

SUSPENSION OF THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
ON
SUSPENSION OF THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY

OCTOBER 13, 1977

Serial No. 23



for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 1977

53620

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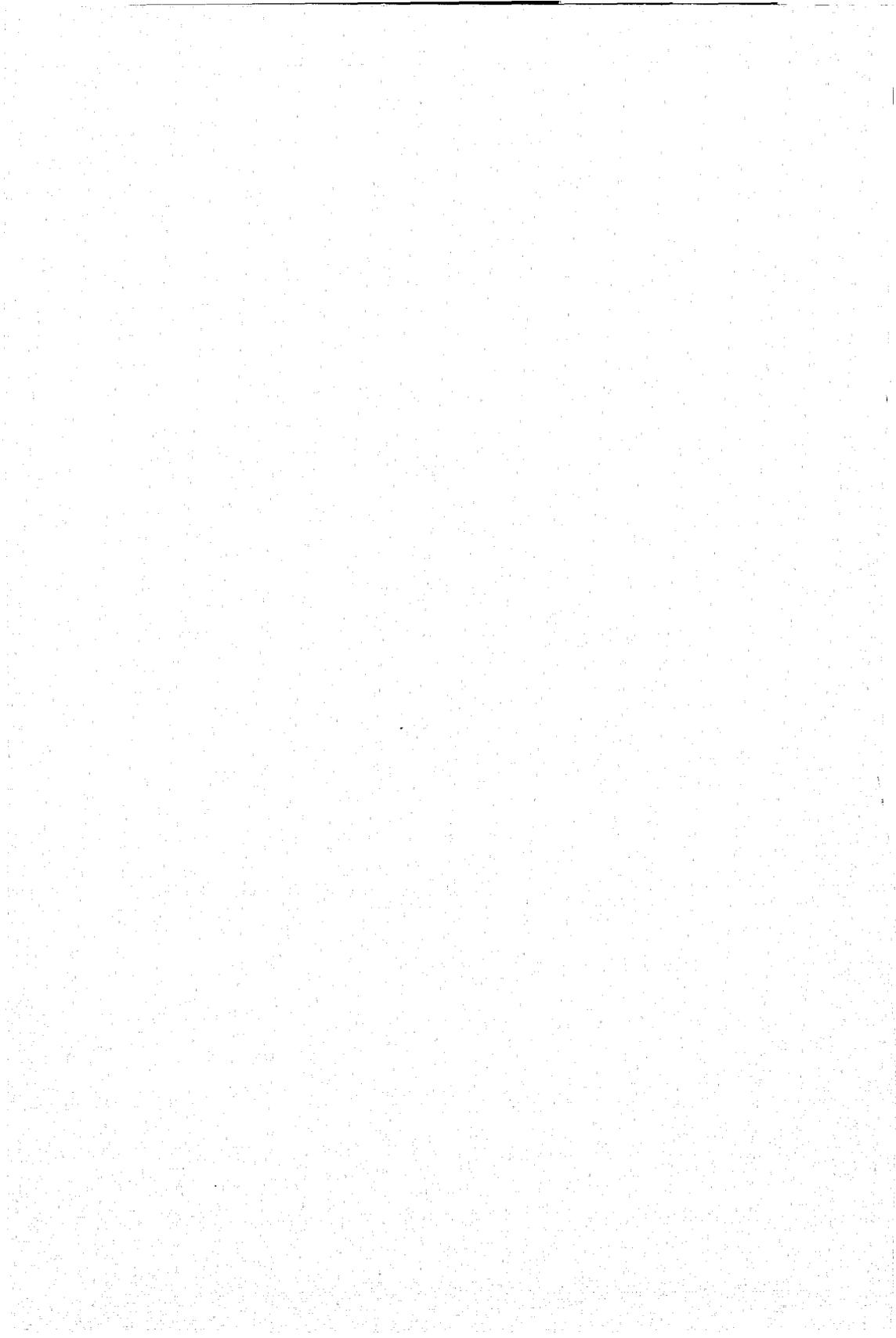
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SUSPENSION OF THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1977

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME
OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 1:15 p.m. in room 2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building; the Honorable John Conyers, Jr. (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Conyers, Gudger, Rodino, and McClory.

Mr. CONYERS. This is a hearing before the Subcommittee on Crime of the House Committee on the Judiciary. This hearing will consider the proposed suspension of the National Crime Survey.

As chairman of the subcommittee, I wish to apologize to all involved for the haste in which this hearing was called, but it seemed urgent and necessary that this subcommittee inquire into LEAA's proposed decision to suspend data collection for this country's only ongoing survey of the victims of serious crime.

This survey was designed to collect accurate statistics on the incidence and nature of crimes involving serious violence and property offenses.

Many of us are familiar with how it works, and according to those in the law enforcement community and in a variety of Government agencies, this victimization survey is far more accurate than the only other one we have—the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting mechanism—because, among other reasons, it enables the Government to obtain data on crimes not reported to the police.

With this in mind, the subcommittee is meeting here this afternoon to review the decision apparently made by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to suspend the National Crime Survey for a period of approximately 1 year.

Before proceeding, a little background, I think, might be appropriate.

On August 1, 1977, we learned that Acting LEAA Administrator James Gregg, had signed a memorandum approving suspension of the survey. Shortly thereafter, we wrote the Attorney General asking for clarification of his policy regarding victimization statistics, noting that his proposal to establish a Bureau of Justice Statistics incorporated the ongoing analysis and collection of victimization data.

Shortly thereafter, Deputy Attorney General Flaherty informed us that LEAA's decision was under review and that we could expect some decision shortly.

Having not received further communication from the Justice Department, this subcommittee was surprised to read in the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, and the New York Times of an interview with Acting Administrator Gregg, who announced that LEAA was suspending the survey because of serious questions about data collection, including the quality of the questionnaires that had been used.

We are obviously concerned about the confusion and delay which has surrounded this decision and whether it need really be made in the first instance, particularly at a time when this Nation needs an accurate barometer to measure crime if we are to gauge whether a real decrease in the crime rate is, in fact, going on.

It seems that the decision to terminate data collection raises very important questions which we hope to pursue today.

I am pleased that we are able to have with us today members of the user and statistical community to provide background concerning the merits of continuing to collect these statistics. We have on hand a representative from the Census Bureau, the Acting Administrator of LEAA, and many others.

Our first witness is Professor Stephen Fienberg, chairman of the department of applied statistics at the University of Minnesota, and chairman of the American Statistical Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Law and Criminal Justice Statistics.

We welcome Professor Fienberg.

I must note, however, that two bells indicate a recorded vote is taking place on the floor of the House, so, if you will permit me to do this, we will incorporate your statement, without objection, into the record.

I would now like to yield to my colleague from Illinois, the ranking minority member of the Judiciary Committee, whose time, I know is limited.

The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. McClory.

Mr. McCLORY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding, and I want to commend you on the convening of this meeting of the subcommittee. As you stated, I will not be able to remain to hear the testimony, although I want to indicate my keen interest in the subject of the hearing this afternoon.

Having testified earlier with regard to the plight of the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency, it strikes me that the entire program of Law Enforcement Assistance Agency is being jeopardized by unilateral and hasty actions which appear to be taking place. This apparent decision to discontinue the National Crime Survey would seem to me to be a most serious and a most unfortunate step, if carried out, and I hope that either this activity will be retained or something better will be established.

The thing that strikes me about the decisions being made with respect to LEAA is that we have an apparent decision to restructure, to replace LEAA with something else, but that something else is very vague and uncertain.

As you and I know, there is room for improvement, but there is a very great need for improvement within LEAA, and for expansion of LEAA and its functions—not for its elimination, or for that matter, suspension of any of its vital activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CONYERS. I thank my colleague for joining me here, and I note that the gentleman from Illinois was for many years a member of this subcommittee, whose overriding concern with LEAA and the research institute in particular is going to cause him to monitor these hearings very thoroughly.

The subcommittee will take a 10-minute recess.

[Brief recess is taken.]

Mr. CONYERS. The subcommittee will come to order.

Welcome, again, Dr. Fienberg. We have your statement, and we are prepared to hear any additional views that you may have.

[The prepared statement follows:]

VICTIMIZATION AND THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY: SHOULD DATA COLLECTION BE SUSPENDED?

(By Stephen E. Fienberg, Department of Applied Statistics, School of Statistics, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minn.)

SUMMARY

The National Crime Survey (NCS) was begun in 1972, under the sponsorship of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), to develop new information on the incidence of crime and its impact on society. The NCS is viewed by experts in the area of crime statistics as an important innovation which has great potential to provide new information for policy makers. The design and implementation of the NCS are of a relatively high statistical quality, and in this sense the NCS is superior to other data series collected by the Justice Department. While the NCS has many shortcomings, they are not sufficient to justify the suspension of data collection. Indeed, a careful consideration of the flows in the NCS should lead logically to a policy of continuing support for basic victimization data collection, and special attention to methodological and other improvements. A short-term interruption of data collection will have long-term consequences on the utility and interpretation of national victimization information. The arguments put forth by LEAA in support of such a suspension are not adequate to sustain the LEAA decision.

I believe that a suspension of data collection for the NCS during fiscal year 1978 would do irreparable damage to the NCS in particular and to LEAA and the Department of Justice more broadly. This is especially true in light of current of Justice efforts to develop a framework for a new Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Qualifications

My appearance before this Subcommittee is a result of my professional and academic research interests in the National Crime Survey. I received my Ph. D. in Statistics from Harvard University in 1968, and have subsequently taught at Harvard University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Minnesota, where I am currently Professor and Chairman of the Department of Applied Statistics.

I am a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, and the Royal Statistical Society. I have served for five years on the Social Science Research Council's Advisory and Planning Committee on Social Indicators and on its Subcommittee on Criminal Justice Statistics. I am also Coordinating and Applications Editor of the Journal of the American Statistical Association, and Chairman of that Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Law and Criminal Justice Statistics.

My own research interests include data collection and statistical analysis in the area of criminal justice. I recently prepared a detailed critique of the design and implementation of the National Crime Survey of the limited resources devoted to its analysis.

While I cannot speak for the Social Science Research Council, the American Statistical Association, or the University of Minnesota, I can note the significance attached to the NCS victimization data by professionals within the statistical community, and by those interested in basic information on crime, how criminal victimization is changing over time, and how victimization is related to other demographic variables and social conditions.

The NCS and other criminal justice data series

The National Crime Survey (NCS) was initiated in July of 1972 by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to measure the annual change in the incidence of crime in a set of major categories, and to characterize aspects of the reported events and their victims. The NCS has been heralded as the most important new data series introduced by the Federal Government in the past decade, and is clearly the most important innovation in the area of crime statistics since the 1930's. It has the potential to provide policy makers with new insights into the causes of crime and the effectiveness of various criminal justice and law enforcement programs.

The Department of Justice is responsible for several major national data-collection programs including the Uniform Crime Reports (through the Federal Bureau of Investigation), the Drug Enforcement Administration Addict Reporting Program, the National Prisoner Statistics Program, the Uniform Parole Reports, and the National Crime Survey to name a few. In my opinion, no other data series collected under the auspices of the Department of Justice even approaches the quality of the NCS.

The NCS has been designed and executed for LEAA by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. It includes personal interviews at six-month intervals with individuals in up to 65,000 households. As such it is one of the largest ongoing surveys in the United States, and it receives continual attention from the many professional statisticians employed by Census. It is the high quality of the NCS design and its implementation, as well as the careful documentation produced by Census staff, that has allowed me and others to prepare detailed criticisms of the NCS. Only data series that meet such a relatively high standard allow for and warrant careful statistical critiques.

The NCS and national unemployment statistics

It is of special interest to note that the sample design and structure of the NCS closely resemble those of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is also conducted by the Bureau of the Census. The CPS is the source of official national unemployment statistics released each month by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Many of the problems with and criticisms of the NCS are equally valid with respect to the CPS and the unemployment data. Moreover, we can probably make rough estimates of victimization with the same degree of accuracy as that which we associate with many statements about unemployment.

There are two difficulties with such NCS-CPS comparisons. First, we simply don't have as much experience with victimization data as we do with unemployment data. Second, in many ways we are asking more and deeper substantive questions about victimization than we do about unemployment. Thus the defects of the NCS appear to be greater than those of the CPS. Nonetheless, the similarities between the two surveys are important to keep in mind.

The proposed suspension of NCS data collection

A suspension of data collection for any statistical time series brings with it many dangers and problems, and in the case of the NCS these are more severe than is at first apparent. The basic sampling structure of the NCS is that of a panel study, in which each participating household location supplies information over a full 3½-year period. Breaking off the NCS data collection for nine months during fiscal year 1978 will have the effect of forcing panel construction to begin anew. It was only in January 1977 that the balanced panel structure of the NCS became fully operational, despite the fact that data collection commenced in 1972. Thus the NCS balanced panel will not be fully operable again for at least 4½ years from suspension of data collection, even though the actual suspension is only for nine months.

The impact of a nine-month suspension becomes of even greater concern when we recognize the change in the sampling frame that will take place following the 1980 Census. As a result, a nine-month suspension of data collection might easily be parlayed into as much as an eight-year gap between time periods involving a fully-balanced panel structure.

Even if one were to accept the loss of information and accuracy associated with a relatively brief suspension of NCS data collection, one must recognize that the real dollar costs for NCS are not appreciably less with the suspension than without. When these real costs are coupled with the lasting impact a suspension would have on Census field collection activities, it is hard to imagine the powerful nature of the arguments marshalled in support of the suspension plan.

I am the first to admit that there are many flaws in the NCS, and that the victimization data it produces are not as useful as they could be, both for policy purposes and for fundamental research into crime and its social causes. Suspending data collection during fiscal year 1978 is simply not a reasonable way to cure these problems. In fact I believe that the problems will get worse as a result of the suspension, not better. The most reliable way to make methodological and other improvements in the NCS is in the context of an ongoing survey. Research and analytic activities must go hand in hand with data collection. This is the only rational way to interpret the recommendations in the report of the National Academy of Sciences' Panel. It was in this spirit of an ongoing and ever-improving survey that I prepared my own critique of the NCS.

LEAA's justification of suspension

It is my understanding that there are five reasons offered by LEAA in support of the suspension of victimization data collection. Because I find these reasons inadequate to support the decision to suspend, I list them here, following each one with my own reflections on the issues involved.

1. The joint LEAA/Census Research Committee is considering changes in the most fundamental aspects of the victimization surveys, such as reference period, time in sample, series and multiple victimizations, and basic questionnaire design.

While I applaud the creation of such a committee, and am completely in sympathy with its goals, I do not understand how the existence and support of such a research program is an argument in support of the suspension of victimization data collection. Indeed, I believe the opposite is true.

First, one must realize that the process of creating appropriate statistical methodology capable of dealing with fundamental design problems of the NCS requires considerable time. While first-rate statistical staff at the Bureau of the Census have been hard at work for at least two years on modeling and analysis aspects of the NCS with regard to reference period and time in sample, they have yet to arrive at an optimal choice for both which will maximize the accuracy of the victimization data collected. It may well be that Census will find a good solution to this set of problems in the next year, but it is hard to see how such solutions could be implemented in time for the resumption of data collection in fiscal year 1979.

Second, the relationship between series and multiple victimizations is extremely complex, and is one that I, myself have been exploring in my own research work. Recent analyses by Albert Reiss Jr. of Yale University are the first I know of which begin to point to technical problems in NCS reporting, but no one has yet developed statistical models relating series and multiple victimization in a way that suggests how they may be better handled in the future.

Third, and most important, if and when research leads to suggestions of fundamental design changes in the NCS, the evaluation of the changes must take place in the context of an ongoing survey. Criminal victimization in the United States is a dynamic social process. Were the process static, we could make a change (i.e. abandon the old method and adopt the new) and assess its impact by comparing old and new levels. But because victimization is dynamic, and because our measuring instruments are both fallible and subject to substantial sampling variability, we can only compare the old with the new by doing both at the same time. This is one of the fundamental concepts of experimental control in statistical thought. Without a continuing victimization data base, we have no sound basis to assess the effects of any design changes in the NCS.

Finally, while I am not privy to detailed budget information, it is my impression that the actual level of funding available for basic research on fundamental design changes in the NCS under the suspension plan is actually less than that currently available. This hardly seems supportive of a major research effort.

2. LEAA needs to concentrate resources on the analysis of already collected victimization data, and on promoting maximum use of victimization public use tapes.

Encouragement of widespread use of victimization public use tapes is a wise course of action only if LEAA can give proper advice on the use of the tapes. At the moment, I don't believe that it can give such advice, nor do I see much evidence of a concentration of resources on the analysis of data from the NCS national panel. To my knowledge there is only one group outside of LEAA currently doing such analysis. Moreover, given the time lags between the prepara-

tion and submission of proposals and their funding, and given the nature of the national panel data of the NCS and the organization of the tapes, sensible new analysis projects outside of LEAA (if they were funded) could not reasonably begin until fiscal year 1979. The alternative to outside analysis is work within LEAA, and there is no apparent LEAA capability for such statistical work.

I am one of the strongest advocates of careful statistical analysis of the NCS data, but, despite the competition for scarce resources, I cannot understand how the initiation of such analysis could be used as an argument in support of even a temporary suspension of NCS data collection efforts.

3. LEAA is planning to fund the evaluation of random-digit dialing and computer-assisted telephone interviewing as an alternative to the current methods in use at Census.

As I noted above, the proper evaluation of procedural changes such as this can only take place in the context of an ongoing survey. That one would wish to suspend the current data collection in order to fund certain forms of telephone surveys is especially surprising given the knowledge we have already gathered about them. A research report on the NCS I recently read notes that: "Personal interviews produce higher rates of series and nonseries victimization per 1000 interviews than do telephone interviews. In the aggregate, personal interviews are 50 percent more productive of victimization incidents than are telephone interviews." Because the use of telephone interviews in the NCS is at the discretion of the interviewer, it is extremely difficult to separate out the personal-telephone interviews effect from design features of the NCS.

In light of this evidence, and similar evidence from other unrelated surveys, it would be folly to attempt to evaluate the utility of a telephone survey of victimization without a careful comparison with the ongoing NCS panel. (The only published study I know of which compares telephone and personal interviewing for victimization used unbounded interviews, and as a result is unreliable. I understand that Census has done an experiment comparing personal and telephone interviews in conjunction with the NCS, but the results are not yet available.)

Additional problems such as residential mobility appear to preclude the use of an exclusively telephone survey of victimization except as a cross-section, and this would sacrifice the tremendous advantages of bounded interviews in the current NCS structure.

4. LEAA has been unsuccessful in getting the Bureau of the Census to modify its disclosure policy on microdata files.

While I understand LEAA's concern on this point, and see the problem of disclosure of microdata files as a serious one, I don't believe that this can be used as a reason for recommending suspension of victimization data collection. Before suspension is considered, someone should have in mind an alternative data collection method that will also provide usable data for state and local users with tolerable associated sampling variability.

What most people don't understand is that to get precision in a survey at the state or local level equivalent to that of a national survey, one needs to have a sample of about the same size. It is difficult to see how anyone at a local level could make effective use of data pertaining to his locality from a national victimization sample, for policy analysis and program development. We are dealing with a phenomenon (victimization) that requires relatively large samples for even the most rough inferences.

Nonetheless, Census does provide specialized tabulations involving microdata on request, even though it won't prepare public use tapes for local areas. This should suffice for most users, and seems to be a reasonable compromise that avoids violation of Census disclosure policy.

5. LEAA now has three years of data from the victimization surveys (1973-1975) and preliminary data for 1976 which indicate no significant changes in victimization rates for most crime categories.

If the Uniform Crime Reports showed little change in offense rates over a three-year period no one would propose to suspend their collection. I can't see why this argument is any more suitable for the NCS, even if we accept the argument that there has been no significant change in recent years.

Only data for 1973 to 1975 have been published so far, thus I have not yet seen figures for 1976. My own examination of the 1973-75 data suggests several changes in criminal victimization rates of potentially profound significance. First, the NCS data do exhibit some dramatic increases from 1973 to 1975. For example, personal larceny without contact (the most common personal crime of theft) shows

a 5.3 percent increase, household larcenies show a 17.3 percent increase, and commercial burglaries show a 12.2 percent increase. In each case most of the increase is attributable to the change from 1973 to 1974. To properly interpret these and other rate changes we need continuing data.

Second, the NCS was created at the tail end of a period of rapidly rising crime rates in essentially all categories. UCR data suggest a slowdown in the rise of various crime rates over the past five years, and collateral demographic information suggests that the population age-shift we are now experiencing might actually lead to a downturn in crime rates. These observations are consistent with the curvilinear pattern that appears to be present in many of the NCS crime categories. Several more years of equally accurate data will be necessary to distinguish between a stable series of estimates and a curvilinear trend in the estimates. It is important to have a way of measuring crime in the United States at this juncture in our development, which is unrelated to administrative data produced by our police departments and agencies, and which can be used as a check on the UCR.

Finally, since the full maturity of the NCS panel structure first occurred in January of this year, we must recognize that the earlier data (for 1973-76) may be contaminated by errors of unknown but substantial size. Thus, it is difficult to accept a conclusion that victimization rates have remained remarkably stable without adding a long list of qualifying statements.

TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN E. FIENBERG, PROFESSOR AND CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED STATISTICS, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION'S AD HOC COMMITTEE ON LAW AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS

Professor FIENBERG. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My appearance before the subcommittee is the result of both my professional and my academic research interest in the National Crime Survey.

My connection with the survey has come up in several different ways. In part, through my membership on the Social Science Research Council's Advisory and Planning Committee on Social Indicators and its Subcommittee on Criminal Justice Statistics; in my capacity as an editor of the Journal of the American Statistical Association, for which I review articles by professional people at Census and report on the work that they have done in connection with the survey, and also in connection with that Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Law and Criminal Justice Statistics.

While I cannot speak for the Social Science Research Council, the American Statistical Association, or the University of Minnesota, I can note the significance attached to the National Crime Survey by professionals within the statistical community and by those interested in basic information on crime and criminal victimization.

The National Crime Survey was initiated in July of 1972 by the LEAA and has been heralded by many as the most important new data series introduced by the Federal Government during the past decade.

It is clearly the most important innovation in the area of crime statistics since the 1930's and has the potential to provide policymakers with new insights into the causes of crime and the effectiveness of various criminal justice and law enforcement programs.

In my opinion, no other data series collected under the auspices of the Department of Justice even approaches the quality of the National Crime Survey.

The survey has been designed and executed for LEAA by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and includes personal interviews at 6-month intervals with individuals in up to 65,000 households. As such, it is one of the largest ongoing surveys in the United States, and it receives continual attention from the many professional statisticians employed by census.

It's the high quality of the National Crime Survey design and its implementation, as well as the careful documentation produced by Census staff, that have allowed me and others to prepare detailed criticisms of the National Crime Survey.

I want to note very emphatically that only data series that meet such a relatively high standard allow for and warrant careful statistical critiques.

It's of special interest to point out that the sample design and structure of the National Crime Survey closely resembles those of the Current Population Survey, which is also conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

You and other members of the subcommittee are aware of the Current Population Survey, primarily because it is the source of the official national unemployment statistics released each month by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Many of the problems associated with the criticisms of the National Crime Survey that have been discussed in recent months in connection with the proposed suspension are equally valid with respect to the Current Population Survey and unemployment data, and it's important to bear in mind the similarities, even though there are difficulties with such comparisons.

First, we simply don't have as much experience with victimization data as we have with unemployment data; and, second, in many ways we are asking more and deeper substantive questions about victimization and crime than we do about unemployment.

Thus, the defects of the National Crime Survey appear to be even greater than those of the Current Population Survey, when, in fact, we don't really know that this is the case.

A suspension of data collection for any statistical time series brings with it many dangers and problems, and in the case of the National Crime Survey these are more severe than are first apparent. The basic sampling structure of the National Crime Survey is that of a panel study, and I would be happy to elaborate on what that means a little later on, if you would like. In this panel study, each participating household location supplies information over a full 3½-year period. Breaking off the data collection for 9 months during fiscal year 1978 will have an effect of forcing the construction of this panel to start anew, and a balanced panel structure—what census aims at by building up and introducing new members into the panel on a regular basis—would not be fully operable again for at least 4½ years from suspension of data collection, even though the actual suspension is only going to be 9 months long.

The impact of the 9 months' suspension becomes of even greater concern when you recognize the change in the sampling frame. By that, I mean, the list from which the households are drawn for the sample. That's going to take place following the 1980 census. As a result, the 9-month suspension of data collection might easily be

parlayed into as much as an 8-year gap in effective data between time periods involving a fully balanced panel structure.

Now, even if one were to accept the loss of information and accuracy associated with a relatively brief suspension, one must recognize that the real dollar costs for the National Crime Survey are not appreciably less if the type of research that LEAA has proposed to do is actually done with the suspension than without. When these real costs are coupled with the lasting impact a suspension would have on census field collection activities and other aspects of the survey, it's hard to imagine the powerful nature of arguments that can be marshaled in support of the suspension.

Now, I am one of the first to admit that there are many flaws in the National Crime Survey and that the victimization data it produces are not as useful as they could be, both for policy purposes and for fundamental research into crime and its social causes.

Suspending data collection during fiscal year 1978 simply is not a reasonable way to cure these problems. In fact, I believe the problems will get worse, not better, as a result of the suspension.

The most reliable way in which to make methodological and other improvements in a survey such as the National Crime Survey is in the context of an ongoing survey. Research and analytic activities must go hand in hand with data collection. This is the only rational way to interpret the recommendations in the report of the National Academy of Science's panel, and it was in the same spirit of an ongoing and ever-improving survey that I, myself, prepared a critique of the National Crime Survey.

I have been shown a memorandum prepared by officials of LEAA, which offers five reasons in support of the suspension of the victimization data collection, and in the prepared material that I am submitting for the record, I have listed these reasons, following each with my own reflections on the issues involved.

I find these reasons inadequate to support the decision to suspend. I believe that a suspension of data collection for the NCS during the fiscal year 1978 would do irreparable harm to the National Crime Survey, in particular; and to LEAA and the Department of Justice, more broadly.

This is especially true in light of the current Department of Justice efforts to develop a framework for a new Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Thank you.

Mr. CONYERS. I appreciate your evaluation.

First of all, are you receiving any funds from LEAA?

Professor FIENBERG. No, I am not.

Mr. CONYERS. You stated that the basic structure of the National Crime Survey is that of a panel of households which supply information on a 6-months' basis for 3½ years. Apparently though if NCS is suspended, a balanced panel will not be fully operational for perhaps another 4½ years.

What is the nature of the balanced panel and why is it desirable?

Professor FIENBERG. Well, to understand what goes on in the survey you have to compare the NCS with the kind of survey we normally think about when we talk about sample surveys. That is one where someone with a field staff goes out and collects information from different samples of people at several points in time. Then a comparison

is usually made across time about rates of victimization in an area such as burglary.

What we are talking about here with the National Crime Survey is quite a different structure, where household locations are selected and everybody in that household is interviewed every 6 months for a 3½-year period. That means we have detailed information for individual people running for a full 3½ years.

Now, in the sense of the National Crime Survey, the panel structure has important implications. First, it allows census to fix when reported incidents really take place. If a respondent reports a burglary to a household in the last 6 months to an interviewer, the interviewer can say, "Well, you reported a burglary to me the last time I came to interview. Is this the same one?" This telescoping of events is a very important phenomenon. You have to separate out those victimizations that belong outside the reference period from those that belong inside.

Second, by using this complicated panel structure, Census can get better estimates of variability associated with the samples. That means they can make more accurate statements about change from one point in time to the next.

Third, and most important from my own perspective, this panel structure allows people, both at Census and elsewhere, to ask very deep questions about the phenomena of crime and victimization and the relationship between offenders and victims. When you can follow an individual across time, you can ask questions about multiple victimization. You can ask about those who are being victimized over and over again across a period of many years. This type of information is unavailable from other forms of survey work.

Mr. CONYERS. Thank you.

May I ask how this termination, although for a relatively brief period, could have the impact of interrupting the survey for a considerable number of years?

Professor FIENBERG. Well, if you cut off the survey, you don't go out into the field for 9 months or a year or a year and a half, and you don't ask these respondents what is going on in that period of time. Then you have to start up all over again, and to start up without an enormous expense requires a gradual buildup, introducing each month a new group into the panel, until the panel reaches full size.

Mr. CONYERS. Does it invalidate the presently collected information?

Professor FIENBERG. That's the other thing that is very crucial. All the information that we have been collecting on people who weren't scheduled to go out of the panel at the end of this calendar year will be cut off, and the value of the previously collected data, even if some of these people are introduced into the panel again, will be put into jeopardy in terms of this longitudinal data.

Mr. CONYERS. Finally, Professor, can you put your finger on some of the methodological problems that, according to press reports, the Acting Administrator referred to as a basis for the interruption of the survey?

Professor FIENBERG. There are two that I have been especially interested in, and one of these has to do with the recall period.

When you interview a person in a sampled household, it's important to have a reasonable time period to ask him about, whether it's 1 month

or 2 months, 3 months—currently, we are talking about 6 months in this survey, and that is being called into question.

A second and very important methodological problem has to do with multiple victimization, and its ramifications for reporting. The issue of multiple victimization is one that is quite open, and it is very difficult for me to see how anyone is going to be able to resolve those issues without ongoing data from the survey.

There is a limited amount of data in hand already, but until we have been collecting data for a long period of time, its value in this context will be minimal.

Mr. CONYERS. Have you heard anything about the random digit dialing proposal, or are you prepared to comment on that technique.

Professor FIENBERG. I know something about it. The proposal is for a cross-sectional survey, so it doesn't have the panel structure and, as a result, people are not going to be asked more than once about their behavior over time. This has many of the problems I pointed out before. Random digit dialing is in some sense cost-efficient, but the information that will be available is not comparable, in my opinion, to the information that would be available from the current Census survey operation.

Mr. CONYERS. You referred to the unemployment statistics, which have always been a source of some discomfort for me. I am impressed with the National Crime Survey for the reason that many people have said it is a new attempt to obtain information in an area for which, historically, there has been so little information coming forward. We definitely need something more substantive than the crime figures reported by local law enforcement agencies, whose quality must ultimately depend on the reporting practices of those agencies.

On the other hand, with regard to unemployment figures, we have a great problem. The underreporting of unemployment rates has been a source of embarrassment across several administrations, and those figures have come into increasing disrepute.

Can we separate the methodology used in gathering unemployment statistics from the crime survey?

Professor FIENBERG. I think so. Indeed, I mentioned I had prepared my own criticism of the National Crime Survey, and in that I suggested some alternatives. I think the difficulty is that it requires a lot of experience in the field to understand what form of sample will be appropriate. As a result, adopting the sampling structure from the Current Population Survey was a natural first step for the National Crime Survey. In conversations I have had with staff at Census, they have told me that they are looking into other survey sample structures that would be of greater value, especially in the context of victimization, which is just a different phenomenon than unemployment.

Mr. CONYERS. I am glad to hear that, because I consider myself to be one of the more vocal critics of the imprecise nature of unemployment statistics. It seems to me that the Current Population Survey could be easily improved. Unlike the NCS, I presume that there is no continued followup in unemployment statistics.

Professor FIENBERG. No, there is the same panel rotation structure for unemployment as well. It is not reported in that way in terms of the news releases, or the way in which people make use of the informa-

tion, and that's part of the difficulty. Unfortunately there is little difference in the manner in which data have been reported from the national victimization survey. If one were to read a release, or a newspaper article, or even an in-depth story in a Sunday news magazine on the survey, one would not learn very much about the panel structure and the fact that some people were giving information on victimization over an extended period of time.

Mr. CONYERS. I want to thank you, Professor Fienberg.

We have a copy of your paper titled "Victimization and the National Crime Survey: Problems of Design and Analysis" which will be printed as an exhibit in the record.

[The above-mentioned paper follows:]

VICTIMIZATION AND THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY: PROBLEMS OF DESIGN AND ANALYSIS¹

(By Stephen E. Fienberg,² University of Minnesota)

Technical Report No. 291

ABSTRACT

The National Crime Survey (NCS) was begun in 1972, with funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, to develop new information on the incidence of crime and its impact on society. The survey includes personal interviews at 6-month intervals of approximately 60,000 households, and of the residents therein, making it one of the largest and most expensive ongoing surveys in the United States today.

This paper begins with the description of a single hypothetical incident in order to clarify the differences between offense and victim rates, and to motivate the concept of a survey of victims of crime. Subsequent sections review the design, execution, and analysis of the NCS survey, and describe some models for analyses of NCS data. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the basic design structure of large-scale social surveys.

Key words and phrases.—Longitudinal analysis; Panel studies; Point processes; Social surveys; Survey design; Victimization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime and its impact on society have long been the subject of public interest and social concern. While the study of crime has proved profitable to social scientists over the years, the limitations of police crime statistics (e.g. see Biderman and Reiss 1967) have always been viewed as being so great as to make it virtually impossible to measure criminality in a population. Hood and Sparks (1970) note that "Questions about criminality, like those about sexual behavior, are especially liable to distorted and untruthful answers." Thus it was with great anticipation that the social science community heralded the adoption of survey research methods to find the victims of crime, and to learn of their experiences. As a result of some small-scale attempts at victim surveys in the United States and Great Britain, and after considerable planning and preparation, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) initiated a major new social statistics series based on a national victimization survey.

The primary purpose of the national victimization survey, as stated in a planning document developed by LEAA, is: "to measure the annual change in crime incidents for a limited set of major crimes and to characterize some of the socio-economic aspects of both the reported events and their victims."—(Penick and Owens 1976, p. 220)

¹A version of this paper was presented at the Second Survey Sampling Symposium at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, April 14-17, 1977.

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Henceforth, we refer to this survey as the National Crime Survey (NCS), but the reader should bear in mind that the focus of the NCS is upon victims and their experiences with crime, not the crime itself.

Actually the NCS consists of four separate surveys: (1) a continuing national survey of household locations, (2) a continuing national survey of commercial establishments, (3) a separate set of single or duplicated surveys of household locations in selected cities, (4) a set of city commercial surveys to parallel (3). In this paper we restrict our attention solely to the continuing national survey of household locations.

The NCS has been designed and executed for LEAA by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and it includes personal interviews at 6-month intervals with individuals in up to 65,000 households. Given the magnitude of the NCS and the massive files of data collected since the initial field work began in mid-July of 1972, it is remarkable that the NCS has received so little attention from professional statisticians outside of the Bureau of the Census.

Central to an examination of victimization and the concepts underlying the NCS is the notion of a crime or criminal incident and how it gets recorded by various criminal justice agencies. The dictionary definition of crime offers little in the way of a starting point. For example, a recent edition of the Random House Dictionary defines crime as: "an action or an instance of negligence that is deemed injurious to the public welfare or morals or to the interests of the state and that is legally prohibited."

To shed some light on this matter, Section 2 describes in detail a single criminal incident, and notes how it would be recorded in statistics gathered by the police and in the NCS.

Section 3 contains a brief summary of the survey and questionnaire design of the NCS, and describes some aspects of its execution. Special attention is focused on the panel structure of the survey design, with a rotation plan for households. The major shortcomings of the design are then noted. Section 4 is brief and it summarizes the published analyses from the NCS. The lack of LEAA resources devoted to the statistical analyses of NCS data was one of the principal findings of the Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys appointed by the Committee on National Statistics (Penick and Owens 1976, p. 3). This report contains considerably more detailed descriptions of the NCS survey and questionnaire design than we provided here. It describes the developmental research behind the design, and it suggests areas for further investigation. The report's conclusions overlap considerably with ours regarding the need for extensive ongoing methodological research.

Any assessment of the NCS must look at its objectives and determine to what extent they are being met. The primary purpose of the NCS as described above actually has several components:

1. To measure the incidence of crime.
2. To measure the changes in crime rates over time.
3. To characterize socio-economic aspects of criminal events and their victims. Closely related to item 3 are the aims—
4. To identify high-risk subgroups in the population and to estimate the rate of multiple victimization.
5. To provide a measure of victim risk.

From its inception the NCS was viewed as a multi-purpose survey that would produce only the general-purpose victimization rates described above, but also data for policy-oriented problems, e.g.

6. To calibrate the Uniform Crime Reports data produced by the FBI.
7. To index changes in reporting behavior
8. To measure the effectiveness of new criminal justice programs. (The city surveys were initiated for exactly this reason.)

To determine if the NCS properly fulfills aims 1 through 4, special attention needs to be focused on questions that utilize the longitudinal structure of the NCS. Section 5 outlines a number of substantive questions regarding victimization and victim-survey methodology that in principle should be answerable by analysis of NCS data. A major stumbling block to the successful completion of these analyses is the highly complex NCS survey structure, designed to produce descriptive statistics rather than data amenable to analytical studies of interrelationships and their changes over time. Although the NCS is a rotating panel in form, the primary purposes of the panel structure are to get more stable rate comparisons from one period to the next, and to bound the time frame under consideration.

2. RECORDING CRIME

Criminal incidents are events or social encounters involving one or more offenders and one or more victims, in one or more locations for specified periods of time. The duration of a single criminal incident may be 10 minutes, an hour, a day, a week, or even a month. Nonetheless, when put into a larger time-frame a criminal event is quite profitably viewed as the realization of a point process distributed over time and space, and we do so in Section 5. What complicates the modelling of a large number of crimes is the interpenetrating social networks linking offenders and victims, both within a single incident and across several incidents, and giving rise to multiple offending and multiple victimization. Reiss (1977a) describes some of the impact of such networks and associated group structures on crime rates with special attention to the implications for measuring the effects of deterrence and incapacitation. The stochastic structure of criminal social networks and the resulting lack of independence of criminal incidents also has potentially important implications for both the design and analysis of victimization surveys. It is for this reason that we discuss some first steps in the stochastic modelling of victimizations for individuals over time in Section 5.

How one records crime is a function of one's perspective. A single criminal incident or social encounter can involve one or more offenders, one or more victims or possibly no victims at all, and multiple violations of the law leading to multiple indictments of a single offender or several offenders who have participated in the event. There may even be mutual offending and victimization, e.g. in cases of assault. Thus a particular configuration of crimes aggregated over a given time period may well look dramatically different when viewed from the perspective of offense rates as opposed to victimization rates, and neither set of rates is likely to reveal the true nature of the criminal events that have taken place.

A single hypothetical example can illustrate the complexity associated with criminal incidents and the manner in which they are recorded. A young couple living in the household of the woman's parents in Stamford, Connecticut go to New York City on December 31 to celebrate New Year's Eve. They park their car in a lot on the east side of Manhattan and have a leisurely dinner at a nearby restaurant. After dinner when they return to their car, they are accosted by five young males just outside the parking lot and are taken into an adjacent alleyway, at approximately 11:00 P.M. One of the youths threatens the couple with a revolver, and the other four take turns raping the woman. When the woman resists, one of the youths assaults her with a knife, and then he also assaults the man. Following the acts of rape the youths take the woman's purse and the man's wallet, and they appear to flee. It is now about 1 a.m., January 1. The couple have to travel several blocks to report the incident to the police. When they finally return to the parking lot with a police officer at 3 a.m., they discover that their automobile is missing. A week later three young males are stopped by police in Newark, New Jersey driving the couple's car through a red spotlight and they are arrested.

The incident just described involved five offenders, two victims, three arrests and numerous offenses including forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and motor vehicle theft. It spanned several hours (and two calendar years!) and took place in at least two locations. How would it be classified by various recording systems?

Let us begin with the police record of the event as it is transmitted to the FBI for use in its Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). In a multiple offense situation, the police classify each offense, and then locate the offense that is highest on the list of what is known as Part I Offenses (the ranking is criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft). The highest offense is entered and the others are ignored. Multiple offenses need to be separated in time and place to lead to multiple entries in the UCR. The exception to this rule involves crimes against the person (criminal homicide, forcible rape, and aggravated assault) where one offense is entered for each victim. Thus the UCR record will contain one offense of forcible rape (against the woman) and one offense of aggravated assault (against the man). Had the youths only robbed but not assaulted the man, there would only be one offense entered. These offenses would be recorded by the New York City police, and I am unclear as to which day (and thus which year) they will be attributed to. The UCR record will also show that the offense(s) have been cleared (i.e. "resolved") by the arrest of the three youths in New Jersey. Although this event led to one or two UCR offenses, it might well lead to the prosecution of the five youths on up to a total of five counts of rape, 10 counts of aggravated assault and of robbery, and 5 counts of motor vehicle theft.

Suppose now that the couple's household is chosen as part of the NCS so that the event will also be recorded from the victims perspective. Both the man and woman would be interviewed separately and the NCS would record two victimizations in December: one for the woman "assaultive violence with theft—rape", one for the man "assaultive violence with theft—serious assault with weapon." Even if the man had only been robbed but not assaulted there would still be two victimizations recorded (as compared with a single offense). Moreover, because of the separation of household victimizations from individual victimizations, when the woman's father reports the household victimizations, he may well report the theft of the car separately, and the month of victimization may be given as January, and thus it could go into a separate calendar year.

In summary, our single criminal incident involving 5 offenders and 2 victims, leads to 1 or 2 offenses recorded in New York and 2 or 3 victimizations recorded in Connecticut. The perspectives are clearly different, and so too are the records of the event.

Because a large proportion of criminal incidents are never reported to the police, the discrepancy between all criminal offenses and those reported to the police has been described by Biderman and Reiss (1967) as the "dark figure" of crime, and one of the original purposes of victimization surveys was "to bring more of the dark figure to statistical light." Biderman and Reiss go on to note:

"In exploring the dark figure of crime, the primary question is not how much of it becomes revealed but rather what will be the selective properties of any particular innovation for its illumination. As in many other problems of scientific observation, the use of approaches and apparatuses with different properties of error has been a means of approaching truer approximations of phenomena that are difficult to measure.

"Any set of crime statistics, including those of the survey involves some evaluative, institutional processing of people's reports. Concepts, definitions, quantitative models, and theories must be adjusted to the fact that the data are not some objectively observable universe of "criminal acts," but rather those events defined, captured, and processed as such by some institutional mechanism."

Much controversy has centered on the comparability of police statistics on offense rates and NCS survey statistics on victimization rates (e.g. see Biderman 1967, Biderman and Reiss 1967, Penick and Owens 1976, p. 152-4, and U.S. Department of Justice 1976b), but the utility (or lack thereof) of NCS data for such comparisons should not obscure the richness of information about victimization available in the NCS. It is for this reason that the NCS data must be collected and organized in a manner that will make it amenable to standard forms of statistical analysis. Otherwise the rich veins of information, on such topics as high-risk segments of the population and multiple victimization, or the way that deviance is perceived and dealt with in various social contexts, may never be mined.

3. DESIGN OF THE NCS

3.1 Sample Design

The NCS is a sample survey of households and their occupants, and as such it closely resembles the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is also conducted by the Bureau of the Census, in almost all aspects. In fact, descriptions of the designation of housing units for the CPS (e.g. see Thompson and Shapiro 1973) are almost identical to those for the NCS (e.g. see U.S. Department of Justice 1976a, 1976b), the major exceptions being the sample sizes, the interview schedules, and the panel and rotation group structures.

The structure of the NCS is that of a stratified multistage cluster sample: The first stage consists of dividing the U.S. into approximately 2,000 primary sampling units (PSU's) comprising counties or groups of contiguous counties. The PSU's are then separated into 376 strata and one PSU is selected from each stratum with the probability proportional to population size. Within each PSU so selected, a systematically chosen group of enumeration districts is selected, and then clusters of approximately four housing units each are chosen within each enumeration district. For 1973, this process led to the designation of about 80,000 housing units, and interviews were obtained from occupants of about 65,000. Most of the remaining designated housing units were vacant or otherwise ineligible for inclusion in the NCS.

The basic sample is divided in 6 subsamples or rotation groups of a little over 10,000 households each. (Actually there are 7 subsamples, but the data for the newest one are not incorporated into the reported rates. Rather these data are used for bounding purposes, as described in Section 3.3). The occupants 12 years of age or older are interviewed at six-month intervals for a total of three years. Every 6 months a new rotation group enters the sample and the "oldest" existing

rotation group from the previous sample is dropped. Each rotation group is divided into 6 panels, with one panel being interviewed in each month of the 6-month period.

For estimating various rates a series of weights and adjustment procedures are applied to the raw data. The weighting procedures are standard practice for surveys of this sort and are basically designed to adjust for the differential probabilities of including various household locations in the survey, and to reduce bias and variance of sample estimators. The final adjustment involves the use of ratio estimation so that the distribution of individuals (or households) in the sample is in accord with independent estimates of the current population in each of 72 age-sex-race categories.

By reporting only adjusted rates, for both the NCS and the CPS, Census has removed from public scrutiny many of the actual defects of the sample design when it is actually implemented. Since all aggregate counts have essentially the same totals for various categories we can never tell when a given sample is badly off the mark, and in what directions.

Although the NCS is basically a sample of household locations, at the same time it yields both a sample of households or families and a sample of individuals. Household locations are of little substantive interest in the study of victimization. While the NCS allows for the study of differential rates of victimization by type of household location (e.g. house, apartment, rooming house, mobile home), not one of the 100 tables in the LEAA report for 1973 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1976b) deals with such information. The primary reason that the NCS is a sample of locations rather than households or individuals appears to be because Census has available a detailed frame only for locations.

The NCS primarily measures victimization while the CPS primarily measures employment and unemployment. Since both unemployment and victimization are relatively rare phenomena, a naive person might suggest a sample design that has proved successful for measuring unemployment should, with only minor modifications, do a good job of measuring victimization. Such a suggestion is naive because, among other things, it ignores the considerable knowledge we have available regarding crime and its physical as well as socio-economic characteristics. In central cities, crime rates vary dramatically from block to block, and a limited amount of field work might lead to cluster boundaries that differ dramatically from those that would seem appropriate for unemployment. It may well be that the NCS sampling plan is most sensible given budgetary constraints, but an exploration of alternatives and variants to the current plan should probably be included in Census' research, development, and evaluation program.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire administered every six months at each household location consists of two parts: (a) a basic screen, and (b) crime incident reports. The basic screen includes household location information, household or family information, the personal characteristics of all the individuals in the household (who may change from interview to interview), plus household or individual screen questions on crime. The report of the Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys (Penick and Owens 1976) gives a detailed critique of the basic screen, and we refer the interested reader to their discussion. For each crime incident detected by the screen, a crime incident report containing answers to almost 100 questions is completed.

The questionnaire distinguishes between individual identifiable incidents, and series of at least three similar incidents which the respondent is unable to separate in time and place of occurrence. For individual victimizations, the questionnaire records the month in which the crime took place, but for series victimizations the respondent only needs to indicate the quarter(s) in which the incidents took place (i.e. spring, summer, fall, winter), the number of incidents (3-4, 5-10, 11+, or don't know), and the details for the most recent event in the series. We discuss the distinction between single and series victimization in more detail in Section 4, where we note how Census treats series victimizations and why we believe series victimizations should be the topic of extensive analytical investigation. What is unclear to us from published documents and various unpublished memoranda is the extent to which series victimization is a true phenomenon or an artificial construct resulting from the NCS questionnaire design.

Not only does the NCS questionnaire solicit information on the details of an incident, the offender, and any resulting physical injury and how it was treated, but it also inquires whether the incident was reported to the police and if not, why not.

3.3 Reference Period and Bounding

One of the most crucial problems in the design of a victimization survey is eliciting accurate information on the time of occurrence of criminal incidents. The problem has at least two components:

(a) *Recall decay*.—The longer the time lapse between a criminal incident and the date of interview, the greater the probability that the event will not be reported to the interviewer.

(b) *Telescoping*.—Events occurring in one time period can be reported as occurring in a different one. The displacement of telescoped events can be forward or backward in time.

It is especially difficult to model recall decay and telescoping, since much evidence seems to point to differential rates of decay and telescoping for different types of crimes, and for different types of respondents. Moreover, there can be no check on a crime that has never been reported, either to the police or the NCS. Thus the only way to get a handle on these two phenomena is via a sample of crimes reported to the police and the subsequent inclusion of victims of these reported crimes in a victim survey. Such "reverse record checks" were part of the pretests of the NCS survey instrument (see U.S. Department of Justice 1972, 1974). The problem with drawing inferences from reverse record checks is that they are aimed at data which are missing from the victimization survey, but which are not missing at random (see Rubin 1976 for a discussion of the importance of the missing at random assumption).

A consideration of both recall decay and telescoping is necessary for the determination of the optimal reference period for a victim survey. The NCS reference period is 6 months, and Census uses the first interview and 6-month period of a household location for bounding, i.e. establishing a time frame to avoid duplication of incidents in subsequent interviews. For a detailed study of the effects of bounding on telescoping see Murphy and Cowan (1976). A major problem in the design of the NCS arises because the bounding procedures bound household locations, not households nor individuals.

If one household replaces another during the course of the 3-year period during which a location is included in the NCS sample, there is no bounding for the new household or of its members as individuals. Murphy and Cowan (1976) report that unbounded households in returning rotations groups comprise (for 1974-75) 13.3 percent of the interviewed sample. In addition only about 95 percent of the interviews in the bounded households are themselves bounded due to considerable transience for households in heavily urban areas. As a result, as few as 20 percent of the individuals over a 3-year period in a given set of household locations may produce complete victimization records for the period. These design characteristics drastically impair the utility of the NCS data for longitudinal analysis of individual victimization profiles.

Considerable methodological interest is centered on the differences in victimization experience for migrants and non-migrants. In addition to follow-up studies of out-migrants (which are quite costly); it seems reasonable to do special analyses of the in-migrants to the sample locations since their data is already in the NCS (see Penick and Owens 1976 and Reiss 1977b). For every out-migrant household there is an in-migrant one. Of course the current lack of bounding for in-migrants would complicate such analyses, but it should be feasible to do a special study of in-migrants where a bounding period would be included along with additional interviews beyond the standard 3-year period for the household location.

4. PUBLISHED ANALYSES OF THE NCS DATA

Not only does the formal responsibility for the design and execution of the NCS lie with the U.S. Bureau of the Census, but the analysis of the collected data is also the responsibility of a small staff of Census employees. This analysis by LEAA and Census involves the periodic preparation of two- and three-dimensional cross-tabulations of estimated victimization rates and estimates of their standard errors. The cross-tabulations produced are basically those requested in advance by professional staff at LEAA, and not as a result of a more detailed and complex statistical analysis.

Suppose for simplicity that NCS employed a simple random sample and that the data (which are primarily categorical in nature) for any year were analyzed using some variant of loglinear model analysis for a k-dimensional cross-classification (e.g. see Bishop, Fienberg, and Holland 1975). Then one of the implications of finding a model that gives a good fit to the data would be that the

k-dimensional table may be succinctly summarized by a series of tables of smaller dimension, from which the original table can be reconstructed with essentially zero information loss. Such analyses can thus provide a rationale for reporting certain cross-tabulations and not others. This point is described in more detail in Fienberg (1975). Even though the NCS does not employ simple random sampling, the idea of careful statistical analyses leading to the choice of cross-tabulations to be published is one which should be considered more seriously by LEAA and Census.

How many reports has LEAA published on the results of the NCS national household sample? As of December 1976, several preliminary but only two final reports had been released: a 162-page report on the 1973 survey (U.S. Department of Justice 1976b), and a much briefer 73-page report comparing findings for 1973 and 1974 (U.S. Department of Justice 1976a). Since both final reports also contain data on separate commercial surveys, the interested reader is left with very slim pickings from what appeared to be a sumptuous meal. Moreover, these two reports contain only weighted data or proportions. No raw counts are available. Thus it is almost impossible for the skilled statistician to do extensive secondary analysis of the published data.

When preliminary versions of the 1973 report were distributed by LEAA, several investigators noted that series victimizations were not included in the computation of any published rates or calculations. Thus all reported numbers and rates of victimization may be severe underestimates. For example, LEAA estimated for 1973 (U.S. Department of Justice 1976b) that there were approximately one million series victimizations in the personal sector and just over 20 million victimizations not in series. A series consists of three or more victimizations, and an average of 5 victimizations per series is likely an underestimate for the NCS data. (Some calculations based on an unpublished tabulation suggest that the average is in excess of 6 victimizations per series.) This then means that at least 20 percent of all victimizations in the personal sector have been excluded from the reported calculations. This matter becomes even more serious when we note that in 1973 46.3 percent of all personal series victimizations involved crimes of violence while only 26.6 percent of all victimizations not in series, and that series victimizations may have accounted for over one-third of all crimes of violence.

We note that despite the panel structure of the survey, LEAA has yet to make use of the full longitudinal structure of the data base. The construction of a panel tape tracking individuals and households over time was not deemed to be a central goal of the NCS, and the preparation of such a tape was only belatedly arranged through a contract with a group at a private university. It might be argued that the panel structure of the NCS sample is intended to handle certain technical problems and to give more accurate year to year comparisons, and not for longitudinal analysis of individual files. This can be true in only this narrowest of senses because without a detailed longitudinal analysis we can never know whether the aggregate annual reported victimization rates are at all accurate. For example, Reiss (1977b), reporting on some preliminary longitudinal analysis, notes that highly victimized individuals are much more likely to be out-migrants than those with low victimization rates, and series victims are more likely to move than non-series victims. Moreover, a high percentage of individuals reporting series victimizations in a given 6-month period report no victimizations in the subsequent 6-month period. These observations call into question the accuracy of the published victimization rates.

5. MODELING VICTIMIZATION

To understand reported annual victimization rates and the implications of changes in them from one year to the next, we need a detailed understanding of how victimization varies among individuals and subgroups within the population. This detailed understanding will necessarily have to come from the analysis of disaggregated data, and of individual victimization records over time. Such analyses will be complicated by the complex structure of the NCS sample design, but the effects of stratification and clustering on analyses will vary greatly from problem to problem. For many problems the use of unweighted data may well simplify the modeling process. This is clearly the case if we are interested in the structure of individual reported victimization patterns over time.

The Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys gives several suggestions for analytic research on the existing NCS data. One of these suggestions deals with the relationship between series victimization and multiple victimization, a topic we discussed in Section 4. To investigate this relationship, however, we need

models for the occurrence of victimizations over time, and we propose one such model here in Section 5.2. A second suggestion deals with analyses to investigate under- and overreporting of incidents as they relate to the month of incident and the month of interview. We take up some aspects that need to be considered in such analyses next in Section 5.1.

5.1 Reporting Biases and Time-in-panel

For several characteristics on which data are collected in the Current Population Survey, Bailar (1975) notes that there is a higher level for the first interview than for succeeding ones, and so on. The effect of such variation is usually referred to as "rotation group bias", and there is reason to expect such biases in the NCS data as well. In the NCS the rotation group bias problem is compounded by several factors including the elapsed time between the incident and the interview (recall that interviews provide data for the preceding 6-month period).

What we would like to do is develop a model which compares the victimization rates for specific crimes for a series of reference months as a function of the number of interviews, the time-lag from incident to interview, and other possibly relevant temporal variables. We build up to this in stages.

In Table 3-1 we show the list of panels being interviewed by month of collection for a full 3-year collection cycle, where the months have been labelled from 31 to 66. Panels 1-6 form a subsample that was first interviewed in months 1-6 (we ignore the initial interview for bounding purposes here) and leaves the sample after the interviews in months 31-36. Note that the difference between the month of collection and the number of a panel being interviewed equals the number of months the panel has been in the sample (time-in-panel). All three variables bear examination in terms of their effect on reported rates.

The time-in-panel variable yields the rotation group bias information, while month of collection measures seasonally and other unique temporal effects, and panel number represents temporal characteristics and effects unique to those that entered the sample at the same time. The formal identity linking these three variables is the same as that linking age, period, and cohort as described in Fienberg and Mason (1977), and any model using all three as independent variables needs to take into account the identification problem associated with the linear components of the effects.

TABLE 3-1.—AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE NCS PANEL ROTATION STRUCTURE

Collection month:	Panels being interviewed												
	1	7	13	19	25	31	37	43	49	55	61	66	
31	1	7	13	19	25	31							
32	2	8	14	20	26	32							
33	3	9	15	21	27	33							
34	4	10	16	22	28	34							
35	5	11	17	23	29	35							
36	6	12	18	24	30	36							
37		7	13	19	25	31	37						
38		8	14	20	26	32	38						
39		9	15	21	27	33	39						
40		10	16	22	28	34	40						
41		11	17	23	29	35	41						
42		12	18	24	30	36	42						
43			13	19	25	31	37	43					
44			14	20	26	32	38	44					
45			15	21	27	33	39	45					
46			16	22	28	34	40	46					
47			17	23	29	35	41	47					
48			18	24	30	36	42	48					
49				19	25	31	37	43	49				
50				20	26	32	38	44	50				
51				21	27	33	39	45	51				
52				22	28	34	40	46	52				
53				23	29	35	41	47	53				
54				24	30	36	42	48	54				
55					25	31	37	43	49	55			
56					26	32	38	44	50	56			
57					27	33	39	45	51	57			
58					28	34	40	46	52	58			
59					29	35	41	47	53	59			
60					30	36	42	48	54	60			
61						31	37	43	49	55	61		
62						32	38	44	50	56	62		
63						33	39	45	51	57	63		
64						34	40	46	52	58	64		
65						35	41	47	53	59	65		
66						36	42	48	54	60	66		

Since each interview collects data for the preceding 6-month period, for each reference month there are a total of 36 distinct panels which provide data. For example, panels 1, 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31 provide data with a one-month lag for month 30 during collection month 31; panels 2, 8, 14, 20, 26, and 32 provide data with a two-month lag during collection month 32; and so on. Thus the ensemble of 36 victimization rates for a given reference month can be modeled as a function of month of collection, time lag to reference month, panel number, and time in panel (as well as various additional independent variables such as education and race if we wish to compare subgroups of the sample).

Of course we need to model several reference months simultaneously if we are to use all of the independent variables at once. If we in addition use reference month as an independent variable than we have an additional identification problem related to the identity involving reference month, collection month, and time-lag until interview.

To analyze and model data using the variables just described we need to know whether we can treat the data for different reference months from the same panel as being independent. Moreover, it is unclear whether we should use rate as the response variate or counts of victimizations (e.g. the number of respondents with 0, 1, 2, . . . victimizations), and whether we should use weighted or unweighted data.

Models of the sort we have just described need to be explored carefully if we are to get a proper handle on such problems as rotation group bias, memory decay associated with recall, etc. Modeling these phenomena separately (as in Bailar 1975, and Finkner and Nisselson, 1977) when they in fact occur simultaneously should only be the first step in an analysis, since it may lead to improper inferences unless there are order-of-magnitude differences in the sizes of their effects. What is especially troublesome with any attempt to model these phenomena is that we can only deal with individual victimizations, and not series even though the latter may make up a sizeable proportion of the total reported victimizations in a given period.

5.2 A Model for Multiple Victimizations Over Time

Most of the models that have been proposed for victimization assume that each individual has an "annual" victimization rate λ_i for crime type i , and that the expected number of victimizations the individual will experience for crime type i in a fixed period of time, T , is simply $\lambda_i T$. This is, of course, the expected number if we assume that victimizations follow a Poisson process. Since victimization is a rare event, in order to test the Poisson model we need to pool individuals into groups expected to have similar values of λ_i . Those victimization studies that have looked at victimization distributions for fixed periods of time and for subgroups of the population typically find that the Poisson model gives a poor fit. This may be an artifact of the data collection procedure, it may be a result of not using a fine enough disaggregation, or it may in fact be the result of the inappropriateness of the Poisson process.

One more general structure for modeling victimization as a point process is the semi-Markov process, which includes the Poisson process as a special case. In this structure we view victimization as a point process $\{Y(t), t > 0\}$ where $Y(t) = j$ if the individual were last a victim of crime type j . If the process is semi-Markov (see for example, Çinlar 1975), then it has transition probabilities

$$p_{ij}(t) = Pr\{Y(t) = j \mid Y(0) = i\},$$

where i and j run over the possible types of crimes, say $1 \leq i, j \leq r$. These transition probabilities can be expressed directly in terms of two sets of quantities:

(a) a matrix of one-step transition probabilities governing a discrete-time Markov chain, $M = \{m_{ij}\}$, which represent an individual's "victimization propensities" given his current victimization state,

(b) a family of waiting time distributions, $\zeta = \{F_1(t), F_2(t), \dots, F_r(t)\}$, characterizing the inter-victimization intervals and depending on the last type of victimization.

The transition probabilities are the unique solution of the system of equations

$$p_{ij}(t) = \delta_{ij}[1 - F_i(t)] + \sum_{k=1}^r \int_0^t f_i(s) m_{ik} p_{kj}(t-s) ds \quad (5.2)$$

where $i, j = 1, 2, \dots, r$,

$$\delta_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1 & i=j \\ 0 & i \neq j \end{cases} \quad (5.3)$$

and $f_i(t)$ is the probability density corresponding to the distribution function $F_i(t)$. When the distributions $F_i(t)$ are exponential the process reduces to a time-homogeneous Markov one, and when, in addition, the probabilities $\{m_{ij}\}$ are independent we get a set of Poisson processes.

In order to use this general semi-Markov model for the NCS data we need to see how the one-month-at-a-time data collection framework of the NCS can be embedded in the structure of the continuous time model. This problem resembles one explored by Singer and Spilerman (1974, 1976a, 1976b), who have used the semi-Markov process model of equations (5.1) and (5.2) for investigation occupational mobility.

In their work they have placed special emphasis on the embeddability of fragmentary multi-wave panel data into a class of continuous time Markov models, and the identification problem within that class of models.

The use of this class of models in the context of the NCS is complicated by the fact that as few as 20 percent of all individuals have full three year records. Moreover, it is unclear whether we need to take into account the complexities of the sample design when we try to model the victimization histories of individuals with common socio-demographic and geographic characteristics. A final complication in the NCS data is the existence of series victimizations, which illustrate a strong propensity for rapid and repeated victimization of a specific type. Analyses based on underlying continuous time models certainly should include both series and separate individual victimizations.

6. DISCUSSION

The two models described in the preceding section have not been exploring with the NCS data, even in a preliminary form. They do, however, illustrate the problems involved in the analysis of data from the NCS when the purpose of the analysis is to provide estimates of aggregate victimization rates. While some have argued that modeling of this sort is unrelated to the primary objectives of the NCS, we disagree. First, we believe that an understanding of the basic structure of the panel data produced by the NCS is crucial to a proper evaluation of aggregate victimization rates.

Second, the detailed stochastic modeling of individual records is required to directly meet one of the NCS objectives described in the Introduction of this paper: to identify high-risk subgroups and to estimate the rate of multiple victimization. Third, a reading of various documents about the NCS makes clear that it is in fact a multi-purpose survey, and substantive issues and concerns need to be properly articulated so that the NCS design may be appropriately modified.

Because the NCS is similar in sample design to many other large-scale social surveys such as the CPS, the National Housing Survey, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, it shares with these other surveys various methodological problems associated with data analysis and inference. For example, the weighting procedures used to get aggregate victimization rates and estimates of standard errors, are not necessarily appropriate for other analytical purposes. To solve these problems, statisticians must develop variants of various multivariate techniques appropriate for the analysis of data from complex surveys. At the same time they must work toward the development of survey designs that are especially amenable to classes of analytical purposes, or at least to specific forms of analysis.

Our evaluation of the NCS is well summarized by the following excerpt from the Report of the Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys (Penick and Owens 1976, p. 152) :

The panel has found much to commend, and much to criticize, in the design and execution of the NCS to date. We have argued that a very great amount of methodological and developmental research must be done, and many changes in existing procedures must be made, if certain of the specific initial objectives of the surveys are to be accomplished. The panel also maintains, however, that those objectives themselves need further scrutiny and that a subtle but fundamental change in the official concept of victimization surveying is necessary if the potential value of this relatively new research method is to be fully realized.

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Mr. CONYERS. The subcommittee, for purposes of a vote taking place on the floor, will stand in recess for approximately 10 minutes.

[Recess.]

Mr. CONYERS. The subcommittee will come to order.

We welcome again Dr. Marvin Wolfgang, who is no stranger to us. He is director of the Center for Studies in Criminology and Law at the University of Pennsylvania, and author of numerous books and research papers in the field of criminology.

We apologize for the lateness with which you were asked to join us, but it was no shorter or longer than any of the other witnesses were afforded.

Thank you for coming.

**TESTIMONY OF DR. MARVIN WOLFGANG, PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR
OF THE CENTER FOR STUDIES IN CRIMINOLOGY AND LAW,
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Dr. WOLFGANG. Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here again.

The victimization survey, or the National Crime Survey, conducted by the Bureau of the Census for LEAA, represents the most sophisticated effort, albeit with some faults, to obtain systematic, nationally comprehensive information on the extent and types of crime undertaken in any country anywhere at any time.

I shall not review the history and rationale that prompted the establishment of the national crime panel survey, for surely they have been laid before this committee already.

I have been involved with some of that history and participated at the Bureau of the Census in early discussions about the items to appear on the schedule used by the census enumerators, and I was a member of the National Academy of Sciences panel that reviewed and evaluated those surveys.

It is on the basis of this past scrutiny that I recommend continuation of the National Crime Survey. Some of my reasons are summarized as follows, very briefly:

First, the survey provides a more comprehensive base than the police statistics found in the Uniform Crime Reports for measuring the amount of crime in the United States in different regions and cities.

Two, it is important to have a time series of victimization data in order to determine whether this set of data corresponds to or is different from police statistics; that is, whether variations over time are correlated such that increases or decreases in one set of data are similarly reflected in the other set.

Third, the victim survey provides much more abundant information about complex criminal events than the police statistics. For example, the degree of physical harm—death, hospitalization, treatment by physician and discharge, minor injury—can be recorded in the victim survey and makes possible an analysis based on the amount of harm inflicted on the community. Moreover, complex or multiple events can be counted, as they are not in the uniform crime reports, such as robbery, rape, aggravated assaults, automobile theft, in one complex crime. In the UCR only the rape is counted and the ancillary crimes are lost in the "Offenses Known to Police" category, because of the

UCR rule of counting only the one offense that appears highest in the hierarchy of the seven offenses in the Crime Index.

Four, during the past 10 years a whole new development in the study of crime and criminality has occurred and takes the name victimology. International conferences, many books and articles have appeared that place the emphasis on the victim and the victim-offender relationship rather than on the offender. This concern is not purely academic, for victim compensation legislation and victim assistance programs have appeared throughout the country. What we learned from the continued series of victimization surveys assists in throwing new research and practical administrative light on the victims of different kinds of crimes. Knowing now more about child victims, elderly victims, rape victims, permits more focused police, social welfare and judicial attention on victims.

Five, the composition of the population has been changing and during the next decade the age group 15 to 24 years of age will proportionately decrease because of reduced fertility rates. Crimes of violence, for which this age group has always registered high rates, will correspondingly decrease. But how these changes will affect the persons who are victimized is unclear. Only the National Crime Survey can provide this information.

Of the seven offenses in the UCR Crime Index, only about 20 percent result in what is known as clearance by arrest, meaning that one or more persons has been taken into custody and made available for prosecution. In short, 8 out of 10 such offenses do not result in arrest. For 80 percent of the offenses known to the police, we know very little. The victimization survey, however, provides not only more counts of these crimes—a ratio of about 3-to-1 over police—but yields much information about the victim—race, sex, age, socioeconomic status, et cetera—about the degree of physical injury, dollar loss in theft, and some information about the offender for those cases in which the victim was confronted by the offender.

To halt the victim survey would be to give up valuable information that not only is used in analytical research but that can have utility in police allocations of manpower and other crime control policies.

Seven, to know who are the targets of crime is as important as knowing who are the offenders. Crime prevention today is as much concerned with what is called "hardening the targets," or making more difficult and risky committing crime on persons and property, as it is with motives and intentions of offenders.

Finally, eight, persons most victimized—the poor of the inner cities—as discovered and empirically reported in the victim surveys—are perhaps most benefited by the surveys. It is also now known these same people most victimized also report least to the police. Here again, there is information gathered by the National Crime Survey not available in the police statistics.

Although there are some methodological problems that require further attention in the victim surveys, I strongly urge continuation of the survey. Whether an annual survey is necessary may be debatable, for some observers suggest that the same ends might be satisfied by having the survey every 3 years. However, what is to be kept in mind is that the administrative machinery for performing the survey should be maintained, for once a budget and staff are dropped and dismem-

bered, it is difficult to reestablish them. The need for statistical and other kinds of analyses of the data collected is more than adequate justification for maintaining—in fact, increasing—the National Crime Survey staff over time should the operation become a triannual one.

I would insert in my formal testimony that I am in accord with Professor Feinberg's statement about the desirability of not dropping it even for a short period of time.

The United States has been a leader and pioneer in the development of a national victimization survey. At a time when other countries have followed us and are setting up surveys such as ours, it would be lamentable to witness a retreat in the level of information about crime available to us. The more information we possess, the greater the probability is we can make more rational public policy decisions about crime prevention and the administration of the criminal justice system. To divest ourselves of useful information is to increase our ignorance and reduce our capacity to function with maximum efficiency and rationality.

Thank you.

Mr. CONYERS. Thank you very much, Professor Wolfgang.

I am surprised that we have been identified as the nation that has done the most in this area. That comes as a pleasant surprise. I would have imagined, since other Western industrial societies have lower crime rates, that perhaps they had done more in this area.

Dr. WOLFGANG. Well, they have better criminal statistics, or crime statistics. I hesitate to use the adjective crime. They have better judicial statistics than we do in the United States.

Mr. CONYERS. Which particular country, sir?

Dr. WOLFGANG. England, the Scandinavian countries; and particularly, Germany—excellent.

Mr. CONYERS. Your reference to the problem of those who live inside the cities, generally blacks and poor, strikes me as being especially significant here because it tends to reinforce one theory that I have pushed for some number of years now. Until we break down this wall of artificial professionalism between law enforcement and those citizens they are supposed to be serving, we will never be able to obtain a lasting solution to reducing crime. We are going to have to incorporate, in as many ways as we can imagine, the support and active participation of the community in augmenting police efforts, and it seems to me that information focusing on the victim and on the urban circumstances will be helpful in devising programs in the community and on the part of LEAA and many other agencies.

Dr. WOLFGANG. I quite agree with your implication, or perhaps your explicit statement, about the desirability of having the police within the areas that they serve. The experience in England and Japan that they have had for a long time has been working quite well.

Mr. CONYERS. What particular impact would this have on any of your own surveys that are ongoing?

Dr. WOLFGANG. I gather that the considered suspension was to take place after December 31 of this year. That being the case, the victim survey would have no direct bearing on any research I am doing. I do have a grant from LEAA now that rides on the coattails of the victimization survey, adding approximately 15 minutes to the interview. We require approximately 30-35,000 households for that interview, asking people to give their subjective perceptions of the rating of the

seriousness of crime—specific crimes—by assigning numbers to approximately 200 crimes.

No subject gets all 200 crimes, and this study could not have been done successfully without having the benefit of the victimization survey. But we will be getting tapes regularly from the Bureau of the Census, as we have already, only through December. So, our study would not be affected by any suspension after that date of December 31.

Mr. CONYERS. Finally, what significance do you read into the argument that there has been substantial decreases in crime according to the Uniform Crime Reports? On the other hand, we have heard arguments that there is a stabilizing trend being detected by the National Crime Survey. How does this argue as a reason for discontinuing the National Crime Survey?

Dr. WOLFGANG. I don't see that it does argue for it at all. The reduction in crime that has been reported in the UCR in the last year has been, I think, mostly reductions in crimes of personal violence. Apparently that's not true necessarily in the first 6 months of 1977, compared to the first 6 months of 1976, but on the annual basis there have been reductions mostly in crimes of personal violence. In projections to the year 2000, as made by one of my doctoral candidates, we have predicted that reductions will most likely continue through the 1980's and then rates will upswing in the 1990's, but only for crimes of personal violence. Crimes against property will, I suspect, continue to increase, and I think that the comparison in 1973 and 1975 victimization surveys showed an increase in larcenies and burglaries.

So, I don't see in these projections, even if there was stabilization over a period of time, any argument for a suspension or elimination of victim surveys.

Really, we only have two points in time thus far published, and we need a long time series in order to determine either stabilization, increases, or decreases.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, I compare the stabilization argument with the desire to discontinue unemployment statistics for a while because we know the unemployment rate is high and we don't like it, but at least it's staying there.

Since we don't have anyway to even check the validity of FBI crime figures, we might be able to use victimization surveys to note trends going in opposite directions that could become very important. It could operate to validate some of the FBI crime figures that we might otherwise question.

Dr. WOLFGANG. Well, for the moment, I wouldn't emphasize that too much, because they are really complementary—supplementary sets of data. The ways in which some of the accounting is done is different in the two sets of data, so that one is not entirely an external validation of the other.

Mr. CONYERS. We appreciate your time spent in preparing your statement and in joining us here today, Dr. Wolfgang. We are grateful.

I notice that my colleague, Mr. Gudger, is with us, and I would recognize him for any questions or comments that he might have.

Mr. GUDGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have had the opportunity to scan Professor Wolfgang's statement and comments and to hear some of the responses to your very

enlightening questions. I want to thank him for his appearance here, and I will not undertake any questioning that may be repetitious.

Mr. CONYERS. Thank you.

Mr. GUDGER. Thank you very much for your important testimony.

Mr. CONYERS. Our next witness is the Associate Director of Demographic Fields Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Mr. Daniel B. Levine.

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us. If you would please identify your associate, and make whatever remarks you choose.

TESTIMONY OF DANIEL B. LEVINE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, DEMOGRAPHIC FIELDS DIVISION, BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, ACCOMPANIED BY MARIE G. ARGANA

Mr. LEVINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have with me Ms. Marie Argana, who has been our chief liaison between the Bureau of the Census and LEAA in regard to all of the activities we undertake for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

In the interest of time and since my statement was very brief, I will merely note that the Bureau of the Census acts as the collecting agent in this regard for LEAA, in the sense that they reimburse us for the work we do for them.

I would also note that we were involved in the development of this project and a good deal of time, effort, and joint responsibility went into the project beginning in 1970 and culminating in the introduction of the project in 1972.

Very simply, I want to note that we recognize the decision to discontinue the survey is, of course, the responsibility of LEAA and Justice, and whatever the decision, we stand ready to assist in its further research and developmental efforts in addressing any methodological issues or in attempting in subsequent periods of time, to restart the survey or undertake any other activities they want us to.

And I think at this point I would merely say we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Mr. CONYERS. Thank you.

Does your associate have any comments?

Mr. LEVINE. No.

Mr. CONYERS. The Acting Director of LEAA has observed that the National Crime Survey is to be faulted for its lack of design flexibility, the time lag involved in releasing the data, and the difficulty in using data tapes.

Can you elaborate on any of these technical activities for the benefit of the subcommittee and the record?

Mr. LEVINE. I would be happy to, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to flexibility in design or content, I think that's an issue that has to be dealt with jointly between LEAA as the sponsor which sets the requirements of the survey. I think, from their point of view as well as our own, the important thing is to be sure that one isn't constantly changing either the concepts or the questions or the methodology, so that the time series to which you have reference made by previous speakers, is destroyed. And, to that extent, the Bureau

has always stood willing and stands willing right now, of course, to discuss any methodological changes, to undertake research, and to try to develop whatever is necessary according to the objectives stated by LEAA.

With regard to providing data and tapes, the design was set in such a way, as has already been referred to, as one in which we have a panel. And in that sense, when you finish a particular series of interviews, let's say you want to get data through December 1977, you could stop at the end of December or you could, because of our design, continue on through the first 6 months of 1978, in which the recall period—6 months—would cover some of the latter months of 1977.

Again, in agreement with LEAA, when the survey was designed, it was decided to go ahead and complete the full cycle so that at the end of June 1978 one would tabulate 1977 data.

In the early stages of an activity as large, comprehensive, and important as this one, it took us quite a bit of time, I must admit, to develop the procedures and the tabulations and the plans to carry out the tabulations phase and provide the data LEAA needed.

But I think most recently, based on discussions with LEAA and concern we have ourselves, we have shortened this period considerably, so that I believe at the end of a period it now approximates 45 to 60 days in which we begin to provide them with all the details.

If LEAA were to decide they wanted to cut off at an earlier point, one could provide either preliminary or a final tabulation at an earlier point in time.

Mr. CONYERS. In other words, these problems aren't going to be resolved by any temporary interruption of the program. I mean, you can't improve your design during an interregnum period; can you?

Mr. LEVINE. Well, one could say there is going to be an interruption for a number of months during which one would do research. But I think there are technical problems involved in that. I certainly would agree that you don't want to take an ongoing vehicle and make monthly changes in it, because you destroy the continuity of the operation. One wants to be sure, to the extent that one can, that the changes proposed have been tested out, have been validated, and are introduced in such a way that they are fully understood in terms of their implications, both in terms of the procedure and in terms of the data that you are producing from that particular survey methodology.

Mr. CONYERS. Let me ask you about some of the reasons given for the suspension of the survey, which had to do with a change in the survey instrument. With regard to the 6-month reference period, the content of the survey instrument and panel maturity, will the findings of these research studies be available in time for resuming the survey in fiscal 1979, if it were interrupted for some 9-month period?

Mr. LEVINE. My judgment is, the answer is "no," for two reasons. Research takes time, because if you just go out and test your methodology among a few households, crime, particularly different types of crimes, are relatively rare phenomenon, when you relate it to the total population. You have some difficulty in testing it among an adequate sample size with limited funds. A lot of it depends on the amount of funds available from LEAA, and our current understanding is that

the amount of funding that will be available to fiscal 1978 is somewhat limited—in fact, quite limited.

I would not think it feasible that we could complete all of the different types of research that have been proposed or are suggested in the documents to which you make reference in time to reactivate the survey.

Second, as some of the previous speakers have mentioned, when you disassemble a staff, it takes time again to both redesign the sample, to get a staff of interviewers, to train them to the quality standard to insure that the results which they are producing and which you are tabulating are ones that you have confidence in.

And, finally, I must note that the Bureau is entering a very difficult period with regard to its workload; namely, as you are well aware, the onset of the 1980 decennial census planning. And if we disseminate or disassemble the staff, I think we would find ourselves in severe difficulty in trying to reconstruct and initiate a new activity in 1979 or 1980, possibly 1981.

And that is a fact. I'm not trying to cause any difficulties for LEAA, but it happens to be a problem at this point in the decade.

Mr. CONYERS. Is there any possibility of a damaging impact upon those who might participate in the survey?

Mr. LEVINE. I'm not sure I understand the point of your question, Mr. Conyers.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, the fact that the survey now has come under public question as to whether it will continue could raise the question in the mind of people who will be responding to the survey, "what are they doing it for?"

Mr. LEVINE. I think that's definitely a concern. We already have reports from a number of our regional offices that both respondents and interviewers have raised questions. And it obviously will take a good deal of effort on our part, which we are willing to put into this particular activity, to insure a high response rate and to overcome any concerns respondents, interviewers and/or other regional staff people may have, having read the articles in the New York Times, the Los Angeles papers, and elsewhere.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Gudger, questions?

Mr. GUDGER. I'll be very limited, Mr. Chairman.

I am concerned about any thoughts that Mr. Levine might have about correlating the Bureau of Census efforts with existing facilities, such as our systems of administering compensation to victims of crime in the 20 States which have such systems.

It seems to me that since most of the States which do have a system for compensating victims of violent crime require that there be cooperation by the victim, not only in prosecution but in the information disclosure, that this might be a very resourceful device for gaining information concerning the nearly 70 percent of our population that reside within these States which are serviced by these particular facilities, and I wondered if you had any thought as to how these victims-of-violent-crime systems could cooperate with your own, if we were to continue—or if we were to discontinue?

Mr. LEVINE. Well, I think that's part of an ongoing process. One is always looking for better ways to design more efficient systems; and although we haven't explored this particular approach, we have looked into and are continuing to explore the possibility of using records from police arrests as one way of doing it.

I think we could also look into this one. One has to recognize that we are trying to measure not only crimes that are reported to police, but total crime victimization. And there are many types of crimes for which compensation is not paid.

But certainly I would think that is something that we could well look into and see if there is any way that this might be built into the ongoing process, Mr. Gudger.

Mr. GUDGER. I take it no particular study has been made of this resource?

Mr. LEVINE. Not in this particular resource. As I say, we have done studies in which we have drawn samples from records within police departments per se, but I don't know of any study which has utilized the resources that you have made reference to.

Mr. GUDGER. Have you been able to produce from your victimization survey data any clear patterns which conflict with other conclusions which have been drawn by other investigative bodies, such as the rate of crime increase in other studies?

Mr. LEVINE. I think, as Dr. Wolfgang and the other speakers have made reference to, the data do show different patterns than do the data which are available from the Uniform Crime Reports. They do show crime which has not been reported. They also show a good deal of information that, of course, is not available from these other sources.

The survey contains information not only on victimization but on the characteristics of the people who are victimized, the characteristics of the households, the geographic location, by residence, where the crime occurred—a whole variety of data which we understand are quite useful, have been useful, and are continuing to be useful to the people who are analyzing the results.

So, I would say we do have somewhat different patterns, but, as Dr. Wolfgang has indicated, they aren't exactly designed to measure or to verify one or the other. They are, let's say, supplementary or complementary pieces of information that can both be used to understand much more extensively the pattern of criminal victimization in the United States.

Mr. GUDGER. Finally, an agency having the broad spread and reach of yours, is there any other device that you know of whereby we can get a clear delineation of the nature of the communities in which particular types of crime originate, the nature of the victims of these criminal misadventures, and the extent of the injuries which ensue?

Mr. LEVINE. I think I have to note, of course, that we do a great deal of survey work for other Federal agencies, but that there are other groups in the country, other research organizations that could conduct similar types of studies.

In this particular case, I would say this techniques—the household sample survey—is, as far as I know, the only place we can get the characteristics of the individual and the household and the type of information to which you have made reference.

Mr. GUDGER. Thank you.

Mr. CONYERS. We want to thank you both.

I just want to ask Ms. Argana, who is the coordinator between LEAA and the Census Bureau, if you have had a very busy time of it all, with the current shakiness in the area.

Ms. ARGANA. Yes, I do.

Mr. CONYERS. How many people are working with you in this coordination effort?

Ms. ARGANA. In the coordination efforts, I work alone. Within the project itself, we have, I would say, about 25 people who are working full time on the project.

Mr. LEVINE. And overall, throughout the Bureau, I would say we have several hundred in the Bureau who are engaged in various activities for LEAA, and, of course, our interviewing staff, which probably numbers several hundred at a minimum, each month, doing this work.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, I thank you.

I want you to know this subcommittee is fully aware of the magnitude and importance of your work, and we want you to know that we applaud your activities, and we hope that this matter can be favorably resolved.

We thank you for your time and cooperation with the subcommittee. At this time, several exhibits will be entered into the record.

Mr. LEVINE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement and exhibits follow:]

STATEMENT OF DANIEL B. LEVINE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF THE CENSUS,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to be here today.

As you know, the Bureau of the Census acts as collecting agent for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) with regard to the National Crime Survey. In that capacity, we do not believe it is appropriate for us to comment either on the suspension or continuation of the National Crime Survey, except as related to the technical issues. We understand the matter of continuation or suspension is undergoing review within the Department of Justice and we have provided Justice with technical information concerning the implications of suspending the survey as well as the problems associated with re-instituting the survey. We have also informed LEAA and the Office of Management and Budget of these technical implications and issues.

It appears that one of the major reasons for the LEAA decision to suspend NCS data collection was that the report of the NCS evaluation made by the National Academy of Sciences had called attention to some methodological problems. But the report also emphasized the great value of this new survey. At no point did the report call for stopping or suspending the survey. Instead it called for strengthening the staff in order to make more effective use of the results and to develop needed improvements.

I wish to point out that the NCS was initiated in 1972 following several years of joint methodological, developmental efforts by LEAA and the Census Bureau. The survey was designed according to acceptable Census Bureau standards and procedures to meet the stated LEAA survey objectives. We recognize that all the methodological issues were not resolved when the survey was initiated and that new issues would certainly arise. During the time the National Academy of Sciences was conducting its valuation, the Census Bureau strongly supported the work of the Academy and cooperated fully.

Again, however, we recognize that the decision to discontinue this activity is the responsibility of LEAA and Justice. Whatever the decision, we stand ready to assist LEAA in its further research and developmental efforts in addressing the methodological issues.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

U.S. GOVERNMENT,
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
July 26, 1977.

Memorandum to: James M. H. Gregg, Acting Administrator.
Thru: Harry Bratt, Assistant Administrator, NCJISS.
From: Benjamin H. Renshaw, Director, Statistics Division, NCJISS.
Subject: Proposed Actions to Accommodate Budgetary Reductions in the Statistics Division, NCJISS for fiscal years 1978 and 1979.

This memorandum proposes to accommodate funding reductions in the Statistics Division programs by (1) suspending all National Crime Survey (NCS) data collection, i.e., victimization data collection efforts in household and commercial establishments, in fiscal year 1978 and (2) by curtailing the Comprehensive Data Systems (CDS) program in fiscal year 1979 to the extent necessary to accommodate the budgetary allocations for fiscal year 1979. The reasons for each of these recommendations are explained in detail below, but the basic rationale is that we have an obligation to provide states with notice of impending reductions in the CDS program by means of revised CDS guidelines including a redefinition of the entire program, while a fiscal year 1978 suspension of the victimization data collection can be accomplished without a detrimental impact on LEAA or the Bureau of the Census Staff.

Justification for and implementation of the suspension of victimization data collection

The reasons for recommending suspension of victimization data collection are as follows: (1) We now have 3 years of data from the victimization surveys (1973-1975) and preliminary data for 1976 which indicates no significant changes in victimization rates for most crime categories, in fact a remarkable stability in the series over time; (2) we have received the evaluation which the National Academy of Sciences conducted of the NCS series and are responding with a joint LEAA/Bureau of the Census Research Committee that is considering the changes in the most fundamental aspects of the victimization surveys (reference period, length of time households should be retained in the sample, handling of serious crimes and multiple victimizations, and basic redesign of the household and commercial questionnaires); (3) we need to concentrate resources on the analysis of the victimization data which is now available to us, by a variety of subsidized research and efforts to promote maximum use of victimization public use tapes; (4) we are now planning to fund, in fiscal year 1977, the evaluation of random-digit dialing and computer-assisted telephone interviewing as a collection technology that provides an alternative to the costly interviewing of approximately 136,000 persons in 60,000 households, with its lack of design flexibility, time lag on release of data, difficult to use data tapes; (5) despite over 2 years of discussion and protest on our part, we have been unsuccessful in getting the Bureau of the Census to modify its disclosure policy on microdata files which now removes any data element which would directly or inferentially identify a collectivity (state, region, or city) with a population of less than 250,000 and which results in data being lost for analytic purposes, complaints from responsible state and local users, and problems in use of formulas for estimating sampling error.

To summarize, with documented stability over 4 years in the data series, with consideration being given to fundamental methodological changes and survey instrument redesign in response to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, with the need to emphasize analysis of the available data, with Census indicating that no change is possible in a disclosure policy that severely restricts efforts to use the data for policy analysis and program development, and with consideration being given to a change in collection technology from direct household interviewing to computer-assisted telephone interviewing, fiscal year 1978 is an entirely appropriate time to suspend collection of victimization data.

The victimization survey should and can be reinstated in fiscal year 1979 assuming that the joint LEAA/Census research efforts have produced conclusions on the most fundamental methodological questions that must be answered to reinstate the survey and that we have initial research results on the use of computer-aided telephone interviewing. Recognizing the risk that suspension can become termination, it should be reiterated that it is NCJISS's intention to reinstate the NCS during fiscal year 1979.

With reference to implementation, there will be no detrimental effect on the LEAA and Census staffs responsible for victimization; in fact the result should

be to speed up the research activities and to expand analytic efforts. Census field interviewers are part-time and we would expect they would be reassigned to other surveys, though there is a loss of the experience of those individuals who have become skilled in the administration of the NCS survey.

We would intend to suspend the collection as of December 31, 1977 to (1) provide for completion of the data collection phase associated with the effort to develop a crime severity scale under Professor Marvin Wolfgang and (2) provide 6 months of victimization data collection in 1977. The cost of collection is now running at roughly \$400,000 a month, so the Interagency Agreement effective October 1, 1977 would carry an item of roughly \$1.2 million for collection.

Actions concerning the comprehensive data systems (CDS) program

By taking budgetary cuts, primarily in the victimization area, during fiscal year 1978, we will have the opportunity (1) to develop a new definition of the CDS program and new funding guidelines, (2) to notify the states of our intent to curtail the CDS program sharply in fiscal year 1979, and (3) to make substantial funding reductions in fiscal year 1978 by beginning implementation of recommendations developed by the CDS Reassessment Seminar held in mid-June.

The most meaningful changes recommended were that:

1. CCH be decoupled from OBTS for funding purposes and be considered a data source for OBTS rather than a primary development objective, and that
2. OBTS be desystematized, that is it should not be an on-line tracking system, and it need not be a single data base physically present at a central location. It may be a concept which permits the aggregation of research data from dispersed data bases or operational systems which subscribe to OBTS standards.

The group reaffirmed its commitment to the SAC as a focus for statistical data gathering at the state level.

The key actions to be taken are the following:

A. CDS component modification

1. Separate CCH and OBTS:

CCH would be fundable, but not required by, the Action Plan.

2. Encourage Development of OBTS as a by-product of operational information systems (agreement):

Not an independent information system itself and not separately fundable.

3. SACs would be funded as a consequence of existing data:

SAC participation should be part of the Action Plan; but

SAC existence should not be mandated.

4. Contingency funding concept would be discontinued (buy-in):

Funding would be based on state priorities if other CDS components are planned.

B. Funding guidelines

1. Fulfill existing commitments before taking on new commitments.

2. Establish operational milestones for each CDS component and make future funding dependent upon performance.

3. Make future funding contingent upon assumption of cost.

4. Develop expiration dates for existing commitments.

With these and other steps announced and initially implemented in fiscal year 1978, we will be prepared to reinstitute the NCS in fiscal year 1979, with CDS receiving only residual funding depending on the final NCJISS dollar allocation for that year.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS,
Washington, D.C., August 31, 1977.

Mr. HARRY M. BRATT,
Assistant Administrator, U.S. Department of Justice,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. BRATT: Mr. Renshaw circulated copies of his memorandum to James M. H. Gregg on the subject of proposed actions to accommodate budgetary reductions in the Statistics Division, NCJISS, for fiscal years 1978 and 1979, to the Bureau of the Census staff during discussions on the impact of Statistics Division budget reductions as related to Census activities. A number of statements made in the memorandum are in need of correction and/or explanation to set the record straight at this time and to avoid future misunderstanding.

Under the heading "Justification for and Implementation of the Suspension of Victimization Data Collection," five reasons are listed. Item 1 states that over 4 years (1973-76) no significant changes in victimization rates for most crime categories have been measured. The fact that there has not been a significant change in these rates would seem to have enormous policy implications for those charged with crime-fighting. Instead, the conclusion is drawn that since there has been no change measured, the victimization data collection should be suspended. If year-to-year change is no longer of interest to LEAA or to their users, we infer that maintenance of NCS time series is not an objective of the survey. This is a crucial point with three major implications. It brings into serious question the wisdom of resuming a continuing national survey in fiscal year 1979; it renders the research plan developed over the last several months questionable, and finally, it raises the recurring question of just what are the survey's objectives, i.e., what are LEAA's needs with respect to crime incidence information?

Item 2 implies that a substantial research effort relating to fundamental aspects of the victimization surveys is going to be undertaken in response to the evaluation conducted by the National Academy of Sciences. Item 4 under this heading indicates that LEAA is planning to fund immediately, a random-digit dialing and computer-assisted telephone interviewing experiment as a collection technology that provides an alternative to the costly personal interviewing of 136,000 persons in 60,000 households. We believe that a coordinated and long-range plan is needed to insure that research now proposed (item 2) is consistent with research being done (item 4). It may be a waste of effort to do recall studies using personal interviews if the plan is to conduct the survey entirely by telephone in the future. Final results of the personal/telephone interview experiment conducted in conjunction with the NCS will be available soon and these findings should be considered in the decision process on future research planning. Questionnaire issues under consideration in item 2 depend on the primary method of interview. If telephone interviewing is the objective, questionnaire design and content should be developed in that context.

Reference is also made to the "lack of design flexibility, time lag on release of data, difficult to use data tapes." In reference to the NCS design flexibility, we fail to understand what this means. The design was developed to meet the stated objectives of LEAA. If these objectives have changed, we should be so informed so that design modifications could be made.

Time lag on release of data has been mutually reviewed before, but apparently needs review again. The manner of producing estimates for annual victimization rates as specified by LEAA requires the collection of data 6 months beyond the end of the reference period. There is no way to release complete data before that time. Currently, the data are tabulated within about 30 days after the end of the last collection month. Thus, data for calendar year 1976 were collected through June of 1977, and tabulated by early August. More timely data tabulations would require a change in the concepts used in producing the estimates and could be done if LEAA so specified. The present procedure was developed jointly by LEAA and Census staff to meet the stated objectives of the program.

The point made concerning difficult-to-use data tapes is not clear as to what is at issue. LEAA has contracted the preparation and release of micro-data tapes for public use to DUALabs and that organization has developed the data tape program. The fact must be recognized that a large, complex data set is involved and does not lend itself to easy manipulation without major modification for general purpose uses. Thus, the use of the complete NCS file, being hierarchical and extremely large, does not lend itself to use on some of the simpler forms of analysis packages, such as SPSS, available to most users. SPSS was not designed to handle large data sets such as NCS and modifications would have to be made for such purposes. To our knowledge, the data tapes are not unnecessarily difficult to use after 'DUALabs' efforts. Furthermore, earlier users such as CJRC, Albert Reiss, and Wesley Skogan, with experience in dealing with such large and complex files, had developed the capability of using the Census tapes before modification by DUALabs. In any event, we do not see how data-tape utility is related to the issue of suspension of data collection.

Item 5 states: "despite over 2 years of discussion and protest on our part, we have been unsuccessful in getting the Bureau of the Census to modify its disclosure policy on microdata files which now removes any data element which would directly or inferentially identify a collectivity (State, region, or city) with a population of less than 250,000 and which results in data being lost for

analytic purposes, complaints from responsible State and local users, and problems in use of formulas for estimating sampling error." This issue was discussed in the meeting between Mr. Velde and Mr. Marabba on January 13, 1976. The response to the issue then as now is that it would not be possible to release public use tapes for areas with a population of less than 250,000 persons because of the possibility of identifying an individual, and thereby violating the law. We also indicated at that time that it would be possible for the Bureau of the Census to produce summary tabulations for areas not identified on public use tapes. This same position was restated in a meeting on July 20, 1977, with Mr. Renshaw. In developing the detailed geographic identifiers to be placed on the National sample file, Census recommended the level of geography generally requested by most data users on other programs. This included the identification of the 10 Federal Regions as defined by OMB, a code for central city of SMSA/ balance of SMSA/not SMSA, and collapsed place size codes. LEAA requested that a different approach be used; that is, that the maximum amount of geographic descriptors such as neighborhood characteristics, place size and place description be identified, so that smaller entities could be analyzed on the National level as a group. This priority precluded the identification of specific areas. At the July 20 meeting, this option was reviewed and modification to permit identification of specific States, SMSA's, etc., to the extent possible was offered by Census staff as a solution to the need for more local area data. The decision by the Statistics Division was to leave the geography at the present level.

Also in reference to this item, the data are not lost for analytic purposes. Tabulations for the 10 largest States have been produced since 1974 at the request of Statistics Division. In addition, in one case where an important user requested State micodata, the offer was made to produce the specialized tabulations required for the analysis. This can be done (and has already been done for several users) without violation of disclosure policy. The problems in use of formulas for estimating sampling error alluded to in this item are unclear to us. Sampling errors are provided for general purpose statistics and the process required for computing sampling errors is outlined in the documentation provided by DUALabs. Again, the points raised in item 5 seem unrelated to suspending data collection.

The statement that the victimization survey should and can be reinstated in fiscal year 1979 is debatable given our current understanding of the issues. There is an assumption that the joint LEAA/Census research efforts will have produced conclusions on some fundamental methodological question and that research results on the use of computer-aided telephone interviewing will be available in time to reinstate the survey in 1979. These expectations are not realistic since neither of the research efforts (LEAA/Census nor the RDD/CBI) will be completed and analyzed in sufficient time to restart the survey in fiscal year 1979. If the survey is discontinued as planned in December 1977, interviewing staff, supervisory field staff, and data processing staff will be reassigned to other Bureau projects. It will require a minimum of 6 months leadtime to recruit and train the staff required to conduct the survey when it is restarted. We cannot assume that the same trained interviewers will be available. Since sampling preparation precedes the data collection activities by several months, this work has to be rescheduled and started in advance. Thus, the survey specification changes must be agreed upon after the research results are available (if the research is to provide input into the program at that time) and the decision on availability of the necessary funding will have to be made available approximately 6 to 9 months in advance of the starting date for field data collection. It should be noted that, normally, 12 months or more are required to get a survey into full-scale field operation. We are assuming that our problems with restarting NCS would be less than a new survey. A delay of more than 1 year will increase the time required to restart the survey. Of major importance, this timing places the startup in direct competition with other Census work including the 1980 Decennial Census development and expansion of the Current Population Survey. The availability of staff for sampling work and field staff for recruitment and training will be very limited.

The reference to "no detrimental effect on the LEAA and Census staffs responsible for victimization; in fact the result should be to speed up the research activities and to expand analytic efforts" is presumptuous as far as Census staff is concerned and is not supported by the funding proposed. The cost of conducting the NCS for 1 month is running at about \$500,000, not \$400,000 as stated. In addition, production of the 6 months of victimization data re-

quested in the memorandum requires continuation of processing through January at an expected cost of \$100,000. The funding proposed by LEAA for the fiscal year 1978 includes \$1.2 million for data collection and \$800,000 for research (including commercial victimization survey research). If we proceed on Renshaw's proposal, there will be only \$400,000 for all research activities. The research plan developed jointly by LEAA/Census for the NCS listed a number of research activities that could be carried as a part of the ongoing victimization survey. Some of the research proposals would now require separate data collection operations. The item considered by the Committee to be of most pressing concern was the length of recall study. The cost of this study conducted as a part of an ongoing operation was \$250,000. The cost of conducting an experiment to collect the same data without the ongoing operation is approximately \$2 million. Apparently, no consideration was given to the impact on the LEAA/Census research plans when the decision was made to discontinue data collection at the end of calendar year 1977. With this level of funding available, the staff currently working on the NCS may have to be reduced. Further, it is not likely that any meaningful field collection for the research can take place. Our estimate is that only questionnaire revision work, small-scale tests, and possibly some sample design modifications could be developed in fiscal year 1978.

It is quite distressing to have spent such considerable resources in developing jointly with LEAA the survey research effort, and then find that the potential impact of a major change in the program on this effort is not considered in the decisionmaking process.

A somewhat more serious issue seems to be developing in the relationship between LEAA and the Bureau of the Census. A cooperative spirit prevailed in the development of the victimization surveys. The agencies worked closely together, freely exchanging ideas and making joint contributions to the program. This is the role of the Census Bureau in nearly all of its interagency operations. For this reason, the data produced have been recognized by the Federal Government, the Congress, and the statistical community as being of exceptional quality and meeting the highest standards. It is not possible to maintain this quality effort if full cooperation, exchange of information and continuing communication are not maintained. The staff at the Census Bureau is ready to discuss the changing objectives and design specifications on the surveys it conducts for sponsoring agencies and is willing to work with them in developing whatever modifications are required to meet changing program requirements and/or budgetary situations. These changes should not be made capriciously, and in fact may often prove very costly in the long run if not given adequate preparation and development.

Of major concern to us now are the operations required for the research to be done and the potential requirements for restarting the victimization surveys. Decisions must be made in the very near future on the direction and level of the NCS. We request that the Bureau be involved in the planning of these next steps in the survey area involving Census work.

Sincerely,

MARIE G. ARGANA.

[From the Washington Post, Friday, Sept. 23, 1977]

JUSTICE DIVISION SUSPENDS SURVEY ON NATIONAL CRIME

A Justice Department unit is suspending a door-to-door survey of crime victims that has cost \$6.5 million annually and has been heralded as providing "a whole new dimension" in assessing national lawlessness.

After collecting and analyzing crime victim data for nearly five years at a cost of \$53 million, the program's managers yesterday cited budget shortages and questions about the survey's validity and reliability as reasons for the suspension.

But James M. H. Gregg, acting administrator of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which has financed the project, said he thought that the survey would be restarted once major kinks are ironed out—"unless at some point we lose funding support. There's no indication of that," Gregg said in an interview.

A related survey on crime experienced by commercial establishments, which cost about \$3 billion annually, is being totally scrapped. The two crimes covered by the commercial survey—robbery and burglary—are already well reported to police, Gregg said.

Initiated in 1972, the national crime survey was designed to provide potentially crucial information on victims of crime and to measure the tremendous volume of crime known to be going unreported.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports—the only other national crime survey—reflects only crimes reported to state and local police. The LEAA survey found that actual crimes run anywhere from two to five times as high as reported crime in the nation's largest cities.

The Census Bureau conducted personal interviews for the LEAA every six months in some 60,000 households and 39,000 businesses, asking whether rape, robbery, assault, personal and household larceny, burglary and auto theft had been experienced there.

But an assessment of the survey by the National Academy of Sciences, conducted last year at LEAA's request, uncovered what Gregg called "serious, methodological problems" in the survey.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 23, 1977]

\$53 MILLION CRIME STUDY HALTED AS QUESTIONABLE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (UPI)—For five years, Census Bureau field workers have gathered data from 6,000 households and 39,000 businesses to help determine the extent of unreported crime in America and provide a profile of crime victims. The total cost of the "National Crime Survey" to taxpayers: \$53 million.

Now the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration is suspending the survey because of "serious" questions about the data collection process, including the quality of the questionnaires that were used.

The acting L.E.A.A. administrator, James Gregg, said in an interview Friday that he believed there was continued support within the Justice Department, once technical changes are made, for continuing the survey aimed at providing the most complete crime data available.

But he said that analyses by a panel from the National Academy of Sciences had concluded that there were "serious methodological problems with the survey."

Mr. Gregg said that the survey of businesses would be terminated at the end of this fiscal year because most crimes against merchants were reported to the police.

Interviews with the 60,000 families, now done every six months at the same residences, will be either mostly or entirely suspended for nine months beginning in December.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (UPI)—President Carter asked Congress today to rescind \$2.7 million from the budget authority of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. A brief notice issued by the White House press office said that the funds represented money still remaining for grants "allocated to state and local governments but not used by them."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS,
Washington, D.C., September 30, 1977.

Mr. JAMES M. H. GREGG,
Acting Administrator,
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration,
U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. GREGG: A newspaper article appearing in the September 23 edition of the Washington Post states that the decision has been made by LEAA to suspend data collection for the National Crime Survey. The article further states that the reasons for suspension included "... questions about the survey's validity and reliability."

Up until now, the Bureau of the Census has been led to believe that various alternatives to suspension were still being considered by LEAA. It is extremely perplexing to learn of your final decision in such a manner. We are also surprised to read that questions about reliability were a major reason for suspension. In our opinion, the National Academy of Sciences report did not uncover such

"serious methodological problems" that the survey should not be continued. Of greater concern to the Bureau, however, is the adverse impact that this ill-timed article will have on future survey results. Specifically, the following consequences are likely:

1. Obtaining respondent cooperation in the National Crime Survey may now be extremely difficult in view of the fact that many respondents may be unwilling to provide information for a survey they believe has already been suspended and which is of questionable validity.

2. An orderly transition of the Bureau's sample workloads and interviewer re-assignments in our field offices is now virtually impossible because of the manner in which LEAA's decision was announced. The survey's cancellation will mean layoffs in our field offices and reading this announcement in the newspaper will most certainly create a severe morale problem among our field staff.

3. The allegations appearing in the article concerning the methodological problems in the survey may adversely affect both respondents' and interviewers' attitudes toward the Bureau of the Census in general and the NCS program in particular, thus impacting on the quality of survey results. Moreover, since many of our interviewers also work on other Bureau surveys we fear that any mistrust of the reliability of survey results could be carried over to these programs as well.

We believe the statements appearing in the news article to be damaging, both in content and in timing. The Bureau of the Census has now been put in a position where its integrity in relations with field employees has been compromised, and we wish to register a strenuous protest. It would have been far more appropriate for LEAA to have informed the Bureau in advance of a public announcement so that our field staff would have had adequate notification.

Sincerely,

MANUEL D. PLOTKIN,
Director, Bureau of the Census.

MR. CONYERS. I should like now to recognize the chairman of the full committee, who has honored the Subcommittee with his presence today, Mr. Rodino, the gentleman from New Jersey.

MR. RODINO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I come here, first of all, to commend you for having decided to call this hearing, in view of the importance of the subject matter that you are considering, which is part of its oversight responsibility.

I want to say very strongly that, frankly, I was a bit stunned when I learned that this decision had been made by the Department to drop the National Crime Survey which serves as one of the most useful reporting operations that I think the Department has been served with; and it is my intention to address my views on the matter to the Attorney General. I want you to know that, Mr. Chairman, generally these matters are called to the attention of this committee by the Department of Justice prior to implementation.

This, however, was a decision which was made without our having been consulted in this area, and I feel constrained to say that we have considered that LEAA, which has been the subject of so much criticism, at least was supported in great measure because it did have within its structure such an operation as the National Crime Survey. This survey provides the Department and provides us and other interested people with the kind of data that we think is essential for decisionmakers attempting to do something about crime.

And, very frankly, although I am not going to be able to remain for Mr. Gregg to come here to make his presentation, I would like to say, for his attention, that we are going to seriously evaluate what the testimony is that he will bring to this committee and the reason for having decided to terminate what we consider to be a very, very useful

tool, not only for the Department, but for every interested individual and agency of government and especially for this committee.

I believe that, again, it only points up, very frankly, that Congress likes to be informed, and I must say—and I am very deliberate about saying this—that it's unfortunate that these decisions were taken in areas where Congress has a deep interest and a serious concern, without this kind of consultation.

I make this statement here at this hearing so that it becomes part of this record, and, Mr. Chairman, I am going to ask unanimous consent to be able to expand on my statement for the hearing record.

I believe that it's important for us to have all of the information, to have all of the data, so that we are going to be able to make a decision here.

But again, I would like for the Department to know, and the LEAA administrators to know, at this time, that, as an individual who has taken a great deal of interest in assuring that there is a system of cooperation to better serve the public interest, very frankly, I feel that in this instance this hasn't been the case. And I would hope that somehow or other this situation could be remedied.

If, indeed, the National Crime Survey serves no useful purpose, then I think we ought to know why, and it ought to be said on the record. If, however, this decision was made without the kind of consideration that I think is necessary, then, Mr. Chairman, I am going to support you in this effort to insure that this Subcommittee, with its oversight jurisdiction, is accorded that kind of courtesy and that kind of consultation when it relates to matters that are of such concern to it.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, I thank the chairman of the full committee for his statement and his presence here.

Without objection, permission will be granted to revise and extend.

He might wish to know that the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. McClory, was here at an earlier part of these proceedings, and we definitely appreciate the support of these members of this committee.

Our next witnesses are from the National Academy of Sciences, Dr. Margaret Martin, Mr. Morris Hansen, and Dr. Maurice Owens. If they are here, they will be welcome at the witness table.

Your statement will be included in the record.

[The prepared statement follows:]

STATEMENT OF MARGARET E. MARTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee: I am pleased to appear before you on behalf of the Committee on National Statistics and its former Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys. The Committee on National Statistics is a continuing Committee of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. It investigates and reports on statistical issues important to public policy and is composed of outstanding statisticians who contribute their time and expertise. I am the executive director for the Committee.

When the Committee is asked to undertake a major investigation, it appoints a separate panel of experts to make a particular contribution to the problem, under the chairmanship of a member of the parent committee. When the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) requested our review, Dr. Conrad Taeuber, a member of the Committee, was asked to serve as the Chairman of the Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys. He regrets that he is unable to be present today and asked me to describe the Panel's report on his behalf.

Accompanying me are Morris Hansen, a former member of the Committee on National Statistics who reviewed the report of the Panel for the Committee, and Maurice Owens, who was staff officer to the Panel and associate editor of the report. We shall be pleased to answer questions following my brief statement.

First let me remind you that the program of surveys the Panel reviewed in its report, "Surveying Crime," consisted of three parts during the time the Panel was active (March 1974-September 1976): A national household survey; a national survey of commercial establishments; and city surveys of both households and commercial establishments. So some of the Panel's recommendations refer to each of these.

The Panel made ten major recommendations. The first four dealt with strengthening the LEAA's role in the management and analysis of the survey, indicating a belief that a greater proportion of the resources should be devoted to managerial coordination, to data analysis, and to a continuing program of research and evaluation.

The fifth recommendation advocated discontinuing the separate city surveys and combining the resources in an integrated national program.

The sixth recommended suspension of the national commercial survey pending a review and restatement of its objectives.

The seventh recommendation stated that continuing exploration and testing should be undertaken and recommended that 5 percent of the sample be set aside for this purpose.

The eighth was a specific recommendation to analyze the survey results further, in terms of risk of victimization.

The ninth recommended undertaking a major methodological effort on optimum field and survey design.

And the tenth recommendation suggested that the need for detailed local data should not be met by expansion of the national survey but by supplying technical and procedural manuals and other aids to local officials to undertake their own surveys.

It is my understanding that the commercial surveys and the separate city surveys have now been discontinued, so the rest of this statement is concerned with the national household survey.

I have summarized these recommendations of the Panel to assure you that there is nothing in them that suggests that the Panel thought the national household survey should be suspended. This is the first major point I should like to make. In fact, the Panel specifically considered the question of whether or not it should recommend suspension of the national household survey pending the results of a major analytical and methodological research effort. The Panel concluded that the analysis and research program should be carried in simultaneously with the ongoing survey and that the national household survey should be maintained to provide a continuing record and to avoid the stop-start loss involved in suspending such a complex mechanism.

Dr. Taeuber, the Chairman of the Panel, expressed the Panel's concern over the possible interruption of the survey in a recent letter to Peter Flaherty, the Deputy Attorney General. Dr. Taeuber wrote that the Panel concluded "that the surveys provide valuable measures of the volume of crime and of public perception of the 'crime problem', information for executive and legislative action, and data basic to thorough studies of a wide range of phenomena related to crime and victimization. The Panel believed that the improvements it recommended, including greater emphasis on analysis, could be achieved by a reallocation of priorities and resources without interrupting the national household survey." Dr. Taeuber's letter was intended to counter recent newspaper accounts that implied the Panel had recommended suspension of the national household survey. (A copy of his letter is included at the end of this statement.)

As the Panel's report points out, a victimization survey can help to illuminate our society's concepts of crime and the moral order. It can throw light on the relationship between people's fear of crime and the real risks of crime that they confront. By providing a basis for studying the linkages between perceptions and the factual situation, a continuing series of victimization surveys can provide essential information for policy makers on matters relating to crime, crime prevention, and the social consequences of crime. In this way the survey provides a more rational basis for allocation of resources in the criminal justice system than would otherwise be available. The survey can do much to dispel the ignorance, misunderstanding, the irrational fear that now so often characterize public debate and discussion of crime.

My second point is that a temporary suspension of this series will have an impact on the quality of the data extending over several years. The design of the survey is complex, involving rotating panels of respondents who stay in the panel for three and a half years, being interviewed once each six months. This complicated panel rotation system has just recently matured. An interruption would mean that it would need to be started again, and several more years would be required to bring it into full operation.

Third, the Panel recognized that a major statistical survey of an important social problem cannot be designed and put in place over night. Such a survey must be seen as a continuing activity with new data leading to new insights and these in turn to new questions for study. The experiences of the data collectors, the analysts, and the policy makers who use the results must all be fed back to those responsible for guiding the survey in order that the most useful information can result. To this end, the Panel made a number of suggestions and criticisms. These should not be viewed as reasons for suspension. They are, rather, an effort to suggest avenues of future development, the kind of development that moved the automobile, for example, from the Model T to the LTD.

At the time the Panel prepared its report, relatively little information had been published from the survey. The Panel, therefore, judged the survey's utility largely in terms of possibilities rather than actual experience. In the words of the Panel (*Surveying Crime*, p. 101), "Within a very short time, the NCS has demonstrated enormous potential utility. The question now is whether resources can be allocated and coordinated so as to transform potential into practical utility."

The Panel did not expect a major social survey to come to maturity over night. It recognized the need for a slow development process. This accounts for its emphasis on strengthening the resources for planning, management, and analysis. The Panel's comments and recommendations should be viewed, not as criticisms of the past, but as recommendations for future directions.

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL,
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS,
Washington, D.C. September 29, 1977.

Hon. PETER F. FLAHERTY,
Deputy Attorney General,
Department of Justice,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SIR: I am writing as the Chairman of the former Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. In recent days, newspaper reports have referred to that Panel's report in support of a recommendation that the crime victimization surveys sponsored by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration be discontinued (*Washington Post*, September 23; *New York Times*, September 25). This is an incorrect conclusion to draw from our report, *Surveying Crime*, and I have so written both newspapers (copies attached).

It is true that the Panel's report criticized some aspects of the National Crime Surveys, but it also found much to commend. My views were expressed at the meeting concerning the future of the surveys held by your office on September 15. I called attention to the Panel's conclusion that the surveys provide valuable measures of the volume of crime and of public perception of the "crime problem", information for executive and legislative action, and data basic to thorough studies of a wide range of phenomena related to crime and victimization. The Panel believed that the improvements it recommended, including greater emphasis on analysis, could be achieved by a reallocation of priorities and resources without interrupting the national household survey.

I am not in favor of discontinuing the crime victimization survey of households and hope that means will be found whereby it will be continued. In any event, I trust that the decision will not be based in any part on a misunderstanding of the Panel's recommendations.

Sincerely,

CONRAD TAEUBER.

Attachments.

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL,
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS,
Hyattsville, Md., September 27, 1977.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR,
The Washington Post,
1150 15th Street NW
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SIR: In an article on Friday, September 23, you reported that the Department of Justice had decided to discontinue the National Crime Victimization Surveys (NCS), and cited as one of the reasons that a report of the National Academy of Sciences had called attention to some methodological problems. It is unfortunate that the article did not draw attention also to the fact the Academy report says: "The panel found much to commend, and much to criticize, in the design and execution of the NCS to date." The report emphasized the great value of this new survey. At no point did the report call for stopping or suspending the survey. Instead, it called for strengthening the staff in order to make more effective use of the results and to develop needed improvements.

Sincerely yours,

CONRAD TAEUBER, *Chairman.*

[From the Washington Post, Friday, Sept. 23, 1977]

JUSTICE DIVISION SUSPENDS SURVEY ON NATIONAL CRIME

A Justice Department unit is suspending a door-to-door survey of crime victims that has cost \$6.5 million annually and has been heralded as providing "a whole new dimension" in assessing national lawlessness.

After collecting and analyzing crime victim data for nearly five years at a cost of \$53 million, the program's managers yesterday cited budget shortages and questions about the survey's validity and reliability as reasons for the suspension.

But James M. H. Gregg, acting administrator of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which has financed the project, said he thought that the survey would be restarted only major kinks are ironed out—"unless at some point we lose funding support. There's no indication of that," Gregg said in an interview.

A related survey on crime experienced by commercial establishments, which cost about \$3 million annually, is being totally scrapped. The two crimes covered by the commercial survey—robbery and burglary—are already relatively well reported to police, Gregg said.

Initiated in 1972, the national crime survey was designed to provide potentially crucial information on victims of crime and to measure the tremendous volume of crime known to be going unreported.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports—the only other national crime survey—reflect only crimes reported to state and local police. The LEAA survey found that actual crimes run anywhere from two to five times as high as reported crime in the nation's largest cities.

The Census Bureau conducted personal interviews for the LEAA every six months in some 60,000 households and 39,000 businesses, asking whether rape, robbery, assault, personal and household larceny, burglary and auto theft had been experienced there.

But an assessment of the survey by the National Academy of Sciences, conducted last year at LEAA's request, uncovered what Gregg called "serious methodological problems" in the survey.

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL,
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS,
Hyattsville, Md., September 27, 1977.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
The New York Times,
New York, N.Y.

DEAR SIR: In an article on Sunday, September 25, you reported that the Department of Justice had decided to discontinue the National Crime Victimization

Surveys (NCS), and cited as one of the reasons that a report of the National Academy of Sciences had called attention to some methodological problems. It is unfortunate that the article did not draw attention also to the fact the Academy report says: "The panel found much to commend, and much to criticize, in the design and execution of the NCS to date." The report emphasized the great value of this new survey. At no point did the report call for stopping or suspending the survey. Instead, it called for strengthening the staff in order to make more effective use of the results and to develop needed improvements.

Sincerely yours,

CONRAD TAEUBER, *Chairman.*

§53 MILLION CRIME STUDY HALTED AS QUESTIONABLE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (UPI)—For five years, Census Bureau field workers have gathered data from 60,000 households and 39,000 businesses to help determine the extent of unreported crime in America and provide a profile of crime victims.

The total cost of the "National Crime Survey" to taxpayers: \$53 million.

Now the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration is suspending the survey because of "serious" questions about the data collection process, including the quality of the questionnaires that were used.

The acting L.E.A.A. administrator, James Gregg, said in an interview Friday that he believed there was continued support within the Justice Department, once technical changes are made, for continuing the survey aimed at providing the most complete crime data available.

But he said that analyses by a panel from the National Academy of Sciences ~~LEAA~~ concluded that there were "serious methodological problems with the survey."

Mr. Gregg said that the survey of businesses would be terminated at the end of this fiscal year because most crimes against merchant were reported to the police.

Interviews with the 60,000 families, now done every six months at the same residence, will be either mostly or entirely suspended for nine months beginning in December.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (UPI)—President Carter asked Congress today to rescind \$2.7 million from the budget authority of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. A brief notice issued by the White House press office said that the funds represent money still remaining for grants "allocated to state and local governments, but not used by them."

MR. CONYERS. Dr. Martin is the executive director of the academy's Committee on National Statistics, formerly assistant chief of Statistical Policy Division at OMB. Mr. Hansen is a member of the academy's Committee on National Statistics, which evaluated the national crime survey, and Dr. Owens is a staff member of that evaluation.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are welcome, of course. You may proceed in your own way.

TESTIMONY OF MARGARET E. MARTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS, NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ACCOMPANIED BY MORRIS HANSEN AND DR. MAURICE OWENS

DR. MARTIN. Since you have my statement for the record, I will just mention a few high points.

When the LEAA requested the Committee on National Statistics to review its crime victimization survey, Dr. Conrad Taeuber, a member of the committee, was asked to serve as chairman of the panel for the evaluation of the crime survey. He regrets that he is unable to be present today and asked me to describe the panel's report on his behalf.

In my testimony, I summarize the major recommendations of the report primarily to indicate that the panel thought the national household survey should be continued. At one meeting, panel members specifically considered the question of whether or not they should recommend suspension while research was conducted along the lines that they recommended, and came to the conclusion that the ongoing survey should be maintained and research conducted simultaneously.

Dr. Taeuber, as chairman of the panel, expressed concern over the possible interruption of the survey in a recent letter to Peter Flaherty, the Deputy Attorney General.

He wrote that the panel concluded that the surveys provide valuable measures of the volume of crime and the public perception of the crime problem.

I have attached that correspondence to the statement.

The panel recognized that a major statistical survey of an important social problem cannot be designed and put into place overnight. Such a survey must be seen as a continuing activity, with new data leading to new insights and these in turn, to new questions for study.

The experiences of the data collectors, the analysts, and the policy-makers who use the results must all be fed back to those responsible for guiding the survey in order that the most useful information can result.

To this end, the panel made a number of suggestions and criticisms. These should not be viewed as reasons for suspension. They are, rather, an effort to suggest avenues of future development.

In the words of the panel:

Within a very short time, the NCS has demonstrated enormous potential utility. The question now is whether resources can be allocated and coordinated so as to transform potential into practical utility.

The panel recognized the need for a slow developmental process. This accounts for its emphasis on strengthening the resources for planning, management, and analysis. The panel's comments and recommendations should be viewed not as criticisms of the past but as recommendations for future directions.

That is, in very brief, the spirit of the panel's report.

Any one of the three of us will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, first of all, I want to commend you on your statements, both submitted and oral, which correct a misimpression that you were advocates of the survey's suspension, abolition, or even its termination. For that misimpression to get corrected makes these hearings worthwhile, in my judgment.

I have only two questions.

The first one deals with your analysis of the methodological criticisms that were made about the National Crime Survey. I mean, can they be put in some kind of context that supports your enunciated position?

Dr. MARTIN. I think that a general criticism of the panel was that although the project had started out on the basis of a considerable research effort, once the operation of the survey was undertaken, there was relatively little in the way of resources assigned to the kind of continuing methodological research needed to develop the survey.

I would agree with the previous speakers, that that kind of methodological research is more likely to be effective if it's done while the panel is continuing, rather than as an alternative.

I'd like to call on Maurice Owens, who was on the panel staff, to see if he has anything further to add.

Dr. OWENS. Yes, I'd like to add something to Dr. Martin's statement.

I speak as a former employee of the National Academy of Sciences. I was one of the two primary staff members working for the panel for the evaluation of crime surveys. I also speak as a member of the American Statistical Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Criminal Justice Statistics.

The staff of the panel for the evaluation of crime surveys spent approximately 1½ years reconstructing the set of decisions that were made in the process of designing the surveys. We spent many hours at the Bureau of the Census, many hours on the telephone, collecting various memoranda, research reports, and correspondence.

I'm sure the representatives of the Bureau of the Census can testify to this.

The report of the panel was based largely on the information we constructed. This is a project undertaken by two very large organizations in a cooperative activity. The report, "Surveying Crime," is a report from one set of professionals to another set of professionals. There are very few basic problems with the field collection procedures and survey design that are not touched on in this report, and in no way should it be construed as a document that condemns the survey—at least, that's my assessment of the outcome of the panel's work.

As Dr. Martin pointed out, the panel did consider the possible recommendation that the survey be suspended for an indefinite period, or permanently. The panel decided that this was not representative of their views.

So, I think that the idea that the report published by the National Academy of Sciences does not support the survey in spirit and in substance is a misconception.

Mr. CONYERS. Could it not have been mistakenly interpreted, since it was a professional-to-professional report, and therefore have been subject to misconstruction?

I understand you people are pretty hard on each other in your own fields of specialization.

Dr. OWENS. Yes; well, I cannot speak as a sociologist. I have a Ph. D. in mathematical statistics. As a statistician, I noted where Professor Fienberg drew analogies between the NCS—National Crime Survey—and the Current population Survey, stating that many of the same problems exist in both of the operations.

I am referring to statistical problems now, not substantive problems. The thing is that, in operations other than the NCS, many of these problems are not documented to the extent that they are documented in the academy's report. Because of this documentation, the problems are exposed and therefore invite criticism.

Now, I should point out further that I think it was very professional of the personnel at LEAA to invite this evaluation. A lot of correspondence—we had a lot of correspondence from them, and also the

individuals of the Bureau of the Census. Had they not done extensive methodological research and provided us with the amount of information that they did, we would not have been able to raise the criticisms.

The point is that all of the problems have been brought to the surface with this operation, as is not the case with many statistical series.

Mr. CONYERS. Question: How can the victimization survey throw light on the relationship of our society's concept of crime and moral order? I mean, as far as I'm concerned, this survey may help us better understand our traditional response to crime of passing more laws. As the nation that leads all other industrial societies with more laws on the books, we also seem to be getting more crime, so that somewhere along the line it seems necessary to make an analysis. It hadn't occurred to me that this kind of survey could help illuminate this very difficult area of understanding the administration of justice.

Dr. MARTIN. I think this is an attempt to reflect and summarize the feeling of the sociologists connected with the panel activities, that detailed analysis by the research community of various aspects of crime, of conditions of the victim, of the time and place, and beliefs of people as to what is a crime, can be analyzed and drawn out from this kind of an activity over a period of years.

I don't think it's anything which is going to occur in a press release, from an immediate release of the figures, and it's for this reason I believe that the panel recommended emphasis in allocation of resources on more analysis of the results.

Dr. OWENS. I would like to respond to your question, Mr. Chairman. This is somewhat outside of my area, but there was a 1966 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. And one of the primary task force reports of that Commission noted that most of what the citizens of this country know about crime is based on their perceptions through television, radio, newspapers. Very few of the citizens have direct experience with crime. The fear is more of a—I would have to defer to the sociologists for the term—but it's more of a group phenomenon as opposed to a directly experienced phenomenon.

That Commission concluded that it is the responsibility of the U.S. Government to inform the citizens of the risk of being victims of major categories of crime. And they also sponsored the initial victimization surveys in this country.

One final note about the work of that Commission. Much of the Commission's work and work of the staff, which numbered something like 100, dealt with available statistics on crime over the past several decades. After many months of study, many man-hours, their conclusion was that we really can't be sure whether crime has increased or decreased over the last 25 years.

They did surmise that it increased, but stopped short of saying how much it had increased. I think the victimization survey method as it is applied in the NCS continued over a span of years will provide such information so at the time of the next assessment we will know what the status is.

Thank you.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, you know, one secret among all of us working at this issue is that many of the things that are proposed as solutions don't work. No. 1, and No. 2, we almost know it from the beginning.

We are reacting so frequently out of emotion, rather than rational judgments that we try to pride ourselves on. And it seems that anything that would lead to distinguishing between the fear of crime and what the real risks of crime are would contribute handsomely to what we are going to need, unless we are to constantly consign ourselves to flinging more money and artificial solutions at social problems.

I am very pleased that this statement attempts to cover at least some part of the relationship of this survey to those more profound and nagging questions.

Mr. HANSEN, do you have any observations?

Mr. HANSEN. Well, just one brief remark. I was a member of the Committee on National Statistics that reviewed the report of the panel, and we were concerned, since there was a strong emphasis on criticism, that it be clear whether or not the recommendation was, in any sense, toward discontinuation of the survey. In the review discussions there was no question at all about that.

It was clear that the survey should be continued for two reasons. The first reason is the value of the information that it's producing, and over time that increases. And the other reason—and more important, even—is that if you're going to improve the survey, it has to be done as part of an ongoing system. It would be very costly and difficult to develop and incorporate research results by stopping and starting it again.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Gudger.

Mr. GUDGER. I would like to address one or two very brief questions to Dr. Martin.

I am very impressed with her typewritten statement and particularly with what I believe to be the thrust of the panel's conclusions. And I think the panel was inclined to question the necessity of continuing the commercial establishments' survey, inasmuch as the commercial establishments routinely do report to the police their loss experiences due to crimes, whereas, with respect to the household survey, this is not true in any substantial degree.

There is not that same quality and degree of reporting of victimization, and, therefore, the continuance of this survey is needed, as I understand it, with greater analytical application during the course of the survey, and from time to time, modification of the survey so as to get the maximum data of use and benefit from the survey. Is that essentially correct?

Dr. MARTIN. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUDGER. Now, with respect to your urban classifications—city surveys of household and commercial establishments—what was your conclusion with reference to the justification of continuing the commercial survey within cities, in urban areas?

Dr. MARTIN. There were two systems at the time we were looking at them. One was the national survey and then a series of city surveys in which they were taking both household and commercial information. And it was the view of the panel that those city surveys, which were not directly comparable with the national, could better be combined with the national survey and develop information for local areas from the national sample, although there would be fewer areas.

Since that time, I believe they have been suspended entirely because of budgetary restraints.

Mr. GUDGER. May I take another step. If the panel were to arrive at a specific conclusion, I take it it would be to abandon the commercial establishment survey, continue the household survey, with changes in methodology along the lines which you have reported and shown in your report, and without regard to urban versus nonurban classification. Is that essentially correct?

Dr. MARTIN. I think so. The panel itself had its last meeting—I think it was June or July of 1976. The report came out last December, and the panel and staff have dispersed, in effect. So it's difficult to say what they might say today.

Mr. GUDGER. Now, there's one observation in your report that I'm not clear on, and that reads thus:

The 10th recommendation suggested that the need for detailed local data should not be met by expansion of the national survey but by supplying technical and procedural manuals and other aids to local officials to undertake their own surveys.

Was it one of the concepts of the panel that there might be some voluntary participation beyond the sample studies that were being made in the household survey?

Dr. MARTIN. I believe there have been some local activities. This was, in part, an issue of the enormous cost of conducting surveys like the national survey for a large number of separate local areas, and the feeling that the LEAA and the Census Bureau could assist local areas that really wanted that kind of information to undertake their own activities.

Mr. GUDGER. Finally, was it a conclusion of the panel that to discontinue this survey after 3 years and before the new general census of 1981 and possibly to reinstitute the survey again—the household survey—might represent a very serious loss in the benefits which had accrued as a result of the survey to date?

Dr. MARTIN. The panel considered the question of suspension or discontinuance as an option in its own review of the problem. But this was 2 years ago. The issue as it is presented today didn't arise then.

They settled it in their own minds 2 years ago by recommending the continuation of the national household survey.

Mr. GUDGER. And was one of the considerations in recommending continuation that there was a cumulative value to this study?

Dr. MARTIN. I believe so, yes.

Mr. GUDGER. Thank you.

Mr. CONYERS. We want to thank you all for appearing. Your testimony has been most helpful.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Administrator of LEAA is here, Mr. James Gregg. We welcome you again before the subcommittee. You may come forward.

Mr. Renshaw, I believe, is joining you.

Mr. RENSRAW. That's correct.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Benjamin Renshaw is Director of the Statistics Division of the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service. We welcome you, too, here. We fully appreciate the fullness of your own schedule and this makes your appearance before this subcommittee even more valuable. We know that you do not have a prepared statement, but you may begin your testimony as you choose.

TESTIMONY OF JAMES M. H. GREGG, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR,
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, ACCOMPANIED BY BENJAMIN H. RENSHAW, DIRECTOR, STATISTICS DIVISION, NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AND STATISTICS SERVICE

Mr. GREGG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have a few preliminary remarks.

LEAA has spent \$53 million since 1972 on the victimization surveys conducted by the Bureau of the Census; \$48 million of the \$53 million has been spent on data collection. The total LEAA budget has been reduced by \$250 million over the last 3 years.

Data collection costs alone for the victimization study are running at a rate of about \$6 to \$7 million per year. In light of the very high cost of this survey to the taxpayer, the questions for LEAA have become: What is the validity and reliability of the data being collected in this survey? What is the cost of acquiring this data? What are the benefits of having the data so acquired? Are the benefits worth the cost?

Unless the data is valid, the benefits of having it are greatly reduced or eliminated. Even if the data is valid, we must inquire into the uses that are being made of it. Serious questions have been raised concerning both the validity of the data, in light of methodology problems, and the degree to which the data is being utilized.

It appears that we need a period of reform and assessment concerning this survey, a period in which we can review and correct methodological problems. During this period we can also determine the use that is being made of survey data, and how that utility can be increased.

I'd like to point out, Mr. Chairman, that I was present during the testimony of the previous witnesses. I think that there may be a misunderstanding regarding this issue. There has never been any decision on the part of the LEAA, or the Department of Justice to discontinue the victimization survey.

The issue is the suspension of data collection for some period of time, in whole or in part, in order to correct the methodological problems that have been pointed out by both the National Academy of Sciences study and by independent critiques of the survey. During the period of assessment and reform, we can save the taxpayer up to \$6 million a year by suspending data collection in whole or in part. We would be conducting research and determining improvements that would be necessary to continue the data collection at a later time.

Those are my opening comments, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Renshaw and I will be happy to address any questions that you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

Mr. CONYERS. I don't know if you were here earlier, but this question was addressed as to whether or not these improvements could in fact occur while the program was in a state of suspension.

Were you aware—

Mr. GREGG. I understand. I didn't hear the testimony on that issue, Mr. Chairman, but I understand that it is a basic concern.

It has not been LEAA's intention at any point to terminate this effort. The question in our minds is, considering the very high cost of data collection, should we continue collection before the questions of the validity of the data and before the methodological issues are addressed.

The question has been raised as to whether you can do this without full data collection. This is a very technical area. Our assumption has been that it would be possible to undertake this methodological reform without full data collection. That issue has been raised again and is being taken into consideration by our staff.

Mr. CONYERS. What do you base that on? What information have you gathered that would lead you to that conclusion?

Mr. GREGG. Let me ask Mr. Renshaw to address that, because he has been very active in discussing that issue with who raised it in the last month or so.

Mr. RENSHAW. Mr. Chairman, upon receipt of the National Academy of Sciences report in July of 1976, even before we had the final report, we, in conjunction with the Bureau of the Census, began examination of that report on a question-by-question, issue-by-issue basis.

Over the period of the last year, we have been developing what I would term a management agenda for the examination of the methodological refinements.

In the discussions which preceded the decision within LEAA to suspend the data collection, the point has been made in quite a few quarters that there are elements of research that may not be able to be effectively undertaken without some level of data collection.

Thus, the staff activity that Mr. Gregg alluded to is an attempt to come up with a final version of a total research plan. Such a plan, Mr. Chairman, would encompass a range of activities suggested by the Academy and by other responsible critics of the survey. The possible levels of activity given available resources in particular years would be spelled out.

It is quite possible that research with reference to the recall period, and research with relation to some serious multiple victimizations, which the previous speakers have alluded to as a serious problem, may well require some level of data collection.

After we have laid that research program out, we will be able to ascertain more clearly the implications of the research program which will address the Academy's recommendations.

Mr. CONYERS. Are you conducting this research yourself, Mr. Renshaw?

Mr. RENSHAW. No, sir, the research will be conducted largely by the staff at the Bureau of Census that Mr. Levine alluded to in that Bureau's Office of Demographic Analysis.

Mr. CONYERS. You mean the Census Bureau will be brought in to help in studying these alternatives that are under consideration?

Mr. RENSHAW. Yes, sir, they already have been.

Mr. CONYERS. And they are in the process now of doing so?

Mr. RENSHAW. Yes, sir.

Mr. CONYERS. And which persons are so engaged over at Census?

Mr. RENSHAW. Well, the individuals who are on the staff—

Mr. CONYERS. Are you referring to Mr. Levine and his staff?

Mr. RENSILAW. I don't know that he is doing it directly, but certainly the people—

Mr. CONYERS. Under his direction?

Mr. RENSILAW. Under his direction.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned earlier random digit dialing. Computer-aided interviewing has been raised as a very important new technology that might, if it can bring in valid data, very much reduce the cost of the survey.

It is highly likely that we would undertake research in that area through some university or nonprofit firm that can establish credentials regarding such technology.

Mr. CONYERS. Now, you gentlemen are aware of the distinction that I hope is being made at these hearings—no one, including any of the witnesses thus far, has raised any objection to continued research that could refine or improve the victimization survey under question. There is no problem about that.

The question this afternoon is the possibility of a suspension of the program while these refinements are going on. That's the point.

And what has been testified to here almost without interruption since 1 o'clock, is the fact that any period of suspension would critically damage not only the first cycle's worth of 3 years that has already been obtained, but that it would also make it impossible to have any valid base for the projections that will go on for a number of years.

We applaud any continued refinement that would attach to this survey. But to consider interrupting it is the precise point upon which I would like you to refute the positions that have been made very explicitly.

The impact of a 1-year suspension becomes of even greater concern when we recognize the change in the sampling frame that will take place following the 1980 census. As a result, 1-year's suspension of the data collection might easily be parlayed to as much as an 8-year gap between time periods involving a fully balanced panel structure.

Now, the census people have just appeared already. I don't want to have to review their testimony, but there was nothing that they suggested here or in earlier writings between you and them and others that implied that an interruption would do anything but wreak havoc in their operation, not only substantively, but morally as well.

So I can't understand your response, quite frankly. Let us focus on the precise point of a 1-year suspension. Could we not continue the activities of the refinements, improvements and modifications that you suggest without the suspension? What would happen then?

Mr. GREGG. Mr. Chairman, the most expensive aspect of this effort is data collection while the research and methodological improvements are going forward. We would like to save some of these costs and reprogram them into further research.

In effect, that's the first recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences. They are concerned about the current balance between resources allocated to data collection and resources allocated to all other aspects of the victimization survey. I believe they intended to include both analysis of the survey results as well as research to improve the methodological issues or correct methodological problems.

Mr. CONYERS. If your explanation is correct, it would imply throwing the baby out with the bath water. I don't read that into it at all.

Mr. GREGG. No. If we could afford full data collection, I have no doubt it would be preferable from a technical point of view to continue it.

The issue is that this is a very expensive procedure. If there are serious methodological problems, can we correct those without having full data collection during that period and save the funds involved?

Mr. CONYERS. They have already answered that. You know what the answer is.

Mr. GREGG. They have. However, the expenditure of those funds is not their responsibility. It is LEAA's responsibility to try to assure that the taxpayer gets the best possible value for his funds.

The process that we are engaged in now is determining if we can make the methodological corrections without funding full data collection during that period.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Gregg, no one has suggested that the decision rests in someone's hands other than LEAA's under the Department of Justice. That is not a point of contention between anybody.

The fact of the matter is that we cannot cut the costs of this by an interruption without seriously damaging the entire survey. That is the weight of all of the evidence that we have heard so far.

Are you aware of that?

Mr. GREGG. I'm not aware of all the testimony this afternoon. I'm certainly aware that that is the principal issue. I have not yet had the benefit of my own staff's advice at this point on that issue.

They have been working with the Bureau of Census staff. They are considering that issue. It is a basic question. At this time I don't have staff advice as to the correct answers.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, I can appreciate that, and that's why I am going to ask, after Mr. Gudger finishes his examination, if you, Mr. Renshaw, and your other associates would like to join us informally off the record.

I'm a great one for believing that we don't have to proceed in this formalistic manner, and therefore I would just like to engage you in a brief informal meeting with some of the witnesses that are here today, with the understanding that you will also review their testimony and the other material that is related. I think that it will be important.

I applaud your concern about expenditures. You recall I tried to reduce the LEAA budget by a minor amount last year and I didn't receive any encores from anybody over at LEAA at that time.

Now, we come to the survey and it runs a grand course of \$6½ million per annum.

Here we have one of the few innovative statistical contributions to the study of crime by LEAA and your agency wants to, in effect, terminate the NCS while negotiations are underway to transfer this survey from LEAA to a new Bureau of Justice Statistics.

I am quite willing to concede that the expenses, especially if some of the recommendations are followed, will go up. But the question goes back to the point that you made, is it worth it?

Mr. GREGG. That's correct, Mr. Conyers.

Mr. CONYERS. And I suppose in your judgment the answer to that question is still unresolved.

Mr. GREGG. The answer is still out, Mr. Chairman, in assessing the whole program, its value in light of its cost is a basic issue.

We had requested the National Academy to address that issue in their study. The work of the Academy was outstanding. In the report they prepared for us, however, this was one issue that they weren't able to address.

We are going to try to independently assess that. There have been serious issues regarding the benefits of this survey. This partly stems from the Census Bureau's policies with respect to utilization of data for cities of population less than 250,000. This has made the survey not very useful for State and local officials, for State and local government planners, or for people who might be operating a community anti-crime program.

They can't utilize the victimization data for their purposes. They have to utilize many victimization surveys for those purposes.

We are interested in supporting such efforts and have been working with State and local governments to encourage surveys at the local level.

That is another cost, which returns us to the basic issue of the benefits of the current survey. I hope the chairman will call upon the State and local government officials, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to determine the benefit or value of this survey to them, beyond its value to the academic and research communities.

Mr. CONYERS. A good idea.

Mr. RENSCHAW. Mr. Chairman, could I add that the utility question—the benefit question—is a most difficult one.

Prior to coming to this position, I was with the State Planning Agency for the District of Columbia. I headed that agency, and made many efforts to look at victimization data in the settings of the inner city. Quite soon we'll be issuing data for 13 major cities, with specific highlights that conceivably have this kind of policy utility for others cities.

However, a recent National Academy of Sciences report entitled "Setting Statistical Priorities" sets forth the principle that the examination of all statistical series must be done in terms of the benefits being derived for the costs. The means of looking at these benefits was the extent to which public and private decisions had, in fact, been impacted by that data.

To date, we have very little measurable, documentable evidence to suggest that the victimization investment is proving of real decision-making benefit to the parties involved—to the Congress and to the State and local operative planning agencies.

Mr. CONYERS. Who is questioning it?

Mr. RENSCHAW. Who is questioning?

Mr. CONYERS. Yes, sir. From where are these doubts coming?

Mr. RENSCHAW. I wasn't referring to doubts.

Mr. CONYERS. Or the criticism?

Mr. RENSCHAW. When we look at an agency for the direct benefits or the utility of the data, and particularly when we look to the range of public decisions on program development made because of the survey, we have found very little evidence that the investment that we made to date has had the kind of impact we had hoped for.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, I'd like you to explain that statement. I mean, what information did you desire that you are not getting or don't have.

the prospect for getting, since the only criminal statistics that we have in the United States of America come from those 13,000 law enforcement agencies that report to the FBI?

Are you saying that all of the benefits that have been suggested here, even for the brief time you have been in the room, are of no consequence to the Federal anticrime units in the country?

Mr. GREGG. We would be very pleased to see evidence of use. We have looked for it and it's been rather sparse. Perhaps we have not looked closely enough.

Mr. CONYERS. I appreciate your candor. I'm going to yield now to my colleague from North Carolina, Mr. Gudger.

Mr. GUDGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I seem to see a confrontation of conclusions here. And I feel some responsibility to try and probe into the basis of these conclusions.

The conclusions that I perceive are the conclusions which you seem to have arrived at, that it is in the best interest of discontinuing the survey, that there be a suspension effective December 31 of this year for 1 year in the data collection which is a part of this commitment.

I read some of your remarks and other public material as indicating that it is your recommendation that all National Crime Survey data collection—in other words, victimization data collection efforts and household and commercial establishments in fiscal year 1978, in effect be suspended.

You suggest that year that the research evaluation and analysis of those results which have previously accumulated and that after such research and analysis, that a decision be made as to whether to continue this system.

Also, you state in your report that not only is there to be a decision made as to whether to continue, but that there would be a reassessment of methodology.

All right. Now, my question is this. We find these conclusions confronted by conclusions I think best expressed perhaps in the testimony of Dr. Margaret E. Martin, who just previously testified to the effect that the panel had reached the conclusion that—and I refer to the former panel for evaluation of crime surveys—that they reached a conclusion that any discontinuance or temporary suspension would have an impact, and I quote, "on the quality of the data extending over several years."

She comments that the design of the survey is complex, involving rotating panels, or respondents who stay in the panels for 3½ years, being interviewed once each 6 months. This complicated panel rotation system has just recently matured and an interruption would mean that it would need to be started again and several more years would be required to bring it into full operation.

In other words, a suspension would demolish the effect of all previous data collections. Now—or at least demolish the full benefit of all the previous data collections.

Do I understand that you disagree totally with this conclusion?

Mr. GREGG. I have not been able to fully understand that point. I have heard it made previously and I am somewhat intrigued as to how that's possible. That data is available. Much of it has been published and more will be published. How a suspension of the data collection can completely ruin the value of the previously collected data is something I am unable to understand.

I'm intrigued by that. I tried to understand it. I haven't been able to.

Mr. GUDGER. Do you concede that data collection does have cumulative value?

Mr. GREGG. Assuming it's valid.

Mr. GUDGER. All right, sir. One other statement made by Ms. Martin which I think deserves special consideration, and at least an entry in the record here is this—and of course, this is the same Panel for Evaluation of Crime Surveys which you have made reference to earlier—I quote, "The panel concluded that the analysis and research programs should be carried on simultaneously with the ongoing survey and that the national household survey should be maintained to provide a continuing record and to avoid the stop-and-start loss involved in suspending such a complex mechanism."

I take it that you disagree with that conclusion?

Mr. GREGG. I'm not sure that I would have disagreed within the context in which it was made. The panel, in making that suggestion, was not cognizant of the budgetary constraints that now face LEAA. Had they been aware of those limitations they might have suggested other options.

The overall Agency budget has been reduced by \$250 million since 1975. The LEAA funding for our statistics systems program has been reduced 40 percent.

If the panel had been able to predict that that situation would occur, perhaps they would have suggested other options.

Mr. GUDGER. By way of preface to my next question, I would like to state that I have just been serving as a member of the Criminal Justice Subcommittee. We reported to the full committee and back to the House the bill providing Federal support for State victims-of-violent-crimes systems.

You heard my reference to that earlier. I understood from the testimony made here that the National Crime Survey data is not widely used.

Are you aware of the fact that it was certainly considered and used as a survey tool in the preparation of the victims-of-violent-crimes compensation bill by this committee which I have made reference to?

Mr. GREGG. Yes, sir, I am aware of that.

Mr. GUDGER. It's my information that the cities of Portland and Denver have been making certain research surveys and have relied somewhat on this data. Are you aware of that?

Mr. GREGG. They have, somewhat, but they have experienced difficulties. In the case of Portland, they conducted their own local victimization survey to meet their needs.

Mr. GUDGER. Are you aware of the fact that the States of Oregon, Connecticut, Wisconsin, and I believe the Arkansas attorney general's office has also used this data in either updating, modifying, or developing their victims-of-crime systems for their own State legislatures?

Mr. GREGG. For compensation programs?

Mr. GUDGER. Yes.

Mr. GREGG. Not in every case, no, sir.

Mr. RENSILAW. Sir, I am not sure how that data was used. We do not publish any State-by-State victimization data. It is not normally possible to provide a State with victimization data.

Mr. GUDGER. Have you discussed this with any of the members of the State legislatures of these several States? Our data tends to show that the general assemblies for the legislatures of Oregon, Connecticut, Wisconsin, and the Florida House of Representatives all had access to the general data and did use this data in trying to anticipate the likely incidence of violent crime victimization and the cost of their several systems.

Mr. RENSRAW. No, I am not, sir. We have made a particular effort to provide public use tables to any jurisdictions, universities, or others inquiring about such data. I'm not aware of the particular use you mentioned. It certainly is possible for them to use that information drawing on the national survey.

Mr. GUDGER. That's what I have reference to.

Mr. RENSRAW. But not specific State-by-State data.

Mr. GUDGER. I did not mean to imply State-by-State treatment, but national incidence of victimization—national incidence of cost of victimization—and that's all the data which is of national scope, rather than specific State scope.

Now, the purpose of that line of question was to illustrate that there is some indication that this data has had some practical use here in Congress and in other legislative areas.

I am concerned at one comment which I may have misinterpreted, and that's the suggestion that the National Research Council had not included in its own studies the basis and justification for these surveys.

Am I wrong, or did I correctly interpret that there was testimony given here earlier to the effect that the sense and purpose of this survey had not been fully validated before it was undertaken?

Mr. GREGG. I believe, sir, you are referring to the comments I made that when the study was initiated we had hoped to have greater attention given to the potential benefits and uses of the survey.

Mr. RENSRAW. When the survey was initiated, LEAA stressed its potential utility and potential benefits. In other forums where we have been called upon to discuss this survey and the dollar expenditure involved, the issue of benefits and utility to document users has arisen. At the national level, as well as at the State and local level, as we consider victim restitution programs and other programs of victim assistance, people clearly are going to look to these data as a means of understanding State problems.

However, my own experience suggests that in the legislative forums that I have had some exposure to, there is usually a desire to have data from specific jurisdictions, whether it be the State of Oregon or the city of Portland.

Thus, we have pursued the publication of technical documents to assist State and local areas in local victim surveys. There is no ability to provide specific State data as gathered by census under the current design.

Mr. GUDGER. I would like, Mr. Chairman, for the record to show that I am reading from the National Academy of Sciences publication of 1976, entitled *Surveying Crime*, page 160, which reads:

The need for a continuing series of victimization surveys.

And it states,

We turn now to the importance of having the continuing series of national victimization surveys. Three distinct but related perspectives will be considered:

A, that of a social indicator; B, that of the executive and legislative branches of government; and C, that of the scientists' interest in advancing the state of knowledge of crime and its impact on American society.

There follows a considerable treatment of these three areas sought to be met and fulfilled by this survey, and I believe my previous questions have already indicated that the survey has had some beneficial effect here in meeting the second of these, that is, the needs of the executive and legislative branches of Government.

My concern, Mr. Chairman, has been that the other two objectives might be seriously prejudiced—the social indicator objective, the knowledge of crime and its impact on American society, if there be a suspension of this course of study which the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences had proposed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CONYERS. Without objection, the quoted material will be included in the record at this point.

[The material referred to follows:]

Excerpt from "Surveying Crime," Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys, National Academy of Sciences (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1976), pp. 160-163.

THE NEED FOR A CONTINUING SERIES OF VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

We turn now to the importance of having a continuing series of national victimization surveys. Three distinct, but related, perspectives will be considered: (a) that of a social indicator, (b) that of the executive and legislative branches of government, and (c) that of the scientist interested in advancing the state of knowledge of crime and its impact on American society.

THE VICTIMIZATION SURVEY AS A SOCIAL INDICATOR

In the decade since the first victimization surveys were carried out for the President's Commission, substantial progress has been made, in the United States and in other countries, toward the goal of providing a wide range of social indicators—that is, quantitative time-series data analogous to economic indicators, reflecting social change, the accomplishment of specific social goals, and the magnitude of social problems or concerns.¹ A continuing series of victimization surveys could provide a range of social indicators.

In suggesting the use of victimization surveys to provide social indicators, we do not envisage mere counts of crimes or victimizations, nor just aggregate rates of victimizations. Instead, the ideal series also should monitor the impact of crime in both personal and social terms. For example, how many persons are injured, in various degrees, as a result of violent crime—and what are the individual and social costs of such injuries? What are the risks of this kind of injury for different sectors of American society, and how are those risks related to other risks of injury? What is the direct personal cost of theft, in any given year—and how does it compare with the cost in other years and to other forms of loss? What is the distribution of criminal victimization of various kinds in the social structure, and how are changes in that distribution related to other social changes?

A continuing national victimization survey would at first probably provide only indicators of the objective effects of crime on the community. But in time, the surveys should produce data on subjective effects as well. A growing body of surveys has, in recent years, attempted to measure perceptions, expectations, beliefs, attitudes, and values, on the assumption that the quality of life is in the eye of

¹ For a thorough discussion of this problem and of efforts to construct social indicators in the years up to 1966, see Raymond A. Bauer, ed., *Social Indicators* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966).

the beholder.² A fairly consistent finding of these researchers, anticipated to some extent by earlier survey data on the fear of crime, has been that people's subjective perceptions of their own welfare—in this case, their feeling of freedom from crime and/or satisfaction with the workings of the criminal justice system—are not related in any simple or straightforward way to the objective facts of their experience nor to the real risks of crime that they confront. A continuing national victimization survey could thus provide, in a very literal sense, a measure of "domestic tranquility" and could help to relate that sense of tranquility, or its absence, to the relevant facts of social life.

The production of social indicators relating to crime need not involve any particular value premise; in particular, it is not, per se, to imply that an increase in crime, of the kinds measured by victim surveys, necessarily means society has changed for the worse. Analysis may show the change is attributable to a change in the population composition, to increases in wealth, and/or to a shift from activities of equal or greater harmfulness to those types of activities registered as crimes of victimization.

A continuing series of victimization surveys, carefully designed and validated in the ways described elsewhere in this report, could help to fill in the details of American life. It could help to illuminate our society's concepts of crime and the moral order, and it could help to provide a factual foundation for a reassessment of that moral order.

EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE USES OF VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

For most of the past dozen years, crime has been seen as a serious social problem in the United States and, as such, has been an important political issue. Many of the types of crime or disturbances that caused the most concern in that period—urban and campus riots, assassinations, violent political protest, the Pandora's box known as "Watergate"—did not, of course, require a victimization survey for their investigation. But in addition to those dramatic incidents, there was a general concern about more traditional forms of lawbreaking—in particular, "street crime" and other violence committed by strangers. This concern is reflected in the legislative origins of the NCS.

It can be forcefully argued that this concern is unrealistic. Evidence from a variety of sources, including the NCS and other victimization surveys, suggests that for the majority of Americans, crime of the type surveyed in the NCS is not, in fact, an important personal problem—compared with issues such as inflation, unemployment, educational costs, or race and sex discrimination. What cannot be denied is that public concern about crime is real. Crime is thus likely to remain an important fact of political life.

As to the utility of a continuing series of national victimization surveys for the executive and legislature, it is conceivable that it would reside largely in showing what could not be done about the crime problem, as well as showing, of course, more clearly what that problem is.³ The existence of such a series would mean that political decision-makers no longer had to rely solely on the UCR or on other administrative statistics for information on the level of crime. In addition, the victimization series would provide a wealth of information about the distribution and social consequences of crime, which could never be obtained from police statistics. Such a series could thus provide a much more rational basis for expenditures on the criminal justice system than has ever been available. It also could provide data relevant to a wide range of more specific issues, such as gun control and compensation for victims of crime. And, by exploring public attitudes concerning crime and the criminal justice system, as well as the relationship of those attitudes to the experience of victimization, the surveys could help to dispel the ignorance, misunderstanding, and irrational fear that now so often characterize public debate and discussion of crime.

² See, for example, Norman M. Bradburn and David Caplovitz, *Reports on Happiness: A Pilot Study of Behavior Related to Mental Health* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965); Norman M. Bradburn, *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being*, NORC Monographs in Social Research, No. 15 (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969); Angus Campbell and Philip E. Converse, eds., *The Human Meaning of Social Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972); Mark Abrams, "Social Indicators and Social Equity," *New Society*, Nov. 23, 1972, p. 454.

³ More precisely, what part of that problem is. Even a series of victimization surveys would give no information about organized or white-collar crime or political corruption, for example. (See also Chapter 8.)

THE SCIENTIFIC UTILITY OF VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

For the social analyst, a continuing series of victimization surveys at a national level could provide a rich resource of data. Each survey in such a series could be used as a cross-sectional testing ground for criminological theories (if victimization data were to be supplemented with other behavioral and attitudinal data). In addition, if the survey were a continuing one providing annual data over a period of years, it could be used along with other time-series data in longitudinal studies. Finally, if the series used a panel design, it would be possible to use it to study the consequences of criminal victimization. A continuing series of victimization surveys could yield data for testing theories about societal reaction to crime. It would probably have little to say about the microsociology of interpersonal violence and nothing whatever to say about victimless crime. But the NCS has already pointed to the existence of some criminological phenomena—such as series victimization—for which new theoretical approaches may be needed.

More importantly, the victimization survey makes possible for the first time an adequate test of a whole range of social theories, which have attempted to relate crime to the social structure, to culture, to class and class conflict, to economic conditions, or to deterrence. Until now, the only possible test of many of these theories has been official statistics such as the UCR. But, leaving aside their other characteristics, such statistics are a function not only of crime, but also of the working of the system of social control: They thus confound the relationships that theorists have wished to isolate for study. Victimization surveys, which can provide separate measures of crime and of societal response to it, can overcome this limitation. A continuing national survey would thus open the way to an extensive program of retesting of discarded theories and a reexamination of many received truths.

Mr. CONYERS. Gentlemen, I appreciate your willingness to join with us in this formal session.

I would like to just find out if you have seen the letter that Mr. Taeuber of the National Research Council addressed to the Deputy Attorney General, dated September 20. Is that a familiar document?

Mr. RENSHAW. Yes.

Mr. GREGG. Yes. Mr. Renshaw is familiar with that.

Mr. CONYERS. OK. Under those circumstances, I will yield to staff Subcommittee counsel for a few brief comments, after which time we will retire to the floor to cast our recorded ballot to which those bells summon us.

And then we would ask that those witnesses that have been before the subcommittee this afternoon, with the Acting Administrator, to join us informally in 2448, the library, which is adjoining this committee hearing room for what the old Speaker, Mr. Sam Rayburn, used to call a boardroom session.

I think we can make, informally, far more progress if that's agreeable with all of you.

Mr. Gregory.

Mr. GREGORY. I have just a few questions, Mr. Gregg, concerning the process by which this decision was arrived at. Was this an NCJISS (National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service) recommendation that the survey be suspended?

Mr. GREGG. Yes.

Mr. GREGORY. Was that recommendation made following an indication that there would have to be a budget cut, or was this independent of a budget cut?

Mr. GREGG. The date of the memorandum indicates that it would have come after NCJISS was aware of the 1978 budget figure.

Mr. GREGORY. And of course, dividing up that money is part of your responsibility as Acting Director, is it not, assigning a certain amount to NCJISS, as well as other elements?

Mr. GREGG. NCJISS is a budget line item, so that is really a matter of the guidance from the Appropriations Committee and the Department to LEAA. Allocations within that line item would be within LEAA's decision.

Mr. GREGORY. I'm sure you're aware of the proposal in the Office of Attorney General regarding the Criminal Justice Statistics Bureau?

Mr. GREGG. Yes, I am.

Mr. GREGORY. Are you familiar with the provisions in that suggesting that victimization would be an element of such a bureau?

Mr. GREGG. Yes, it's certainly an option that's under consideration.

Mr. GREGORY. Were you in constant—

Mr. CONYERS. It's more than an option, isn't it? It was understood to be part of the transfer. There was no suggestion when they were thinking about bringing the survey into Justice that victimization data collection be dropped. I mean, that wasn't part of the plan, was it?

Mr. GREGG. As far as I know, Mr. Chairman, the Attorney General has made no final decision on what would and would not be encompassed within the new Bureau of Justice Statistics. That's under consideration within the Department now, so I am really not in a position to speak to that.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, the impression that we gathered from the proposal to create a Bureau of Justice Statistics was that victimization surveys would be a major component of that agency.

Mr. GREGG. It would seem very likely to be. However, as far as I know, no final decision has been made on that by the Department.

Mr. GREGORY. Were you in consultation with the Office of Improvements in Administration of Justice prior to your approval on August 1 of the proposed—

Mr. GREGG. Not with respect to this particular question, no.

Mr. GREGORY. It didn't occur to you it might somehow fit in with what they were doing with the Bureau?

Mr. GREGG. No, it didn't. At this point, that Office has no operational responsibility that I am aware of. In fact, I'm not even certain that the Bureau of Justice Statistics will be located within that office. I don't believe any decisions have been made on that.

Mr. CONYERS. It wouldn't be located in their office, but they are making recommendations for the Bureau's future location.

Mr. GREGG. I'm suggesting, Mr. Chairman, that there is no Bureau of Justice Statistics within the Department. Its location within the Department has not yet been determined by the Attorney General. I may be just not aware of those decisions, if they have been made.

Mr. CONYERS. What about the Office of Improvement of the Administration of Justice?

Mr. GREGG. Yes.

Mr. CONYERS. You're in contact with them?

Mr. GREGG. Yes.

Mr. CONYERS. They are in existence and alive and well in the Department?

Mr. GREGG. As far as I know. As of the last contact, yes, sir.

Mr. CONYERS. OK. Well, would they have anything to do with any recommendations, or would they be involved in any of these ultimate considerations?

Mr. GREGG. I believe that they have been. The staff of that office has also been involved in the planning for the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Mr. CONYERS. And what about this particular point under consideration?

Mr. GREGG. We have had discussions with them subsequent to the signing of the decision memorandum. We also had discussions with the Department prior to the signing of the decision memorandum at a budget hearing.

There were a number of people at that hearing. I just can't recall whether someone from Mr. Meader's office was at that meeting. A number of departmental representatives were present.

Mr. GREGORY. What about the Census Bureau? Did you consult with them prior to your August 1 decision?

Mr. GREGG. Our staff had been discussing this, as Mr. Renshaw stated. We had established a committee with the Bureau of Census soon after receiving this report.

Mr. RENSHAW. I should clarify that. The committee's purpose was to examine all of the recommendations that were made by the National Academy and develop a research agenda by which they would be considered.

However, census was not consulted regarding the actual decision or the writing of the decision memorandum. After Mr. Gregg signed the memo on August 4, I went to the Bureau of the Census to discuss it and give them a copy. At that meeting there were at least 20 representatives of the Bureau of the Census, including Mr. Levine.

Mr. GREGORY. There must have been some misunderstanding then. Because we have seen a letter from the Director of the Census Bureau suggesting that he learned of it by reading it in the Washington Post.

Mr. GREGG. That's unfortunate, because we have a letter from his staff well before that time, responding to every point in the decision memo. It must have been some problem of communication within his staff.

Mr. RENSHAW. That letter was dated August 31.

Mr. GREGORY. One final question, Mr. Chairman.

I think you had arrived at the time Chairman Rodino made his remarks, and I wonder if it occurred to you that this was the sort of thing that might be of interest to the subcommittee or the Judiciary Committee which had oversight of your activities, and whether you feel that some sort of consultation with the chairman would have been—

Mr. GREGG. That is correct. I agree with the chairman, and I regret that we didn't have this consultation.

Mr. CONYERS. Well, we'll meet in room 2448 in 10 minutes.

The subcommittee stands in adjournment and the record will remain open for the inclusion of several additional exhibits.

[Whereupon, at 4:05 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Exhibits follow:]

COMMENTS ON THE CONTINUING COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THE NATIONAL CRIME VICTIM SURVEY

(By Albert J. Reiss, Jr., Yale University)

Perhaps the single and potentially most important innovation in our understanding of crime has been the development of the National Crime Victim Survey. Not only has it provided us with a new and important social indicator of crime in the United States but it remains potentially the most important source of analysis of the crime problem. Having been associated for more than a decade with the development of the victim survey method and the analysis of survey data I view the proposal to interrupt data collection for the National Crime Survey with considerable concern. I should like to present below a few reasons why I think data collection should be continued without interruption if it is at all feasible to support its continuation.

First, one of the most valuable though currently least exploited features of the NCS is its panel design that makes possible following the victimization of the same locations, households, or persons over a period of years. From this information we are able to estimate the amount and kind of victim proneness and repeat victimization over time. The simple use of cross-section data from the NCS does not make that possible. To interrupt data collection at this point is to reduce substantially the possibility of not only estimating repeat victimization over longer intervals of time but to determine whether there are changes in repeat victimization over time that affect the level of crime in the United States. In passing, I would simply note that more rather than fewer resources should be devoted to the analysis of victimization over time.

Closely related to this first reason is a second one about the importance of continuing the panel design without interruption so that we may better understand a host of questions related to measuring victimization as panels in the survey mature. This requires that all first interviewed rotation groups be allowed to mature to their maximum time in sample. With such information we can undertake cohort studies as well as other kinds of analysis that will better permit us to reliably estimate victimization rates.

A third reason why I think it is of considerable importance to continue the collection without interruption relates to the importance of having an independent way of estimating crime in the United States at this juncture in our history. Previous publications of the NCS and current preliminary estimates suggest that on the whole there is relatively little change in the rate of victimization of crime in the United States for the period 1973-76. While more detailed analysis of these data might show some significant changes, this relative stability is often taken as an argument for interrupting the series without any important loss of information or for in fact doing the survey on a less frequent basis. I do not agree with that conclusion if for no other reason than that were the stability to persist it may well be increasingly at odds with the only other important indicator we have on the crime rate, the rates reported by the Uniform Crime Reporting system. Now it is clear that NCS and UCR cannot be compared directly, but it is also quite apparent that if they diverge in significant ways critical questions arise both for analytical and policy purposes about estimating levels of crime in our society. At this very point in our history where UCR is reporting significant shifts in the crime rate for selected types of crime, it is critical that we have measures from the NCS. Thus the year 1977 and 1978 are particularly important ones from the standpoint of understanding any short as well as long term trends in the crime rate.

Finally, proposals to use alternative methods of data collection, to follow victimized persons and households over time, to estimate the effects of bounding household and individual respondents and a host of other questions related to the collection of National Crime Victim Survey data will be best answered in my opinion if there is a strategy for exploration that includes studies both in connection with the current survey and separately designed studies to explore particular matters of design and estimation. This is hardly the point to pose an entirely different strategy of data collection for the NCS in comparison with the current survey nor is it feasible to answer many questions unless the methods are directly compared in the same design. Since I have had occasion to comment elsewhere on these matters, I shall not burden this general assertion with particulars.

My comments are in no way intended to indicate any lack of support for either current or projected alternative means of data collection and analysis for the

NCS, provided they are carefully designed and executed to answer important questions. I support, indeed applaud, the effort to undertake considerably more work on the use of phone as compared with personal interviews bearing in mind that phone interviewing is not the same as many proposals for telephone victim surveys since there are many other features of a survey design. Indeed the present NCS incorporates phone interviewing into its design and it needs to be better understood. I have urged for some time that considerably more effort be devoted to redesigning the NCS to maximize the possibilities for panel or longitudinal studies of victimization. My position on many of these matters is not substantially different from that of the National Academy of Sciences Panel. We need both more effort in the analysis of data and more research on methods of data collection in an effort to continually improve the NCS. The history of any major national data collection effort, whether it be the NCS or UCR for crime indicators, or whether it be the CPS or the CES for economic data, is that too little rather than too much effort is invested in a program of continuing improvement. Any such major and significant program requires not only the continuing support of basic data collection and analysis efforts but of continuing efforts toward their improvement. Any such program likewise requires a continuing support of the partnership between the agencies without as well as within government and of the consumers as well as the producers of these data.

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL,
New York, N.Y.

Hon. GRIFFIN B. BELL,
Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. ATTORNEY GENERAL: I understand that household interviews for the National Crime Survey may be discontinued after December, 1977, with resumption planned, though not guaranteed, for fiscal year 1979. Speaking not for the Social Science Research Council, but for myself as a professional social scientist, I wish to express my profound unease that the Department of Justice now contemplates an action with such large and unfortunate consequences for our understanding of crime in the United States and of social conditions more broadly conceived.

As you know, the National Crime Survey exists because of dissatisfaction with traditional sources of data concerning crime. Wise policy is difficult to devise when not even the simple question of whether crime is increasing or decreasing can be answered with confidence. Though not a perfect measuring instrument, the National Crime Survey has the potential to provide extremely useful data concerning trends in criminal victimization, the distribution of victimization across places and groups in the society, the character of criminal events, and many other matters of interest and importance to both policy makers and social scientists. My own interest lies primarily in the ability of the National Crime Survey to generate social indicators, that is, statistical time series that measure changes in significant aspects of a society. The National Crime Survey is one of the most promising new developments in the measurement and analysis of social change. It reflects a wise commitment to knowledge as a basis for understanding and action.

Were the only consequences of the contemplated interruption in the ongoing interview program to be a nine month gap in a time series, my concern would be minimal. The design of the survey, however, is such that a relatively brief interruption in data collection produces a much longer gap in results. The recent National Academy of Sciences study Surveying Crime points out that "full maturity" of the survey first occurred with respect to data for January, 1977, more than 4 years after initial data collection. This means that earlier data may be contaminated with statistical artifacts of unknown magnitude. These artifacts can be brought under control only long after data collection begins. To interrupt data collection is to reintroduce these artifacts, so that only the passage of years will once again bring them under control. With the existing survey design, a 9 month interruption in data collection will result in a period of more than 3 years without reliable and comparable data on trends in victimization. This is no small price to pay. It is particularly unfortunate because what we know about the magnitude of year to year changes in measured victimization rates in relation to the sensitivity of the surveys in detecting change emphasizes the importance of studying trends. With this interruption, it will be well into the mid-1980's before the survey produces reliable trends to study.

Redesign of certain aspects of the National Crime Survey has been suggested by the National Academy, among others. The prospect of redesign does not greatly

increase the wisdom of interrupting data collection now. Methodological experimentation with such possibilities as a change in the recall period from 6 months to 12 is best accomplished in the context of an ongoing survey, and in any case will take longer than the 9 month interruption. Barring an unlikely radical alteration in the technology of the survey, it should be possible to introduce design modifications into the ongoing program in such a way that the extremely long period before the new design reaches maturity will be reduced. Furthermore, without continuation in the survey, it will not be possible to assess fully the effects of the new design features, so that we will never know whether data already collected are comparable with data collected under a new design.

A short interruption in the National Crime Survey will save a modest amount of money. It will cost years of time and reduce the benefits of what has already been spent. Neither public policy nor a scientific understanding of crime in society will be well served by a massive interruption in a program the value of which depends upon its continuity through time.

I strongly urge that household interviews for the National Crime Survey not be interrupted in fiscal year 1978. Short run advantage must not be allowed to destroy the prospect of long run understanding of crime and of society.

Sincerely yours,

ELEANOR BERNERT SHELDON.

OCTOBER 21, 1977.

JAMES M. H. GREGG,
Acting Administrator,
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

DANIEL J. MEADOR,
Assistant Attorney General, Office for Improvement in the Administration of Justice.

My staff and I have reviewed Mr. Gregg's memorandum of September 22, 1977, Dr. Scarr's memorandum of September 23, 1977, and the various documents that have been prepared in recent weeks concerning the National Crime Survey.

There is agreement that methodological studies should be conducted to determine whether the Survey can be improved. There is disagreement as to whether the Survey should be discontinued while the methodological studies are being conducted.

Based upon our review I do not believe the Survey should be completely suspended at this time. At the same time, because of the questions that have been raised concerning the quality and validity of the data currently being collected and because of the budgetary constraints which have been imposed upon LEAA, I believe that data collection should not exceed (a) the collection level necessary to maintain the comparability of the data series and (b) the collection level necessary to meet the objectives of the National Crime Survey.

By copy of this memorandum I am asking LEAA to prepare a report for submission to me which should set forth a statement of the objectives of the National Crime Survey and identify the programs that should be undertaken to meet those objectives. Consistent with those objectives, the report should identify the minimum collection levels for fiscal years 1978 and 1979 necessary to maintain the comparability of the data series. The report should be prepared after appropriate consultation with the Bureau of Census and the Office for Improvements in the Administration of Justice. In order to provide the Bureau of Census with adequate notice concerning data collection levels commencing with the second quarter of fiscal year 1978, you should report your findings to me no later than November 25, 1977.

PETER F. FLAHERTY,
Deputy Attorney General,
The National Crime Survey.

THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL,
Washington, D.C., October 26, 1977.

Hon. JOHN CONYERS, Jr.,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN CONYERS: In recognition of your interest in the activities of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration generally and in your particular interest in the National Crime Survey, I thought it would be appropriate

to follow-up my letter of September 15, 1977, with a current status report on the Department of Justice's deliberations concerning the National Crime Survey.

I believe that during the hearings which your Committee held on the Survey earlier this month, Mr. Gregg advised you that no final decisions had been made on this matter and that further study was being conducted on the National Crime Survey and its future. In recognition of the importance and complexity of this issue I have asked LEAA officials to conduct further study of the Survey and its objectives so that we may be in a position, after appropriate consultation with Congress, to make an informed judgment concerning the future of the Survey. I have specifically asked LEAA officials to identify the programs that are consistent with objectives of the Survey and to set forth the collection levels for the data series that should be undertaken to meet those objectives. In preparing their study I have asked LEAA officials to work closely with officials from the Bureau of Census and with other interested parties in the Executive and Legislative branches of the Federal government.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and would be pleased to discuss this matter with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

PETER F. FLAHERTY.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS,
Washington, D.C., November 18, 1977.

Mr. BENJAMIN RENSHAW,
Director, Statistics Division, NCJISS, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration,
U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

DEAR BEN: As requested by Charles Kindermann, we have reviewed the question of the minimum level of National Crime Survey (NCS) data collection required to produce publishable annual change data comparable with previous data. While data comparable to earlier data can be published with a substantially reduced sample, it is our firm conviction that such a reduction would severely limit our ability to make meaningful comparisons from year to year.

The required sample size for the NCS is, of course, dependent on the main objectives. Originally, when the survey was designed in the early 1970's, the sample size determination was driven by an objective of measuring annual change in the personal victimization rate, which then excluded personal larceny without contact (making it nearly equivalent to our current category of crimes of violence). The assumptions made concerning the personal victimization rate were that a rate of 20 per 1000 and an annual relative change of 10-15 percent could be expected. These appeared to be realistic expectations according to Uniform Crime Reports data, which was the main data source available at that time. However, we now know that annual changes of that magnitude are unrealistic, given current evidence from the survey itself.

The following table shows, by major crime category, the average annual victimization rate for the four years 1973 through 1976, the sample estimate of relative change for the three year-to-year comparisons, and the average annual relative gross change in rates (ignoring direction).

Type of crime	Average annual victimization rate, 1973-76	Annual percentage change in rates			Average annual percentage change in rates
		1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	
Crimes of violence (including rape).....	32.7	+1.3	-0.4	-0.8	0.9
Robbery.....	6.8	+6.5	-5.8	-4.4	5.6
Assault.....	25.0	-1	+1.4	+4	.6
Personal larceny with contact.....	3.9	+1.5	-8	-6.4	2.9
Personal larceny without contact.....	91.6	+4.5	+1.0	+3	1.9
Total personal crimes ¹	127.4	+3.6	+6	-2	1.5
Burglary.....	91.3	+1.6	-1.6	-3.0	2.1
Household larceny.....	120.2	+15.7	+1.3	-1.0	6.0
Motor vehicle theft.....	18.4	-1.3	+3.5	-15.5	6.8
Total HH crimes ²	230.0	+8.3	+3	-3.0	3.9

¹ Change significant at 95 percent confidence level. No changes were significant at the 90 percent level.

² Changes in total personal or total household crime victimization rates have not been tested for significance because they have never been considered for publication.

It is apparent that, even though the current sample may be considered large, it is still too small to measure with accuracy annual changes in most major victimization rates, including crimes of violence, as long as current trends regarding magnitude of changes continue. Of course there is no way of knowing whether future estimated changes will be as small or possibly even smaller. At any rate, current best knowledge suggests the sample size should be increased rather than reduced.

Recognizing that sample increases are presently out of the question, however, we shall address the impact of any substantial sample reduction. To illustrate the impact, in the 1974-1975 Change Report, out of 1,454 comparisons attempted, only 170 showed significant change—94 at the 95 percent confidence level and 76 at the 90 percent level. With a one-half sample, only 17 of these 170 changes would have been significant at 95 percent and 35 at 90 percent—so that only about 3 in 10 of the currently estimated significant changes could be expected to hold up. With an effective one-third sample (the result of excluding length of recall research cases from half a sample), the corresponding figures are 10 changes at the 95 percent level, and 10 at 90 percent, or only about 1 in 10 of the original 170 significant changes would be judged to be significant.

We would caution that an additional hazard in reducing the sample size is that spurious changes are more likely to show up as significant because of increased fluctuation of sample estimates, particularly in smaller categories.

Not only does the picture look bleak for the possibility of measuring year-to-year change even with current sample levels, but substantial reduction would have an adverse impact on comparisons of victimization rates and levels among subgroups within a single year, as well. Further the ability to do in-depth analytical reports, using data aggregated for 2 or more years, on topics like domestic violence and unlawful entry will also be impaired. Finally, a reduction would hamper the ability to look at the long-term trends, an area of analysis that is becoming more important as limitations of current sample size become more and more apparent. Even nonparametric trend analysis would be hampered by sample reductions because of the fluctuations in point estimates which would inevitably result.

The publication of data, however, regardless of sample size, is not affected by the Bureau's adherence to statistical standards. The limitations of the data and the standard errors associated with the data are required to be published. The conclusions drawn from the data by the author of the report must meet the statistical standards, but this does not prevent a user from obtaining data from the report and drawing conclusions that do not meet the test of statistical reliability.

In conclusion, we recommend strongly against any substantial sample reduction at this time. Further, as implied in the five-year research plan, we recommend that consideration be given to methods of improving upon current estimates or, if that is not feasible, that the objective of measuring year-to-year change be reconsidered (with the possibility of a major survey redesign being indicated).

Sincerely,

MARIE G. ARGANA.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, D.C., December 1, 1977.

Memorandum to: Peter F. Flaherty, Deputy Attorney General,
From: James M. H. Gregg, Acting Administrator, LEAA.

In response to your directive of October 21, 1977 we are submitting the attached report. We feel that this report responds to the questions raised in your memorandum and presents a course of action with which you can concur.

This report, however, does not set to rest the complex issues surrounding the victimization survey. In the next six months we must address such critical matters as internal staffing in support of the Survey, further definition of the research program of improvements in the Survey, and a short term evaluation of its policy and program utility. In all these efforts we will continue to seek Departmental support and guidance.

If you concur with the recommendations made here, I feel a joint public announcement should be made since we continue to receive Congressional, press and other inquiries. We await your reaction.

JAMES GREGG.

REPORT CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY (NCS)

I. INTRODUCTION

This internal report is prepared in response to an October 21, 1977 directive from Deputy Attorney General Peter Flaherty to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to examine the objectives, data collection levels and overall program of the National Crime Survey (NCS) of victimization, in consultation with the Department of Justice's Office for Improvements in the Administration of Justice and the Bureau of the Census.

II. BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF ISSUES

The arguments for and against a suspension of household data collection of the National Crime Survey during FY 78 have been explained in detail in memoranda, discussions within the Department of Justice (particularly September 15th) and Congressional testimony, and with only be summarized in the following paragraphs. It should be explained at this point that LEAA regards a total victimization program as including data collection, data analysis, research concerning methodological and conceptual refinements, and assistance to state and local governments; however since the inception of the program in 1972 the data collection aspect of NCS has been dominant, consuming over \$48 million of the \$53-54 million spent on victimization surveys.

Considerations that impelled the decision to suspend data collection of NCS as a response to budgetary cuts in the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistic Service's Statistics Division included (1) the lack of utility of the data, particularly the absence of use by national, state and local criminal justice policy and program officials; (2) the extremely high cost of the surveys again in the absence of demonstrated benefits; (3) strong challenges variously to the quality, reliability and validity of the data; (4) the need to focus available resources on methodological and conceptual research in response to a two and a half year evaluation of NCS by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS); (5) challenges, including that of the National Academy, to the current sampling design and methods; (6) the present stability of the data; and (7) the current Bureau of the Census disclosure policy which limits the utility of the survey for state and city users.

Arguments against suspension include: (1) the view that the most reliable way to make methodological and other improvements is in the context of an ongoing collection effort; (2) that it is important to continue the series to determine whether victimization data corresponds to or is different from police (Uniform Crime Reports) statistics in coming years, i.e., to have an independent way of estimating crime in the United States other than UCR; (3) the need to permit more of the NCS interview panels to mature so that a host of questions related to victimizations, e.g., repeat or series victimizations can be better investigated; (4) that the administrative machinery of the Bureau of the Census for performing the surveys should be maintained; (5) that the suspension of data collection for nine months is neither desirable nor feasible given the time required to complete methodological research and the costs of Census start up; and (6) overall that the NCS is a major innovation, a success of LEAA, and an essential source of information to guide public policy decisions.

The reconciliation of these views is difficult, particularly for the agency that has defended the NCS in budget, policy and analysis forums since 1972. It is our conclusion, however, that at least part of the concern of those opposing either suspension or other reduction in victimization data collection is that the overall survey will either continue to diminish or will not be started again. Whatever the final resolution on the extent of data collection over the coming years, strong public assurances should be made concerning this Administration's support of the need for data on the extent and nature of victimization as a guide to national criminal justice policy.

III. PROCEDURE FOLLOWED IN DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT

The first mandate of this report was to develop a statement of objectives for the National Crime Survey. The National Academy of Sciences [NAS] report included an entire chapter (Chapter 8—"Assessment of Objectives of the National Crime Surveys") chronicling various LEAA and Census formulations of the

objectives of the NCS and the extent to which they had been achieved; the final chapter (Chapter 9—"The Utility of the National Crime Surveys") and other parts of the Academy volume offered views and guidance on what the objectives should be. Using the Academy recommendations and considering current LEAA program needs, a draft restatement of NCS general objectives was developed by LEAA staff for circulation and comments.

A second mandate of this report was to define a victimization program to meet these objectives. Since an essential element in such a program is methodological research, the next step was to develop a detailed research agenda for a five year period that would embrace all the conceptual, methodological and technological issues raised by the NAS evaluation that should be completed before a new version of the victimization survey could be launched. Staff of the Bureau of the Census, with guidance from LEAA staff, completed and transmitted a preliminary draft plan of the coverage and costs of such a research program.

The draft versions of (1) a revised statement of objectives of the NCS program and (2) the research plan were circulated to LEAA grantees in the victimization field and individuals and institutions that had expressed interests and concerns with the future of NCS, including the National Academy of Sciences and the American Statistical Association's subcommittee on crime statistics. Field trips were made by LEAA staff to get more detailed reactions to these drafts.

During the time we were awaiting responses to the drafts, we consulted with Dr. Harry Scarr of the Department's Office for Improvements in the Administration of Justice concerning the objectives and uses that Office might have for data derived from victimization surveys.

With the receipt of written and oral responses concerning the drafts, we analyzed these responses in order to arrive at a final version of NCS objectives, research program and data collection levels. (Copies of letters received are available for your review if desired). Finally, three major options for the continuation of the victimization program were considered. Each option is expressed in terms of an ~~objective~~ or set of objectives to be achieved.

The sections of this report that follow present our conclusions concerning what should be the current objectives for the national crime survey, a preliminary statement of overall focuses for research, an explanation of the three options we considered for the future of the victimization surveys, and our recommendation concerning the preferred option and the level of data collection required to meet the objectives addressed by that option.

IV. CURRENT OBJECTIVES FOR THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY (NCS) OR VICTIMIZATION PROGRAM

Based on a careful review of the National Academy of Sciences report, responses of persons who have been asked to comment on an earlier version of these objectives, consultation with the Office for Improvements in the Administration of Justice, and assessment of current LEAA needs—the following is considered to be an appropriate statement of the objectives of a nationwide publicly funded, statistical series on victimization:

1. To provide trend data that will serve as a set of continuous and comparable national social indicators for the rate of victimization for selected crimes of violence and crimes of theft and for other factors related to crime and victimization in support of national criminal justice policy and decisionmaking and in support of informed public discussion.
2. To conduct a program of conceptual and methodological research that will improve the victimization surveys in response to the National Academy of Sciences evaluation, including refinements of measurement, survey techniques, and questionnaire design.
3. To exploit the depth and richness of currently available victimization data through analytical research on issues of public concern and of consequence to the development of national, state, and local criminal justice policy and legislation, with broad dissemination of findings.
4. To assist state and local government efforts to improve the administration of criminal justice through (a) promotion of analysis of national data to understand local implications, (b) provision of national guidance on the feasibility, conduct, and utility of local victimization surveys, and (c) provision of a limited set of subnational social indicators derived from the national survey.
5. To expand the current victimization survey to include assessment of vulnerability and susceptibility to crime of various segments of the population, and

to explore governmental and private approaches for reducing the opportunity for criminal acts and the risk of victimization.

6. To examine, through the longitudinal component of the survey, those factors associated with repeated or multiple victimizations to discover appropriate means of reducing such victimizations or minimizing their consequences.

7. To use the ongoing national survey to obtain additional information on crime and criminal justice issues through supplemental questionnaires.

This list of objectives has intentionally been entitled "current," first to convey that some earlier objectives have been reviewed and discarded, and second that these objectives are subject to modification as the needs of the criminal justice system and policy concerns of the Department of Justice and LEAA subsequently may dictate.

Some objectives of the national crime survey which have been cited in earlier documents have proven undesirable on a cost/benefit basis or simply unworkable. The goal of obtaining quarterly victimization data has been discarded because it is exceedingly expensive in its implementation and because the "state-of-the-art" in criminal justice intervention strategies does not permit responses to changes in victimization on a quarterly basis.

The assumptions once held that victimization data could be used to evaluate local crime reduction programs has proved false. "Before" and "after" victimization surveys measure only a small set of possible consequences of criminal justice programs and they are not able to isolate non-criminal justice program influences.

The concept of the national crime survey as an instrument for calibrating the Uniform Crime Reports ignores the different conceptual bases of each, which, while enhancing the findings of the other, are not sufficiently congruent to permit revising the data from one source solely on the basis of the data from the other.

Perhaps most important, the objective of providing subnational data for states or metropolitan areas by means of either an expanded national sample to reach SMSA's (as recommended by the National Academy) or through separate city surveys (which the Academy recommended that LEAA discontinue) is suspended as an objective for fiscal years 1978 and 1979 for two reasons: first, the Academy states that an "... objective of producing operating intelligence for jurisdictions is inconsistent with the original purposes of NCS ..." and second, even should we disagree with that view, the cost involved in expanding the sample size precludes further work on subnational areas in fiscal years 1978 and 1979. The limited subnational data now referenced in objective 4 would be derived from categorizing data from the national sample by type of area (urban, suburban, rural) and by characteristics of the neighborhood. In fiscal years 1980-1982, funding levels permitting, the sample size could be expanded to achieve specific subnational data objectives that may be formulated at that time.

V. STATEMENT OF OVERALL FOCUSES FOR RESEARCH

This section of the report presents the overall priorities and initial estimates of costs for a variety of methodological and conceptual research activities to be undertaken over the next five years. The priorities assigned and the dollar estimates of cost are derived from the Bureau of the Census's proposal for a research agenda for fiscal years 1978-1982 modified on the basis of the letters and other reactions we have received to that proposal. The material presented in this section provides the research activities and cost estimates to be incorporated into Section VI dealing with the principal options for continuation of the victimization program.

There are several reasons, however, why the research program presented here can still only be regarded as preliminary and tentative: first, the responses we received from the individuals and institutions reviewing the draft research agenda differed dramatically in their views on priorities, sequence of research activities and level of funding; second, several respondents indicated that the materials we provided were not sufficiently detailed to permit an effective review; and perhaps most important, it became apparent from our discussions with several of those who did respond that there is a lack of interchange of information on the current victimization research work and results being done by various respondents.

To develop a final version of this research agenda we feel that it is essential to convene a session for the interchange of results of currently funded research

and to debate the differing recommendations concerning research which we have received while developing this report. We intend to conduct such a session for a three to four day period in February, 1978 and to focus the discussion on specific research issues related to priorities among activities, questions of the appropriate order for the conduct of such activities, and the necessary level of funding.

What agreement did exist among the reviewers stressed as a priority the overall research objective of improving the reliability, quality and accuracy of the victimization data and of increasing the usefulness of the survey by conducting research dealing with the scope and coverage of the NCS. For example, several reviewers stressed and the need for the survey to provide more explanatory power by researching the inclusion of questions dealing with the vulnerability, risk, and opportunity for victimization.

TABLE I.—NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND COSTS, FISCAL YEARS 1978-82

[Dollar amounts in thousands]

Research activities	Fiscal year costs and priorities					
	1978		1979		1980-82	
	Cost	Priority	Cost	Priority	Cost	Priority
A. COMMERCIAL VICTIMIZATION SURVEY (CVS) PROJECTS						
1. Exploratory workshop.....	\$10.0	Low				
2. Scope of crimes research.....	240.0	Low	300	Low		
3. Questionnaire design research.....						
4. Sample design research.....						
Subtotal, commercial survey.....	250.0		300			
B. NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY (HOUSEHOLDS) PROJECTS						
1. Telephone/personal visit experiment.....	2.0	High				
2. Centralized telephone interview.....	25.0	do	200	Medium	\$1,300	Medium.
3. Computer assisted interview.....	25.0	do	75	do	125	Do.
4. 12- and 13-yr-old self-response.....					75	Low.
5. Questionnaire research.....	20.0	High	100	High	400	High.
(a) Series crimes.....	5.0	do	50	do	25	Do.
(b) Attitude supplements.....	23.0	Medium	2	Medium		
(c) Accommodation and fatigue.....	7.5	Low				
(d) Psychological factors.....			450	Low	3	Low.
6. Reverse record checks.....	25.0	High	800	High		
7. Reference period.....	100.0	do	100	do	50	High.
8. Time in sample.....	7.5	Medium				
9. Estimation procedure.....	5.0	do	5	Medium	20	Medium.
(a) Collection year.....					50	Do.
(b) Composite estimation.....					20	Do.
(c) Series crimes.....					25	High. 2
(d) Unbounded data.....	2.0	High	10	High		
10. Sample design:						
(a) Dual frame sampling.....	5.0	Medium			50	Medium.
(b) Stratification.....			10	High	25	High.
(c) Random digit dialing.....	5.0	Medium	5	Medium	750	Medium.
11. Coverage issues:						
(a) Military.....	2.0	Low				
(b) Institutional population.....	5.0	do				
(c) Under age 12.....					100	
(d) Scope of crimes.....					400	Low.
(e) Undercoverage problems.....	15.0	High	5	High		Medium.
12. Conceptual issues.....	225.0	Very high	500	do	300	High.
13. Analytical issues.....	50.0	do	350	do	300	Do.
Subtotal, household survey.....	554.0		2,662		4,018	
Total, household and commercial surveys.....	804.0		2,962		4,018	
High priority.....	494.0		1,925		1,125	
Medium priority.....	45.5		287		2,715	
Low priority.....	264.5		750		178	

1 A major reverse record check project could provide useful information for a variety of other activities including telephone experiments, questionnaire research, time in sample and others.

2 Consideration will be given to more immediate work on this subject building on census research already completed.

A second emphasis of the research recommendations was on the methodologies and technologies which will minimize cost while maintaining the data scope and quality requirements. These areas of research include reference period research; reverse record checks; the feasibility of telephone interviewing, random digit dialing, and computer assisted interviewing; dual frame sampling; and the possible use of unbounded or non panel data. Reviewers have not only recommended these as cost savings measures, but as areas of research because of possible positive or negative impacts on the data quality.

Other major areas of research are primarily to implement the first two objectives. For example, questionnaire design, redesign of the sampling plan, estimation procedures, and household-versus-individual measurements are all directly derived from the outcomes of the first two classes of research.

The attached table shows the estimated costs, degree of involvement of the Bureau of the Census, and priorities of the NCS research program. The priorities were assigned by LEAA after considering the outside review by experts and the importance of the activity in making the data more analytically useful and reducing cost. Timing was decided based on the need for preliminary research, planning, or review of more detailed proposals for the conduct of the research.

Again this research agenda is highly tentative, with its primary purpose being development of rough estimates of a budget requirement for fiscal years 1978-82.

VI. OPTIONS FOR CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY FOR FISCAL YEARS 1978-79 AND 1980-82

In the development of options for continuation of the National Crime Panel, several assumptions have been made. The first is that analytical research is an objective that must be incorporated into any option although the level of research activity can vary and will ultimately depend on the level of departmental and LEAA staff capabilities and on funding available for the support of analytic research both at the Bureau of the Census and among academically-based and nonprofit research groups. A second assumption incorporated in each option is a distinction between fiscal years 1978-79 and fiscal years 1979-82, based on support possible from LEAA during the first period and the potential for increased support under the proposed Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics during the second period. A final assumption, as stated in the previous section, is that each option will require further refinement of research programs and priorities and that this will be undertaken in a working conference to be held in early 1978.

The formulation of the options presented below also reflects such considerations as the emphasis placed by the Office for Improvements in the Administration of Justice on the NCS as a source of national social indicator(s) for crime, the lack of consensus among the criminal justice statistical community on the respective priorities accorded research and data collection under scarce-resource conditions, and the desire to preserve the institutional and organizational infrastructure of the NCS which has been developed over the better part of a decade.

The importance attached to national social indicators of crime has certain inevitable programmatic ramifications. The ideal social indicator is available annually. Less frequent dissemination of victimization rates and other indicators diminishes the value of the indicator itself and the benefits of examining it in the context of other criminal justice indicators which are available on an annual basis.

In order to understand the resource implication of various program levels that would meet all objectives and sets of more limited objectives, we developed three options for the conduct of the victimization survey:

1. the first would be a program that would meet objectives 1-4 in fiscal year 1978 and 1979 and all objectives in fiscal years 1980-82 (explained on p. 13);
2. the second would be a program that emphasizes data collection to achieve a national indicator of victimization rates in fiscal year 1978 and 1979, and would meet objectives 1-4 in fiscal years 1980-82 (explained on p. 14);
3. the third would emphasize research throughout fiscal years 1978-82, but would not fully address any other objectives and would reach only selected additional objectives in fiscal years 1980-82 (explained on p. 15).

The cost estimates for the three options were developed as follows:

Data collection.—The Bureau of the Census estimated that data collection at the current level would cost \$6 million in fiscal year 1978. Since data collection for the first quarter of fiscal year 1978 is nearly complete at a cost of \$1.5 million,

the costs associated with full collection for the remainder of the year (options 1 and 2) are estimated to be \$4.5 million ($\frac{3}{4}$ of the \$6 million estimate for 12 months). Costs associated with full collection for subsequent years were derived by inflating the \$6 million figure with an inflation factor of 6.5 percent per year.

Option 3 was developed under the assumption that a $\frac{1}{2}$ sample was the lowest on-going data collection level that would support the high priority research in fiscal year 1978. The Census Bureau estimated that the annual costs associated with a $\frac{1}{2}$ sample with a more efficient sample design (266 PSU design instead of the current 376 PSU design) would be about \$4.1 million. Therefore, data collection for option 3 in fiscal year 1978 would cost \$3.1 million ($\frac{3}{4}$ of \$4.1 million) in addition to the \$1.5 million expended during the first quarter. Again, costs associated with a $\frac{1}{2}$ sample collection effort in subsequent years were derived by inflating the \$4.1 million figure by an inflation factor of 6.5 percent per year.

Methodological research.—Research cost estimates were classified as either high, medium or low priority according to the criteria discussed in the section on research objectives and priorities.

In fiscal year 1978, a total of \$804,000 (\$275,000 for LEAA and \$529,000 for the Census Bureau) was estimated for research under option 1; only high priority research is done under option 2 and the totals are \$275,000 for LEAA and \$219,000 for Census; under option 3 high and medium priority research are done and the totals are \$275,000 for LEAA and \$265,000 for Census. LEAA's share represents the methodological research needed to address the conceptual and analytical issues. This research would be done by University and non-profit grantees and would be the basis for the development of subsequent research proposals. The fiscal year 1978 funds for methodological research to be carried out by the Census Bureau primarily will be used to conduct the high priority research such as reference period research, computer assisted telephone interviewing, questionnaire research, etc.

Methodological research costs for fiscal year 1979 and fiscal year 1980-82 are based on Census Bureau and LEAA estimates of the funds required to conduct either the high priority research or all research; again only high priority research is done under option 2.

Analysis.—In general, the cost estimates for analysis are based both on the costs to continue to support the Office of Demographic Analysis (ODA) at the Census Bureau and on the costs associated with funding university and non-profit grantees to conduct substantive research for LEAA. The fiscal year 1978 estimate is composed of \$500,000 to support ODA and \$274,000 to support the current LEAA grantees. Cost estimates for subsequent years are higher than the fiscal year 1978 estimate and reflect inflationary trends as well as the recommendations to increase the resources devoted to analysis that have been made by virtually every reviewer of the National Crime Survey program.

International LEAA/DOJ management and analysis.—The cost figures represent the salaries for positions associated with the current and projected staff necessary to manage the National Crime Survey and conduct indepth analysis of the NCS data. The fiscal years 1978 and 1979 figures are based on current LEAA position allocations. The fiscal years 1980-82 figure assumes an increase of 15 professional positions (analysts) and 6 clerical positions (3 clerk-typists and 3 statistical clerks). These estimates include neither fringe benefits nor the analytic staff at the Census Bureau that is shown separately under analysis..

State and local support.—State and local support costs assume a relatively low level of support throughout the five year period. The fiscal year 1978 estimate of \$350,000 will be used to produce a manual to assist state and local planners and practitioners with the conduct of victimization surveys and to provide other forms of technical assistance. Estimates for fiscal year 1979 and fiscal years 1980-82 will be used to provide technical assistance.

Supplements.—The cost estimates for supplements represents the costs associated with (1) questionnaire development by LEAA grantees, (2) pretesting and data collection costs by the Census Bureau, and (3) data analysis by LEAA grantees. The fiscal year 1978 costs represents the Wolfgang seriousness study and the data collection associated with that study. The fiscal year 1979 figure represents questionnaire development and minimal pretesting costs. The fiscal years 1980-82 figure represent the costs associated with data collection and analysis for three supplements—one each year.

Table 2, which details the objectives, research levels, costs, and data collection implications of each option, follows. Discussion of the benefits and uses of the data follows this table.

TABLE 2.—OPTIONS FOR CONTINUATION OF NCS

OPTION 1: OBJECTIVES 1-4 MET IN FISCAL YEAR 1978-79; ALL OBJECTIVES MET BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 1980-82

	1978	1979	1980-82	Total 5-year costs
Objectives addressed.....	Objectives 1-4.....	Objectives 1-4.....	All objectives.....	
Research implications.....	Full research agenda—primary focus on research to improve meaningfulness of data (conceptual and analytic issues) and research to reduce cost of surveys (reference period research).			
Total costs (in thousands).....	8,353.....	11,045.....	13,789 (per year average).....	\$50,765
Collection.....	6,000 census.....	6,500 census.....	9,000 census.....	39,500
Meth. research.....	275 LEAA, 529 census.....	850 LEAA, 2,112 census.....	200 LEAA, 1,139 census.....	7,783
Analysis 1.....	274 LEAA, 500 census.....	500 LEAA, 530 census.....	1,000 LEAA, 570 census.....	6,514
Internal LEAA/DOJ management and analysis.....	85 LEAA.....	103 LEAA.....	630 DOJ.....	2,078
S. & L. support.....	350 LEAA.....	250 LEAA.....	250 LEAA.....	1,350
Supplements.....	150 LEAA, 190 census.....	150 LEAA, 50 census.....	250 LEAA, 750 census.....	3,540
Current allocation.....	3,549.....			
Additional funds required.....	4,804.....	11,045.....	13,789 (per year average).....	
Data collection implications—Sample size.....	Current sample size—60,000 households.....	Current sample size—60,000 households.....	Augmented to measure 10 percent change in violent crime rate 72,000 households; further augmentation possible, but not reflected in costs, for subnational data.....	

OPTION 2: NATIONAL INDICATOR PRIMARY IN FISCAL YEAR 1978/79; OBJECTIVES 1-4 MET BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 1980/82

	1978	1979	1980-82	Total 5-year costs
Objectives addressed.....	National indicator (1), high-priority research (2).....	National indicator (1), high-priority research (2).....	Objectives 1-4.....	
Research Implications.....	Only high-priority research, reference period research, commercial analytic issues, etc.....	High-priority research—commercial survey, telephone, questionnaire, reference period, conceptual and analytic issues, etc.....	Full research agenda—both high and low priority research.....	
Total costs (in thousands).....	8,043.....	9,553.....	12,738 (per year average).....	\$55,815
Collection.....	6,000 census.....	6,500 census.....	7,500 census.....	35,000
Meth. research.....	275 LEAA, 219 census.....	850 LEAA, 1,075 census.....	200 LEAA, 1,588 census.....	7,783
Analysis 1.....	274 LEAA, 500 census.....	500 LEAA, 530 census.....	1,000 LEAA, 570 census.....	6,514
Internal LEAA/DOJ management and analysis.....	85 LEAA.....	103 LEAA.....	630 LEAA.....	2,078
S. & L. support.....	350 LEAA.....		250 LEAA.....	1,100
Supplements.....	150 LEAA, 190 census.....		250 LEAA, 750 census.....	3,340
Current allocation.....	3,549.....			
Additional funds required.....	4,494.....	9,558.....	12,738 (per year average).....	
Data collection implications—sample size.....	Current sample size—60,000 households.....	Current sample size—60,000 households.....	Current sample size—60,000 households.....	

OPTION 3: METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH ONLY IN SUPPORT OF OBJECTIVES 1-4 IN FISCAL YEAR 1978/79; SELECTED OBJECTIVES MET AFTER FISCAL YEAR 1980

	1978	1979	1980-82	Total 5-year costs
Objectives addressed.....	Research (2) in support of objectives 1-4.....	Research (2) in support of objectives 1-4.....	Research (2) in support of objectives 1-4; selected objectives.....	
Research implications.....	Full research agenda—High- and medium-priority research.....	Full research agenda—High- medium- and low-priority research.....	Full research agenda—High- medium- and low-priority research.....	
Total costs (in thousands).....	6,667.....	8,221.....	9,713 (per year average).....	\$44,027
Collection.....	4,578 census.....	4,361 census.....	4,524 census.....	23,711
Meth. research.....	275 LEAA, 265 census.....	850 LEAA, 2,373 census.....	200, 1,139 census.....	7,784
Analysis 1.....	274 LEAA, 500 census.....	530 census.....	1,000 LEAA, 570 census.....	6,014
Internal LEAA/DOJ management and analysis.....	85 LEAA.....	103 LEAA.....	630 LEAA.....	2,078
S. & L. support.....	350 LEAA.....		250 LEAA.....	1,100
Supplements.....	150 LEAA, 190 census.....		250 LEAA, 750 census.....	3,340
Current allocation.....	3,549.....			
Additional funds required.....	3,118.....	8,221.....	9,713 (per year average).....	
Data collection implications—Sample size.....	1/2 sample with 266 psu design.....	1/2 sample with 266 psu design.....	1/2 sample with 266 psu design.....	

¹ Level of analysis will depend on DOJ/LEAA staff capabilities and funds available for support of Bureau of the Census and university/nonprofit research. The costs estimates also do not reflect the in-house analytic effort that has been recommended by the National Academy of Sciences and others who have reviewed the program.

The benefits of the three options for the National Crime Survey vary with the users of the survey. At the broad national level those concerned with public policy in both the legislative and the executive branch use summary data from the NCS as a national indicator of trend, a broader counterpart to the Uniform Crime Report and as useful background for informed programmatic decisions. Although these users are concentrated in the Department of Justice and more intensively in LEAA, they are found throughout government.

The criminal justice research community contains the National Crime Survey's most vigorous supporters and vociferous critics—often the same individuals. Among criminal justice researchers, a broad distinction can be made between those whose interest is primarily in the longitudinal aspects of the survey and those whose interest is primarily in "cross-sectional" uses of the data. Those interested in longitudinal uses feel they will be ill served by any halt in the data collection effort. They argue not only that there will be a gap in the data itself, but that the process whereby the survey panel matures over time will be halted, with a consequent diminution of the quality of the data upon the resumption of data collection. Some researchers also argue that methodological research without ongoing data collections is undesirable because of the loss of continuous feedback from the field in the form of newly-collected data. Those researchers interested primarily in cross-sectional analyses of the characteristics of crimes and victims can exploit the existing data base and are less disturbed by the possibility of a hiatus in data collection, though a majority would probably argue for continued data collection for specific subcategories of victimization, such as non-reporting. A final group of users are at the State and local government level. For the State and local government personnel with operating programs, there is limited benefit in the three options in the five-year period laid out. There are benefits for State and local governments in the policy and planning area, consisting in inferences and extrapolation to local circumstances and conditions that can be made from national and trend data, and a limited program of technical assistance for those concerned with local victimization surveys.

Option I provides the maximum benefit to the maximum number of users. It meets all national needs, satisfies those researchers most concerned about halting data collection, addresses the issues raised by the National Academy, and provides the widest range of data from which to extract information relevant to local issues.

Option II benefits those users who turn to the national crime survey primarily for data on trends and social indicators. The opinion we received from the Office for Improvement in the Administration of Justice indicates that, at a minimum, full data collection is necessary to provide a national indicator of victimization rates. This option satisfies researchers who feel that data collection must not be stopped, but does not satisfy researchers who feel the National Academy's extensive research agenda is not being promptly addressed. (These two groups are not mutually exclusive.) In summary, this option provides uninterrupted data series but delays improvements in the quality of the data deemed essential by many knowledgeable users.

Option III is acceptable principally to those in the research community whose interests are in cross-sectional analysis, and feel that sufficient data exists in the close to 1,000,000 interviews to date and who emphasize the immediate need to proceed with the full range of conceptual and methodological research called for by National Academy.

Option III does not provide an annual national social indicator or subcategory indicators thereby not fully meeting the needs of policy makers and planners: it creates a break in the data which stops trend analysis in the short run and inhibits it in the longer run. Under this option the best approach with reference to comparability with previous year's data is first to examine the 1978 data for what can be said about annual change. If it is decided that there are too few significant changes to justify a change report, the data can be combined with that for 1979, and perhaps 1980, in order that longer range trends can be revealed as significant. However, the gain in sample size achieved by averaging two or more years together might mask annual changes in different directions, e.g., an increase in 1979 offset by a decrease in 1980.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING LEVEL OF DATA COLLECTION AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE NCS

To address the issue of comparability and the issue of data collection necessary to support an active research effort, we sought the views of the Bureau of the Census on requisite data collection levels.

On the first issue the Census response suggests that the assumption made at the outset of the NCS that an annual relative change of 10-15% could be expected was unrealistic so that the current sample size is now too small to measure accurately annual changes in most victimization rates, including crimes of violence. Thus the view of the Bureau of the Census, expressed in a letter of November 18, 1977, is that to maintain data comparability such that significant changes can be noted, year-to-year change measured, comparisons of rates and levels among sub-groups within a single year made, and long term trends analyzed—that house-hold data collection at the current level of 60,000 households is the minimum requirement.

After examination of all the issues related to this highly complex survey, LEAA recommends option 3 which emphasizes methodological research to improve the Survey (explained on p. 15) with the following modifications:

1. *Continue full data collection through June 1978.*—This will complete five full years of data collections under existing methodology and collection level of 60,000 households.

2. *Go to a one-half sample (30,000 households) from June 1978 until the survey is fully reformed by the end of fiscal year 1982.*—This would result in (a) total cost savings of about \$15.8 million over the 5-year period; (b) on-going data collection in support of research and methodological improvements; (c) biennial or triennial rather than annual trend data between 1978 and 1983; and (d) a primary focus and emphasis on research and improvement of the survey rather than on full collection and presentation on an annual basis of data the validity of which has been seriously questioned.

3. *Provide adequate staffing to manage this survey.*—Without additional internal staff to effectively manage this large and complex program, LEAA strongly recommends that the program be cancelled either now or no later than July 1978. The nature of this program is such that it should be done well or not done at all.

4. *Conduct between now and June 30, 1978, an evaluation of the benefits and utility of the NCS.*—A study of users of this survey is needed in order to determine the precise nature and extent of the use made of the survey data, the reasons for use or non-use, and ways of increasing the utility of the data.

DECEMBER 8, 1977.

To: James M. T. Gregg, Acting Administrator, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

From: Peter F. Flaherty, Deputy Attorney General.

I have reviewed the report concerning the National Crime Survey transmitted to me on December 1, 1977. Upon reviewing the report, I agree with the LEAA's recommendation to proceed with a modified option 3 which emphasizes methodological research to improve the Survey. The only caveat that I would add is that because of the possibility that a Bureau of Justice Statistics will be created in 1978, we should retain maximum flexibility concerning the collection levels for the Survey after June, 1978. It may be that a one-half sample would be appropriate, but we should not foreclose the option to continue the Survey at a different level.

PETER F. FLAHERTY.