

Research and program evaluation in Illinois: Studies on drug abuse and violent crime

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An Evaluation of the Homicide and Violent Crime Strike Force Program in Madison and St. Clair Counties

April 1998

Prepared by
Center for Legal Studies
University of Illinois at Springfield

Evaluation funded by
Illinois Criminal Justice
Information Authority

Jim Edgar, Governor
Bob Kustra, Lieutenant Governor
Peter B. Bensinger, Chairman

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**ILLINOIS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INFORMATION AUTHORITY**

**AN EVALUATION OF THE HOMICIDE AND VIOLENT
CRIME STRIKE FORCE PROGRAM
IN MADISON AND ST. CLAIR COUNTIES**

**Prepared for the
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority**

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Executive Summary

The Madison and St. Clair County areas have experienced severe levels of violent crime in the last decade. This was most noticeably true in the St. Clair County community of East St. Louis where both high per capita homicide rates and high unsolved homicide figures continued for a number of years. In response to this problem the Homicide and Violent Crime Strike Force (hereinafter referred to as the task force) was created to operate in Madison and St. Clair counties. This study was funded by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority as an implementation and impact evaluation of the task force.

Scope of the Study and Methodology

This study attempted to determine (1) the original goals and objectives of the task force, its initial operating procedures, practices, organizational structure, resource allocation, as well as its internal and external relationships; (2) changes in the structure, procedures, practices, resources, and relationships that occurred over time; (3) the impact of the task force on cases, law enforcement, prosecutors, the judicial system, and the communities in which it operated. In order to determine the initial framework of the task force, its evolution and impact, the research team examined task force program documents and correspondence with ICJIA, interviewed task force supervisors and staff, area law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys and community leaders, and examined data from task force case files.

Task Force Initiation and Design

The task force was designed as a joint venture between the Illinois State Police and the Illinois Attorney General's Office. The State Police provided one supervisor and four case agents. The goal was to select experienced homicide investigators who also had significant ties to the communities in which the task force operated. Another goal of the State Police component was to obtain the involvement of local law enforcement officers, especially East St. Louis Police Department officers. The Attorney General's Office component provided two attorneys, one investigator, and one secretary who served both the State Police and Attorney General's Office components. The Attorney General's Office component was designed to assist local prosecutors in the prosecution of task force cases and give legal advice to the State Police component. It was also anticipated the task force attorneys would occasionally take a lead role in the prosecution of task force cases.

Evolution of the Task Force

The task force experienced relative stability in terms of both resources and personnel. Two State Police case agents and one attorney general's attorney transferred out of the task force. One of the case agents and the attorney left in the first year of task force operations. The other case agent left in 1995. There were no other personnel changes. Resources were also stable and generally deemed adequate for the required job.

There were changes in operating procedures as the two components of the task force adjusted and more clearly defined their roles in the internal operations of the task force. The original design of the task force called for joint decision making between members of both components regarding whether to initiate investigation or proceed further with a case, or ask for an arrest warrant and prosecution of a case. During the first year of task force operations, the process moved away from participation in these decisions by the attorneys in all cases to consultation of the attorneys by the State Police component on an as needed basis. Within the first year of task force operations an understanding was reached whereby the State Police component controlled task force activities up to the point of an arrest and the Attorney General's Office component controlled task force activities after arrest.

In addition to changes in operating procedures, the task force was unable to realize its goal of local law enforcement participation from the East St. Louis Police Department. At the time of task force initiation, the East St. Louis Police Department was under staffed and coping with the demands of high violent crime rates. In addition, the City of East St. Louis was financially unable to contribute resources to replace any officers who might join the task force. On the other hand, the task force was not able to pay the compensation for any local officers who wanted to participate in the task force. The task force was only able to obtain the services of one local officer. An Alton Police Department officer worked with the task force for nine months before he was called back to his local department.

In several instances, interagency relationships changed during the period of task force operations. The relationship between the East St. Louis Police Department and the task force experienced a period of strain. Initial personnel decisions had given the task force a cordial start with local law enforcement in East St. Louis. The State Police case agents had connections to the community and the attorney general's investigator was a retired East St. Louis Police Department detective. The selection of the investigator gave the task force immediate credibility with the East St. Louis Police Department. In addition, the investigator already knew of cases in that community which were good prospects for the task force. Apparently, the initial success of the task force in solving previously unsolved cases was a source of embarrassment for some East St. Louis officers. The task force took steps to increase its outreach and level of communication with the local department and to involve the East St. Louis Police Department in arrests and press conferences relating to task force cases originating from that city. As a result, nearly all persons contacted from the task force and the East St. Louis Police Department felt relationships between the entities returned to a friendly state.

The relationship between the task force and the prosecutor's office in St. Clair County also changed during the period of task force operations. The case agents felt their work with the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Offices had improved the relationship between the prosecutors and the State Police component. The quality of task force investigations and the effort the case agents put into the cases impressed the St. Clair County State's Attorney and his assistants.

The utilization of the task force attorneys by the local prosecutors was less prominent than had been anticipated at the time of task force formation. During the grant period, the Attorney

General's Office component experienced a consistently close relationship with the Madison County State's Attorney. All task force cases prosecuted in Madison County involved the task force attorney as the lead prosecutor. In St. Clair County, the locus of the majority of task force cases, task force attorneys have only been involved in the trial of two cases as the lead prosecutor. Task force attorneys have four additional cases pending in St. Clair County at the time of this report. This is a substantially smaller role for the task force attorneys than what was initially anticipated. However, the relationship remains cordial. It appears the St. Clair County State's Attorney simply prefers to utilize his own staff in prosecuting these cases.

Impact of the Task Force on Cases

During the course of their grant, the task force opened 72 cases. Fifty-seven of the task force cases involved murder and another ten involved assault or battery. The task force experienced great success in obtaining arrests and convictions in these cases. This impact was felt most strongly in St. Clair County which was the source of over ninety percent of the task force cases. In 43 percent of the cases, one or more defendants had either pled guilty or been convicted. In another 11.1 percent of the cases one or more suspects had been arrested but the cases had not progressed beyond that stage. In 16.7 percent of the cases a suspect had been identified but was dead. Of the 33 task force cases which went to trial, thirty resulted in a conviction and three resulted in hung juries.

Impact of the Task Force on Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, and the Judicial System

The task force has assisted local law enforcement by removing 72 serious cases from their caseloads. This has freed local law enforcement to devote more of its limited resources to its current cases. The task force also may have fostered an environment of positive competition wherein local law enforcement is more aggressively pursuing cases to demonstrate its ability to solve these crimes.

Local prosecutors have been assisted by the task force through the infusion of additional experienced personnel to develop homicide and other violent crime prosecutions. This has increased the regions capacity to deal with homicide and violent crime. The success these offices have experienced in prosecuting task force cases has made them more willing to pursue other old cases developed by the task force.

Task force attorneys and a number of the investigators voiced the opinion that task force cases produced heavier sentences than did other cases for comparable offenses. The average length of sentence for task force defendants sentenced to incarceration for first degree murder was 51.7 years. This average can be compared to the average sentence length for comparable Illinois Department of Corrections commitments. During the years 1992-1995, IDOC average sentences for first degree murder ranged from a low of 34.5 years in 1993 to a high of 37.6 years in 1995. While other possible explanations might exist for this disparity, these figures appear to support the perception of task force personnel.

Impact of the Task Force on the Community

East St. Louis, which was the primary focus of task force operations, experienced a significant drop in its homicide rate during the period of task force operations. In both Madison and St. Clair Counties violent crime indicators are down for this same period. Attributing a precise impact on these rates to the task force is not possible. However, all participants and members of the community are convinced the task force along with other anti-crime initiatives and the improved economic picture in East St. Louis have all contributed to this decline in crime.

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I. INTRODUCTION

On May 13, 1996 the Center for Legal Studies and the University of Illinois, Springfield contracted with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) to conduct an implementation and impact evaluation of the Homicide and Violent Crime Strike Force Program in St. Clair and Madison counties (hereinafter referred to as the task force). The evaluation was concluded on March 3, 1997.

The Center for Legal Studies was assisted in the evaluation of the law enforcement component of the task force by William O'Sullivan, L. Robert Magnusen, and George Sweat, former law enforcement professionals who had served in senior management roles within the Illinois State Police and had conducted major criminal investigations. Dr. Marc Reidel assisted the evaluation team by reviewing the case data coding sheets and the evaluation report. The report of this evaluation includes four parts. First, the evaluation team conducted an evaluation of the process through which the task force was designed and implemented. That process evaluation is divided into a section describing the initiation and design of the task force and a section describing the evolution of the task force since its inception. Second, the evaluation examines the impact of the task force on: the cases handled, law enforcement and the judicial process, and the larger community. Third, by combining the information gained in the implementation and impact evaluations an overall assessment is made of the task force as a viable approach to the investigation and prosecution of homicides and violent crimes. Fourth, the evaluation concludes with recommendations for the future development of the task force in Madison and St. Clair counties and for those interested in starting similar task forces elsewhere.

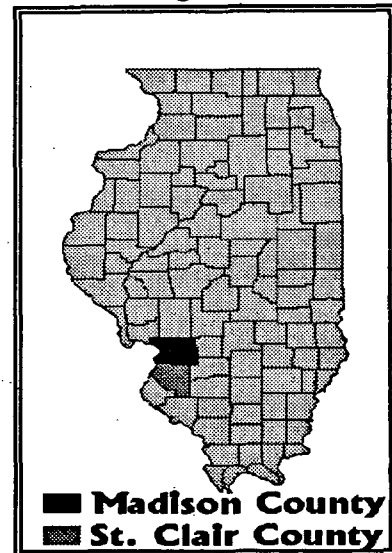
II. PROGRAM SETTING

A. Locale and Population

The Illinois counties of St. Clair and Madison are located in the southwestern section of the state. They share a western border with Missouri and are situated along the Mississippi River (see Figure 1). Within St. Clair County, Belleville is the largest city, serves as the county seat, and is the site of the St. Clair County courthouse. Other populous cities within that county include East St. Louis, Collinsville,¹ Fairview Heights, O'Fallon, and Cahokia. Together these cities comprise more than 50 percent of the St. Clair County population (see Figure 2).

Alton is the most populated city within Madison County, while the county seat, and site of one of three Madison County courthouses, is Edwardsville. Together, these cities, along with Collinsville, Wood River, Godfrey, Nameoki, and Granite City comprise approximately two-thirds of the Madison County population. As illustrated in Figure 3, all of these cities are located in the western portion of the county.

Figure 1



¹ The city of Collinsville is split between the Illinois counties of St. Clair and Madison.

Figure 2

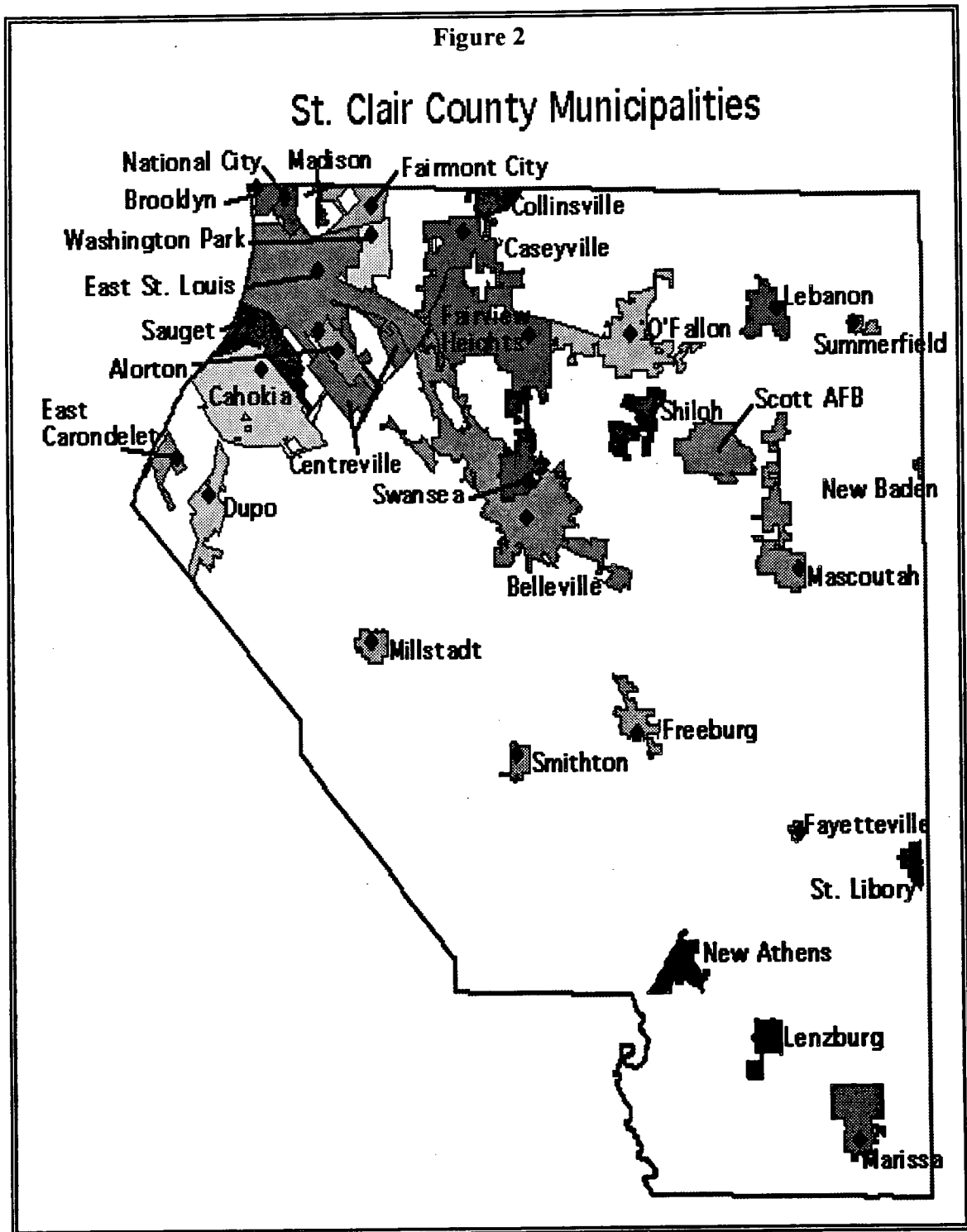
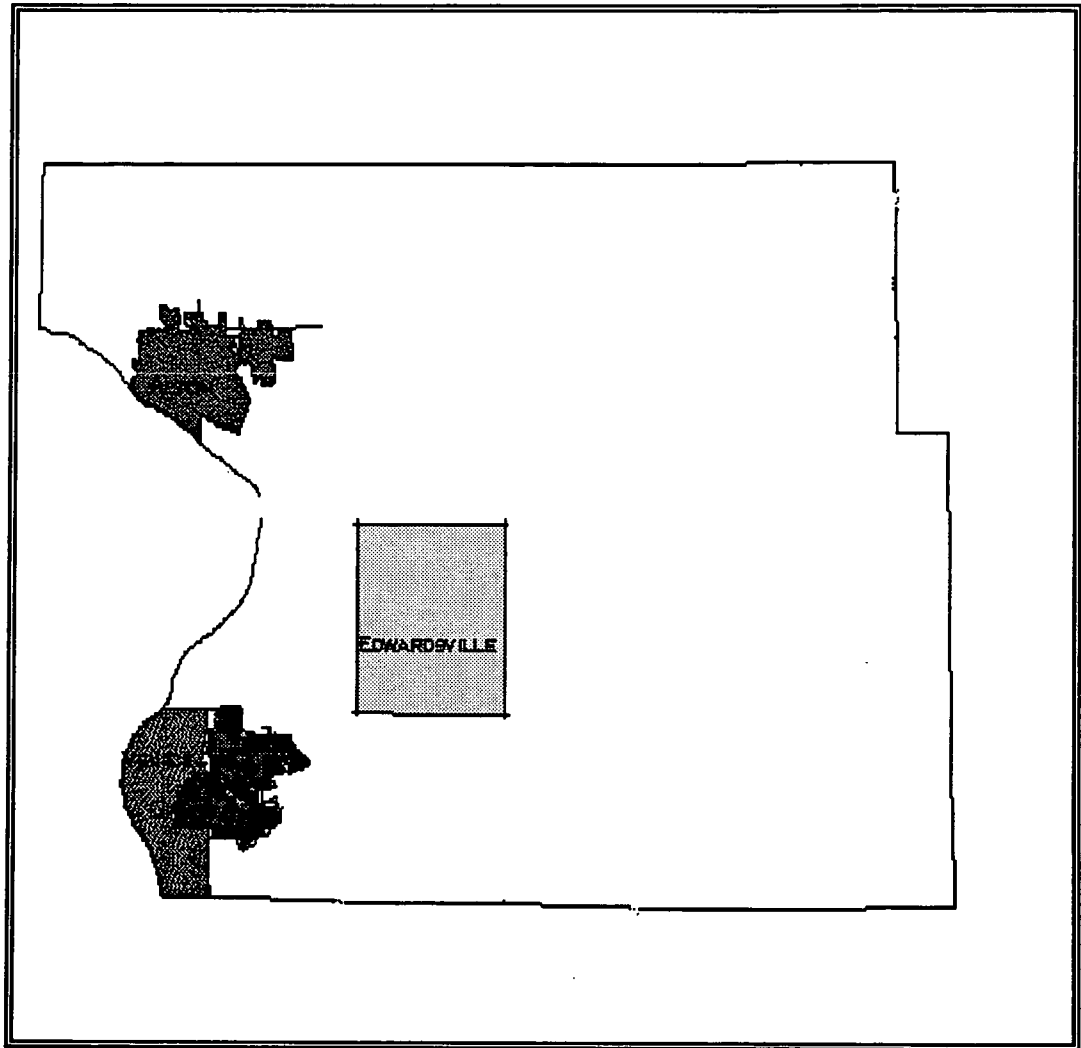


Figure 3

Madison County Municipalities



The 1992 census population for Madison and St. Clair counties combined was approximately 516,000 persons. At that time, St. Clair County, with a population of 263,124 persons, was the sixth most populous county in the State, while Madison County, with a population of 253,260, ranked eighth. Since 1980, the population of St. Clair County has declined, while the population of Madison County has increased. However, based on projections prepared by the Illinois Bureau of the Budget, by the year 2020, the population of St. Clair County should increase to more than 273,000 persons, while Madison's population should fall beneath 245,000 (Illinois Statistical Abstract: 1995). No reasons were included regarding why this decline in population is projected.

With respect to demographics, over two-thirds of all persons residing in St. Clair County are white, as are over 90 percent of those in Madison County (see Table 1). Over the past thirty years, both counties experienced increases in their non-white populations. In 1960, 18.2 percent of the St. Clair County population was black, while by 1980, blacks comprised almost 30 percent of that population. During that same period, the percentage of the population comprised of other racial categories increased from 0.1 percent to 1.1 percent (<http://govinfo.kerr.orst.edu>).

Table 1: Racial Identification of St. Clair and Madison County Populations (1960-1990)

| St. Clair County | White Residents | | Black Residents | | Other Residents | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | Number of Residents | % of Population | Number of Residents | % of Population | Number of Residents | % of Population |
| 1960 population | 214,363 | 81.7 | 47,857 | 18.2 | 289 | 0.1 |
| 1970 population | 220,768 | 77.3 | 63,512 | 22.2 | 1,311 | 0.5 |
| 1980 population | 190,914 | 71.4 | 73,651 | 27.5 | 2,966 | 1.1 |
| 1990 population | 187,866 | 71.5 | 71,275 | 27.1 | 3,711 | 1.4 |

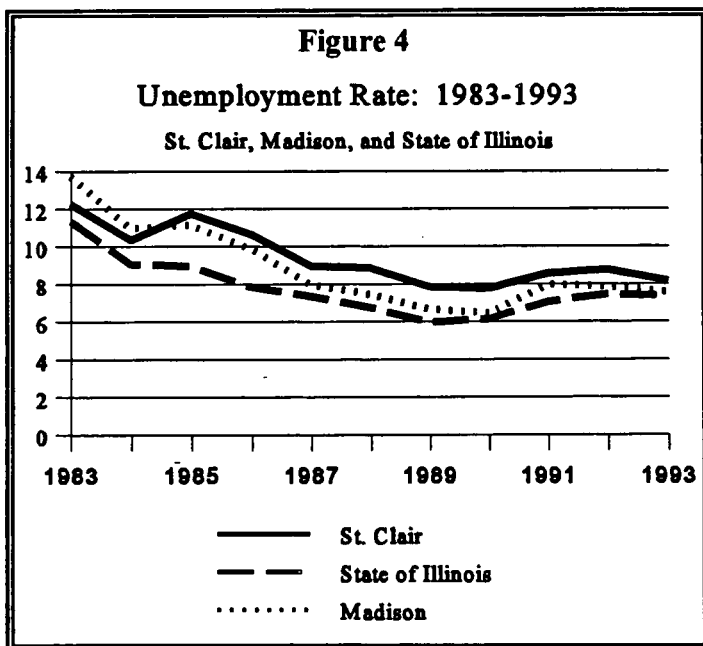
**Table 1 (cont.): Racial Identification of St. Clair and Madison County Populations
(1960-1990)**

| Madison County | White Residents | | Black Residents | | Other Residents | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| | Number of Residents | % of Population | Number of Residents | % of Population | Number of Residents | % of Population |
| 1960 population | 212,630 | 94.6 | 11,933 | 4.8 | 126 | 0.1 |
| 1970 population | 237,231 | 94.5 | 13,053 | 5.2 | 627 | 0.2 |
| 1980 population | 231,232 | 93.4 | 14,236 | 5.8 | 2,193 | 0.9 |
| 1990 population | 230,217 | 92.5 | 16,136 | 6.5 | 2,885 | 1.2 |

Of all adults residing in St. Clair County, the largest cluster (16.8 percent) was between 21 and 24 years of age, and an additional 28.5 percent of the population was under 18 years old. With a somewhat older population, the largest cluster of Madison County residents (16.6 percent) were between the ages of 25 and 34 years old; an additional 7.8 percent were between 35 and 39 years old. Both counties report more female residents than male residents. To illustrate, 52.2 percent of the St. Clair County population were female, as were 52.1 percent of the Madison County population. The majority of St. Clair County residents who were 25 years old or above had either a high school diploma (30.6 percent) or had yet to graduate (27.4 percent). Less than 15 percent of the population held either a Bachelor's degree or graduate or professional degree. While a similar distribution existed in Madison County, a greater percentage of the 25 years old or older population had a high school diploma, 36 percent. However, 24.2 percent had yet to graduate from high school, while, as was the case in St. Clair County, less than 15 percent of the population held either a bachelor's degree or graduate or professional degree (County and City Data Book: 1994).

B. Employment/Income

According to the Regional Economic Information System, St. Clair County residents reported a 1994 per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$18,452, compared to \$20,530 reported by Madison County residents. This placed St. Clair County 52nd (out of 102) in the state, and represented approximately 78.2 percent of the state average (\$23,611), and approximately 85 percent of the national average (\$21,696). Madison County was ranked 22nd in the state, and its PCPI was 87 percent and 94.6 percent of state and national averages, respectively. Since 1983 the PCPI of St. Clair County residents has grown at a rate (4.6 percent) less than the state (5.1 percent) and national (5 percent) averages, thus negatively affecting the rank of the county in the state. That is, in 1983, the PCPI of the County was \$10,968, ranking 37th in the state (REIS, 1994). A similar finding was observed for Madison County. Since 1984 the PCPI of Madison County residents has grown at a rate (4.6 percent) less than the state (5.1 percent) and national (5.0 percent) averages. In 1984, Madison County ranked 17th in the state (govinfo.kerr.orst.edu).



From 1983 to 1993, the rate of unemployment in both counties generally declined. However, as displayed in Figure 4, rates in St. Clair and Madison County remained above those reported for the state (Illinois Statistical Abstract: 1995).

In 1989, residents of St. Clair County reported a median household

income of \$26,498, which was somewhat lower than the state and national medians of \$31,801 and \$29,642, respectively, while Madison County residents reported a median household income of \$29,338. Within both counties, substantial differences in such income were reported when the rates were considered by race. For example, in St. Clair County, the median household income for white residents was \$29,859, while a median household income of \$14,850 was reported for black residents. Similarly, in Madison County, incomes of \$30,171 and \$16,017 were reported for white and black residents, respectively (Illinois Statistical Abstract: 1995).

Of all St. Clair County families, 13.9 percent report an income below the poverty level; 43.4 percent of all single female head-of-household families lived in poverty. Additionally, of all *persons* living in poverty, 26.5 percent were children under 18 years old, and 12.5 percent were adults, 65 years old and older. In Madison County, fewer families (8.5 percent) reported an income below the poverty level. Among households headed by females, 32.9 percent were below the poverty level. Approximately 16 percent of all persons living in poverty are related children less than 18 years old, while 8.8 percent were 65 years old and above (<http://www.rrds.siue.edu>).

Employment in the two counties covered by the Homicide and Violent Crime Task Force was considered on two dimensions: the number of individuals employed by industries operating within either county, and the number of county residents employed.

1. Industries

Across both counties, there were 149,960 individuals employed by industries operating within Madison or St. Clair County. Of these individuals, the majority were employed in services, retail, or manufacturing (<http://www/census.gov>).

St. Clair County census data indicate there were 70,472 individuals employed by industries operating within the county (see Table 2). It is interesting to note that the two industries employing the greatest number of individuals (services and retail trade) also reported the lowest average yearly salaries, while one of the industries employing the fewest, mining, had the highest average salary (<http://www/census.gov>).

Table 2: 1994 County Business Patterns: Persons Employed in St. Clair County

| Industry Type | Examples | Number of Employees | Average Yearly Salary |
|---|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Agricultural Services fishing and forestry | landscaping crop services | 381 | \$17,635 |
| Mining | coal mining oil and gas extraction | 746 | \$44,387 |
| Construction | general contractors heavy construction | 3,479 | \$30,570 |
| Manufacturing | transportation equipment apparel | 7,504 | \$30,587 |
| Transportation/ public utilities | passenger transit trucking | 4,643 | \$27,930 |
| Wholesale trade | durable goods nondurable goods | 3,013 | \$25,660 |
| Retail trade | general merchandise service stations | 19,290 | \$11,840 |
| Finance, insurance, real estate | depository institutions insurance carriers | 3,433 | \$23,568 |
| Services | hotels personal services | 27,918 | \$20,295 |
| Unclassified establishments | -- | 65 | -- |

Data indicate there were approximately 79,488 persons employed by industries operating in Madison County. As detailed in Table 3, the majority of these persons were employed in service and manufacturing industries. However, while service workers report one of the lowest average yearly salaries (\$18,672), those employed in manufacturing industries operating in Madison County earned above-average salaries (\$37,936) (<http://www.census.gov>).

Table 3: 1994 County Business Patterns: Persons Employed in Madison County

| Industry Type | Examples | Number of Employees | Average Yearly Salary |
|---|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Agricultural services fishing and forestry | landscaping crop services | 360 | \$18,102 |
| Mining | coal mining oil and gas extraction | 52 | \$22,212 |
| Construction | general contractors heavy construction | 4,894 | \$29,122 |
| Manufacturing | transportation equipment apparel | 20,118 | \$37,936 |
| Transportation/ public utilities | passenger transit trucking | 4,213 | \$29,125 |
| Wholesale trade | durable goods nondurable goods | 3,000 | \$28,737 |
| Retail trade | general merchandise service stations | 18,319 | \$11,610 |
| Finance, insurance, real estate | depository institutions insurance carriers | 3,592 | \$21,924 |
| Services | hotels personal services | 24,900 | \$18,672 |
| Unclassified establishments | -- | 40 | \$8,875 |

2. Residents Employed

As stated previously, not all individuals resided in the counties where they worked nor did all residents of either county work in local industries. Based on data collected by the U.S. Census,

105,544 St. Clair County residents were identified as part of the employed civilian labor force, as were 113,802 Madison County residents. Of St. Clair County residents, the greatest percent were employed in wholesale and retail trade industries (22.5 percent), followed by manufacturing trade (14 percent) and health services (10.7 percent). A similar trend was observed in Madison County. That is, the majority of residents were employed in wholesale and retail trade industries (21.9 percent), followed by manufacturing (21.3 percent) and health services (8.6 percent) (County and City Data Book: 1994). No information regarding average salaries for individuals employed by these industries was available.

C. Prevalence of Crime

There are two indicators commonly used to report levels of crime and subsequent police response: the number of crimes known to law enforcement as having occurred within a particular jurisdiction, and the number of arrests made. Both of these dimensions were considered for the jurisdictional area covered by the Homicide and Violent Crime Task Force.

1. Crimes Known to Police

During 1991, 25,504 serious crimes² were known to police working in St. Clair and Madison Counties as having occurred within their jurisdictions. Of these, 14.2 percent were violent and 85.8 percent were property related (IUCR data).

² Serious crimes include those for which information is collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation via the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting Program (IUCR). These offenses are identified as either violent Index or property Index crimes. Violent Index crimes include murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property Index crimes include burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson. Data specific for Illinois are collected via the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting Program (IUCR). Also, incidents of "forcible rape" are included within Illinois statutory language involving criminal sexual assault and/or aggravated criminal sexual assault.

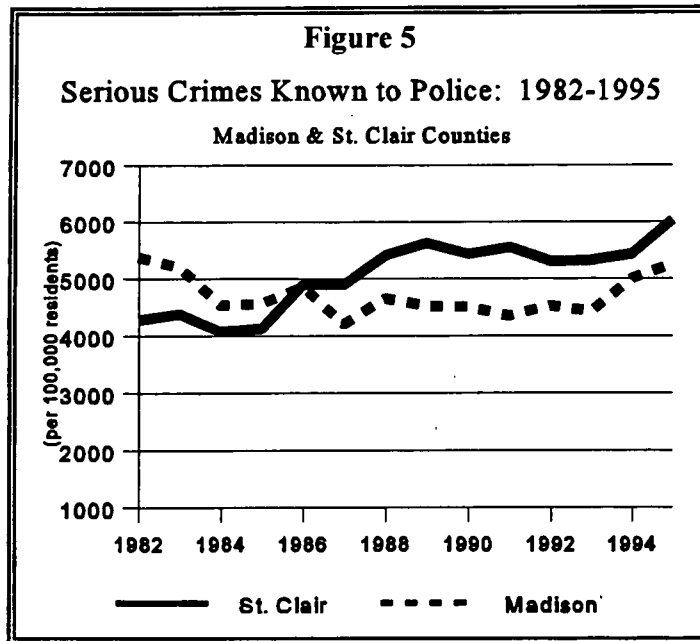
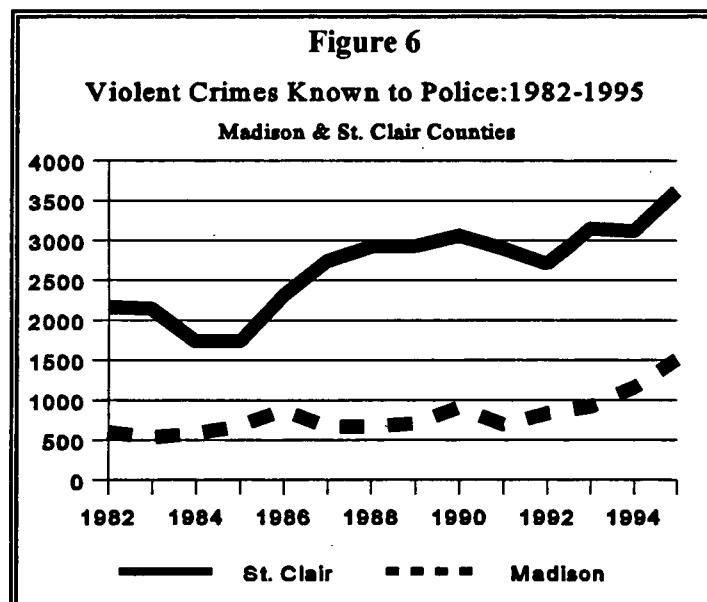


Figure 5 displays the number of serious crimes known to law enforcement that occurred in St. Clair and Madison Counties since 1982, while controlling for population size. As illustrated, a sizable increase in the number of serious crimes known to law enforcement was observed in St. Clair County (40.6 percent), while Madison County experienced a decline. However, while crimes known stabilized between 1988 and 1992, since 1993 each county has experienced

moderate increases in the number of serious crimes known to law enforcement (IUCR data).

Of the eight offenses which comprise serious crimes as defined by the FBI, four are sub-categorized as violent in nature (i.e., murder/ nonnegligent manslaughter, criminal sexual assault,



robbery, and aggravated assault), and are the types of crimes investigated by the Homicide and Violent Crime Task Force.

Figure 6 illustrates the incidence of violent crimes known to police as having occurred within Madison or St. Clair Counties from 1981 to 1995. The majority of such crimes occurred in St.

Clair County; on average, less than 20 percent of all violent crimes known to police over this ten-year time frame were from Madison County (IUCR data).

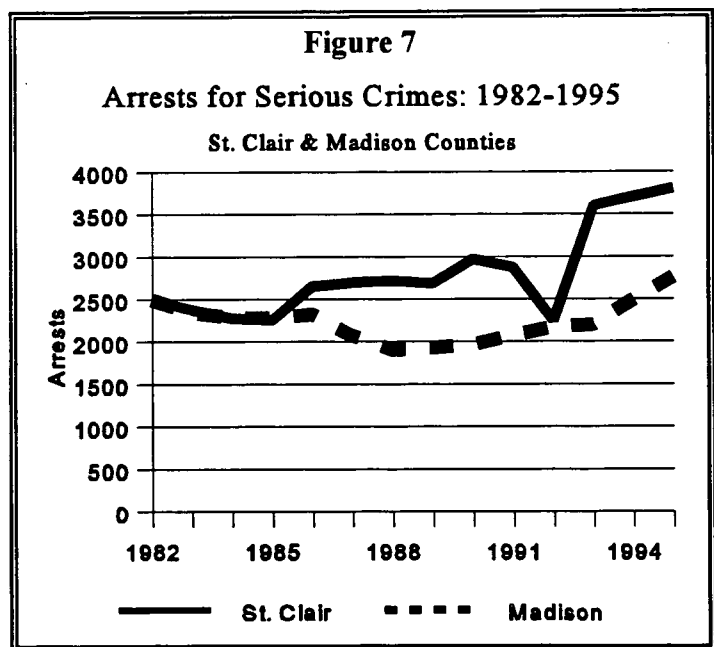
2. Arrests Made by Police

The number of arrests made is a second indicator of law enforcement workload, and thus the magnitude of illegal activity occurring in a given jurisdiction. Based on

IUCR data, law enforcement agencies within St. Clair and Madison counties have arrested an average of 5,073 individuals each year for serious crimes between 1982 and 1995. As displayed in Figure 7, the majority of individuals arrested each year were from St. Clair County. Given that more such crimes are known to have been committed in St. Clair County (as discussed previously), a higher number of arrests

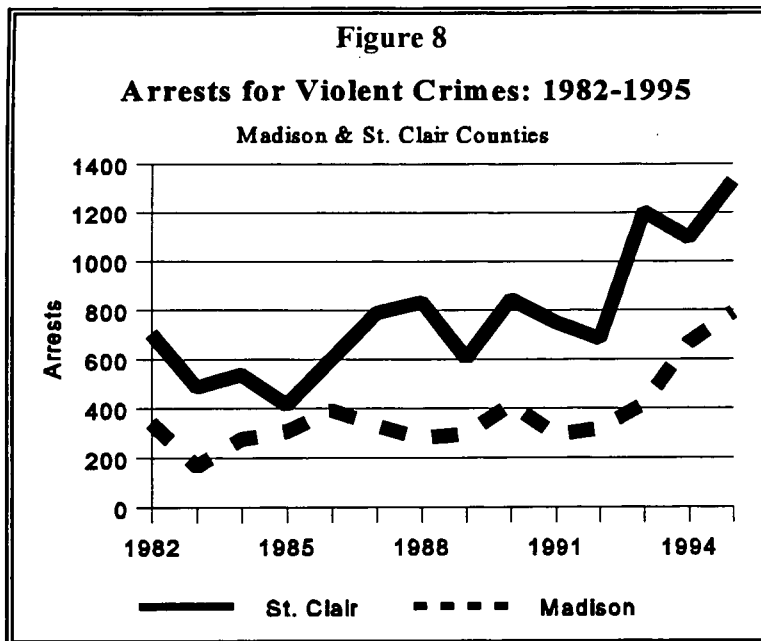
are expected. Although arrests in St. Clair County were down in 1992, since that year, both counties have experienced increases in arrests for serious crimes.

Similar findings were revealed when only violent crime arrests were considered. That is, while the two counties averaged 1,163 arrests



involving violent crimes each year, the majority of such arrests originated in St. Clair County.

During the past 14 years, a gradual increase in arrests has been observed in both counties, with marked increases occurring recently (see Figure 8). Since 1992, arrests in both counties have

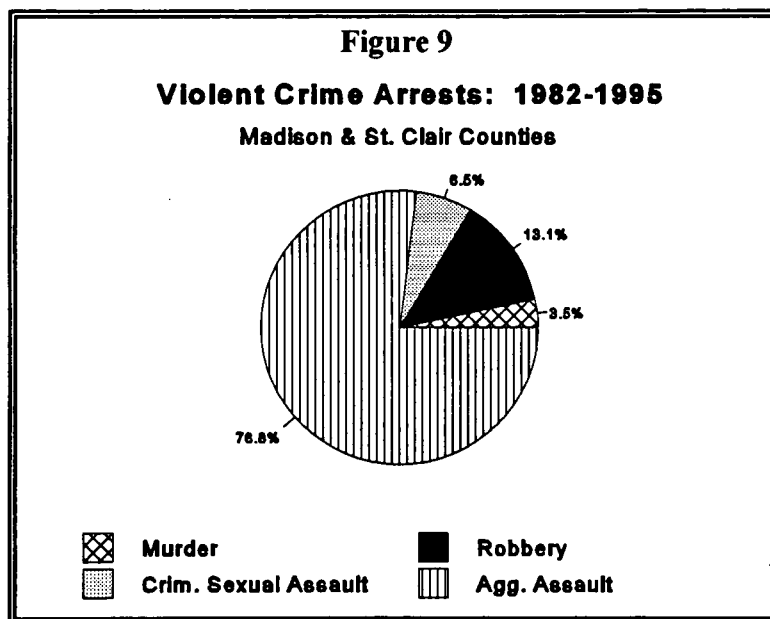


increased over 90 percent (93.9 percent in St. Clair County and 147.2 percent in Madison County).

Four crimes comprise the IUCR violent crime related index: murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Of these offenses, aggravated assault and robbery have had the

greatest impact on total IUCR violent crime arrests in Madison and St. Clair Counties (Figure 9).

When considering the counties separately, Madison County reported a higher incidence of arrests for criminal sexual assault, while St. Clair County reported higher numbers of arrests for murder, robbery, and aggravated assault. For example, over the past 14 years, an average of 28.5



individuals are arrested each year by St. Clair County law enforcement for murder; approximately one-half that amount (14.6) are arrested by Madison County law enforcement on like charges (see Table 4).

Table 4: Average Number of Individuals Arrested (1982-1995)

| County | Murder | Criminal Sexual Assault | Robbery | Agg. Assault |
|------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Madison | 14.6 | 41.9 | 62.4 | 180.2 |
| St. Clair | 28.5 | 34.2 | 89.6 | 630.2 |

D. Political, Social and Economic Climate

During the years 1992 through 1996, the territory covered by the Homicide and Violent Crime Task Force weathered congressional re-districting, educational inadequacies, loss of industry, and much political scandal. However, they also celebrated millions of dollars in revenue generated by their most impoverished city, East St. Louis, and a new railway system that linked St. Clair County with downtown St. Louis and the St. Louis airport. Each of these factors may have impacted the ease with which the task force was able to interact with the communities and their political leaders. Also during these years, other law enforcement initiatives operating throughout the area may have affected the impact of the task force in realizing its goals.

1. Congressional Changes

Prior to the redistricting that occurred subsequent to the 1990 U.S. Census, most of Madison and St. Clair Counties were included in the historically Democratic 21st Congressional District. Redistricting placed both counties into the 12th Democratic Congressional District, while stretching the District south to include parts of Southern Illinois, Carbondale and Cairo. Congressperson Jerry Costello has represented Madison and St. Clair Counties since 1988, replacing the late Mel Price who had been in office for 44 years until his death. Costello, described as “well connected” and “district minded,” enjoys the support of organized labor and

has promoted local projects, such as the new civilian/military airport located at Scott Air Force Base and railway connection between St. Clair County and St. Louis, as well as the new Clark bridge in Madison County (Barone, Ujifusa, & Cohen, 1996).

In 1991, Illinois lawmakers reconfigured state election districts in which boundaries were based on the population's racial composition. With the influx of African-American residents into the Cahokia area, the commission re-drew the new map to allow the minority population in that area to join the predominately African-American communities of the former 113th legislative district led by Democratic Representative Wyvetter Younge, who had been in office since 1975. Younge's 113th District also was extended to the north to represent Madison County's black population. The new configuration placed Younge and St. Clair County in the 114th Congressional District, an area represented by Monroe Flinn, a 23-year veteran in the Illinois House at the time of the redistricting. Flinn, who stated "I got gerrymandered out [of my district] into a 65 percent black district" chose not to run against African-American Younge and retired in 1995 (Jackson, 1995).

In the 112th district, Democrat Glenn Bradford of Glen Carbon replaced Jay Hoffman of Collinsville who gave up his seat to run for U.S. Congress in the 20th District. Subsequently, Hoffman lost to Republican Madison County Treasurer John Shimkus (Brinkmann, McCain, Schmidt, & Yakstis, 1996).

State Representative Jim McPike of Alton, who also served as the Democratic House Majority Leader, decided not to run for re-election in 1994, despite being described as "River Bend's most powerful politician" (Farmer et al., 1993). He was replaced by Democrat Steve

Davis of Bethalto, who won the election by only 217 votes over the Republican candidate (Carroll et al., 1994).

On the local political front, changes also were observed. For example, in April, 1993, new mayors were elected in the Madison County towns of Alton, Edwardsville, Roxana, and Wood River. (Farmer et al., 1993).

2. The Educational Environment

In 1994, East St. Louis School District 189 was taken over by the State of Illinois after it was revealed the District was operating \$2.7 million in debt and holding classes in unsafe, dilapidated buildings. Further, some classrooms had no teachers and certain school buildings were not equipped with fire alarms (Spiers, 1995a). The next year (1995), a lawsuit was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of 15,000 District 189 students, alleging that children could not concentrate on academics in the midst of such a deplorable environment (Goodrich, 1995). The lawsuit charged the schools were dangerous and unsanitary, and teachers, books, and equipment were inadequate. In addition to students missing several weeks of school due to local flooding, less than one-half of the District's schoolchildren were able to pass standardized tests in reading and science (Spiers, 1995a, 1995b). The ACLU asked the court to order improvements in District 189 or to have the district dissolved, filtering students out to other districts (Goodrich, 1995). The suit was later dismissed in a St. Clair County Circuit Court after assistant attorney general Gregory Riddle successfully argued that the problem with the school district was a matter to be dealt with by the school board and the legislature, not a matter to be remedied in the courtroom (Goodrich, 1995). A financial oversight committee appointed by the state currently oversees the District's finances (Gauen, 1996).

Over the past years, violence has plagued various school districts within St. Clair County. For example, students bringing weapons and other forms of violence on school property was cited as grounds to expel over 30 youth throughout St. Clair County in 1995. Parents, teachers, students, and police banded together to combat this problem (Spiers, 1995a).

In Madison County, to curb the increasing number of gun-related incidents on Alton school properties, the school district enacted a new discipline policy in 1993 that included tougher penalties for students and police notification of serious offenses. An alternative high school geared toward students who failed to thrive in traditional classroom setting also was established by the district (Farmer et al., 1993).

3. Political Environment

During the past several years, a number of political and/or law enforcement controversies have erupted within St. Clair County. For example:

- In 1992, Belleville Police Chief Robert Hurst, previously accused of targeting African-Americans with a special task force on the city's west side, was accused of using city funds to take a 12 credit hour flying class and a one credit hour bowling class, as well as making over \$4,000 in personal telephone calls on his city-provided cellular telephone. Hurst reimbursed the city for the tuition bill, while the rest of the investigation continued (Speirs, 1993).
- In 1993, Alton officials and Madison County State's Attorney William Haine criticized Alton Police Chief Sylvester Jones and questioned department morale after Jones implemented a shake-up in the department's command structure. Jones, the city's first African-American Police Chief, assigned the department's five lieutenants to oversee department bureaus and report directly to Jones. Due to those changes, Assistant Police Chief Rick McCain was transferred to the Homicide/Violent Crimes Task Force in Collinsville. After McCain's departure, two of the five reassigned lieutenants were returned to the patrol division while a third was suspended for a week with pay after asking to be reassigned from his post as patrol commander (Farmer et al., 1993).
- In 1993, newly-elected Belleville Mayor Roger Cook appointed Dave Brauer to replace Police Chief Robert Hurst. Other candidates for the position believed the city of Belleville

was discriminatory in their hiring practices. The city subsequently was sued by the U.S. Department of Justice over its hiring policies (Spiers, 1993).

- In 1994, Alton Police Chief Sylvester Jones was accused of targeting African-Americans in an attempt to crack down on drug dealing and loitering in Alton. A petition was submitted to the City Council on behalf of the black community charging that blacks were being harassed as a result of Jones' initiative. The anti-loitering proposal was criticized by the NAACP and other black leaders who thought it would "lead to an open season on blacks" (Carroll et al., 1994).
- In 1995, amidst allegations of voter fraud occurring in East St. Louis, St. Clair County State's Attorney Robert Haida agreed to conduct a formal investigation of voting practices in the County. The *Belleville News-Democrat* reported voters were paid for their votes and that voter registration records included a multitude of false addresses (e.g., 17 voters listed their addresses at a committee-person's residence, while over a dozen others were registered as living at the address of an alderperson) (Spiers, 1995b).
- Also in 1995, East St. Louis Township Supervisor, Will McGaughy was accused of misusing township money for his own political gain, of holding onto government commodity butter to give away during the election, of not properly distributing food donated for flood relief, and of practicing political firing. The food issue was resolved by McGaughy when confronted by county and government officials, while the other issues were left unresolved (Spiers, 1995b).
- In 1995, an Alton police officer was accused of acting in malice provoked by racism, after fatally shooting an African-American motorist when the motorist fled a traffic stop. After an ISP investigation, the officer, who was supported by both Alton Chief Jones and Madison County State's Attorney William Haine, was cleared when a grand jury ruled the death a justifiable homicide. Area African-American leaders, along with the NAACP, criticized the ruling and requested further investigation (Brase et al., 1995).
- In 1996, Wood River second-term councilman Anthony Stassi was indicted by a Madison County grand jury for aggravated criminal sexual assault. He was charged in the violation of a 19 year-old woman at gun-point after DNA tests confirmed there was a one in 79 million chance that Stassi was not the attacker (Brinkmann et al., 1996).

4. Loss of Industry/Financial Concerns

In 1992, over 300 jobs in Madison County were lost when Godfrey employer Owen Illinois decided to close the doors of its foundry and mold shop. Another 115 positions were phased out by LaCledde Steel Company in Alton that same year (Brase et al., 1992).

The flood of 1993 hit Madison County hard, causing an estimated \$5 million in damages to downtown Alton alone. The city also suffered from decreased revenues from the Alton Belle riverboat, as attendance at the casino from August to October dropped due to flooding (Farmer et al., 1993).

5. Law Enforcement Initiatives

In addition to the Homicide and Violent Crime Task Force, other law enforcement initiatives have been implemented in the southwestern section of Illinois and the city of St. Louis, Missouri. For example, the Major Case Squad has been in effect for more than 20 years. Operating with personnel from both Missouri and Illinois, the squad focuses on major crimes occurring in that region. Additionally, in September 1993, Illinois State Police Captain Andre Parker was assigned to serve as the East St. Louis Public Safety Director, and Illinois State Police Master Sergeant Don Murphy was installed as his assistant. These assignments, mandated by Illinois Governor Jim Edgar, were made in a joint effort between the city of East St. Louis and the state to combat crime in the city (*State Police Captain*, 1993). A third example is the Greater East St. Louis Anti-Drug Initiative. This drug and violent crime control program includes overt and covert enforcement, specialized prosecution and defense, specialized probation, jail-based work-release, substance abuse treatment, and homicide investigation.

6. Other Changes

Amidst the problems which transpired in St. Clair and Madison County during 1992 to 1996, a number of positive events also occurred. For example, the Casino Queen, a floating riverboat casino, set sail from impoverished downtown East St. Louis in June, 1993. Within five months, approximately \$656,000 in revenues had been generated by the riverboat (Spiers, 1994).

In 1994, the Casino Queen brought \$5 million dollars into the city, thus improving city services and rejuvenating city properties (Spiers, 1995a). By 1996, proceeds from the Casino Queen allowed the East St. Louis city government to almost double its operating budget. Since the introduction of gambling revenues, the previously stagnant East St. Louis has developed a new medical annex, a new supermarket, an addition to the local federal courthouse, and has purchased new emergency vehicles and increased its police personnel. However, while the floating casino boat improved the financial condition of East St. Louis, the Casino Queen did not provide any much-needed help to local schools. That is, the state shares gambling taxes with cities, but does not allow school districts to enjoy any of the revenues (Gauen, 1995).

Other positive events which took place in St. Clair County since the inception of the Homicide and Violent Crime Task Force include the construction of a new civilian-military airport located at Scott Air Force Base, and the development of the Metro-Link Rail system connecting St. Clair County to St. Louis and the St. Louis Airport (Spiers, 1995a). Subsequently, residents of St. Clair County approved a half-cent tax increase to expand the Metro-Link system to Scott Air Force Base (Spiers, 1994).

Overall, the improved financial picture in the area has led to improvement in local services. This is especially true in East St. Louis, a city which had one of the most severe financial problems, yet has enjoyed an increase in financial resources in recent years. This is one possible reason for declining crime in the area.

III. TASK FORCE OPERATING PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

A. Data Collection Strategies

A variety of data collection strategies were used to obtain the information needed to describe the task force's operating procedures and practices. Two sources of information were central to this portion of the evaluation: task force program documents maintained by the ICJIA and interviews with task force participants. The program documents obtained from the ICJIA included task force grant applications, correspondence between the ICJIA and the task force, and the task force's monthly data reports.

Additional information about the origins of the task force and its operations were obtained from personal interviews with ISP and Attorney General's Office administrators, task force personnel, and other agencies or individuals involved in the creation and the development of the program. These interviews were based on written protocols developed by the evaluation team in consultation with the ICJIA.

Interview subjects were identified from the program documents and through a "snowball" technique where initial interview subjects were asked to identify other appropriate subjects who should be interviewed. The interview protocols and a list of individuals interviewed are contained in Appendix A.

B. The Creation of the Task Force and Early Operations

When the task force began, the key participants were unaware of any existing models for direction. The acting commander, District 11, Illinois State Police, directed the squad leader and the attorney general's representative to develop operating procedures. As would be expected in any new venture of this type, adjustments to operating practices and procedures were made as the

task force evolved, gained experience as a unit, and encountered circumstances not anticipated at the initiation of the project.

Task force procedures to determine which cases would be handled by the task force underwent significant modifications in the first year of the grant. While these procedures were not reduced to written form, interviews of task force personnel and program documents obtained from the ICJIA and the task force provided a consistent picture. Originally, the attorney general's investigator conducted the first review of unsolved homicide files maintained by the East St. Louis Police Department. When he located a file he believed was solvable through the application of additional resources, the investigator forwarded the case to the lead assistant attorney general for review. If the assistant attorney general felt the case could be made prosecutable, she forwarded the file to the ISP squad leader for further review. After this additional screening by the squad leader, the case was reviewed by the entire squad and the attorney general's staff in a round table format. Prospective cases were reviewed and prioritized by the entire group. Once it was decided to pursue a case further, the squad leader assigned it to a case agent as the primary investigator. Support assignments were then distributed among all the agents.

During the first year of the grant, the review process changed in two ways. First, the initial review by the assistant attorney general was eliminated. Instead, cases moved directly from the attorney general's investigator to the ISP squad leader. This change was the result of a lack of faith in the ability of the assistant attorney general to accurately evaluate the cases (squad leader and assistant attorney general interviews). The assistant attorney general had no criminal prosecution experience and was unable to convince the other task force members of her ability to handle the review responsibilities. After the first year of task force operation she was no longer a

part of the task force. Her duties were assumed by an attorney with prosecutorial experience recognized and accepted by members of the task force. However, because he served only in a one-half time capacity, the squad leader retained control of the review process (squad leader interview).

The second change was to move away from round table decision making and team assignments to a review by the squad leader who conducted the initial workup of the file and then assigned the case to an agent for further review or investigation. To save agents' time this change was implemented approximately three months into the grant as caseloads increased. The assistant attorney general was consulted, as needed. As the task force developed, a division of authority evolved whereby the State Police retained control of the process up to the point of issuance of a warrant. After a warrant was issued, control of the case within the task force shifted to the Attorney General's Office component (assistant attorney general interview).

As the task force evolved, additional avenues were developed for referral of cases to the task force. Individual agents were allowed to develop their own cases with local law enforcement agencies. Agents interviewed were uncertain when this change took place. Prosecutors interviewed acknowledged referring cases to the task force. This happened when the prosecutors felt cases received from local law enforcement were in need of additional work before the prosecutor would agree to pursue criminal charges against a suspect. In many such instances, the prosecutor would give the case back to local law enforcement for further development. However, in some instances, the prosecutor would contact the task force and request assistance. The task force would then seek agreement from local law enforcement to become involved in the case. Although there are no data to indicate by which of these methods cases first came to the attention

of the task force, those interviewed indicate the additional sources of cases did not replace the attorney general's investigator as the primary source of new task force cases.

No written procedures were available regarding criteria for the assignment of a particular agent to a specific case. The interviews of the task force agents and their superiors clearly indicate the decision for assignment always rested with the squad leader. The squad leader indicated the factors he considered in determining a specific assignment included the type of case, the characteristics of the victim, the location of the crime and the agent's skill level. The agents and the district investigations commander agree caseloads were the primary factor in making case assignments. It was noted that all agents were highly qualified and experienced investigators, making workload balance the primary distinguishing characteristic for the assignment decision.

Two primary means existed for monitoring and recording case progress after assignment to an agent. First, the squad leader held weekly reviews with the case agents. Second, monthly operational activity reports were required by the state police. The monthly reports summarized an agent's activities on task force cases for the reporting period. A similar report was submitted by the task force to the ICJIA. This report lists the number of new cases initiated during the reporting period, the number of cases completed by referral to another agency, administrative closure, declination by the prosecutor or completed adjudication, and the number of warrants issued during the reporting period. The ICJIA report also included cumulative data in all categories. A copy of the monthly report form is attached as Appendix B.

The authority to terminate investigation of task force cases, prior to presentation of the case to the local prosecutor, rested with the squad leader. The squad leader decided to terminate investigation if, after consultation with the case agent, he was convinced all leads in the case were

exhausted. If a legal opinion was important to the termination decision, the attorney general's attorneys also were involved in this process. Once all leads were deemed exhausted, non-homicide cases were closed and homicide cases were placed on an inactive status pending reactivation should new leads develop.

Occasionally, the local prosecutor played a role in the termination of further investigation. If the squad leader and agent decided to request prosecution from the local state's attorney, the prosecutor could refuse to go forward with prosecution. If there was no further evidence to be obtained after declination by the prosecutor, the case was placed in the same status as a case where all leads were exhausted prior to a request for prosecution. Task force records indicate three instances where prosecutors declined to take action after a task force request.

As in other areas of task force operations, the role of the Attorney General's Office component in deciding when a case was ready for prosecution moved from routine involvement in the process to consultation on an as needed basis. Originally, decisions to request prosecution of cases were the result of joint consultation between the agents, the squad leader and the attorney general's attorney. After the first year, the decision rested with the case agent and the squad leader and only involved the attorney general's attorney if the agent and squad leader requested his assistance. The task force only has the ability to request prosecution. In the criminal justice system in the State of Illinois, the ultimate decision to proceed with prosecution resides with the county state's attorney.

Overall, the early period of task force operations was marked by a consistent move from universal integration of the State Police and Attorney General's Office components to situational

collaboration. However, the interviews of personnel in each component voiced a respect for the other's expertise and an appreciation of the value of collaboration in appropriate circumstances.

C. Organizational Structure and Resource Allocation

Organizational structure, operational control and resource availability for the task force were relatively stable, although not completely unchanged over the course of the grant. Overall, staff satisfaction was high in these areas.

Operational control for the task force has always been vested in the Illinois State Police. Originally, operational control for the State Police and Attorney General's Office components was unified under the State Police. That was changed to provide for separate control of the Attorney General's Office component. This is consistent with the first year shift away from involvement of both components in the operations of the task force and toward the eventual model of State Police control of the process up to issuance of a warrant, with Attorney General's Office control post-warrant.

The ICJIA grant provided the State Police component with salaries for a squad leader and four case agents. The Attorney General's Office component was provided with salaries for one full-time and one half-time attorney, one investigator, and one clerical staff who provided support services for both components. Except for the changes in the attorney position discussed below, these staffing levels remained constant over the course of the grant. Other major resources provided to the task force through the grant included automobiles, travel funds, weapons, radios, computers and office equipment.

Overall, task force personnel were satisfied with the amount and availability of resources, staff, and support services. All task force members interviewed felt they had adequate resources

under the grant to perform their jobs. The two resource needs which task force members identified as unique to handling older and more serious cases were travel and time. Travel becomes essential over time as witnesses and suspects tend to relocate. The case agents reported travel funds were available, adequate, and essential to their work.

Task force members interviewed identified time as an important element in most crime investigations. They felt time was even more important in the older and more difficult cases because additional time was needed for locating witnesses and physical evidence, and for reviewing evidence which may have been gathered months prior. All task force members interviewed agreed the time afforded for this nature of investigation was a luxury they had not experienced in their prior work, and was a major distinction between the task force and other law enforcement units.

Decisions regarding the expenditure of resources for training needs of task force members were made by the squad leader according to individual need. All but the newest member of the State Police component received some training while assigned to the task force.

The following programs were utilized for task force members:

- Colonel Henry Williams' Homicide Seminar, New York State Police
- International Homicide Investigators Seminar
- Gang School, Illinois State Police
- Death Investigations, St. Louis School of Medicine
- Coroner's Death Investigations, Southern Illinois Law Enforcement Commission
- Serial Crimes and Major Case Investigation, Orlando and Gainesville, Florida Police Departments

- Major Case Management, Illinois State Police

Supervisors of the State Police component were satisfied with the amount and type of training available. They pointed out that the agents were experienced and highly skilled before coming to the task force. The supervisors noted they were initially unable to expend grant funds for training related travel; however, the grant was eventually modified to allow this expenditure. Case agents were also generally satisfied with the amount and type of training, although several mentioned that limited funds prevented attending some of the desired training.

Two other areas of resource limitation existed. Both were limited in scope and duration. First was the availability of official advance funds for informants, and the other was adequate computer equipment for the task force clerical support staff. Draft proposals for the task force included informant fees as a budget item. However, this was removed because ICJIA policy did not allow the use of grant funds for this purpose. The ICJIA policy was apparently necessitated by the extensive monitoring and documentation responsibilities associated with these expenditures (Kane letter, 9/23/91). Without the availability of grant funds, it was determined the task force would share official advance funds with the ISP drug unit. Interviews indicated there were times when advance funds were limited because task force requests followed a period of high requests from the drug unit, which depleted the limited pool of funds.

The clerical support for the task force was provided by one person who was hired by the Attorney General's Office component, but who provided support for both components. Her duties included word processing for reports and correspondence, maintenance of data bases for the task force, and preparation of documents and graphic displays for the attorneys to use in court. For several months the clerical support person for the task force was operating with a computer which

lacked sufficient memory to allow her to perform even the simplest, routine, functions of her job in an efficient manner. A new computer was ordered, but delivery was delayed for many months. The delay was attributed to the normal workings of the State of Illinois procurement process and not to a lack of funds.

The costs of task force participation to the State Police and the Attorney General's Office were limited. A 25 percent match was required of each agency. Aside from the matching funds, the primary cost to the State Police was the dedication of the agents to task force cases, making them unavailable to work on other State Police assignments. The attorney general assigned one attorney to the task force who was already employed by the Attorney General's Office. After the first year of the grant, she was replaced by a one half-time contractual attorney who also was an assistant state's attorney in Madison County. The other attorney was a contractual employee hired specifically for the task force on a one-half time basis. The other personnel in the Attorney General's Office component were contracted specifically for the grant and paid by the grant. No other significant resources were added by either the State Police or the Attorney General's Office.

Task force participation resulted in several benefits to the State Police and the Attorney General's Office. All task force personnel identified one or more of the following three areas as a benefit: 1) clearance of cases which otherwise would have remained unsolved, 2) enhanced recognition and prestige for law enforcement in general and the State Police and Attorney General's Office in particular, 3) additional experience conducting homicide investigations or prosecutions.

D. Task Force and Interagency Relationships

The work of the task force crossed many jurisdictional lines. Various municipal, village and county law enforcement entities exist in Madison and St. Clair Counties. Task force personnel were reliant upon these entities for case referrals and to share information gathered during local law enforcement's investigation of a case. Because Madison and St. Clair Counties both border the State of Missouri, several task force cases also required cooperative efforts with Missouri law enforcement. In addition, several other federal and state task forces, such as the Major Case Squad, operated in the metro East St. Louis vicinity. Prosecution of task force cases was dependent upon the State's attorneys in Madison and St. Clair Counties. The existence of so many entities with overlapping jurisdictions created the potential for disputes and conflicts over authority. The structure of the task force as a cooperative venture between two state agencies, the State Police and the Attorney General's Office, created similar potential for conflict. Conversely, the potential also existed for enhanced productivity through cooperative efforts between entities with distinct areas of expertise and knowledge. Over the course of the grant, several strategies were employed in an attempt to maximize positive results and minimize the negatives. They produced varying levels of success.

Given the high number of unsolved homicides in East St. Louis, it was anticipated most of the task force cases would come from that community. The task force made a request for assistance from local law enforcement before intervening (Program Narrative) as relations with the East St. Louis Police Department were essential if the task force was going to receive and successfully handle cases from the community. Staffing decisions for the task force, as well as

communication and outreach policies were designed, in part, to foster a positive relationship with the East St. Louis Police Department.

The investigator hired by the Attorney General's Office component and the case agents assigned by the State Police component contributed to good relationships with local law enforcement in general, and the East St. Louis Police Department in particular. The selection of a recently retired Chief of Detectives for the East St. Louis Police Department as the attorney general's investigator helped get the task force off to a good start in East St. Louis. This individual knew the personnel in the East St. Louis Police Department and was already aware of unsolved cases he considered solvable. Both case agents and supervisors in the State Police component of the task force agreed that knowledge of the community was a criteria in the selection of agents for the task force. Several agents acknowledged having good relationships with the East St. Louis Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies prior to coming to the task force.

Pre-existing relationships between the Illinois State Police and local law enforcement also may have made it easier for the task force to interact with local law enforcement. Local law enforcement routinely called upon the State Police forensic specialists to investigate crime scenes involving homicides and other serious crimes. Interviews with local law enforcement personnel and others in the criminal justice system revealed respect for the abilities of the Illinois State Police dating before the initiation of the task force.

In addition to staffing decisions, the task force took several actions to reach out to local law enforcement agencies. As the task force began operations, members contacted each individual local law enforcement agency to explain the role of the task force and to answer

questions regarding task force operations. The task force also solicited participation in the task force on the part of local law enforcement officers. This initiative was mostly unsuccessful in obtaining participants and will be addressed more fully in Section C.

Recognizing the importance of cooperation from East St. Louis, the attorney general's investigator and the squad leader maintained daily contact with the East St. Louis Police Department. In addition, individual case agents maintained their contacts with the East St. Louis Police Department as well as other law enforcement agencies.

Despite the efforts undertaken by the task force, personnel from the State Police and the Attorney General's Office components acknowledged some conflict arose between the task force and members of the East St. Louis Police Department. Task force members believed the early success of the task force in resolving cases the East St. Louis Police Department had been unable to solve embarrassed some members of the East St. Louis Police Department. Task force members felt it was difficult for people in the community to understand why the local department had been unable to solve crimes while the task force was able to solve them. In an attempt to minimize this conflict, the task force took steps to include local law enforcement in arrests and press conferences regarding task force cases referred from the local agency. All but one task force member felt the conflict with the East St. Louis Police Department had subsided. Interviews with the heads of the East St. Louis Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies revealed no hostility and reported good relationships between the local departments and the task force.

Interaction with other federal and state law enforcement entities operating in Illinois and Missouri varied among individuals on the task force. Interviews revealed individual task force

members had relationships with different state and federal law enforcement groups prior to coming to the task force. All task force members reported positive relationships with the state and federal entities they did encounter. Case agents reported information was shared between the task force and state, federal and local law enforcement entities as situations warranted.

Relationships with the Madison and St. Clair County State's attorneys also were considered important by the task force. Originally, it was anticipated the Attorney General's Office attorneys would assist the local prosecutors with the prosecution of cases. It was also anticipated the Attorney General's Office attorneys would receive requests from local prosecutors to initiate and prosecute cases on their own (Program Narrative). Further, the State Police component needed cooperation from the local prosecutors in order to get their cases accepted for prosecution and to obtain necessary warrants and other related court orders.

As was the case with local law enforcement, personnel decisions played a role in relationships with the Madison and St. Clair County state's attorneys. Prior to formation of the task force, both prosecutors were asked to submit names of attorneys they felt could fill the attorney positions on the task force (Attorney General's Office and State's Attorney's Office interviews). One of the two attorneys originally hired by the Attorney General's Office component was proposed to the task force by the Madison County state's attorney. This individual was employed by the Madison County State's Attorney's Office on different occasions prior to formation of the task force as an assistant state's attorney and as a special prosecutor. The other attorney was proposed to the task force by the Attorney General's Office (Attorney General's Office and State's Attorney's Office interviews). All those interviewed agreed that the attorney proposed by the Madison County State's Attorney's Office was a highly skilled

prosecutor. They also agreed that the other attorney lacked experience as a prosecutor or with crime investigation. After the first year of the task force grant, this individual was replaced. The replacement was an assistant state's attorney in Madison County. He was assigned one-half time to the task force and remained one-half time with the Madison County State's Attorney's Office.

The eventual hiring of two attorneys with present or past affiliation to the Madison County State's Attorney's Office helped maintain an already strong relationship between that office and the task force (State's Attorney's Office interview). There was no one on staff with the Attorney General's Office component who had any similar relationship with the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office. This may have been a factor in the degree to which both offices utilized the Attorney General's Office component.

Generally, relationships between the State Police component and the local prosecutors appear to have been positive. Members of the task force and the prosecutors' offices acknowledged some level of tension always exists between law enforcement and prosecutors. One reason cited was the different goals of the two jobs (law enforcement is focused on obtaining an arrest while prosecutors are focused on obtaining a conviction). Another reason given for the tension was the investment, both emotionally and in terms of time, law enforcement has in a case by the time it reaches the prosecutor for a decision to proceed with prosecution. Perhaps because most of the task force cases have come from St. Clair County, most comments from case agents regarding relationships with local prosecutors concerned the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office. In general, the case agents reported the relationship as positive and one which improved over time. Several case agents and members of the Attorney General's Office component noted the older cases required more effort on their part in "selling" the cases to the prosecutor. They

believe they have now established a sufficient track record to make the job of convincing prosecutors to pursue task force cases easier.

Prosecutors in both counties exhibited great respect for the investigatory and witness skills of the case agents. The prosecutors also noted their appreciation for the case agents' willingness to exert extra effort to make the prosecutor's job easier. This extra support included making sure witnesses were located and in attendance for trial, visiting the crime scene with the prosecutor, and obtaining additional statements for the prosecutor.

An ancillary task force goal was to increase community support and reduce the community perception that the area was forgotten or neglected by law enforcement (Program Narrative). In an effort to accomplish this goal, the task force distributed informational flyers to local businesses and in other public places. A copy of one such flyer is included in Appendix C. task force members addressed local civic groups to inform them of the task force. Press releases were issued to publicize the existence of the task force and its accomplishments. An 800 number was established in an attempt to elicit information from the public.

Relationships within the task force generally appear to be positive and communication does not appear to be a significant issue. In interviews conducted by project staff, members of each component exhibited respect for the abilities of the other component's staff. Some, but not all, members of the State Police component questioned the utility of the Attorney General's Office attorneys, not because of doubts about the attorneys' abilities but because of the limited utilization of the attorneys in the investigation and prosecution processes. No concerns arose regarding communication with other members of the task force either among members of the same component or between members of the two components.

Structurally, cross component communication was facilitated by the necessity of a working relationship between the attorney general's investigator and the State Police squad leader in preliminary case screening. Also, the offices of both components adjoin. This physical proximity of the component offices and the relatively small number of personnel should facilitate communication among task force members. Both components used the same clerical support which aided the organization of information.

Formal procedures for internal assessment of effective operation were restricted to the monthly operational reports and regular reviews of case progress between the squad leader and the case agents. ICJIA provided external assessment through regular site visits and monitoring of monthly data reports and fiscal reports. No other formal external assessment was initiated. There was informal feedback to the task force from external entities such as the prosecutors and local law enforcement agencies.

E. Changes in Implementation and the Evolution of the Task Force

1. Changes in Operational Scope, Goals and Objectives

There were two significant changes in the components of the task force over the course of the grant. One was a lower level of participation in the task force by local law enforcement. The other was a diminished role in the prosecution of task force cases for the Attorney General's Office attorneys. No significant changes were noted in the organizational placement or in the locus of operational control of the task force.

The initial proposal for the task force envisioned inclusion of two East St. Louis police officers as part of the task force (Program Narrative). This was desired because it was anticipated a substantial number of the task force cases would come from East St. Louis. It was

also believed assignment of officers to the task force would upgrade the skill level of the assigned officers and allow them to increase the skill level of the East St. Louis Police Department upon the return of assigned officers to the local department (Goals and Objectives). However, if East St. Louis officers were assigned to the task force, they would have to be paid by East St. Louis, since no money was available under the grant to compensate the local officers. At the time the task force began operations, East St. Louis was experiencing severe financial strain. This financial strain contributed to understaffing of the East St. Louis Police Department. Therefore, East St. Louis could not afford to reduce its staff in order to assign officers to the task force, and it could not afford to hire new officers to replace any officers assigned to the task force. For this reason, the task force was never able to incorporate the services of East St. Louis officers into the task force.

The task force was only able to obtain the services of one local officer. A captain of the Alton Police Department served on the task force as an Illinois State Police Inspector for nine months in fiscal year 1995 (ICJIA: April 1996, Final Progress and Data Report, p.2). After his nine months with the task force, he returned to the Alton Police Department at the request of the Alton Chief of Police. He did not receive any additional training from the task force. In part this was because of his short time with the unit. Also, he was an experienced homicide detective and had received homicide investigation training while assigned to the Alton Police Department (captain interview).

The initial program design envisioned a more prominent role in the prosecution of task force cases for the Attorney General's Office attorneys (ICJIA: April 1992, Intergovernmental Agreement: #4178, Program Narrative, p. A-3). This role was realized in Madison County, but

only to a very limited degree in St. Clair County. The Attorney General's Office attorney was the lead prosecutor in five trials in Madison County. These were the only trials of task force cases to take place in Madison County. However, during the course of the grant, only two task force cases in St. Clair County were taken to trial by the Attorney General's Office attorney as lead prosecutor. Task force attorneys were assigned four additional cases in St. Clair County which were pending at the time of this report.

When task force personnel were asked about changes that could have enhanced the performance of the task force, there was no universal agreement. However, two suggestions were made by several members of the task force. One was to pay the salaries of local officers who participate in the task force. The other suggestion was to formally involve someone from the local state's attorney's staff in the task force and reduce, or eliminate, the role of the Attorney General's Office attorneys.

During the course of the grant, two changes in the operation of the task force were proposed to the ICJIA. One proposed change was to provide funds for local law enforcement officer's salaries. This proposal was not acted upon due to ICJIA concerns about supplanting. (Stout Memo: January 27, 1994). The other proposal for change was to allow the use of travel funds for training related travel. This request was allowed (Remelius interview).

2. Changes in operating procedures

Procedures for deciding which cases to pursue changed in the first three months of task force operation when the task force moved from round table discussion of each prospective case to a process involving only the squad leader and the individual case agent. Another change occurred in the first year of task force operations when the Attorney General's Office attorney was

moved from a regular participant in initial case screening and in decisions to request prosecution to an as needed consultant.

3. Resource stability

With the exception of the lack of resources to pay salaries for local law enforcement officers who might participate in the task force, resources were not identified as a significant limitation on task force's ability to meet project goals. Task force and local law enforcement personnel all saw the lack of funds available to compensate local departments for assigned officers as the primary deterrent to allowing local officers to participate in task force operations.

Overall equipment, staff, and other resources were seen as stable and adequate for the accomplishment of task force goals. Most resource limitations identified by task force personnel were not viewed by them as being significant, long-term, restrictions on their ability to accomplish task force goals. Temporary shortages in official advance funds were identified as an occasional limitation, but not a chronic deterrent to task force effectiveness. Also, some members felt a lack of funds kept them from receiving all the training they requested. However, no one identified lack of training as a limitation upon their ability to perform their work.

Staffing levels remained relatively stable over the course of the grant. The State Police component had a constant staffing level of one squad leader and four case agents. The Attorney General's Office component was staffed with two attorneys, one investigator and one clerical support person throughout the grant. However, one attorney position changed from full time to half-time after the first year of task force operation. No members of the task force indicated staffing levels were a limitation on task force performance.

Individual staff assigned to the task force also remained relatively constant. One case agent was assigned to other duties in the first year of task force operations. Another case agent left in 1995 in order to take a promotion. He was replaced by an agent who then remained with the task force.

Only one change was made in staff assigned to the Attorney General's Office component. The full time attorney was replaced by a one-half time attorney after the first year of task force operation. This was regarded as a positive change because the new attorney possessed more experience with criminal prosecution.

IV. IMPACT OF THE TASK FORCE

The impact portion of this evaluation relies on quantitative and qualitative data collected to describe the effectiveness of the task force program in achieving its goals and objectives. Data obtained from interviews and task force documents collected during the implementation evaluation have been analyzed and supplemented with an in-depth examination of case files for those cases handled by the task force during their grant period. The analysis has been divided into three sections: 1) the impact of the task force on the cases chosen for investigation, 2) the impact of task force programs on law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts, and 3) the impact of the task force on the broader community.

A. Impact of the Task Force on Cases

The goals of this case analysis are to describe the cases handled by the task force and to examine the movement of those cases through critical decision points in the criminal justice process. Based on these analyses, the section will conclude with a discussion of the impact the task force had on the resolution of these cases.

1. Case Data Collection Methods

Case Selection. As described in their monthly reports to the ICJIA, most of the activity undertaken by the task force focused on the investigation and prosecution of homicides and other violent crimes which originally had been investigated by other agencies in St. Clair and Madison counties. However, the task force did engage in other activities. For example, the task force investigated four shootings by local police officers.³ In addition, investigators from the task force

³ Two cases arose from shootings by East St. Louis Police Department officers (1995 and 1996), one from a narcotics stop made by the local MEG unit (1994), and one from a shooting after a traffic stop by an Alton Police Department officer (1995). None of the officers were prosecuted based on the investigations by the task force. An additional case was excluded from the evaluation's database. That case involved the arrest of an individual for

rendered assistance to the ISP, federal law enforcement agencies and local police departments. This assistance did not involve extensive involvement of the task force in the cases and, therefore, neither the task force nor the evaluation has counted these "assist cases" as task force Cases. Since the assist cases and the officer shooting cases involved actions outside the sort of investigations the task force was designed to accomplish, they have been excluded from the group of cases used in the analysis of the task force cases. When these cases were excluded from the list of cases handled by the task force during the grant period (April 1, 1992 - April 30, 1996), 72 cases remained. Data on these cases were collected from the initiation of the evaluation through February 15, 1997. Events occurring after February 15, 1997 will not be included in this analysis.

Data Collection Procedures. Case data coding sheets were developed by the evaluation team and circulated to ICJIA and the task force for comment before case data collection began. (The forms used are included in Appendix D). Case data were collected from four sources. The first source utilized was the monthly reports provided by the task force to the ICJIA during the grant period. In these reports, narratives regarding the cases and task force progress on cases were provided. The second source used was the computerized database maintained by the Task Force's secretary. She provided the evaluation team with printouts of information available from her database. After the data were entered from those two sources, evaluation team members were allowed to consult the ISP case files for the task force cases.⁴ Finally, case data were sought from newspaper articles obtained through NEXIS, a computerized information search and retrieval

battery. The individual was being sought in connection with a pending task force homicide case. The battery case was not pursued beyond its use to revoke the individual's parole and hold him for the homicide case. The task force includes these cases in its performance reports. Therefore, their data will differ from the data used in this evaluation.

⁴ Case data were limited for eight of the cases because the local ISP files had been purged. Local case files were purged after a case was closed for three years.

service. Newspaper articles were consulted most often to provide dates for events such as arrests and indictments when those events had occurred before the task force became involved in the case or after the case had been turned over to the State's Attorney's Office for prosecution.⁵ Data were entered in a computerized database for analysis of the task force cases.

2. Description of the Task Force Cases

This section will provide a description of the cases handled by the task force. Such a description is necessary to provide an understanding of the demands these cases placed on the task force. As shown in Table 5, most of the cases handled by the task force during the grant period involved a single victim (86.1 percent). There were two victims in 9.7 percent of the cases and three or more victims in 4.2 percent of the cases.

⁵ There are variables included in the case data coding sheets but not discussed in the body of the report because information for those variables was missing for a substantial portion of the cases. Missing information tended to involve activities of local police departments before the task force took a case or prosecution-related events in cases not prosecuted by task force attorneys. Information was not available if a case was prosecuted primarily by the State's Attorney's Office. The task force had no mechanism in place to collect information regarding the progress of that case. The task force became dependent on the State's Attorney's Office volunteering information to the task force. Since most of the cases were prosecuted primarily by the State's Attorney's Offices rather than the task force prosecutors, much of the post-arrest information available was incomplete.

Table 5. Type of Crime in Task Force Cases

| Number of Victims in the Crime | Number | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| One | 62 | 86.1 |
| Two | 7 | 9.7 |
| Three | 1 | 1.4 |
| Four | 1 | 1.4 |
| Five | 1 | 1.4 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |
| Type of Crime | | |
| Murder | 57 | 79.2 |
| Assault/Battery | 10 | 13.9 |
| Sexual Assault | 3 | 4.2 |
| Robbery/Armed Robbery | 2 | 2.8 |
| Total | 72 | 100.1 ¹ |

¹Totals over or under 100 percent are due to rounding.

The cases handled by the task force have been categorized according to type of crime committed in the case (see Table 5).⁶ Most cases handled by the task force (79.2 percent) involved murders and 13.9 percent involved assault/battery. The task force handled a small percentage of sexual assault cases (4.2 percent) and robbery/armed robbery cases (2.8 percent).

As shown in Table 6, the crimes committed in nearly all of the task force cases (91.7 percent) involved use of a weapon; however, the type of weapon used varied. The most commonly used weapon was a handgun, used in 60.6 percent of the cases. A rifle or shotgun was used in six percent of the cases; 10.6 percent involved a firearm which was not identified by type.

⁶ When the cases involved murder and other types of crimes, the case was considered a murder. Cases involving sexual assault but not involving murder have been coded as sexual assault cases. Cases involving assault/battery but also involving nonassault crimes (e.g., robbery) have been coded as assault/battery cases.

A knife or edged weapon was used in 13.6 percent of the cases. In 4.5 percent of the cases, a weapon other than a firearm or edged weapon was used (usually something characterized as a blunt object). A small percentage of the cases (4.5 percent) involved multiple types of weapons. Six cases did not involve weapons.

Table 6. Weapon Use in Task Force Cases

| Was a Weapon(s) Used in the Crime? | Number | Percent |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| No | 6 | 8.3 |
| Yes | 66 | 91.7 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |
| What Type of Weapon was Used? | | |
| Handgun | 40 | 60.6 |
| Rifle or shotgun | 4 | 6.0 |
| Firearm - unknown type | 7 | 10.6 |
| Knife or edged weapon | 9 | 13.6 |
| Other | 3 | 4.5 |
| Multiple types of weapons | 3 | 4.5 |
| Total | 66 | 99.8 ¹ |

¹Totals over or under 100 percent are due to rounding.

Most of the murders (78.9 percent) and nonsexual assaults/batteries (70.0 percent) were committed with a firearm (see Table 7). In the small number of sexual assault cases, the incidents were evenly divided among the three categories of no weapon, use of a firearm, or use of a non-firearm weapon. Five of the six cases not committed with a weapon involved beatings, one case involved a sexually assault. In three of the six cases in which a weapon was not used, the victims were children. Half of the non-weapon cases were murders in which the victim was either beaten to death or strangled.

Table 7. Type of Crime by Weapon Use

| Type of Crime | No Weapon | Firearm ⁷ | Non-firearm | Totals |
|----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-------------|--------|
| | (n=6) | (n=54) | (n=12) | |
| Murder (n=57) | 5.3 | 78.9 | 15.8 | 100.0 |
| Nonsexual assault/battery (n=10) | 20.0 | 70.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| Sexual assault (n=3) | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 100.0 |
| Armed robbery (n=2) | | 50.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 |

Table 8 summarizes the demographic characteristics of crime victims included in the Task Force's cases. The majority of victims were Black (76.1 percent); 22.7 percent were White. Females constituted 28.4 percent of the victims; 71.6 percent were male. The ages of the victims ranged from a low of three years old to a high of 85 years old. The average age of the crime victims was 27.5 years old. Fifty percent of the victims were 24 years old or younger.

Table 8. Victim Demographics

| Characteristic | Number | Percent |
|------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Victim's Race | | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1 | 1.1 |
| Black | 67 | 76.1 |
| White | 20 | 22.7 |
| Total | 88 | 99.9 ¹ |
| Victim's Gender | | |
| Female | 25 | 28.4 |
| Male | 63 | 71.6 |
| Total | 88 | 100.0 |

⁷ This includes crimes in which a firearm was one of multiple types of weapons used.

Table 8. Victim Demographics (continued)

| Characteristic | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Victim's Ages | | |
| 10 years old or younger | 6 | 6.8 |
| 11 - 17 years old | 12 | 13.6 |
| 18 - 29 years old | 42 | 47.7 |
| 30 - 39 years old | 16 | 18.2 |
| 40 - 49 years old | 5 | 5.7 |
| 50 years or older | 7 | 8.0 |
| Total | 88 | 100.0 |
| Average age: 27.5 years Std. deviation: 14.7 years | | |
| Median age: 24.0 years Minimum/Maximum: 3/85 years | | |

¹Totals over or under 100 percent are due to rounding.

Table 9 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the suspects identified in task force case files.⁸ Among the suspects named in the task force case files, 88.5 percent were Black, 10.3 percent were white and one (1.3 percent) was identified as Asian. Nearly all suspects (94.9 percent) were male; 5.1 percent were female. The age of suspects at the time the crime was committed ranged from a low of 12 years old to a high of 51 years old.⁹ Fifty percent of the suspects were 22 years old or younger. The average age of suspects in task force cases was 24.5 year old. Over 77 percent of the suspects were in the category of 18 through 29 years old.

⁸ The suspects included in this analysis are those identified in the case files who have been arrested or whose cases were closed because of death of the suspect at some point in the legal process. The names and identifying information for suspects named in the files who had not yet been arrested were not recorded by the evaluation team.

⁹ The age assigned to suspects who committed more than one crime was their age at the date of the first crime committed in a task force case.

Table 9. Demographic Characteristics of Suspects

| Suspect's Race | Number | Percent |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|
| Asian | 1 | 1.3 |
| Black | 69 | 88.5 |
| White | 8 | 10.3 |
| Total | 78 ¹ | 100.1 ² |
| Suspect's Gender | | |
| Female | 4 | 5.1 |
| Male | 75 | 94.9 |
| Total | 79 | 100.0 |
| Suspect's Age | | |
| 17 years old or younger | 4 | 5.3 |
| 18 - 29 years old | 59 | 77.6 |
| 30 - 39 years old | 7 | 9.2 |
| 40 - 49 years old | 4 | 5.2 |
| 50 years or older | 2 | 2.6 |
| Total | 76 ¹ | 99.9 ² |
| Average age: 24.5 years Std. deviation: 7.8 years | | |
| Median age: 22.0 years Minimum/maximum: 12/51 years old | | |

¹This information was not available for all individuals.

²Totals over or under 100% are due to rounding.

Most of the task force cases (68.1 percent) involved crimes committed in East St. Louis; 22.2 percent occurred in St. Clair County outside the city of East St. Louis (see Table 10). Only 9.7 percent of the cases handled by the task force involved crimes committed in Madison County.

Data were also collected to identify which police department provided the uniformed first response to the crime. In 66.7 percent of the cases, that response was provided by the East St. Louis Police Department. Police departments in St. Clair County outside of East St. Louis provided the first response in 16.7 percent of the cases. Madison County police departments

responded first in 6.9 percent of the cases. The task force provided the first response to a crime in only one case (1.4 percent).¹⁰

Table 10. Where the Crimes Took Place

| Location of Crime | Number | Percent |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| East St. Louis | 49 | 68.1 |
| St. Clair County (Outside East St. Louis) | 16 | 22.2 |
| Madison County | 7 | 9.7 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |
| Uniformed First Response in Case | | |
| East St. Louis Police Department | 48 | 66.7 |
| St. Clair County (outside East St. Louis) Departments | 12 | 16.7 |
| Madison County Departments | 5 | 6.9 |
| St. Louis, Missouri Police Department | 1 | 1.4 |
| Illinois State Police (not task force) | 2 | 2.8 |
| Task Force | 1 | 1.4 |
| More than one department | 3 | 4.2 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |

Two factors often cited as contributing to the rate of homicides and violent crimes are drug use/trafficking and gang activities. As shown in Table 11, 26.4 percent of the crimes handled by the task force could be identified as drug-related and 20.8 percent involved gang-related crimes.¹¹

¹⁰ The evaluation team sought to record the identity of the crime scene teams responding to the initial investigations of these cases. That information was not available in about one-third of the cases. In most of the cases for which the information was available, the crime scene teams were provided by the Illinois State Police. Most local police departments in the Task Force's area are not large enough to have their own crime scene technicians.

¹¹ A crime was identified as drug-related if it occurred during a drug sale, if information in the file indicated obtaining drugs was a motive, or the crime resulted from competition between drug traffickers. In addition, if the task force agent identified the crime as gang-related in the data provided to the evaluation team, it was so categorized. A crime was identified as gang-related if information in the file indicated the crime was committed explicitly in furtherance of organized gang activity or in retaliation for another gang's activities. In addition, if the task force

Table 11. Drug or Gang Related Crimes

| Was the Crime Drug Related? | Number | Percent |
|------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| No | 53 | 73.6 |
| Yes | 19 | 26.4 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |
| Was the Crime Gang Related? | | |
| No | 57 | 79.2 |
| Yes | 15 | 20.8 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |

The interviews with task force personnel indicated that the perceived solvability of a case was central to the Task Force's decision to take a case. One factor of solvability identified as very important by the members of the task force was the availability of witnesses. The case data collected from the case files and reported in Table 12 indicate that in over 70 percent of the Task Force's cases, there was at least one identified witness to the crime.

Table 12. Crime Witnesses

| Were There Witnesses to the Crime | Number | Percent |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| No | 19 | 29.2 |
| Yes | 46 | 70.8 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

investigator had identified the crime as gang-related, it was so categorized. The fact that a participant in the crime was a gang member was not sufficient to have the crime characterized as gang related. There may have been cases individual case agents believe to be drug or gang-related which were not classified as such in this analysis because the file contained no information so identifying the case under the above-specified criteria.

3. Age of Task Force Cases

As discussed above in the implementation analysis, the task force was created primarily to handle "cold cases". The Task Force's grant application makes two references to the determination of what constitutes a cold case. In an early draft of the program narrative from the Attorney General's Office task force component, these cases are identified as cases 48 - 72 hours old or older.¹² In the final version of that document, the target cases are identified as cases one old or older.¹³

The age of a case at the time it was taken by the task force was based on the number of days from the date of the crime to either: 1) the date of the formal request from the first response police department to the task force asking the task force to assist with the case, or, if that date was not ascertainable, 2) the date of the first action taken on the case by the task force as indicated in the case file.

Table 13 indicates the number of days from the date the crime was committed to the date of the request for task force involvement.¹⁴ The average time from the date of crime to the request for task force assistance was 1.4 years; however, as shown by the large standard deviation (3.2 years) the time varied greatly from a minimum of the request coming the day of the crime to a maximum of the request for task force assistance coming 34.5 years after the crime. The request for task force assistance with a case was dated one year or more after the date of the crime in 29.2 percent of the cases. In 34.7 percent of the cases, the request for assistance was made from four

¹² Page 3, Office of the Attorney General, Homicide Violent Crime Strike Force, Program Narrative document not dated.

¹³ Page 3, Office of the Attorney General, Homicide Violent Crime Strike Force, May 24, 1993.

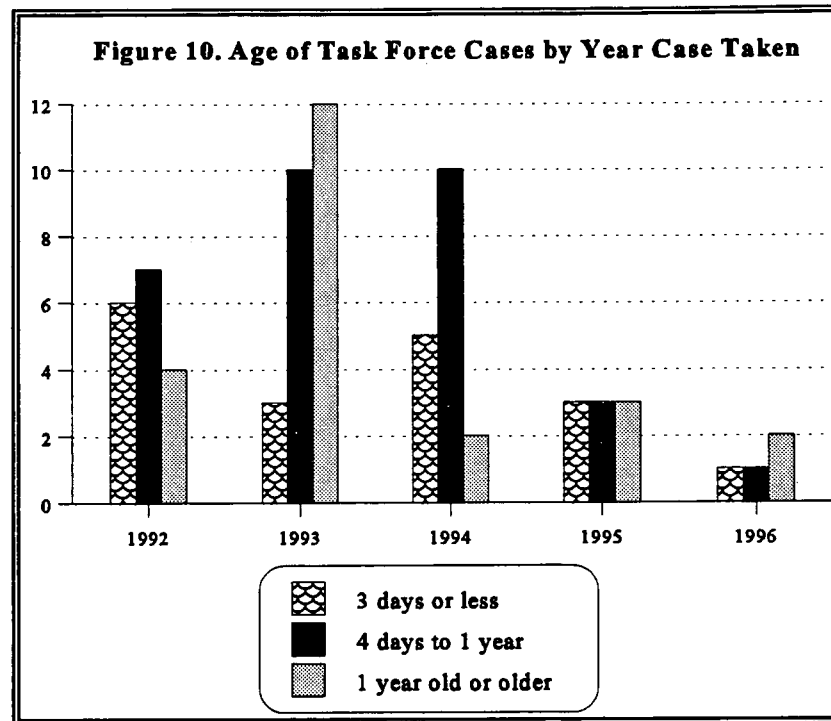
¹⁴ The date of the request was not ascertainable in 12 of the cases.

days to one year after the crime. The task force was asked to assist with 18.1 percent of the cases within one day of the crime. In a small percentage (1.4 percent) of the cases, the request was dated two or three days after the date of the crime.

Table 13. Age of the Task Force Cases

| Days from Crime to Request for Task Force Involvement | Number | Percent |
|--|---------------|--------------------|
| 1 day or less | 13 | 18.1 |
| From 2 through 3 days | 1 | 1.4 |
| From 4 days through 1 year | 25 | 34.7 |
| Over 1 year old | 21 | 29.2 |
| Request date not ascertainable | 12 | 16.7 |
| Total | 72 | 100.1 ¹ |
| Average: 525.4 days (1.4 years) Median: 198.0 days (0.5 year) Std. deviation: 1,178.8 days (3.2 years) Minimum/Maximum: 0/8,183 (0/22.4 years) | | |
| Was It A Cold Case? | | |
| 3 days old or younger | 18 | 25.0 |
| 4 days through 1 year old | 31 | 43.1 |
| More than 1 year old | 23 | 31.9 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |
| Average: 627.8 days (1.7 years) Median: 170.5 days (0.5 year) Std. deviation: 1,793.0 days (4.9 years) Minimum/Maximum: 0/12,585 (34.5 years) | | |

¹Totals over or under 100% are due to rounding.



Because the date for the request for task force assistance with the case was not available in twelve cases, an alternative means for determining the age of a case when it was taken by the task force has been used. That alternative means calculates the age of the case based on the date of the first action taken by the task force on the case. That date was identified from file documents. The determination of whether a case could be considered a cold case has been made by calculating the age based on the number of days between the date of the crime and the date of the first task force action on the case as indicated by file documents. Table 13 displays categorization of cases into three groups based on when the task force began working on them. The average age of cases calculated using this approach is 1.7 years old. One half of the cases were 170.5 days old or younger. Twenty-five percent of the cases were taken by the task force within three days of the crime. If a cold case is defined as a case over three days old, three-quarters of the cases can be

considered cold cases. If a cold case is defined as a case which is over one year old, 31.9 percent of the task force cases can be considered cold cases.

In the interviews with task force members, there was a consistent perception that the percentage of cold cases had decreased over the life of the task force as the solvable cold cases were removed from the accumulated pool of available older cases. Figure 10 shows the relative age grouping of cases for those taken each year by the task force. In 1992, the first year of task force operation, six of 18 cases were accepted by the task force (35.3 percent) were three days old or younger, seven (41.2 percent) were from four to 364 days old, and four (23.4 percent) were one year old or older. The distribution of the 25 cases that were accepted changed in 1993 where the largest category included the 12 cases (48.0 percent) that were one year old or older. Ten (40.0 percent) were from four to 364 days old and only three (12.0 percent) were three days old or younger. In 1994, 17 cases were taken by the task force; five cases (29.4 percent) were three days old or younger, ten were from four to 364 days old and two were one year old or older. In 1995, the categories were evenly divided; there were three cases each category. Finally, during the first four months of 1996 (the final period of the task force grant), two cases of the four cases accepted were one year old or older, one was from four to 364 days old and one was three days old or younger. From the data presented in Figure 10, the perception of the task force members regarding the portion of cold cases handled by the task force cannot be supported.

4. Task Force Case Progress and Outcomes

The goal of this portion of the case analysis component is to document how many cases moved successfully from one stage of the investigative/prosecutorial process to the next and to identify how long it took for case disposition once the task force accepted a case. Initially, the

evaluation team planned to track the progress of the cases in substantial detail from the point a case was selected by the task force for consideration through the conclusion of any appeals associated with the case. However, as the evaluation progressed, it became apparent that such detailed information was not available for many of the cases. As discussed above, there were no records kept nor data compiled by the task force regarding the numbers or types of cases reviewed but not taken. The absence of detailed records on pre-arrest events can be attributed to the uneven quality of local department information provided to the task force and included within task force case files. The absence of detail regarding post-arrest events is the result of the task force having no control over cases sent to State's Attorney's Offices for prosecution and the lack of a mechanism to have State's Attorney's Offices routinely inform the task force of significant events in those cases. Information was available for cases on the following points: 1) whether suspects were named in the case file, 2) whether suspects were arrested (although the case file often did not identify who arrested a suspect), 3) whether a suspect pled guilty or was convicted, and 4) whether a suspect was sentenced. For most cases, the file did not contain specifics about indictments, prosecutors' information, pretrial hearings or post conviction processes. The analysis of case progress included herein will be limited. Case data collection ceased on February 15, 1997.

The ISP component of the task force considered a case successfully concluded when an arrest had been made. As shown in Table 14, using this measure of success, 69.4 percent of the cases were successfully concluded. An exploratory analysis was done to determine the impact of various case characteristics on whether an arrest was made. While patterns do exist, as shown by the measures of association (lambda) reported in the table, most of the case characteristics have

minimal impact on whether there was an arrest in the case. When comparing arrest percentages for cases categorized by type of crime, the highest percent occurred among sexual assault cases. All three of those cases led to an arrest. In murder cases, 70.2 percent of the cases produced an arrest and arrests were made in half of the cases involving nonsexual assaults/batteries. Those cases which were drug-related or gang-related were less likely to produce arrests than were cases not drug or gang-related. In fact, the category of gang-related cases was the only group of cases for which the "No Arrest" category was larger than the "Arrest Category." There was little difference in arrest percentages between those cases in which a weapon was used and those cases in which one was not used. One counter-intuitive result is that the cases in which no witness was named in the file had a higher percentage of arrests (78.9 percent) than did those cases in which at least one witness was named (65.2 percent).

Table 14 also shows the arrest percentages for cases of varying ages. There were arrests in 61.1 percent of the cases that were three days old or less when the task force received them. The percent of cases producing arrests was larger (80.6 percent) among those cases which were at least four days old but less than one year old. In cases one year old or older, there was an arrest in 60.9 percent of the cases. The age of cases received by the task force also can be measured by the number of days from the crime to the Task Force's assumption of the cases. The average age of cases in which there was no arrest was 346.4 days (slightly under one year old). On average, cases in which there was an arrest were older (751.6 days or 2.1 years old).

Table 14. Case Characteristics and Arrests in Cases

| Case Characteristic | Percent with No Arrest | Percent with an Arrest | Total % |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Total cases (n=72) | 30.6 | 69.4 | 100.0 |
| Type of crime (lambda=.00) | | | |
| Murder (n=57) | 29.8 | 70.2 | 100.0 |
| Nonsexual assault/battery (n=10) | 50.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| Sexual assault (n=3) | | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Was the case drug related? (lambda=.01) | | | |
| Yes (n=19) | 36.8 | 63.2 | 100.0 |
| No (n=53) | 28.3 | 71.7 | 100.0 |
| Was the case gang related? (lambda=.23) | | | |
| Yes (n=15) | 66.7 | 33.3 | 100.0 |
| No (n=57) | 21.1 | 78.9 | 100.0 |
| Was a weapon used in the crime? (lambda=.00) | | | |
| Yes (n=66) | 30.3 | 69.7 | 100.0 |
| No (n=4) | 33.3 | 66.7 | 100.0 |
| Were witnesses identified in the file?¹ (lambda=.00) | | | |
| Yes (n=46) | 34.8 | 65.2 | 100.0 |
| No (n=19) | 21.1 | 78.9 | 100.0 |
| Was it a cold case? (lambda=.00) | | | |
| 3 days old or younger (n=18) | 38.9 | 61.1 | 100.0 |
| 4 days old to less than 1 year old (n=31) | 19.4 | 80.6 | 100.0 |
| 1 year old or older (n=23) | 39.1 | 60.9 | 100.0 |
| Average age of case | | | |
| Average days from crime to task force taking case | 346.4 days | 751.6 days | |

¹ Data on the presence/absence of witnesses were not available in all case files.

Table 15 provides a summary of the stage each task force case had reached. In 8.3 percent of the cases, no suspects had been named in the file and in 8.3 percent of the cases, suspects had been named in the file but no arrests had been made.¹⁵ One or more suspects had been arrested in 11.1 percent of the cases but the cases had not progressed further. In 43.1 percent of the cases, one or more defendant had either pled guilty or been convicted. The State's Attorney's Office had declined prosecution in 4.2 percent of the cases (three cases).¹⁶ The outcome is listed as "other" in 8.3 percent of the cases. Among those other outcomes are: defendant had been arrested but failed to appear for a hearing, the case was overturned on appeal and retrial was pending, and the defendant was awaiting extradition from another state.

Table 15. Case Progress

| Stage Case Had Reached | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| No suspects named | 6 | 8.3 |
| Suspects named but no arrests made | 6 | 8.3 |
| Suspects dead | 12 | 16.7 |
| Suspects arrested | 8 | 11.1 |
| Guilty plea or conviction | 31 | 43.1 |
| State's Attorney's Office refused prosecution | 3 | 4.2 |
| Other | 6 | 8.3 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |

¹⁵ This does not include the cases in which suspects were not arrested because they were dead.

¹⁶ In two of these cases, the state's attorney declined prosecution based on a perception that the suspect had acted in self-defense. In the other case, the state's attorney deferred to another county which wished to try the suspect on a more serious charge.

Of the 72 cases accepted by the task force, 65.3 percent or 47 cases were concluded as shown in Table 16. Among the cases still pending are: those in which no suspects had been named, those in which the suspects had been named but no arrests made, and those with co-defendants with pending charges.

Table 16. Task Force Cases Concluded

| Case Status | Number | Percent |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Concluded | 47 | 65.3 |
| Pending | 25 | 34.7 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 |

Table 17 reports the amount of time that elapsed from the date the task force began a case to the case ending date for those cases closed by the termination of legal proceedings or the death of the defendant.¹⁷ One-half of the 42 completed cases were disposed of in one year or less from the time the task force began work on the case; 26.1 percent or 11 cases were concluded in less than six months. Slightly over one quarter (26.2 percent) of the cases required between one and two years to dispose. The remaining 23.8 percent of the cases required over two years to complete. The average time to conclusion for the task force cases was 496 days or 1.4 years. The standard deviation for these cases was 458.6 days or 1.25 years. The time to disposition for task force cases ranged from three days to 4.6 years.

¹⁷ Relevant date information was missing on five cases resulting in their exclusion from this analysis.

Table 17. Case Disposition Time by Task Force

| Task Force Time on Case | Number of Cases | Percent |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Within one month | 5 | 11.9 |
| 1 - 6 months | 6 | 14.2 |
| 6+ months - 1 year | 10 | 23.8 |
| 1+ year - 2 years | 11 | 26.2 |
| Over 2 years | 10 | 23.8 |
| Total | 42 ¹ | 99.9 ² |

¹ Relevant date information was missing on five concluded cases resulting in their exclusion from this analysis.

² Totals over or under 100% are due to rounding.

5. Potential Explanations for Variations in Case Outcome

One goal of the evaluation was to attempt to identify the characteristics that distinguish cases which progressed through the investigation and adjudication from those cases that did not progress. As discussed previously, the absence of case information, particularly once the case was referred to the State's Attorney's Office for prosecution, made it impossible to track cases through all phases of development and to identify why a particular case ceased to progress or ended without conviction. However, some analysis of the factors related to case success can be done. An attempt was made to identify correlates of case success by selecting a subset of cases whose outcomes most clearly could be defined as successful or not successful. Cases were included in the successful category if: suspects had been arrested and prosecution was pending, or one or more defendant in the case had pled guilty or been convicted. Thus, successful cases are those where the investigation has produced at least one arrest and that arrest has either initiated an ongoing prosecution or has led to a conviction. Cases were categorized as unsuccessful if: no suspects had been named in the file, suspects had been named but none had been arrested, the

State's Attorney's Office had refused to prosecute a case, or a mistrial had resulted from a trial.¹⁸ These cases are unsuccessful in that the investigation has failed to produce an arrest or the prosecution has failed to produce either a guilty plea or conviction.¹⁹

The results of using this categorization are summarized in Table 18. Nearly three-quarters of the task force cases categorized were successful. This variable of case success was used in an exploratory analysis which attempted to identify independent variables associated with a case being successful. The independent variables considered in the analysis are displayed in Table 16. One pattern is immediately obvious: no matter how the cases are grouped, successful cases outnumber unsuccessful cases. As indicated by the measures of association (lambda) reported in the table, none of the case characteristics had a substantial impact on case success.

With regard to type of crime, the lowest percentage of successful cases were among those cases involving murders; 70.2 percent of the murder cases that could be categorized were successful. All of the cases involving sexual assault were successful as were 71.4 percent of those involving nonsexual assault. Cases in which there were no witnesses named in the file were slightly more likely to be successful than were cases in which there were witnesses named in the file. All of the cases in which a weapon was not used were successful; 69.2 percent of the cases involving the use of a weapon were.

¹⁸ In those cases where a suspect has not been identified, or has been identified but not arrested, the lack of success is something which can be remedied as events progress. These cases are not permanently unsuccessful in the sense that a case would be unsuccessful if it resulted in an acquittal of the defendant after a trial.

¹⁹ The following groups of cases were omitted from this portion of the analysis: cases with deceased suspects, cases where suspects are awaiting extradition, and one case where a defendant was arrested but failed to appear at his next court date.

Table 18. The Relationship Between Case Characteristics and Case Productivity

| | % Unsuccessful | % Successful | Total % |
|---|-------------------|--------------|---------|
| Total cases (n=56) | 28.6 | 71.4 | 100.0 |
| Type of crime (lambda=.00) | | | |
| Murder (n=47) | 29.8 | 70.2 | 100.0 |
| Nonsexual assault/battery (n=7) | 28.6 | 71.4 | 100.0 |
| Sexual assault (n=2) | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Was the case drug related? (lambda=.00) | | | |
| Yes (n=18) | 23.7 | 76.3 | 100.0 |
| No (n=38) | 39.2 | 61.1 | 100.0 |
| Was the case gang related? (lambda=.06) | | | |
| Yes (n=9) | 44.4 | 55.6 | 100.0 |
| No (n=47) | 23.4 | 76.6 | 100.0 |
| Was a weapon used in the crime? (lambda=.00) | | | |
| Yes (n=52) | 30.8 | 69.2 | 100.0 |
| No (n=4) | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Were witnesses identified in the file?¹(lambda=.00) | | | |
| Yes (n=35) | 28.6 | 71.4 | 100.0 |
| No (n=16) | 25.0 | 75.0 | 100.0 |
| Was it a cold case? (lambda=.00) | | | |
| 3 days old or younger (n=15) | 40.0 | 60.0 | 100.0 |
| 4 days old to less than 1 year old (n=24) | 29.2 | 70.8 | 100.0 |
| 1 year old or older (n=17) | 17.6 | 82.4 | 100.0 |
| Average age of case when taken by Task Force | | | |
| Average day from crime to task force taking case | 171.8 days | 907.3 days | |

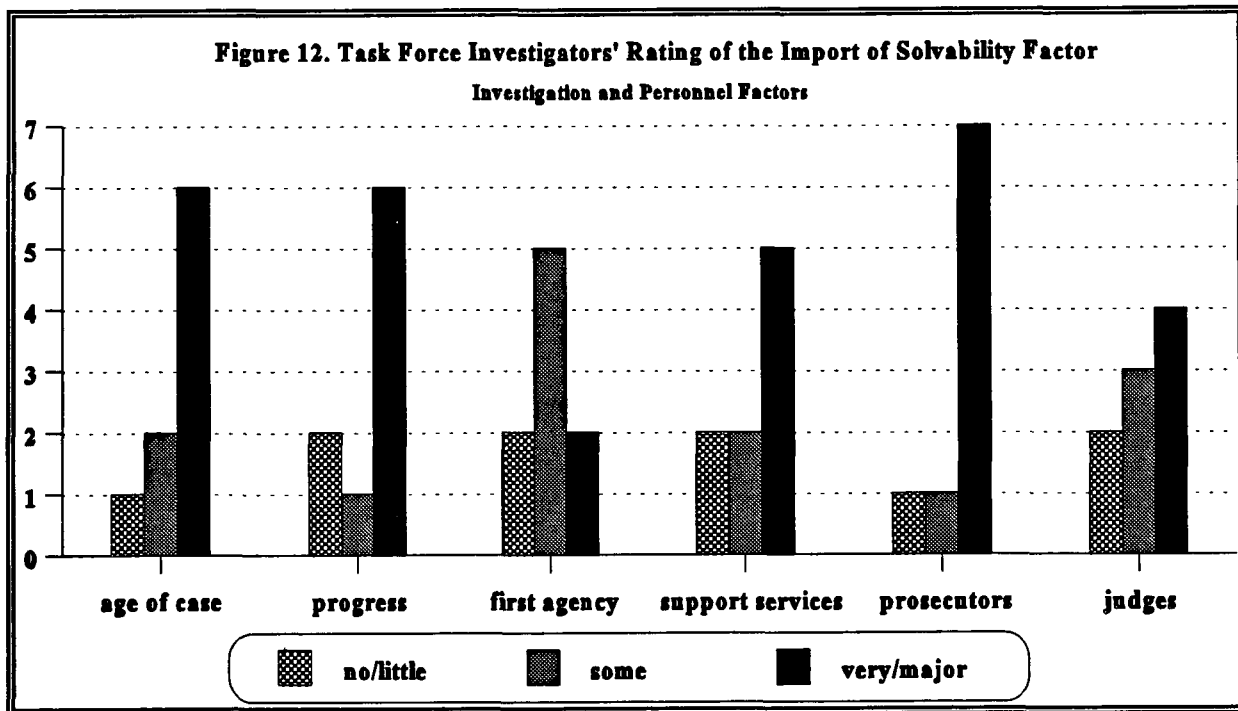
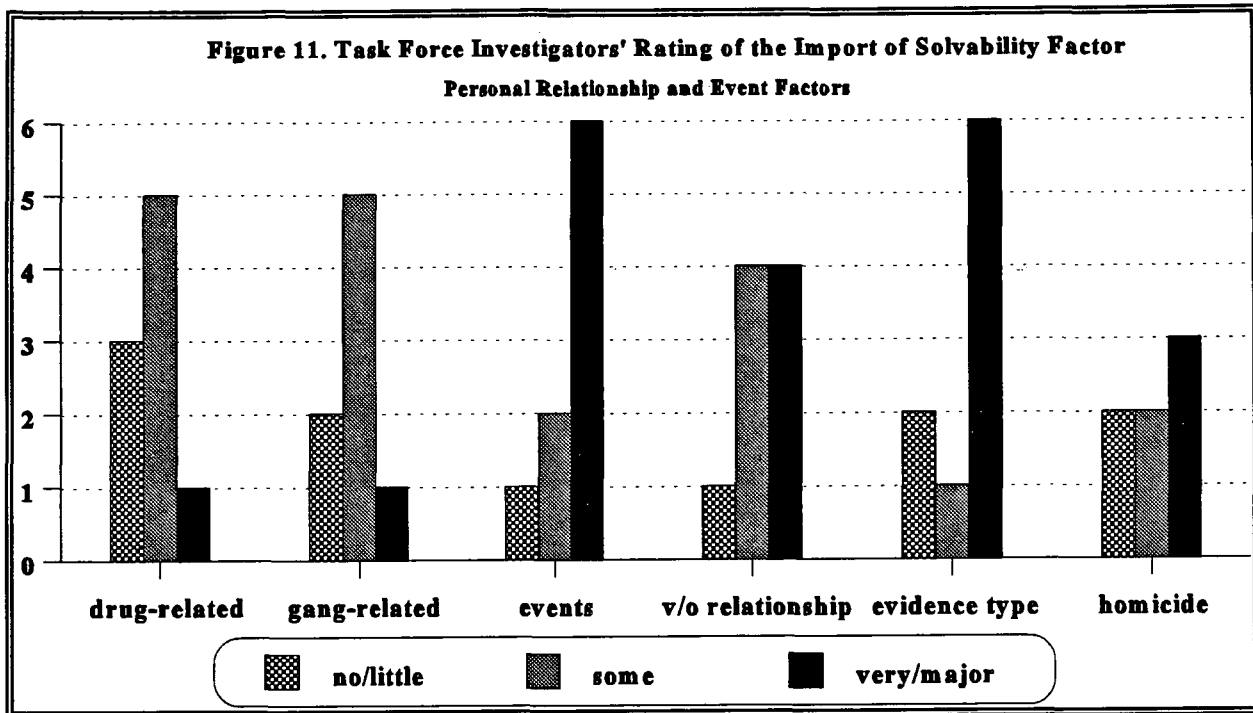
¹ Information on the presence of witnesses was not available in five cases.

Whether a case was considered drug-related appeared to have an impact on success; 76.3 percent of the drug-related cases were successful, 61.1 percent of cases not related to drugs were successful. Gang-related cases were less likely to be successful (55.6 percent success) than cases that were not gang-related (76.6 percent success).

Table 18 also shows the relationship between the age of the cases when the task force received them and case success. The task force was most successful with those cases one year old or older (82.4 percent success) and least successful with cases three days old or younger (60.0 percent success). The average age of unsuccessful cases was 171.8 days; successful cases averaged 907.3 days old. This pattern suggests that the case screening process used by the task force is effective in selecting solvable cases from among available cold cases.

The results of this exploratory analysis can be compared to the results obtained by two items in the interview protocol administered to task force investigators. Each task force investigators was asked to rate the relative importance of a variety of case solvability factors:

- the age of the case,
- how far the investigation had progressed prior to referral to the task force,
- type of victim/offender relationship and events surrounding the offense,
- whether the case involved a homicide,
- the major type of evidence in the case (testimonial versus physical),
- whether the offense was gang or drug related,
- the location of the crime,
- the support services available to the initial investigation, and,
- prosecutors' and judges' attitudes



Both the ISP and the Attorney General's Office component investigators were asked to rate the factors. (The rating form used is included in Appendix E.) The investigators were asked to rate each factor from one (of no importance) to 6 (of major importance).²⁰ Figures 11 and 12 summarize the results of those ratings. Figure 11 focuses on those solvability factors related to case events or the relationships among persons involved in the case. Figure 12 focuses on solvability factors related to the progress of the investigation and the individual law enforcement and legal system personnel involved in the case.²¹ The factor considered to be very important or of major importance by most investigators (seven) was the attitudes of prosecutors toward when to take a case to a particular stage in the judicial process. Six of the investigators considered the events surrounding the case, the type of evidence (physical versus testimonial), the age of the case, and the amount of progress made by the initial investigation to be very important or of major importance. Six investigators considered both the question of whether the case was drug-related or gang-related to be of at least some importance. The quality of the support services (e.g., crime scene technicians) available to the initial case investigators was considered of major importance by five of the investigators. Four of the investigators indicated the relationship between the victim and the offender was very important or of major importance and four considered that factor to be of some importance to the solvability of the case. There was much less agreement among the investigators about the relative importance of whether the case

²⁰ Not all investigators rated all factors. When the responses regarding a factor add to less than nine, one or more investigators did not rate that factor.

²¹ The 12 factors the investigators were asked to rate will be discussed together. They have been separated into two figures for ease of presentation.

involved a homicide or other type of crime, which agency provided the first response to the crime and the attitudes of judges toward the cases.

The analysis thus far has spoken of cases in the law enforcement sense of a case. For the task force, as for most law enforcement agencies, a case involves all criminal charges against all defendants arising from a single criminal event. The case is terminated from a law enforcement perspective when the suspects are arrested. As discussed above, using this definition of case, the task force handled 72 cases. Those 72 cases involved charges or potential charges against 105 suspects named in case files. Eighty of those suspects were arrested (77.8 percent).

At that point in the evolution of the disposition of a criminal case, the definition of case shifts to the court system's definition of case. Using this definition, a case is the collection of charges pending against a specific defendant. During the forthcoming discussion of the progress of task force cases, a case will be defined in the court system sense rather than in the law enforcement sense. Court cases proceeded against 72 of the 80 defendants (90.0 percent) when those 72 defendants were formally charged through indictment or information. At the time data collection for this evaluation ceased, the cases against 56 defendants had reached the stage at which a trial was concluded or the court accepted a plea bargain. The results of these 56 court cases are summarized in Table 19. The majority of the court cases (58.9 percent) against these defendants proceeded to trial; in 41.1 percent the court accepted a plea bargain resolving the charges against the defendant. In most of these cases terminating in a plea bargain, the defendants pled to their original charges (52.2 percent); in 47.8 percent of these plea bargains, the defendant pled to a reduced charge. Nearly all the trials conducted produced convictions.

Table 19. Court Cases Producing Plea Bargains or Leading to Trial

| Disposition | Number | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Plea bargain entered | 23 | 41.1% |
| Trial | 33 | 58.9% |
| Total | 56 | 100.0% |
| Type of Plea Bargain | | |
| Defendant pled to original charge | 12 | 52.2% |
| Defendant pled to reduced charge | 11 | 47.8% |
| Total | 23 | 100.0% |
| Result of Trial | | |
| Mistrial | 3 | 10.0% |
| Conviction | 30 | 90.0% |
| Total | 33 | 100.0% |

Table 20 shows the most serious charge for which defendants were sentenced as a result of either a plea bargain or a trial conviction. Fifty defendants were sentenced in task force cases. Most of the defendants sentenced, 30, were sentenced for first degree murder. Six of those thirty defendants were sentenced as the result of a plea bargain and 24 as the result of a trial. One task force attorney explained the high number of trials as the result of defendants in cold cases thinking the prosecution had little chance of winning a conviction and, therefore, refusing plea bargains that might have been taken by defendants in other cases. One defense attorney noted in most homicide cases there is little opportunity for negotiation because of the seriousness of the charge and the public profile of the case. The high percentage of trial victories in task force cases calls the defendants' purported reasoning into doubt. Defendants sentenced for charges less

serious than first degree murder were more likely to be sentenced as the result of a plea bargain than as the result of a trial.

Table 20. Charges for Which Defendants Were Sentenced after Trial or Pleas

| Most serious charge for which defendant was sentenced | Number | Percent | Plea Bargain | Trial |
|---|--------|---------|--------------|-------|
| First degree murder | 30 | 60.0 | 6 | 24 |
| Second degree murder | 4 | 8.0 | 3 | 1 |
| Attempted murder | 5 | 10.0 | 3 | 2 |
| Aggravated criminal sexual assault | 3 | 6.0 | 3 | 0 |
| Aggravated battery | 2 | 4.0 | 2 | 0 |
| Other ²² | 6 | 12.0 | 6 | 0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 23 | 27 |

The sentences given to task force defendants are summarized in Table 21.²³ Four defendants were sentenced to death and eight to life without parole. These 12 defendants were all sentenced for first degree murder. Forty-two defendants were sentenced to fixed terms of incarceration. Most of these defendants were sentenced for first degree murder. The four defendants sentenced to probation were convicted of an offense less serious than first degree murder.

²² This column does not include defendants sentenced to life.

²³ The number of sentences in this table does not equal the number of defendants because some defendants were given more than one sentence. For example, one defendant in a first degree murder case was sentenced to death, life without parole and 130 years incarceration.

Table 21. Sentences Given to Defendants in Task Force Cases

| Most serious charge for which defendant was sentenced | Death | Life Without Parole | Incarceration | Probation |
|--|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| First degree murder | 4 | 8 | 26 | * |
| Second degree murder | | | 3 | 1 |
| Attempted murder | | | 4 | 1 |
| Aggravated Criminal Sexual Assault | | | 3 | * |
| Aggravated Battery | | | 2 | 0 |
| Other ²⁴ | | | 4 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 8 | 42 | 4 |

* Under Illinois law, individuals convicted of these offenses are not eligible for probation (730 ILCS 5/5-5-3 (c) (2)(A) and (C)).

The task force attorneys and a number of the investigators voiced the opinion that task force cases produced heavier sentences than did other cases for comparable offenses. Table 22 compares the length of the sentences of incarceration given to defendants in task force cases with the terms of incarceration to which inmates were sentenced to the Illinois Department of Corrections in the years 1992-1995. The average length of sentence for task force defendants sentenced to incarceration for first degree murder was 51.7 years. The average sentence length for comparable IDOC commitments ranged from a low of 34.5 years in 1993 to a high of 37.6 years in 1995. The median task force defendant sentence was 47.5 years, greater than the largest median year for IDOC, 1995 with a median of 38.0. These comparisons appear to sustain the perception of task force personnel that their cases are producing longer sentences, at least cases in which the defendant is sentenced for first degree murder.²⁵

²⁴ This column does not include defendants sentenced to life.

²⁵ However, there is a possible alternate explanation for the disparity between the IDOC averages and the results achieved by the task force. The task force sentences still, in most cases, were pending

Table 22. Length of Terms of Incarceration for Defendants Sentenced in Task Force Cases

| Charge for which defendant was sentenced to incarceration | Years Sentenced to Incarceration ²⁶ | | | |
|---|--|--------|---------|---------|
| | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| First degree murder (n=18) | 51.7 | 47.5 | 20 | 130 |
| Second degree murder (n=3) | 25.7 | 17.0 | 10 | 50 |
| Attempted murder (n=4) | 24.3 | 18.5 | 10 | 50 |
| Aggravated criminal sexual assault (n=3) | 13.3 | 14.0 | 6 | 20 |
| Aggravated battery (n=2) | 9.0 | 9.0 | 4 | 14 |
| Other ²⁷ (n=4) | 11.3 | 12.0 | 3 | 18 |
| Defendants Sentenced to IDOC Commitment for First Degree Murder ²⁸ | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| 1992 (n=264) | 35.4 | 34.5 | 20.0 | 60.0 |
| 1993 (n=374) | 34.5 | 30.0 | 20.0 | 60.0 |
| 1994 (n=359) | 36.1 | 34.0 | 20.0 | 60.0 |
| 1995 (n=465) | 37.6 | 38.0 | 20.0 | 60.0 |

6. Conclusions - The Impact of the Task Force on Cases

The task force has taken 72 cases involving the investigation of crimes in St. Clair and Madison Counties. Most of these cases involved crimes eventually producing charges of first degree murder against suspects. Most of these cases were investigated to a conclusion. Most defendants charged as the result of task force investigations were either convicted or pled guilty

appeal. It is possible that the IDOC sentences average a smaller number of years due to sentence reductions mandated by appellate courts after review of the defendants' cases.

²⁶ This column does not include defendants sentenced to life.

²⁷ This column does not include defendants sentenced to life.

²⁸ Data obtained from the Illinois Department of Corrections, 1995 Statistical Presentation, p. 65. These figures do not include defendants sentenced to life.

and received sentences greater than state averages. Given that the task force took cases other law enforcement agencies felt were not progressing, the task force had a clear, positive impact on the cases they chose to handle.

However, it should be noted that the conclusion of the cases did not always result from the efforts of the task force. For example, 12 cases ended because the defendant or defendants died. The uneven state of the information regarding the extent to which a case had progressed prior to being taken by the task force makes it impossible to determine the relative impact of the Task Force's investigation on case resolution compared to the efforts of the law enforcement agency initially responsible for the investigation. In addition, the task force did not prosecute most of the court cases generated by task force investigations. Most of the court cases were prosecuted by a lead prosecutor from a State's Attorneys' Office with some level of assistance from the task force attorneys. No documentation existed to allow the evaluation team to assess the extent of the assistance provided by task force attorneys in these cases.

B. Task Force Impact on Law Enforcement, the Courts and Communities

In assessing the impact of the task force, evaluation project staff interviewed task force personnel, local law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys and community leaders. Areas of inquiry included their impressions of the effect of the task force on the behavior of local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, the ability of these local entities to deal with homicide and violent crime, and the perceptions of the public.

There is general agreement the work of the task force has enhanced the ability of the local prosecutors to gain convictions in homicides and serious crimes. Prosecutors, both from the local State's Attorney's Offices and the Attorney General's Office component, were especially

appreciative of the efforts of case agents in locating witnesses and assuring their presence for trial as well as other work in assisting in trial preparation. The witness skills of the case agents were also highly regarded by prosecutors and judges. Judges and prosecutors both felt the work of some local departments closely approximated the work of the task force case agents, while other departments fell far short due to either lack of expertise or resources. All agreed some undeterminable number of cases would have gone unprosecuted but for the task force.

The impact of the task force on the work of local law enforcement, particularly the East St. Louis Police Department, is difficult to assess other than anecdotally. The infusion of four additional homicide investigators into an area with an understaffed police department should have helped relieve the pressure on the local department. In fact, most task force personnel believe their presence has allowed the East St. Louis Police Department to focus more resources on current cases. Other factors may also allow the East St. Louis Police Department to focus on "hot" cases. As detailed in Section II during the period of the task force grant, the East St. Louis Police Department was able to make significant additions to its forces. Also, the homicide rate in East St. Louis has decreased over this period. Fewer homicides and a better staffed force should also free up time for East St. Louis officers to investigate current crimes.

Related to the previous discussion is the question of the Task Force's impact on the homicide rate in Madison and St. Clair Counties. Nearly unanimous agreement exists among those interviewed that the task force was a factor in the decline in the number of homicides in the two county region. There is also near unanimity that the precise impact of the task force is unknown. Along with the task force, the additional staff for the East St. Louis Police Department, the infusion of funds from river boat gambling and the Metro Link commuter train service, as well

as the plethora of other law enforcement initiatives operating in the area were mentioned as factors in the improving outlook for the area.

Several explanations of the Task Force's role in the declining homicide rate were offered. First, the task force was responsible for removing from the streets several persons who had killed more than one person. As illustrated in Table 23 below, 30 suspects had killed two people or more. Six suspects appear in more than one task force case, indicating a pattern of homicidal conduct. It is not illogical to infer that, if not stopped, these same people would continue to commit violent crimes. Second, as stated above, not only did the task force clear cases, it allowed the East St. Louis Police Department an opportunity to react more effectively to

Table 23: Frequency of Suspect Appearance

| Number of Victims Attributed to Suspect | Number | Percent |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| One | 49 | 62.0 |
| Two | 22 | 27.8 |
| Three or more | 8 | 10.1 |
| Total | 79 | 99.9 |
| Average: 1.7 Std. deviation: 1.2 | | |
| Mode: 1.0 Minimum/maximum: 1/7 | | |
| Number of Cases in Which Suspect Appears | | |
| One | 73 | 92.4 |
| Two | 3 | 3.8 |
| Three or more | 3 | 3.8 |
| Total | 79 | 100.0 |
| Average: 1.2 Std. deviation: .85 | | |
| Mode: 1.0 Minimum/Maximum: 1/7 | | |

new cases by freeing up the local department's resources from some time consuming cases. In order to assess the impact of the task force on the court system and the judiciary, the project staff

interviewed task force personnel, as well as prosecutors, judges and defense attorneys who were involved in task force cases. Inquiry was made about general behavior of the judiciary and differences in sentencing practices as compared to sentences in similar cases handled by local law enforcement. Members of the judiciary were also asked for their impressions of the work of the task force.

None of the individuals interviewed identified any differences in general behavior or demeanor on the part of the judiciary in task force cases when compared to other cases of similar magnitude. However, most task force members felt the task force was responsible, in some measure, for obtaining higher sentences than in similar cases emanating from other agencies. task force personnel felt the sentences were higher because their cases were better investigated and organized. The prosecutors, defense counsel, and judges interviewed generally disagreed with this assertion. They felt too many variables aside from task force involvement influence sentencing to allow any judgment about the impact of the task force on sentences. The nature of the crime and the past criminal history of the defendant were frequently cited examples of important variables which influence sentencing. These professionals did agree the extent to which a case is well investigated and prepared did influence the likelihood of a guilty verdict. There was also general agreement task force cases were well prepared, witnesses were present, and task force witnesses were polished and prepared. Also, one judge did reveal a way in which the clarity of guilt has an impact upon sentencing. He indicated the degree to which guilt is clear makes handing down a severe sentence easier because there is less concern about the verdict being overturned, since any error at trial would most likely be deemed harmless error by an appellate court.

The degree to which the number of requests to the task force from local law enforcement changed over time is difficult to ascertain. The task force did not keep records of the number of requests. Only the number of cases opened by the task force is available as a limited indication of the number of requests received. These numbers are addressed in Section IV and the related text. When task force members were asked about changes in the number of local referrals, responses were inconsistent. Those who believed requests increased believed increased local awareness of the task force accounted for the change. Those who believed requests had decreased gave one, or more, of the following reasons in support of their belief: (1) the task force has reduced the number of unsolved cases so the pool of potential task force cases was depleted; (2) local law enforcement was better able to handle the cases because of better staffing, or other reasons; (3) local law enforcement wanted to keep the cases locally because of competition with the task force; or (4) homicide is down in the area, thus reducing the pool of potential cases.

As evidenced in two St. Louis Post-Dispatch articles, victim's families and community leaders, especially in Metro-East St. Louis, were fed up with the violence and implored the community's support and participation in vigils and anti-crime rallies. The Metro-East Church-Based Organization (MECCO) and Families Advocating Safe Streets were two such groups initiating community events against violence.

A sampling of community members from Madison and St. Clair counties were interviewed regarding their awareness of the task force and their perception of the impact the force has had on their communities. Initial evaluation project design anticipated surveys of community leaders. Because of the small number of persons involved, interviews were utilized as a means of obtaining more detailed and complete information. The majority of community members stated

they were aware of the task force, however, their perceptions of its purpose varied. Some of the responses concerning the purpose of the task force included: conducting undercover police work to seize drugs and recover automobiles acquired through drug trafficking, investigating all major crimes, assisting smaller cities who lack the resources and personnel to handle major crime investigations, investigating homicides and domestic abuse that leads to homicide, and clearing unsolved homicides closed due to insufficient evidence.

All but one of those surveyed reported no changes had occurred in their perceptions of what the task force initially intended to achieve and current goals. One community member stated that the task force had come to be perceived by many as a solution to the East St. Louis law enforcement problems.

Of those interviewed, most rated the value of the task force as very important and necessary. The consensus was that many old cases would have remained untouched without the initiative of the task force.

Regarding its impact on the Madison and St. Clair County communities, responses ranged from the task force having no involvement, to significantly impacting a community. In the latter community, the interview subject referenced a twenty year old homicide that had been solved by the task force. One community member reported that the task force dealt with very public cases and was proactive in its approach. Another person interviewed stated that the task force was highly efficient, as evidenced by the increased number of arrests, convictions, and solved crimes. When asked for suggestions regarding the task force, a recurrent theme was to have more resources and people involved in the task force.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

task force participation resulted in several benefits to the State Police and the Attorney General's Office. All task force personnel identified one or more of the following three areas as a benefit: 1) clearance of cases which otherwise would have remained unsolved, 2) enhanced recognition and prestige for law enforcement in general and the State Police and Attorney General's Office in particular, 3) additional experience conducting homicide investigations or prosecutions.

Among those interviewed, there was a strong perception that the task force had an impact on the homicide and violent crime rate in both counties but particularly in St. Clair, the source of most task force cases. This impact cannot be empirically verified because of the multiple initiatives designed to reduce violent crime in St. Clair county operating simultaneously with the task force. In addition, there were major economic and demographic changes in East St. Louis which may have had an impact on the crime rate. However, support for the contention that the task force had an impact on the homicide and violent crime rates in the two counties can be inferred from the number of successful prosecutions to which the task force contributed, the number of multiple-murderers the task force prosecutions removed from the community, and the benefit the task force resources provided to local law enforcement and prosecutors operating with scarce resources.

Interview data suggest several elements were key to task force success:

- Experienced homicide investigators were available for the task force and the investigators had the added advantage of being familiar with the communities in which they operated.

- The task force mission provided the investigators with the resources needed to travel to conduct interviews and collect evidence. The ability to concentrate on a case without having to be diverted to more recent crimes allowed a level of concentration and specialization usually not possible in police departments.
- Identification of a pool of potentially solvable cases was facilitated by the hiring of an attorney general's investigator who had been a homicide investigator in East St. Louis law enforcement long enough to have stored in his memory a list of cases that he believed would have been solved had sufficient resources been available.
- Early successes gave the task force a reputation for reliability that led to more cases being referred to them and provided credibility with prosecutors and judges.

Evaluation of future initiatives similar to the task force would be aided by establishing the evaluation team early in the history of the unit. Then, the evaluation team would be able to have input regarding the data collection protocols to be established. In spite of the task force secretary's substantial efforts to anticipate evaluator data needs, much of the data needed to analyze this Task Force's impact on its cases had not been collected and could not be reconstructed in a timely fashion because the information was dispersed among local law enforcement, the task force and local prosecutors.

While the task force experienced many successes, the original vision of the task force was frustrated in two areas. One was the failure to gain significant participation from local law enforcement. The other was the under-utilization of the Attorney General's Office attorneys. The experience of the task force in these two areas should be carefully considered by any jurisdictions contemplating similar initiatives.

All parties agree the primary focus of task force operations was East St. Louis because of the severe per-capita homicide rate in East St. Louis and its high number of unsolved homicides. The program narrative and other program documents also bear this out. It was felt the task force could help address the crime problem through the insertion of its resources and skilled personnel. The task force also was to assist in improving the ability of the East St. Louis Police Department, and other police departments to deal with serious crimes by bringing local officers into the operation of the task force. The program narrative provided for the full time assignment of two East St. Louis police officers to the task force. However, the program budget did not allow any grant funds for the salaries of local officers. Thus, those costs would have to be borne by the local departments. When the task force was being conceived and when it began operations, the East St. Louis Police Department was understaffed and overwhelmed with the serious crime wave the task force was designed to address. In addition, the City of East St. Louis was in poor financial condition at this time. To expect the City of East St. Louis would be able to assign two officers to the task force and continue to pay their salaries given the conditions that existed during this time was unrealistic. Interviews of officials in other communities with better financial resources than East St. Louis revealed most could not afford to lose an officer and could not afford to replace an assigned officer. Also, officials in these communities generally felt it was not their responsibility to assign officers to a task force which they perceived as primarily concerned with another city's crime problem. If similar initiatives are undertaken in the future and if local participation is regarded as important, provision must be made for the payment of salaries for assigned officers.

While the under-representation of local law enforcement appears to be a mostly financial issue, the reduced utilization of the Attorney General's Office attorneys by local prosecutors and

by the State Police component of the task force appears more complex and subject to various interpretations. The original task force design contemplated a very active role for the Attorney General's Office attorneys in supporting local prosecutors. It was anticipated the Attorney General's Office attorneys would even manage and lead some prosecutions. In Madison County the role of the Attorney General's Office component was realized. All five task force cases which were prosecuted in Madison County included the Attorney General's Office attorneys taking the lead role in the prosecution. However, as anticipated when the task force was formed, the bulk of the task force investigations and prosecutions involved St. Clair County cases. During the course of the grant, only two St. Clair County cases involved the Attorney General's Office attorney as the lead prosecutor.

One possible explanation for the difference in utilization between Madison and St. Clair Counties may be related to familiarity with the Attorney General's Office lead prosecutor. Prior to coming to the task force, this individual had been employed as a special prosecutor in homicide and other serious cases by the Madison County state's attorney . Neither he nor any other attorney assigned to the Attorney General's Office component had a similar prior association with the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office. However, both the St. Clair County state's attorney and several of his assistant prosecutors acknowledged familiarity with and respect for the lead prosecutor's credentials. In fact, all persons interviewed who possessed any knowledge of this individual's credentials expressed great respect for his ability as a prosecutor.

The more likely explanation for the lack of utilization of the Attorney General's Office attorneys by the St. Clair County state's attorney appears to be a philosophical preference in favor of using local prosecutors. When asked about the small number of cases handled by the Attorney General's Office component, the St. Clair County state's attorney explained he has eight felony

prosecutors on staff. He expressed faith in their abilities and felt eight was usually a sufficient number to handle his office's cases. He pointed out he did transfer two cases to the attorney general's lead prosecutor when the State's Attorney's Office was temporarily short handed. He also noted they received background assistance from the Attorney General's Office in some cases. This supports his contention that he has faith in the abilities of the lead prosecutor and the staff of the Attorney General's Office. Also, the high conviction rate in task force cases by the St. Clair County state's attorney's prosecutors 21 convictions in 23 cases with two hung juries supports his contention they are capable of handling these cases.

For future initiatives similar to the task force, two recommendations are offered which might help avoid some of the frustrations experienced by the Attorney General's Office attorneys. First, prior to initiation of the project, it should be clearly established that the local prosecutor and any entity offering assistance to the prosecutor agree on the parameters of and conditions for the assistance. It does not appear this was done in the case of the task force. Second, the model of outside assistance to local prosecutors may be of more value in counties with staffs too small to handle current caseloads or where specialized expertise is not available in the local office and can be provided by the outside entity.

The original task force design also envisioned a substantial role for the Attorney General's Office attorneys in initial case screening and in the decision to proceed with investigation of a case. After less than one year, the involvement of the attorneys moved from regular to on an as needed basis as determined by the case agents or their squad leader. Several factors appear to have contributed to this change. The initial staffing of the Attorney General's Office component with a lead attorney who had no criminal prosecution experience eroded the faith of the State Police component in the ability of the Attorney General's Office attorney to make a positive

contribution to the process. Even after the lead prosecutor, with credentials respected by the State Police personnel, was placed in charge of the Attorney General's Office component, the attorneys were only involved on an as needed basis. The initial staffing of the Attorney General's Office component does not provide an explanation for the continuation of the limited role for the attorneys in the case screening and investigation processes. Two factors do appear to account for the permanent nature of the change. First, while the lead prosecutor's abilities were widely respected, he was not always available to the task force. Eventually, the State Police component exercised control of the case up to an arrest warrant after which control of task force activity shifted to the Attorney General's Office component. Second, as the task force developed, even the State Police component moved away from round table decision making and to a model that centered around joint consultations between the investigator and the squad leader in the early phases of case development and between the case agent and the squad leader for decisions after assignment to a case agent.

The internal decision making process which eventually took hold in the task force seems to have worked well. The division of labor recognized the areas of expertise of each component. In addition, the State Police component valued access to legal advice when needed. The source of the legal advice and the amount of resources devoted to the legal component were matters of disagreement among task force members. In future projects, a careful appraisal should be made of potential sources of legal consultation and, the costs and benefits associated with the various sources. For example, closer liaison with the local prosecutor might be the result of regular consultation with their office for legal advice. On the other hand, more regular contact could increase tensions by providing more opportunities for disagreement. Also, assignment of a particular member of the prosecutor's office as legal counsel to a task force might breed jealousy

and resentment among other members of the prosecutor's office. Each situation should be evaluated taking into consideration historical relationships and individual dynamics.

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