularly nasty, then the deputy probation officer will recognize it as serious. The probation department does seem to react more to the violence aspect of the case than to the legal definitions.

In the delinquency hearing, there seems to be a great deal of concern about violent offenses. While the juvenile court judge often follows the recommendations of the probation department, the deputy probation officers had the impression that the judges have been more severe with robbery offenders than the officers had recommended. The effect of this may well be to make the probation department "tighten up" with respect to dispositional issues. One

court officer indicated that the judges and the probation department had a posture of getting "tough as hell with vicious offenders". The court is not always tougher than the deputy probation officers, however.

There is a new policy being implemented by the judge that deserves mention--that of a strong emphasis on restitution by the offender to the victim. This policy, of course, becomes operative in most robbery and pursesnatching cases. Several deputy probation officers complained that the judges ordered restitution in cases in which it was virtually impossible for the juvenile to comply.

In California, as in many other states, some cases may be heard either in the juvenile court or in adult court. This overlapping jurisdiction leads to some confusion. The juvenile court in the county observed will not hear any case that originated in adult court, unless the defendant is willing to stipulate to at least some charge when appearing in juvenile court. This is, in part, based on the belief that if the defendant contests the case, his rights will be better protected under the adult adversary system.

Several field supervisors were asked how they go about supervising robbery offenders, in particular whether they treat this "type of offender" differently than "others". Generally, the field supervisors said that by itself the offense involved made no difference in the way the juvenile was supervised. Some even found the question a strange one. Almost without exception, the field supervisors neither knew nor apparently cared how many robbers they had on their caseloads.

Thus, while the fact that a robbery had been committed was critical at some earlier stages in the process, it is apparently almost meaningless at the supervision stage. It should again be pointed out, however, that a robbery record is important if the juvenile commits another crime, since his record will then count.

Footnotes

Introduction

1. All figures from the Uniform Crime Reports. Forcible
    rape increased 135 percent during the period, wilful homi-
    cide 78 percent, and aggravated assault 119 percent. 1972
    Uniform Crime Report, p. 61.

2. The argument here is not that there are too many experts
    in these fields. Rather that there are too few in the
    field of robbery and street crime.

3. See, e.g., N. Y. Times. June 28, 1972, p. 45, col. 2.

4. See, e.g., President's Commission on Law Enforcement and
    Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: Assessment
    of Crime, p. 36 (1967).

5. See President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Admin-
    istration of Justice, Task Force Report: Science and
    Technology, pp. 62-63 (1967), for method of estimating; U. S.
    Department of Justice, Expenditures and Employment Data
    for the Criminal Justice System, 1970-71, for expenditure
    data. See also U. S. Department of Commerce, 1967 Census
    of Manufacturers, Vol. II, p. 39C-23.

6. President's Commission, The Challenge of Crime in a Free
    Society, p. 6 (1967).

Volume I

1. Biderman, Johnson, McIntyre and Weir, Report on a Pilot
    Study in the District of Columbia on Victimization and
    Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement, Field Surveys I,
    President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Adminis-
    tration of Justice, p. 130 (1967).

2. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration
    of Justice, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society,
    p. 18 (1967).

3. Includes 10 percent of the wilful homicides, 50 percent of
    the forcible rapes, 50 percent of the robberies, 20 percent
    of the aggravated assaults based on the SMSA rates, 1968
    Uniform Crime Reports, Table 1. Also includes a rate
    for pursesnatching based on 1968 UCR, Table 18. Percentages
    computed on the basis of various studies. See President's
    Commission, Task Force Report: Assessment, ch. 2, notes
    3, 4, 5 and 7 (1967).

4. See President's Commission, Task Force Report: Assessment,
    ch. 3, pp. 46-48 (1967); 1972 UCR, Table 22. These figures
    differ somewhat from those collected by the Small Business
    Administration study, "Crime Against Small Business" (1969)
    which estimated a national loss to business alone of $77
    million from robbery.

5. See, e.g., President's Commission on Crime in the District
    of Columbia Report, p. 45 (1966).

6. Id. at p. 64.

7. See President's Commission, Task Force Report: Science
    and Technology, ch. 2, "Police Operations--The Apprehension
    Process," p. 12 (1967).

END