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MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CRIME IN 1978 AND 1985

*Middle Tennessee State University*

M.C.J. 1985

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Misconceptions about Crime in 1978 and 1985

William Joseph Woodruff

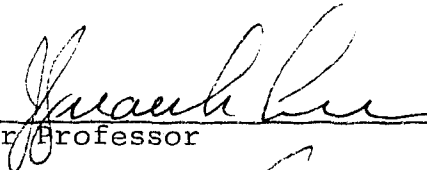
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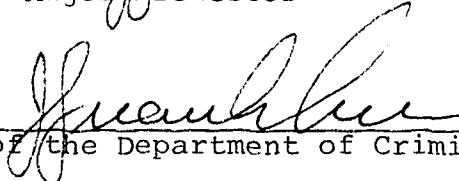
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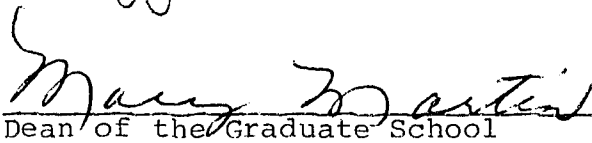
Misconceptions About Crime in 1978 and 1985

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## Abstract

Misconceptions About Crime in 1978 and 1985

by William Joseph Woodruff

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the data from a 1978 study on myths and realities about crime is still true in 1985. Research data is presented in order to provide a comparison of the earlier study. The summary of data presented in this thesis indicates that the majority of both police and non-police groups still believe the majority of the misconceptions found in 1978.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Many Americans pride themselves on their knowledge of trivia or facts about history, sports, science and nature, and entertainment. This interest in gaining knowledge about the world and age in which they live is reflected by the number of trivia games and news and media publications that are purchased yearly in the United States. Unfortunately, the public is not always provided with enough presentations of accurate criminal justice information to have a realistic image of crime in America. The media often presents a distorted view of crime. They often tend to overpublicize isolated crimes of extreme violence while avoiding the main body of criminal offenses (Schur, 1969).

There is a need to educate the public about crime. Fear of crime and fear of victimization could be greatly reduced if the public knew what crimes were being committed against different age groups and sexes and in what amount. Increased knowledge about crime would also help the public know more about the nature of crime and of offenders. Social scientists who have done research on crime have provided the criminal justice community with an enormous amount of information. Sociologists and criminologists have carefully examined the distribution of criminal offenses and known

offenders. They have analyzed official crime statistics and methods of recording crime data. They have asked samples of the general public about their involvement in criminal activities for which they could have been prosecuted if discovered by the police. Self-report crime surveys and victimization surveys have revealed a great amount of information concerning unknown crime and unreported crime in the United States. Unfortunately, most of this information never gets out of the criminal justice community and into the view of the general public. The government of the United States has put forth a great deal of effort in gathering information on crime in America so that not only the criminal justice community but the general public could have access to this information. The three main government publications used in this study are: the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), the National Crime Survey (NCS), and the National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPS), (Hagan, 1982). These publications contain a large body of detailed statistical information. Although this information is available to the public, very few people ever obtain copies and read them, and, when they do, many can not understand the language used or interpret the data shown (Hagan, 1982). Because of this type of problem in understanding criminal justice information, the U.S. Department of Justice publishes a report of data on crime and justice to the nation. This

particular publication is designed to provide a comprehensive picture of crime and criminal justice in the United States in a way the public can easily understand. Graphs and language are simplified and clarified so that even high school students can use the data. This report was an attempt to assist the nation as it tries to understand the crime problem and deal with proposals to confront it (U.S. Department of Justice, 1983).

Has the public gained a more realistic view of the criminal justice system and crime in America since all of these efforts have been made by the government? According to the findings of the NCS and NPS, the public still tends to hold many misconceptions (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978a). This publication about misconceptions and facts about crime was designed to enlighten the general public with selected findings from the NCS and NPS programs and to show the public that there are many myths concerning crime. Its purpose was to challenge conventional beliefs about crime in America with realistic data in order to help the public to reject myths concerning the nature of crime in the United States. Twenty-three myths and realities were covered: (1) national crime trends, (2) the extent of violent crime, (3) crime in the big cities, (4) police performance, (5) reporting crime, (6) minorities and the police, (7) neighborhood problems, (8) neighborhood safety,

(9) fear of crime, (10) crime against the elderly, (11) crime against women, (12) armed violence, (13) weapons and injuries, (14) using force for self-defense, (15) victim injury, (16) the classic hold-up, (17) residential burglars, (18) victim-offender relationships, (19) serious assault by strangers, (20) the criminal as a loner, (21) drugs and crime, (22) unemployment and crime, and (23) blacks on death row (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The first myth concerned national crime trends. The myth is that crime in the nation is rising by leaps and bounds. In reality, the incidence of certain major crimes of violence and common theft is just about keeping pace with population growth (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978). For the first time, the UCR has reported that the crime rate in America has declined for two consecutive years (Uniform Crime Reports, 1983).

The second myth concerned the extent of violent crime in the United States. The myth is that most crimes taking place in the United States are of a violent nature. In reality, the vast majority of crimes are against property only and do not involve personal violence or threat of violence (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The third myth concerned crime in big cities. The myth is that the larger the city, the greater the likelihood that its residents will be the victims of crime. In reality,

for certain crimes, the residents of smaller cities have higher rates than those of our largest cities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The fourth myth concerned police performance. The myth is that, in general, the residents of large cities believe that their police department is doing a poor job. In reality, if the opinions of residents of numerous cities across the nation are indicative of the nation as a whole, then the majority are satisfied with the performance of the police (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The fifth misconception concerns reporting crimes to the police. The myth is that most crime is reported to the police. In reality, less than half of all offenses measured by the NCS are known to the police (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The sixth misconception also concerns reporting crimes to the police. The myth is that Blacks and Hispanics are less likely than the population as a whole to report personal crimes to the police. In reality, the offenses experienced by members of those two minority groups are as likely to be reported by them as by the population in general (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The seventh myth concerns neighborhood problems. The myth is that residents of large cities regard crime as the most important neighborhood problem. In reality, most



residents are as concerned about environmental problems as they are about crime problems (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The eighth misconception is about neighborhood safety. The myth is that most residents of large cities think their neighborhoods are not safe. In reality, most residents feel reasonably safe when out alone in their neighborhoods either in the daytime or at night (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The ninth myth is about the fear of crime. The myth is that most residents of large cities have limited or changed their activities because of the fear of crime. In reality, less than half of all large city residents have personally changed or limited their activities because of crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The tenth myth concerns crimes against the elderly. The myth is that elderly persons make up the most heavily victimized age group in our society. In reality, the rates of victimization are a great deal higher for younger individuals than for senior citizens (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The eleventh myth is about crimes against women. The misconception is that women are more likely than men to be the victims of crime. In reality, men's victimization rates

were higher than women's, with the exception of rape (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The twelveth myth is that a weapon is used by the offender in nearly all rapes, robberies, and assaults. In reality, weapons are used in less than half of those crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The thirteenth myth is that a victim is more likely to be injured during an armed assault or robbery if the offender uses a firearm rather than a knife or other weapon. In reality, the victim's likelihood of not sustaining an injury is increased if a firearm is used because the victim is less likely to resist (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The fourteenth myth is that people often use force or weapons for self-defense from criminal attack. In reality, most victims use passive methods such as seeking help, running away, hiding, ducking or reasoning with the offender (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The fifteenth myth is that most victims of violent crimes other than homicide end up in a hospital. In reality, very few victims of rape, robbery or assault get hospital care (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The sixteenth myth is that the typical personal robbery is carried out by a single armed offender against a lone pedestrian. In reality, the robber does not usually work alone or use a weapon (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The seventeenth myth is that household burglars usually commit their offenses by breaking into the premises by using force. In reality, most burglars gain entry into homes and apartments without resorting to force, entering through unlocked doors or windows, or by using keys (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The eighteenth myth is that victims of crime seldom know or recognize their offenders. In reality, over one-third of all victims are acquainted with or know their offenders (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The nineteenth misconception is that aggravated assaults are more likely to result in physical injury if the attacker is a total stranger. In reality, one's chances of being injured and ending up in a hospital are somewhat greater if the offender is known by the victim (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The twentieth myth is that the typical inmate in prison is a loner with no family or friends. In reality, prisoners try to maintain as much social contact with family and friends as they can during incarceration (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The twenty-first myth is that people are usually under the influence of drugs when they commit a crime. In reality, only a small number of prisoners indicate that they were on

drugs when they committed their crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The twenty-second misconception is that most criminals are either unemployed or on welfare when they commit crime. In reality, most persons who engage in crime have jobs, and only a small number are on welfare (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The twenty-third and final misconception covered is that Blacks are overrepresented on death row across the nation, and this overrepresentation is more pronounced in the South than in any other region. In reality, Blacks are not represented as highly in the South on death row as they are in the other regions of the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978).

The public often does not like some expert telling them that what they believe is myth rather than reality. Therefore, many people tend to reject findings such as those previously discussed. This research on myths and realities about crime was done in 1978, yet, the findings still hold true, in spite of data such as the UCR report that the crime rate has reduced for two consecutive years, thus dispelling the rising crime rate myth even further. This study is an attempt to see if these misconceptions are still prevalent in 1985.

## Chapter II

### Review of Related Literature

Journalists, politicians and social scientists have studied collective behavior for years. Collective behaviors are those similar actions of a multiplicity of individuals that are relatively spontaneous and transitory and are thereby in contrast to the relatively more routine, predictable interactions of everyday life (Goodman and Marx, 1978). Public opinion is therefore comprised of the opinions of people on a street, in a town, or all over the country who communicate with one another about some specific matter of importance, and who want to have something to say in what is done about this matter.

Public opinion is characterized by diversity rather than by any overriding pattern. People tend to agree with mass media, community leaders, and other people widely regarded as experts on most issues. Public opinion seldom changes suddenly; it usually undergoes a series of modifications. The newspapers and television stations inform the public about what is going on all over the world. They tend to get a onesided view of the world of crime (Turner and Killian, 1972). They see escaped prisoners in Tennessee, kidnapping in Missouri, skyjacking in Texas, and searches for murderers and automatically think that the crime rate is

increasing dramatically in the United States. There are many such misconceptions held by the public and there must be something done to better inform them about the facts of the criminal justice system.

The public plays an important part in the functioning of the criminal justice system. Their attitudes and opinions greatly affect how the police, courts, prisons and lawmakers do their jobs and the decisions they make. In the past, researchers have tried to get away from public opinion surveys and studies, feeling that this area of study has been exhausted and is now unfruitful; however, at this point in time no other form of research has provided adequate information on the criminal justice system.

For years, critics of many applications of scientific research to the criminal justice system viewed such efforts as a waste of money and time. They believed that study will only bring to light what any streetwise person with common sense knows (Hagan, 1982). The question then is, does the streetwise person with common sense actually know anything? Findings from the National Prisoner Statistics program and the National Crime Survey indicate that the public is often incorrect about many criminal justice facts (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978a; Survey of Inmates, 1976). The following are some of the misconceptions reported:

1. Crime in the nation is rising by leaps and bounds.

2. The larger the city, the greater the likelihood that its residents will be the victims of crime.
3. In general, residents of large cities believe their police are doing a poor job.
4. Blacks and Hispanics are less likely than the populations as a whole to report personal crimes to the police.
5. The residents of our large cities regard crime as the most important neighborhood problem.
6. Most residents of large cities think their neighborhoods are not safe.
7. Most residents of large cities have limited or changed their activities because of the fear of crime.
8. Elderly persons make up the most heavily victimized age group in our society.
9. A weapon is used by the offender in nearly all rapes, robberies, and assaults.
10. A victim is more likely to be injured during an armed assault or robbery if the offender wields a firearm rather than a knife or other weapon.
11. Household burglars usually commit their crimes by breaking into the premises.
12. Aggravated assaults are more likely to result in physical injury if the attacker is a total stranger.

13. The typical person who commits a crime is either unemployed or on welfare.
14. Blacks are overrepresented on death row across the nation; however, this overrepresentation is more pronounced in the South than in the other regions.

These findings fall into the group of common sense data but are in fact untrue. The correct findings based on criminal justice data rather than public perspective are:

1. The incidence of certain major crimes of violence and common theft is just keeping pace with the population growth.
2. The residents of smaller cities have higher rates than those of our largest cities for certain crimes, such as assault, personal or household larceny, and residential burglary.
3. The opinions of residents of numerous cities across the nation indicate that the vast majority are satisfied with the performance of their police with four of every five residents of the 26 cities surveyed in 1974-75 giving ratings of good or average.
4. The offenses experienced by Blacks and Hispanics, by and large, are just about as apt to be reported as are crimes against victims in general.



5. Environmental problems cause just about as much concern as crime, judging from the opinions of many city residents.
6. Nine of every ten persons living in 26 large cities surveyed (1974-75) felt very or reasonably safe when out alone in their neighborhoods during daytime. A majority (54%) felt the same at night.
7. Assessments of an estimated 21.1 million persons indicate that slightly fewer than half of all big-city residents have personally altered their lifestyles because of crime.
8. Rates of victimization are far higher for younger individuals than for senior citizens.
9. Weapons are used in far fewer than half of all rapes, robberies, and assaults.
10. The victim's likelihood of sustaining injury at the hands of an armed offender is lessened if the weapon is a firearm.
11. In a majority of completed residential burglaries committed throughout the United States, burglars gain entry into homes or apartments without resorting to force. Most simply enter through unlocked doors or windows, or by using keys.
12. The chances of being injured and ending up in a hospital are somewhat greater if the assailant is not a stranger.

13. Knowledge of imprisoned criminals indicates that most persons who engage in crime have jobs and very few are welfare-dependent.
14. Black overrepresentation on death row is less pronounced in the South than in the other major regions (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978a as found in Hagan, 1982).

Several recent studies in the four major areas of crime, police, corrections, and the judiciary indicate that there has been a great deal of effort put forth to educate the public in matters concerning the criminal justice system. These recent studies suggest that some attitudes have changed about the criminal justice system since earlier Department of Justice studies in 1978, yet some beliefs based on common sense are still found, and are faulty.

The majority of public opinion surveys still tend to produce findings that the crime rate is perceived as increasing (U.S. National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, 1978). Despite efforts by the police to enlighten the public about crime rates, the public still sees the crime rate as increasing. In fact, according to the recently released 1983 UCR, the Index Crime Rate fell by eight percent in 1983. This is the first time since the Uniform Crime Report has been published that the UCR Index Crime Rate has decreased for two consecutive years (U.S.

Department of Justice, FBI Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in the United States, 1983). A great deal of this false belief is fostered by the media, which tends to overemphasize criminal offenses. The only way to reduce fear of crime is by actually reducing crime instead of just keeping pace with it (Warr, 1982).

One way of examining perceptions and opinions of the public concerning crime is to break the topic of crime down into three general subtopics--crime trends, fear of crime, and residential problems and lifestyles. In order to see what the public's attitudes about crime are, studies of the following cities will be examined: Boston, New Orleans, Washington, DC, Oakland, San Diego, Minneapolis, Miami, Houston, Cincinnati, Buffalo, San Francisco, and Pittsburgh.

#### Crime Trends

Eighty-one percent of the respondents in Boston felt that crime in the United States is increasing. Forty-four percent felt that neighborhood crime was also increasing. Forty-seven percent felt that their neighborhood was safe, while another 43 percent felt that neighborhood safety is no worse than in any other community. However, at the same time, 62 percent of the respondents believed that their chances of being victimized have increased. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents believed that outsiders are the offenders who commit crime in their neighborhood. Boston

residents believed that the crime rate in both the neighborhood and the nation is increasing. They report that they felt their neighborhood is safe, yet, they felt there is a greater chance of being victimized. This is somewhat of a contradiction in that in a neighborhood which is perceived as being safe there should be little fear of being victimized. Some of this fear might come from the multitude of crime news that the average American receives daily. This is possibly the reason that many Boston respondents think that outsiders commit most of their neighborhood crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979a).

Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed in New Orleans believed that crime in the United States is increasing. Forty-three percent felt that neighborhood crime was about the same while 37 percent felt it has increased. The public in New Orleans also believed that their neighborhoods were just as safe or safer than other neighborhoods in 94 percent of the cases, yet 68 percent felt their chances of being victimized has dramatically increased. Fifty percent felt that outsiders commit most of their neighborhood offenses. Respondents in New Orleans felt that the overall crime rate is increasing. They also believe that there is a greater chance of being victimized than in the past, even though they felt their neighborhoods are safe. They believe that

outsiders commit most of the neighborhood crime and this is probably linked to the media (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979b).

Residents in the Washington, D.C. area felt, in 60 percent of the cases, that the crime rate in the United States had increased. Forty-four percent felt that neighborhood crime had remained the same. Again, nearly 93 percent felt their neighborhoods are safe, but at the same time 42 percent felt their chances of being victimized have increased. Forty-four percent felt that outsiders commit all the crime in their community. Respondents in Washington believed that their neighborhoods are relatively safe and that the community crime rate has not increased. They felt less worried about being victimized than the previous cities' respondents. They also believed that those who commit neighborhood crime are mainly outsiders, but that neighbors are guilty sometimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978a).

Four-fifths or 80 percent of the surveyed population of Oakland believed that crime in the nation was on the increase, and about 39 percent thought crime was also on the rise in the neighborhood. Ninety-two percent were of the opinion that neighborhood safety was about the same as other areas in the nation. Sixty-four percent believed that their chances of being victimized had increased. Forty-five percent felt that outsiders were most likely the ones

committing criminal offenses in the community. Respondents here believed that their neighborhoods are as safe as other neighborhoods, but they also felt that their chances of being victimized had increased over the previous year. Less than half of the respondents believed outsiders were responsible for neighborhood crimes. The majority of the respondents believed that crime in the nation was on the increase, but only half of these felt crime was on the rise in the community (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978b).

In San Diego, 75 percent of those surveyed felt that crime nationwide was increasing while 37 percent felt neighborhood crime was on the rise. Sixty-one percent of those surveyed thought their neighborhood was safer than others but 52 percent felt that their chances of being victimized had increased. Outsiders were considered to be the perpetrators of crime in their community in 37 percent of the responses. Respondents here do not feel as confident in their neighborhood safety as other cities surveyed. The percentages were still high when comparing perceived safety and chances of being victimized. Only a small number of respondents felt outsiders were perpetrating most of the neighborhood crime and this is probably why they felt that crime was not increasing rapidly. San Diego respondents did feel that crime nationwide was increasing (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979c).

Seventy-three percent of the surveyed residents of Minneapolis believed that crime was on the increase in the United States. Neighborhood crime was seen as increasing by 28 percent while 50 percent felt it was about the same as it had been the year before. Fifty-one percent thought their chances of being victimized had increased. Forty percent of the residents felt outsiders committed most of the neighborhood crime. Most of the respondents felt crime nationwide was increasing, while neighborhood crime was only slightly increasing. Most respondents felt safe in their neighborhood, yet about half did not feel as safe as they did the year before. This statement appears to be contradictory on its face, yet the effects of aging can change one's feelings concerning safety. As one gets older one often feels his or her chances of being victimized increase (National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, 1979). Only 40 percent felt outsiders committed most of the neighborhood crimes, but this is still a fairly large number of people who fear being victimized by outsiders. This fear of outsiders is possibly a cause of the high percentage of those perceiving their chances of being victimized as increasing (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978c).

Seventy percent of Miami residents responding felt that crime in the nation had increased, but only 27 percent felt that neighborhood crime had increased. Most residents

believed their community was safe or safer than other areas, but that their chances of being victimized had increased in 53 of the responses. Forty-three percent felt that outsiders made up the offender group. Most residents who were surveyed in Miami felt that crime in the nation had increased. The respondents felt their neighborhood was just as safe as any other neighborhood, but that it was not as safe as it had been in previous years, as seen by the percentage of those feeling their chances of being victimized had increased. Respondents also felt that a majority of outsiders make up those committing neighborhood crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979d).

Seventy-six percent of the surveyed population in Houston thought the national crime rate had increased, and 31 percent believed the neighborhood crime rate was also on the increase. Ninety-four percent believed that their neighborhood was as safe or safer than other communities, but 58 percent still felt that their chances of being victimized had increased. Outsiders were seen as the criminal offender in the community by 43 percent of the respondents. Ninety-four percent of the respondents in Houston felt their neighborhood was just as safe as any other community, but that their chances of being victimized had increased over previous years, and that outsiders were making up a large number of the community's criminal offenders. The



majority of those surveyed also felt that crime in the nation had increased (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978d).

In Cincinnati, 68 percent of the respondents believed that crime was increasing in the United States, and 33 percent thought neighborhood crime was also increasing. Ninety-one percent of the residents surveyed felt that their community was as safe or safer than other areas, yet 53 percent believed their chances of being victimized had increased. Thirty-eight percent perceived that outsiders committed most of the neighborhood crimes. Those surveyed felt that their community was safe compared to other communities, but their chances of being victimized had increased over previous years. Outsiders are perceived as making up a large portion of the criminal offender group. Neighborhood crime was perceived as only slightly increasing while crime in the nation as a whole was seen as increasing rapidly (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979e).

In Buffalo, about three-fourths of the measured population believed crime was on an upswing in the nation as a whole, and one-third felt that there had been an increase in crime within their own city. Ninety-three percent of the respondents thought their neighborhoods were just as safe or safer than other neighborhoods. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents felt that their chances of being victimized had increased. Thirty-seven percent believed that outsiders

committed most neighborhood crime. The majority of those surveyed believed crime was on the rise in the nation. Many respondents felt their neighborhoods were just as safe as other neighborhoods. About one-third believed that outsiders made up the majority of the neighborhood criminal offender group. Fear of outsiders is linked to the perceived fear of being victimized (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979f).

In San Francisco, 75 percent of those surveyed believed crime in the nation was increasing, while 32 percent felt that neighborhood crime was also on the rise. Ninety-one percent thought that their neighborhood was as safe or safer than other areas, yet 59 percent felt their chances of being victimized had increased. Forty-seven percent of the respondents believed outsiders were responsible for the majority of neighborhood crime. The majority of those surveyed in San Francisco believed crime in the nation was increasing. The majority also felt their community was just as safe as other areas, but, as in the majority of cities surveyed, indicated an increased fear of being victimized and a tendency to point to outsiders as the cause of victimization (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978f).

Sixty-three percent of the surveyed residents of Pittsburgh believed that the United States crime rate was increasing. Only 29 percent felt neighborhood crime had increased. Ninety-two percent believed their community was as safe or

safer than others; however, 51 percent believed their chances of being victimized had increased in the last year. Forty-one percent perceived outsiders as committing most of the neighborhood crime. The national crime rate was perceived as increasing. Community safety was seen as good, but not as good as it had been in previous years. Many respondents felt outsiders committed the majority of neighborhood crimes and that their chances of being victimized had increased (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979g).

In examining the overall study, city by city, one is able to see a general similarity among respondents' opinions from different cities throughout the nation. Crime is seen as increasing in the nation as well as in the community. A majority of those surveyed believed the national trend was increasing while only about a third perceived the neighborhood crime rate as increasing.

As seen earlier, the crime rate is actually just keeping pace with the population growth. Interestingly, most residents felt that their communities are safe, yet they also felt that their chances of being victimized have increased. The public is correct in thinking that their neighborhoods are safe, but they contradict their confidence in neighborhood safety when they report an increased fear of being victimized. As a whole they are not more likely to be victimized today than they were before because the crime rate is staying about the same (see Table 1).

TABLE I  
CRIME TRENDS

CITIES SURVEYED	PERCENTAGE AGREEING THAT:														
	DIRECTION OF U.S. CRIME			DIRECTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME			COMPARATIVE NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY			GENERAL IDENTITY OF OFFENDERS			CHANCES OF BEING VICTIMIZED		
	I N C R E A S E D	S A M E	D E C R E A S E D	I N C R E A S E D	S A M E	D E C R E A S E D	L E S S  S A F E	A V E R A G E	S A F E	O U T S I D E R S	N E I G H B O R S	D O N ' T K N O W	I N C R E A S E D	S A M E	D E C R E A S E D
Boston	81	12	7	44	35	5	8	43	47	39	23	24	62	28	5
New Orleans	87	8	2	37	43	6	6	39	55	50	15	22	68	24	5
Washington, D.C.	60	22	8	26	44	13	5	44	49	44	15	26	42	40	13
Oakland	80	11	2	39	36	7	7	46	46	45	17	27	64	27	5
San Diego	75	16	4	31	44	5	5	33	61	37	27	26	52	39	7
Minneapolis	73	19	4	28	50	5	10	35	53	40	27	26	51	41	6
Miami	70	16	5	27	45	7	6	31	62	43	10	24	53	32	8
Houston	76	16	4	31	47	7	5	42	52	43	21	24	58	33	6
Cincinnati	68	49	8	33	45	8	9	43	48	38	27	24	53	36	8
Buffalo	76	14	4	33	44	9	6	44	49	37	26	25	57	32	7
San Francisco	75	14	3	32	41	6	7	36	55	47	15	28	59	31	6
Pittsburgh	63	22	9	29	48	10	7	45	47	41	26	20	51	37	9

Fear of Crime

Respondents were asked how safe they feel in their neighborhoods in both daylight and nighttime hours. Safety in movement was also examined for both daylight and nighttime hours. Respondents were also asked if they had considered home relocation due to crime. This section only covers those who considered relocation. Those who did relocate are covered in the Residential Problems section. Respondents were also surveyed to find out if they feel they have limited their usual or regular day-to-day activities because of crime. Regular activities include shopping, going to work, visiting, going out to eat, and any recreational activities that require one to leave his or her home in order to do. Respondents were also asked to give their opinion on whether crime has inhibited their activities, as well as their neighbor's activities, and the nation's activities as a whole.

Residents in Boston feel that they are very safe in the day time, but the percentage shrinks from 90 to only 54 percent when considering nighttime safety. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed said that crime has not inhibited their daylight movement. The respondents in over half the cases did not limit their usual activities. Seventy-three percent said that they would not consider relocation of their homes because of crime. While most respondents felt they had not limited their activities, 87 percent did feel that the nation

as a whole had limited its activities. In sixty-five percent of the responses, respondents believed neighbors had limited their activities. Respondents felt very safe in the daytime, and this is supported by the high percentage of those who felt crime had not inhibited their daylight movement. Forty-six percent of the respondents perceived safety as seen as lessening as nighttime hours begin. The majority of those surveyed felt crime has not limited their regular activities, but that neighbors and the nation as a whole had limited their activities because of crime. The majority have not considered home relocation because they felt relatively safe in their present community (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979a).

In New Orleans, residents said crime had not inhibited their daylight or nighttime activities (81 percent/70 percent, respectively). Eighty-eight percent felt their neighborhood was safe in the daytime and 53 percent felt safe at night. Forty-nine percent did not limit their regular activities. Eighty-three percent had not considered relocating their homes due to crime. Eighty-six percent felt that the nation as a whole had limited its activities, while 62 percent felt their neighbors had limited their activities. Respondents in New Orleans had not considered relocating their homes due to crime. The majority of those surveyed did not feel inhibited by crime in their daylight or nighttime activities.

Most felt safe in the daytime but less safe at night. Most respondents had not limited their regular activities. Most respondents had not considered relocating to another community because of crime. Although they felt safe and felt crime had not limited their activities, they did feel their neighbors and the nation as a whole had limited their activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979b).

In the District of Columbia, 84 percent of those surveyed said that crime had not inhibited daylight movement and 68 percent said it had not inhibited their night movement. Fifty-three percent said they had not limited their regular activities. Eighty-one percent had not reconsidered home relocation. Eighty-three percent of the respondents thought that the nation as a whole had limited its activities, while 61 percent felt their neighbors had limited their activities. Most respondents felt crime had not inhibited their movement or activities during the daylight hours and felt relatively safe from crime at night. Most of the respondents had not considered relocation of their homes. The majority felt safe at home and felt that they had not limited their activities, but that their neighbors and the nation as a whole had limited their activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978a).

In Oakland, 81 percent of those surveyed said that crime had not inhibited their daylight movement and 63 percent

said it did not inhibit night movement. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents viewed their community as safe during the daylight hours, but only 47 percent felt safe in their neighborhood at night. Seventy-six percent had not considered home relocation. Forty-seven percent said they had not limited their regular activities. Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed thought the nation as a whole had limited its activities, while 66 percent think their neighbors have limited their activities. The majority felt safe to move as they please in their community. They also felt crime had not caused them to greatly limit their activities. The majority had not considered home relocation because of crime. The majority felt that the nation as a whole and their neighbors had limited their activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978b).

Eighty-six percent of those surveyed in San Diego said crime had not inhibited their daylight movement and 69 percent said it had not inhibited their nighttime movement. Ninety-eight percent felt their neighborhood was safe in the daytime and 73 percent felt safe at night. Eighty-six percent had not considered home relocation. Seventy-one percent had not limited their regular activities. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents believed the nation as a whole was limiting its activities and 34 percent think their neighbors are limiting their activities. The majority of



respondents felt safe in their communities and perceived that crime had not inhibited movement or activities to any extent. Home relocation as a whole had not been considered by the respondents. The respondents felt that their neighbors had to some extent limited their activities and that the nation as a whole had limited its activities also (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979c).

In Minneapolis, 85 percent stated that crime had not limited their daylight activities and 64 percent said their nighttime movement had not been inhibited. Ninety-six percent felt their neighborhoods were safe in the daytime, but only 64 percent believe them to be safe at night. Eighty-three percent had not considered home relocation. Seventy-one percent of those surveyed indicated that crime had not inhibited their regular activities, yet 68 percent believed the nation as a whole is limiting its activities. Only 39 percent felt their neighbors had limited their activities. The majority of the respondents had not considered home relocation. Most of the respondents felt safe during the daylight hours to move about and do their regular activities. The percentage of those who felt safe at night was somewhat less than those in the daytime. The percentage also reflects those who felt that crime had not limited their activities yet they felt their neighbors and the nation had limited their activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978c).

Seventy-two percent of Miami residents surveyed stated that crime had not inhibited their daylight movement and 61 percent felt the same way about nighttime movement. Ninety-one percent consider their neighborhoods safe in the daytime and 62 percent at night. Seventy-eight percent had not considered home relocation. Fifty-five percent of the respondents had not limited their regular activities because of crime. Seventy-nine percent believed that on a nationwide scale, crime had inhibited and limited movement and activities, while only 51 percent thought their neighbors had limited their activities. The majority felt safe to move about their neighborhoods and do their regular activities regardless of the time of day. Most had not considered relocating their homes because of crime. Though they felt safe they perceived nearly everyone else as limiting their activities because of crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979d).

In Houston, 87 percent said crime did not inhibit daylight movement, and 71 percent said the same for night movement. Ninety-three percent thought their neighborhood was safe in the daytime and 61 percent at night. Eighty-three percent had not considered home relocation. Fifty-nine percent had not limited their regular activities. Seventy-one percent believed that the nation's population had limited their regular activities. Seventy-one percent believed that

the nation's population had limited its activities, and 46 percent felt their neighbors had limited their activities because of crime. The majority of those surveyed felt safe from crime and that they could go about doing their activities without any great degree of limitation. However, they did feel their neighbors and the nation as a whole had limited its activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978d).

Eighty-four percent of the respondents in Cincinnati felt that crime had not inhibited daytime movement; 66 percent felt that it had not limited nighttime movement. Ninety-four percent felt their neighborhoods were safe in the daytime, fifty-eight percent at night. Eighty percent had not considered home relocation. Sixty-one percent had not limited their regular activities. However, 79 percent thought the nation had limited its activities, and 53 percent thought their neighbors had limited their activities. The majority of the respondents felt crime had not inhibited their movement or limited their activities. Most of the respondents had not considered relocation of their homes because of crime, and this is reflected by the perceived percentage or margin of neighborhood safety. Respondents in Cincinnati as in other places surveyed felt that their neighbors and the nation had limited their activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979e).

In Buffalo, 76 percent of those surveyed said their daylight movement had not been limited due to crime and 64 percent felt they had not altered their nighttime movement. Ninety-three percent believed their neighborhoods were safe in the daytime; 55 percent at night. Seventy-eight percent had not considered home relocation. Fifty-eight percent stated that crime had not caused them to limit their regular daily activities. Fifty-eight percent believed their neighbors were limiting their activities. The majority of those surveyed had not considered home relocation. They felt safe in their communities. Crime had not greatly inhibited either their activities or movement. The majority believed the nation and their neighbors had limited their activities because of crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979f).

Crime was not an inhibitor of daylight movement for 78 percent of San Francisco's respondents. Sixty-three percent did not perceive crime as an inhibitor of nighttime movement. Eighty-four percent had not considered home relocation. Fifty-five percent felt that crime had not inhibited or limited regular activities. Fifty-eight percent felt neighbors had limited their activities and 83 percent believed the same to be true for the nation as a whole. The majority of those surveyed felt reasonably safe to move about in their communities and do their regular activities without great fear of harm coming to them. Since the majority felt their

homes were safe, few considered home relocation because of crime. Respondents in San Francisco, as have respondents in other surveyed cities, perceived their neighbors and the nation as having limited their activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978f).

In Pittsburgh, 82 percent of the respondents did not consider crime as an inhibitor of daylight movement and 30 percent felt the same about night movement. Ninety-three percent felt their neighborhood was safe in the daytime and 56 percent felt it was safe at night. Eighty-one percent had not considered relocating their homes. Sixty-two percent had not limited their regular activities. Eighty-one percent believed that the nation as a whole has limited its activities, while 58 percent felt their neighbors had limited their activities because of crime. The majority felt safe in the daytime to move and go about their regular activities. The majority is greatly reduced, however, when discussing nighttime safety and movement. The majority still have faith in their communities as being safe from crime because they have not considered relocating their homes. They also believed that crime is inhibited the activities of the nation as a whole (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979g).

In comparing cities the findings are similar, and therefore one can generalize the results to some extent. The majority of residents believe that their movement in the

daytime has not been inhibited because of crime. Nighttime movement is somewhat inhibited. Nearly all respondents felt their neighborhoods are safe in the daytime but their confidence in neighborhood safety is reduced at night. The majority of residents have not considered relocating their homes. About half of the respondents overall have not limited their regular activities such as going to work, shopping, eating out, and recreational activities. The respondents think that on the whole the nation's population has limited its activities (see Table 2).

#### Residential Problems

Those who have relocated or who have considered it were questioned as to why they did so. One question this section examines concerns whether the residents had bad neighborhood features, defined as anything that would promote fear of crime such as poorly lighted areas, alleys, and the like. The respondents were also surveyed to find out what they perceived the main neighborhood problem to be.

In Boston, only five percent considered crime safety a reason for leaving their old neighborhoods and only four percent considered it a factor in choosing a new neighborhood. The main reasons for leaving an old neighborhood and choosing a new neighborhood was whether they liked or disliked their house and its location. Forty-two percent felt they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood. Only 28

TABLE II  
FEAR OF CRIME

CITIES SURVEYED	PERCENTAGES AGREEING THAT:															
	INHIBITS DAYTIME MOVEMENT		INHIBITS NIGHTTIME MOVEMENT		DAYTIME NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY		NIGHTTIME NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY		HOME RELOC. CONSD.		POPULATION LIMITING ACTIVITIES		NEIGHBORS LIMITING ACTIVITIES		RESPONDENT LIMITING ACTIVITIES	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	UNSAFE	SAFE	UNSAFE	SAFE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Boston	21	76	26	64	9	90	46	54	25	73	87	12	65	30	45	55
New Orleans	16	81	23	70	9	89	47	53	16	83	86	13	62	34	51	49
Washington, D.C.	13	84	24	68	10	90	41	59	16	81	83	16	61	36	47	53
Oakland	16	81	26	63	11	89	93	47	22	76	97	12	69	29	52	47
San Diego	10	86	24	69	2	98	26	73	11	86	67	32	34	62	28	71
Minneapolis	13	85	29	64	4	96	35	64	15	83	68	30	39	55	29	71
Miami	20	72	25	61	9	91	38	62	19	78	79	20	51	48	45	55
Houston	11	87	23	71	7	93	39	61	15	83	71	27	46	42	41	59
Cincinnati	15	84	28	66	6	94	42	58	18	80	79	20	53	44	38	61
Buffalo	19	76	26	64	7	93	44	56	21	76	84	14	58	36	42	58
San Francisco	20	78	29	63	8	92	47	53	14	84	83	15	58	33	45	55
Pittsburgh	17	82	30	64	7	93	44	56	17	81	81	18	58	40	38	62

percent considered crime to be the main neighborhood problem compared to 31 percent who felt the environment was the main neighborhood problem. Only a very small minority of those who relocated said crime safety was a reason for leaving their old neighborhood. The environment was their chief concern and crime was their second concern. Less than half felt that they had bad neighborhood features which were likely to promote crime in their old neighborhood (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979a)

In New Orleans, only three percent stated crime safety as a reason for leaving the old neighborhood and for choosing the new neighborhood. Thirty-one percent thought they had bad neighborhood features that could promote crime in their old neighborhood. Seventeen percent believed crime was the main neighborhood problem. The majority relocated because they either found a home they liked better or because they needed to move because of their jobs. Only a small number felt they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood which could promote crime. Seventeen percent believed crime was the main neighborhood problem (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979b).

In Washington, D.C., only two percent considered crime safety as a reason for leaving their old neighborhood and only three percent considered crime safety a factor in choosing their new neighborhood. Thirty-five percent



believed they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood, which was a factor to consider in choosing a new place to live. The respondents in Washington, D.C. said they did not consider crime safety a major reason in relocating. Most felt their neighborhood was safe and only a small number considered crime the main problem (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978a).

In Oakland, only three percent considered crime safety as a reason for leaving their old community and for choosing their new one. Thirty-eight percent felt they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood. Twenty-eight percent saw crime as the main neighborhood problem in their old community. Crime was not seen as an overriding factor in home relocation and only a small number of those responding considered crime as the main neighborhood problem (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978b).

In San Diego, only one percent considered crime safety a reason for leaving the old neighborhood and for choosing the new neighborhood. Thirty-four percent felt they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood. Nine percent believed crime was the main neighborhood problem in their old neighborhood. Almost no one felt that crime had anything to do with their decision to relocate. Most of them felt reasonably well about their neighborhood features (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979c).

In Minneapolis, only three percent considered crime safety a reason for leaving their old community and only two percent considered crime safety the reason for choosing the new community. Thirty-four percent felt they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood. Twenty-one percent believed crime was the main neighborhood problem in their old neighborhood. The majority of the respondents believed that crime safety was not a factor in home relocation. Only a small number believed that their old neighborhood had bad features. Crime was seen as a main neighborhood problem (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978c).

In Miami, only two percent stated crime as a reason for leaving their old neighborhood and only four percent felt crime safety as a reason for choosing their new neighborhood. Thirty percent felt they had bad neighborhood features in their old neighborhood. Seventeen percent considered their main neighborhood problem to be crime in their old neighborhood. The respondents did not list crime safety as a reason for moving to their new neighborhood. They were pleased with their new neighborhood features. They considered their main neighborhood problem to be environmental concerns; however, this was closely followed by crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979d).

In Houston, only two percent considered crime safety as the reason for leaving their old community and only one

percent considered it a factor in choosing a new home. Thirty-four percent felt their old neighborhood had bad features. Ten percent considered crime to be the main neighborhood problem in their old community. Crime safety had nothing to do with most of the respondents leaving their old community or choosing their new one. The majority felt their neighborhood had good features and was safe (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978d).

In Cincinnati, only two percent considered crime safety as a reason for leaving their old community and only one percent considered it a factor in choosing a new home. Thirty-six percent felt their old neighborhood had bad features. Eighteen percent viewed crime as the main neighborhood problem in their old neighborhood. Crime safety was seen as an insignificant factor in leaving their old neighborhood and choosing their new one. The majority felt they did not have any bad features in their old neighborhood. Crime again was seen as the main neighborhood problem in their old neighborhood (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979e).

In Buffalo, only two percent considered crime safety as a factor in leaving their old neighborhood and in choosing their new neighborhood. Thirty-three percent felt their old neighborhood had bad features. Eighteen percent considered crime as the main problem in their old neighborhood. Very few respondents felt crime was a factor in either leaving or

choosing a new home. Most of the respondents felt their neighborhoods had good features (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979f).

In San Francisco, only two percent stated crime safety as a reason for leaving their old community and only three percent for choosing their new community. Thirty-nine percent felt their old neighborhood had bad features. Twenty percent considered crime to be the main problem in their old neighborhood (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978f).

In Pittsburgh, only two percent stated crime safety as a reason for leaving the old community and only one percent considered crime safety as a reason for choosing the new community. Thirty-six percent felt their old neighborhood had bad features. Twenty-two percent considered crime to be the main problem in their old neighborhood. Environment was seen as the main neighborhood problem, closely followed by the crime, schools, and the like. Most of the respondents liked their neighborhood as it was (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979g).

Crime safety is not considered to be a major factor in leaving one's old neighborhood or choosing their new neighborhood. Most respondents moved because of a job or because they had found a home they liked more than where they were. About one-third of all respondents surveyed felt that their neighborhoods had some features which could promote crime.

Some of these features are environmental in form and they can therefore be altered to make the community less vulnerable to crime. Other bad features include such things as areas which are higher in risk of crime and isolated areas which during daylight hours are crowded but at night are deserted and are therefore more likely to promote fear of victimization.

Humans have a tendency to feel safer in crowds. The main neighborhood concern is the environment, but crime is ranked only a few percentage points from the top (see Table 3). The 1978 U.S. Department of Justice Survey listed crime as not being one of the main neighborhood problems. Hispanics feel less safe from crime than does the general population (Carter, 1983).

#### Police

Public attitudes and opinions toward police are extremely important because the police are the visible link between law and order. This section will examine the same cities as in the crime section, beginning with Boston.

In Boston, 41 percent of those surveyed rated the police as doing an average job. Eighty-seven percent said there was a need for improvement and 62 percent called for operational practices to be improved. The police are rated as doing an average job with a need for operational practices to be improved. Operational practices are the everyday duties of an officer which include patrolling, surveillance,

TABLE III  
RESIDENTIAL PROBLEMS

CITIES SURVEYED (Percentage Agreeing That:)	REASON FOR LEAVING OLD NEIGHBORHOOD			REASON FOR CHOOSING NEW NEIGHBORHOOD			BAD NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES		MAIN NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEM		
	C R I M E S A F E T Y	L O G I C A L T I K E N D	N O I S E S L I K E D	C R I M E S A F E T Y	L L O C K A E T O H	H I G H S E E D	Y E S	N O	C R I M E	E N V I R O N M E N T	T R A N S P O R T A T I O N
Boston	5	30	29	4	49	19	42	58	28	31	11
New Orleans	3	26	40	3	49	22	71	68	17	36	12
Washington, D.C.	2	31	34	3	50	20	35	65	19	37	15
Oakland	2	25	37	3	45	21	38	62	28	27	12
San Diego	1	36	36	1	56	26	34	65	9	35	17
Minneapolis	3	28	36	2	59	22	34	66	21	29	11
Miami	2	28	35	4	58	22	34	66	21	29	11
Houston	2	37	31	1	62	20	34	65	10	43	12
Cincinnati	2	28	34	1	51	23	36	63	18	28	17
Buffalo	2	24	34	2	44	24	33	67	18	30	11
San Francisco	2	29	33	3	51	25	39	61	20	37	15
Pittsburgh	2	22	33	1	53	18	35	64	22	29	12

public assistance, answering calls and the like (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979a).

In New Orleans, 43 percent of those surveyed rated the police as doing a good job. Eighty-six percent said the police needed to improve and 46 percent said the improvement should be in personnel resources. Personnel resources are the individuals who make up the police force. Apparently the public sees the police as lacking in this area and needing to recruit better qualified individuals to fill the police department ranks (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979b).

In Washington, D.C., 46 percent rated police job performance as average. Eighty-one percent called for improvement and 56 percent wanted operational practices to improve. The police are again seen as doing a good or average job, but could perform their daily tasks better (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978c).

In Oakland, the police were rated as doing a good job by 42 percent of the respondents. Eighty-five percent indicated a need to improve and 42 percent indicated there was a need to improve in operational practices. The police again were rated by the public as doing a good job, yet it is not an overriding percentage as the police would like it to be. If the police improved in operational practices, perhaps the percentage would rise (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978b).

Fifty-nine percent of those surveyed in San Diego rated the police as doing a good job. Eighty-one percent said the police needed to improve. Thirty-nine percent indicated the main improvement needed to be in operational practices. Over half of those surveyed indicated the police were doing a good job, but that they could do better in performing their daily duties (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979c).

In Minneapolis, 53 percent rated police job performance as good. Eighty-two percent said that police performance could improve and 40 percent felt that operational practices was the area most needing improvement. The police were again seen as doing a good job but needing to do a better job in performing their daily functions (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978c).

In Miami, 43 percent rated the police as doing a good job. Eighty-six percent said they could improve. Forty-three percent called for improvement in operational practices. The majority of those surveyed said the police could improve. The police were seen as doing a good job but needing improvement in performance of their operational functions (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979d).

In Houston, 44 percent rated the police as doing an average job. Ninety percent said the police could improve and 51 percent said they could improve in the area of personnel resources. Police were not given a vote of confidence



in Houston, as nearly half rated the police as doing an average job. The respondents believe that the police department could recruit more qualified individuals (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978d).

In Cincinnati, 53 percent rated the police as doing a good job. Eighty percent said they needed to improve. Forty-seven percent said the police needed to improve in operational practices. The police are seen as not performing their jobs as well as they could, but still are seen as doing a good job (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979e).

In Buffalo, police were rated as doing a good job by 41 percent of those responding to the study. Eighty-two percent said they need improvement. Fifty-eight percent said the main area of needed improvement was in operational practices. Less than half thought the police were doing a good job (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979f).

In San Francisco, 45 percent of those surveyed indicated the police were doing a good job. However, 86 percent said the police could improve on job performance. The main improvement needed, according to 51 percent of the respondents, was in operational practices. The police were doing a good job according to just less than half of the respondents (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978f).

In Pittsburgh, the police were rated by 45 percent of the residents as doing a good job. Eighty-one percent said

they could do a better job and 57 percent said they could improve in operational practices. The police are again rated as doing a good job but they could improve on their present performance (U.S. Department of Justice, 1979g).

According to these studies, the following things are indicated: (1) the police do a good job, and (2) there is a need for improvement in both operational practice and personnel resources. The police are rated high in community relations (see Table 4). These studies represent the general population, but these studies cannot be generalized to groups such as Hispanics. In a study of Hispanics in Texas, it was found that they feel the police cannot reduce crime and that the police offer inadequate protection (Carter, 1983).

Police are also seen as being rude, unfriendly, and bullish by some because of the combination of a military style police uniform and an authoritarian attitude (Bell, 1982). Police are apparently given positive ratings by those who had positive contacts with police, while the reverse is true for negative contacts (Cizanckos, 1975; Rusinko, 1978; Griffiths, 1982). Blacks and young people tend to see police as being less active and overly authoritarian (Ilana & Hador, 1975; U.S. National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, 1978). Finally, most of these studies included all police personnel, but some of the findings on job performance are different when rating only police women. Women

TABLE IV  
POLICE

CITIES SURVEYED	PERCENTAGE AGREEING THAT:			NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT		MAIN IMPROVEMENT NEEDED		
	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	YES	NO	PERSONNEL RESOURCES	OPERATIONAL PRACTICES	COMMUNITY RELATIONS
Boston	35	41	17	87	11	23	62	9
New Orleans	43	40	12	86	11	46	36	12
Washington, D.C.	35	45	12	81	16	19	56	21
Oakland	42	40	11	85	12	29	42	19
San Diego	59	30	7	81	17	31	39	19
Minneapolis	53	37	6	82	16	33	40	18
Miami	43	37	12	86	12	42	43	9
Houston	41	44	11	90	7	51	30	13
Cincinnati	53	35	9	80	18	30	47	14
Buffalo	41	40	13	82	17	22	58	13
San Francisco	45	37	11	86	11	25	51	16
Pittsburgh	45	39	11	81	17	27	57	10

tend to rate police women as doing a good job and men tend to rate them as only doing an average job (Steffensmeir, 1979; Koenig, 1981). In most cases the police are seen as being effective, equitable in their treatment of citizens, and respectful (Thomas, 1977).

#### Corrections

A survey of 1,121 Washington state residents indicated that the majority of those favoring correctional reform tend to blame society for crime and therefore see a need to help correct the problem it caused (Rose, 1977). The majority of citizens today are apparently concerned more about capital punishment than any other correctional issue. Some individuals cry for the abolition of capital punishment, but these are by far the minority (Roberts, 1976; Alston, 1976; Gorecki, 1983). Since 1976 there has been a shift toward stiffer penalties for violent crimes. There has been demonstrated a strong, positive, nonlinear relationship between public support for capital punishment and crime rates across regions of the United States (Rankin, 1979). In a study in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, California, it was shown that 58.5 percent of all respondents were in favor of capital punishment, and of those, 75 percent felt capital punishment should be mandatory for serious crimes regardless of race (Ellsworth and Ross, 1981; Hamilton and Rotkin, 1979). Many young Blacks still are against severe punishments such as

capital punishment because they feel they are discriminated against by race and they still think Blacks are overrepresented on death row (Mack and Sheley, 1979).

#### The Judiciary

The judiciary has a lasting effect on corrections and anyone entering the criminal justice system. Judges appear to take advice from the public on setting of bail, rather than on flight risks only. Persons in Memphis, Tennessee, for example, suggested judges detain those charged with serious crimes and set higher bail, and the judiciary agreed (Kirby and McKnight, 1982). The public also has great impact on sentencing of offenders. Those who perceive the crime rate as not increasing are the most lenient concerning sentencing and those who are the most fearful of victimization are in favor of severe sentencing (Thomas and Cage, 1976). Since most Americans now apparently feel the crime rate is increasing, there is probably also an increase in severity of sentencing. If the public could be better informed on all criminal justice issues, it would probably change the face of the criminal justice system. The public is reasonably knowledgeable of types of crime and is also well informed about courts, prisons and police. However, they do have some false preconceived ideas (Graber, 1980).

In a study in Ontario's educational system, students were given factual information about the criminal justice

system to see if they would change attitudes toward the system. The results were as follows: (1) attitude is more or less independent of knowledge, and (2) an increase of knowledge does not always result in a change of attitude (Jayewardene and Gainer, 1977). There is a great need for further investigation in this area.

### Chapter III

#### Research Methodology

The purpose of this study to determine whether the findings of a 1978 study of myths and realities about crime are still true in 1985 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978). The sample was composed of six groups from the Rutherford, Bedford, and Cannon County, Tennessee, areas. The 427 respondents ranged in age from 14 to 85 years. An anonymous crime knowledge questionnaire was given to the entire group (see Appendix). The questionnaire was made up of 22 false statements. All 22 statements are myths about crime, and a response of true was recorded as agreeing with the misconception.

The first group in this study was made up of 46 men and four women who were members of the Murfreesboro Police Department. Respondents were given the questionnaire by shifts. Due to scheduled leave and off days, only 50 respondents were obtained from a total of 75 officers, detectives, and metermaids.

The second group was made up of senior citizens aged 60 and over. Traditionally, senior citizens are believed to be at least 65 years of age, but recently many older adults are retiring at the age of 60. Therefore, the sample size was enlarged to include this age group. Subjects were obtained by getting references from the Shelbyville, Tennessee

Senior Citizens Center and from the members of the Shelbyville Southside Church of Christ Senior Class. All questionnaires were given to church members on both group and individual bases. Twenty-four males and 26 females participated in the study.

The third group was also composed of senior citizens aged 60 and over. Subjects were obtained from the Murfreesboro, Tennessee Senior Citizen Center, the Elderly Nutritional Center located in Smyrna, Tennessee, and the Fosterville, Tennessee, Church of Christ Senior Class. Thirty-three males and 37 females participated in this study.

The fourth group was composed of persons aged 22 to 59. Respondents in the group were obtained from the following: the Rutherford County, Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service Officer, the Murfreesboro, Tennessee Production Credit Association employees, employees of Sullivan's Department Store in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and the Fosterville, Tennessee, Church of Christ Adult Classes. Twenty-six males and 29 females participated in this study.

The fifth group was composed of students, aged 17 to 21, from the Middle Tennessee State University campus. Questionnaires were given to passers-by in the Peck Hall class building. All participants were degree majors other than Criminal Justice Administration. Thirty-one males and 21 females participated in this study.



The sixth group was a sample of students at Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, located in Bedford, County, Tennessee, and Cannon County, Tennessee, High School. Eighty males and 80 females from the two schools were given questionnaires.

## Chapter IV

### Data Analysis

A total of 427 persons satisfied both the age (14 years and over) and residency requirements (Rutherford, Bedford, and Cannon Counties) for participation in this study. A summary of the data is reported with reference to tables of participant response.

The response data have been broken down into male and female categories with the total number of respondents marked as (N) and the percentage of those agreeing with the misconception marked as (%).

The majority of all groups agreed that major crimes of violence in America are increasing rapidly. Police agree with the myth possibly because of job concern. The rest of the groups may have agreed with the myth due to inaccurate or distorted information presented to them by the media (see Table 5).

The majority of the groups except for the police indicate that they believe that most crimes occurring in America are of a violent nature. The public may answer this way because the media often reports violent crimes while not reporting crimes of less severity (see Table 6).

Over 70 percent of all respondents indicate that they agree that the larger a city, the greater the likelihood

Table 5

Major crimes of violence in America are increasing rapidly

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	76.09	4	100.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	100.00	26	100.00
Senior Citizen Group II	33	96.97	37	97.30
Persons Aged 22-58	26	92.31	29	68.97
Persons Aged 17-21	31	77.42	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	86.25	80	93.75

Table 6

Most crimes occurring in America are of a violent nature

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	23.91	4	0
Senior Citizen Group I	24	70.83	26	69.23
Senior Citizen Group II	33	63.64	37	94.59
Persons Aged 22-58	26	57.69	29	24.14
Persons Aged 17-21	31	29.03	21	52.38
Persons Aged 14-16	80	61.25	80	75.00

that its residents will be victims of crimes. This is possibly due to the public having received inaccurate information from the media (see Table 7).

There was a large percentage of all groups agreeing with the myth that residents of large cities believe that the police do a poor job. The police often believe that the public rates them poorly. The public, again, is greatly influenced both by media news and police centered television programs (see Table 8).

The majority of respondents disagree with the myth that most crime is reported to the police. The police are aware that many crimes are not reported to them. The public has apparently received accurate information concerning the reporting of crimes to the police (see Table 9).

A majority of all groups indicated that they agreed with the myth that Blacks or Hispanics are less likely than the population as a whole to report personal crimes to the police. The public may have preconceived ideas that Blacks or Hispanics do not believe the police will help them. The police may think that Blacks or Hispanics do not trust them and therefore they will not report personal crimes to them (see Table 10).

Over 65 percent of all groups were in agreement that residents of large cities regard crime as the most important neighborhood problem. The public may answer this way because

Table 7

The larger a city, the greater the likelihood that its residents will be victims of crimes.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	84.78	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	100.00	26	100.00
Senior Citizen Group II	33	90.91	37	97.30
Persons Aged 22-58	26	96.15	29	79.31
Persons Aged 17-21	31	77.42	21	95.24
Persons Aged 14-16	80	73.75	80	78.75

Table 8

In general, residents of large cities believe that the police do a poor job.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	41.30	4	50.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	62.5	26	76.92
Senior Citizen Group II	33	60.61	37	59.46
Persons Aged 22-58	26	57.69	29	62.07
Persons Aged 17-21	31	61.29	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	78.75	80	77.5

Table 9

Most crime is reported to the police.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	30.43	4	0
Senior Citizen Group I	24	16.67	26	26.92
Senior Citizen Group II	33	66.67	37	59.46
Persons Aged 22-58	26	46.15	29	34.48
Persons Aged 17-21	31	25.81	21	33.33
Persons Aged 14-16	80	57.5	80	46.25

Table 10

Blacks or Hispanics are less likely than the population as a whole to report personal crimes to the police.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	60.87	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	83.33	26	96.15
Senior Citizen Group II	33	100.00	37	91.89
Persons Aged 22-58	26	76.92	29	58.62
Persons Aged 17-21	31	48.39	21	76.19
Persons Aged 14-16	80	73.75	80	70.00

they think that large cities have more crime than smaller cities and therefore assume that the major neighborhood problem is crime (see Table 11).

The majority of all groups also agreed that most residents of large cities think their neighborhoods are not safe. People apparently tend to feel that crimes are being committed everywhere; yet, they feel that their own neighborhoods are safe. They read of crimes being committed in every community around them but very seldom hear of their next door neighbor being robbed. They appear to have a preconceived idea that since crimes are being committed in places other than where they live, the residents of those places would feel that their neighborhoods are not safe (see Table 12).

The majority of all groups agreed that elderly persons make up the most heavily victimized group in our society. This may be due to the media giving too much coverage to those elderly victims of crimes (see Table 13).

The majority of all groups agreed that women are more likely than men to be victims of crime. This may be due to some preconceived idea that women are more vulnerable than men and therefore are more likely to be victimized (see Table 14).

Over 43 percent of all the groups surveyed agreed that a weapon is used in nearly all rapes, robberies and assaults. The public has possibly been given inaccurate data from the

Table 11

Residents of large cities regard crime as the most important neighborhood problem.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	65.22	4	100.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	95.83	26	96.15
Senior Citizen Group II	33	93.94	37	100.00
Persons Aged 22-58	26	92.31	29	68.96
Persons Aged 17-21	31	74.19	21	76.19
Persons Aged 14-16	80	86.25	80	86.25

Table 12

Most residents of large cities think their neighborhoods are not safe.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	67.39	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	54.17	26	73.08
Senior Citizen Group II	33	81.82	37	62.16
Persons Aged 22-58	26	92.31	29	72.41
Persons Aged 17-21	31	70.97	21	80.95
Persons Aged 14-16	80	73.75	80	76.25



Table 13

Elderly persons make up the most heavily victimized group in our society.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	50.00	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	45.83	26	73.08
Senior Citizen Group II	33	60.61	37	62.16
Persons Aged 22-58	26	65.38	29	51.72
Persons Aged 17-21	31	61.29	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	76.25	80	70.00

Table 14

Women are more likely than men to be victims of crime.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	63.04	4	50.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	37.5	26	65.38
Senior Citizen Group II	33	48.48	37	56.76
Persons Aged 22-58	26	100.00	29	68.96
Persons Aged 17-21	31	87.10	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	78.75	80	77.5

media and the police are apparently basing their answer on personal experiences rather than any knowledge of crime in the United States (see Table 15).

Over 40 percent of all groups, with the exception of the police, agreed with the myth that a victim is more likely to be injured during an armed assault or robbery if the offender has a firearm rather than a knife or other weapon (see Table 16).

Over 40 percent of all groups, with the exception of the police, agreed with the myth that people often use force or weapons for self-defense from criminal attack. The respondents may have answered this way because they were thinking of crimes such as rape in which a large percentage of victims use force or weapons to defend themselves from attack (see Table 17).

Over 46 percent of all groups indicated that they agreed with the myth that victims of violent crimes other than homicide end up in a hospital. Respondents may have answered this way because of exposure given to injured victims on television (see Table 18).

The majority of all groups agreed with the myth that the typical personal robbery is carried out against a lone victim by an armed offender operating alone. The public may have answered this way because of inaccurate information given them by the media (see Table 19).

Table 15

A weapon is used by the offender in nearly all rapes, robberies and assaults.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	43.48	4	50.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	79.17	26	65.38
Senior Citizen Group II	33	81.82	37	78.38
Persons Aged 22-58	26	65.38	29	51.72
Persons Aged 17-21	31	77.42	21	80.95
Persons Aged 14-16	80	75.00	80	86.25

Table 16

A victim is more likely to be injured during an armed assault or robbery if the offender has a firearm rather than a knife or other weapon.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	19.56	4	25.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	54.17	26	84.61
Senior Citizen Group II	33	75.76	37	72.97
Persons Aged 22-58	26	50.00	29	44.83
Persons Aged 17-21	31	35.48	21	47.62
Persons Aged 14-16	80	60.00	80	61.25

Table 17

People often use force or weapons for self-defense from criminal attack.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	19.56	4	25.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	29.17	26	50.00
Senior Citizen Group II	33	48.48	37	45.94
Persons Aged 22-58	26	46.15	29	55.17
Persons Aged 17-21	31	64.52	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	82.5	80	83.75

Table 18

More often than not, victims of violent crimes other than homicide end up in a hospital.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	43.48	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	45.83	26	96.15
Senior Citizen Group II	33	78.79	37	64.86
Persons Aged 22-58	26	69.23	29	55.17
Persons Aged 17-21	31	61.29	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	71.25	80	82.5

Table 19

The typical personal robbery is carried out against a lone victim by an armed offender operating alone.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	65.22	4	100.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	70.83	26	61.54
Senior Citizen Group II	33	75.76	37	62.16
Persons Aged 22-58	26	88.46	29	55.17
Persons Aged 17-21	31	58.06	21	61.90
Persons Aged 14-16	80	63.75	80	70.00

Table 20

Household burglars usually commit their crimes by breaking (using force) into the premises.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	82.61	4	100.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	100.00	26	92.31
Senior Citizen Group II	33	96.97	37	83.78
Persons Aged 22-58	26	100.00	29	86.21
Persons Aged 17-21	31	74.19	21	80.95
Persons Aged 14-16	80	92.5	80	96.25

The majority of all respondents were in agreement that household burglars usually commit their crimes by breaking into the premises. The respondents may think that most people lock their doors and windows to their houses, when in reality most burglars enter through an opening that is unlocked (see Table 20).

The majority of all the groups agreed with the myth that victims of crime seldom know or recognize their offenders. The respondents may have answered this way because they usually think that neighborhood crimes are committed by an outsider (see Table 21).

Over 40 percent of all groups, with the exception of the police and the senior citizen group I, agreed with the myth that aggravated assaults are more likely to result in physical injury if the attacker is a total stranger. This is possibly a result of inaccurate information given to them by the media (see Table 22).

The majority of all groups disagreed with the myth that the typical prison inmate is a "loner" with no family or friends and little social contact. The majority of the respondents have possibly received accurate data from the media on prisoners and their families (see Table 23).

With the exception of the two senior citizen groups, the respondents disagreed that people are usually under the influence of drugs when they commit a crime. The senior

Table 21

The victims of crime seldom know or recognize their offenders.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	43.48	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	70.83	26	84.61
Senior Citizen Group II	33	72.73	37	72.97
Persons Aged 22-58	26	76.92	29	62.09
Persons Aged 17-21	31	67.74	21	80.95
Persons Aged 14-16	80	76.25	80	86.25

Table 22

Aggravated assaults are more likely to result in physical injury if the attacker is a total stranger.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	36.96	4	0
Senior Citizen Group I	24	8.33	26	50.00
Senior Citizen Group II	33	30.30	37	48.65
Persons Aged 22-58	26	65.38	29	44.83
Persons Aged 17-21	31	45.16	21	66.67
Persons Aged 14-16	80	78.75	80	68.75

Table 23

The typical prison inmate is a "loner" with no family or friends and little social contact.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	15.22	4	25.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	12.5	26	46.15
Senior Citizen Group II	33	33.33	37	48.65
Persons Aged 22-58	26	30.77	29	20.69
Persons Aged 17-21	31	35.48	21	28.57
Persons Aged 14-16	80	45.00	80	48.75

Table 24

People are usually under the influence of drugs (other than alcohol) when they commit a crime.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	34.78	4	0
Senior Citizen Group I	24	66.66	26	57.69
Senior Citizen Group II	33	66.66	37	67.57
Persons Aged 22-58	26	38.46	29	31.03
Persons Aged 17-21	31	45.16	21	38.09
Persons Aged 14-16	80	40.00	80	36.25



citizens may believe that most crimes are committed in order to support a drug habit and therefore they may have assumed that the offenders were on drugs when they committed their crimes (see Table 24).

Over 41 percent of all groups agreed that the typical person who commits a crime is either unemployed or on welfare. This is possibly a result of some preconceived idea that criminals are lazy people looking for an "easy dollar" (see Table 25).

There were mixed responses to the myth that Blacks are overrepresented on death row in the South as compared to other regions. Percentages ranged from 27.27 percent to 75 percent. Those who strongly agreed with the myth may have believed that there were more Blacks on death row in the South because of racial prejudice that is assumed to exist in the South (see Table 26).

In conclusion, the majority of respondents are in agreement with most of the misconceptions listed in this study. Most ignorance can be attributed to the lack of accurate available data.

Table 25

The typical person who commits a crime is either unemployed or on welfare.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	50.00	4	50.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	41.66	26	76.92
Senior Citizen Group II	33	54.54	37	54.05
Persons Aged 22-58	26	53.85	29	65.52
Persons Aged 17-22	31	51.61	21	71.43
Persons Aged 14-16	80	65.00	80	65.00

Table 26

Although Blacks, are overrepresented on death row in the United States, this overrepresentation is more pronounced in the South than in the other regions.

	N Male	% Male	N Female	% Female
Police	46	47.83	4	75.00
Senior Citizen Group I	24	33.33	26	46.15
Senior Citizen Group II	33	27.27	37	45.94
Persons Aged 22-58	26	50.00	29	37.93
Persons Aged 17-21	31	51.61	21	38.09
Persons Aged 14-16	80	61.25	80	63.75

## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The majority of all the participants in this study agreed with many misconceptions. The police did not agree as strongly with the myths as did other groups, yet there is an indication that they are not as well informed as they could be about crime. They work daily with the world of crime and for this reason they may develop preconceived notions based upon their job experience, while assuming that every city in the United States is exactly like theirs. The police departments of most cities in the United States provide data yearly to the FBI for use in the Uniform Crime Reports. Unfortunately, this is the last many of them see of this information. Only a small portion of police officers ever see a copy of the UCR.

The non-police respondents, in most cases, agreed strongly with the myths contained in the questionnaire. However, they did disagree with some of the myths and this is possibly a result of the efforts of the media to educate the public. Ironically, this is the same media that tends to overdramatize murders and crimes of violence while underplaying less serious crimes. The United States government has spent a large amount of money and man hours researching and putting together data on crime so that the public can be

better informed. Unfortunately, even though the government has made this information available to the public, few if any write for a copy or even know that one exists. The solution is possibly as simple as the government giving the major networks this information and hiring them to present it to the public. This is most likely the only way that Americans will ever know the truth about crime. It would be helpful if the media would make an attempt to reduce the amount of coverage given to violent crimes on the news. This is unlikely to happen because this is what gets the most attention for them. There needs to be a comprehensive effort made by the police to inform the public about crime, explaining to them exactly how our cities compare to the nation when it comes to crime.

APPENDIX

## The Crime Knowledge Inventory

Please fill in the following: AGE \_\_\_\_\_, RACE \_\_\_\_\_, SEX \_\_\_\_\_

\*All Questionnaires are voluntary and anonymous.

Mark the following statements true or false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Major crimes of violence in American are increasing rapidly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Most crimes occurring in America are of a violent nature.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The larger a city, the greater the likelihood that its residents will be victims of crimes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. In general, residents of large cities believe that the police do a poor job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Most crime is reported to the police.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Blacks or Hispanics are less likely than the population as a whole to report personal crimes to the police.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Residents of large cities regard crime as the most important neighborhood problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Most residents of large cities think their neighborhoods are not safe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Elderly persons make up the most heavily victimized group in our society.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Women are more likely than men to be victims of crime.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A weapon is used by the offender in nearly all rapes, robberies and assaults.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A victim is more likely to be injured during an armed assault or robbery if the offender has a firearm rather than a knife or other weapon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. People often use force or weapons for self-defense from criminal attack.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. More often than not, victims of violent crimes other than homicide end up in a hospital.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The typical personal robbery is carried out against a lone victim by an armed offender operating alone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Household burglars usually commit their crimes by breaking (using force) into premises.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. The victims of crime seldom know or recognize their offenders.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Aggravated assaults are more likely to result in physical injury if the attacker is a total stranger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. The typical prison inmate is a "loner" with no family or friends and little social contact.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. People are usually under the influence of drugs (other than alcohol) when they commit a crime.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. The typical person who commits a crime is either unemployed or on welfare.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Although Blacks are overrepresented on death row in the United States, this overrepresentation is more pronounced in the South than in the other regions.

Thank you for your participation.



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