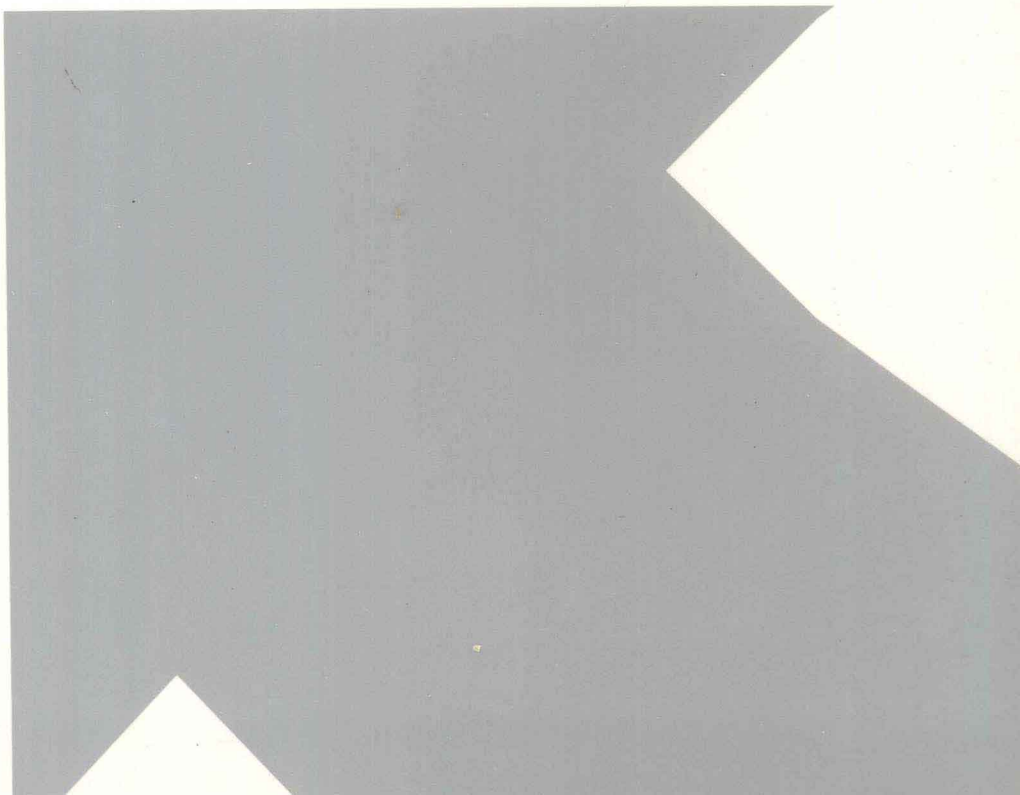


Crime Prevention

Approaches, Practices and Evaluations

Third Edition

Steven P. Lab



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Steven P. Lab
Bowling Green State University



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Crime Prevention: Approaches, Practices and Evaluations, Third Edition

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To
Susan and Danielle
who make it all worthwhile

Preface

I have found that making revisions is harder than writing the initial version of a text (at least for me). This challenge comes from a wide array of sources. First, there are always new ideas and research arising that need to be incorporated into the existing body of knowledge. Sometimes this is a straightforward process and simply means adding material to existing discussions. Other times there is a need for a totally new direction. Both of these accommodations appear in this text. A second challenge is in trying to add material without significantly lengthening the presentation, and simultaneously not losing or missing important information. When faced with the prospect of cutting material just to maintain length, I opted to let the pages grow. I feel the tradeoff is justified. Third, it is difficult to make sweeping changes in a product that is doing well and is receiving positive feedback. There is always the fear that the changes will detract from, rather than enhance, the material. In making the changes, I have relied on the comments and suggestions made by many different individuals. This help is invaluable and I invite continued input about the book. Despite my reliance on input from others, the changes that have been made are solely my choice and I will accept the blame if my decisions were wrong. The final product you now hold maintains the orientation I set in earlier editions of this book. Specifically, my intent is to raise people's awareness of crime prevention approaches and direct their attention to the promises and shortcomings of those activities. Individuals who are interested in learning exactly "how to" implement various preventive approaches should seek out other materials that take such an approach.

As always, there are many people who deserve thanks for their assistance with this project. A good deal of thanks must go to my colleagues in the field for their research, comments, ideas, insight, and friendship. You make this project (and many others) easier and a whole lot more fun. Special thanks goes to the staff at Anderson for their help, encouragement, and (oh yes!) friendly badgering to get the project done. I must also recognize the support of the people at Bowling Green State University, particularly my dean, who let me "disappear" to my home office so that I can get some uninterrupted time to work. Finally, and most importantly, I thank my family for the support and understanding that only they can give.

S.P.L.

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Chapter 1

Crime and the Fear of Crime

Crime remains an indisputable fact of life for many, if not most, members of modern society. Crime has continued to increase or remain at unacceptably high levels, regardless of whether crime is measured by official records or victimization surveys. Most individuals turn to society for help in alleviating crime and their fear of crime. Society, in turn, has established the criminal justice system, with its many components, to combat the crime problem. The ability of the criminal justice system to single-handedly alleviate crime in society has been seriously questioned by both proponents and opponents. One has only to look at the alarming trend in crime rates over the past 30 years to observe the failure of the formal criminal justice system to do little more than process law violators and victims through a confusing maze of legal procedures. Society clearly needs to pursue alternate means of preventing crime.

It is important to place the need and evaluation of crime prevention within a working framework. The first issue that needs to be addressed involves the measures and amount of crime in society. The numerical level of crime, however, should not be the only concern of crime prevention programs. Often the “fear of crime” poses a greater, more far-reaching problem for society and its members. Demonstrating a need for crime prevention is not hard to accomplish when you consider the levels of crime and fear in society. Both crime and fear of crime are addressed in this chapter as a basis for understanding and exploring crime prevention strategies.

The Problem of Crime in Society

The magnitude of the crime problem can be evaluated using a variety of approaches. The use of official crime statistics, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s *Uniform Crime Reports*, provides a view of crime from the standpoint of what the formal criminal justice system must handle. Many critics argue that this provides an inaccurate and incomplete analysis of the true levels of crime in society. These individuals point to the results of victimization surveys as a basis for their argument.

Official Measures of Crime

The FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR) is the most widely used and cited official measure of crime in the United States. The UCR represents the number of criminal offenses known to the police. The reported crime rate reflects only the offenses known as *Part I crimes* (violent crimes: murder, rape, robbery, and assault; property crimes: burglary, larceny, auto theft, and arson). A host of other offenses (i.e., fraud, kidnapping, and drug offenses), known as *Part II offenses*, are not included in the computations and reported crime rates. The resulting crime rates, therefore, reflect only a portion of the offenses with which the formal criminal justice system comes into contact.

Other official crime measures include criminal court filings, conviction records, and jail populations. Each of these alternate measures provides an increasingly narrower view of the level of crime. The police are often referred to as the *gatekeepers* of the criminal justice system. This means that they control, to a large extent, the numbers and types of problems handled by latter stages of the system. Few offenders or cases enter the criminal justice system without first being processed by the police. It is the police who make the decision to arrest, file reports, and refer the cases to the prosecutor and, subsequently, to the court and correctional arenas. Any measure of crime based on system processing after the police stage will reveal smaller numbers of offenses and offenders than the UCR. The police figures appearing in the UCR are the most inclusive of all official measures. Our interest in the official level of crime in society, therefore, is best indicated by the UCR.

According to the UCR, crime in the United States rose a great deal in the 1960s and 1970s, leveled off in the early 1980s, rose in the early 1990s, and has started to fall again in recent years. The crime rate in 1960 was 1,887.2 offenses per 100,000 population. With a single exception (1972), this rate continuously increased to a rate of 5,287.3 in 1976. The crime rate fluctuated in the late 1970s, reached a peak in 1980, and decreased to 5,031.3 in 1984. From 1984 to 1991, the rate again increased to 5,897.8 (Maguire and Pastore, 1995). Modest decreases have appeared since 1991. The 1993 UCR reveals more than 14 million crimes in the United States. Violent crimes make up almost two million of the total reported crimes (Maguire and Pastore, 1995).

The UCR comes under fire from a variety of sources over the methods of data collection used and the meaning of the crime rate figures (see O'Brien, 1985). Foremost among the concerns for our discussion is the question of whether the reported UCR crime rate is an accurate depiction of the amount of crime in society. That is, do the police records and reports provide an unbiased, complete view of crime in society? Popular wisdom would answer this question with a resounding "No!" Examination of the UCR reveals three major points at which the UCR can be inaccurately adjusted.

First, the UCR is a voluntary system of data collection. It is possible for police departments to adjust their figures in order to enhance the image of their operation and/or their jurisdiction. The police operate within a political

framework similar to any other governmental organization. Funding is based on service delivery, and police productivity is often measured by the crime figures that they report (O'Brien, 1985). As a result, it may be in the best interests of the department to alter its collection and reporting practices in order to make itself look better. Interestingly, this may be accomplished through both increasing and decreasing the level of crime. For example, an increase in the reported crime rate may be touted as an indication of better police work and improved police effectiveness. This would be especially true if the police had previously announced a "crackdown" on a selected crime and then wished to demonstrate their success. Similarly, a decrease in the level of crime may be pointed to as deterrence brought on by improved police performance.

A second major problem with the UCR involves the ability of individual police officers to adjust the crime rate. Any officer can refrain from making an arrest or a formal report on an incident. Such activity may allow the officer to deflect minor or unimportant events away from an already overburdened criminal justice system. More importantly, however, such discretion factors into a distorted and underrepresented crime rate. Departmental policies may also contribute to this shift in reported crimes. Administrative procedures concerning the handling of crimes may alter the level of reported offenses. McCleary et al. (1982) found that, by requiring all reported cases of burglary to be investigated by detectives, the number of officially recorded burglaries showed an immediate drop. This was attributable to the detectives reclassifying offenses that were not burglaries (i.e., thefts) to their correct UCR categories. Less experienced officers who previously handled these offenses elevated many instances to the burglary category. It is clear that the UCR crime rates are subject to unintentional, as well as intentional, manipulation.

The third criticism of the UCR revolves around the claim that many offenses are not brought to the attention of the police. The police are a reactive force. This means that they primarily respond to calls for service. Despite their patrol function, little crime is encountered directly by the police. They must rely on victims and witnesses to call them for help. The absence of such calls when offenses do occur translates into crimes that are not known to the police and that do not become part of official crime statistics. The reasons some individuals do not report crimes to the police will be explored below. The fact that there is much unreported crime, along with the potential problems of data collection, have prompted many individuals to rely on victimization surveys in order to assess the extent of the crime problem.

Measuring Victimization

Victimization surveys are exactly what they sound like. They are surveys of the population carried out to measure the level of criminal victimization in society. This form of crime measurement experienced great growth in the late 1960s and continues today through a variety of ongoing social surveys. The

surveys typically inquire about the victimization experiences of the subject or his or her household over a specified period (usually the preceding six months or year). Such surveys have been lauded as a more accurate reading of crime in society because they circumvent the problems of official records and they uncover crimes that are not reported to the police.

Perhaps the best known victimization survey is the *National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCVS). The NCVS (formerly the National Crime Survey) was initiated in 1972 and consists of a panel survey of households drawn from across the United States. In a *panel survey*, the same subjects (in this case addresses) are surveyed repeatedly over a period of time. The NCVS contacts the same household every six months for a period of three years, with one-sixth of the sample dropping out and being replaced every six months. Interviewers attempt to talk with every household member age 12 and older. While the NCVS has undergone considerable change in data collection methods in recent years, including the use of computer-aided interviewing and changes in preliminary screen questions, the findings relative to official statistics have remained fairly stable.

Consistent with UCR figures, victimization surveys reveal increasing levels of crime throughout the 1970s. The National Crime Victimization Survey estimates that there were 35,646,755 offenses in 1973. This number rose to 41,267,496 in 1981. A steady decline since 1981 resulted in an estimated 35,459,649 offenses in 1984 (Flanagan and McGarrell, 1986). These figures have risen since 1984 and stand at 43,547,400 for 1993 (Maguire and Pastore, 1995).

Comparison of victimization survey results to UCR figures presents a consistent pattern of underreporting by the official data sources. In one of the earliest and most well-known comparisons of victimization and UCR data, Ennis (1967) finds that the victimization figures show about twice as much crime as that found in the comparison UCR data. More recently, the 1993 NCVS uncovered 43,547,400 crimes of which an estimated 14,141,000 or 32.5 percent were known by the police (Maguire and Pastore, 1995). This means that the UCR reflects roughly one-third of the crimes committed.

Individual offenses and offense categories display varying amounts of discrepancy between the two types of crime measures. According to the 1993 NCVS, victims reported only 41 percent of the violent personal crimes, 25.6 percent of the theft victimizations, and 48.9 percent of the household burglary offenses to the police. While victim figures are much greater for these broad categories of offenses, it is important to note that some crimes are not considered in the NCVS and others find comparable levels in official and victimization data. For example, the UCR typically finds slightly higher levels of auto theft than the victim surveys. Victims of auto theft are highly likely to alert the police about the crime because insurance companies require victims to file police reports before a claim can be paid. At the same time, homicides would not be uncovered in surveys of personal or household victimization if the victim lived alone. This offense comes to the attention of the police due to the existence of a body as a result of the crime. The remaining Part I offenses

exhibit victimization levels ranging from 1.5 times higher than UCR figures (robbery) to 3.7 times higher (rape) (Ennis, 1967). These figures are comparable to those found in many victimization surveys.

Victimization surveys clearly uncover much more crime than does the UCR. Many victims and witnesses decide not to call the police in the aftermath of offenses. The reasons for this non-reporting are many and revolve around the two issues of what the system can do for the individual and what costs are incurred by reporting the offense. The Milwaukee Victim/Witness Project investigated these two areas through a survey of 1,775 victims and 1,225 witnesses (Knudten et al., 1977). The first set of findings revealed that respondents see little to gain in calling the police. The second issue, dealing with costs to the victim/witness in reporting crime, uncovered a variety of system-related costs including lost time from work, lost income, uncomfortable surroundings, a lack of knowledge about what to do, and a general sense of non-caring on the part of the system (Knudten et al., 1977). The finding that individuals refrain from reporting crimes symbolizes a rational, cost-benefit analysis on the part of the victim or witness. This process leads to official crime records far below the level of actual victimization.

Victimization studies are not without their critics and shortcomings. Among the many problems inherent in the surveys are the lack of knowledge of what constitutes various crimes on the part of respondents, problems of respondent recall, and issues of question wording. These issues are well documented elsewhere (see O'Brien, 1985) and will not be considered here. The magnitude of the difference between official and victimization figures, however, is too large to be offset solely by the problems of victim surveys. There is little question that victim surveys uncover more crime than official measures.

Clearly, both official measures of crime and victimization surveys suffer from a variety of shortcomings. The exact nature and level of crime in society is unknown. Official UCR figures reveal a staggering amount of crime. More than doubling those numbers to account for unreported offenses, as victimization figures would suggest, compounds the problem.

The level of crime, whether at its peak or more moderate numbers, exceeds the limits of what the criminal justice system can hope to handle. The system is already overburdened and often simply processes people through the maze of legal requirements without having an impact on the crime rate. A quick comparison of UCR data to the number of prisoners in state and federal institutions shows that incarceration is increasing faster than the official crime data. In both 1970 and 1980, the number of incarcerated prisoners (196,429 and 315,974, respectively) represented roughly 2.3 percent of the number of known index offenses (8,098,000 and 13,408,300) (Maguire and Pastore, 1995). In 1990, however, the number of prisoners (739,980) was approximately 5.1 percent of the total UCR index crime counts (14,475,600) (Maguire and Pastore, 1995). Further increases in incarceration are seen in 1993 when incarceration figures (910,080) represent 6.4 percent of the UCR index figures (14,141,000) (Maguire and Pastore, 1995). Adjusting the official

figures of known crime to account for unreported offenses only exacerbates the view of an ineffective criminal justice system. Clearly, simply increasing the number of persons being incarcerated has not abated the growth of crime.

Viewing criminal justice system productivity by arrests, incarceration, probation, or other such indicators, unfortunately, is an after-the-fact approach to crime. The system is dealing with crimes that have already been committed. There is little, if any, evidence to show that the system actually stops crime before it occurs. To further compound the problem of these levels of “actual crime” in society, one needs only to examine the perceived levels of crime and the resultant fear of many members of society.

The Fear of Crime

Further consideration can be given to the level of crime as it is perceived by societal members. The “fear of crime” presents a view of criminal victimization which, although not necessarily real, forms the basis for daily “inactivity” and anxiety. Because fear reduction is an important component of many crime prevention programs, it is important to understand the extent of fear and issues related to measuring and understanding fear.

Defining and Measuring Fear

Fear of crime emerged as a social issue in the mid-1960s and soon became a permanent part of criminological research, largely due to the growth of surveys focusing on crime and victimization. What exactly is fear and how do we measure it? While these are key questions, there are no universally accepted answers to them. Perhaps the most recognized work on these issues is that of Kenneth Ferraro and his associates. Ferraro (1995) defines *fear* as

an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime. This definition of fear implies that some recognition of potential danger, what we may call perceived risk, is necessary to evoke fear (p. 8).

While this definition requires an emotional response, the fear may manifest itself in various ways depending on the person involved and the basis for his or her anxiety. Some individuals fear walking on the streets in their neighborhood while others fear physical attack within their own home. As a result, there may be a shift in physical functioning such as high blood pressure and rapid heartbeat. Alternatively, the individual may similarly alter his or her attitudes about walking alone in certain places or avoiding various activities. To a great extent, the source of the fear for the individual will determine the