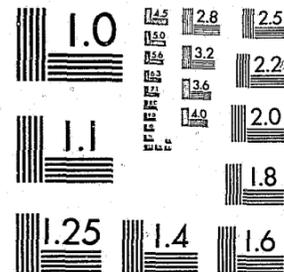


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Analysis of National Crime Survey Victimization Data  
to Study Serious Delinquent Behavior: Phase II

Trends in Juvenile Criminal Behavior  
in the United States, 1973-1981:  
A Summary of the Major Findings

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Introduction

In the past decade, serious juvenile crime has been the focus of considerable attention by legislators, law enforcement personnel, academic criminologists, and the public. Despite this attention, however, misunderstanding, misperception, and confusion still exist and, in some instances, seem to dominate both research and public policy. In order to formulate sound public policy regarding serious juvenile crime, it is necessary to establish a body of systematic empirical research on the nature and extent of the problem over time. Moreover, this research should be based on the best available and most timely data.

Recently, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in cooperation with the Bureau of the Census, has produced a large body of information about serious crimes in the United States. These data are generated by surveying very large probability samples of the general population in order to ascertain the nature and extent of criminal victimizations that may have been suffered by respondents. The availability of the National Crime Survey (NCS) data on personal victimization offers an important opportunity to examine a third source of data that avoids many of the problems and limitations inherent in official and self-report data.<sup>1</sup>

When survey respondents indicate that they have experienced a criminal victimization, they are asked a series of detailed questions relating to every aspect of the offense: exactly what happened, when and where the offense occurred, whether any injury or loss was suffered as a result of the offense, who was present during the offense, whether it was reported to the police, and what the victim perceived to be the offender's sex, race, and age group.<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of these offender data, it is possible to pose

many important questions regarding the basic facts surrounding the offenses of various subgroups of offenders. For a variety of reasons (e.g., the potential biases in police data and the lack of serious crimes in typical self-report studies, etc.), victimization survey data are likely to provide more adequate answers to these questions than either arrest or self-report data. This is not to say, however, that victimization survey results as a source of data about offenders are without problems. There are four interrelated limitations regarding the use of NCS data in connection with studying offender characteristics. First, because the source of the data is the victim's report, only a small number of visible offender characteristics are available--sex, race, age group, number of offenders, and relationship (if any) to the victim. Second, little systematic work has been done to date on the accuracy of the victim's reports of these offender variables.<sup>3</sup> Third, because these data depend on reports of victims, they include only offenses in which the victim sees the offender: rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny with contact between the victim and offender. Fourth, questions related to incidence versus prevalence cannot be resolved with these data. For example, the question of whether the disproportionate number of males among offenders is due to a small proportion of males repeatedly offending or due to a large proportion of males rarely offending cannot be resolved with these data. Even within these limitations, however, the NCS data hold potential that is not found in self-report or official data (McDermott and Hindelang, 1981).

Given the importance and attractiveness of the NCS data as an untapped source of information regarding serious juvenile crime, in 1978 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funded a research project entitled "The Use of the NCS Victimization Survey Data to Assess the Nature,

Extent, and Correlates of Serious Delinquent Behavior."<sup>4</sup> The purpose of that project was to provide a comprehensive descriptive analysis at the national level of the involvement of juveniles (under 18 years of age) in illegal behaviors in which victims come face-to-face with offenders (rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny). The criminal involvement of juvenile offenders was compared with that of youthful offenders (18 to 20 years old) and adult offenders (21 or older).

One of the products of the earlier project was a research monograph entitled Juvenile Criminal Behavior in the United States: Its Trends and Patterns. This monograph utilized the National Crime Survey data for 1973-1977 to provide a general descriptive analysis of the extent, the nature, and the seriousness of criminal victimizations committed by juveniles compared with youthful and adult offenders. Examination of changes over time in these areas was also provided. In many ways this investigation failed to provide empirical support for the concerns of the media, the public, and legislative bodies with respect to the serious criminal behavior of juveniles. This analysis led to two major policy-relevant conclusions. First, juvenile crime for the time period in question was less serious--in terms of weapon use, completion of theft, financial loss, and rate of injury--than adult crime. Second, over the five year period studied, juvenile crime did not become increasingly serious at the national level.

These findings are controversial in that the NCS data seem to be inconsistent with the growing national concern regarding perceived changes in serious juvenile crime. The overriding perception among many is that juvenile crime has sharply increased; juveniles are committing more serious violent crimes, like robberies and rapes; younger age groups are

becoming involved in serious crimes, more females are becoming involved in serious crimes; and juveniles are using weapons more often in committing their offenses and are thus increasing the likelihood of injury to their victims. These notions are often reflected in the popular media.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, important policy is being introduced on the basis of these notions. Legislative action in the form of potentially harsher penalties for juveniles who commit serious crimes continues in virtually every state legislature in the U.S. (See Smith et al., 1980b for more details regarding legislative trends.) The issues stated above regarding juvenile crime are empirical questions and within the limited time frame (1973-1977) the NCS data do not support the above assertions.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the current concerns and controversies surrounding serious juvenile crime, it is of critical importance to continue to investigate empirically the phenomenon in question. Our first research monograph under the current research project was an update and extension of the above mentioned report, Juvenile Criminal Behavior in the United States: Its Trends and Patterns by Joan McDermott and Michael Hindelang. In particular, our analyses focused on the extent to which patterns of offending and characteristics of personal crimes committed by juvenile offenders had changed at the national level over the 1973 to 1981 period. For example, was the proportion of theft offenses due to robbery (in contrast to personal larceny) changing over time? To what extent were groups of offenders involved in serious crimes? What role did weapons play in these offenses? How prevalent was injury to victims? How substantial were the financial losses incurred? In terms of these consequences to victims, had the seriousness of criminal victimizations changed over time?

Our second research monograph under the current research project was an

update and extension of the report, Juvenile Criminal Behavior: An Analysis of Rates and Victim Characteristics by Michael Hindelang and Joan McDermott. In sharp contrast to their earlier report, our analyses focused on changes in offender characteristics and victim characteristics over time. Our report was organized into two sections. The first section investigated changes in the rates of offending in personal crimes by age, race, and sex of offenders for the 1973-1981 time period. For example, was there any evidence at the national level that females had become more involved in serious juvenile crime over the last nine years? The second section examined the extent to which there had been changes in the demographic characteristics of victims in relation to the age, race, and sex characteristics of offenders. For instance, had the proportion of elderly victims in personal crimes committed by juveniles increased over the 1973-1981 time period?

Throughout our reports three age groups of offenders were examined. The first major group, juvenile offenders, were those offenders perceived by their victims to be 12 to 17 years of age.<sup>7</sup> The second major group, youthful offenders, were those offenders perceived by their victims to be 18 to 20 years old. The third major group, adult offenders, were those perceived by their victims to be 21 years of age or older. The use of these three major age groupings of offenders permitted analyses of age differences in offending. Before turning to a summary of the major findings of these two research monographs, however, it is necessary to give some attention to the data used in these analyses.

#### Description of the Data

The data in our reports were generated from the NCS national sample, collected by the United States Bureau of the Census, in cooperation with the

Bureau of Justice Statistics. In the national survey, probability samples of housing units were selected on the basis of a stratified, multistage, cluster design. The data used cover the period from 1973 to 1981.<sup>8</sup>

The total annual sample size for the national surveys is about 60,000 households containing about 136,000 individuals. The total interviewed sample is composed of six independently selected subsamples of about 10,000 households with 22,000 individuals. Each subsample is interviewed twice a year about victimizations suffered in the preceding six months. For example, in January, 22,000 individuals (in 10,000 households) are interviewed. In the following month--and in each of the next four succeeding months--an independent probability sample of the same size is interviewed. In July, the housing units originally interviewed in January are revisited and interviews are repeated; likewise, the original February sample units are revisited in August, the March units in September, etc. Each time they are interviewed in the national survey, respondents are asked about victimizations that they may have suffered during the six months preceding the month of interview.

Thus, the national survey is conducted using a panel design; the panel consists of *addresses*. Interviewers return to the same housing units every six months. If the family contacted during the last interview cycle has moved, the new occupants are interviewed. If the unit no longer exists or is condemned, it is dropped from the sample, but new units are added to the sample periodically. For household units this is accomplished by a continuing sample of new construction permits. No attempt is made to trace families that have moved.<sup>9</sup> Housing units in the panel are visited a maximum of seven times, after which they are rotated out of the panel and replaced by a new, independent probability sample; maximum time in the

sample for any housing unit, then, is three years.

The data presented in our reports represent estimates of crimes occurring in the United States, based on weighted sample data.<sup>10</sup> It is possible to make these estimates because a probability sample of respondents were surveyed. The interview completion rate in the national sample is about 95 percent or more of those selected to be interviewed in any given period.

Our analyses were concerned with the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny (purse snatching and pocket picking). Although the survey also collects data on the household crimes of burglary, larceny from the household, and motor vehicle theft, these crimes were not examined.<sup>11</sup> As indicated above, the analyses required reports from victims regarding what transpired during the event--particularly regarding characteristics such as the perceived age of the offender--and hence only those crimes generally involving contact between victims and offenders would yield this information. The details about what happened during the event were gathered by means of personal interviews with the victims themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Since its inception the NCS has utilized personal visit interviewing, allowing telephone interviewing only for call-backs. In February, 1981, a major change was initiated in the NCS interviewing procedure which entailed an increase in the amount of telephone interviewing. Now households who are in the sample for the second, fourth, and sixth time are interviewed primarily by telephone (see Walsh, 1981 and Paez and Dodge, 1982). The effects of this change in data collection procedure on the 1980 and 1981 data are not totally known at this time and caution must be exercised when comparing the 1980 and 1981 data with results from previous years.<sup>13</sup> Preliminary analysis reveals that telephone interviews are less productive in eliciting reports of

victimizations compared with the standard NCS face-to-face interviews, particularly for the crimes of personal larceny without contact and assault (see Woltman and Bushery, 1977, Walsh, 1981, and Paez and Dodge, 1982).

Depending on whether one or more than one offender is reported by the victim to have been involved in the incident, victims are asked one of two series of questions relating to offender characteristics.<sup>14</sup> If a lone offender victimized the respondent, that offender's characteristics are simply recorded. If more than one offender was involved it is, of course, possible to have offenders of different ages, sexes, and races. In general, the table and figures shown in our reports in which both lone and multiple-offender incidents are included, use the age of the oldest of the multiple offenders. Preliminary analysis shows that more often than not multiple offenders fall into the same age group; for this reason, whether the age of the youngest or the age of the oldest of the multiple offenders is used has little impact on the results.<sup>15</sup>

On the basis of the details of precisely what transpired--whether force or threat of force was used by the offender, whether some theft was attempted or completed, whether serious injury was sustained etc.--crimes are classified according to definitions used in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) (Webster, 1981).

#### A Summary of the Major Findings

##### A. Trends in Juvenile Criminal Behavior in the United States: 1973-1981

The first research monograph was an update and extension of a previous report, Juvenile Criminal Behavior in the United States: Its Trends and Patterns by Joan McDermott and Michael Hindelang. In the present report 1973 to 1981 National Crime Survey victimization data were used to examine

national trends in the criminal behavior of juveniles, youthful offenders, and adults for the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny (purse snatching and pocket picking). Some of the major findings are summarized below.

- 1) In the period from 1973 to 1981, the rate of juvenile offending in personal crimes in the United States and in urban areas showed a stable pattern. Although the rate of juvenile offending in places with 1,000,000 or more inhabitants revealed an overall increase for the 1973-1981 period, it is difficult to make any general conclusions about trends in juvenile offending in large places because of the large yearly rate fluctuations over the nine years. In 1981, the rate of offending in personal crimes for juveniles was 5,404 per 100,000 juveniles in the United States, 8,936 per 100,000 juveniles in urban areas, and 12,726 per 100,000 juveniles in places with 1,000,000 or more persons.
- 2) For the period from 1973 to 1981, there appeared to be little change in the types of personal crimes juveniles became involved in. Specifically, these data indicate that the vast majority of rapes were committed by adults, whereas a substantial proportion of personal larcenies were committed by juvenile and youthful offenders. In 1981, juveniles accounted for 11 percent of the rapes, 19 percent of the robberies, 15 percent of the aggravated assaults, 21 percent of the simple assaults, and 21 percent of the personal larcenies.
- 3) Although groups of three or more offenders were generally found

much more often among juveniles than among adults, for the 1973 to 1981 period, the proportion of offending in groups of three or more in personal victimization decreased for juvenile offenders resulting in an increase in lone offending. In 1981, the proportion of lone offending in personal crimes committed by juveniles was 63 percent.

- 4) Although some juveniles did use weapons when committing their personal crimes, there was no evidence that weapon use generally, or gun use specifically, had increased among juvenile offenders between 1973 and 1981. In 1981, 25 percent of the personal crimes committed by juvenile offenders involved weapons.
- 5) The proportion of physical injury (to the extent that medical attention was needed) to victims of personal crimes committed by juveniles, youthful offenders, and adults did not change from 1973 to 1977. However, there was an increase in 1978 to 1981 for all offender age groups. Most likely this increase was the result of revising the definition of medical attention in January of 1979 by the Bureau of the Census. In 1981, 11 percent of the victims of juvenile offenders in personal crimes were injured to the extent that medical attention was necessary.
- 6) The proportion of victims receiving hospital treatment in personal crimes committed by juveniles, youthful offenders, and adults did not vary in the nine year period from 1973 to 1981. In 1981, 4 percent of the victims of juvenile offenders in personal crimes received hospital treatment.

- 7) For the 1973 to 1981 period, overall the percentage of theft motivated crimes in which something was stolen showed little systematic variation for juvenile and adult offenders. In 1981, 61 percent of the theft motivated crimes by juveniles involved cases in which something was stolen.
- 8) Overall, the economic consequences (e.g., value of property stolen, etc.) to victims of personal crimes committed by juveniles, youthful offenders, and adults appeared to have increased in the 1973 to 1981 period. However, the economic consequences of personal crimes by adult and youthful offenders were more severe than the economic consequences of personal crimes committed by juvenile offenders. In 1981, 17 percent of the personal crimes committed by juvenile offenders resulted in a total dollar loss of \$10 or more.

In summary, the NCS data do not support the contention that, for the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny, juvenile crime has risen dramatically over the last nine years. Our data show that the rate of juvenile offending in personal crimes in the United States and in urban areas has remained stable over the 1973 to 1981 period. The rate of juvenile offending in personal crimes in places with 1,000,000 or more inhabitants revealed an increase over the total nine year period. However, owing to the large yearly fluctuations appearing in the NCS data no definitive conclusions can be made regarding trends in juvenile offending in large places. To be sure, juvenile involvement in the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and larceny is substantial. However, the NCS data are not consistent with the growing national alarm

regarding serious juvenile crime.

The NCS data also do not support the notion that, for the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny, juvenile crime is currently more serious than it was nine years ago. Based on a variety of indicators such as the percentage of injured victims, the use of weapons, and the proportion of completed theft, the overall seriousness of personal victimizations committed by juvenile offenders showed little substantial or systematic variation between 1973 and 1981 in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Here again popular conceptions were, for the most part, not supported by the NCS data.

Two possible exceptions, however, were found in our analysis. One is the finding that lone offending in personal crimes by juveniles increased over the 1973-1981 period. Whether this is an indication of change in the seriousness of juvenile crime is uncertain and open to debate. Second, we found that overall, the economic consequences to victims of personal crimes committed by juveniles increased in the 1973-1981 period. Here too it is not clear whether this increase is due solely to changes in the seriousness of victimizations or a reflection of the effects of inflation over the last nine years in victim reports to survey interviewers.

B. Juvenile Criminal Behavior in the United States: An Analysis of Offender and Victim Characteristics

The second research monograph was an update and extension of a previous report, Juvenile Criminal Behavior: An Analysis of Rates and Victim Characteristics by Michael Hindelang and Joan McDermott. In the present report, 1973 to 1981 National Crime Survey victimization data were used to examine national trends in the criminal behavior of juveniles, youthful offenders, and adults for the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and

personal larceny (purse snatching and pocket picking).

The first section of this report investigated changes in the rates of offending in personal crimes by age, race, and sex of offenders for the 1973-1981 time period. Some of the major findings are summarized below:

- 1) The rate of juvenile offending in total personal crimes, violent crimes (rapes and assaults), and theft crimes (robberies and personal larcenies) declined over the 1973 to 1981 period. In 1981, the rate of offending in total personal crimes for juveniles was 8,457 per 100,000 juveniles in the United States. The comparable rates for violent and theft crimes were 5,789 and 2,688, respectively.
- 2) The rate of female juvenile offending declined substantially in the 1973-1981 period for all three crime indexes--total personal crimes, violent, and theft. In 1981, the rate of offending in total personal crimes for female juveniles was 2,342 per 100,000 female juveniles in the United States. The comparable rates for violent and theft crimes were 2,159 and 184, respectively.
- 3) The rate of male juvenile offending in total personal crimes, violent crimes, and theft crimes declined over the 1973 to 1981 period. In 1981, the rate of offending in total personal crimes for male juveniles was 13,346 per 100,000 male juveniles in the United States. The comparable rates for violent and theft crimes were 8,606 and 4,739, respectively.
- 4) The rate of black juvenile offending in total personal crimes, violent crimes, and theft crimes declined over the 1973 to 1981 period. The overall decline in juvenile rates of offending was

attributable in large part to the decline in rates of offending among black juveniles. In 1981, the rate of offending in total personal crimes for black juveniles was 23,268 per 100,000 black juveniles in the United States. The comparable rates for violent and theft crimes were 12,131 and 11,138, respectively.

5) The rate of white juvenile offending in total personal crimes and violent crimes revealed little change over the 1973 to 1981 period. However, the rate of white juvenile offending in theft crimes increased for this time period. In 1981, the rate of offending in total personal crimes for white juveniles was 5,285 per 100,000 white juveniles in the United States. The comparable rates for violent and theft crimes were 4,413 and 873, respectively.

6) In the 1973 to 1981 period, for offenders aged 12 to 17, black males, white females, and black females all exhibited substantial declines in their rates of offending in total personal crimes. The only group to reveal an increase in total personal offending for this time period was 12 to 17 year old white males. In 1981, the juvenile rate of offending in total personal crimes (per 100,000 potential offenders in each population subgroup in the United States) was: 38,285 for black males, 8,300 for white males, 6,432 for black females, and 1,529 for white females.

The second section of this report focused on the extent to which there had been changes in the age, race, and sex demographic characteristics of victims in relation to the age, race, and sex characteristics of offenders in the United States for the 1973-1981 period. Some of the

major findings are summarized below.

- 1) For the most part, in total personal victimizations, the age of offender continued to be strongly related to the age of the victim. For example, juvenile offenders victimized other juveniles more than any other age group. Moreover, the rate of juvenile offending in personal crimes among the elderly was lower than comparable rates for all other age groups. Most important was that these patterns were stable for the 1973-1981 time period. In 1981, the rate of juvenile offending involving juvenile victims was 3,380 per 100,000 juveniles in the United States; the comparable rate involving elderly victims was 131.
- 2) In the victimization survey data, juvenile offenders victimized male juveniles about twice as much as female juveniles when committing personal crimes. However, the relationship between sex and risk of victimization by juveniles varied somewhat with age of victim. For all persons over 35 years of age, the female risk of victimization by juvenile offenders was greater than the male risk of victimization by juvenile offenders. In 1981, the rate of juvenile offending for male juvenile victims was 2,243 per 100,000 juveniles in the United States; the comparable rate for female juvenile victims was 1,137.
- 3) For juvenile offenders, males victimized males in about seven of ten personal crimes. Overall this pattern was stable for the 1973-1981 period. Among female juvenile offenders almost one in ten victimized males. Again this pattern held true for the 1973-1981 period.

- 4) Blacks in the United States are on the average victims of more serious personal crimes than are whites for all three offender age groups. Moreover, this pattern holds for the 1973-1981 period. In 1981, for total personal crimes committed by juvenile offenders, the average seriousness scores for white and black victims were 2.44 and 2.68, respectively.
- 5) In the NCS data for juvenile offenders about 73 percent of their personal crimes were of an intra-racial nature. This proportion had increased slightly over the 1973-1981 period. Although white juvenile offenders almost exclusively victimized whites, black juvenile offenders victimized whites in a majority (65 percent) of personal crimes. Only very slight variations in these patterns were evident in the data for the 1973-1981 period.
- 6) In regard to prior relationship of victim and offender, the NCS data suggested that stranger offending was more likely when the victim was male, older, and of a different race than the offender. This patterning of stranger offending showed little variation across the 1973-1981 period.

In summary, the NCS data presented and analyzed here suggest that overall juvenile rates of offending at the national level have declined for the 1973-1981 period. This is particularly true for some subgroups in the population, notably blacks and females. The only exception to this finding was revealed for white males 12 to 17 years of age who showed increases in offending rates for total personal crimes, violent crimes, and theft crimes over the 1973-1981 period. Moreover, what has not occurred in the 1973-1981 period according

to NCS data is a dramatic shift in victim selection (in terms of age, sex, and race demographic characteristics) by juvenile offenders in personal crimes at the national level. The patterning of offending in terms of age, sex, and race of victims and offenders has shown little change over the nine year period.

#### Concluding Comments

Over the last decade, serious criminal behavior by juveniles has been portrayed by the media as increasingly common, particularly in urban areas, and possessing a malicious, violent character (see Time, 1977). Furthermore, law enforcement officials have expressed similar views; for instance Deputy Police Commissioner of New York City Kenneth Conboy recently stated that the crimes for which these youngsters are being arrested are "more ruthless and remorseless and criminally sophisticated than ever before" (see Bierman, 1982:2). The past decade has also been characterized by a growing public concern with crime (see Flanagan, van Alstyne and Gottfredson, 1982:178-182), along with legislative action, some of which has resulted in potentially more severe penalties for juveniles who commit serious crimes. (See Smith et al., 1980b for more details regarding legislative trends.)

Because of this groundswell of concern and controversy regarding juvenile crime, it has become imperative to investigate empirically the nature and extent of this phenomenon with the best and most timely data available. The National Crime Survey data analyzed in this report shed important light on the trends and patterns of juvenile, youthful offender, and adult crimes from 1973 to 1981. In many ways this investigation fails to support empirically the popular presentations of the media and the public, and, perhaps more importantly, seems to contradict current legislative policies

and trends. Numerous state legislatures have passed or are contemplating legislation that would in effect dramatically change juvenile justice systems as they are presently constituted. Some of these changes include lowering the maximum jurisdictional age of the juvenile court, legislative exclusion of certain offenses from the juvenile court jurisdiction, making waiver to adult court less restrictive, and redesigning sentencing schemes in juvenile court to allow for the possibility of longer sentences for juveniles. (See Smith et al., 1980b for a review of some current legislative proposals.) At the foundation of these critical policy changes is the belief that serious juvenile crime has become rampant and is ever increasing and that juvenile justice systems are no longer in control of their clientele (see Schuster, 1982). It is hoped that empirical data on serious juvenile crime, rather than perceptions and media accounts, can inform public policies regarding juvenile offenders. In contrast to the widespread sweeping changes now being considered for handling serious juvenile offenders, the NCS data for the 1973-1981 period suggest a more cautious and moderate approach. (See Schuster, 1982 for additional support for this position.) Moreover, every effort should be made to utilize National Crime Survey victimization data on a continuous basis to inform juvenile justice decisionmakers and policy analysts as to the nature and extent of serious juvenile crime in the United States.

Notes

- <sup>1</sup>For a complete discussion of the problems of official and self-report data see Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) and Hindelang and McDermott (1981).
- <sup>2</sup>See NCS Household Interview Schedule in Laub (1983a:Appendix A).
- <sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the victim's perceptions of offender age as well as a description of the offender age variables in this study see Laub (1983b:Appendix C).
- <sup>4</sup>The project produced five research monographs: McDermott and Hindelang, Juvenile Criminal Behavior in the United States: Its Trends and Patterns (1981); Hindelang and McDermott, Juvenile Criminal Behavior: An Analysis of Rates and Victim Characteristics (1981); Laub and Hindelang, Juvenile Criminal Behavior in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Areas (1981); Danser and Laub, Juvenile Criminal Behavior and Its Relation to Economic Conditions (1981); and Sampson, Castellano, and Laub, Juvenile Criminal Behavior and Its Relation to Neighborhood Conditions (1981).
- <sup>5</sup>See, for example, "The Youth Crime Plague," Time, July 11, 1977, pp. 18-30; Barbara Basler, "Children Bearing Guns: A Growing Peril in the City," New York Times, September 27, 1981, p. 67; Angel Castillo, "Juvenile Offenders in Court: The Debate Over Treatment," New York Times, July 24, 1981, pp. A-1, B-4; and Ted Morgan, "They Think 'I Can Kill Because I'm 14,'" New York Times Magazine, January 19, 1975, pp. 9-34. In contrast, see Zimring (1979), Duxbury (1980), and Snyder and Hutzler (1981).
- <sup>6</sup>This is not to say that juvenile involvement in the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny is not substantial. It clearly is. What is at issue are changes in the nature and extent of involvement over time.
- <sup>7</sup>In order to present more accurate offending rate data it was necessary to restrict the age range of juvenile offenders to 12 to 17 year old offenders. This occurred because the population estimates used for the denominators of the rates are derived from the National Crime Survey itself and in this survey respondents under 12 years of age are not interviewed; hence their estimated number in the general population cannot be obtained from the survey. The youngest age group then is from 12 to 17 years of age, rather than under 18 as in our previous work. Offenses attributable to the offenders perceived to be under 12 years of age (about 1 percent of the total) have been excluded from the numerators of the rates for 12 to 17 year olds.

<sup>8</sup> See Garofalo and Hindelang (1977) and U.S. Bureau of the Census (undated) for additional detail about design and collection. In the early 70's the NCS sampled businesses as well as households; however, the business portion of the national survey focusing on commercial robbery and burglary has been discontinued. The last full year for which business data are available is 1976. Trend analyses of these data are virtually impossible because of the discontinuation and because the 1973 business data are permanently lost. See McDermott and Hindelang (1981:61-70) for analysis of commercial robbery by juvenile offenders.

<sup>9</sup> This procedure may not completely ignore mobile families. Although no attempt is made to trace families that move away from an address in the sample, a similarly mobile family may move into that address and will be included in the survey. For more discussion on this important point see Fienberg (1980) and Lehen and Reiss (1978).

<sup>10</sup> See Garofalo and Hindelang (1977) for more details. The weights for the 1973-1979 data are derived from the 1970 Census tabulations and the weights for the 1980-1981 data are derived from the 1980 Census tabulations. Paez (1983:5) concluded that "rates of victimization and other proportionate measures of the occurrence of crime were not appreciably altered" by the revised 1980 estimates. See Paez (1983) for more information on this revised weighting scheme.

<sup>11</sup> Series crimes are also excluded from the analysis. For a full discussion of series crimes see Garofalo and Hindelang (1977) and Paez and Dodge (1982).

<sup>12</sup> In a small proportion of cases (victims 12 and 13 years of age and victims who for some physical or mental reason are unable to respond for themselves) interviews are completed by proxy with another household member.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to data collection procedures noted above, there are other problems that hamper trend analysis of NCS data. For example, several of the initial interviews in the NCS panel design were not fully bounded thus, rates of offending in early years may be artificially inflated due to the inclusion of unbounded interviews in the sample (see Hindelang, 1976:56 and Lehen and Reiss, 1978:111).

<sup>14</sup> In January of 1979, the Bureau of the Census began using a revised questionnaire in the household survey. In order to insure comparability across years, changes were made such that responses from the new questionnaire could be reformatted to coincide with the old survey questionnaire.

<sup>15</sup> See Laub (1983b:Appendix C) for more details.

<sup>16</sup> Juvenile crime is also shown to be demonstrably less serious than youthful offender and adult crime. See McDermott and Hindelang, (1981:71-72) for a detailed discussion of this finding.

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