

SUMMARY STATEMENT

STUDY TO DEVELOP IMPROVED METHODOLOGIES  
FOR IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING  
CRIME VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS

LEAA Grant No. 75SS-99-6005

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November 1975

34297

READING ROOM

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1. LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING VICTIM/  
OFFENDER DATA SYSTEMS

• FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Contain no data on the nature/volume of un-  
reported crime

Show inconsistent reporting among various juris-  
dictions

Show inconsistent reporting among time periods

• LEAA Victimization Surveys

Contain no information on victimless crimes

Provide no insight on crimes such as shoplifting,  
employee theft, and other white collar offenses  
which are now understood only in terms of aggre-  
gate economic losses

• Federal/State Information Systems

Limited statistically to persons apprehended  
for a specific offense -- SEARCH program,  
federal/state offender-based transaction system,  
and systems on persons incarcerated in prison  
and jail

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- To develop and test methodologies for obtaining reporting on crimes from offenders and members of the general population
- To determine which of the methodologies tested would be compatible with current criminal justice data systems
- To develop verification techniques for the methodologies used
- To collect and identify information on offenders who either have not been arrested or have been arrested for offenses unrelated to the inquiry
- To determine reliability of information on the commission of illegal activities obtained as part of interviews devoted initially to victimization

### 3. ORGANIZATION OF MARI PROJECT

- Developmental Phase  
September 1974 to March 1975
  - Background research
  - Development of preliminary survey instruments and procedures
  - Development of validation procedures
  - Conduct of pretest and evaluation of findings
  - Modification of survey instruments and procedures
  
- Data Collection Phase  
March to June 1975
  - Design of samples
  - Finalization of questionnaires
  - Completion of instructional manuals and training materials
  - Mailing of advance letters to selected households and individuals
  - Training of interviewers
  - Data collection
  
- Data Analysis and Report Preparation Phase  
June to November 1975

#### 4. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

- Structured Questionnaires Administered by Trained Interviewers

Included questions on demographic characteristics, victimization (household sample), illegal activities, and psychological scales

Data collection facilitated by guarantee of anonymity made possible by Section 524(a) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act

- Cash Incentives

Offered to a subsample of arrestees to measure the effect on their willingness to be interviewed and their cooperativeness once consent to be interviewed was obtained

- Card-Sorting Technique

Used to ask potentially sensitive questions on illegal activities

- Veracity Scales

Used to measure reliability of data

Adapted L scale from Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory

Included placebo questions

Included subjective interviewer assessment of respondent truthfulness

## 5. EXAMPLES OF THE UTILITY OF INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

- Identification of more widespread victimless crimes (e.g., drug abuse, gambling) when the participant appears to be the only viable source of information -- to permit policy decisions about reallocation of law enforcement resources.
- Measurement of commonplace offenses such as crimes against business, shoplifting, employee theft, white collar crimes (e.g., fraud, embezzlement) when offender appears to be the only reasonable source of information on the frequency and nature of individual crime incidents

## 6. METHODOLOGICAL FINDINGS

- Once located and consenting to be interviewed, arrestees and household respondents are willing to answer questions related to criminal offenses, victimization, and the measurement of psychological dimensions (veracity, aloneness, resentment).

Interview completion rate for respondents who are located is 76.8 percent for household respondents; 77.5 percent for arrestee respondents

- Addresses from arrest records are unsatisfactory for the purpose of locating respondents
- Offering arrestee respondents a cash incentive as an inducement to participate in the study does improve respondent cooperation, but may or may not improve the quality of data collected
- The general public is willing to answer questions concerning their own offenses, including the frequency with which they have committed a variety of illegal activities. A substantial proportion of both household and arrestee respondents admit they are engaged in criminal activities

### Factors:

Assurances of anonymity

Interview environment created by the interviewer

Training of the interviewer

Possible need of the respondent to admit to illegal activities which may never have been revealed prior to the interview

- Card sorting is an effective and nonthreatening way to encourage respondents to admit to criminal offenses



Methodological Findings, Continued

- More effective procedures are needed to achieve more complete reporting of offenses
- Independent assessments of the veracity of the respondents can be made to provide estimates of the reliability of the data and to group respondents according to the apparent truthfulness of their answers

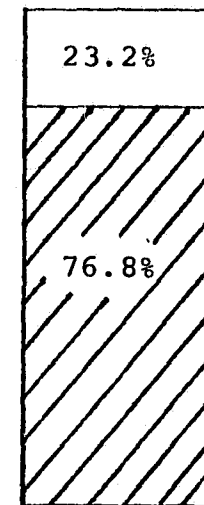
Around 30 percent of those who scored high on a composite index of veracity admitted one or more offenses during the previous 12 months. The comparable proportion for those who scored low on the composite veracity index is six percent

For each offense studied (shoplifting, purchasing stolen property, drug use, and employee theft), those scoring high on veracity were significantly more likely to admit criminal activity than those scoring low on veracity

7. SURVEY COMPLETION RATES

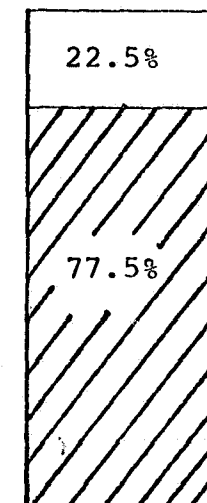
HOUSEHOLD SAMPLE

(n = 233)



ARRESTEE SAMPLE

(n = 80)



Refused Interview



Interviewed

8. COMPARISON BETWEEN 1975 MARI HOUSEHOLD  
SAMPLE AND 1970 CENSUS DATA

Demographic Characteristic	WASHINGTON, D.C.		MARYLAND SUBURBS	
	MARI Sample (n=85)	1970 Census Data	MARI Sample (n=90)	1970 Census Data
% Male	48.2	45.1	47.8	47.4
% Female	51.8	54.9	52.2	52.6
% Black	74.1	66.4	8.9	3.9
% Other	25.9	33.6	91.1	96.1
Median age, in years	33.0	35.9	40.0	37.8
Median years of school	12.0	12.0	12.0+	12.5
Median family income	\$11,000	\$9,583	\$16,000	\$16,710

9. PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS  
 REPORTING OFFENSES BY COMPOSITE  
 VERACITY INDEX (n = 175)

% Reporting	ANY TIME IN PAST		LAST 12 MONTHS	
	Hi Veracity	Lo Veracity	Hi Veracity	Lo Veracity
One or more offenses	43.4	17.7	29.3	6.3
Shoplifting	23.2	10.1	13.1	5.1
Receiving stolen property	16.2	3.8	8.1	1.3
Drug use	25.2	7.6	11.1	3.8
Employee theft	19.2	3.8	19.2	2.5

Note: Differences are statistically significant at the .05 level

Household Findings, Continued

- Different psychological patterns exist for reporting various categories of crime:

Admitters of shoplifting or employee theft are generally resentful toward society and toward commercial and governmental institutions in particular.

Admitters of purchasing stolen property generally evidence a high degree of feeling alone.

Admitters of illegal drug use are more open about themselves.

- Admission of criminal activity is predictable through the psychological dimensions of veracity, resentment, and aloneness. Overall, about 80 percent of admitters can be correctly identified from these traits.

10. SUBSTANTIVE FINDINGS:  
ARRESTEE SAMPLE

- The typical arrestee is involved in far more criminal activity than that for which he is arrested. The most frequently admitted illegal activities are heroin use, shoplifting, carrying a gun, employee theft, trespassing, and receiving stolen property.
- Total admitted illegal activities averaged around 20 per respondent during the previous 12 month period. The frequency of commission of an act was inversely related to the seriousness of the offense.
- The likelihood of being arrested was directly related to the seriousness of the crime. It was negligible for the less serious offenses.

ARREST RATIO CHARACTERIZED BY ACTIVITY

Illegal Activity	Arrest Ratio (Admitted Crimes Per Arrest)
Heroin use	1,438.0
Destroying property	340.0
Receiving stolen property	281.0
Carrying a gun	267.0
Trespassing	216.3
Shoplifting	148.3
Burglary	10.0
Assault	7.6
Robbery	2.5

- Although the veracity ratings of arrestees were relatively low on the average, there was some evidence that those with higher ratings were more likely to admit offenses.

11. SUBSTANTIVE FINDINGS:  
HOUSEHOLD SAMPLE

- About one-third of those interviewed reported the commission of one or more offenses in the past. Close to 20 percent admitted illegal activities in the previous 12 months.

- Reporting of offenses was significantly higher for:

Inner-city residents	vs.	Suburbanites
Men	vs.	Women
Young persons	vs.	Middle or older age groups

- Of the offenses covered, the most frequently reported were:

	% Admitting At Any Time In The Past	% Admitting In Previous 12 Months
Shoplifting	17.4	9.6
Purchase of stolen property	17.4	7.9
Illegal drug use	12.4	11.8
Employee theft	10.7	5.1

- Household respondents ranked considerably higher on all veracity scales than arrestee respondents.
- Those household respondents ranking high on a composite veracity index were far more likely to admit offenses of all types than were those ranking low on the veracity index.

12. PERCENT OF CORRECT IDENTIFICATION OF ADMITTERS TO THE TARGET CRIME, NON-ADMITTERS, AND ADMITTERS TO OTHER CRIMES

Weighted Psychological Criteria	Admitters	Non-Admitters	Admitters to Other Crimes
SHOPLIFTING			
Greater than criteria	81%	25%	57%
Less than criteria	19	75	43
EMPLOYEE THEFT			
Greater than criteria	79%	21%	43%
Less than criteria	21	79	57
RECEIVING STOLEN PROPERTY			
Greater than criteria	77%	21%	48%
Less than criteria	23	79	52



### 13. EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS OF THE SELF-REPORTING METHODOLOGY

- National replication study to obtain information on criminal activity within the general population (LEAA).
- Determination of statistics and psychology of crimes against business such as shoplifting, employee theft, and white collar crimes (embezzlement, fraud, political violations (LEAA, U.S. Chamber of Commerce)).
- Determination of statistics and psychology of crimes against government personnel and property (General Services Administration).
- Measurement of the impact of illegal aliens on the total citizenry (Immigration and Naturalization Service).
- Application of self-reporting methodology to assess problems related to air traffic control (Civil Aeronautics Board).
- Identification of the source of interjurisdictional crime, such as in and around American Indian reservations or near city/county or state/state lines, in order to more effectively allocate resources related to planning and coordination responsibilities.

**END**

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