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## The New Orleans Police Department: Melding Police and Policy to Dramatically Reduce Crime in the City of New Orleans

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The New Orleans Police Department: Melding Police and Policy to Dramatically Reduce Crime  
in the City of New Orleans

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Political Science

by

Kevin A. Unter

B.A. Colorado State University, 1990

M.A. Colorado State University, 1992

December, 2007

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To Dad, Mom, Craig, Melissa, Jordan, Delaney, David, Megan, Alexis, Tyler, Marijane, and Heidi, I love you.

Amen.

## Table of Contents

|  |      |
|--|------|
| List of Figures  | vii  |
| List of Tables   | viii |
| Abstract   | ix   |
| Chapter 1. Introduction  | 1    |
| Crime in America   | 2    |
| Changes in Policing in the Face of Rising Crime                                | 4    |
| Crime Reduction, 1992–2005   | 6    |
| Changes in Policing Leading to Crime Reductions                                | 7    |
| Crime in New Orleans, 1934–94  | 8    |
| Changes in Policing Leading to Crime Reductions, 1994–2004                     | 11   |
| Why Did Violent Crime Decrease So Rapidly in New Orleans – Research Question   | 12   |
| Chapter 2. A History of Crime in New Orleans and the Impetus for Change        | 16   |
| Comparing Crime in New Orleans and the Nation, 1934–2004                       | 17   |
| The History of the NOPD and Crime in New Orleans                               | 21   |
| Policing New Orleans, Founding to 1960   | 21   |
| Policing New Orleans, 1960–94  | 32   |
| Policing New Orleans, 1994–2004  | 37   |
| Impetus for Change   | 38   |
| Chapter 3. The Public Policy Approach to Crime Reduction                       | 43   |
| Systems Theory and the Public Policy Process                                   | 43   |
| A Definition of Crime Policy   | 44   |
| Changing the NOPD and Reducing Crime in New Orleans – the Crime Policy Process | 46   |
| Agenda Setting   | 46   |
| Putting Crime on the Public Agenda, Nationally and in New Orleans              | 47   |
| Reducing Police Corruption: Crime Policy Formulation and Adoption, 1994–96     | 52   |
| Formulating and Implementing a New Crime Reduction Policy, 1996–Present        | 55   |
| Evaluating COMSTAT’s Effects   | 60   |
| Public Feedback of the NOPD’s Efforts  | 62   |
| Crime Declined, but was it Solely Because of the Actions of the NOPD?          | 63   |
| Chapter 4. Policing and Crime Reduction – in General and in New Orleans        | 64   |
| Sociological Theories of Crime Reduction                                       | 65   |
| Political/Criminological Theories of Crime Reduction                           | 66   |
| The Evolution of the Police Agency into its Modern Role and Functions          | 67   |
| Policing Strategies: Traditional Policing                                      | 69   |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Prevention of Crime  | 69  |
| Responding to Crimes in Progress   | 70  |
| Resolving Crimes Already Committed   | 72  |
| Assessing Traditional Policing Strategies                                      | 73  |
| Policing Strategies: Community Policing  | 74  |
| The Need for Greater Citizen Input and Interaction                             | 74  |
| The Role of Citizens in Crime Reduction  | 75  |
| Debate Still Surrounds the Two Approaches                                      | 76  |
| Bridging the Gap Between the Two: Problem-Oriented Policing                    | 79  |
| COMSTAT – Beyond Problem-Oriented Policing                                     | 81  |
| COMSTAT and the Policy Process   | 85  |
| Summary of Policing Strategies   | 86  |
| Conclusion   | 87  |
| Chapter 5. Establishment of Models and Tests of Hypotheses of Crime Reduction  | 88  |
| What is Responsible for the Dramatic Crime Reduction in New Orleans post-1996? | 89  |
| The Data: The Uniform Crime Reports  | 91  |
| Problems Using UCR Data  | 92  |
| The UCR hierarchy rule and crime classification                                | 93  |
| Artificially downgrading crime   | 94  |
| UCRs versus other national reporting programs                                  | 95  |
| Examining the Crime Trends in New Orleans 1985–2005                            | 97  |
| The Dependent Variable: Quarterly Changes in Crime in New Orleans              | 97  |
| Independent Variables and Hypotheses   | 103 |
| Arrests  | 103 |
| Personnel Levels   | 108 |
| Sociological Indicators  | 111 |
| Modeling the Crime Decline in New Orleans, post-COMSTAT Implementation         | 118 |
| Model One – Interrupted Time Series  | 119 |
| The Abrupt and Temporary Pattern, or <i>Impulse-Decay</i> Function             | 120 |
| The Gradual and Permanent Pattern, or <i>Dynamic-Growth</i> Function           | 122 |
| Interpreting the Results of the Interrupted Time-Series Models                 | 123 |
| Model Two – Traditional Time Series Analysis and Equations                     | 123 |
| Data Collection Differences Across Equations                                   | 125 |
| Findings and Discussion  | 126 |
| Model One – Interrupted Time Series Analysis                                   | 126 |
| Model Two – Traditional Time Series Analysis                                   | 130 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Policing Model, Equation 3.1   | 130 |
| Individual Variables   | 133 |
| Sociological Model, Equation 3.2   | 135 |
| Melding Model, Equation 3.3  | 138 |
| Individual Variables   | 140 |
| Conclusion   | 142 |
| Chapter 6. Judging Crime Policy Effectiveness                              | 146 |
| Measuring the Public’s Perceptions of Crime                                | 146 |
| New Orleans Residents’ Opinions on Crime and Fear in New Orleans           | 147 |
| Public Opinion as Feedback to Policy Makers                                | 148 |
| Why Policy Outputs are not Enough  | 149 |
| Using “Fear of Crime” as a Surrogate Measure                               | 150 |
| Avoiding Bias when Measuring Fear of Crime in New Orleans                  | 150 |
| Measuring Fear of Crime and other Residents’ Opinions In New Orleans       | 151 |
| Other Measures of Policy Effectiveness                                     | 159 |
| Conclusion   | 161 |
| Chapter 7. Conclusion  | 163 |
| Competing Hypotheses but Inconclusive Proof                                | 164 |
| Measuring the Impact of the Implementation COMSTAT                         | 164 |
| Measuring the Impact of Police-Specific Variables                          | 165 |
| Measuring the Impact of Socio-Economic Variables                           | 166 |
| Measuring the Combined Impact of All Variables – the Melding Model         | 166 |
| Models’ Relevance for Existing Research                                    | 167 |
| Methodological Notes for Future Research                                   | 168 |
| No Single Explanation, but Reductions in Fear among New Orleans’ Residents | 171 |
| Crime in New Orleans and the City’s Future, post-Katrina                   | 172 |
| Bibliography   | 175 |
| Vita   | 191 |

## List of Figures

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1–1. U.S. Criminal Incidents and Population, 1932–2005                       | 6   |
| Figure 1–2. Criminal Incidents in New Orleans, 1934–2004                            | 10  |
| Figure 2–1. Total UCR Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–2004          | 17  |
| Figure 2–2. Total UCR Violent Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–2004  | 18  |
| Figure 2–3. Total UCR Property Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–2004 | 19  |
| Figure 2–4. Total UCR Murder Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–2004         | 20  |
| Figure 2–5. Total UCR Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–59            | 30  |
| Figure 2–6. Total UCR Violent Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–59    | 31  |
| Figure 2–7. Total UCR Property Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1932–59   | 32  |
| Figure 2–8. Total UCR Violent Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1960–94    | 35  |
| Figure 2–9. Total UCR Murder Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1960–94           | 36  |
| Figure 2–10. Total UCR Murder Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1994–2004        | 40  |
| Figure 2–11. Total UCR Violent Crime Rate, New Orleans vs. United States, 1994–2004 | 41  |
| Figure 5–1. UCR Crime Increases/Decreases, 1985–2005                                | 99  |
| Figure 5–2. UCR Violent Crime Increases/Decreases, 1985–2005                        | 100 |
| Figure 5–3. UCR Property Crime Increases/Decreases, 1985–2005                       | 101 |
| Figure 5–4. Murder Increases/Decreases, 1985–2005                                   | 102 |
| Figure 5–5. NOPD State Arrests, 1990–2004   | 105 |
| Figure 5–6. NOPD Narcotics Arrests, 1990–2004                                       | 106 |
| Figure 5–7. NOPD City Arrests, 1990–2004  | 106 |
| Figure 5–8. NOPD Traffic Arrests, 1990–2004   | 107 |
| Figure 5–9. NOPD Juvenile Arrests, 1990–2004  | 107 |
| Figure 5–10. NOPD Officers, 1985–2004   | 109 |
| Figure 5–11. % Males Ages 15–24 in New Orleans, 1985–2004                           | 112 |
| Figure 5–12. % Black Population in New Orleans, 1985–2004                           | 114 |
| Figure 5–13. Unemployment Rate in New Orleans, 1985–2004                            | 116 |
| Figure 5–14. Poverty Rate in New Orleans, 1989–2004                                 | 117 |
| Figure 5–15. Per Capita Income in New Orleans, 1985–2004                            | 118 |
| Figure 5–16. Four Types of Impacts  | 120 |



## List of Tables

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 1–1. Crime in the United States, 1932–91  | 3   |
| Table 1–2. Crime in the United States, 1932–2005  | 7   |
| Table 1–3. Crime in New Orleans, 1934–90  | 9   |
| Table 3–1. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–98 on Questions Relating to Crime                      | 50  |
| Table 3–2. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–98 on Questions Relating to Crime                      | 50  |
| Table 5–1. COMSTAT’s Effect on New Orleans Quarterly Crime Reduction (Impulse-Decay Model)                      | 128 |
| Table 5–2. COMSTAT’s Effect on New Orleans Quarterly Crime Reduction (Dynamic-Growth Model)                     | 130 |
| Table 5–3. Effect of Police-Related Variables on Crime Reduction in New Orleans                                 | 132 |
| Table 5–4. Effect of Sociological Variables on Crime Reduction in New Orleans                                   | 136 |
| Table 5–5. Effect of Police-Related and Sociological Variables on Crime Reduction in New Orleans                | 138 |
| Table 6–1. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004 on Questions Relating to Crime                    | 153 |
| Table 6–2. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime                    | 154 |
| Table 6–3. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime                   | 155 |
| Table 6–4. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime                   | 156 |
| Table 6–5. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1994–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime                   | 157 |
| Table 6–6. Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime                   | 158 |
| Table 6–7. Survey Results of New Orleans Police Officers to Selected Questions about Police-Community Relations | 159 |

## Abstract

In 1996, the New Orleans Police Department implemented the COMSTAT management and accountability style of policing. Within three years of that implementation, murder was cut by over fifty percent and violent crime fell by nearly the same amount; overall crime was cut by over one-third compared to just three years ago. This dissertation seeks to explore the reasons crime declined so rapidly in New Orleans post-COMSTAT implementation, compared to crime in the rest of the country. Drawing on political and criminological theories of policing as well as sociological theories, variables unique to each set of theories were identified and tested alone and against competing explanations. Utilizing higher-ordered time series methodology, two analyses were conducted. The first utilized interrupted time-series analysis to identify the nature of COMSTAT's impact on New Orleans' crime trends, measured as changes in the current quarter compared to the same quarter of the preceding year. The results show that while COMSTAT had a significant impact on the crime trends, the effects were short-lived. The second analysis utilized traditional time series methodology to examine the impacts of the individual variables on the overall crime trends. The results show that while policing variables and sociological variables have little effect on the overall crime trends both individually and when tested together, the findings indicate policing variables play a larger role than sociological variables when included together. As another independent test of the effects of crime, public opinion data obtained via the University of New Orleans' Survey Research Center from 1986–2004 show that the public was very positive towards the NOPD's efforts in dramatically reducing crime and fear of crime in New Orleans during this period. The overall results for policy makers then indicates that reductions in crime resonate positively with city residents and future policy decisions should be made with that goal in mind.

**Keywords:** New Orleans Police Department, COMSTAT, City of New Orleans, policing, strategies, community-oriented policing, problem-solving policing, public policy process, public opinion.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

According to criminologist George Kelling, “the most impressive achievement of city governance during the urban renewal of the 1990s was the enormous decline in crime” (2003, 1). This is impressive for city governments because they are charged with basic police protection. This is even more remarkable given that during the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, many major American cities were perceived to be “dangerous” places, ridden with crime, violence, and illegal drugs. As a result, people began leaving these cities for the safer suburbs, beginning the downward cycle of decay for many of these urban areas. Some of these cities today still have not recovered from these demographic shifts.

If, as Kelling states, the reduction in crime is an impressive achievement of city governance, then it stands to reason that increases in crime are a failure of city governance. What is understood then is that it is a city’s leadership that is at the forefront of directing local crime policy. In most large cities, it is the Mayor (or in combination with other city leadership) who appoints the Police Executive (Chief, Commissioner, Superintendent or other) to direct the police department to protect the citizens from crime. The success or failure of that police executive will most likely reflect back on the Mayor.

Accordingly, the study of policing in an urban setting is vitally important. Mayors and Police Executives need to understand where crime is occurring, why crime is occurring, and develop strategies that will reduce it to as low a level as possible. These strategies may involve just the police organization itself, or may involve other combinations of police and social organizations to effectuate a safe society. And such strategies cannot come too soon, as the history of crime in America demonstrates.

## Crime in America, 1932–91

In 1932, the first year in which the FBI compiled full national statistics of all crimes reported to local police agencies, America as a whole experienced 760,375 criminal incidents for a rate of 609.1 per 100,000 residents, as tracked by the FBI's (then) new Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.<sup>1</sup> By 1960, in part due to improved reporting requirements that captured more incidents than were previously being reported, the national crime rate had tripled to 1,887.2 incidents per 100,000 residents. By 1991 when crime reached its high point of 14,872,900 incidents, or a rate of 5,897.8 per 100,000 residents, crime growth was outpacing population growth, 212.5% to 40.6%. And the crime that was occurring was increasingly violent in nature. Between 1960 and 1992 (the high point for violent crime), violent crime (including attempts) – murder and non-negligent homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault and batteries – outpaced population growth 569.9% to 42.2%. During this same period, 1960–1991, property crime in America (including attempts) – burglary, larceny-theft, and auto theft – outpaced population growth by over 7 times (318.7%). By way of another comparison, by 1991 according to FBI UCR statistics, property was being stolen somewhere in America every four seconds; a burglary was being committed every 10 seconds; and this high crime was not limited to property: someone was being assaulted (beaten) ever 29 seconds, and a woman was being raped every 46 seconds.

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<sup>1</sup>The UCR program allows local police departments and sheriff's offices to voluntarily submit to the FBI all incidents of crime reported to them regardless of whether an arrest follows. The program was established in 1929 and tracks crime in jurisdictions with populations of 10,000 or more; 1932 is the first full year national statistics were reported.

Table 1-1

Crime in the United States, 1932-91

|      | <u>Population</u> |        | <u>Violent<br/>Crime*</u> |         | <u>Property<br/>Crime</u> |         |
|------|-------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| 1932 | 124,840,000       |        | 78,373                    |         | 682,002                   |         |
| 1960 | 179,323,000       | +43.6% | 288,460                   | +286.3% | 3,095,700                 | +353.9% |
| 1991 | 252,153,000       | +40.6% | 1,932,270                 | +569.9% | 12,961,100                | +318.7% |

\*Violent Crime figures through 1992.

Source: FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1932-74; FBI, *Crime in the United States*, 1975-92.

Local politicians did not let this increasing crime rate in their cities go unnoticed.

According to Scheingold (1991), analysis of newspaper reporting during the period 1964 to 1980 revealed that many local candidates campaigned on platforms to reduce the high levels of street crime, both frequently and successfully. There was good reason for local politicians to do so as well. Public opinion polls taken since the early 1960s consistently showed that crime was the public's second-biggest political worry (Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Sourcebook*). A poll conducted in 1994 revealed that 62 percent of Americans felt "truly desperate" about crime and personal safety, up from 34 percent in 1989 (Sherman 1994). For local leaders, the situation became not so much articulating a general policy to combat crime, but rather to implement a crime policy that was effective at reducing the crime rates.

As crime reached its high points, and as politicians and citizens were growing increasingly weary of high crime, new strategies were being developed and implemented in major cities to overcome the shortcomings of the "get tough" sentencing laws and the "three strikes and you're out" policies of the 1980s. These laws mandated longer prison sentences for multiple felony offenders, but crime continued to rise during this period. As the amount of street

crime reported to the police increased – those seven categories of crime reported to the FBI detailed on page 2 – citizens demanded that the police step up enforcement in an effort to reduce it (Pepinsky and Jesilow 1992). Furthermore, as street crime rose, the police naturally drew fire for failing to eradicate the problem. Thus to politicians, police departments seemed like a logical place to focus their efforts.

### *Changes in Policing in the Face of Rising Crime.*

In attempting to deal with the rising crime beginning in 1960 and through the early 1990s, the nature of policing underwent a serious transformation. The traditional methods of policing – responding to crimes that are already in progress or investigating those crimes that have occurred – did not result in noticeable reductions. Efforts at preventing crime before it occurred included assigning police officers to specified locations (“beats”) and having officers patrol these beats randomly, the idea being that criminals would be wary to commit crimes not knowing if the police would suddenly appear. In addition, by assigning police officers to specific locations, their response times would be faster to any crimes that did occur in those areas resulting in catching the criminals in the act. However, as Kelling et al. discovered (1974), citizens reported that they did not even know when or if patrols had been increased or reduced in their neighborhoods.

The continued rising crime rates in the 1980s and into the 1990s were blamed in part on decreasing police efficiency, as scholars began to believe that police organizations by themselves were insufficient to reduce crime. As a result, police goals were redefined and expanded beyond that of crime reduction (Bayley 1994). Police were urged to interact in greater capacity with the broader community in efforts to improve social conditions to limit the opportunities for criminal behavior (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1990). In essence, police-community partnerships were

urged to prevent crime by steering potential criminals and criminal activity to other non-crime related, socially beneficial activities and outcomes.

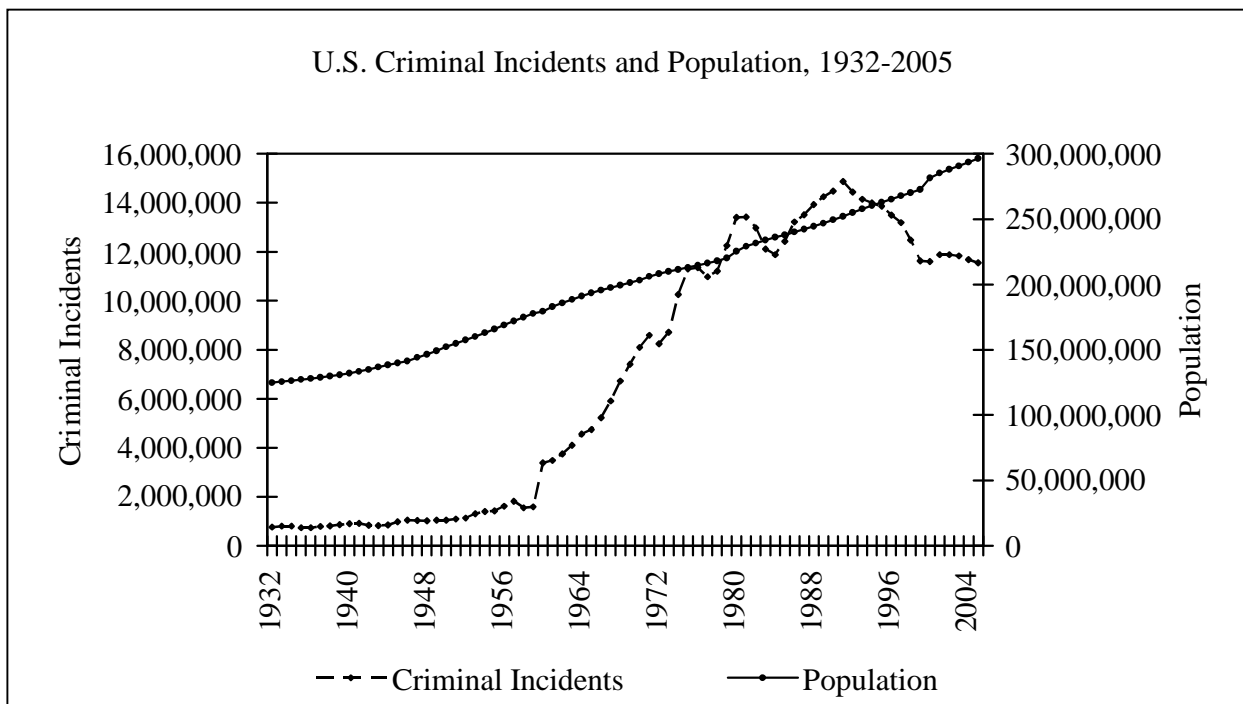
In addition to increased police-community partnerships, efforts were also directed towards increasing community interest in their own neighborhoods. This “Broken Windows” school of thought suggested that community “disorder” actually spawns serious crime. The premise, put forth by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling (1982), uses the image of broken windows in buildings to explain how neighborhoods might decay into disorder and even crime if no one attends faithfully to their maintenance. The failure of anyone – including the building owner – to fix the broken windows implies a lack of concern about the state of the neighborhood, and as more building windows are broken over time, passersby will increasingly think that “not only is no one in charge of the building, no one is in charge of the street on which it faces” (Kelling and Coles 1996). The public’s fear increases as the belief takes root that only criminals have any business on such a street; as such, law-abiding citizens avoid the street and link its downtrodden image to crime and decay. The longer this belief is held, the more widespread the neighborhood decay will become, eventually engulfing large sections of a city.

As crime continued to increase through the 1980s, the debate continued about the role of the police. The traditional method of policing involved utilizing police resources to react to crime in high crime areas, focusing on only one of three times that they can influence the ultimate outcome of a criminal act – after the occurrence of crime (Trojanowicz et al 1998). Newer community policing strategies, on the other hand, focus on police behavior prior to the occurrence of a criminal act, bringing officers and neighbors together in a partnership to address problems in the community, not just crime (Brown 1989). As the debate continued however, a third way emerged, resulting in a dramatic crime decline throughout the nation.

### Crime Reduction, 1992–2005

America appears to have experienced two different periods of crime: the first as discussed previously, and the second – the post 1992 trend when crime began to decrease. The figure below demonstrates this: while there have been peaks and valleys throughout the overall trend, crime began declining in 1992, and with the exception of a slight increase between 2000–02 crime has fallen since its high point. Furthermore, crime has dramatically declined since 1992 despite a continuous increase in population as Figure 1–1 indicates.

Figure 1–1



Source: FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1932–74; FBI, *Crime in the United States*, 1975–2005.

Note: As seen in the above graph, the FBI changed its reporting requirements in 1960 to facilitate collection and consistency in reporting. As a result, comparisons between the pre-1960/post-1960 trends cannot be made with accuracy.



Table 1–2 makes the point even more clearly:

|      | <u>Population</u> |        | <u>Violent<br/>Crime*</u> |         | <u>Property<br/>Crime</u> |         |
|------|-------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| 1932 | 124,840,000       |        | 78,373                    |         | 682,002                   |         |
| 1960 | 179,323,000       | +43.6% | 288,460                   | +286.3% | 3,095,700                 | +353.9% |
| 1991 | 252,153,000       | +40.6% | 1,932,270                 | +569.9% | 12,961,116                | +318.7% |
| 1991 | 252,153,000       |        | 1,932,270                 |         | 12,961,116                |         |
| 2005 | 296,410,000       | +17.6% | 1,390,695                 | -28.0%  | 10,166,159                | -21.6%  |

\*Violent Crime figures through 1992, the highest recorded totals in the 44-year period.  
Source: FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports, 1932–74*; FBI, *Crime in the United States, 1975–2005*.

#### *Changes in Policing Leading to Crime Reductions*

Beginning in New York City in 1993, a new strategy of policing began to emerge. In response to incredibly high numbers of homicides – 6,394 persons were killed between 1990 and 1992, an average of 2,131 per year – new Mayor Rudolph Giuliani appointed William Bratton to be Commissioner of the New York Police Department. Bratton brought with him a new approach to policing that was emerging, a version of “problem-oriented policing” that directed police officers to focus on crime problems, or the interconnectedness of crimes – similar incidents reoccurring in the same geographical area or a simple increase the overall number of crimes. The point of this style of policing, which blends aspects of both the traditional method of policing and community policing (without incorporating all of both styles), was to get police officers and police departments as whole to look “beyond” or “behind” the incidents to identify the underlying problems leading to the rash of crimes (Goldstein 1990). With increased focus

then, the police would be able to devise effective solutions that may not be solely criminological or sociological in nature (Eck et al. 1987) and may not even result in arrest (Kelling and Sousa 2001). Even as far back as 1985, Wilson concluded that “*what* that police do may be more important than how many there are, that patrol focused on particular persons or locations may be better than random patrol, and that speed may be less important than information” (71, emphasis in original).

It is not surprising that effective changes in policing strategy took several years to effectuate. The general image of police departments, and any city bureaucracy for that matter, is that they are slow moving and relatively ineffectual with the assumption that very little can be done to change them (Bratton 1998). Yet, New York was able to buck the trend – by 1996, homicides had fallen by 51%, violent crime had decreased 38%, and total crime had declined 39%. Nationwide, the crime declines experienced by New York accounted for a staggering 21.5% of the nationwide decrease in total crime, 20.6% of the nationwide decrease in total violent crime, and 17.3% of the nationwide decrease in homicides.

#### Crime in New Orleans, 1934–94

Much like that of the nation as a whole, New Orleans had its own experiences. Between 1934 (the first year the FBI kept individual city UCR statistics) and 1990, the highest year on record for crime in the city, crime increased at a staggering rate, even as the city’s population began declining.

Table 1-3

Crime in New Orleans, 1934-90

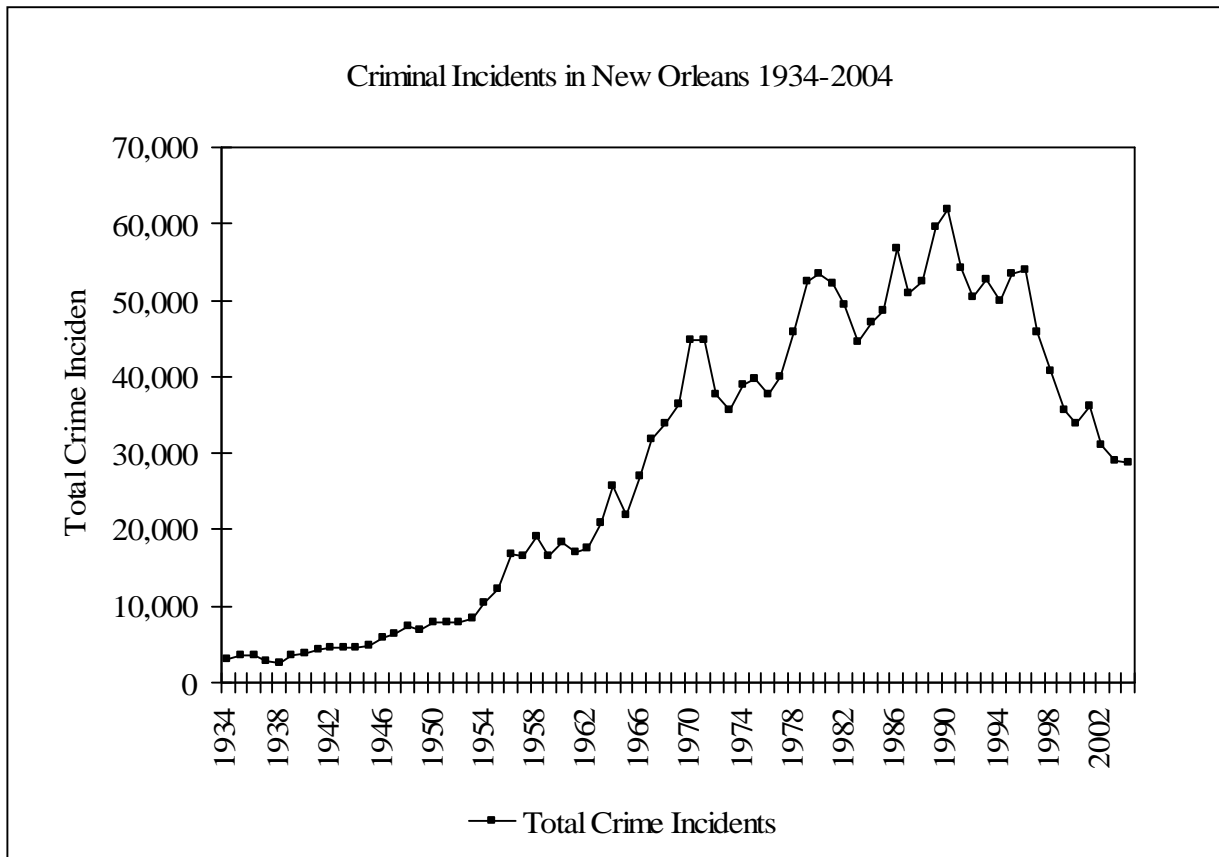
|       | <u>Population</u> |        | <u>Violent<br/>Crime</u> |         | <u>Property<br/>Crime</u> |         |
|-------|-------------------|--------|--------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| 1934* | 458,762           |        | 428                      |         | 2,724                     |         |
| 1960  | 627,525           | +36.8% | 1,746                    | +307.9% | 16,613                    | +509.9% |
| 1990  | 496,938           | -20.8% | 11,227                   | +543.0% | 50,572                    | +204.4% |

Source: FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1934-1974; FBI, *Crime in the United States*, 1975-1990.

\*Population figure for 1934 is the 1930 decennial census total.

As Figure 1-2 below shows, although crime began to decline in 1990, it remained relatively stable until 1997 when it began to dramatically decline.

Figure 1-2



Source: FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1934–74; FBI, *Crime in the United States*, 1975–2004.  
Note: 2005 Crime Statistics after 2004 cannot be compared to previous years due to Hurricane Katrina.

By 1994, New Orleans had been nicknamed “The Murder Capital of America” because its murder rate was the highest among all cities in America with a population of 100,000 or more (FBI). The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) also had a national reputation for being one of the most corrupt (if not the most) police departments in the country as four officers were indicted for murder in 1994 and 1995 (two were later convicted and now sit on death row). Mismanagement plagued city leadership as well as that of the NOPD as successive police Superintendents came and went. In 1996, over 50% of respondents to a citywide public opinion

survey indicated that “crime” was the biggest problem facing the city of New Orleans. In addition, over 80% of respondents perceived crime as increasing during this period (UNO Survey Research Center).

Violent crime was in no way limited to that committed by corrupt NOPD officers. Over the Labor Day weekend in 1996, 13 people were murdered. The rising crime situation was punctuated by a multiple killing during a robbery of a popular French Quarter restaurant the week after Thanksgiving, almost three short months later. The crime situation in New Orleans at this time was ripe for systemic change. As Tonry states, a “moral panic” occurs “when horrifying or notorious events galvanize public emotion and produce concern, sympathy, emotion, and overreaction” (2004, 5). Tonry further states that these moral panics generate emotions that can be “harnessed” and can provide “windows of opportunity for desirable policy change” (2004, 93). These killings provided the NOPD and city leadership such a window of opportunity to change operational strategy.

#### *Changes in New Orleans Leading to Crime Reductions, 1994–2004*

In 1994, the city of New Orleans elected a new Mayor who had campaigned vigorously on the promise of reforming NOPD (as did his opponent). In October 2004, Mayor Marc Morial appointed a new Superintendent of Police, Richard Pennington, a non-New Orleanian, and someone from outside the department. The Superintendent spent two years firing or suspending corrupt officers and instituting a vigorous monitoring program of all officers. Over 130 officers were either fired or suspended for corruption by 1996. Once the issue of corruption was contained, Superintendent Pennington turned his attention to fighting the high levels of crime, much as Commissioner Bratton had done in New York City.

Adopting the new problem-oriented policing strategy called COMSTAT, the police management and accountability program created by Jack Maple when he was Deputy Commissioner of the New York Police Department (NYPD), Pennington articulated a new goal for the NOPD – reduce crime in New Orleans. The record speaks for itself: between the end of 1996 and the end of 1999 alone, violent crime in New Orleans declined 46.2%, murder had declined by 55.0%, and overall crime declined 33.7%. Furthermore, starting with the third quarter of 1996 and ending with the second quarter of 2001, New Orleans experienced 19 straight quarters in which violent crime decreased compared to the previous quarter; 15 of these quarters were double-digit decreases.

|       | <u>Population</u> |        | <u>Violent Crime*</u> |         | <u>Property Crime</u> |         |
|-------|-------------------|--------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| 1934* | 458,762           |        | 428                   |         | 2,724                 |         |
| 1960  | 627,525           | +36.8% | 1,746                 | +307.9% | 16,613                | +509.9% |
| 1990  | 496,938           | -20.8% | 11,227                | +543.0% | 50,572                | +204.4% |
| 2004  | 471,057           | -5.2%  | 4,468                 | -60.2%  | 24,316                | -51.9%  |

Source: FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1934–74; FBI, *Crime in the United States*, 1975–2004.  
Note: Population figure for 1934 is the 1930 decennial census total.

#### Why Did Violent Crime Decrease so Rapidly in New Orleans – Research Question

This is the primary research question this dissertation seeks to answer: why did crime and especially violent crime decrease so rapidly and dramatically during this period given New Orleans’ sordid policing history and the violent nature of the city? Did something happen in the NOPD that made them an extremely effective crime fighting organization during this period?

Did economic and societal factors improve such that individuals leaning towards engaging in criminal behavior decide that there were better options?

The focus of this dissertation will be on the linkage between the practices and tactics of the New Orleans Police Department as implementers of crime policy as set forth by the political leaders of New Orleans and the resulting crime rates and the improved public support of the police department. By approaching this question from a public policy perspective, this research shows that the crime policy process in New Orleans – specifically changes in the way crime policy is implemented and is adapted to the changing reality – is a significant predictor of decreases in crime rates in the short term, but longer term changes in overall crime trends are more complex than those modeled here. This research both confirms and counters existing research by showing that more arrests and police officers play little to no role in reducing crime in New Orleans and by showing that improved economic conditions also play little to no role.

Chapter Two of this dissertation will explain the need for crime reduction in New Orleans in terms of the city's criminal past that has helped to shape the ongoing political dynamic that is "naturally N'Awlins." Significant eras in the city's history will be examined to look for reasons for failure and catalysts for change.

Chapter Three will examine the public policy approach to crime reduction. In this chapter, the actors and their roles in each stage of the crime policy process will be identified and discussed relative to traditional roles.

Chapter Four will examine the policing approaches to crime reduction both in general and in New Orleans. First, traditional policing strategies and their evolution will be discussed, both conceptually and in New Orleans. Next, the new trend of community policing strategies including the requisite sociological variables will be explained and compared to traditional

strategies. Finally, a new policing strategy – the COMSTAT model of crime reduction – will be introduced and explained. Furthermore, its role in crime reduction in New Orleans will be discussed.

Chapter Five will establish the models and test competing hypotheses of crime reduction. In this chapter, crime trends will be broken out to allow for detailed testing of specific hypotheses. All measurement problems with existing crime rate indicators will be discussed and the COMSTAT method will be applied to crime in New Orleans. The results of the tests will allow for evaluation of the impact of COMSTAT on crime in New Orleans.

Chapter Six will be an examination of the public's perception of NOPD effectiveness and crime as a serious problem. While not an exhaustive approach to measure public perception of police performance, this study will utilize existing New Orleans survey data to measure citizen perception of COMSTAT and its effect on the NOPD and New Orleans' crime rates. This analysis fits within the policy model offered here as an explanation of crime reduction by providing the necessary feedback to policy makers as to the effectiveness of crime initiatives. Surely, if the public does not perceive a noticeable difference in the crime problem, then new policies need to be offered. Conversely, dramatic reductions in crime in New Orleans should be reflected in positive changes in the public's opinion regarding crime in New Orleans.

Chapter Seven will conclude the dissertation by synthesizing the findings of this research. This chapter will offer a summary of all of the important findings and the explanations of these findings. Also, the impact of these findings and suggestions for future research will be offered here.

This impact is of sufficient interest for scholars. Today, police are no longer viewed solely as the last resort in the fight against crime – a tool to be used when others have failed – but



have come to be seen as a significant and perhaps primary actor in the criminal justice system. The ongoing changes in policing occurring in the 1990s have been the results of reforms designed to attack the increasing crime rates – primarily major crime, or those seven categories of crime reported to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program by law enforcement jurisdictions. Accordingly, police are placing an increased emphasis on preventing crime from occurring in addition to solving crimes that have already occurred. While the result has been slight decreases in the overall crime rates in the last decade, crime has only been reduced to the levels of the mid-1970s – levels which are still four times higher than that of the early 1960s. That New Orleans experienced such dramatic declines in such a short period of time makes this study all the more important for the cities throughout the nation – can New Orleans be an example of *what* to do instead of *what not* to do?

## CHAPTER 2. A HISTORY OF CRIME IN NEW ORLEANS AND THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

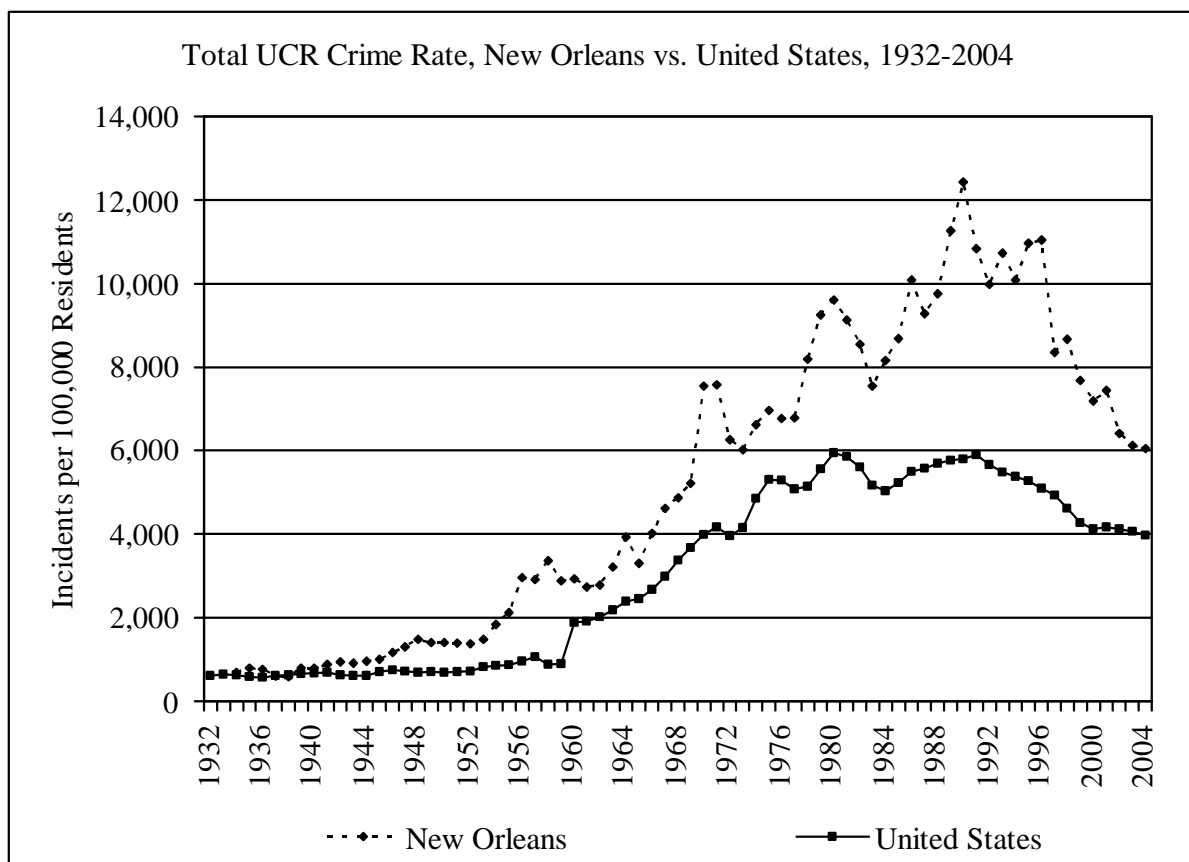
New Orleans, like all cities that have grown into great urban areas, has had its historical ups and downs, throughout which crime in all its forms has played a conspicuous part in the city's history. Countless books and articles have been written about New Orleans' history, its colorful nature, its depiction as the "wickedest city on earth" (deClouet 1999), and most recently the "Murder Capital of America." While some local residents continue to lament the levels of violence in New Orleans, still others shrug their shoulders and consider the violence to be part of New Orleans culture and harden themselves to the surrounding reality. New Orleans' history itself is one of violence, from its founding as a hideout for pirates, to its strategic importance as one of the busiest shipping ports in the country, to its heyday of debauchery symbolized by Storyville (the city's notorious red-light district), to its struggles with organized crime in the early 1900s (Vyhnaneck 1998), and to its recent labeling as the aforementioned "Murder Capital of America." But recent changes to the police department and the manner in which it does its job (as further described in Chapter 4) have demonstrated that New Orleans can change its reputation and become a model for how to reduce crime and make its citizens feel safe.

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to provide the definitive history of the city relative to its crime fighting efforts, but it is important to set the tone in which the dramatic crime reductions of the late 1990s took place. To that end, this chapter will undertake an overview of recent crime trends and a brief recounting of important historical points to lay out the impetus for change, culminating in the appointment of Richard J. Pennington to be the Superintendent of Police in 1994.

### Comparing Crime in New Orleans and the Nation, 1934–2004

The following charts depict the total UCR crime rates for New Orleans as compared to the nation as a whole for 1934 to 2004, the UCR violent crime rates (the aggregate of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault), the UCR property crime rates (the aggregate of burglary, larceny-theft, and auto theft), and the murder rate during this same period.

Figure 2–1

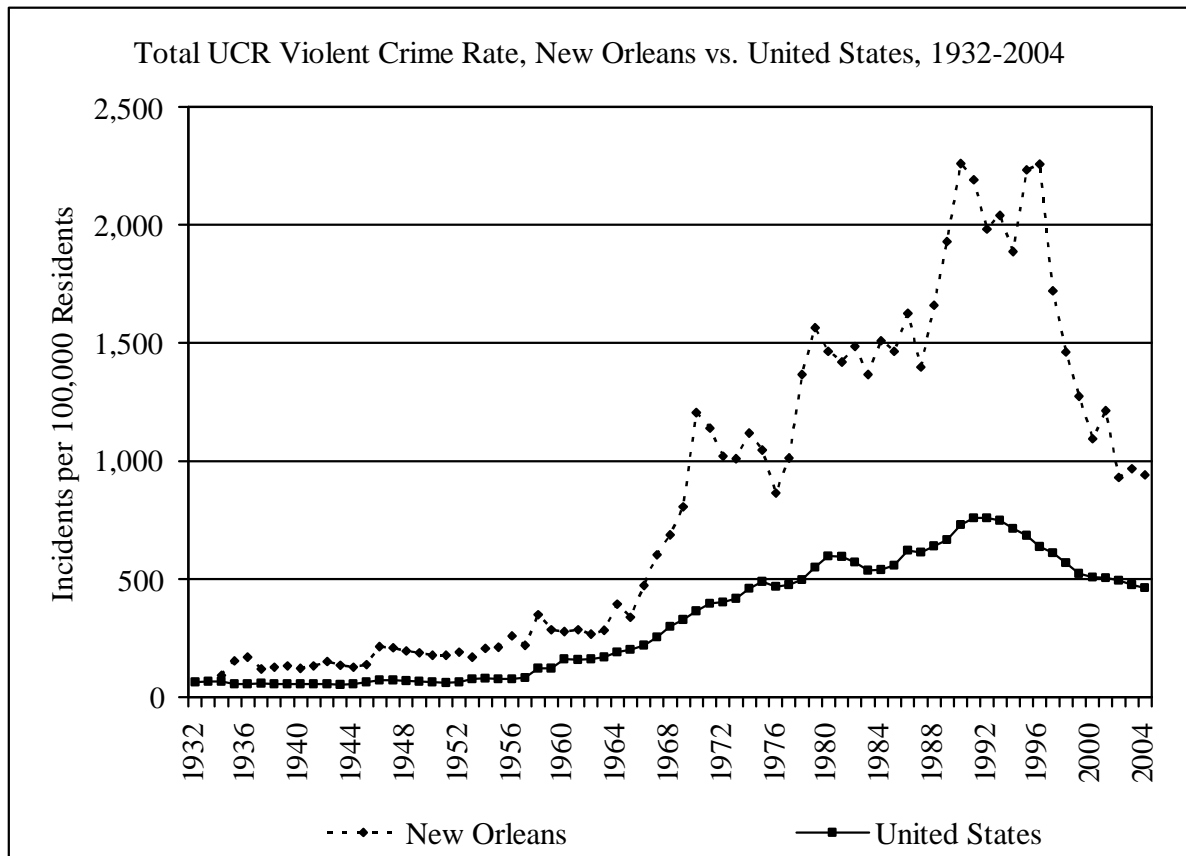


Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932–74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975–2004.  
Note: The spike in the national crime rate in 1960 is due to improved reporting and collection procedures by the FBI.

As the chart above shows, the total crime trend in New Orleans has generally mirrored that of the nation as a whole, only on a much higher rate. Of specific note is that the increases and decreases have generally happened on a much steeper level than that of the nation, both

rising quickly and falling quickly. As this chart demonstrates, as will the others, since 1996 total crime in New Orleans has fallen at faster rate than the nation as whole.

Figure 2-2

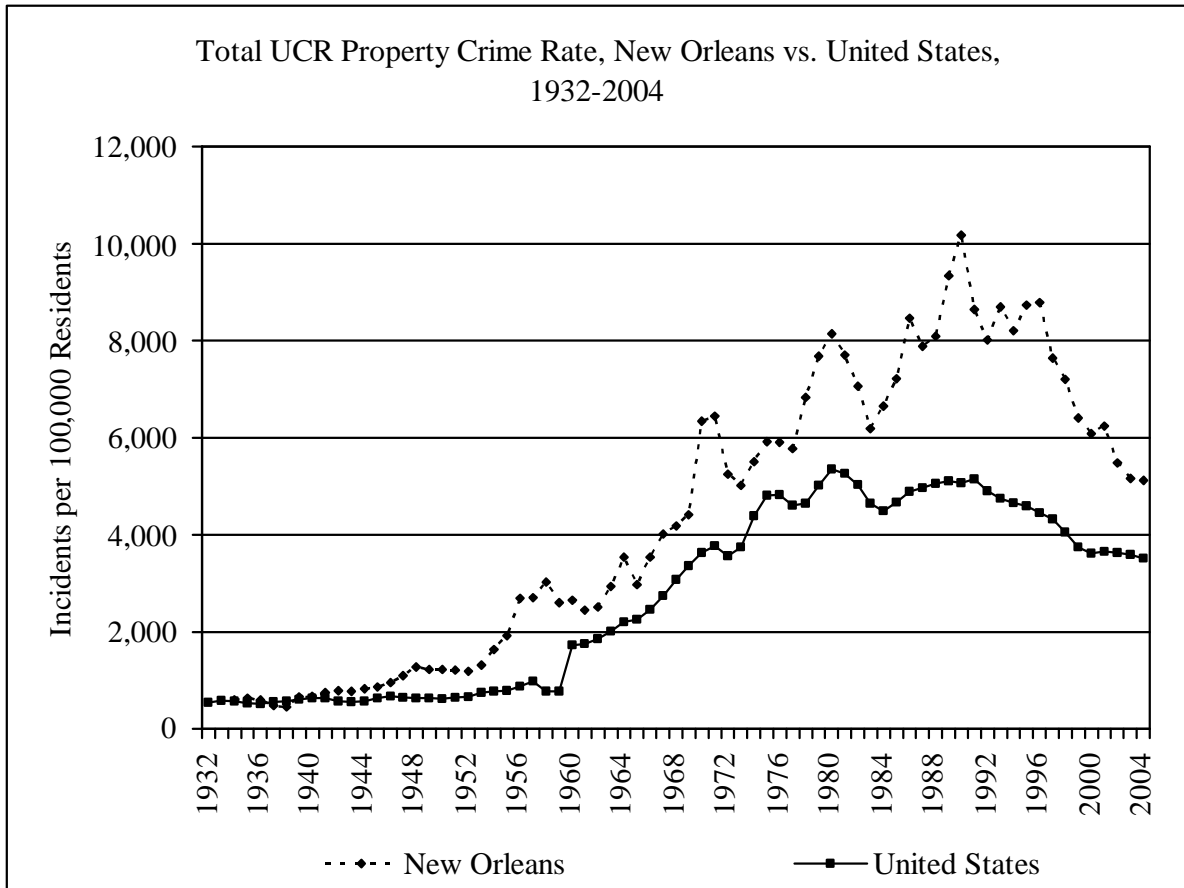


Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932-74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975-2004.

Figure 2-2 shows that violent crime in New Orleans during this 62 year period was well above that of the nation as a whole. As similar to the total crime rate, since 1996, violent crime in New Orleans has decreased at a faster rate than that of the nation as a whole. It is also important to note about 1976 – the rapid drop and subsequent increase the following year may be an artifact of the way the New Orleans Police Department recorded the data reported to it. This error becomes apparent due to the disaggregation of total crime into its two component parts. Because violent crime in 1976 only accounted for 12.8% of the crime reported to the NOPD, this

potential error is not apparent when comparing Figure 2–2 to Figure 2–1. A thorough discussion regarding problems with UCR data and probable collection errors will be discussed at length in Chapter Five.

Figure 2–3

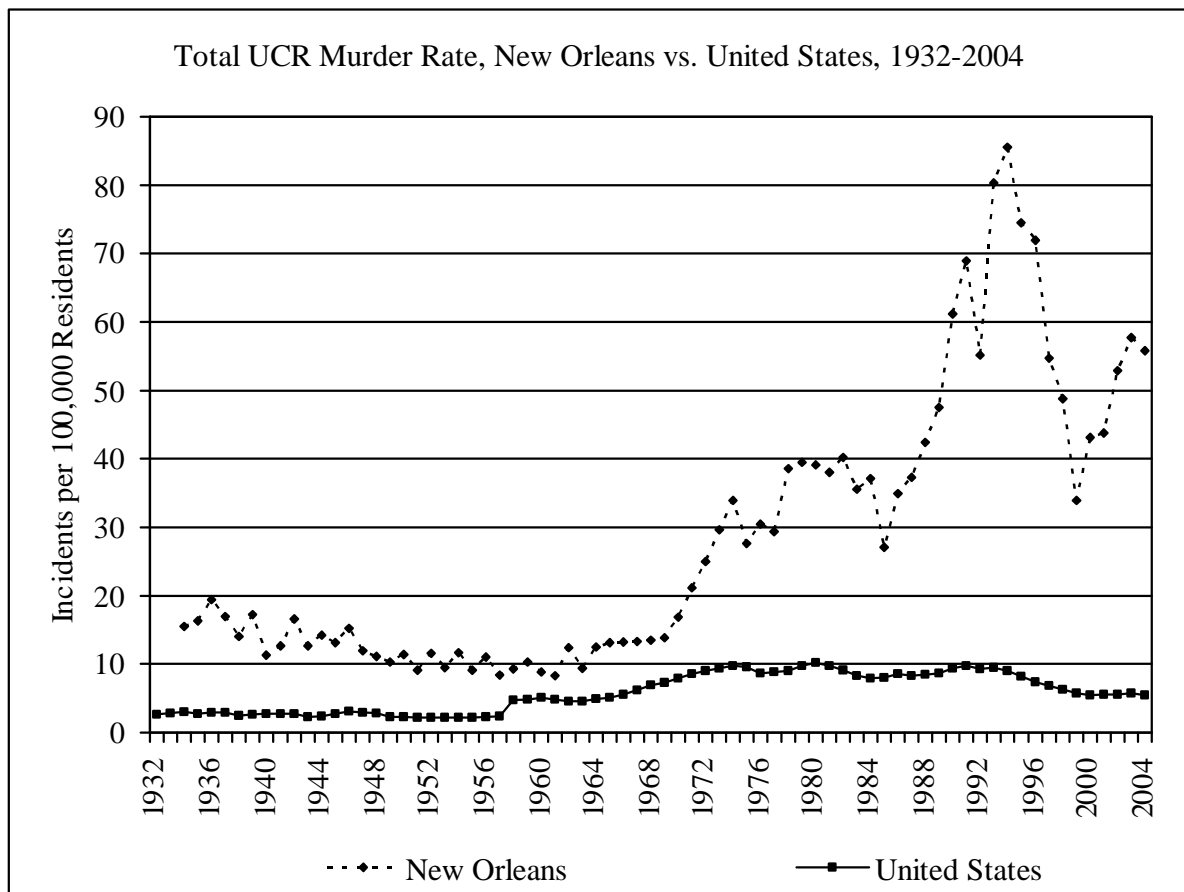


Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932–74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975–2004.  
 Note: The spike in the national crime rate in 1960 is due to improved reporting and collection procedures by the FBI.

Again, Figure 2–3 indicates a general tracking with the national property crime rate, and a dramatic decrease in property crime after 1996. By way of comparison with the previous chart, there is no corresponding one-year decrease in 1976, indicating a potential data reporting error by the NOPD.

While the murder rate for the nation as a whole has peaked around 10 incidents per 100,000, New Orleans' murder rate peaked at nearly 86 in 1994, as can be seen in Figure 2-4. While there has been a dramatic decrease since then, there also has been a noticeable increase since 1999. Murder is the most egregious of crimes and is often used as a symbol of danger by city residents and visitors alike. A city's failure to get a hold of its murder rate will quickly find itself without both. It is also a crime that New Orleans has grappled with without much success, save for the period under study here.

Figure 2-4



Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932-74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975-2004.

These figures, showing the crime in New Orleans and the nation since 1932, clearly depict the increasing levels of danger and violence that was afflicting New Orleans by 1994. Even after 1960 when the FBI changed its collection and reporting requirements, crime in New Orleans was relative to that of the nation as whole. It was not until the decade of the 1970s when crime in New Orleans began to rise at a faster rate than that of the nation, especially violent crime. By the early and mid 1990s, it could be argued that crime in New Orleans was out of control compared to the rest of the nation. This, in part, speaks to the history of New Orleans, the history of crime in the city, and the history of the New Orleans Police Department.

#### The History of the NOPD and Crime in New Orleans

##### *Policing New Orleans, Founding to 1960*

The history of the New Orleans Police Department and its attempts to police the growing city have been well-chronicled, and that history is as colorful as the city's inhabitants and environment. The first paid police force was formed May 18, 1805, with 39 men, and by 1817, it had increased in size to 46 (NOPD 1984). The police force took the organizational form that resembled a small army necessary to police a city of approximately 80,000 and to deal with slave uprisings. However, by 1836, the city demilitarized its police force dropping the use of uniforms, and surprisingly, weapons (Rousey 1996, 6–13).

In 1836, the city partitioned itself into three separate cities – two French (actually one French and one Creole) and one Anglo-American, each with its separate government. To handle this new divided city, three separate police departments were created, one for each independent municipality (Rousey 1996, 41). At this time, although gambling had been outlawed statewide, two of the three municipalities refused to obey and continued to authorize and license gambling parlors throughout their jurisdictions. During one crackdown, police officers from the First

Municipality raided a gambling establishment in the Third Municipality. As a way of expressing outrage over the slight, the Third Municipality Council ordered its police force to arrest any officer from the First Municipality's police force who crossed the dividing line between municipalities (Rousey 1996, 47).

In 1852 the Louisiana Legislature ordered the reunification of New Orleans. By 1861 – the advent of the Civil War – New Orleans was described as “a perfect hell on earth, and that nothing would put an end to murders, manslaughters, and deadly assaults, till it was made penal to carry arms; but by law every American citizen may walk with an armory round his waist, if he likes. Barrooms, cocktails, mint juleps, gambling houses, political discussions, and imperfect civilization do the rest” (Russell 1863, 244). During this initial reunification period, the New Orleans police were involved in political violence and voting fraud, leading groups of men from one polling place to another to cast multiple ballots – newspaper descriptions of the violence during these 1854 elections are the first known recorded use of the phrase “vote early and often.” The police chief himself was wounded in the violence surrounding the elections (Rousey 1996, 69). This would not be the first (or last) time that a police chief was in the middle of controversy. Just two short years later, after forcing the police chief to resign for “assaulting and threatening to kill one of his own policemen,” the Mayor of New Orleans reappointed him to head the department (Rousey 1996, 77).

The city's reputation during the pre-Civil War period was indeed one of corruption and pervasive violence. Said Rousey,

“Policemen in New Orleans lived and worked in a world of chronic and pervasive violence. Few other cities in the United States in the 1850s could have matched the level of violence in New Orleans; indeed the Crescent City may well have been the darkest stain on the butcher's apron. Virtually the dueling capital of the South, a major headquarters for career criminals, site of the some of the most



intense ethnic strife in the country, New Orleans earned a reputation as one of the most dangerous places in America” (1996, 80).

As further evidence of the city’s violence, the murder rate during the period 1857–60 was about 35 per 100,000 residents; 225 criminal homicides were committed during this period. By way of comparison, Philadelphia recorded an average murder of 3.6 per 100,000 residents between 1853–59 and Boston recorded an average murder rate of 7.5 between 1855-59. An extremely high murder rate was not the only problem facing New Orleans – complaints were made by the state Attorney General that the New Orleans police force was “ineffective,” witnesses to crimes were increasingly afraid to testify, and the district attorney’s office was “grossly undermanned and overworked” (Rousey 1996, 85). Many of these same complaints were levied against the New Orleans Police Department during the time period under study here, 140 years later.

The sordid history of the police force in New Orleans continued during and after the Civil War. One editorialist remarked about the police in New Orleans, “the wonder is that thieves don’t pick up the town and carry it off” (Sala 1885, 281-282). In 1881, two detectives murdered the Chief of Detectives after the Chief charged one of them with disorderly conduct. Both detectives were acquitted. Eight years later, one of these detectives – David C. Hennessey – was named Chief of the Department (and ultimately Superintendent of Police), only to be assassinated six months later (NOPD 1984, 22). Nineteen persons were alleged to have been implicated in the murder of the Superintendent Hennessey, all of whom were believed to be associated with the Italian mafia. After a jury acquitted six defendants and declared a mistrial on three others, a group of enraged citizens stormed the prison, shot nine of the accused to death and hung two others (NOPD 1984, 24-26).

Such actions by political leaders in New Orleans (and the surrounding communities) certainly gave the impression that they were indifferent to the criminal occurrences involving the police force and the larger issue of crime throughout the city. By 1870, prostitution was a well-established vice throughout the city. It was estimated that nearly every street had at least one brothel, all of which paid political tribute to local and state politicians as well as the local police force (deClouet 1999, 20). In 1897 the New Orleans City Council created the section of the city which came to be known as “Storyville,” soon to become the “most celebrated red light district in the United States” (deClouet 1999, 84). While the ordinance did not legalize prostitution, it simply made it unlawful to practice it outside the restricted boundaries. In 1905, the newly-named Inspector of Police (which had replaced the title of Superintendent by the state legislature) ordered the brothels to be closed, but it was not until 1917 when the official boundaries restrictions identifying Storyville were revoked by the NOPD, in conjunction with the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy (NOPD 1984, 30).

During the late 1800s and continuing into the next century, New Orleans was also a haven for “well-organized gangs of burglars, pickpockets and sneak thieves.” It also became a well-known winter headquarters for major criminals, some of them internationally infamous (deClouet 1999, 100). It was one group of these immigrant criminal groups that assassinated Superintendent Hennessey. Interestingly, Superintendent Hennessey was not the only head of the police force in New Orleans to be assassinated – Superintendent James Reynolds was shot and killed in his office at the Criminal Courts Building by a suspended police officer (NOPD 1984, 33).

The city’s tolerance for certain types of crime during the turn of the century period, i.e. those normally associated with vice – prostitution, gambling, and drugs – certainly makes it easy

to understand why New Orleans continued its association with violence during the Prohibition era, especially in the 1920s. Immediately after the passing of prohibition, a general understanding was reached between the police and bar owners, much like the relationship between the police and brothel keepers during the heyday of Storyville: as long as those bar owners contributed money illegally to politicians and police officers, illegal liquor would be tolerated. By January 1920, it was estimated that New Orleans was the center of all smuggling and illegal liquor distribution in the South (Vyhnaneck 1998, 5).

Much of the tolerance of crime, and in some instances the actual crime, were linked to the mayoral administration of Martin Behrman, the 5-time Mayor of New Orleans (1904–20, 1925–26). Behrman himself was accused of going to Washington, D.C., to plead with the Secretary of the Navy to keep Storyville open because it was a “time-honored tradition” (Vyhnaneck 1998, 14). Questions about Behrman’s stewardship of the city in light of the increasing crime in the city cost him the mayoral election in 1920, losing by 1,450 votes out of 44,522 cast. Ironically, it was the crime issue that returned Behrman to office in 1925 – an examination of the city’s newspapers during this period indicated that “crime was rampant and the police were powerless” (Vyhnaneck 1998, 19–21).

Police corruption also was a major issue during the 1920s. A large number of policemen were indicted during this decade for various crimes, including bribery and extortion in efforts to protect prohibition violators. Surprisingly, every single police officer charged with accepting bribes to “look the other way” regarding liquor violations was either found not guilty in court or had the charges dismissed by the District Attorney before the case could get to trial (Vyhnaneck 1998, 41). Even more incredibly, a local convict caught in the act of robbing a drug store revealed at his trial (allegedly) that he had been provided with the gun and getaway car used in

the robbery by two police officers, one of whom was a Captain with the Department. Although the case was surrounded with controversy, the accused Captain committed suicide before charges could be brought against him (Vyhnaneck 1998, 43–44).

One aggravating force for police corruption during this period was the advent of Prohibition and the passing of the state’s prohibition law, the Hood Act. This law was a necessary addition to the national Volstead Act that mandated local law enforcement efforts to assist federal agents with the fight against illegal liquor, at least on its face. In actuality, the Hood Act dealt solely with the “sale and manufacture of liquor;” it did not prevent the transportation of liquor for “one’s personal use,” the making of “home brew and wine from Louisiana products,” or the serving of drinks to “legitimate guests in one’s own home.” In addition, the Hood Act required two witnesses to sign sworn affidavits before a search warrant for illegal alcohol could be issued. Given these lax requirements and the nature of the lawless environment of New Orleans, it was not surprising that the city would soon earn the moniker “The Wettest City in America” (Vyhnaneck 1998, 52–53). By 1927, New Orleans had more establishments serving illegal liquor (cabarets and nightclubs) under federal “padlock” – federal injunctions that classified such places as “illegal nuisances” and were ordered closed for one year by the federal district court judge – than any other major city in America (Vyhnaneck 1998, 79).

And yet surprisingly, the New Orleans Police Department was making improvements to its infrastructure during this period. Under new Superintendent Guy Molony’s tenure between 1920 and 1925, the NOPD expanded its motorized fleet to deal with the increasing vehicular traffic in New Orleans, the Juvenile Bureau was first established in 1922, and a women’s division was established in the Detective Bureau. The Department was also nationally recognized as the only police department in the entire nation that was thoroughly equipped for

first aid in all of its units. The Department was making such improvements that the retiring Grand Jury in 1925 called the administration during Superintendent Molony's tenure "one of the best in the history of the New Orleans Police Department" (NOPD 1984, 34).

But missing from these laudatory improvements were real attempts at enforcing the prohibition law's mandate: "spasmodically the police make raids on soft drink stands or illicit manufactories, but few seem to be prosecuted. No examination of the State Court dockets has been made, but is believed that for all practical purposes the law is disregarded."<sup>2</sup> In fact, Superintendent Moloney had three federal Prohibition agents arrested who mistakenly stopped an off-duty NOPD Captain who was wearing civilian clothes. Superintendent Moloney went so far as to threaten to shoot any Prohibition agent who tried to stop his police car (Vyhnaneck 1998, 84–85).

Illegal alcohol was not the only vice – illegal gambling, prostitution, and illegal drug selling and use were also prevalent during this period. According to some federal officials, New Orleans was one of two leading drug smuggling centers in the United States with three drugs – morphine, opium, and cocaine – dominating the illegal drug scene (Vyhnaneck 1981). Drugs entered New Orleans much the same way illegal liquor did – through the swamps and the sparsely protected coastline. And, much like Prohibition, enforcement of illegal drugs was primarily a federal concern, and a task the New Orleans Police Department seemed only too happy to not engage in.

Surprisingly, what would separate New Orleans from other major American cities during the Prohibition period was that by the 1930s while many cities were being overrun by crime syndicates in the traditional style of Al Capone in Chicago for example, New Orleans largely avoided such large-scale organization (Nelli 1985, 126–27). Although murder and corruption

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<sup>2</sup> Louis H. Burns to Attorney General, April 21, 1924, File No. 23, as reported in Vyhnaneck 1998, 84.

were rampant throughout the city, some have suggested that even that did not reach the scale of much larger northern cities such as Chicago or Philadelphia (Vyhnaneck 1998, 88). As an example of the level of violence in New Orleans during the last half of the 1920s, 543 people were murdered between 1925 and 1929; between 1960 and 1964 only 329 people were murdered (Vyhnaneck 1998, 210; FBI, *Crime in the United States 1960–64*).

Given the culture of New Orleans however, it should come as no surprise that the city continued to struggle with the problem of police ineffectiveness and police corruption. For some historians, the citizens of the city themselves were to blame in part – that it was their tolerance for the “social vices” prevalent during the period that led them to fail to support the police in their efforts to enforce the existing laws dealing with Prohibition, illegal gambling, prostitution, or illegal drug use. In addition, political leaders were paid off illegally to “look the other way” when it came to directing police enforcement. These arrangements did not end with the changes in political administrations. These accepted practices and relationships, never having been severed before, continued to entrench themselves both within the police department and between the criminals who exploited these connections to continue their illegal activities (Vyhnaneck 1998).

Vice in New Orleans continued to flourish in the post-World War II period as the NOPD’s own history makes clear.<sup>3</sup> After a Nashville contractor was killed in a French Quarter bar in 1949, then-Mayor deLesseps Morrison called for local, state and national investigations to help clean up the French Quarter and the rest of the city. On January 24, 1951, Senator Estes Kefauver visited New Orleans to investigate organized crime in the State of Louisiana and its possible linkages to both New Orleans city government and the NOPD. Into 1952 and 1953, the

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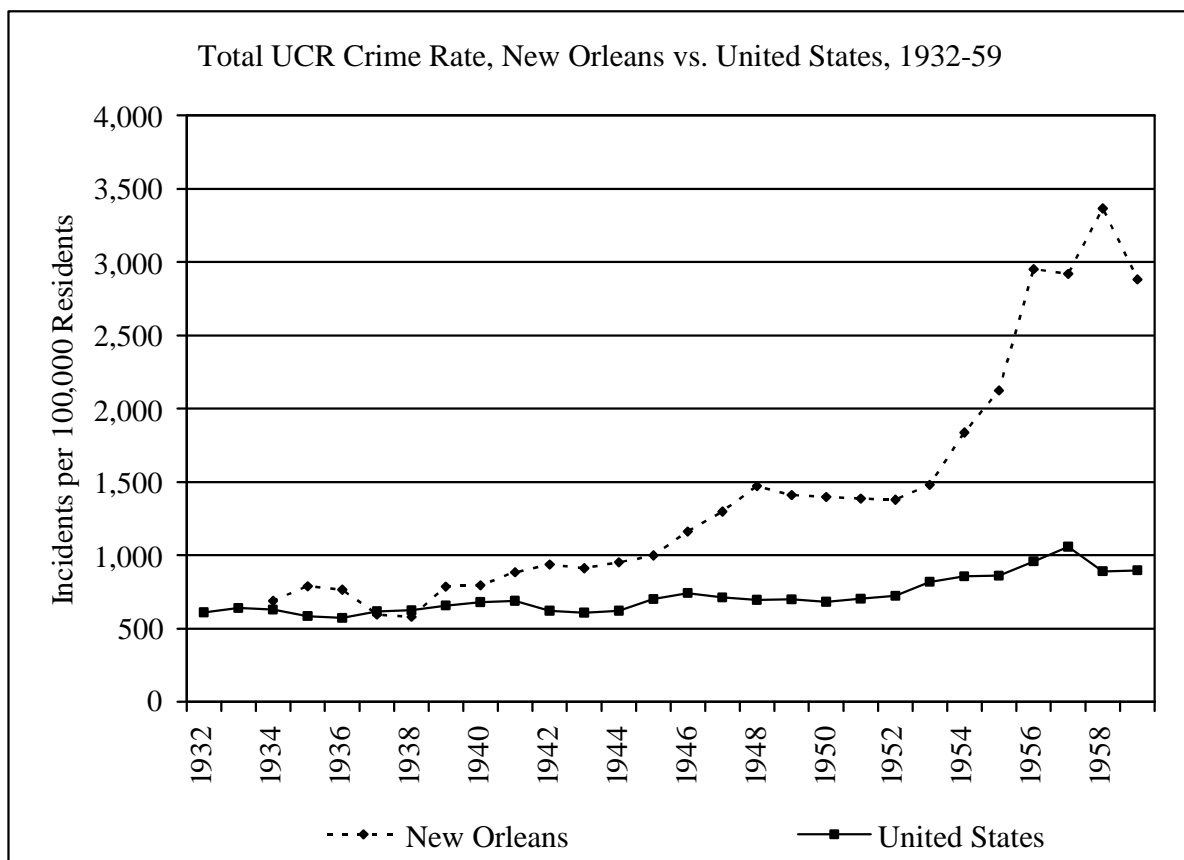
<sup>3</sup> Information in this section taken from the *History of the New Orleans Police Department*, 1984.

Louisiana State Police staged numerous raids of gambling and prostitution houses in New Orleans, all of which were operating under NOPD protection.

In June 1953, a retired FBI agent was hired to head the newly-created “Special Citizens Investigating Committee (SCIC)” created by the New Orleans City Council to independently investigate the New Orleans Police Department. As a result of the public hearings held in late 1953 and early 1954, the Orleans Parish Grand Jury indicted the Superintendent and Chief of Detectives for malfeasance; both were suspended, however they were returned to office by a city judge. Responding to increasing public pressure, Mayor Morrison appointed another retired FBI agent to head the newly created Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in August 1954. The PBI’s probe was prematurely ended in 1956; the retired FBI agent still at the head of the PBI was fired for insubordination in 1957 claiming that “ten top officers” involved in corruption were still on the force. Rather than fire the officers involved, the Mayor and Superintendent instead fired ten other high-ranking police officers.

The attention given to New Orleans during the 1950s was well warranted as the following chart indicates. By 1958, the total crime rate in New Orleans was over three times that of the country.

Figure 2-5

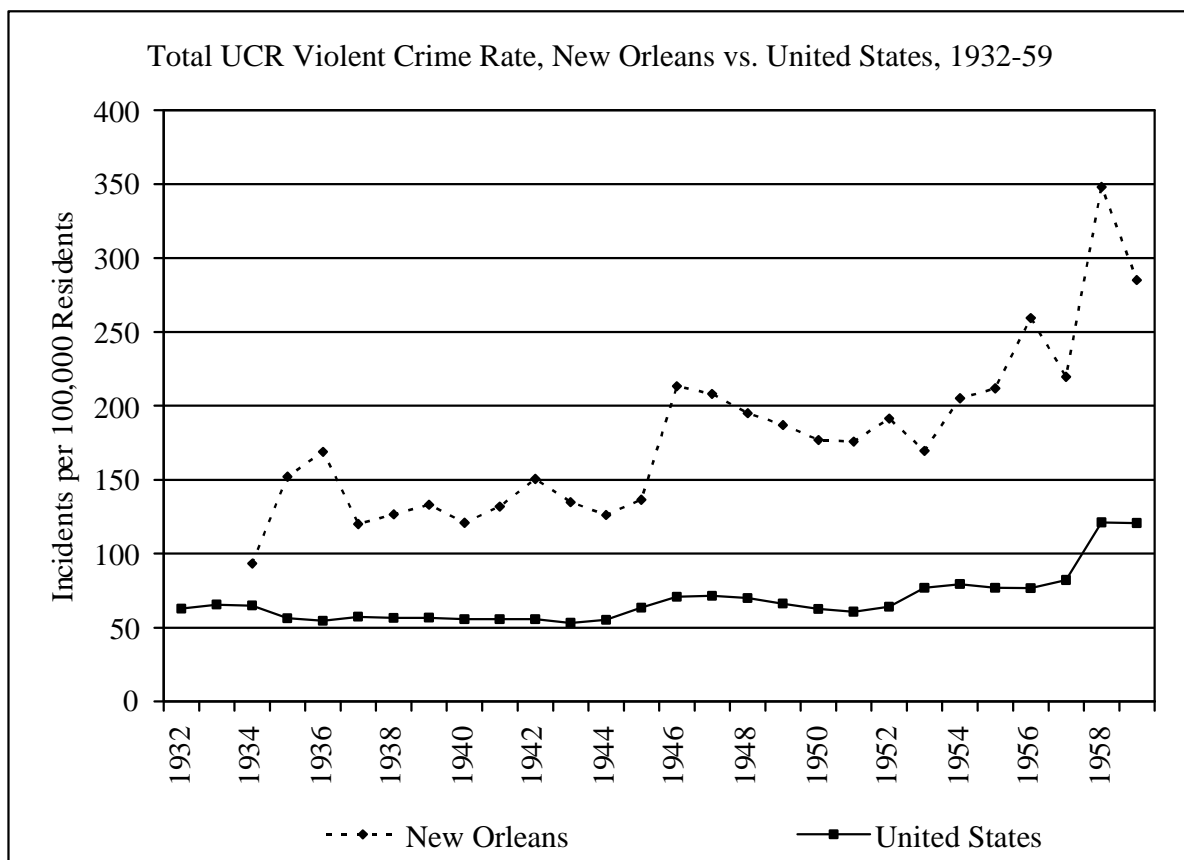


Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932-59

Much of this difference was due to rising property crime rate and not the violent crime rate as the following two charts indicate.



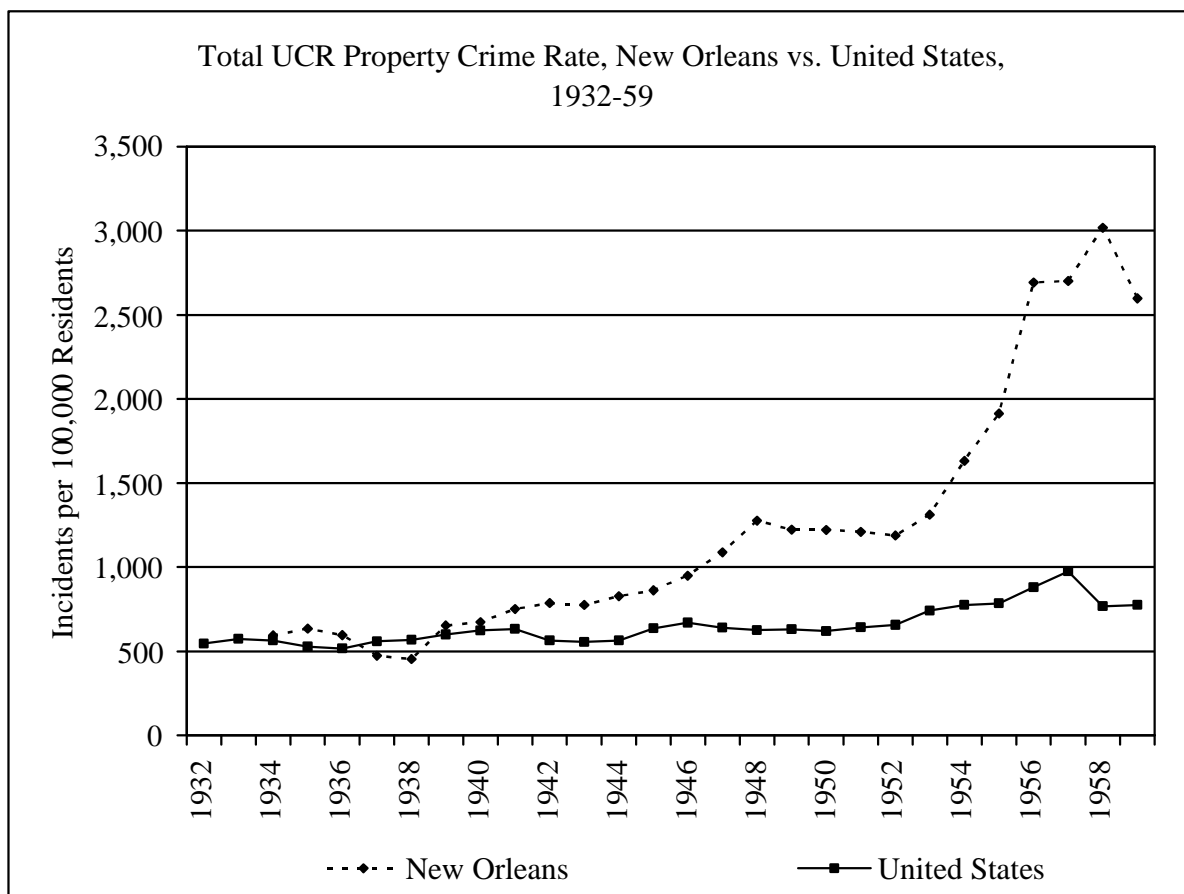
Figure 2-6



Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932-74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975-2004.

As seen above (Figure 2-6), the violent crime rate at the end of the decade was barely twice that of the nation. However, property crime, in the next chart (Figure 2-7), was increasing at a much more rapid pace, peaking in 1958 at more than four times that of the country.

Figure 2-7



Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1932-59

*Policing New Orleans, 1960-94*

The modern history of the NOPD can be traced to the appointment of Joseph Giarrusso as Superintendent in 1960. It was under his direction that the NOPD helped maintain peace during the federal court order to integrate public schools in New Orleans. Other innovations were soon added to the NOPD's arsenal during his 10-year tenure: officers were equipped with two-way radios eliminating the need for police call boxes and allowing one-man patrol units, and the NOPD was linked to 46 other state law enforcement agencies via the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). It was during his tenure also that the NOPD faced its first real environmental disaster, Hurricane Betsy in 1965 (NOPD 1984, 51-2).

Although there was no evidence to suggest or indicate that police corruption had completely disappeared, crime was still a major concern through the 1960s and into the 1970s, especially during the uneasy period of the Vietnam War. In August 1970, less than one month after Superintendent Joseph Giarrusso resigned and his brother Clarence was named Superintendent, a group of Black Panthers barricaded themselves inside a house and fired on responding police units. The NOPD also dealt with its worst tragedies during what is now called the Howard Johnson sniper incident in January 1973, in which five police officers including the Deputy Superintendent were killed and six others wounded (NOPD 1984, 57–61).

In 1973, New Orleans received a different kind of national recognition – a personal letter from President Nixon to then-Superintendent Clarence Giarrusso commending the NOPD for a 15.2 percent reduction in serious crime between 1971 and 1972. By the time Superintendent C. Giarrusso resigned in 1978, the NOPD had reduced the crime rate in New Orleans by 9.2% while cities of comparable size had seen their crime rates increase by over 34% (NOPD 1984, 63–4). By 1980 however, crime in New Orleans reached its highest point to date, and the rate of total crime in New Orleans far and away exceeded that of the nation as a whole.

As stated earlier, police misconduct did not disappear completely during this period. In November 1980, two suspects were identified in the murder of an NOPD officer. In the course of the confrontation with the barricaded suspects, both suspects were shot and killed as was one of the suspect's girlfriends who was helping them resist arrest. As a result of a federal grand jury investigation that was instigated at the request of interested civilian groups, seven police officers were indicted and put on trial in Dallas, Texas. Three of the seven defendants were found guilty of federal violations; during the course of the protests, the Superintendent of the NOPD resigned amid the controversy (NOPD 1984, 68–70).

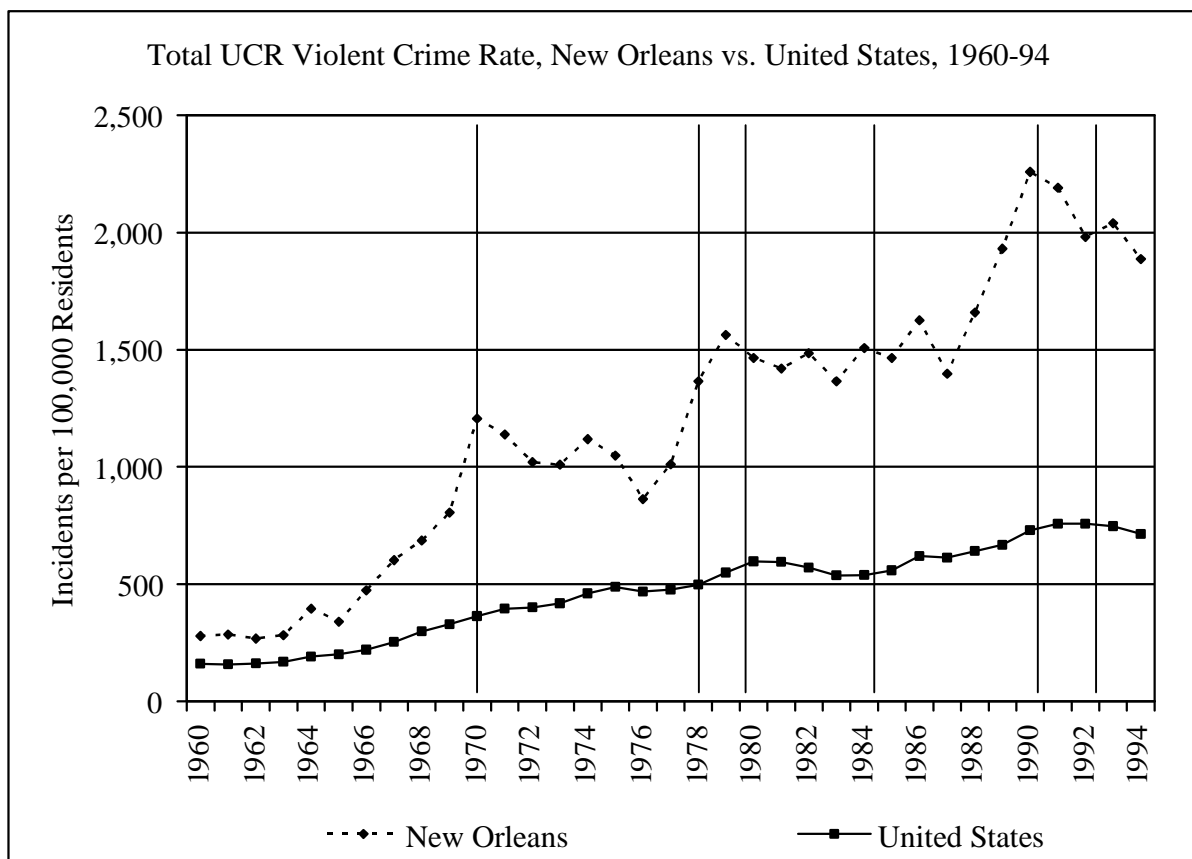
The decade of the 1980s for the city of New Orleans was marked by economic decline as the oil markets, a large component of New Orleans' economy, contracted. This was a repeat of the pattern of the 1850s when New Orleans' vibrant economy collapsed as a result of the impending Civil War (Horne 2005, 148). As the city was undergoing economic change, the NOPD was undergoing turnover at the top of the department. This tumultuous period earned New Orleans the "City that Care Forgot" (NOPD 1984, 71). After Superintendent Parsons resigned in November 1980 during the aforementioned Dallas trial of seven NOPD officers, Henry Morris served as Superintendent until January 1985, followed by Warren Woodfork, who served until April 1991. At that time, then-Mayor Sidney Barthelemey nominated Deputy Superintendent Arnesta Taylor to be Superintendent (NOPD 1997, 8–9). Taylor, who was only a high school graduate, was appointed apparently because of his close personal relationship with the Barthelemy family (Marin 1991, 26). The nomination of Taylor was also controversial because prior to his appointment to Assistant Superintendent back in May 1986, Taylor had risen only to the rank of Sergeant. His appointment to that position bypassed the civil service ranks of Lieutenant, Captain, and Major (Marin 1991, 26).

With the exception of a few years between 1983 and 1990, crime continued to rise steadily in both New Orleans and the nation as a whole. However, after 1991, the national crime rate began a slow decrease while New Orleans continued to fluctuate with a crime rate nearly twice that of the nation. And the NOPD continued to be beset with internal concerns during this time, distracting the department from its crime-fighting mission. In 1992, the NOPD ranked as the police department with the highest number of reported brutality cases of criminal suspects by police officers (Alpert 1992). In February 1993, reports surfaced that NOPD Vice Squad officers had been extorting money from bars and massage parlors in the French Quarter, eastern New

Orleans, and other areas (Philbin 1993). In April 1994, the Assistant Superintendent was dismissed for departmental violations in which he consorted with a Las Vegas gambling concern with reputed ties to organized crime while working with the NOPD and for running a private detective company out of his NOPD office (Perlstein and Cooper 1994).

The crime trends from 1960 to 1994 show the cumulative effects of the high turnover at the top of the department after 1978 (represented by the vertical lines in the figure below), the increasing police corruption, and increasing violent nature of the city on the crime rates.

Figure 2-8



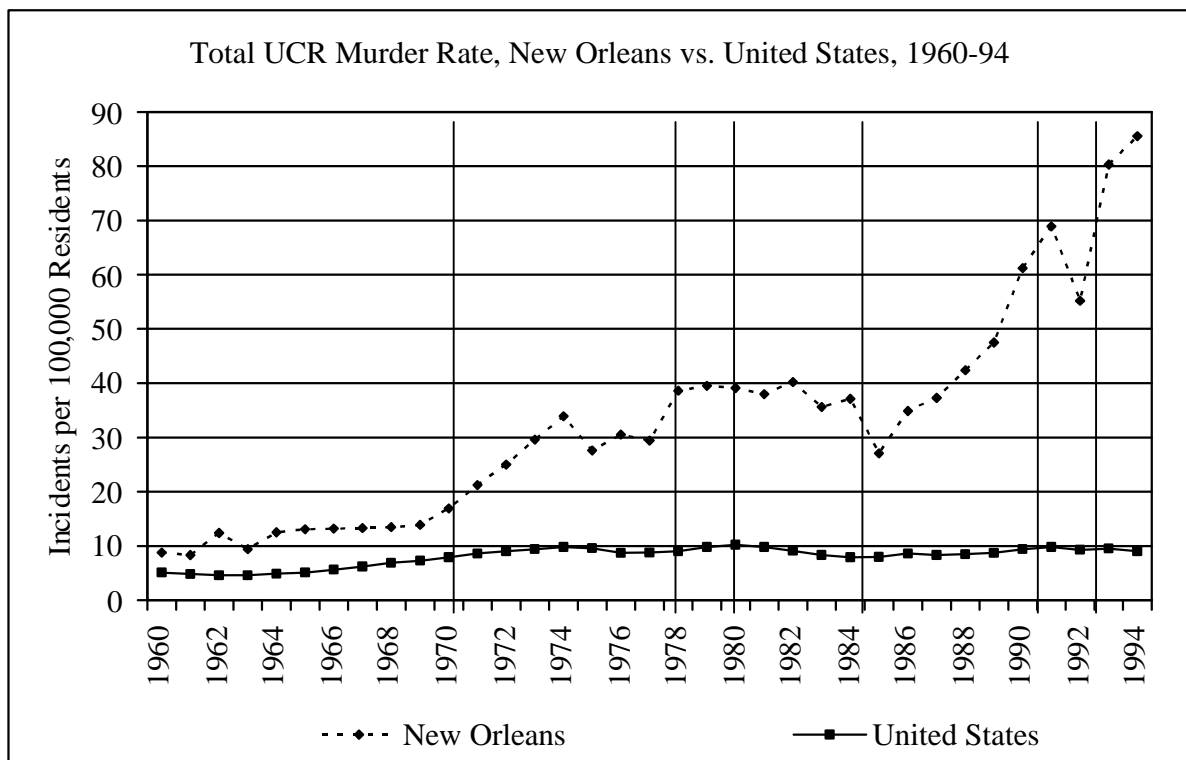
Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1960–74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975–94.

As seen in Figure 2-8, violent crime increased during the late 1960s during Superintendent Joseph Giarusso’s tenure (1960–70), then again in the 1970s towards the end of

Superintendent Clarence Giarusso’s tenure (1970–78) , stayed relatively stable but high through the short tenure of Superintendent Henry Parsons (1978–80) and that of Superintendent Henry Morris (1980–85), but began a dramatic increase during Superintendent Warren Woodfork’s six years (1985–91), which also coincided with a change in mayors – Sidney Barthelemy took office after eight years of Ernest Morial, the city’s first black mayor; Mayor Barthelemey reappointed Superintendent Woodfork. Violent crime began a slow decrease after reaching its high in 1990.

When the murder rate is examined during this same 34-year period, the results are even more startling.

Figure 2–9



Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1960–74; FBI, Crime in the United States, 1975–94.

As seen here, homicides, while never at a low rate during this period, really increased during Superintendent Woodfork’s tenure (1985–91), and again during Superintendent Taylor’s (1991–

93), finally reaching their peak in 1994 on the watch of Superintendent Orticke, when a new Mayor was elected.

*Policing New Orleans, 1994–2004*

By 1994, when newly elected Mayor Marc Morial appointed Superintendent Richard Pennington, New Orleans had a violent crime rate 62.2% higher than the nation as a whole. In that same year New Orleans experienced 424 murders – a rate of 85.8 per 100,000 residents, giving the city the infamous (and unenviable) title of “Murder Capital of America” according to FBI rankings (FBI 1994). And there was no doubt that the NOPD was in complete disarray. Personal interviews conducted with officers who were on the force during these years (and still are now) revealed that in some instances, ranking officers would show up for roll calls and then go back home never to be heard from during their shifts. On one occasion, said one officer, his unit commander who was scheduled to be working, took an unannounced vacation to a neighboring state, but still called in everyday to give the appearance to his superiors that he was working. Discipline in these instances was rare, and if given, slight penalties were imposed, according to the officers interviewed. At the same time, the department continued to suffer from corruption scandals as officers were being convicted of murder, bank robbery, cocaine trafficking, and bribery, among others (Perlstein 1996). The biggest scandal up to that time took place on the day Superintendent Pennington was sworn in, when FBI agents arrested an NOPD officer who ordered a woman killed after the woman complained to the Internal Affairs Division that she had witnessed that officer brutalize a suspect (*Times Picayune*, January 2, 1995). By March 1995, the NOPD had four officers charged with murder in less than one year – two were ultimately sentenced to death row (*Times Picayune*, March 5, 1995).

### *Impetus for Change*

It was under these conditions that Superintendent Pennington was directed to reform the NOPD and reduce the level of crime (especially violent crime and murder) in New Orleans. And the Superintendent was going to have to do it with a department full of demoralized police officers inured to corruption and unethical behavior.

During his first two years Superintendent Pennington replaced the ineffective Internal Affairs Unit with the Public Integrity Division (PID) and moved this Division out of Police Headquarters and into another building one mile away. With the assistance of FBI agents, PID began the unenviable and dangerous process of identifying and arresting corrupt NOPD officers. Superintendent Pennington and PID also instituted a vigorous “early warning” program to monitor all officers to identify potential problem officers and offer them remedial training to prevent further misconduct and corruption. Within those two years, over 130 officers were suspended or fired for corrupt activity.

During this same period however, crime in New Orleans remained at intolerable levels. Although the number of homicides had fallen from 424 in 1994 to 351 in 1996, the number of violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) rose from 9,321 to 11,021, an increase of 18.2% (FBI 1994–96). In addition to rebuilding the NOPD as a professional organization committed to ethical behavior, Superintendent Pennington had to refocus the NOPD as a crime-fighting organization as well.

In October 1996, Superintendent Pennington published his three-year Plan of Action, *Dramatically Reducing Crime in New Orleans*. In this Plan, the Superintendent announced a complete restructuring and refocusing of the entire department to a crime-fighting mission. Adopting the COMSTAT model of policing already in use by the New York Police Department



(NYPD), which had resulted in a nearly 33% decrease in violent crime there between 1993 and 1996, the NOPD immediately became a changed organization dedicated to outcome-focused policing. The COMSTAT model (fully explained in Chapter Four) focuses police officers and police resources where they are needed most, has made an dramatic impact on the performance of the NOPD. In turn, the improved police performance appears to have made an astonishing impact on crime reduction in New Orleans: in the first quarter of 1997 compared to the same period in 1996, violent crime decreased 23.4%; by the end of 1997, violent crime had decreased 23.7% and total crime had been cut 15.2% compared to the previous year (FBI 1996–97).

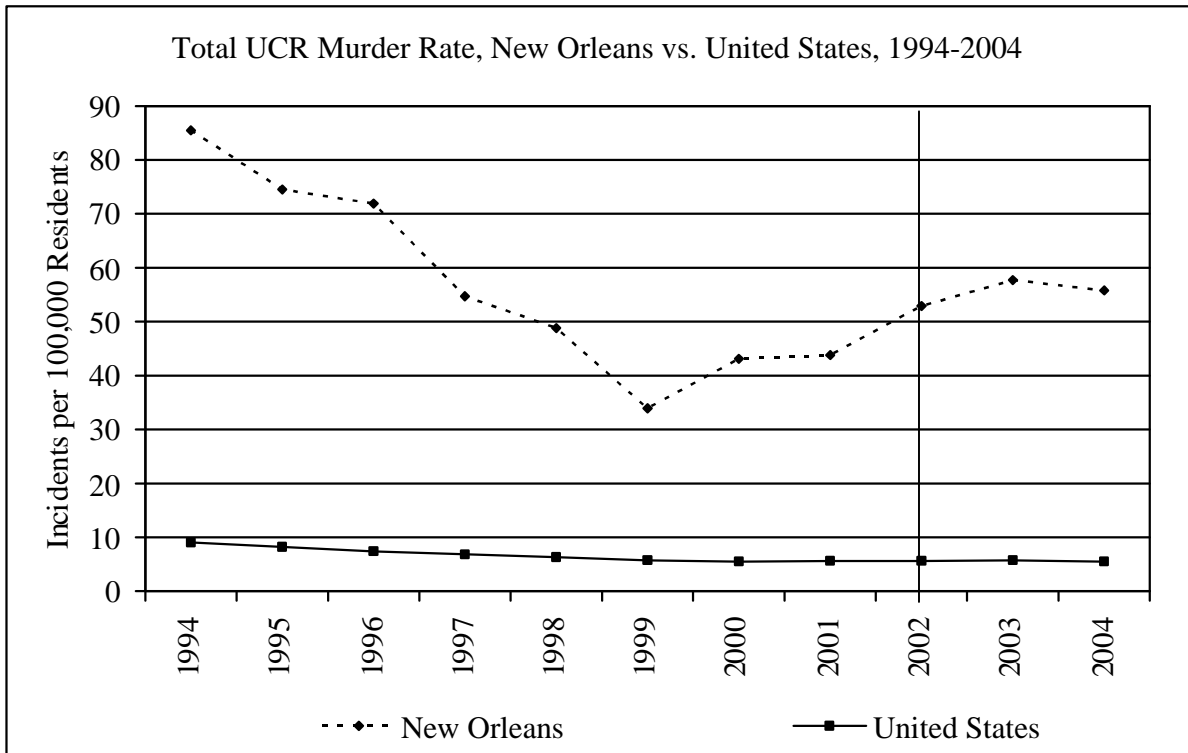
The adoption of this effective model of policing continued to benefit New Orleans. From 1996 to 1999, homicides alone had been cut 54.7% and New Orleans had the largest one-year (1996–97), two-year (1996–98), and three-year drop (1996–99) in violent crime – 46.2% (from 11,021 to 5,932) – of any city with a population of 250,000 or more (FBI 1996–99). As of June 2005, violent crime – murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault – was at levels not seen since the 1960s. Arrests in 1999 were up almost 70% compared to 1996.<sup>4</sup> And perhaps most importantly, the percentage of New Orleans citizens who mentioned crime as the biggest problem facing New Orleans decreased from 70% in 1996 to 26% in Spring 2000 (however this percentage had since increased somewhat by 2004).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> New Orleans Police Department.

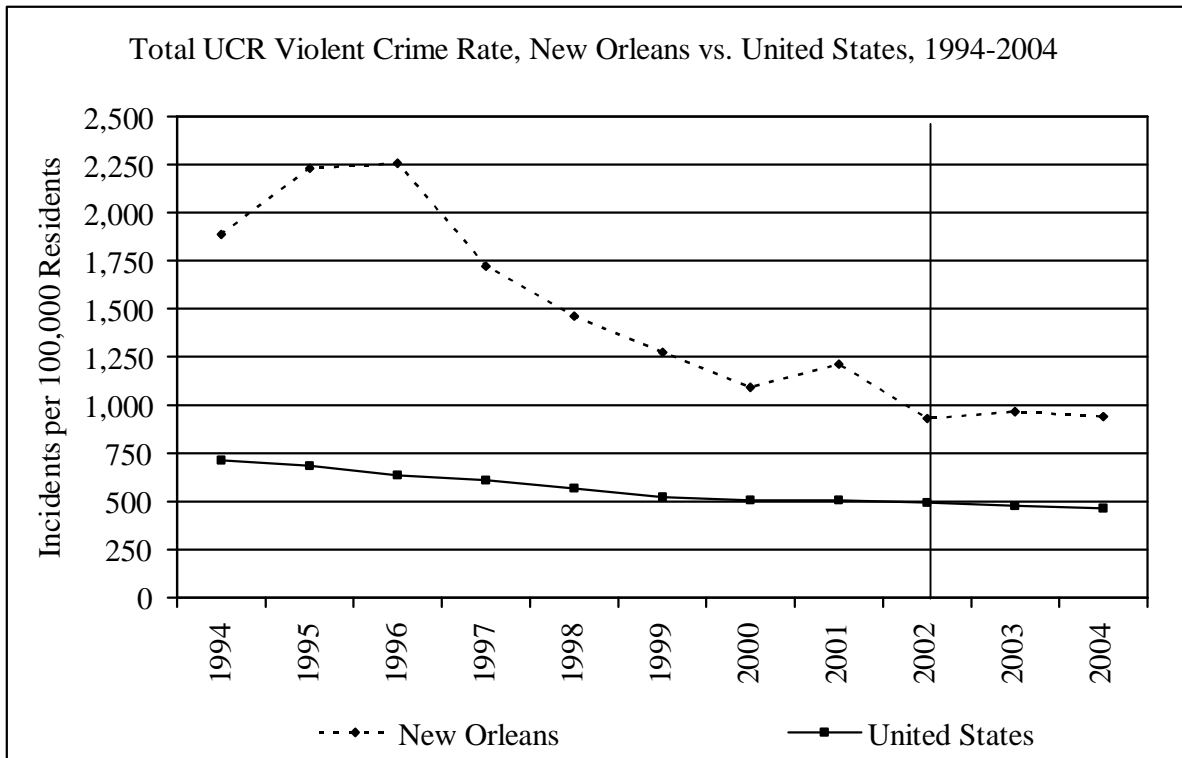
<sup>5</sup> Survey Research Center, University of New Orleans.

Figure 2-10



Source: FBI, Crime in the United States, 1994-2004.

Figure 2-11



Source: FBI, Crime in the United States, 1994–2004.

But New Orleans still has a way to go and cannot rest on its past successes. In 2000, while violent crime decreased another 13.1%, the number of homicides increased from 158 to 203 (FBI 2000), and year-end 2004 homicide totals indicated still another increase of 62 homicides above 2000 (FBI 2004). There are differing interpretations for these increases – as seen in the previous charts, the vertical line demarcates the end of Superintendent Pennington’s tenure and the start of Superintendent Eddie Compass’. Given the effects that changes in leadership can have on police departments, especially that of the NOPD as it experienced in the 1980s and 1990s, it is possible that such a change had some effect. But, as the chart shows, violent crime continued its decline, while murder increased before Superintendent Pennington left office. Interviews with ranking officers at that time suggest that there were eight instances of violence perpetrated very visibly against witnesses who were scheduled to testify in murder trials

that year: in one instance, a female witness was shot multiple times resulting in her being paralyzed from the waist down. In another highly visible case, an elderly pastor was killed in his front yard before he could testify in another murder case. In yet another case, the victim was called out of his house by name and shot dead in his driveway, in broad daylight. According to these ranking officers, once the word got out that this type of violence was happening, it is possible that other murderers became emboldened.

According to another high ranking officer, murders were also increasing due to offender re-entry – many violent offenders arrested in the late 1990s were being released back into the New Orleans community after serving short sentences. As a result, the rate at which these individuals were re-offending, e.g. committing retaliation murders, increased. Likewise, for some of these offenders, they gave little to no thought to killing an “extra” person to keep themselves out of jail.

Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 also changed the department in many ways. Because of the damage to the Department (as discussed in Chapter Seven), the period under study ends in June 2005. The murder and violence however, continues to increase in the post-Katrina era. Whether or not that trend is simply a continuation of what was occurring in 2004 and early 2005 is not known. What is known is that the Department certainly faces a tremendous uphill battle to combat increased crime.

While the above anecdotes and the post-Hurricane Katrina period are certainly worth additional examination, they are beyond the scope of this study. However, the changes in police tactics and effectiveness definitely should take them into account. That the murder rate increased in the last few years under study here suggests that perhaps the NOPD did not do so.

### CHAPTER 3. THE PUBLIC POLICY APPROACH TO CRIME REDUCTION

As crime in New Orleans and corruption within the New Orleans Police Department continued to grow and fester during the history of the city and the organization, both Mayors and Police Superintendents attempted to introduce various changes to both the organization and to its practices. Some of these efforts at change were predicated on the appointment of a new police Superintendent or through the election of a new Mayor, or a combination of both. A few efforts were successful in the short term – either a brief dip in the crime rates or a few major arrests of corrupt NOPD officers – but many efforts were not as crime continued to rise and as some NOPD officers became more brazen in their corrupt activities. It was not until the 1994 election of a new Mayor, who in turn appointed a new Superintendent, that meaningful change began to take hold in New Orleans and among the NOPD.

#### Systems Theory and the Public Policy Process

Controlling crime is one function of the criminal justice system that falls in part to the police department – here, the NOPD. When concepts are envisioned as a “system,” especially within political science, it automatically brings to mind Easton’s systems theory (1953) that relates such systems as part of a policy process. Kingdon (1984) expounds on this policy process further by conceiving it as cyclical in nature. That is, the process starts with policy formulation; once formulated, the policy is adopted; once adopted, the policy is implemented; once implemented, the policy is evaluated for impact; once evaluated, this information is “fed back” to policy makers to formulate improvements to the existing policy. Ideally, this process involves all political actors – including police officers – and perhaps most importantly, gives due credit to police officers as the policy implementers, with discretion and latitude in their performance.

The utilization of such a heuristic allows for detailed examination of crime policy, especially changes in the policy itself. As stated by Scheingold, “what is true of policy in general is likely to be particularly true of crime control policies (1991, 5). The vagaries of street crime necessitate immediate assessment and follow-up of police performance, among other political actors. When police performance is unsatisfactory or ineffective, crime can increase and the need for change manifested via public outcry can become more intense.

Examining political policies through each of these junctures of the cycle, also known as the “stages heuristic,” is the dominant paradigm of the policy process (Anderson 1975, Jones 1970, Peters 1986). Examinations of the individual stages themselves do not form the direct basis for hypothesizing causal relationships across stages, although such hypotheses may emerge. Rather, the individual stages, when linked, serve as guides for researchers who wish to study important activities in an ordered pattern or sequence. Examining policies through these stages is essential for anyone who desires to study the complexities of policymaking and policy analysis. At best, these stages can lend some clarity to the observer as he or she grapples with a complicated and sometimes murky set of interactions and processes.

#### A Definition of Crime Policy

At its basic level, crime policy can be defined as those governmental laws and rules set out to control the numbers of crime victimizations in a jurisdiction. Persons who violate criminal laws are subject to arrest by police, prosecution by the local district attorney’s office, and incarceration in the local jail or state prison. All three actors compose the criminal justice “system” that is referenced above.

There are differences of opinion, however, as to how best to control or limit the number of incidents in which people are victimized – the primary reason for the existence of the criminal

justice system. On one side of the policy argument, at its broadest level, putting convicted criminals in jail and thus removing them from society ought to be a sufficient deterrent to committing crime. On the other side, again at its broadest level, crime can be prevented by improving the socio-economic standing of individuals such that committing crimes will be viewed as a negative option. Regardless which direction is chosen, the policymaking starts with the same premise of what works best to control crime. In this study, the assertion is made that it is the police department that can have the biggest and most successful impact.

In order to study fully the impact of the NOPD on crime in New Orleans the inputs (the formulation of the policies used) and the outputs (the implementation and feedback of those policies) must be fully examined. This is important extension and use of the policy model within political science. As stated by Meier (1994), most political scientists end their research efforts with the successful or unsuccessful adoption of policies. Meier claims that studies of implementation tend to be deemed within the field of public administration and that studies of policy outcomes tend to fall within the sphere of economics or program evaluation. This study will be a theoretical case study of a substantive area, here crime policy as carried out by the New Orleans Police Department, similar to the type of study conducted by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), and Sabatier (1991). The following is a summary of the stages of the policy process as it applies to the crime reduction policies of the NOPD during the 1990s and into the new millennium. Although hypotheses are not directly generated from observing New Orleans crime policy as it transitions from one phase to the next, that is, no comparisons or analysis of New Orleans crime policy to other New Orleans policies will be made, a description of the actions in each of the stages is essential to understanding the evaluation of the crime policy's effects, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four and empirically tested in Chapters Five and Six.

## Changing the NOPD and Reducing Crime in New Orleans – the Crime Policy Process

### *Agenda Setting*

According to Cobb, Ross and Ross, the public agenda consists of all issues which: “one, are the subject of widespread attention or at least awareness; two, require action in the view of a sizeable proportion of the public; and three, are the appropriate concern of some governmental unit, in the perception of community members” (1976, 127). Similarly, Kingdon states that recognition that a problem exists is the key to setting an agenda, and that the political arena is generally well-supplied with policy proposals but that only a few reach the political agenda (1984, 21). Further, as Scheingold indicates, an issue such as crime becomes politicized when it is “put on the agenda” (1991, 31). But as he states further, “which agenda?” Cobb and Elder stratify this political agenda into the “systemic” and “institutional” agendas. The systemic agenda indicates some vague sense of public awareness, or “a general set of political controversies falling within the range of legitimate concerns of the polity” (1983, 14). The institutional agenda, on the other hand, is composed of “a set of concrete, specific items scheduled for active and serious consideration by a particular institutional decision-making body” (1983, 14).

What is important to understand is how issues such as crime get put on the agenda. As stated above, Kingdon argues that the political arena is generally well-supplied with policy proposals but that only a few reach the political agenda (1984, 21). Kingdon further distinguishes between “agenda items” and “realistic alternatives.” He identifies “agenda items” as being primarily attributable to elected government officials, and “realistic alternatives” as those proposals that emerge out of the interplay between organized interest groups (1984, 21). This dichotomy is a synthesis of Cobb, Ross and Ross who identified three models of agenda



building: the outside initiative model, “the process through which issues arise in nongovernmental groups and are then expanded sufficiently to reach, first, the public agenda, and, finally, the formal agenda (1973, 127); the mobilization model, which “considers issues are initiated inside government and consequently achieve formal agenda status automatically (1973, 127); and the inside initiative model, which “describes which issues arise within the government sphere and whose supporters do not try to expand them to the mass public” (1973, 127).

With regards to crime, Tonry (2004, 8-9) suggests that as crime rates increase, people call for more control, that is, a public debate between civil liberties and public safety, arguing for harsher policies (three strikes, truth in sentencing laws, zero tolerance policing, more severe punishments, and for putting more people in jail) during high crime periods, and for softening these policies during low-crime periods. This suggests that crime reaches the agenda through Cobb, Ross and Ross’s outside initiative model (1973). However, Tonry leaves unaddressed the question of just what is a “low crime period.” As shown in Chapter Two, crime in New Orleans was much higher than the national average, and it has remained so today despite dramatic reductions in crime.

#### *Putting Crime on the Public Agenda, Nationally and in New Orleans*

Political campaigning on the issue of crime has continued since the 1960s when crime reemerged as a major issue in national politics (Beckett 1997) primarily as a result of the soaring crime rates during that decade and the urban unrest in many American cities (Smith, Greenblatt and Buntin 2005, 440–1). During the 1964 election, Senator Barry Goldwater based his unsuccessful Presidential campaign on a “law and order” platform (Caplan 1973). However, the despite all of the attention of Presidents since – mostly in the manner of releasing federal dollars

to local communities – the federal government has little to do with local crime. Nonetheless, local politicians have followed along in making crime an integral part of their political platform.

There is no doubt that crime has been “on the agenda” in New Orleans throughout the city’s history. The actions of the NOPD during the 1800s and 1920s were comparable to those of the 1990s. In addition to being the “Murder Capital of America” in 1994, New Orleans was also faced with a police department that was considered one of the most corrupt in the country, and received notoriety in the national media. Marc H. Morial, then a state Senator, campaigned for Mayor vigorously on the promise to reform the NOPD, as did his opponents. This would suggest that crime is part of the systematic agenda of Cobb and Elder (1983).

The need for reform was self-evident. Mayor Sidney Barthelemy had appointed three police superintendents during his two terms in office, the second – Arnesta Taylor – rising only to the rank of Sergeant before being promoted to Deputy Superintendent and later Superintendent. During his three years, Taylor faced several controversies including reports in February of 1993 that members of the NOPD’s Vice Squad had been extorting money from bars and massage parlors in various parts of the city, including the French Quarter. Two of the unit’s members were later indicted and the unit disbanded. As *The New Yorker Magazine* stated, “The department has disbanded its vice squad because the squad was riddled with vice. It was a department in which the head of the robbery squad got in a drunken shootout with his own son” (1997, 96). Later that summer, one-third of the police department staged a two-day sickout (Philbin 1993, A.1). The third Superintendent of Barthelemy’s tenure, Joseph Orticke, was accused of severely mismanaging the Department’s budget, at one point proposing a larger budget than the previous year’s but including lay-offs of patrol officers. Stated an editorial in *The Times-Picayune*, “[The Superintendent] suffers the stain of mismanagement that has become

almost cliché at the Police Department and other departments during Mayor Sidney Barthelemy's administration" (*The Times-Picayune* 1993, B4).

Troubles within the police department continued throughout 1994 and 1995 as officers were convicted of corruption, armed robbery, aggravated battery, theft, and even murder. Between April 1994 and March 1995, four NOPD officers were charged with murder. Two of these incidents are highlighted: on the day that Richard Pennington was sworn in as Superintendent by newly-elected Mayor Marc Morial, Pennington received word that an NOPD officer had been arrested for drug trafficking and the murder of a civilian (one day after the civilian had reported to the NOPD that she witnessed the officer pistol-whip a seventeen year old, she was murdered on the officer's direct orders). Less than one year later, another NOPD officer was convicted of killing her off-duty partner and two civilians during an armed robbery at a restaurant.

Not surprisingly, local opinion polls were demonstrating that the public was indeed aware of these problems. A series of surveys of New Orleans residents conducted by the University of New Orleans (UNO) Survey Research Center demonstrated the public's awareness and concern about the crime problem. The UNO Survey Research Center conducts Quality of Life Surveys every other year, having begun in 1986. These surveys are designed to provide an ongoing picture of how voters in the New Orleans area view local government services and the general quality of life. These surveys are useful in highlighting the problems that concern the residents of New Orleans. The results of these surveys showed that from 1991 to 1996, over 50% of the respondents indicated that crime was the biggest problem facing the city of New Orleans. In addition, during this time period, over 80% of respondents perceived crime as increasing in New Orleans.

Table 3-1

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986-98 on Questions Relating to Crime

“Would you say that the amount of crime in New Orleans has increased, decreased, or remained about the same over the last several years?”

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Increased</u> | <u>Same</u> | <u>Decreased</u> | <u>DK/Ref</u> |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1986        | 68%              | 21%         | 7%               | 4%            |
| 1988        | 71%              | 20%         | 7%               | 2%            |
| 1990        | 87%              | 10%         | 2%               | 1%            |
| 1992        | 88%              | 8%          | 3%               | 1%            |
| 1993        | 94%              | 5%          | 1%               | -             |
| 1994        | 94%              | 5%          | 1%               | -             |
| 1996        | 72%              | 18%         | 8%               | 2%            |
| 1997        | 35%              | 26%         | 38%              | 2%            |
| 1998        | 19%              | 28%         | 50%              | 2%            |

Source: Quality of Life Surveys, University of New Orleans, Survey Research Center

Table 3-2

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986-98 on Questions Relating to Crime

“What is the biggest problem facing New Orleans today?”

|             | <u>1986</u> | <u>1988</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1994</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>1998</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| New Orleans | 17%         | 27%         | 29%         | 44%         | 78%         | 70%         | 44%         |

Source: Quality of Life Surveys, University of New Orleans, Survey Research Center.

Violent crime was in no way limited to that committed by NOPD officers. Over the Labor Day weekend in 1996, 13 people were murdered. The rising crime situation was punctuated by a multiple killing during a robbery of a popular French Quarter restaurant

(Louisiana Pizza Kitchen) the week after Thanksgiving, two months later. Tonry (2004) calls situations such as these “moral panics.” According to Tonry, moral panics typically occur “when horrifying or notorious events galvanize public emotion and produce concern, sympathy, emotion, and overreaction” (2004, 5). Tonry further states that these moral panics generate emotions that can be “harnessed” and can provide “windows of opportunity for desirable policy change” (2004, 93). These situations also appear to fit within the outside initiative model illustrated by Cobb, Ross and Ross (1973). Similarly though, the circumstances also fit within what Kingdon (1984) described when he stated that some problems are so pressing – here, police corruption and violent crime – they “set agendas all by themselves.” While the crime policy had always been to “control crime,” the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen killings provided the NOPD with such a “window of opportunity” to change operational strategy, or what Kingdon identified as a “realistic alternative” (1984, 21).

In addition to being recognized locally, the problems of the NOPD were being noticed nationally with articles detailing its problems in numerous magazines and newspapers around the country. One article appearing in the December 1996 issue of *Newsweek* described New Orleans as a city “rocked by gunfire, not world class jazz” (1996, 3). In addition, the travails of the NOPD were also chronicled on several national television programs, e.g. CBS *60 Minutes* ran an in-depth report on the NOPD, reviewing alleged cases of police brutality including “rape, stealing, and murder.”

It is clear that crime in New Orleans was part of the systemic agenda, or that “general set of political controversies” identified by Cobb and Elder (1983). The point of interest then becomes when exactly crime reaches the institutional agenda, or that “set of concrete, specific items scheduled for active and serious consideration” by political actors. Laumann and Knoke

suggest that that point is reached when the political system begins to organize around that issue; they call this a “policy domain” (1987, 10). They further emphasize the organizational basis of this construction, defining a policy domain as “a set of organizations concerned about a set of substantive problems, which take each other into account as they formulate policy options and work for their adoption (see also Rose 1985; Sabatier 1988; Salisbury et al. 1987; Scott and Meyer 1983.) Although research on policy domains has indicated that policy outcomes are affected primarily by forces within each domain (Sabatier 1988), Kingdon (1984) found that political leaders, in their relationships with the general public, are at least as likely to exert influence as be influenced. As Bass (2000, 150) states, “It is rare the politician who pursues a controversial policy without express public support for his or her endeavors.”

Cobb and Elder (1983) further state that an issue is a conflict between two identifiable groups and that the formation of an issue is dependent on the “dynamic interplay between the initiator and the trigger device.” Thus, crime and its everyday occurrence, by itself, may not be the issue, which gets it put on the agenda. Rather, an “unanticipated event” (in Cobb’s and Elder’s terms) is necessary to transform a problem – high numbers of everyday occurrences of crime – into an issue to be acted upon – high numbers of everyday occurrences of crime. The Louisiana Pizza Kitchen killings in 1996 certainly were unanticipated, and they clearly led to changes in the NOPD and ultimately changes in how crime policy was carried out.

*Reducing Police Corruption: Crime Policy Formulation and Adoption, 1994–96*

Most policies are formulated based on the history of past policies – what has worked versus what has not. How the police respond to crime problems is a key concern of any crime reduction policy. Any efforts to reduce crime must do so within the bounds of the law and with the respect for the rights of citizens and the accused alike. The basic function of any police

department is to find and arrest those accused of breaking the law. Criminal incidents come to the attention of police officers in one of two ways: the crime is reported to the police by someone (either the victim or a witness) or the crime is observed by a police officer directly. If there is no suspect to arrest immediately, the police must invest time in determining who the suspect is (if no witness to the crime) and where the suspect is (once identified). This investigative function is critical to the success or failure of any crime control policy. The police also have a support or administrative function that provides the necessary equipment, technology, and communications support to make the other functions operate properly. The operating efficiency of each function lies at the very core of the success of any crime control policy. The question for the top police executive and the top political leaders is how best to maximize the operations of the department to successfully implement a crime control policy, i.e., how will that crime control policy be formulated?

According to Anderson (1986), policy formulation is the creation of courses of action to deal with problems on the political agenda. Theodolou (1995) states that policy adoption is selecting one from the identified courses of action to address the stated problem. With regards to criminal justice policy the police are one component of a larger system, including the district attorney's office, the mayor's office and city council (who control the budgeting process), probation and parole who supervise released offenders, as well as social and charitable organizations who assist in providing alternatives for youths to prevent them from engaging in criminal activities. According to Henry, any police agency's success in fulfilling its basic mission and in conducting its business depends "greatly upon the kind of commitment, support, interest and coordination provided by its political leadership" (2002, 9).

Because the criminal justice process essentially starts with the police – the apprehension of criminals – the person directly charged with maximizing that efficiency in New Orleans is the Superintendent of Police. As stated earlier, the NOPD had been characterized during the preceding years as being inefficient and corrupt. To assist in routing out corruption, Pennington abolished the old and ineffective Internal Affairs Division and replaced it with the new Public Integrity Division. In addition, this Division was moved out of police headquarters and given its own building about a mile away. Pennington also sought and received the assistance of the FBI, getting two agents “on loan” and assigning them to the newly-formed Public Integrity Division. Said FBI Director Louis Freeh, his officers would assist the NOPD by “focus[ing] primarily on criminal cases as opposed to administrative cases. Criminal cases are the most important in terms of combating public corruption and ensuring integrity” (Perlstein 1995, A1). He also instituted vigorous monitoring of all officers to ensure that the problem of future corruption could be headed off. During his first two years in office, Superintendent Pennington worked to clear the department of its corrupt officers, and in his words “bring credibility back to the organization” (Perlstein 1997, A16); over 130 officers were either fired or suspended between 1994 and 1996.

Once the message was out that corruption would be prosecuted, incidents of these types began to taper off and even disappear. Now, Superintendent Pennington needed to figure out how best to focus on the remaining and critical issue of how to reduce crime in New Orleans. How he formulated and adopted his crime policy can be best be understood by focusing on its implementation.



*Formulating and Implementing a New Crime Reduction Policy, 1996–Present*

As Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) indicate, implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision – the result of policy formulation. Ideally, they say, the policy decision identifies the problem to be addressed, stipulates the objective to be pursued, and structures the implementation process. Studies of implementation also focus on the behavior of the actors who are charged with implementing the policy (Caputo and Cole 1979; Maranto 1993; Nathan 1983; Waterman 1989). By examining the actions of political and non-political actors (at any level), implementation can be conceptualized as more than a “yes or no” outcome, i.e., whether or not a policy was implemented. For example, implementation can be thought of as a process or a series of decisions and actions directed toward putting a legislative or executive decision into effect, or implementation can be thought of in terms of outputs or outcomes. It is examination of the latter two types that allows the researcher to define implementation of a particular crime policy in terms of outputs – more arrests of criminals by police officers for example, or in terms of outcomes – a decrease in reported crime or an increase in citizens’ perceptions of feeling safe in their neighborhoods at particular times, i.e., a measurable change being addressed by the policy. Studies of these types measure the “effectiveness” of a policy, something Ripley (1985) believes political scientists are well equipped to handle.

Berman (1980) extends the study of implementation further, identifying three types of policy implementation that include formulative elements. The first, programmed implementation, tries to eliminate or control the problems and pitfalls that await implementation by thorough, explicit programming of implementation procedures. The second type of implementation identified by Berman, adaptive implementation, follows from the incremental approach of Lindblom (1957). Adaptive implementation tries to improve the policy process by

allowing for adjustments to the original policy mandates as events unfold, i.e., a feedback element. However, as Shulman (1975) states, some policies differ in their demand for comprehensive rather than incremental decisions and are characterized by an “indivisibility in the political commitment and resources they require for success.” Shulman also denoted what he called as the “threshold effect” for these policies, such that the nature of the policy makes it exceedingly difficult for a series of small, incremental steps to add up in cumulative fashion to one “big, comprehensive step.” Shulman called these policies “nonincremental policies” that “defy disaggregation into piecemeal decisions or additive partial advancements.”

In New Orleans Superintendent Pennington was faced with two major problem areas – police corruption and high crime. Superintendent Pennington realized that without the removal of officers committed to the “old way” of policing in New Orleans, his next step in reforming the NOPD could not take place. Berman (1980) refers to this type of behavior by those actors charged with implementation – in this case the police officers – as premeditated non-implementation, or behavior deliberately aimed at preventing implementation from occurring. Superintendent Pennington recognized that reducing the high rate of crime depended on having a police force of officers committed to his goals and not the officers’ own. Now that Superintendent Pennington had rid the department of the most corrupt officers and established a new system for monitoring and preventing new police corruption, he could turn his focus to implementing a policing strategy that would adapt police activities to focus on reducing the high rates of crime in the city.

The impetus behind this effort was spearheaded by the newly formed New Orleans Police Foundation. Formed in March 1996 by a small group of business leaders, the Foundation met with Pennington to determine what it could do for the NOPD. Pennington indicated he wanted

to model the NOPD after the New York Police Department, a department that had cut its violent crime rate by 36% between 1993 and 1996, and its murder rate in half, from 1,946 murders in 1993 to 983 murders in 1996 (FBI 1993, 1996 *Uniform Crime Reports*). John Casbon, regional director of First American Title in New Orleans, and later first Chairman of the New Orleans Police Foundation, went to New York and met with NYPD Commissioner Bratton and Jack Maple, Deputy Commissioner for Crime Control Strategies. In New York, Casbon – through the New Orleans Police Foundation – hired John Linder who helped author the NYPD’s strategic plan, and brought Linder to New Orleans to assist Pennington. Linder later hired Maple who had resigned from the NYPD to be his partner in drafting a crime-reduction plan for the NOPD. Said Pennington, “The [New Orleans] Police Foundation played a very important role for me. They didn’t have to deal with bids or red tape or political hang-ups. We were able to move right away” (Perlstein 1996, A19). And move right away they did. Three months after they were hired, Superintendent Pennington issued his Strategic Plan of Action (Pennington 1996) that dramatically restructured the NOPD and instituted sweeping changes in operating procedures. More importantly, Pennington promised that the NOPD would reduce murder by half within three years (Pennington 1996, 8).

Involving traditionally non-political actors in the drafting of political policy is not a new phenomenon. Overall crime policy however, has traditionally been set by city leaders – Mayors and City Council members – who are held accountable for the criminal justice system’s success or failure. What is important to note is that it was the police superintendent who wanted to implement a new policy, and went about it in a non-traditional manner. Equally important, was the new course of action taken by a small group of actors outside the traditional arena of politics.

Whereas the Mayor had campaigned on reducing crime, it was the business community that provided the NOPD with the tools to make that happen.

Superintendent Pennington made his new Plan of Action public on October 14, 1996, with the approval and commitment of Mayor Morial; the primary goal of his Plan was to dramatically reduce crime in the City of New Orleans. This Plan restructured, reorganized and reengineered the NOPD to attack the problem of violent crime and crime in general.

Superintendent Pennington proclaimed that the new focus of the NOPD is “to secure every street, every block and every neighborhood in New Orleans” (Perlstein 1997, A17). The Plan detailed a series of strategic and innovative reforms that were to be immediately implemented by the NOPD.

The reforms set out in the Plan greatly overhauled the Department’s structure and devised new crime-fighting strategies. First, more officers would be hired. Pennington’s Plan called for the aggressive recruitment of new officers to bring the force of fewer than 1,300 to over 1,700 officers (Plan 1996, 53). In addition, the salary of police officers would be increased along with increased overtime pay and better benefits (Plan 1996, 55). Another major reform increased efforts to weed out corruption within the ranks of the NOPD. These efforts were aimed at monitoring, disciplining and retraining officers faced with multiple civilian complaints for abuse of force, abuse of authority, or acts of disrespect. As a result, the Public Integrity Division was expanded in both size and effectiveness (Plan 1996, 53).

In addition to the above reforms directed at the quality of police officers, other reforms changed the structure of the Department. The goal of this set of reforms was to transform the NOPD into an effective and efficient crime-fighting organization. In order to protect New Orleans tourism – the largest source of revenue for the City – the Plan immediately reassigned all

106 reserve officers to patrol the French Quarter, the leading tourist destination (Plan 1996, 5). Also pivotal to the Superintendent's Plan was decentralizing the department. Detectives were moved from their offices in downtown police headquarters to one of the city's eight police Districts. According to Superintendent Pennington, "Decentralization is a way to get our officers back into the districts. This will put detectives in specific geographical areas. The detectives will get to know everyone who commits crime in their specific areas" (Perlstein 1997, A17). This reform was an effort to transform the focus of the Department to a more community-oriented approach.

This strategy of decentralization was complemented by another important and innovative reform. The department would immediately implement a crime-fighting strategy known as COMSTAT, an accountability-driven strategy created by Jack Maple at the New York Police Department.

COMSTAT is a computer mapping and management accountability process that drives accountability and authority to the lowest appropriate level of the police organization (Silverman 1996). Henry (2002, 22) expounds on the definition further by explaining that accountability and responsibility for achieving results is not just placed on commanders by the executive staff, but on supervisors by commanders, and on the rank-and-file officers by supervisors. Under COMSTAT, every officer in the New Orleans Police Department – from Patrol Officer to Superintendent – is now held accountable for crime-reduction in their areas of responsibility. Using COMSTAT, weekly maps are created for each district that show the location of every reported crime occurring in that District. Weekly meetings are held bringing District Commanders, Unit Commanders and the Department's Chiefs together to discuss current crime trends. District Commanders are questioned by their superiors about crimes occurring in their

Districts. Crime fighting tactics, possible leads and response times are also discussed. In describing their feelings about the COMSTAT procedure, then-6<sup>th</sup> District Captain Michael Ellington replied, “You don’t want to be embarrassed. It forces the Captains to be on top of everything in their territory. It really helps to see the trends and hear what’s happening in other districts” (Perlstein 1997, A16). Likewise, then-2<sup>nd</sup> District Captain Linda Buczek said, “It’s a rigorous exercise. It’s a very high-pressure environment. Every week you stand in front of your boss and you’re held accountable for everything that happened that week” (Perlstein 1997, A16).

### *Evaluating COMSTAT’s Effects*

Evaluation of any policy is an integral component of the decision-making and policy processes (Nachmias 1980). External evaluation of a policy is vital to measuring its effectiveness. The simple question to be answered is “what did the program do?” (Borus 1979, 3). Measuring success of any crime policy must take into account more than just UCR statistics – the public’s opinion as a member of the crime policy domain is critical as they are the affected party of any crime policy. Patton (1981) identifies two basic categories of evaluation: 1) process evaluation, which looks to the extent to which a particular policy is implemented according to its stated guidelines, and 2) impact evaluation, which is concerned with examining the extent to which a policy causes a change in the intended direction. In this case, process evaluation is measured by how well the NOPD follows the COMSTAT guidelines and impact evaluation is measured by how much crime is reduced. Theodoulou (1995) further says impact evaluation requires the specification of operationally defined policy goals, delineation of criteria of success, and measurement of progress toward the stated goal.

This latter point is important because it moves study of police evaluation beyond just looking at policy outputs to looking at policy outcomes. Policy outputs are things actually done

by agencies in pursuit of policy decisions and statements, i.e., activity or behavior. These outputs can be easily recognized, counted, and statistically analyzed. Examining police activity or behavior only such as an increase in arrests may indicate, or appear to indicate, that much is being done in the way of dealing with crime.

Policy outcomes, in contrast to outputs, are the results or consequences for society – both intended and unintended – that follow from deliberate government action or inaction. Using the example above of the number arrests illustrates the differences in examining outputs versus outcomes by seeking to answer the following questions: what is the effect of an increase in arrests on the number of crimes being reported to the police? What is the effect of an increase in arrests on the public's perceptions of personal safety in their neighborhood at any particular time? While there are a multitude of other questions that can be raised when focusing on outcomes instead of outputs, the point should be clearly made: outputs are important but outcomes truly inform us whether policies are accomplishing their intended purposes, e.g., whether society is changing (hopefully positively) as consequence of implementing certain policies and not because of other factors. In short, policy evaluation is an amalgam of measuring outputs and outcomes.

So what of the outcomes then? Implementation of a particular policy may have several types of consequences. The two most commonly discussed impacts are governmental and societal (Shull 1999). Governmental impacts refer to the effect of government actions on individuals or groups, such as the impact of crime policy on the number of crimes being committed in a city. Societal impacts refer to a much broader impact, such as the impact of crime policy on the public perceptions of overall personal safety. According to Shull (1999) societal outcomes are often associated with well-being or standard of living. Developing

measures of impact has often proven elusive to researchers, especially measures of societal impact. This study is concerned with both as later chapters will demonstrate.

Broadly stated by Superintendent Pennington, the goal of the crime reduction effort was to “secure every street, every block and every neighborhood in New Orleans” (Pennington 1996, 7). And as stated specifically in his Plan, the goal was to reduce murder by half within three years (Pennington 1996, 8). The former is clearly a policy outcome, the latter a policy output. By formalizing both as the agenda of the New Orleans Police Department, Pennington was emphatically saying that the officers of the NOPD would be the driving agent of change, just as the officers of the New York Police Department had been in the mid-1990s.

#### *Public Feedback of the NOPD's Efforts*

Feedback is easy to measure among the public since crime as an issue is salient to many Americans and is relatively easy to understand. Given the divergence in social characteristics, citizens' opinions on crime vary widely across the spectra. It is impossible to conceive of citizens who want more crime (except perhaps the criminals) but it is also difficult for policy makers and citizens to agree on the best policies and tactics for reducing crime. Yet politicians and other government officials remain highly responsive to public concerns about crime and even more responsive to public concerns when some police tactics produce unintended and unanticipated results. Care must be exerted, however, when interpreting the results of public opinion surveys showing public support or opposition to specific crime policies since the public often lacks information about many issues – crime and the criminal justice system among them. A thorough discussion of this aspect of the changes to New Orleans' crime policy appears in Chapter Six.



### Crime Declined, but was it Solely Because of the Actions of the NOPD?

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this study is a theoretical case study of the crime trends in New Orleans pre- and post-1996 and the causes of the dramatic shifts therein. In other words, this is a study of the implementation of COMSTAT and its relation to the dramatic decreases in crime in New Orleans post implementation. But before statistical tests can be conducted, a full examination of *how* COMSTAT changed policing styles in New Orleans – the incremental approach of Lindblom (1957) and the adaptive implementation approach of Berman (1980) – must be conducted. This is presented in Chapter Four.

From there, statistical tests will be conducted that both confirm any positive effects of COMSTAT and eliminate any rival explanations before any conclusive statements can be made with confidence about the role of COMSTAT in dramatically reducing crime in New Orleans. This is presented in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER 4. POLICING AND CRIME REDUCTION – IN GENERAL AND IN NEW ORLEANS

As discussed in Chapter Three, one of the biggest decisions for city leaders is how to reduce the level of crime in their jurisdictions. Clearly, the goal for any city and police department is that set in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel. Peel established the first test for police efficiency, and it is one that police departments in any jurisdiction still try to meet although their methods for doing so clearly differ: “the test should be the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action dealing with them” (Lee 1901, 12). This test suggests that some people will commit crime and that there will need to be some enforcement of the criminal laws, i.e., the police are required. Peel’s test implies that the police should necessarily be invisible. More realistically, the test suggests that if police are optimally efficient, crime will be reduced without citizens being aware of the police’s efforts. This too is necessarily impossible.

An alternative interpretation focuses on the “absence of crime and disorder.” This definition suggests other factors or forces other than police enforcement that keep people from committing crimes. This is the great debate among political/criminological theories versus sociological theory in attempting to explain crime increases and reduction. Advocates of political or criminological theories place a greater emphasis on the role of the police in affecting crime rates while sociological theories focus more on root causes of why people commit crimes. The political and criminological theories have undergone evolution especially in relation to how police should police. Sociological theories have also undergone evolution as society has become more complex. Utilizing these theories, variables can be identified and tested to determine why crime declined so rapidly in New Orleans post 1996.

## Sociological Theories of Crime Reduction

Those who follow the sociological approach begin from the assumption that “men steal because they are poor,” whether or not by force from another person (robbery versus larceny theft, burglary, or auto theft) (Wilson 1975, xiv). This assumption can be expanded to explain why people commit other crimes as well. The lack of viable economic alternatives in high poverty areas has been used to explain why individuals turn to selling illegal drugs (Short 1997). Illegal drugs – both the sale and use – are also the reason people commit other crimes, either to further the sale or to finance their use. According to the sociological approach then, crime occurs because people are left without viable economic options. Therefore, it is the improvement of the economy or other social variables – or root causes – that will lead to crime reduction. Such variables include reductions in poverty, improvements in basic education (K-12), economics, race relations, family composition, age distribution within the population, and still others. Any attempt to explain crime reductions must include these variables in any equation, according to those who advocate the sociological approach.

One problem with this approach is that it leaves open the premise that crime is going to occur, regardless of how good those indicators are, and that such an approach may not be the correct one. Hagan says that a sociological “focus on inequality frustrates the search for rapid improvements or even the near term containment of America’s imposing crime problems” (1995, 40). Cohen and Machalek suggest that it is very difficult to eliminate a substantial amount of crimes without “modifying a way of life that, as citizens in a relatively open society, we take for granted” because crime is a “normal by-product of the social organization of productive activity” (1995, 169). In essence, crime is part of society and will always be present to some degree or other. So, while it can be reduced, it can never be eliminated. Before studies such as those cited

here, Wilson himself said this approach is fraught with error, as those who use poverty (for example) as an explanation for why individuals commit crime are usually those who deny that crime can be deterred at all (1975, xiv). Ultimately then, there will always be crime unless other non-sociological factors are brought to bear.

Nonetheless, inclusion of these variables in studies of criminality demonstrates that these variables do have some influence on crime trends in all jurisdictions (Wilson 1975; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Blumstein and Wallman 2000). To that end, any study attempting to explain crime increases or decreases that does not include such socioeconomic variables would be suspect as to its theoretical import.

#### Political/Criminological Theories of Crime Reduction

Those who follow the political or criminal justice approach to crime reduction begin from the assumption that “man will not steal if the penalty is sufficiently severe” (Wilson 1975, xiv). The thrust of this argument is that society must raise the risks of stealing to such a high degree that the risks exceed any benefits the individuals obtain. In reality, this means increasing the severity of the penalty. Wilson sets out three requirements about the severity of the penalty and its ability to deter crime: one, the individual doing the stealing must believe that the penalty will be carried out, two, the penalty must be greater than the proceeds of stealing, i.e., incarceration and the loss of personal liberty outweighs any monetary gain from the robbery or theft, and three, there is another source of income (such as a job) that would produce “greater net gains” to the individual than stealing would, i.e., the loss of the job is worse than the penalty for being caught stealing (1975, xiv).

There are two problems with this approach. The first is that these three requirements may not always be present at the same time. The second is that while society can raise the risks of

stealing to such a high degree that the risks will *always* outweigh any benefits (e.g. making all crimes subject to the death penalty), a free and liberal society will not tolerate such extreme measures to eliminate crime. As a result, theft (and crime in general) continues to occur.

The agency charged with such deterrence is the police agency. Its officers are responsible for investigating all crimes and arresting the perpetrators. They have this role regardless of which approach underlies current crime policy. People still commit crimes regardless of any improvement in the socioeconomic conditions of society and irrespective of any deterrents (arrest and incarceration), thus the burden continues to fall to the police, at the least, to apprehend those who commit the crimes, or to paraphrase Wilson's terminology, to exact upon the criminals the cost or penalty for committing crime. These costs or penalties are operationalized as arrests, incarceration rates, and increased severity of sentences designed to keep criminals off the streets for longer periods of time.

With the police agency at the forefront of the political/criminological approach, debate has been ongoing as to the best way to utilize the police to effectuate such deterrence. The concept of policing – that is, how police *should* police – has undergone changes just as society has. It is important to track this evolution to determine which variables should be used to determine the effects of the police on crime increases and decreases.

#### *The Evolution of the Police Agency into its Modern Role and Functions*

To fully understand where the police “fit” within competing theories of crime reduction policy, an examination of the evolution of policing in general and in New Orleans particularly must be undertaken. Much like any other agent in the criminal justice system (and implementers of policy), police and their strategies have changed in reaction to the times in which police departments have found themselves and the types and levels of crime during the same periods.

Regarding crime as an issue, research has shown that external political pressure is often the primary reason that police organizations initiate change (Zhao 1996). For example, the push towards “professionalism” of modern police organizations in the 1940s and 1950s provided greater adherence to standards of legal behavior for police officers to eliminate arbitrariness (and thereby reduce the amount of discretion given to front-line police officers) and to improve efficiency (Bass 2000). In New Orleans, the NOPD formed its first investigative unit for all cases involving allegations of police personnel – the Police Bureau of Investigation (NOPD 1984, 45). Additionally, the separate functions of policing – patrol work and investigative work – required increasing expertise. Accordingly, a rigid set of norms and values were instilled in police officers – norms and values that still permeate most police departments.

Because of the increased specialization of function that accompanied the “professional” police force, new innovations in equipment and techniques were needed. Many police organizations modernized as society did – police moved from horseback to cars, and later introduced motorcycles as additional means of transportation. In New Orleans, the Mounted Division of the NOPD was almost eliminated in 1936 at the expense of the motorized Traffic Bureau due to the increasing traffic problems (NOPD 1984, 39). Two-way radios were adopted, eliminating the need for telephone call boxes – by 1950, the NOPD equipped all its motorized vehicle fleet with two-way FM radio equipment (NOPD 1984, 44). And now, police have increased their reliance on computers to track and retrieve criminal history information instantly and regardless of their proximity to headquarters. The first such effort was instituted in 1960 when New Orleans joined the National Crime Information Center, connecting New Orleans with all other state agencies throughout the country, something still in effect today (NOPD 1984, 51). These changes in equipment have also allowed changes in police practices.

But most importantly, the battle within the political or criminological approach centers on the best way police should “police.” That is, how best to prevent crime from occurring and investigating and arresting those who have committed crime; in other words, how to reduce crime.

### *Policing Strategies: Traditional Policing*

The traditional police model most associated with “professional” police organizations is based on a deterrence philosophy – the political or criminological approach espoused by Wilson as stated above – and relies primarily on police patrol as the first line of offense and defense (Trojanowicz, et al. 1998). By having police patrol throughout the jurisdiction, police can affect crime in one of three ways: 1) the appearance of a marked patrol unit deters criminals from committing crimes as criminals will not commit their crimes in view of the police, 2) having a marked patrol unit in an area leads to quicker responses to the crime scene when a crime is occurring, thus affecting the outcome, and 3) quicker response times can lead to a successful resolution of the criminal incident ideally by catching the perpetrator in the commission of the crime, or quickly thereafter, before the perpetrator has fled the scene. As will be seen, these strategies were based on an incremental approach to policy change, and perhaps contributed to the rise in crime seen in the 1980s and 1990s.

### *Prevention of Crime*

One of the first reforms designed for reducing the crime rate focused on the restructuring of police patrols and response times to increase crime prevention. In an experiment in Kansas City (MO), police administrators tested the assumption that random driving in a patrol area prevented crime due to the unpredictable nature of when the police would appear – it continues to be a safe assumption that individuals will not commit crimes in the presence of the police.

Also tested was the idea that police could respond to crime and apprehend the suspects more quickly because they were in the relatively immediate area. As stated by Moore and Stephens (1991, 31), directed police patrols increase the likelihood that crimes will be thwarted in progress. This strategy will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The results of the study did not conclusively demonstrate that preventive patrolling necessarily prevented crime. In addition, citizens reported that they did not even know when or if patrols had been increased or reduced in their neighborhoods (Kelling, et al. 1974). A byproduct of this study found that preventive patrolling required changes in police support structures such as communications, budgetary resources and manpower strength. The Kansas City study was validated by similar experiments in St. Louis (MO) and Minneapolis (MN) that uncovered similar results: no noticeable decrease in crime or an increase in arrests (Sherman, Schmidt and Rogan 1992). In part because of the findings of this study, patrol activities have undergone continuous restructuring for police to be more effective in crime prevention (Krajick 1980; Wilson and McLaren 1977).

#### *Responding to Crimes in Progress*

Other reforms replaced preventive measures with reactive measures. Focusing solely on response time to crimes in progress, another study of the Kansas City (MO) Police Department found that police response time was unrelated to the probability of making an arrest or locating a witness. The study also found that neither dispatch time nor travel time was associated with citizen satisfaction of police performance. The researchers discovered that the time it takes a citizen to report a crime was the major determinant of whether an on-scene arrest took place and whether witnesses could be located. The researchers concluded “because of the time citizens take to report crimes, the application of technological innovations and human resources to reduce



police response time will have negligible impact on crime outcomes” (Van Kirk 1978). Similar studies in Jacksonville (FL), San Diego (CA) and Peoria (IL) (Pate, et al. 1976), and in Rochester (NY) (Spelman and Brown 1982) confirmed the Kansas City findings.

Based on these findings, the most significant changes to police operations have been in the area of officer dispatch – calls for police service are prioritized with the critical calls being dispatched for immediate response. The results have allowed police departments to handle increases in calls without a corresponding increase in patrol officers (Petersilia 1987). Again the focus of police work has shifted to a reactive measure. Directing police response had become the hallmark of traditional police performance. Unfortunately, the simple reality is that crime in the form of interrupting crimes in progress or pursuing fleeing criminals occupies approximately ten percent of the time of a patrol force; the remaining time is spent responding to citizen calls for service (either via 9-1-1 or non-emergency numbers), taking criminal incident reports from victims, securing crime scenes, transporting arrestees to jail, or other non-patrol activity (Wycoff 1982).

Both of the above types of policing can be further identified either as “response-oriented policing” or “reactive policing.” As discussed, each differs in its approach, but there are additional concerns. The “response-oriented policing” school treats each incident as its own separate event with no real relation to any other criminal events that have occurred in the past nor how (or even if) the current incident would be related to another incident in the future (Kelling and Sousa 2001, 2). This is because patrol officers are “chasing the radio” moving from one call to the next, trying to satisfy citizens’ needs for police response. Due to increasing demands, patrol officers do not have time to “think strategically” beyond the incident with which they are currently dealing.

A similar situation occurs when patrol response is defined as “reactive policing” (Moore and Stephens 1991). In this reactive mode, patrol officers wait until a crime occurs and brought to their attention via 9-1-1 or an alarm sounds necessitating their response. According to Moore and Stephens, the benefit is that police do not “intrude too deeply into social life, and that when they do there is an important reason for it” (1991, 31). This type of policing certainly fits within the second part of Peel’s test of police efficiency – “not the visible evidence of police action dealing with them.” Still another weakness is that the reactive approach involves crime incidents that do not necessarily produce victims – drug dealing and other drug offenses, prostitution, loitering – or witnesses who mobilize the police by identifying the offenders – ordinary street offenses in which the victim is unable to secure an adequate description, burglary (where the perpetrator is gone long before the police arrive), and increasingly robbery (due to disguises or obscured identifying features) (Kelling and Sousa 1991, 34).

#### *Resolving Crimes Already Committed*

The criminal investigation function has also undergone change in efforts to resolve crimes already having been committed. A 1977 RAND study focused on making the criminal investigation process more effective. The study found that the probability of an arrest is largely determined by the information patrol officers obtain in their preliminary investigation at the crime scene. The study recommended that patrol officers be given a larger role in conducting preliminary investigations with the most promising cases given to the detective division for follow-up investigation (Greenwood and Petersilia 1977).

The above studies demonstrate the responsibility that is placed on individual officers to arrest criminals – officers must respond quicker to the crime scene and conduct thorough

investigations to increase the probability of an arrest. This responsibility again places primary focus on crime statistics and arrests rates as evaluators of police effectiveness and efficiency.

### *Assessing Traditional Policing Strategies*

Some researchers suggest that these changes in police activity have not had the intended effect of reducing crime. These researchers point to the rising crime rates in the 1980s and early 1990s as evidence of police inefficiency. To rely solely on these police tactics as efforts to reduce crime is to neglect other police functions and other police roles. These traditional methods of policing focus on increasing the arrest rates but not reducing crime rates. These studies provide nothing on how to prevent crime. Alpert's and Moore's (1993, 112) consideration of the traditional crime control strategy concluded that,

“Enthusiasm for this strategy of professional policing has waned. The professional policing model has been ineffective in reducing crime, reducing citizens' fears, and satisfying victims that justice is being done. Indeed, a majority of the population believes that the crime problem has become progressively worse during the past decade. Similarly, citizens have lost confidence in the criminal justice system to protect them.”

The detective units (traditionally seen as “specialized”) had become further isolated from the patrol units, hindering crime-fighting efforts. Before the 1990s, units were more frequently assessed by their own productivity than by their impact on crime in general. Patrol was measured by response times to calls for service or by arrests; traffic units by the number of tickets or violations issued; and detectives by their case clearance records (Silverman 1999, 18).

Not only did researchers embrace the realization that police tactics were not having the intended effect of reducing crime, so too were police executives (Kelling and Sousa 2001, 38). As a result, new changes in police techniques have been suggested – changes in which the goals of

police work have been redefined and expanded. In this vein, the belief is that the functions of the police are broader than those of crime reduction (Bayley 1994.)

### *Policing Strategies: Community Policing*

Bayley's suggestion – that there is more to policing than crime reduction – has given researchers a starting point for trying identify those “broader” functions. These studies have been grouped under the new rubric of “community policing.” These studies recognize the potentially significant role of the community in crime prevention and control (Blumstein and Petersilia 1994). Community policing is characterized as “a new philosophy of policing, based on the concept that police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways can help solve contemporary community problems related to crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood decay” (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1990, 3). Specifically, “community policing aims to increase interaction and cooperation between local police and the people and neighborhoods they serve” (Mastrofski, Parks and Worden 1998, 1). By working together then, the police and the public can create or improve social conditions such that opportunities for criminal behavior are limited or prevented altogether.

Community policing strategies recognize that there is more to reducing crime than just the police. Hoover (1995) suggests that other indicators such as citizen satisfaction and crime prevention, although hard to quantify, are also important in fairly assessing police services. The thrust behind these strategies is that there are multiple forces, acting in concert, that can have the desired effects police departments and political leaders are seeking.

### *The Need for Greater Citizen Input and Interaction*

The simple fact is that police cannot succeed in their crime control mission without citizens bringing crime incidents to their attention, whether as witnesses, victims, or as interested

persons who are assisting by calling 9-1-1. In this sense, community policing attempts to move beyond the “reactive policing” of the traditional model by making it “safe” for citizens to engage police officers in their every day duties: “if the police are operationally dependent on assistance from citizens and if citizens must inevitably be the first line of defense in controlling crime, then the question of what the police must do to mobilize and guide the citizenry becomes crucially important” (Kelling and Sousa 1991, 40).

The study of the role of the community in policing is not new. As far back as 1973, Ostrom and Whitaker studied police activity in three neighborhoods of Indianapolis (IN) as compared to police activity in three smaller, neighboring, yet independent communities. They found that smaller and community-controlled police agencies have higher levels of police output<sup>6</sup> than large city-controlled police agencies and thus are more effective in meeting citizen demands for police protection. These findings, while limited in its generalization, indicate that higher levels of police interaction with citizens leads to improved perceptions of both police performance and lower crime rates.

#### *The Role of Citizens in Crime Reduction*

The lack of citizen interest in maintaining the community also has been studied. In an *Atlantic Monthly* article in March 1982, policing experts James Q. Wilson and George Kelling argued that community “disorder” actually spawns serious crime. Their premise, in that article and in future studies, uses the image of broken windows in buildings to explain how neighborhoods might decay into disorder and even crime if no one attends faithfully to their maintenance (Kelling and Coles 1996, xv). The failure of anyone – including the building owner

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<sup>6</sup> In this study police output was measured as a pattern of responses to seven survey questions: being a victim of crime, receiving assistance from the police, rating the police as responding rapidly, thinking that crime is not increasing in their neighborhood, rating police-citizen relations as good, indicating that the police do not accept bribes, and rating the job done by police in their neighborhood as generally good or outstanding (Ostrom and Whitaker 1973, 60).

– to fix the broken windows implies a lack of concern, and as more building windows are broken over time, passersby will think that “not only is no one in charge of the building, no one is in charge of the street on which it faces.” The public fear is that only criminals have any business on such a street, thusly law-abiding citizens avoid the street and link its downtrodden image to crime and decay.

Skogan (1990) argues that public disorder has both social and physical dimensions: disorder is manifested as junk and trash in vacant lots, decaying homes, boarded up buildings, graffiti, stripped or abandoned cars, and signaled by groups of youths congregating on corners, and public drinking and intoxication. These examples are by no means the only extensions of disorder but serve to extend the concept beyond broken windows. More manifestations of disorder lead to heightened public awareness of crime and ultimately to an increased sense of fear.

#### *Debate Still Surrounds the Two Approaches*

These findings have helped shape the current debate surrounding how police should police. Traditional policing efforts involving utilizing police resources to counteract (but primarily react to) crime in high crime areas through citizen-initiated complaints and officer responses. The traditional system of policing focuses the vast bulk of its resources on only one of three times that police action can influence the ultimate outcome of a criminal act – after the occurrence of crime (Trojanowicz, et al. 1998). Community policing strategies, on the other hand, focus on police behavior prior *to* the occurrence of a criminal act. Community policing strategies try to bring police officers closer to the neighborhoods they serve and “build two-way communication into neighborhood police work” (Skogan 1990, 162). Additional studies that have fueled the drive towards implementing community policing include Brown and Wycoff (1987), Eck, et al. (1987) and Goldstein (1990). As Taylor, Fritsch and Caeti (1998, 1) note, “law

enforcement has been trying to change from a close, incident-driven and reactive bureaucracy to a more open, dynamic, quality-oriented partnership with the community.” Community policing therefore demands that police form partnerships with citizens to address citizens’ perceptions of problems in the community, not just those of the police. Brown (1989, 1) summarizes this position, “Community policing also relies heavily on articulation of policing values that directly incorporate citizen involvement in matters that directly affect the safety and quality of neighborhood life.” It is perhaps this increased emphasis on solving neighborhood problems instead of more serious crime problems that has comprised police effectiveness in these communities.

Community policing presents a challenge for law enforcement because “it requires a fundamental shift in the longstanding philosophy underlying the maintenance of law and order” (Carter 1995). Although community policing is most commonly associated with a movement toward greater police recognition of the role of the community in the crime-fighting mission, the movement also included a trend away from the traditional bureaucratic, top-down, command and control management style of traditional policing (Mastrofski 1998). Advocates of community policing (Brown 198; Goldstein 1990; Skolnick and Bayley 1986; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1990) argue that community policing promotes the true “professionalism” of police officers because they are motivated to solve problems and are responsible for making the important decisions, based on their best judgment, about how to best serve the neighborhoods to which they are assigned.

Community policing strategies, however, may be insufficient in many settings because they require a large number of police officers to be deployed. Also not addressed by the community policing model is the removal of criminals from the neighborhoods before citizens

can begin to reclaim the public space. Wolfgang (1972) first identified the fact that a small subset of society commits a disproportionate amount of the crimes. Similarly, Blumstein, Canela-Chaco, and Cohen (1993) found that the average robber who went to prison (based on interviews with incarcerated and pre-incarcerated robbers) committed eleven to fourteen times more robberies than the average *estimated* among all robbers. In a similar analysis, Canela-Chaco, Blumstein, and Cohen (1997) found that nearly one-quarter to one-half of all imprisoned robbers committed more than ten robberies per year. Spelman further identified that the most frequent ten percent of offenders are responsible for approximately fifty percent of all street crime in any jurisdiction, that ten percent of the highest crime locations account for sixty percent of all criminal incidents, and that ten percent of all crime victims account for over forty percent of all victimizations (1995, 116). This “10/50, 10/60, 10/40” approach suggests that much of a jurisdiction’s criminal activity is highly concentrated and highly dangerous. Strategies which rely solely on the broken windows approach – solving community problems first – have been likened to “giving a cancer patient a facelift: the patient may look better and even feel better but the killer disease hasn’t been arrested” (Maple 1999, 154).

Furthermore, questions remain as to the effects of traditional and community policing strategies on the criminal justice system as a whole. Claims have been made by such notables as Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former NYPD Commissioner William Bratton that virtually all the homicide drop in New York City between 1993 and 1996 resulted from smart and assertive policing (Butterfield 1995; Kelling and Coles 1997; Krauss 1996; Mitchell 1994). Yet others focused more on other sociological factors including a booming economy creating more jobs for low-income youth (Grogger 2000), the changing nature of drug markets (Johnson, Golub, and Dunlap 2000), and the growing incarceration trends (Spelman 2000; Rosenfeld 2000). These



controversies again point to the differences in the effectiveness of different types of crime policies. As Trojanowicz, et al. point out, “In a complex society undergoing rapid and constant change, there are simply too many variables to be able to determine, with any certainty, how much of a role any single factor may play in the rise and fall of overall crime rates” (1998, 82).

*Bridging the Gap Between the Two: Problem-Oriented Policing*

Reforms to the traditional policing model increased the focus of police officers on reacting to crimes rather than preventing them, leading to the need for changes in police tactics and strategies. However, empirical research that attempts to demonstrate the effectiveness of the reforms of community policing in reducing crime rates and decreasing citizens’ feelings of fear does not provide substantive evidence that these strategies actually work. While the melding of traditional crime strategies with the new community policing approach – resulting in a new approach named “problem-oriented policing” – has constituted a revolution in the way the criminal justice system attacks the scourge of crime, not all police departments have been quick to join in this revolution. Change and implementation has, for the most part, occurred on an incremental basis.

This is not to say that change has not occurred. Problem-oriented policing marked the beginning of a switch to focusing on “crime problems” or the interconnectedness of crimes – similar incidents resurfacing in the same geographical area or a simple increase in the number of crimes. The point was to get police officers and departments as a whole to look “beyond” or “behind” the incidents, that as they do so they can identify the underlying “problems” leading to the rash of criminal incidents (Goldstein 1990). With increased focus then, the police would be able to devise effective solutions that may not be solely criminological or sociological in nature (Eck, et al. 1987) and may not even result in arrest (Kelling and Sousa 2001). Understanding the

new and emerging strategies that have come from such an approach for controlling crime has allowed police executives to look beyond “pure” crime control and to take advantage of their increasingly “sophisticated” understanding of crime and its reasons for occurring (Bratton 1999). As far back as 1985, Wilson concluded that “*what* the police do may be more important than how many there are, that patrol focused on particular persons or locations may be better than random patrol, and that speed may be less important than information” (71, emphasis in original). As Deputy Commissioner Maple stated, “put the cops on the dots;” the dots being the map locations where crime has occurred (1999, 128).

The effort to change policing strategies is a process that can take several years to effectuate. The general image of police departments is that they are slow moving and relatively ineffectual bureaucracies with the assumption that very little can be done to change them (Bratton 1998). Yet another problem for police departments as public organizations is that they are slow to respond to the changes in the world around them, and that those changes are not always incorporated into a redefinition of their mandate (Moore and Poethig 1998). This certainly can be seen in many police departments’ individual responses to the emerging crack epidemic in the early 1980s: arresting drug dealers and violent criminals was already a part of their mission, and it was not until crime had already begun a steady upward increase that new tactics and approaches were tried, often with unintended consequences. New Orleans is an exception in that a large number of reforms that greatly overhauled the NOPD and changed the manner of fighting crime were adopted and implemented in a remarkably short period of time. The NOPD moved beyond a process of what Lindblom (1959) called “successive approximation” whereby incremental policy changes are built upon previous initiatives.

*COMSTAT – Beyond Problem-Oriented Policing*

With assistance from the New Orleans Police Foundation, the Linder/Maple Group Inc. of New York City (later renamed the Maple/Linder Group Inc.) was hired to assist Superintendent Pennington and the NOPD in developing a strategic plan for reducing crime in New Orleans. The first step was to implement the COMSTAT model of police management and accountability created by Jack Maple when he was Deputy Commissioner of the New York Police Department (under the overall direction of Commissioner William Bratton) to reach one goal – reduce crime in New Orleans.

COMSTAT is based upon four principles: 1) accurate and timely intelligence clearly communicated to all officers, 2) rapid deployment of officers that is synchronized, coordinated and focused, 3) effective police tactics, and 4) relentless follow-up and assessment and all activities (Maple 1999, 32). These four principles give police organizations the ability to rapidly adapt to the emerging needs of crime reduction:

*Accurate and timely intelligence clearly communicated to all officers.* Information on every criminal incident throughout the city is gathered on a daily basis and mapped to identify patterns, hot spots, trends and to analyze their underlying causes (Maple 1999, 32).

*Rapid deployment that is synchronized, coordinated, and focused.* Top police commanders from all major units – District Commanders and their Detective Lieutenants, Narcotics, Homicide and other centralized investigative units, Traffic, Special Operations, Sex Crimes (or its equivalent), and others as needed – meet on weekly basis with the Department's top command staff to discuss the information that has been gathered to share information and devise immediate strategies to effectuate crime solutions (Maple 1999, 32).

*Effective tactics.* These same commanders work to develop long-term strategies and tactics to combat recurring crime incidents based on patterns and trends that have been identified. Innovation is definitely encouraged and best practices are shared among these commanders (Maple 1999, 32).

*Relentless follow-up and assessment* is perhaps the most important of the four, as the top commanders are debriefed as to their weekly, even daily, efforts to effectuate crime reduction. The information (accurate and timely) obtained from these debriefings – done department-wide at the weekly meetings – is used to redefine deployment strategies and develop new and more effective tactics to emerging crime issues (Maple 1999: 32–3). These plans are documented and commanders are measured by how well their plans work to address crime in their area, and ultimately the city as a whole.

While these four components demonstrate the concepts around which the organization will operate on a day-to-day basis, other concepts are important to the imposition of COMSTAT. All of these are keys to a police department's success.

The first key to any COMSTAT system is the ability to make the organization responsive to leadership in a new manner, one that does not follow the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy. According to Commissioner Bratton, the first step leadership must do is set a defined crime control mission (Bratton 1999). In New Orleans, Superintendent Richard Pennington did just that in 1996 promising a “double-digit” decrease in total violent crime (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated battery) and to cut the murder rate in half within three years. Such a promise clarified the mission for the NOPD and includes a demonstration of management's commitment to specific goals for which the organization and its leaders can be held accountable (Bratton 1998, 11).

Establishing the crime-fighting mission is extremely important. But inherent within this is the concept of accountability, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph. It is imperative that internal accountability procedures be established so that the officers at all levels of the organization are held directly responsible for carrying out organizational goals (Weisburd, et al. 2003). In New Orleans, this meant that all officers of the NOPD were tasked with achieving the double-digit decrease in violent crime and the fifty percent reduction in homicide. Officers and unit commanders that were unable to adhere to this mission would be replaced with new officers and commanders (via transfers) more in line with the department's mission. Concurrently, as the last paragraph indicates, the police chief is also held accountable by the public and the officers in his command. This two-way accountability is imperative because it places demands on the police chief from below to provide the necessary crime fighting tools and rewards (promotions, higher pay, etc.) for those officers who are successful.

In a COMSTAT organization, decision making is pushed down to the lowest levels via a decentralized structure (Moore and Stephens 1991; Bratton 1999; Maple 1999). In a decentralized police department, all officers and detectives are empowered with a greater freedom to make decisions about how to reduce crime on their patrol beat or shift. The decentralized organization also empowers District Commanders with the necessary authority to carry out the same mission (Weisburd, et al. 2003). This forces these commanders to think in terms of geographic territory, not just operational territory. Silverman (1999) calls this the delegation of central decision making authority. This means that the District Commanders in essence become mini-police chiefs of their areas, responsible for the organizational mission of crime reduction within their boundaries. Combined with the accountability measures, this makes

the patrol officer a “mini police chief” of his patrol beat during his shift. Moore and Stephens identify three ideal advantages of a decentralized organization (1991, 76):

- 1) decentralization frees upper-level command staff from having to spend all of their time and energy on either pressing or even minute operational matters;
- 2) decentralization improves operational decisions because the decisions are made more timely and made by the people who are closest to the relevant facts of the situation; and
- 3) decentralization challenges more people in the organization to be creative and striven in meeting the goals of the organization; in general this should result in higher morale as more people are part of the decision making process and assists the top command staff in developing and identifying talent within the organization.

Concurrent with the accountability and decentralization is the organizational flexibility that will allow officers at the various levels (District Commanders, detectives, patrol officers, and other units) to make the necessary decisions in responding to problems. This may include breaking down the long-established “blue walls of silence” between units that inhibit timely communication of critical information. As Jack Maple stated, “one of the biggest lies in any police department is ‘we work well together’” (1999, 103). In addition, empowering these officers with the organizational flexibility to utilize all available resources and tools to address emerging crime problems – including bringing to bear all community assets and resources – will assist them in being successful in their efforts (Weisburd, et al. 2003).

All successful efforts should lead to greater innovation and more successful tactics as those tactics that are utilized and show success should be built upon and replicated throughout the city. Furthermore, an accountable, decentralized, and innovative organization means that

commanders and executive staff should look beyond their own experiences and draw on other knowledge and research about how to continually solve problems better (Weisburd, et al. 2003; Bratton 1999; Silverman 1996).

Ultimately, COMSTAT restructures the organization in the way decisions are made at each level without restructuring the actual lines of organizational authority or hierarchy. Logistically, new units may be created to deal with specific crime problems, sometimes at the expense of existing units. Often, cross-unit tactics are developed that bring together units that prior to the establishment of COMSTAT required senior management approval to free such resources. While this indeed may be a change within the structure, the hierarchy is still in place – the organization however is revitalized and reinvigorated, at least ideally.

Concurrently, more than crime information is included in the analysis, for example, incidents, arrests, summonses, complaints, calls for service, shooting incidents, and victim information; all are measured against police department activity including current deployment patterns, time of occurrence, geography, city demographic information, officer workload, and many others. The inclusion of the additional information forces commanders and ultimately street-level officers themselves (as District Commanders conduct their own weekly meetings in their own Districts with their patrol officers) to view each criminal incident as part of a larger scheme (perhaps) rather than as an isolated event.

#### *COMSTAT and the Policy Process*

Additionally, each aspect of the policy process is met through its principles with the COMSTAT structure, placing the greatest emphasis on the policy's effectiveness by focusing direct attention on the police department's and its officers' activities. The impetus for the institution of COMSTAT – or any crime policy – can come from one of three actors, all of whom

operate within the crime policy domain discussed previously – political leaders, organization leaders, or the public. The COMSTAT method was formulated by police officers for police officers. The need to institute a new policy was driven by the high crime levels occurring in New Orleans and placing such need on the new Mayor’s agenda. Once adopted by Superintendent Pennington, COMSTAT is an adaptive policy building upon successes and failures. Its implementation is based upon the same policing activities that police officers have been engaging in since the inception of police organizations – preventing crime, identifying and arresting criminals, and improving public safety. Furthermore, the COMSTAT method highlights the effectiveness of police activities and gives the public an increased role in their evaluation, a necessary condition for the evaluation of any political policy.

Strictly speaking then, COMSTAT is a “strategic control system” (Weisburd, et al. 2003, 426) that collects and disseminates information about past crime incidents and track solutions for dealing with them, including dealing with future crime incidents. Over time however, it has become shorthand for the full range of strategic problem solving within a police department. Within the NOPD, much like other police departments that have adopted the COMSTAT approach (*Compstat* in the NYPD and LAPD, *Comstat* in the Baltimore Police Department, *COBRA* in the Atlanta Police Department, etc.), it means more than just identifying locations of where crimes have occurred and detailing police response to them, although crime mapping and other technological approaches are a key part of the process.

#### *Summary of Policing Strategies*

All three policing strategies have adherents and can claim success for the varying levels of crime reduction both in terms of severity and duration that have occurred in many cities throughout the country. The question still remains however – which style of policing has the



best impact on crime reduction in a city as measured by long-term and sustained decreases in crime?

### Conclusion

Both the sociological approach and the policing approach (as a surrogate for the political/criminological approach) have their adherents and both claim to effectuate change in ongoing crime trends. The question remains as to which is the best approach. Both approaches, utilizing different variables, seek to offer ways to prevent future crimes from occurring while seeking ways to solve present crimes. Sociological theories stress improvements in living conditions such that future crime levels will be reduced by steering individuals to activities other than criminal. Policing theories stress deterrence to criminal behavior by identifying, emphasizing, and advertising the consequences of criminal activity.

As discussed in Chapter Two, New Orleans experienced nearly twenty successive quarters of striking decreases in crime since the imposition of COMSTAT in 1996, and although some categories of crime began to increase slightly after 2001, overall crime remains emphatically lower than it was prior to COMSTAT's implementation. Before any credit can be given to COMSTAT itself, its effects must be tested against competing hypotheses of crime reduction, specifically those of the sociological approach.

In addition and relative to the policy process, New Orleans presents an optimal location to examine public awareness and reaction to this crime reduction and change in NOPD policy. Success of a policy must ultimately be measured by its impact and by the general public's satisfaction with it. It will be interesting to assess whether the citizens of New Orleans deem the reformation of the NOPD to be effective. That is, has a remade NOPD increased their confidence in the police and caused their fears of crime to subside?

## CHAPTER 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF MODELS AND TESTS OF HYPOTHESES OF CRIME

### REDUCTION

The measure of public safety – and the effectiveness of any crime policy – continues to be based on whether crime is up or down, with the adequacy or effectiveness of police performance inversely related to that measure: if crime is down that the police are doing a good job and vice-versa (Brady 1996). Indeed, the presence or absence of crime is the occupational standard against which police programs are measured (Trojanowicz, et al. 1998). Thus, the impression is formed in the public's mind that it is the police officers who are responsible for reducing crime. In fact, the police are perhaps the only actors in the criminal justice system whose performance can be measured so simply by the public (underscoring these perceptions are the ever-present television shows in which the perpetrators are caught through good police work and the public is spared any future menace, conveniently all within a one-hour time frame). The question thus faced by political leaders and police administrators is how to focus officers' duties to reduce crime.

The first tenet of COMSTAT – accurate and timely intelligence – places primary emphasis on knowing what crimes are being committed, where the crimes are being committed, and who is committing the crimes. Once these are identified, the second tenet of COMSTAT – rapid deployment – forces police officers to act quickly to apprehend those responsible for committing the crimes. If offenders cannot be identified or arrested quickly, the third and fourth tenets – effective tactics and relentless follow-up and assessment – go to future police activity designed also to prevent future crimes from occurring: arresting criminals removes them from the streets before they can commit multiple offenses. As DiIulio (1995) noted, assertive police

efforts to take criminals off the street are responsible (in part) for the recent decline in crime rates.

However, as the last chapter indicates, there are two primary approaches to studying crime decreases and increases – criminological and sociological. As recently as 2001, Kelling and Sousa indicated that there had (to date) been no systematic attempt to statistically parse out the relative contributions of police actions from the other variables that have been thrown into the mix, such as the economy, demographics, changing drug use patterns on crime, etc. (2001, 1). They further state that few studies have combined multiple factors into a single study: most studies tend to focus solely on homicide to the exclusion of other crimes; other studies lack comparison by either focusing on a city as a whole or by not comparing it to another city; or they lack “qualitative understanding and insight” into what the data mean (Kelling and Sousa 2001, 3–4). This study will deal with each of these three weaknesses they identify, first by focusing on all types of crime as depicted by the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting program (discussed below), second by comparing the City of New Orleans to itself across time<sup>7</sup> so that comparisons can be made to the pre-COMSTAT/post-COMSTAT period, and third, by presenting sufficient “qualitative insight” into the data given the personal experiences of the researcher. While this last part can introduce researcher bias into the study, the strict adherence to scientific principles and methods will protect against any potential effects.

What is Responsible for the Dramatic Crime Reduction in New Orleans post-1996?

This study will test whether the implementation of COMSTAT is a significant predictor of the crime reductions in New Orleans. That crime decreased after the introduction of COMSTAT, by itself, is insufficient to demonstrate a causal connection between the two; but, a

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<sup>7</sup> Kelling and Sousa focused their study on the city of New York; to handle the comparison issue, they used a random sample of the 76 police precincts. Because New Orleans has only 8 police districts such a replication cannot be undertaken.

full understanding of the trends prior to the introduction of COMSTAT is necessary. More importantly, other aspects of police behavior as well as environmental factors must be included. These trends will be measured against the drop in crime experienced since 1994, both separately and in combination, to determine the impact each has had on the overall decrease in crime in New Orleans (see Patton 1981). As Eck and Maguire (2000) point out, police departments have experimented with efforts to focus their activities where they can have the greatest impact since the late 1970s, but scholarly research examining the contribution of COMSTAT to crime reduction is lacking.

Following Eck and Maguire (2000, 230–3), four criteria are needed to test whether COMSTAT is a major contributor to crime reduction: one, a description of how COMSTAT influences crime; two, a statistical association between the implementation of COMSTAT and reductions in crime; three, data showing the decrease in crime came after the establishment of COMSTAT; and four, the elimination of rival explanations for any decrease in crime.

Accordingly, Eck and Maguire's four criteria will be met as follows: one, a description of how COMSTAT influences crime has been discussed in Chapter Three of this study; criteria two through four will be discussed and analyzed in this chapter.

Eck and Maguire initially focused on the relationship of COMSTAT to the reduction in homicides. I am extending their argument by associating the implementation of COMSTAT in New Orleans to reductions in the composite indices of the Uniform Crime Reporting Part I crime types (violent crime, property crime, and total crime). The reason for utilizing the Uniform Crime Reports as opposed to other crime statistical compilations is discussed next.

### *The Data: The Uniform Crime Reports*

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports were invented by the International Association of the Chiefs of Police (IACP) in 1929. Although technically there are eight categories that compose Part I crimes (arson was added in 1979), the seven original categories and their definitions are (Department of Justice 1995):

- Murder and non-negligent manslaughter – the willful (i.e. non-negligent) killing of one human being by another (traffic fatalities are excluded).
- Forcible rape – the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Rapes by force and attempts or assaults to rape regardless of the age of the victim are included (statutory offenses, or rape where no force was used, i.e. the victim was under the age of consent, are excluded).
- Robbery – the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear.
- Aggravated assault (aggravated battery in Louisiana) – an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault usually is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm (simple assaults are excluded).
- Burglary – the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft (attempted forcible entry is included).
- Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft) – the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. Examples are thefts of bicycles or automobile accessories, shoplifting, pocket-picking, or the stealing of any property or article which is not taken by force and violence or by fraud. Attempted larcenies are included; embezzlement, confidence games, forgery, worthless checks, etc. are considered UCR Part II crimes and categorized accordingly.<sup>8</sup>
- Motor vehicle theft – the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle. A motor vehicle is self-propelled and runs on the surface and not on rails (motorboats, construction

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<sup>8</sup> The FBI does not provide a clear reason as to why certain crimes are classified Part I and others Part II other than this blanket statement: “The Part II Offenses encompass all other crime classifications outside those defined as Part I [earlier in this publication]. In November, 1932, the UCR Program adopted a Standard Classification of Offenses for the compilation of criminal statistics. This classification was devised and adopted in order that law enforcement, judicial, and penal statistics might be uniformly compiled in terms of a single classification of offenses” (FBI 1984, 79).

equipment, airplanes, and farming equipment are specifically excluded from this category).

The totals for each of the first four crime categories are summed to compose the Violent Crime Index; the totals for each of the last three crime categories are summed to compose the Property Crime Index. The UCR data are compiled from monthly law enforcement reports or individual crime incident reports transmitted directly to the FBI or to centralized state agencies that then report to the FBI. For example, because the city of New Orleans is coterminous with the Parish of Orleans, the NOPD does not have “higher” law enforcement authority to whom it submits its UCRs. The state of Ohio, however, requires all law enforcement agencies (police departments and sheriff’s offices) to submit their crime statistics to the Ohio Bureau of Public Safety, which then compiles the UCRs for each jurisdiction and sends them off to the FBI. The UCR Program then provides crime counts for the nation as a whole, as well as for regions, states, counties, cities and towns. This allows for studies of various comparisons – among neighboring jurisdictions and among those with similar populations throughout the country, and other common characteristics. The UCR Program represents over 96% of the total population of the United States (Department of Justice 1995).

#### *Problems Using UCR Data*

It is important to note that the UCR Program only counts those offenses “known to law enforcement.” This means incidents and occurrences that are brought to the attention of the police by victims, witnesses, or by direct observations by police officers themselves. As such, they represent the “official” level of crime in a community (Stephens 1999). Also, other offenses that citizens consider “serious” or cares deeply about are not counted, such as narcotics offenses or other vice crimes.

### *The UCR hierarchy rule and crime classification*

This is not the only problem with using UCR data. Although the UCR program captures those crimes reported to police, it does have a unique crime classifying and scoring procedure that can artificially deflate the actual number of crimes committed and reported to police. This occurs when multiple crimes are committed simultaneously (FBI 1984). Under this “hierarchy rule” only the highest or most serious offense is counted. For example, assume that during the commission of an armed robbery of a commercial eatery the offender strikes an employee with the gun; after the robbery the offender runs from the eatery and steals an automobile at the curb for a getaway vehicle. By law, three Part I UCR crimes have been committed – robbery, aggravated assault and auto theft – but on the UCR report only the robbery will be counted because it is the most serious crime. This is not to say that the other two crimes will not be counted by the local police department nor will the perpetrator not be charged by the district attorney’s office for those crimes; the hierarchy rule counts only the most serious crime in a multiple offense situation. As stated by the Department of Justice, the primary reason for the hierarchy rule is to “prevent the double-counting of crime” (Maltz 1999, 14).

The hierarchy rule also allows for direct comparison across jurisdictions by putting crime rates onto the same classification scale. For example, the state of Louisiana has the crime of feticide (L.R.S. 14:32.5) – “the killing of an unborn child by the act, procurement, or culpable omission of a person other than the mother of the unborn child” (abortion is not included). Feticide is considered a homicide under Louisiana law, as it is in other but not all jurisdictions. However, feticide is not part of homicide as classified in the UCR program. Accordingly, the shooting death of a pregnant woman in which the baby also dies would be considered a double homicide in New Orleans but only one homicide for UCR purposes.

### *Artificially downgrading crime*

The hierarchy rule and classification scheme can also lead to a final problem noted with using UCR data. Crimes are reported to the police who classify them, score them, tabulate them, and send them to the State or directly to the UCR program. This can provide the opportunity for intentional manipulation of the statistics themselves, or “downgrading,” to make the city appear safer than it really is. As Stephens notes, in some cases “the careers of police chiefs and sheriffs have been affected in either positive or negative ways by these statistics” (1999, 56).

Downgrading occurs when police classify the crime that is reported to them as a Part II UCR crime, or a less severe crime, instead of the proper Part I UCR crime. The following is an actual example of a downgraded UCR crime that occurred in New Orleans; the incident report was viewed by this author during his work with the NOPD: a homeowner in the Third District went to bed at night; when she woke up the next morning, she noticed that her two thousand dollar fountain was missing from the cement foundation in her front yard. She called the police to report the theft; the report had been classified as a “miscellaneous incident – lost or stolen” (a Part II UCR crime) rather than a “larceny theft” (a Part I UCR crime) because in the written words of the officer who responded, “victim could not state for certainty that it had been taken by someone else.” Not accurately recording this crime in the proper UCR category can give the appearance that New Orleans is safer than it really is.

This is not the only problem that the NOPD has had relative to accurately capturing UCR crimes. In June 2003, an internal NOPD investigation uncovered that crime statistics in the NOPD’s First District had been undercounted from May 2002 to May 2003: of the 700 incident reports that were examined, 42% were found to have been classified incorrectly. Of those



reports, 200 involved “serious crimes” such as shootings, stabbings, and carjacking. These serious reports were instead labeled “miscellaneous incidents” (Grace 2003). Many of these incidents were later reclassified and investigated. Ultimately, of the six officers involved including the District Commander, five were fired and one Lieutenant was demoted to Patrol Officer. After a series of appeals and hearings, all six were exonerated; five returned to the NOPD. Despite the increased level of attention brought to this practice, no department-wide audit was conducted, nor have procedures been put into place within the Department to review incidents on an on-going basis.

#### *UCRs versus other national reporting programs*

Despite these limitations, the UCR program, while not the only nationwide measure of crime, is considered a superior measure of crime levels than other crime statistic collections such as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The NCVS is a nationwide representative sample of approximately 49,000 households (or 100,000 persons) at least 12 years old, collecting information on crimes suffered by these individuals and households. According to the BJS, households stay in the sample for three years and are interviewed at six-month intervals. Because the NCVS was designed to complement the UCR program, they share many characteristics. However, while they define most of the crimes the same, the NCVS does not measure homicide, commercial crimes such as burglaries of stores, and crimes committed against children ages 12 and younger. Conversely, the UCR Part-I Program does not measure rape against men, sexual assaults, nor simple assaults (assaults/batteries committed without a weapon and that do not cause serious injury). Other discrepancies also exist: the burglary definitions are different for each program and the two programs calculate crime rates using different bases – the UCR program calculates crime rates

per capita (number of crimes per 100,000 persons) and the NCVS calculates crime rates per household (number of crimes per 1,000 households) (Department of Justice 1995).

It is important to note that these two measures differ because they are collected for different purposes. Both use different data collection methods and measure an overlapping – but not identical – set of offenses against an overlapping – but not identical – population (Rand and Rennison 2002). The Department of Justice estimates that as much as two-thirds of property crime and half of all violent crime is not reported to the police. Accordingly, the crime rates measured by the UCR program may represent anywhere from one-third to one-half of the total crime being committed (Department of Justice 2000). While these facts may make for an argument for utilizing NCVS data, the fact that it does not measure certain crimes would make this study less inclusive than necessary. Furthermore, because NCVS data are compiled only on an annual basis and only for the nation as a whole, parsing out New Orleans data by quarter would be unwieldy and possibly yield such a small sample to make the data unworkable.

There is also a third national measure of crime in the United States that must be discussed relative to the UCR program. That program is the National Incident-Based Reporting System, or NIBRS. NIBRS moves beyond aggregate statistics to individual records for each reported crime incident and its associated arrest. In other words, NIBRS eliminates the UCRs “hierarchy rule” to account for each criminal incident committed (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997). As a result, NIBRS rates differ from the individual UCR crime rates to following extent: rape, robbery and aggravated assault rates are about 1% higher on average, burglary rates are lower by an average of 0.5%, larceny rates are higher by an average of 3.4%, and motor vehicle theft rates are higher by an average of 4.5% (Rantala 2000). While NIBRS appears to be a more accurate count of criminal incidents to the police, NIBRS is not yet a national program currently representing only

5.7% of the U.S. population (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997). In addition, the New Orleans Police Department does not record its statistics according to NIBRS. Thus, attempting to use NIBRS data in this study would effectively yield no study at all.

Examining the Crime Trends in New Orleans, 1985–2005, Pre-COMSTAT vs. Post-COMSTAT

Starting the analysis with UCR crime data from 1985 allows for sufficient examination of crime trends in New Orleans prior to the implementation of COMSTAT in 1996, and especially allows for the detail of the high crime period 1994–96. Also, continuing the examination through to 2005 allows for ample examination of the post-COMSTAT period. The year 1997 is the primary demarcation for crime fighting efforts in New Orleans because it represents the first full year after the implementation of COMSTAT. Although 1994 is substantively important because both a new Mayor and Police Superintendent assumed office – changes in political leadership often precede dramatic changes in policy – the actual change in policy did not occur until the fall of 1996. However, not all data for the independent variables could be collected on a quarterly basis back to 1985; some was collected on an annual basis. These issues will be discussed below.

*The Dependent Variable: Quarterly Changes in Crime in New Orleans*

The dependent variable in this study will be the percent change (increase or decrease) in UCR Part I crime totals (as submitted by the New Orleans Police Department to the FBI) as compared to UCR Part I crime totals for the same quarter of the previous year, for each quarter beginning January 1985 to June 2005. Comparing quarterly totals to the same quarter of the previous year for reductions/increases ensures consistent measurement and controls for seasonal changes and events. The equation for measuring the quarterly percent change is as follows:

$$\Delta V: (UCR(1Q_t) - UCR(1Q_{t-1})) / UCR(1Q_{t-1})$$

where:

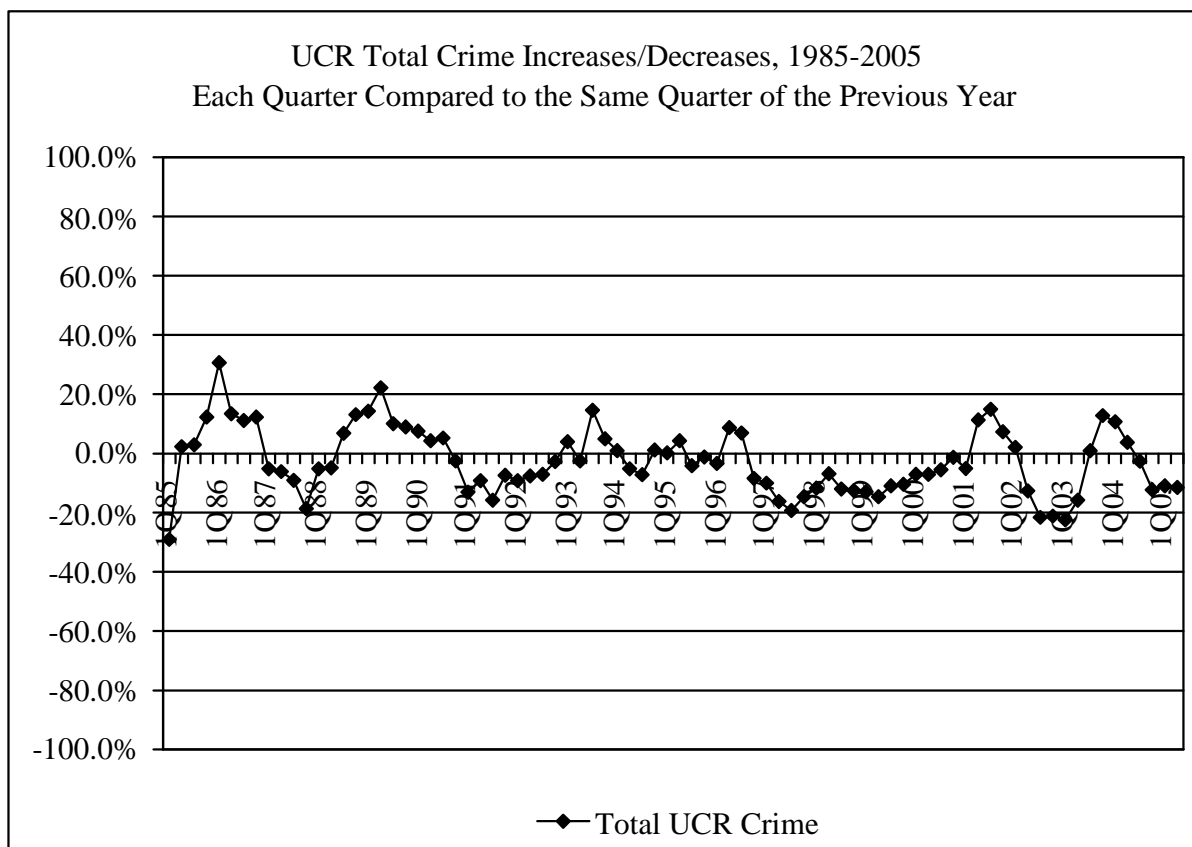
$\Delta V$  is the Quarterly Percent Change in Crime

$UCR$  is the UCR Part I crime totals recorded in that quarter

$t$  is the year

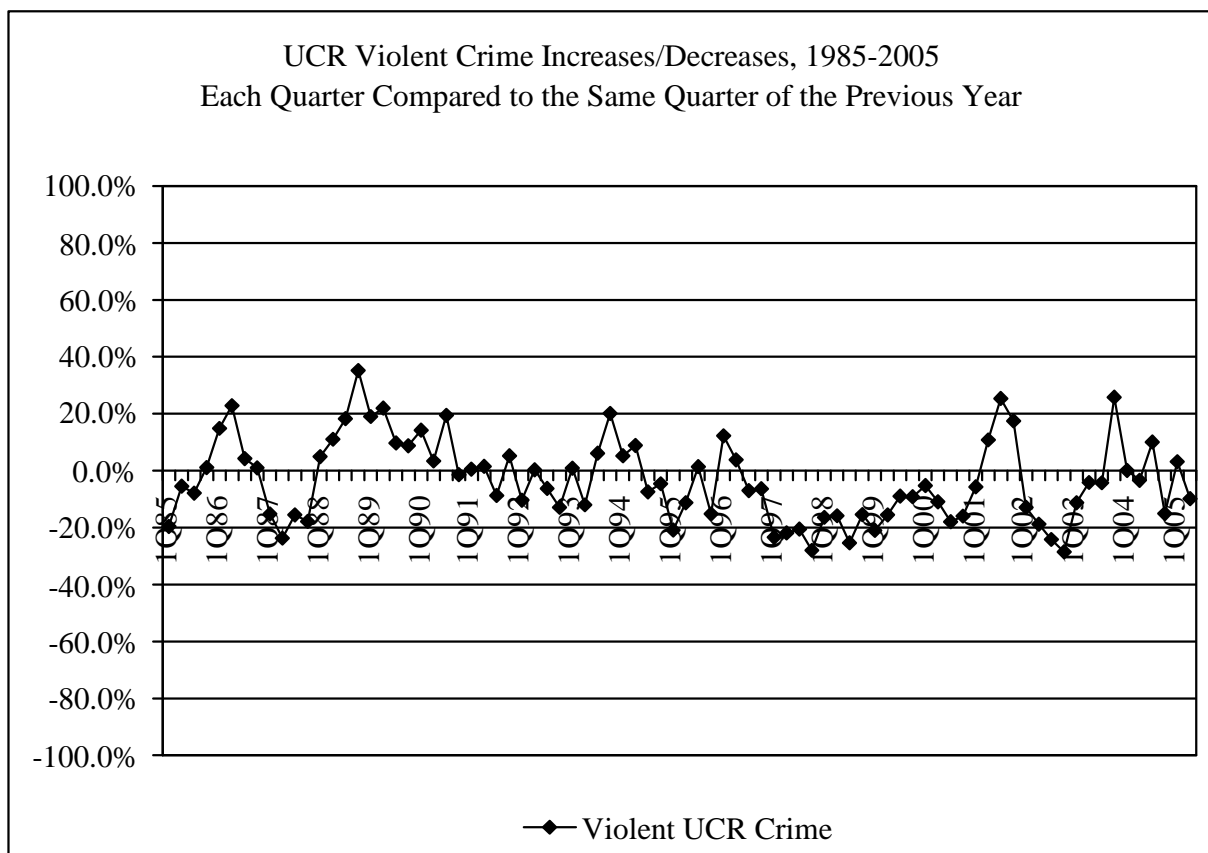
In addition to examining the overall crime trends in New Orleans, it is important that the total UCR crimes be broken out by the component crime indexes (violent and property) and each trend examined independently. As Blumstein notes, although homicide and robbery are the “principal indicators of violence” (2000, 13), fluctuations in one category of crime can overwhelm significant changes in another. Continues Blumstein, “it is more appropriate to deal with the various violent crime types individually in order to avoid the problem of distortions in the aggregate caused by changes in the numerically dominant offenses of robbery or aggravated assault” (2000, 15). Furthermore, assessing the trends individually allows for more in-depth examination for the underlying decreases. However, because the trends in the individual crime types can vary – one crime increasing and another decreasing concurrently – it makes more sense to examine the crime indexes rather than the individual crimes. Murder however, is the exception because of its egregious nature. The charts below show the quarterly increases and decreases for total crime, violent crime, property crime, and murder. While some swings are indeed dramatic from one quarter to the next (as compared to the same quarter of the previous year), using the indexes reveals sustained rather than short-term trends in crime escalation and decreases that would be masked by focusing on the individual crime types.

Figure 5-1



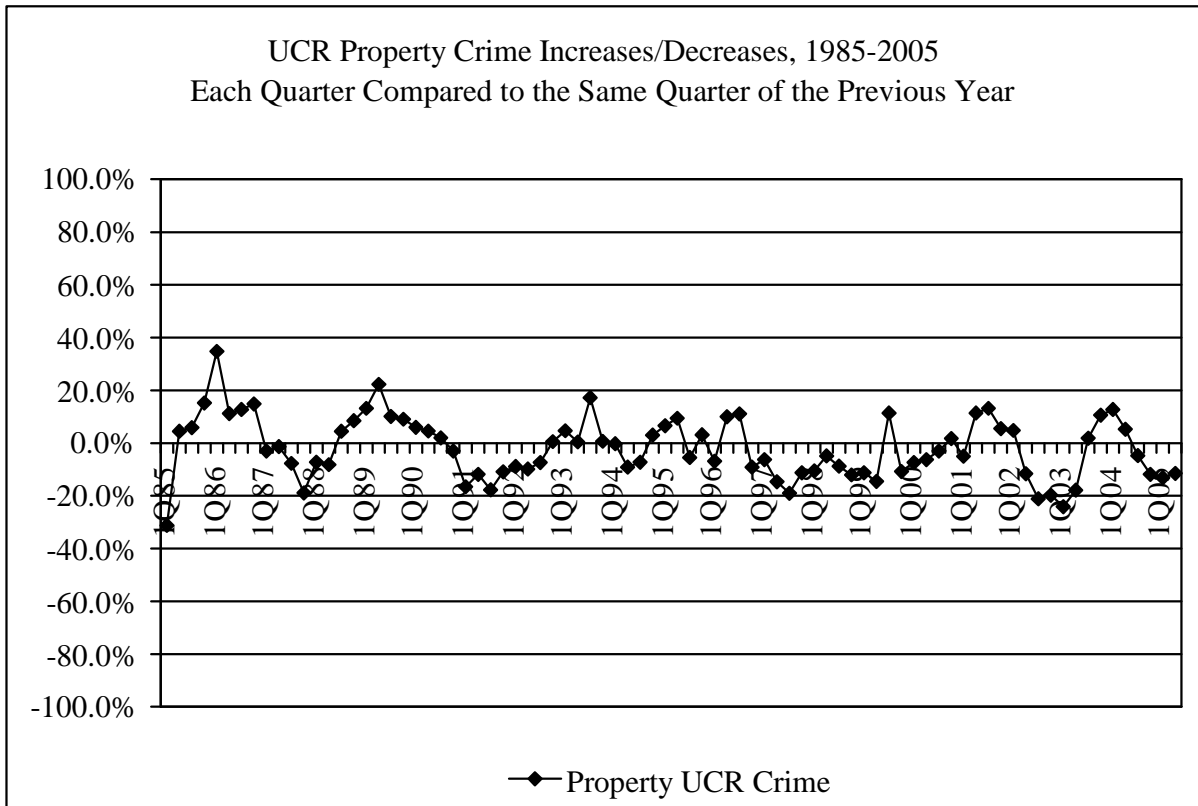
Source: New Orleans Police Department

Figure 5-2



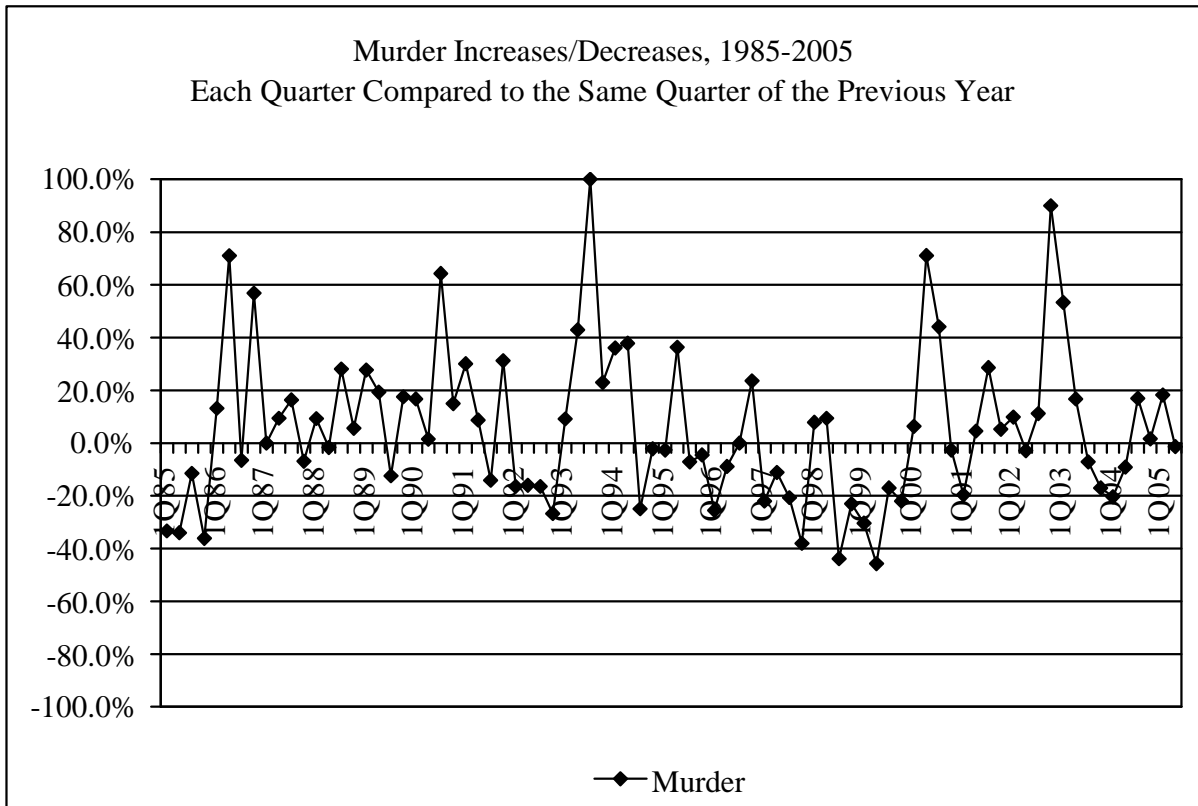
Source: New Orleans Police Department

Figure 5-3



Source: New Orleans Police Department

Figure 5-4



Source: New Orleans Police Department

As seen from Figures 5-1 through 5-4, the swings in murder are more dramatic than those of the component indexes and the total crime index given that the numbers of incidents per quarter are smaller in comparison, rarely accounting for more than one percent of all criminal incidents in New Orleans (the most murders occurring in any quarter was 132 in the third quarter of 1993; the same quarter in 1992 saw only 66 murders – an increase of 100.0%). At first look then, it would seem that crime declines are independent of each other; in the same quarter, crime could decline in one category and rise in another. Because the imposition of COMSTAT is hypothesized to have a effect on the crime trends, each trend needs to be examined separately to test each hypothesis individually.



### *Independent Variables and Hypotheses*

#### *Arrests*

Several studies have found a strong negative correlation between the rate at which persons are arrested for an offense, and the rate at which that offense occurs (Sjoquist 1973; Wilson and Boland 1976, 1978). The logic behind this correlation is that there are finite numbers of people who are committing those types of crimes and that arresting the perpetrators and incarcerating them will prevent them from committing additional crimes. Ergo, crime will go down because there will be fewer people in the city committing those types of crimes. Accordingly, the historical arrest data of the NOPD since 1990 will be used, 1990 being the latest year data are available that is broken down by type of arrest. As with the crime totals, quarterly arrest totals will be used and compared to the same quarter of the previous year. The resulting increases/decreases will also allow for seasonal changes and events to be controlled.

The NOPD breaks down arrests by five different types – state arrests (violations of state law and often referred to as UCR arrests), city arrests (violations of municipal ordinances and often referred to as misdemeanor arrests), narcotics arrests (arrests for drug-related offenses), traffic arrests (including DWI arrests), and juvenile arrests (including truancy and curfew violations). Arrests are perhaps the primary indicator of police activity under the COMSTAT model and, as previous studies have shown, are directly related to the crime levels. I hypothesize arrests are negatively correlated to UCR crime totals: increases in arrests will lead to decreases in crime.

Just as there are problems inherent with police recording their own crime statistics, so too are there problems with police recording their own arrest statistics. A national Police Foundation report in 1984 found that arrest statistics, unlike crime statistics, are not comparable across police

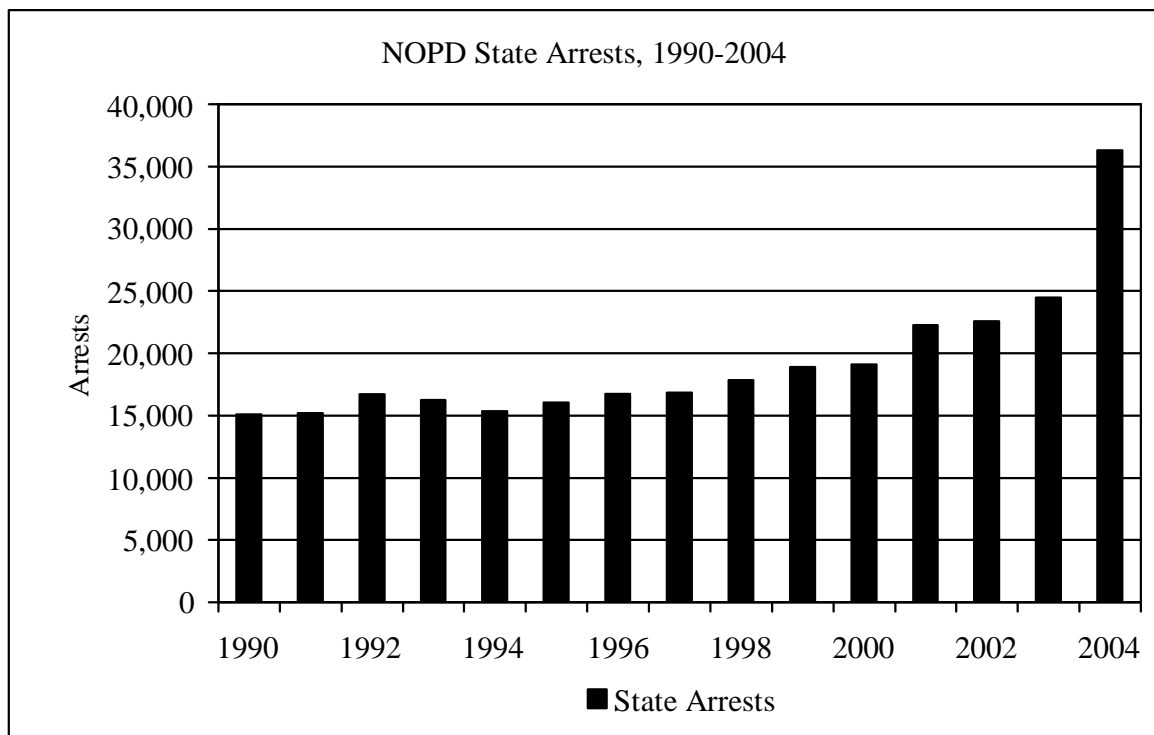
departments and that an “intensive” examination of four distinct police departments resulted in findings that two police departments were actually *undercounting* arrests while the other two were *over-reporting* arrests (Sherman and Glick 1984, 1). Even in New Orleans, the number of arrests recorded by the NOPD is not the total number of arrests in the City as there are other police departments and sheriff’s departments with arrest powers operating in the City. An analysis of a sample of arrests recorded citywide during the years under study here revealed that the NOPD was responsible for, on average, over 95% of all arrests. Accordingly, the NOPD totals used in this study are considered to be representative of all arrests that occurred within the City of New Orleans.

This is not the only problem with arrest statistics relative to crime statistics: the UCR’s “hierarchy rule” also plays a considerable role. As discussed earlier, the UCR program only counts the most serious crime even if multiple crimes have occurred. However, it is possible – again, due to political pressure to show a positive effort in reducing crime – to overstate arrests by counting each charge (in a multiple offense instance) as a separate “arrest.” In addition, as the Police Foundation study reports via a survey of 196 police departments, an “arrest” could be counted as something less than “charging and booking” a suspect, including “placing a citizen in a car and driving to a police facility” (Sherman and Glick 1984, 5). This discussion demonstrates that an “arrest” may not always result in the offender being incarcerated prior to arraignment. Accordingly, it may be difficult to directly relate arrest activity to decreases in criminal activity. As Sherman and Glick conclude, “even year-to-year evaluations of arrest trends may be suspect due to the error rate” (1984, 8). Finally, as Moore and Stephens point out, increases and even decreases in traditional measures of police outputs such as arrests may bear no relationship to new programs or initiatives put into place by agency leadership: arrests,

citations, summonses, etc. may be more a measure of individual officer activity, efficiency, or even personal initiative (1991, 91).

The following chart shows the annual totals of arrests by crime type from 1990 to 2004. The annual totals for 2005 are not included due to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath's effects on the NOPD's ability to record data.

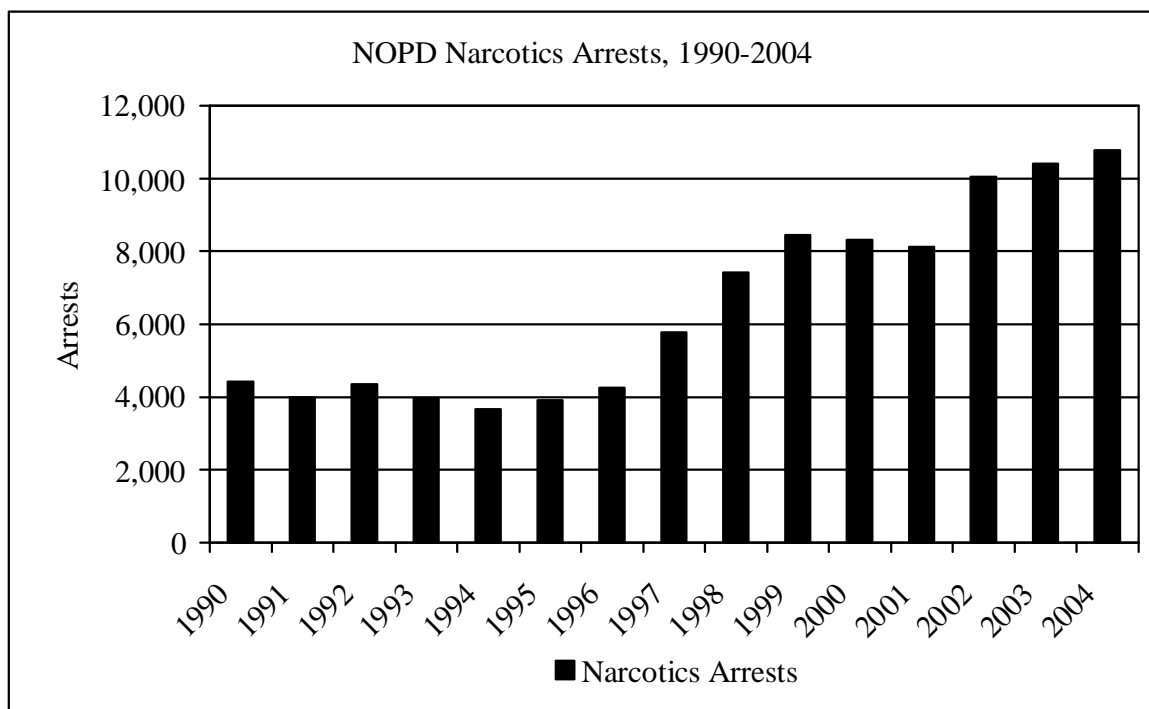
Figure 5-5



Source: New Orleans Police Department

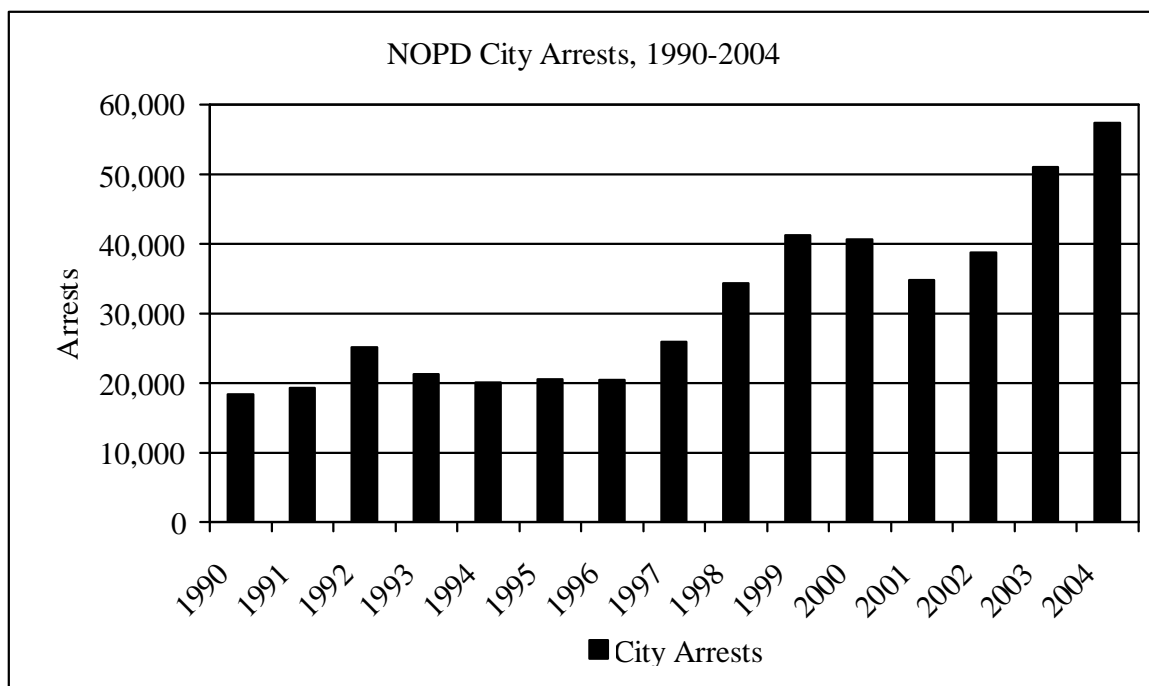
As seen from the above chart, state arrests stayed relatively stable, albeit increasing slightly each year from 1994 onwards. The final year, 2004, appears to be an outlier, given the dramatic increase in arrests over 2003.

Figure 5-6



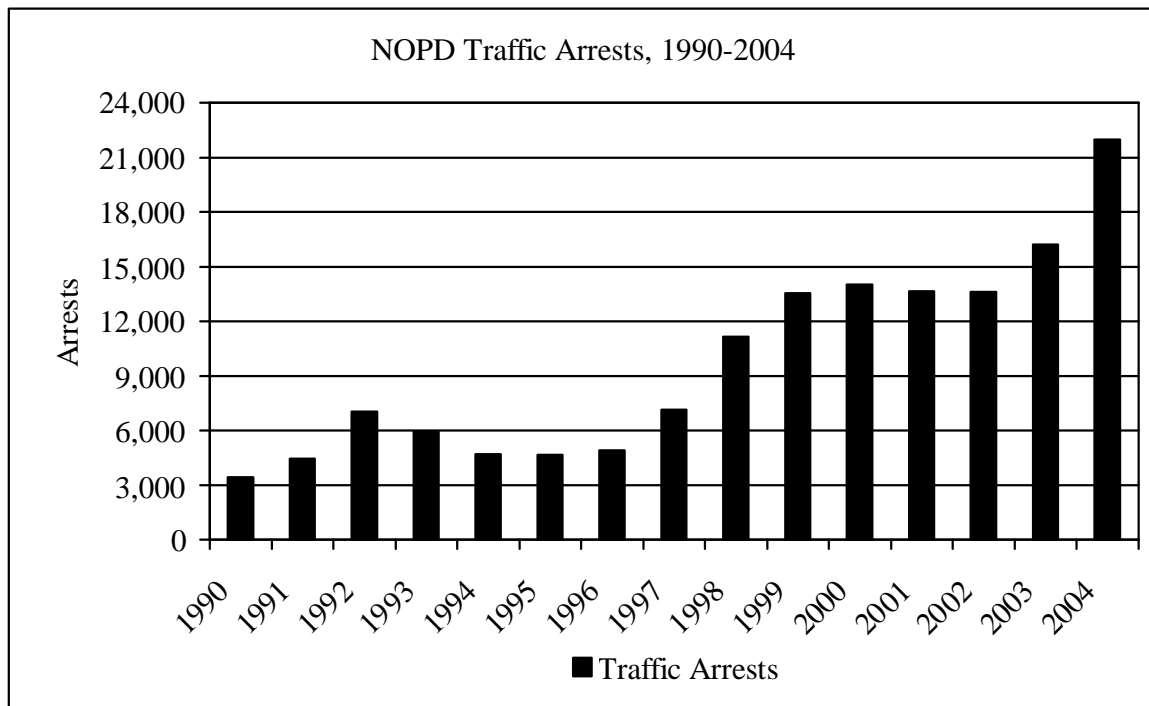
Source: New Orleans Police Department

Figure 5-7



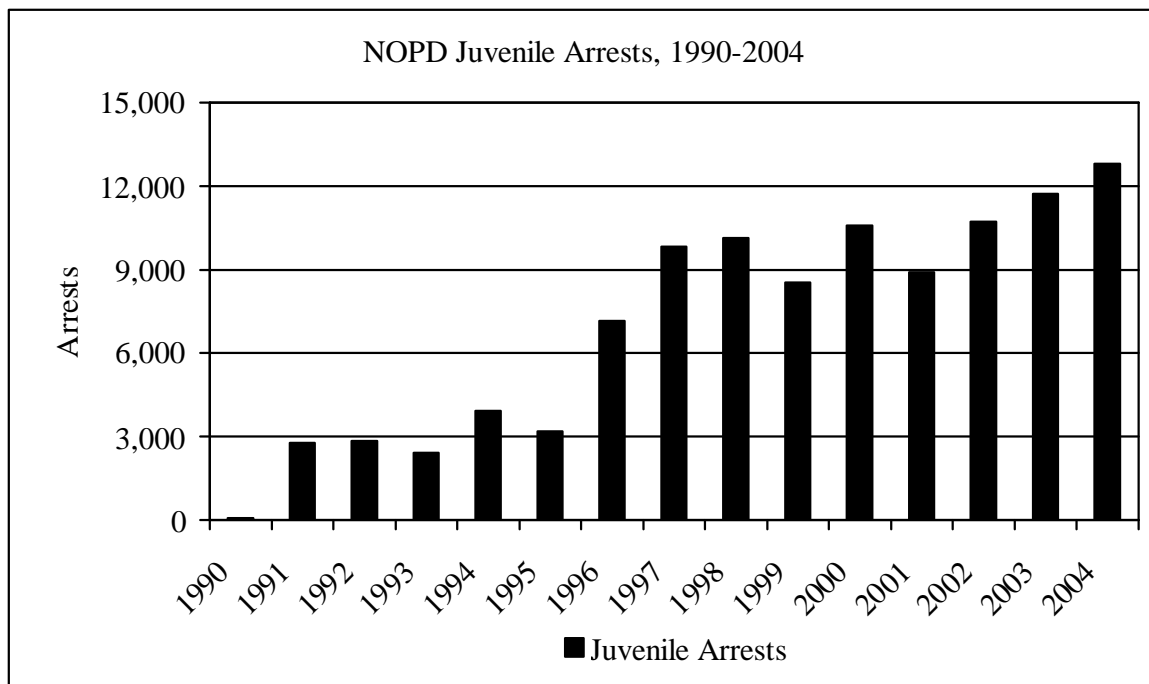
Source: New Orleans Police Department

Figure 5-8



Source: New Orleans Police Department

Figure 5-9



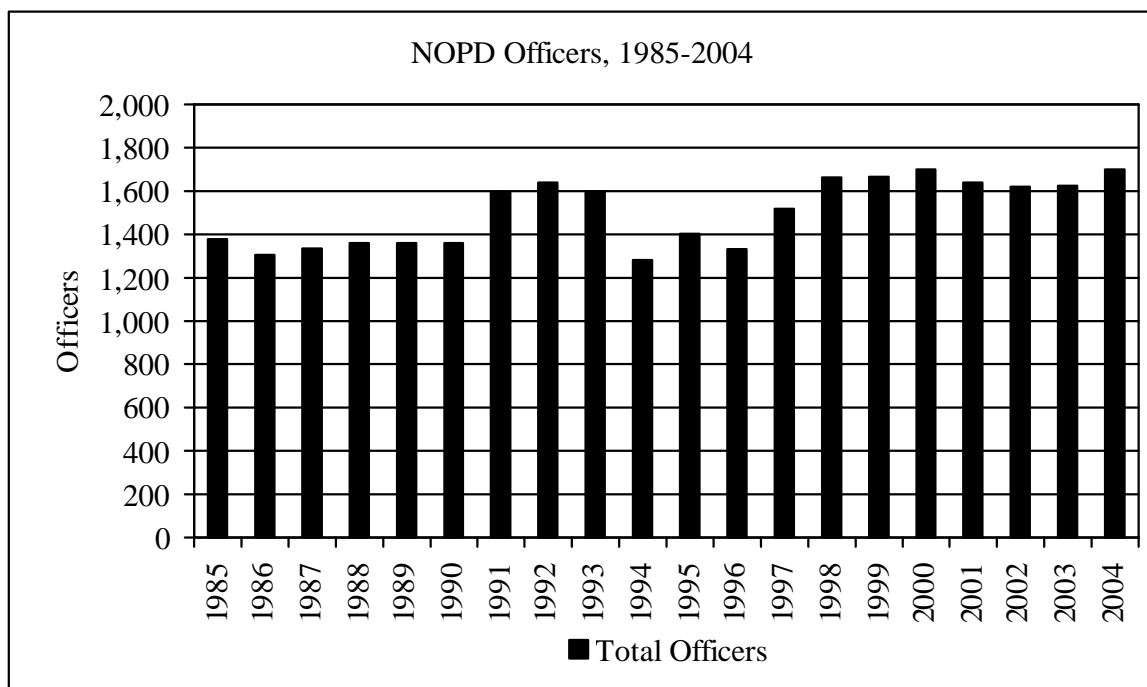
Source: New Orleans Police Department

The above four graphs all show dramatic increases in totals since 1996, with the start of those increases occurring in that year. The pattern for traffic arrests in 2004 is similar to that of state arrests, showing a dramatic increase in 2004 compared to 2003. The overall trends of these five graphs indicate that the conventional wisdom is holding: that crime declined because arrests increased. As another point of reference, although these graphs show annual totals, the quarterly comparisons will be used in this analysis to control for seasonality, similar to the treatment of the dependent variable.

### *Personnel Levels*

The annual historical levels of sworn NOPD officers, or commissioned strength of the department, since 1985 will be used to measure the personnel level of the NOPD. Due to data availability issues, the 1985–90 annual totals were obtained via the FBI and include police recruits in the total officer strength. The 1991–2005 quarterly totals were obtained directly from the NOPD manpower reports that separate out the officer totals by rank, including those at the “Recruit” rank. Although recruits are officer candidates still in training – either still enrolled in the police academy or in the field training portion (post-academy) of their training, I have included these officers because although the reports do not further separate recruits according to training phase, recruits in their field training portion are actually out on the streets, working with their Field Training Officer. In addition, the annual totals are used rather than the quarterly totals because of only small changes from quarter to quarter versus year to year. The following graph shows these annual totals from 1985–2004. Again, 2005 is excluded due to Hurricane Katrina and its effects on the NOPD.

Figure 5-10



Source: New Orleans Police Department

The inclusion of personnel levels in the analysis of crime reduction in New Orleans is important. Some researchers believe that the police do not and probably cannot have a significant effect on crime rates (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Klockars 1983; Moran 1995). This view stems from over two decades of evaluation research showing that, within reason, neither the level of police resources nor the core strategies of policing appear to have much effect on crime (Eck and Maguire 2000). However dramatic reductions in violent crime since 1993 have led some researchers to question this stance (DiIulio 1995; Kelling and Coles 1996). Sherman in fact suggests “police presence can reduce or even increase the crime rate substantially in specific places at specific times, depending on what the police do” (1995, 330). Following this, Bratton states that “the number of officers deployed is an essential ingredient in this [crime fighting] formula but it is probably less important in terms of reducing crime than the *manner* in which officers are deployed” (1998, 19, emphasis in original).

And recent research shows that both police executives and the public believe increasing the number of police to be an important and effective method for reducing crime (Maguire and Pastore 1995; McEwen 1995; National Association of Police Organizations [NAPO] 1997, 1999). This method even received national attention in 1992 when President Clinton promised to increase the number of police officers nationwide by 100,000 to combat high crime rates. However, after examining twenty-seven studies measuring the effects of police staffing on crime reduction, Eck and Maguire concluded that there is no “reliable evidence to support the link between *recent* increases in the number of police officers and the drop in violent crime” (2000, 209). As they further state, “many of these studies suffer from flaws in design, analysis, or both” (2000, 214). Clearly, the second, third, and fourth tenets of COMSTAT require enough police officers to deploy rapidly, to continue with effective tactics, and to follow-up and assess individual policies relentlessly. The study here hypothesizes that the increase in NOPD officers is one of several variables leading to the reduction of violent crime. This study also follows from Wilson and Boland’s (1978) study of 35 large cities by assuming that communities respond to increased crime rates by hiring more police with the expectation that more police officers will lead to increases in arrest rates and a corresponding reduction in crime.

There is also an issue with exactly how to operationalize this variable, one point of which has already been made, that being the inclusion of police recruits in the analysis despite their not officially being commissioned officers. A secondary issue concerns *enforcement strength* versus *commissioned strength*. Enforcement strength refers to those officers in enforcement positions as compared to administrative positions. A singular example is the Superintendent of Police – while he is counted in the commissioned strength totals a question remains as to whether or not he is in an enforcement position. To alleviate this problem, I am equating commissioned



strength with enforcement strength as officers can be transferred from one assignment to another at the discretion of the Superintendent; it remains true however that some officers perform primarily administrative tasks.

### *Sociological Indicators*

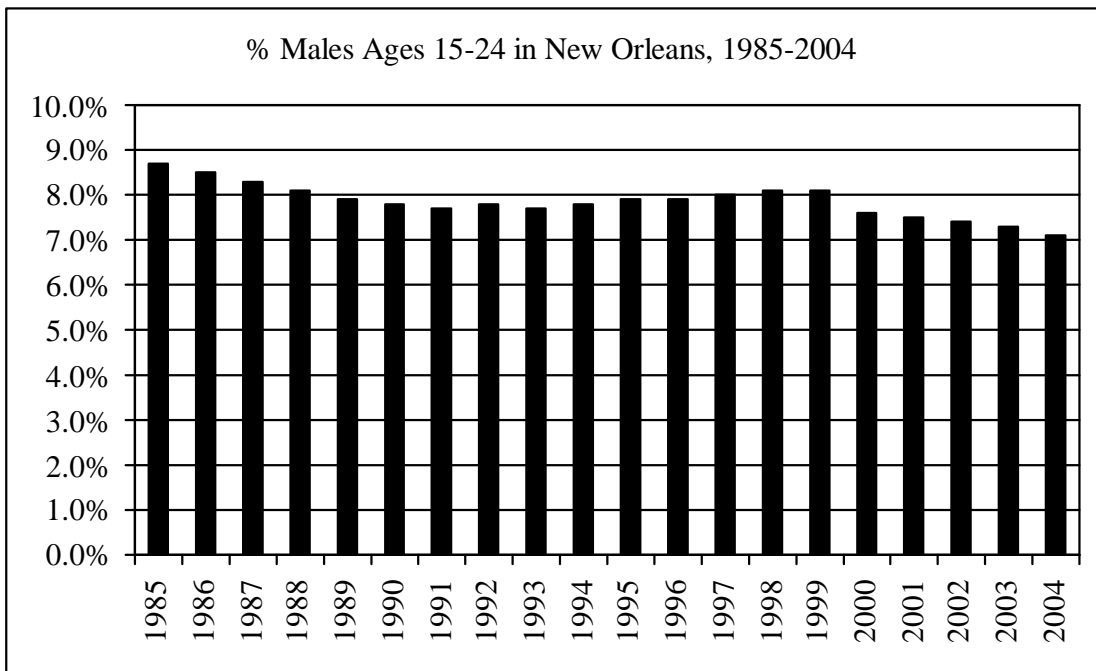
As Eck and Maguire (2000) indicate, in order for any study of the effectiveness of COMSTAT on crime reduction efforts to be complete, competing explanations must be eliminated. Accordingly, the following independent variables will be included to test their effectiveness concurrently and independently of COMSTAT.

- Demographic composition by age. The declines in crime of the early 1980s was attributed in part to the aging of the baby-boom generation who aged out of the high-crime age cohort – males ages 15–23 (Blumstein, Cohen, and Miller 1980; Steffensmeier and Harer 1991) – and were not being replaced at the same rate by the incoming age cohort. The projected declines in this “high-crime age cohort” would thus translate into reduced levels of crime. DiIulio (1995) however, warned of a demographic “crime bomb” ready to go off in the early 1990s due to the expected aging of those born in the mid-1970s – the size of the cohort moving into the high-crime age cohort was expected to be larger than the group it was replacing. To test whether or not the size of the high-crime age cohort has any effect on the crime rates in New Orleans, the age composition of the New Orleans population as compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau annual estimates will be included. One significant difference between this study and those cited above is that the Census Bureau uses the following age breakdowns – “Age 15 to 19 years” and “Age 20 to 24 years.” By combining these two age groups into one cohort, the study will not be directly replicable; however, the inclusion of an additional age year will not harm

the validity of the study. This male cohort will be measured as the percent of the city's total population rather than in raw numbers, to account for inward and outward migration. The percentage is carried out to one decimal point.

The figure below shows this trend during the period under study:

Figure 5-11



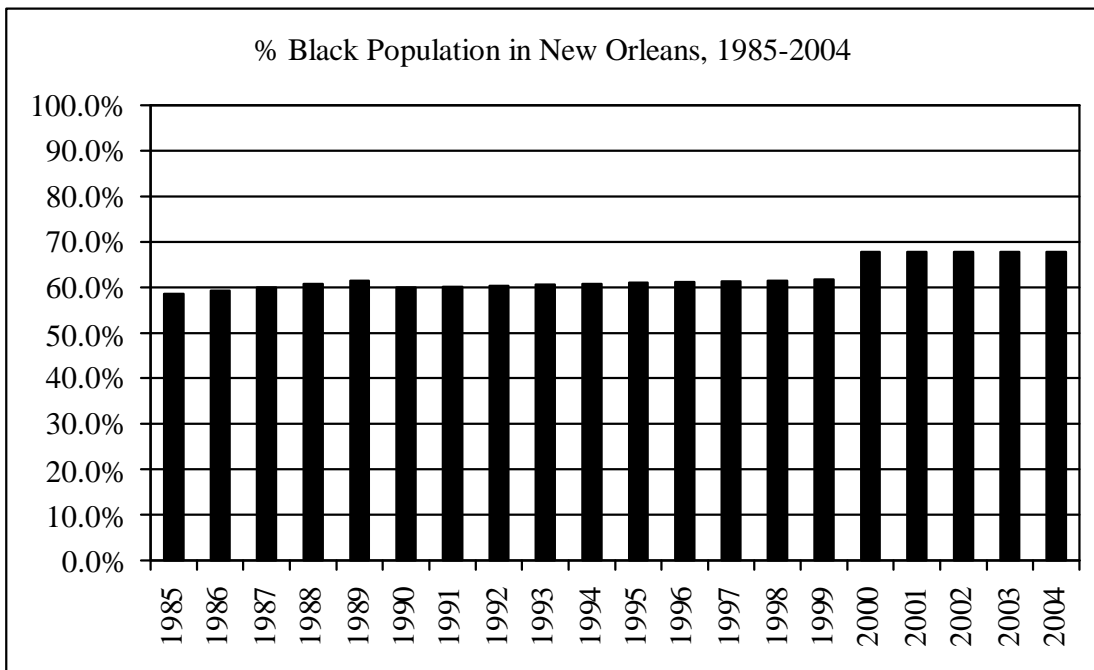
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1985–2004

Note: The dips in 1990 and 2000 represent corrections in the census from estimates to actual counts.

As seen in the above chart, the percentage of males in New Orleans ages 15–24 has stayed relatively stable during the 20 year period under study, ranging from 7.1% in 2004 to a high of 8.7% in 1985. Furthermore, there has been a steady decline since 1999, falling from 8.1% to 7.1%, or a decrease of 1% in the total population. Because of the very slight range in variance during this period, I hypothesize that any changes in the size of this age cohort pre-COMSTAT and post-COMSTAT do not have a significant effect on the level of crime committed in New Orleans.

- Demographic composition by race. Arrest statistics from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program indicate that in 1986, blacks accounted for 27.0% of all arrests nationally; in 2005 that figure had risen slightly to 27.8% of all arrests nationally. These figures are more noteworthy considering that blacks represented 12% of the national population in 1985 and 12.1% in 2005. Furthermore, national data indicate that blacks are victims of violent crimes at higher rates than whites: in 1985, blacks (ages 12 and up) were victimized at a rate of 28.9 persons per 1,000 while whites were victimized at a rate of 15.6 per 1,000. Although these numbers declined by 2005, due to the decreasing levels of crime nationwide, blacks were still being victimized at a rate more than double that of whites – 13.6 to 6.5 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). These two indicators clearly demonstrate that blacks are overrepresented as both perpetrators and victims of crime. This would suggest that higher concentrations of blacks, i.e., a larger “at-risk” population would necessarily lead to higher incidences of crime. To measure this variable, the percentage of New Orleans that is identified as black via the U.S. Census Bureau's annual population estimates for each year 1985–2005 will be used.

Figure 5-12



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1985–2004

Note: The sudden changes in 1990 and 2000 represent corrections in the census from estimates to actual counts.

As seen in the above figure, the number of blacks in New Orleans as a percentage of the population of the city as a whole has ranged from 59.2% in 1985 to 67.8% in 2004, an increase of 8.6 percentage points during the period under study here. As a result of the slight increase in population, I hypothesize that this variable will be positively related with crime in New Orleans.

- Economic Conditions. Some studies have indicated that economic prosperity on both the national and local levels (albeit in different studies) affects the amount and seriousness of crime (Currie 1985; Grogger 2000) i.e., as people's economic situations improve they become less likely to engage in criminal behavior. Different variables have been used to measure these effects: per capita income, and to the same extent, personal wages (as per

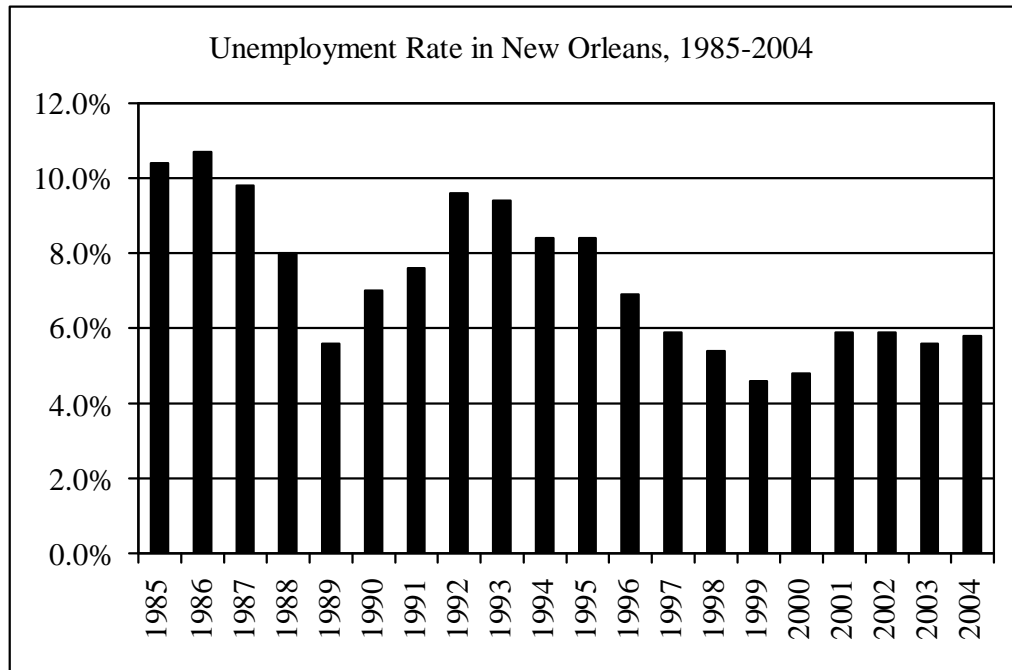
capita income or wages increase, crime decreases), poverty rates (as poverty rates decrease, crime decreases), and unemployment rates (as unemployment rates decrease, crime decreases). These relationships are hypothesized to exist absent any additional effort by the police. However, these measures may at times appear to be at odds with each other. For example, in 1989, the percentage of people in New Orleans living below the poverty line was 31.6%, the unemployment rate was 7.6%, and the total crime rate was 11,262.8 incidents per 100,000 residents. By 1993 however, the percentage of people living below the poverty line had risen to 37.9%, but the unemployment rate had *decreased* to 7.0%, and the total crime rate also decreased to 10,734.5. Accordingly, each of the following economic indicators for the City of New Orleans will be used to test their effects on the city's crime rates: the unemployment rate, the percentage of people living below the poverty line, and per capita personal income. I hypothesize that each of these economic indicators has a limited effect on the crime rates in New Orleans.<sup>9</sup>

- Unemployment Rate: the annual unemployment rate as calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor for the City of New Orleans (seasonally controlled) from 1985–2005 will be used to measure this variable. I hypothesize that this figure is directly related to the changes in the crime rates – as unemployment goes up, so too will the percent changes in crime and vice versa.

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that collection of some of these statistics ended in 2004 for annual figures and in the second quarter of 2005 for quarterly figures due to Hurricane Katrina.

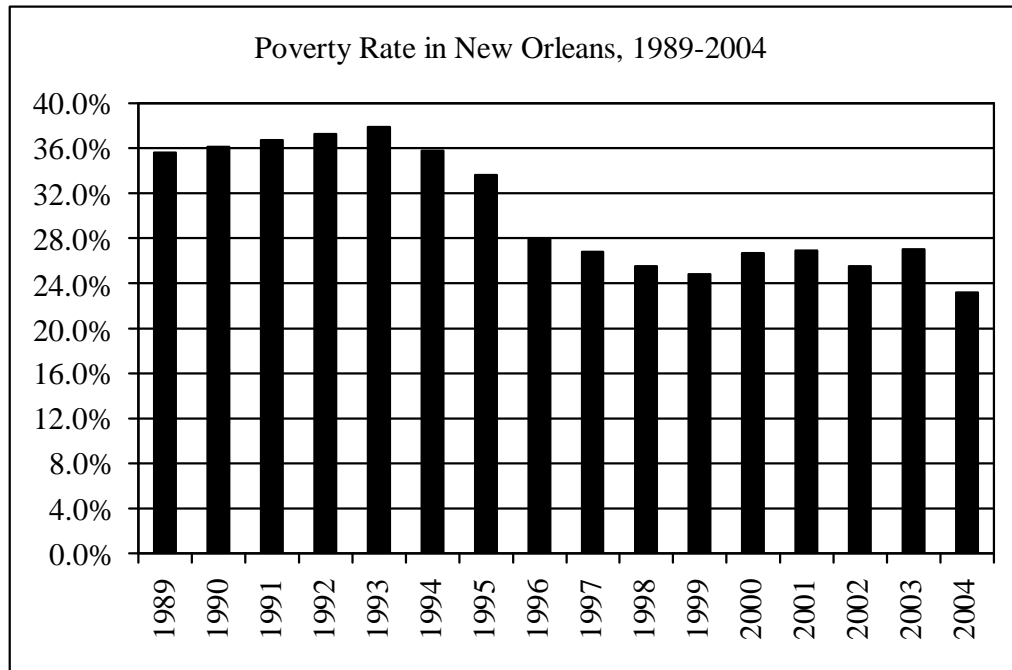
Figure 5-13



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, 1985-2004

- Percentage of People Living Below the Poverty Line: the annual estimates for the City of New Orleans (Orleans Parish) as collected by the U.S. Census Bureau for 1989-2004 (the earliest and latest this data has been compiled) will be used to measure this variable. I hypothesize that this figure is directly related to the changes in the crime rates – as the percentage of people living below the poverty line increases, so too will the crime rates and vice versa.

Figure 5-14

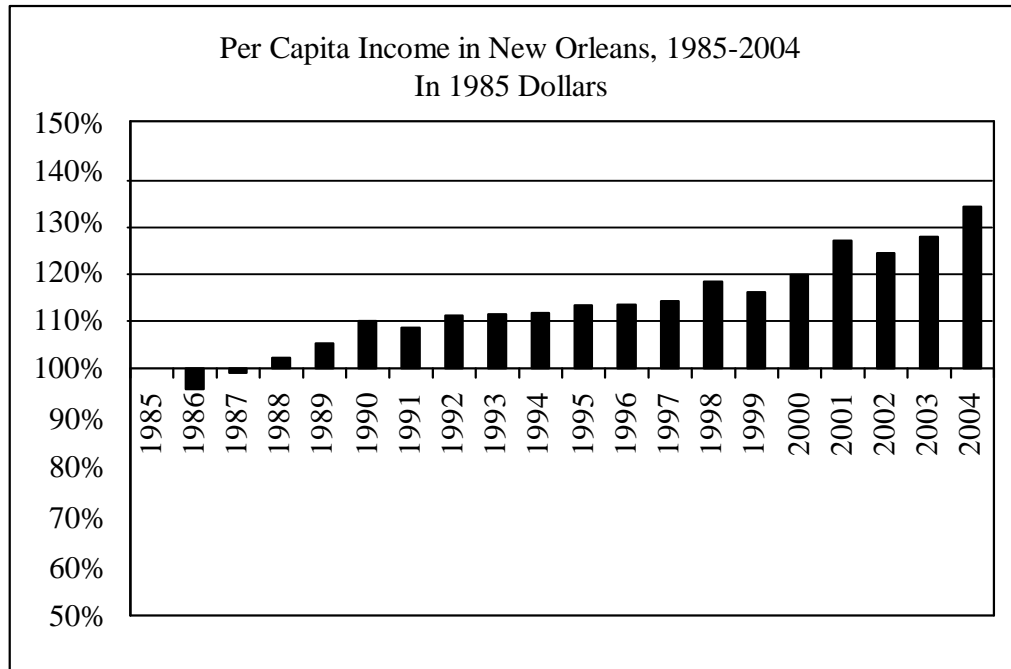


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, 1985-2004

- **Per Capita Personal Income:** the annual per capita personal income for the City of New Orleans as collected by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (Department of Commerce) for 1985-2004 (the latest year collected to date) will be used to measure this variable. Each year's totals were standardized in 1985 dollars; the New Orleans total was then divided by the standardized figure to determine if per capita income in New Orleans exceeded or fell below the adjusted per capita personal income. The graph below demonstrates how this variable is operationalized: the bar for each year represents the amount by which adjusted per capita income in New Orleans exceeds the standardized amount as stated in 1985 dollars. For example, in 1986, per capita income in New Orleans was 95.8% that of the standardized amount, meaning that income in New Orleans was

lagging that of the national economy as a whole. However, in 2004, the per capita income had risen to 132.7% that of the standardized figure.

Figure 5–15



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, 1985–2004

Note: 1985 is set at 100% and thus right at the X axis

Based on the above graph, I hypothesize that the per capita income in New Orleans is inversely related to the changes in crime rates – the more the actual per capita personal income exceeds the adjusted per capita personal income level, the greater the decreases in the changes in crime rates.

#### Modeling the Crime Decline in New Orleans, post-COMSTAT Implementation

Two sets of time series analysis will be used to measure the effects of the independent variables on each dependent variable. These tests will satisfy Eck and Maguire’s remaining three criteria. The first set of models will be an interrupted time series model in which the implementation of COMSTAT will be used as a dummy variable. The intent of using an



interrupted time-series model is three-fold: first, and most importantly, it is expected to identify if the implementation of COMSTAT has a statistically significant impact on the changes in crime levels across all types of UCR crime in New Orleans since 1996 (criteria two and three). Second, this analysis will permit the correct specification of whether the changes in the levels of crime experienced in New Orleans since 1996 are permanent or temporary: a permanent change will result in sustained changes in crime levels; a temporary change will result in short-term changes in crime levels. Third, the use of an interrupted time-series analysis will allow for the determination of whether the changes in the crime levels contributed towards, or simply responded to the implementation of COMSTAT.

*Model One – Interrupted Time Series*

Interrupted time-series analysis is a means of assessing a one-time intervention on an observable social process (Campbell and Stanley, 1966). McDowell et al. diagrams it as follows

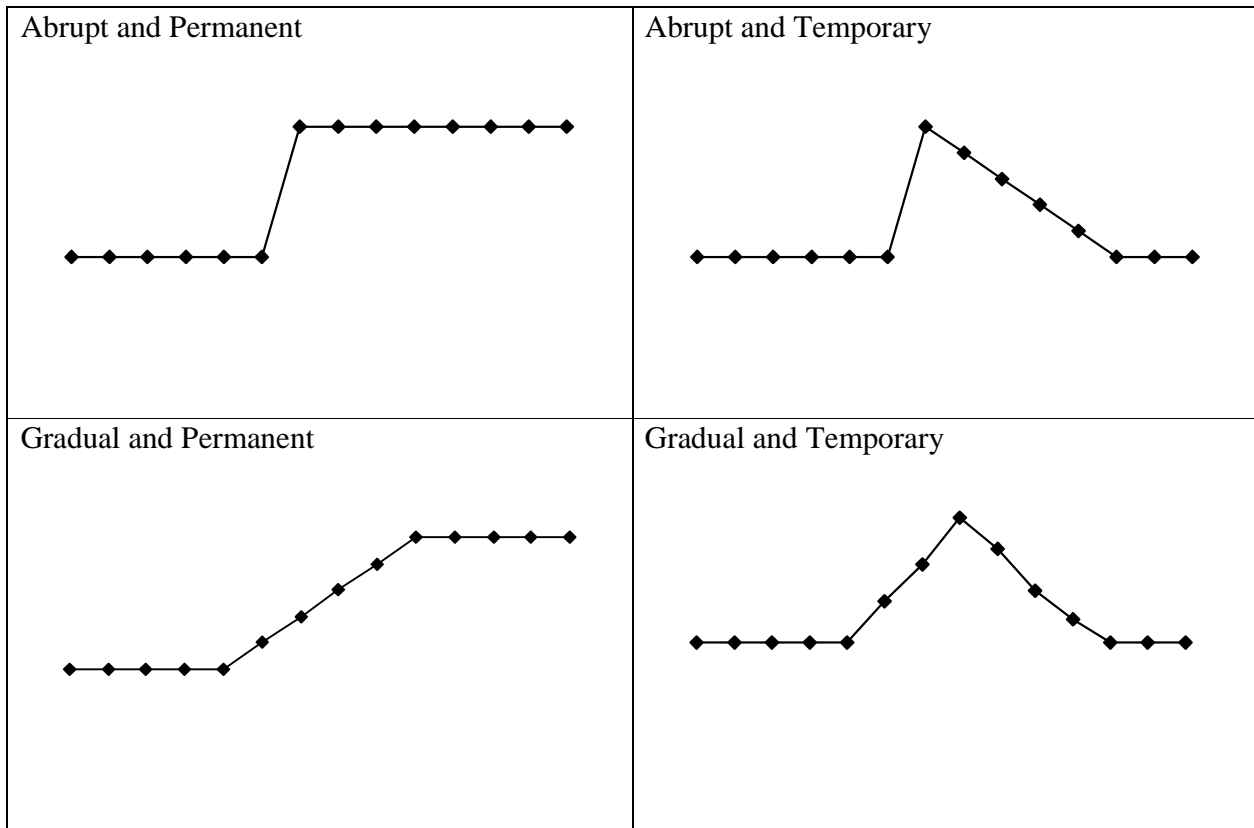
O O O O O O O O O O X O O O O O O O O O O

where O is a single observation in the time series and X is the one-time or discrete intervention (1980, 10). The test is of the null hypothesis, that the intervention did not have an impact on the time series. The test compares the pre-intervention segment to the post-intervention segment, with the result being the magnitude and form of the effect of X (McDowall, et al. 1980, 10). The null hypothesis then is that the impact has no statistically significant effect on the post-intervention series.

If the null hypothesis can be rejected, then both the impact of the intervention and its effect can be modeled as such: “the impact on the time series may be either *abrupt* or *gradual* in onset and either *permanent* or *temporary* in duration” (McDowell, et al. 1980, 66 [emphasis in original]). The following figure shows the four different patterns that can emerge:

Figure 5-16

Four Types of Impacts



Further, say McDowell, et al., “ideally, the analyst will be able to select one of these impact patterns on the basis of theory, so the null hypothesis will center not only on the statistical significance of an impact but also on its form” (1980, 66). They also point out that the gradual-temporary impact pattern cannot be modeled easily, and “would seem to be the least useful of the four” (1980, 66).

*The Abrupt and Temporary Pattern, or Impulse-Decay Function*

The abrupt and temporary pattern is the appropriate place to start as McDowell, et al. suggest that it is “if the analyst has no *a priori* notions about the expected pattern of impact” (1980, 84). If the results rule out a temporary impact, then a gradual and permanent impact is

hypothesized. If the results rule out a gradual impact then the only pattern remaining is one that is abrupt and permanent (1980, 84). As it relates to this study then, starting with this abrupt and temporary pattern, or what Carmines and Stimson call an *impulse-decay* model (1989, 138), this pattern hypothesizes that after the implementation of COMSTAT there will be a return to the pre-intervention levels of quarterly changes in the crime rate after a short, yet undefined, period of time. This pattern goes against what COMSTAT represents – a long term change in the way the NOPD operates. An abrupt and temporary pattern would suggest that COMSTAT would need to be implemented repeatedly

This form of intervention is modeled as follows (eq. 1):

$$Y_t = \delta Y_{t-1} + \omega P_t$$

where:

$Y_t$  is the quarterly percent change (increase or decrease) in UCR Part I crime totals as compared to UCR Part I crime totals for the same quarter of the previous year, for each quarter under study

$\delta$  (delta) is a first-order growth rate parameter

$\omega$  (omega) is a zero-order impact parameter

$P_t$  is zero for each quarter before the implementation of COMSTAT, one at the first quarter after the implementation of COMSTAT, and zero for each quarter after the implementation of COMSTAT.

The  $\omega$  (omega) parameter tests whether the implementation of COMSTAT intervention has a statistically significant impact on the time series, i.e., whether the series moved up or down after the intervention. In other words, the omega parameter examines the abruptness of the impact. What omega cannot indicate, however, is exactly how much higher or lower the post-intervention trend is compared to the pre-intervention trend; in this study, it will only measure whether or not the implementation of COMSTAT resulted in a subsequent change in the crime levels.

Where  $\delta$  (delta) is small, the levels of change in crime post-COMSTAT implementation rapidly “decay,” or decline back to the pre-intervention level. When delta is large, it represents either a small decline in the levels of change in crime over time following the implementation of COMSTAT. If the decay back to the pre-COMSTAT level is gradual, it may be that the changes at the NOPD are giving some legitimacy to the claim that the police are the driving force behind reductions in the crime levels. If delta is small, then the pattern matches that of the abrupt and permanent change in the levels of crime in New Orleans.

*The Gradual and Permanent Pattern, or Dynamic-Growth Function*

An alternative to the impulse-decay model of intervention is one that is gradual and permanent: the *dynamic-growth* function. This intervention function is modeled as (eq. 2):

$$Y_t = \delta Y_{t-1} + \omega I_t$$

where:

- $Y_t$  is the quarterly percent change (increase or decrease) in UCR Part I crime totals as compared to UCR Part I crime totals for the same quarter of the previous year, for each quarter under study
- $\delta$  (delta) is a first-order growth rate parameter
- $\omega$  (omega) is a zero-order impact parameter
- $I_t$  is zero in each quarter before the implementation of COMSTAT and one at and for each quarter after the implementation of COMSTAT.

Again, the  $\omega$  (omega) parameter tests whether the implementation of COMSTAT has a statistically significant impact on the time series, just as in the previous equation. The magnitude of sigma again provides information about the nature of the change in crime levels induced by the implementation of COMSTAT. A small value would indicate a rapid increase or decrease in the asymptotic level of the series, while a larger value would represent a more gradual change.

### *Interpreting the Results of the Interrupted Time-Series Models*

As McDowell, et al. (1980) demonstrate, when  $\delta$  (delta) approximates one in the impulse-decay model (equation 1), the implementation of COMSTAT is interpreted as having an abrupt and permanent change on the overall time series – in this study, the quarterly changes in UCR crime in New Orleans. Because the two equations are opposites, when the  $\delta$  (delta) parameter approximates zero in the dynamic-growth model (eq. 2), the implementation of COMSTAT is also interpreted as having an abrupt and permanent change in the level of the time series. The interpretation the pattern that approximates the real changes in the trends is dependent on the  $\omega$  (omega) impact parameter reaching statistical significance. Should it do so, then the choice of the time-series model used is based on theoretical expectations; employing the other model serves as an empirical check on the robustness of those expectations.

### *Model Two – Traditional Time Series Analysis and Equations*

The use of the interrupted time-series model will test for the second of Eck and Maguire’s criteria as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, the use of an interrupted time-series model is inadequate as a full test of the effects of COMSTAT because one, it does not yield any coefficients that indicate the extent of the impact on the overall time series, and two, it ignores other variables that have long been used as predictors of changes in the levels of crime, e.g., Eck and Maguire’s fourth and final criterion – the elimination of rival explanations for the decreases in crime.

To adequately test for these, regular time series analysis will be used to measure the effects of all of the independent variables on the dependent variable. As Ostrom states “the great advantage of time series regression analysis is the possibility for both explaining the past and predicting future behavior of variables of interest” (1990, 5). This analysis will be divided into

three equations – the first will test the effects of the police specific variables, the second will test the effects of the sociological variables, and the third will test the combined effects to determine which variables have the greatest impact. Included in each equation will be a dummy variable for the implementation of COMSTAT by the NOPD, zero for each period prior to the implementation and one for each period subsequent to the implementation. Also, because of the autoregressive process identified via the interrupted time series analysis, two lagged dependent variables will be included in the equation to correct for correlated error, one at time  $t-1$  and one at time  $t-2$ . Each equation will have essentially the same form (eq. 3):

$$Y_t = a + b_1X_{1t} + b_2X_{2t} + b_3X_{3t} + \dots + b_nX_{nt} + e_t$$

where:

- $Y_t$  is the quarterly percent change (increase or decrease) in UCR Part I crime totals as compared to UCR Part I crime totals for the same quarter of the previous year, for each quarter under study
- $a$  is the constant
- $b_nX_{nt}$  is each independent variable in the model at each time  $t$
- $e_t$  is the error term at time  $t$

As stated above, each equation will test a specific set of variables on changes in the UCR crime levels for each type of UCR crime discussed earlier (murder, the violent crime index, the property crime index, and the total crime index). Equation 3.1 will test the police-related variables alone on each of the crime types identified above, Equation 3.2 will test the sociological variables alone on each of the crime types identified above, and Equation 3.3 will test for the combined effects of all of the variables on each of the crime types identified above.

Equation 3.1: Policing Explanation Equation

$$Y_t(\% \text{ Change in level of crime in } Q_t) = a + b_1Y_{t-1} + b_2Y_{t-2} + b_3\text{COMSTAT} + b_4\text{Personnel Level}_t + b_5\text{Change in State Arrests}_t + b_6\text{Change in Narcotics Arrests} + b_7\text{Change in City Arrests} + b_8\text{Change in Traffic Arrests} + b_9\text{Change in Juvenile Arrests} + e_t$$

### Equation 3.2: Sociological Explanation

$$Y_t(\% \text{ Change in level of crime in } Q_t) = a + b_1\text{COMSTAT} + b_2\text{Demographic Composition by Age}_t + b_3\text{Unemployment Rate}_t + b_4\text{Percentage of Population Below Poverty Line}_t + b_5\text{Per Capita Personal Income}_t + b_6\text{Black Population Percentage} + e_t$$

### Equation 3.3: Melding Equation

$$Y_t(\% \text{ Change in level of crime in } Q_t) = a + b_1Y_{t-1} + b_2Y_{t-2} + b_3\text{COMSTAT} + b_4\text{Personnel Level}_t + b_5\text{Change in State Arrests}_t + b_6\text{Change in Narcotics Arrests} + b_7\text{Change in City Arrests} + b_8\text{Change in Traffic Arrests} + b_9\text{Change in Juvenile Arrests} + b_{10}\text{Demographic Composition by Age}_t + b_{11}\text{Unemployment Rate}_t + b_{12}\text{Percentage of Population Below Poverty Line}_t + b_{13}\text{Per Capita Personal Income}_t + b_{14}\text{Black Population Percentage} + e_t$$

### *Data Collection Differences Across Equations*

It is important to note the differences in methods utilized for the three equations. Most of the data collected and used in Equations 3.1 and 3.3 are done so on a quarterly basis (officer levels and arrest data are annual numbers 1985–90; and quarterly data from then on). This will result in a shortening of the time series from 82 observations (1Q85 to 2Q05) to 58 observations (1Q91 to 2Q05) as an autoregressive process utilizing a generalized least squares (GLS) method cannot be used when a series contains imbedded missing values (i.e., no quarterly measures) (Ostrom 1990).

Most of the data collected and used in Equation 3.2 are primarily collected on an annual basis by the agencies responsible for collecting them. For four of these five variables, the exception being unemployment statistics, quarterly data are not available. Because time series analysis cannot be conducted when data are missing from the series, the quarterly average change between the annual figures was substituted for the missing data. For example, if per capita income (measured as stated above) was 1.022 at the end of 1988 (4Q88) and 1.050 at the end of 1989 (4Q89) (a difference of .028), then the following quarterly average increases were

substituted for the missing data: 1.029 for 1Q89, 1.036 for 2Q89, and 1.042 for 3Q89. This pattern was followed for all three series identified immediately above.

Because poverty estimates do not begin until 1989, the series for Equations 3.2 and 3.3 will be shortened due to the missing data, from 82 observations (1Q85 to 2Q05) to 61 observations (4Q89 to 4Q04). The series will be shortened on the back end as well because 2005 year end data will be suspect due to the massive upheaval in population and economics caused by the collapsed levee and flood wall system as a result of the storm surge from Hurricane Katrina.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Model One – Interrupted Time Series Analysis*

Table 5–1 shows the results of the second-order ARIMA impulse-decay models (Equation 1).<sup>10</sup> While second-order autocorrelation models are rare in the social sciences and can essentially be modeled as first-order, this model was estimated from the autocorrelation function (ACF) and Partial ACF of each of the time series. A second-order ARIMA model indicates that the ACF decays exponentially with the first lag with expected values of 0 after the second lag (the graphs of the ACF and PACF for each time series are included in the appendix). This follows from the hypothesis that COMSTAT has a dramatic and *sustained* impact on the quarterly crime comparisons, i.e. larger quarterly reductions that are in part built on past quarters' crime reductions.

None of the coefficients for  $\omega$  (omega), or the coefficient measuring the impact of the imposition of COMSTAT reach statistical significance, meaning that the imposition of COMSTAT in the fourth quarter of 1996 had no overall independent effect on the quarterly crime comparisons. Furthermore, the values for  $\delta$  (delta), or the coefficient measuring the

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<sup>10</sup> This model is represented as ARIMA (2,0,0) in the tables.



duration of any changes (temporary or permanent decay parameter) are closer to 0 than to 1, indicating that any post-COMSTAT changes in the quarterly crime comparisons would quickly decay back to the pre-COMSTAT levels – an abrupt but temporary shift in the overall trend of the time series. Of particular disturbing note is that two of the coefficients for  $\omega$  are positive indicating that the imposition of COMSTAT would have resulted in small *increases* in the quarterly crime comparisons. Clearly this model does not accurately measure the impact of COMSTAT.

Table 5–1

COMSTAT's Effect on New Orleans Quarterly Crime Reduction  
(Impulse-Decay Model)

| <u>Crime Index</u>   | $\delta_1$        | $\omega_0$      | <u>AR(1)</u>      | <u>AR(2)</u>       |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Violent Crime Index  | .481***<br>(.099) | .017<br>(1.09)  | .069<br>(.358)    | .279<br>(.175)     |
| Property Crime Index | .469***<br>(.031) | -.033<br>(.027) | 1.37***<br>(.089) | -.634***<br>(.088) |
| Total Crime Index    | .470***<br>(.032) | -.022<br>(.022) | 1.46***<br>(.083) | -.688***<br>(.082) |
| Murder Index         | .497***<br>(.033) | .084<br>(.115)  | .975***<br>(.106) | -.362***<br>(.106) |

Noise Mode: ARIMA (2,0,0)

N=81

\*  $\alpha < 0.10$

\*\*  $\alpha < 0.05$

\*\*\*  $\alpha < 0.01$

AR(1) is the correlation coefficient estimated between the time series (Y) and its first lag ( $Y_{t-1}$ ); AR(2) is the correlation coefficient estimated between the time series (Y) and its second lag ( $Y_{t-2}$ ).

*Note:* Standard errors in parentheses. The  $\delta_1$  parameters are a weight reflecting the rate of change in succeeding time periods ( $0 \leq \delta \leq 1$ ). All crime indices are presented to determine whether COMSTAT is having an impact on the quarterly crime reductions.

Table 5–2 shows the results of the alternative second-order ARIMA dynamic-growth models (Equation 2). As seen,  $\omega$  (omega) reaches statistical significance for three of the four models indicating that the imposition of COMSTAT had a statistically significant on the crime reduction trends under study; the coefficients are in the hypothesized direction meaning declines in crime from one quarter to the next (as compared to the same quarter of the previous year).

The values for  $\delta$  (delta, the decay parameter) are closer to 0 than to 1, indicating a more rapid or abrupt and likely permanent change in the quarterly crime comparisons (i.e. a more downward shift in the crime trends that lasts over longer periods of time). While the results indicate that there is a statistically significant negative impact on changes in the Violent Crime Index, the fact that neither autoregressive function reaches statistical significance calls the accuracy of this model into question for this time series. The values for the Property Crime Index ( $\omega=-.073$  and  $\delta=.471$ ) and Total Crime Index ( $\omega=-.069$  and  $\delta=.469$ ) indicate distinct negative shifts in the quarterly crime comparisons (i.e. crime reductions in successive quarters). This dynamic-growth model seems to be a better fit than the impulse-decay model and meets the hypothesis that COMSTAT has a longer lasting effect on changing crime trends in New Orleans.

Table 5-2

COMSTAT's Effect on New Orleans Quarterly Crime Reduction  
(Dynamic-Growth Model)

| <u>Crime Index</u>   | $\delta_1$        | $\omega_0$         | <u>AR(1)</u>      | <u>AR(2)</u>       |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Violent Crime Index  | .470***<br>(.099) | -.049*<br>(.026)   | .024<br>(.422)    | .219<br>(.208)     |
| Property Crime Index | .471***<br>(.028) | -.073***<br>(.022) | 1.35***<br>(.087) | -.657***<br>(.085) |
| Total Crime Index    | .469***<br>(.029) | -.069***<br>(.020) | 1.42***<br>(.080) | -.712***<br>(.078) |
| Murder Index         | .500***<br>(.032) | .032<br>(.067)     | .975***<br>(.105) | -.365***<br>(.105) |

Noise Mode: ARIMA (2,0,0)

N=81

\*  $\alpha < 0.10$

\*\*  $\alpha < 0.05$

\*\*\*  $\alpha < 0.01$

AR(1) is the correlation coefficient estimated between the time series (Y) and its first lag ( $Y_{t-1}$ ); AR(2) is the correlation coefficient estimated between the time series (Y) and its second lag ( $Y_{t-2}$ ).

*Note:* Standard errors in parentheses. The  $\delta_1$  parameters are a weight reflecting the rate of change in succeeding time periods ( $0 \leq \delta \leq 1$ ). All crime indices are presented to determine whether COMSTAT is having an impact on the quarterly crime reductions.

*Model Two – Traditional Time Series Analysis*

*Policing Model, Equation 3.1*

Now that the impact of COMSTAT has been demonstrated to be effective, thus satisfying Eck and Maguire's second and third criteria for any study of COMSTAT, this study turns to their fourth criteria, specifically, eliminating rival explanations for the decreases in crime. As stated

above, three time-series equations will be used to test which variables are better predictors of crime decline. Because two of the three equations utilize lagged endogenous variables, traditional analysis of the Durbin-Watson statistic cannot be undertaken. Instead, an alternative test – Kmenta's *m-test* – was used to test for serial autocorrelation (Ostrom 1990, 66). The results are shown in Table 5-3 below.

Table 5-3

## Effect of Police-Related Variables on Crime Reduction in New Orleans

|                         | <u>Total Crime</u> | <u>Violent Crime</u> | <u>Property Crime</u> | <u>Murder</u>     |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Crime <sub>t-1</sub>    | 1.19***<br>(.107)  | .509***<br>(.133)    | 1.07***<br>(.118)     | .417***<br>(.129) |
| Crime <sub>t-2</sub>    | -.614***<br>(.110) | .016<br>(.133)       | -.546***<br>(.121)    | -.125<br>(.124)   |
| COMSTAT                 | -.008<br>(.013)    | -.012<br>(.033)      | -.009<br>(.017)       | .107<br>(.078)    |
| Officers                | -.000<br>(.000)    | -.000<br>(.000)      | -.000<br>(.000)       | .000<br>(.000)    |
| State Arrests           | -.004<br>(.032)    | .059<br>(.069)       | -.028<br>(.039)       | -.151<br>(.183)   |
| Narcotics Arrests       | -.089<br>(.052)    | -.321**<br>(.110)    | -.092<br>(.062)       | -.365<br>(.277)   |
| City Arrests            | -.078<br>(.061)    | -.039<br>(.112)      | -.125<br>(.077)       | -.130<br>(.295)   |
| Juvenile Arrests        | -.001*<br>(.000)   | -.001<br>(.001)      | -.001**<br>(.000)     | .001<br>(.002)    |
| Traffic Arrests         | .030<br>(.034)     | .031<br>(.070)       | .056<br>(.041)        | -.217<br>(.195)   |
| Constant                | .066<br>(.101)     | .189<br>(.235)       | .093<br>(.123)        | .050<br>(.660)    |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | .826***<br>(.056)  | .491***<br>(.104)    | .768***<br>(.068)     | .339<br>(.249)    |
| Kmenta's <i>m-test</i>  | -.317<br>(.264)    | .092<br>(.355)       | -.519*<br>(.287)      | -.093<br>(.380)   |

Noise Model: AR(2)

N=58

\*  $\alpha < 0.10$ \*\*  $\alpha < 0.05$ \*\*\*  $\alpha < 0.01$ 

*Note:* Standard errors are in parentheses. All crime indices are presented to examine the effects of the independent variables on each of the indices. The Prais-Winsten method was used to test for serial autocorrelation due to the inclusion of lagged endogenous variables.

As Table 5–3 above shows, the models show little utility as predictors of crime declines. The explanatory power of each of the models appears to be being driven by the lagged endogenous variables included to account for any autoregressive process. As the table indicates, both lagged variables reach statistical significance in the Total Crime model and the Property Crime model. Only the first lagged variable reaches significance in the Violent Crime and Murder models. As noted earlier, three of the four models are subsets of the Total Crime model, so it facially appears that the model that makes up most of the crime totals, the Property Crime model, would appear to mimic that of the Total Crime model.

A second statistical test was conducted to further account for serial autocorrelation after including the lagged endogenous variables – the Kmenta *m-test*. As seen in the table, this coefficient reaches significance in only one model, and even then, the significance level is rather weak. A significant coefficient implies that serial autocorrelation continues to exist after including the lagged endogenous variables, suggesting a specification error. This would appear to be the case for the Property Crime model when only police-specific variables are included.

#### *Individual variables*

In overall explanatory terms, the  $\text{Crime}_{t-1}$  coefficient would suggest that crime declines in the previous quarter are responsible for the crime declines in the subsequent quarter, which makes intuitive sense – police are building on the success of their efforts. However, the coefficients of  $\text{Crime}_{t-2}$  suggest something different, given that they are in the opposite direction than hypothesized for three of the four models. Here the lag at  $t-2$  suggests that crime in quarter  $t$  can be expected to decrease if crime at  $t-2$  actually increased. This does not satisfy the hypothesis and defies nearly any useful explanation save one: crime declines are independent of police-related statistics, excluding other predictors.

Overall, most of the coefficients of the other independent variables are in the hypothesized directions, although not statistically significant. The COMSTAT variable, operationalized as 0 prior to the fourth quarter of 1996 and 1 after suggests that implementing COMSTAT has a negative relationship on the crime trends, that is, crime would decline after its implementation. That the coefficient for the Murder model is in the opposite direction suggests the opposite. However, because none of the coefficients reach significance and because the coefficients are of such little value, no meaningful interpretation can be made of its impact.

The same could be suggested of increasing the size of the NOPD during this period. Regarding Total Crime, Violent Crime, and Property Crime, the direction of the coefficients suggest that adding more officers results in crime declines each quarter. However, because the coefficient is positive in the Murder Crime model, adding more officers means the opposite – higher crime. Again, because the coefficients are miniscule, this would seem to confirm some of the conventional wisdom of the sociological model that increasing the size of the police department has little to no overall impact on crime. It is also possible that the increases in the size of the police force have to be larger in magnitude in order to be effective.

Several of the arrest variables reach significance across the four models – Juvenile Arrests in the Total Crime model and Property Crime model and Narcotics Arrests in the Violent Crime model. Narcotics Arrests appear to have the most impact of the significant variables, indicating that for each narcotics arrest, the resulting quarterly change in violent crime decreases by nearly one-third of one percent. Thus, increasing the volume of narcotics arrests would decrease violent crime by a corresponding percentage. In the Property Crime model, Juvenile Arrests are negatively related to the quarterly percent changes in property crime, although their individual impact is much more muted than that of the previous model. Here, for each juvenile



arrest, the resulting quarterly change in property crime decreases by a marginal one one-thousandth of a percent. Since there is a finite number of juveniles in New Orleans however, arresting them all would still not make a substantial dent in the amount of total property crime. These findings indicate that something other than police-related measures are influencing crime declines.

*Sociological Model, Equation 3.2*

I now turn to the second model, which posits that sociological variables by themselves are responsible for the dramatic reductions in crime in New Orleans during this period. Because there are no lagged endogenous variables, the *Cochrane-Orcutt* transformation was used to test for serial autocorrelation (Ostrom 1990). The one major drawback about using this transformation is that the number of observations is reduced by one since data are not assumed to exist for  $Y_0$  and  $X_{n_0n}$  (the starting point of the series). The results are presented below.

Table 5-4

## Effect of Sociological Variables on Crime Reduction in New Orleans

|                   | <u>Total Crime</u> | <u>Violent Crime</u> | <u>Property Crime</u> | <u>Murder</u>    |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| COMSTAT           | -.114<br>(.077)    | -.040<br>(.122)      | -.159*<br>(.088)      | .124<br>(.302)   |
| Age Cohort        | .027<br>(.076)     | .082<br>(.152)       | .017<br>(.090)        | -.082<br>(.375)  |
| Percent Black     | 2.24*<br>(1.17)    | 2.66*<br>(1.49)      | 2.11*<br>(1.26)       | 7.70**<br>(3.68) |
| Per Capita Income | -.324<br>(.458)    | -.342<br>(.743)      | -.306<br>(.526)       | -2.39<br>(1.83)  |
| Poverty Level     | .237<br>(.948)     | 1.48<br>(1.33)       | -.311<br>(1.04)       | 2.66<br>(3.29)   |
| Unemployment      | .015<br>(.767)     | -.361<br>(1.43)      | -.079<br>(.903)       | .928<br>(3.54)   |
| Constant          | -1.10<br>(.783)    | -1.74**<br>(.852)    | -.830<br>(.816)       | -2.98<br>(2.10)  |
| Adjusted $R^2$    | .011<br>(.065)     | .051<br>(.113)       | .001<br>(.075)        | -.014<br>(.279)  |
| Durbin-Watson     | 1.59               | 2.00                 | 1.80                  | 1.89             |

Noise Model: AR(2)

N=61

\*  $\alpha < 0.10$ \*\*  $\alpha < 0.05$ \*\*\*  $\alpha < 0.01$ 

*Note:* Standard errors are in parentheses. All crime indices are presented to examine the effects of the independent variables on each of the indices.

The results of these models are similar to the results from the models that included solely police-related variables. None of the models here reach significance, and the statistical import of the few variables that do cannot be fully discussed as a result. The directions of nearly all the

variables differs across models as well; combined with the insignificance of the variables and the models as a whole, there is little discussion to be had. Per Capita Income maintains its direction as hypothesized – as income goes up, crime goes down, but again, the utility of such a finding is indeed limited.

The only variable that reaches statistical significance is the one that has the most problematic interpretation – the percentage of the population that is black. Because blacks comprise both the highest number of perpetrators and victims, it necessarily follows that the larger the population of blacks in any location, the higher the incidence of violence. Given the sociological and race-related issues that can result from such a finding, great care must be taken when interpreting these results. These results suggest that crime has increased as the percentage of the black population in New Orleans has increased. Furthermore, the coefficient for the Murder model suggests that for every one percent increase in black population, the murder rate in quarter  $t$  will increase nearly eight percent over quarter  $t-1$ . It is important to note that the results do not suggest that blacks are committing these murders rather that murder in New Orleans will increase. However again, because none of the models reach statistical significance themselves, this finding has little utility.

Each of the models' Durbin-Watson statistic is around 2 and within the upper and lower bounds indicating that serial autocorrelation is not present. This means that the residuals of each independent variable are not correlated with the immediately preceding time period nor are they correlated with the other independent variable. This is akin to the absence of multicollinearity in an OLS regression model. Furthermore, the lack of serial autocorrelation seems to indicate that the model is specified correctly methodologically, at least on its face. That there are little to no substantive interpretations from this model suggests one of two things: either the sociological

theory of crime reduction is insufficient in and of itself in describing the crime declines in New Orleans subsequent to the adoption of COMSTAT, or there are other forces at play than just the sociological indicators.

*Melding Model, Equation 3.3*

The next model attempts to show the interactions of all variables to determine if crime declines are the result of multiple, albeit competing, explanations of crime reduction. As with Equation 3.1, lagged endogenous variables are included in the *AR(2)* process, necessitating the use of Prais-Winsten transformations as well as Kmenta's *m-test* to test for serial autocorrelation. The results are presented below.

|                      | <u>Total Crime</u> | <u>Violent Crime</u> | <u>Property Crime</u> | <u>Murder</u>    |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Crime <sub>t-1</sub> | 1.14***<br>(.116)  | .647***<br>(.135)    | .972***<br>(.128)     | .256*<br>(.139)  |
| Crime <sub>t-2</sub> | -.674***<br>(.126) | -.068<br>(.143)      | -.600***<br>(.139)    | -.234<br>(.141)  |
| COMSTAT              | -.034<br>(.052)    | .198*<br>(.101)      | -.092<br>(.062)       | .682**<br>(.315) |
| Officers             | -.000<br>(.000)    | -.000*<br>(.000)     | -.000<br>(.000)       | -.000<br>(.001)  |
| State Arrests        | -.059<br>(.087)    | .389**<br>(.159)     | -.176*<br>(.103)      | .071<br>(.364)   |
| Narcotics Arrests    | -.064<br>(.061)    | -.345***<br>(.111)   | -.052<br>(.071)       | -.501<br>(.309)  |
| City Arrests         | -.140*<br>(.083)   | .090<br>(.117)       | -.245**<br>(.104)     | .079<br>(.343)   |
| Juvenile Arrests     | -.001*<br>(.000)   | -.000<br>(.001)      | -.002***<br>(.000)    | .002<br>(.003)   |

Table 5–5

Effect of Police-Related and Sociological Variables on Crime Reduction in New Orleans  
(continued)

|                    |                    |                      |                       |                  |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Traffic Arrests    | .065<br>(.046)     | -.082<br>(.080)      | .132**<br>(.055)      | -.424*<br>(.235) |
| Age Cohort         | -.040<br>(.085)    | -.045<br>(.160)      | -.060<br>(.101)       | -.133<br>(.381)  |
| Percent Black      | .405<br>(.526)     | -.111<br>(1.00)      | .479<br>(.641)        | 2.08<br>(3.42)   |
| Per Capita Income  | .130<br>(.327)     | -.071<br>(.561)      | .241<br>(.395)        | -.308<br>(1.63)  |
| Poverty Level      | .108<br>(.531)     | 1.77*<br>(1.02)      | -.250<br>(.633)       | 5.28<br>(3.34)   |
| Unemployment       | -.185<br>(.811)    | -.231<br>(.154)      | -.435<br>(.964)       | 2.99<br>(3.85)   |
| Constant           | -.283<br>(.275)    | -.030<br>(.552)      | -.288<br>(.311)       | -2.49<br>(1.86)  |
|                    | <u>Total Crime</u> | <u>Violent Crime</u> | <u>Property Crime</u> | <u>Murder</u>    |
| Adjusted $R^2$     | .826***<br>(.058)  | .606***<br>(.102)    | .772***<br>(.069)     | .270<br>(.252)   |
| Kmenta's $m$ -test | -.509*<br>(.266)   | -.511<br>(.323)      | -.574**<br>(.276)     | .044<br>(.357)   |

Noise Model: AR(2)

N=56

\*  $\alpha < 0.10$ \*\*  $\alpha < 0.05$ \*\*\*  $\alpha < 0.01$ 

*Note:* Standard errors are in parentheses. All crime indices are presented to examine the effects of the independent variables on each of the indices. The Prais-Winsten method was used due to the inclusion of lagged endogenous variables.

The results of the Melding Models in Table 5–5 show little more promise than that of the Policing Models and the Sociological Models individually. Much of the explanatory power is

still being driven by the crime lags, and in all four of the models the directional effects of the second lag run counter to the hypotheses. Of note, when all variables are included, the Total Crime model and the Property Crime model show evidence of serial autocorrelation as indicated by the significant coefficient of the Kmenta's *m-test*. As discussed earlier, Kmenta (1986, 334) himself notes that the presence of significant serial correlation raises the possibility of specification error; here the inclusion of the sociological variables induces serial autocorrelation, especially in the Total Crime model. However, the coefficient provides no indicator of exactly where the specification error lies. Furthermore, as Judge, et al. note, there is no further mechanical solution to the problem of serial autocorrelation after running the Prais-Winsten transformation and checking for it via the *m-test* (1985, 321–2). In sum then, the model appears to be misspecified, a problem that all the models may suffer from despite insignificant *m-test* coefficients.

#### *Individual variables*

Of specific note, the statistically significant effects of the sociological variable Percent Black, present in the Sociological Model, disappear in all of the crime trends in the Melding Model, perhaps indicating some relationship between race and police-related activities. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, African-Americans commit violent crimes at rates nearly twice their percentage of population. This would suggest then that there will be more arrests by police in cities with larger black populations, and may in fact be occurring in New Orleans. However, several of the coefficients of the statistically significant police variables – State Arrests in the Violent Crime model and Traffic Arrests in the Property Crime model – are in the opposite direction as that hypothesized, so their relation to race may be misspecified. The COMSTAT effect reaches significance in the Murder Model, but like in the Violent Crime

model, it is in the opposite direction than that hypothesized. In addition, the Murder model does not reach overall significance rendering moot any further explanation.

Of the individual models, the Melding Model appears to be the best predictor of violent crime declines during the period under study, but the results are mixed at best. The COMSTAT variable is significant but in the opposite direction than that hypothesized. The number of officers is negatively related to the violent crime declines as hypothesized, but the effects are miniscule to the point of having little explanatory utility. State Arrests are in the opposite direction than that hypothesized, suggesting that more arrests leads to higher violent crime in future quarters. However, because State Arrests can be for non-violent crimes, the link between non-violent crime arrests and violent crime needs to be further explored. Narcotics Arrests is both in the hypothesized direction and significant, indicating a direct effect on the Violent Crime reductions experienced in New Orleans during this period. This makes intuitive sense given the established link between illegal drug sales and purchases and crime, especially violent crime, throughout America. However, that this variable does not reach significance in any of the other three models here suggests that more study of this link to all types of crime is needed. Poverty Level is also positively related to Violent Crime, evidenced by the statistically significant coefficient – as poverty rises, so too will violent crime. The overall strength of the model then can be considered as a useful predictor, but with some caveats.

The Property Crime model here also shows some utility given the number of statistically significant coefficients, but the fact that specification error exists as evidenced by the significant coefficient of the Kmenta *m-test*, any explanation must take into account the specification of the model. Given the discussion above that it is unknown where the error is or what type of error it is, any methodological attempts to eliminate would come across as atheoretical.

Another major result of the Melding Model as it relates to the public policy process is that only one sociological variable reaches significance when included with the policing variables, and then only in the Violent Crime model. Several explanations could be made with regard to this finding, and they will be taken up in Chapter Seven of this dissertation.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, five models of crime reduction were tested. The first two measured whether the implementation of COMSTAT at the end of 1996 had any impact on four crime trends in New Orleans – Total Crime, Violent Crime, Property Crime, and Murder. Utilizing interrupted time series analysis, the results show that the implementation of COMSTAT had a statistically significant impact as a dynamic-growth function on the quarterly crime reduction for three of the four models. The delta parameter in each of those models is closer to zero than one, indicating an abrupt and temporary interruption in the time series. This means that the introduction of COMSTAT caused a small, meaningful negative change in the crime trends, i.e. noticeable crime reductions after the introduction, albeit temporal in nature before the trends returned to their vacillating, but stationary trend (bounding around zero percent change).

These results do not fully confirm the hypothesis that the dramatic and sustained reductions in crime experienced after 1996 were a direct result of COMSTAT because of the temporary nature of the shift in the trends. While these findings can be seen simply by viewing the trends themselves in Figures 5–1 through 5–4, Table 5–2 provides statistically significant findings of the hypotheses.

Once the effects of COMSTAT were identified, additional models and hypotheses were developed to determine the specific effects that changes in crime-fighting policy may have had on the changes in quarterly crime comparisons. Additional models and hypotheses were also



developed to determine what effects strictly sociological variables may have had on the changes in quarterly crime comparisons during this period. Then, to measure the impact of the variables concurrently, the variables were combined in a final model and tested against quarterly crime comparisons.

The first equation measured solely police-related variables – the introduction of COMSTAT, arrests, and officers – against the quarterly reductions in four types of crime in New Orleans from 1985–2004 – Total Crime, Violent Crime, Property Crime, and Murder alone. Because the scholarly research in this area is mixed with some studies finding significant effects for these variables and others not, the results of these models confirm some prior research but not others. For example, some arrests were found to be significant predictors of crime declines, similar to what Johnson, Golub and Dunlap (2000) found – intensified police practices targeted at specific crime types (guns and street drug dealing) can result in a decrease in crime. However, because this study does not include specific indicators of drug use among people in society, the results do not confirm or deny Bowling’s study (1999) in which the driving force behind the decrease in New York City was the declining use of crack cocaine. Likewise, this study confirms that of Eck and Maguire (2000) in which police were found not to play a role in crime reduction.

The second equation solely measured sociological variables in New Orleans during the same period – youths aged 15–24 (often called “at-risk” youth), the percentage of the population that is black, the per capita income, the poverty level, and the unemployment rate. Because none of the models reached statistical significance and only one variable was found to have any impact – the percentage black population – the results of these models also fail to support or contradict prior scholarly research. For example, Harcourt (2001) found that crime in the areas

he studied decreased because of the declining numbers of at-risk youths in the population. However, in New Orleans, crime decreased significantly despite an *increase* in this age cohort. Blumstein (2000) found that an improved economy and labor market created opportunities that allowed youths to escape the harsh realities illegal drug trading. However, both the unemployment rate and poverty levels in New Orleans during the study period remained relatively stable, with little reduction in either. And yet, crime declined in New Orleans.

It remains unclear that such an equation can be tested solely within a city such as New Orleans which has higher rates of poverty and unemployment than other cities, as it does a higher concentration of blacks as a percentage of its population. These indicators may mask a larger problem relative to high crime and the dramatic reductions New Orleans enjoyed, even if only temporarily. This and other concerns will be further addressed in Chapter Seven.

The third equation attempted to meld the two approaches by combining the police-related variables and the sociological variables into one model to measure their cumulative effects. The results were no better than either of the previous two models. Ultimately, this study appears to have confirmed Karmen's approach (2000) that there are simply too many factors to determine what *exactly* causes crime to decline, especially in New Orleans after the introduction of COMSTAT.

The problems may also be methodological. This study attempts to take a sophisticated look at micro-level data over a 20-year period. However, some problems were encountered that may have led to specification errors. For example, most sociological data are collected on an annual basis, simply because there is little need to collect them on any other basis. In this study for example, a youth who is 15 at the start of the analysis – here, 1990 because of other missing data issues – will stay in the cohort until 1999, or three years after the implementation of

COMSTAT. Poverty level is another sociological variable that does not vary rapidly enough to be measured on a quarterly basis; education is another type variable although it was not included in this analysis for such a reason. As a result, statistical manipulations must take place as was done here to ensure no missing data and to extend the time series.<sup>11</sup>

Such problems are not limited to the sociological variables only. Even if one has properly defined the value created by police organizations, or COMSTAT for that matter, there remains the enormous problem of measuring the police contribution to whatever changes in crime occur (Moore and Stephens 1991, 99). For example, the variable State Arrests in this study has been operationalized as violations of state law, or typically UCR arrests. However, while this variable measures police activity, the exact link between arrests and crime reduction has yet to be fully understood. And of course, there always exists the issue that the numbers are simply not what the police say they are when dealing with reported crime (e.g. UCR crime) (Manning 2001). Further discussions as to what this means for future research in this area will be offered in Chapter Seven of this dissertation.

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<sup>11</sup> Making the unit of analysis “years” instead of “quarters” would reduce the number of observations from 60 to 15, well short of the minimum recommended for robust time series analysis.

## CHAPTER 6. JUDGING CRIME POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

To city leaders, an effective crime policy has effects other than just driving down crime. Given that crime has been on the public's agenda in New Orleans throughout the city's history (as discussed in Chapter Three), successes in reducing crime can lead to electoral successes. However, people must be aware of more than just reductions in numbers, or changes in policy outputs; people must "feel" safe and link those feelings to actual reductions in crime. The easiest way to measure citizens' perceptions of the levels of crime and perceptions of personal safety remains the public opinion survey.

### Measuring the Public's Perceptions of Crime

In its entirety, public opinion about crime and, more importantly, what to do about it, encompasses a broad array of issues ranging from concerns for one's physical security and security of personal property to overall perceptions about the "fairness" of the criminal justice system. Accordingly, interpretation of such opinion polls need to be done with care as the public tends not to be fully informed as to what the reality is, often confusing reality with perception (just as with most issues). Measuring these opinions is important because crime is an issue of such salience that generates high levels of public passion as well as a high degree of consensus as to what citizens want done about it (Warr 1995). In short, it is impossible to find citizens who want high levels of crime or want to continue to feel unsafe or secure, but the question remains as to whether or not citizens' wishes and desires are understood by policy makers on these issues.

Again, care must be taken when conducting and interpreting such opinion polls. For example, studies have found that people perceive crime to be rising when in fact it has remained the same or declined (Beckett 1997; Flanagan and Longmire 1996; Pepinsky and Jesilow 1992;

Roberts and Stalans 1997.) These studies have also found that the public consistently overestimates statistics such as crime rates and criminal recidivism and underestimates things such as the severity of sentence imposed by the criminal justice system (Roberts and Stalans 1997).

The results on these public opinion surveys have added benefits for policy makers due to the problems associated with crime reporting, as detailed in Chapter Five. Policy makers also cannot rely solely on changes in policy outputs, e.g., reductions in reported crime, to be the sole basis for which future changes are made; they must have additional measures of the effectiveness of that policy and its impact, and the more objective the measures, the better. As Waterman and Wood state, “when decision makers have an objective source of information, they are less reliant on their subordinates and better able to evaluate them” (1993, 687).

#### New Orleans Residents’ Opinions on Crime and Fear in New Orleans

In addition to measuring people’s perceptions of their own safety and perceptions of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, another possible measure is the changes in the levels of fear among New Orleans residents. It is safe to say that in the wake of crime waves, New Orleans residents were deeply alarmed and afraid. Although research on the fear of crime has expanded substantially in the last few years, several scholars have noted that “fear of crime” can be a difficult concept to measure (Flanagan and Longmire 1996; Farral, et al. 1997). As Farral, et al. point out, most of this research has relied primarily on quantitative surveys to assess the extent to which the fear of crime is a prevalent social problem. However, they also point out that there are many contradictory findings among the studies causing many to raise the possibility that the “fear of crime” has been interpreted incorrectly. For example, problems often encountered when measuring fear of crime include confusing the respondent’s fear of crime with

risk of becoming a victim of crime and having already been a victim of crime; specifically, one researcher's review of the literature shows that the hypothesis – victimization predicting fear of crime – is not substantiated (Lewis 1996, 97). Garofalo and Laub make this point forcefully, “The ambiguous relationship between victimization and fear of crime, the indications that crime is not generally perceived as an immediate threat, and the mixing of fear of crime with fear of strangers point to the conclusion that what has been measured as the ‘fear of crime’ is not simply fear of crime” (1979, 250). Before that, Biderman (1967) found that attitudes of citizens regarding crime are less affected by their past victimization than by their ideas about what is going on in their community.

Further compounding the utility of measures of “fear of crime” is the fact that survey respondents' levels of fear have been stable for the most part stable varying no more than roughly ten percent points up or down between 1965 and 1995 (Warr 1995), despite rapid increases in crime during this period. Any interpretations therefore of “fear of crime” should come from the utilization of multiple indicators to minimize any confusion. Concurrently, public policy makers need to take this into account when deriving new policies designed to satisfy the public's desire for “change” based on “fear of crime.”

#### Public Opinion as Feedback to Policy Makers

This is not to say however, that public opinion does not respond to effective changes in policy, and vice versa. The policy model explained in Chapters Three and Four of this study demonstrates the importance of feedback. Measuring the effectiveness of a policy output or outcome by utilizing public opinion surveys is but one method of measuring such feedback. Feedback thus can serve as a justification for continued action, or it can serve as the catalyst for needed change to an existing policy. The key then is to identify a measure or series of measures

that will accurately reflect the impact of the policy relative to the citizens' perception of its effectiveness.

### *Why Policy Outputs are not Enough*

As Ostrom and Whitaker point out, police-maintained indicators of outputs (arrest and case clearance rates for example) are production oriented and do not measure public satisfaction with those efforts (1973, 54). Furthermore, questions regarding citizens' interactions with the police regardless of whether or not a criminal incident occurred are also not good indicators of an effective crime reduction policy (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2005). It is true that citizens are unlikely to support an unprofessional and discourteous police force that abuses its authority in any form by not cooperating with the police's need for citizens to cooperate in their requests for information, e.g., location of wanted persons, witness testimony, providing evidence, etc. In addition, Ostrom and Whitaker add that "citizens are more likely to report [victimization of crime] when their expectation of police follow-up is greater" (1973, 64). A police department that does not have the respect or satisfaction of citizens will be judged ineffective by the same citizens, again regardless of the police's impact on crime reduction. As Roberts and Stalans (1997) indicate, citizen support for and confidence in the police are necessary for the fair and effective administration of justice. If citizens have no confidence in police ability, they become less likely to report crimes to police, which means these crimes go unsolved and their perpetrators unpunished. Low confidence in police ability may ultimately lead to increased concern for safety among the citizens that the police have pledged to serve and protect. Despite these caveats, public opinion on the quality of police work has been mostly favorable according to several scholars (Cullen, Cao, and Frank 1996; Flanagan and Longmire 1996; Warr 1995).

### *Using “Fear of Crime” as a Surrogate Measure*

Despite the problems with identifying with high specificity exactly what is driving citizen’s self-reported fear of crime, it is this measure that is the most widely utilized for police effectiveness. The National Crime Survey (NCS) asks on a yearly basis since 1972 “How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighborhood at night?” The General Social Survey (GSS) asks “Is there any area right around here, that is, within a mile, where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?” These measures however, do not include the word “crime” and therefore have been criticized as to their validity of actually measuring “fear of being a victim of crime” (Ferraro 1995; Williams, McShane and Akcers 2000). These measures have also been criticized as to the specific crime the respondent fears when out in his neighborhood at night: by questioning the respondent about their perception of safety while out walking their neighborhood at night, Skogan and Maxfield (1981) suggest that the respondent does not fear other crimes such as burglary. While there is a broad range of research regarding fear of crime and how to best measure it, the focus here is how to determine a crime reduction policy’s effectiveness through public opinion.

### *Avoiding Bias when Measuring Fear of Crime in New Orleans*

Perhaps the most effective way is to utilize a series of survey questions that specifically state “crime” or other language that indicates criminal activity in either the respondent’s city or community, but to do so in a way that avoids “accessibility bias,” or those issues where people form their responses to questions based on information about the topic that is “easily recalled” (Talyor 1982; Zaller 1992.) Even when utilizing questions that include the word “crime,” respondents may answer that crime is increasing because they immediately recall a recent graphic crime story on the news instead of taking the time to think through their answer. This



bias fits with other public opinion literature that describes people as “cognitive misers” who use short cuts in forming opinions due to their apathy or laziness (Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989). This is relevant in this analysis because it may be that respondents to any single survey will answer that crime is increasing because they may immediately recall a recent graphic crime story in the news, instead of taking the time to think through their answer.

To reduce this bias – and to introduce stability to respondents’ opinions – the same questions are asked over a period of time to measure changes in perceptions; since the bias is expected to be present in each and every time point, successive increases or decreases can be tested against previous years to determine if the changes in trends are responding to what is actually be queried. In addition, a trend over several years will also reflect the dynamics of public opinion on crime. For example, if people are basing their responses on easily accessible and retrievable memories, then opinions on crime from one year to the next should be expected change. Although crime in New Orleans began to decrease starting in 1997, the media attention to crime incidents – especially violent crime incidents – and their repercussions continued (and continues) to be intense, even after COMSTAT was implemented.

#### Measuring Fear of Crime and other Residents’ Opinions in New Orleans

The above discussion demonstrates the problems with utilizing any single measure of public opinion on these issues to measure the effectiveness of any crime policy. As a result, recent studies have attempted to measure fear of crime through the combination of multiple independent variables or via scales to attempt to effectively measure “fear” across multiple urban areas (Unter 2001). Even those studies are limited to one-year or two-year snapshots in time of the locations under study. New Orleans is much different in that sense because since 1986, the Survey Research Center at the University of New Orleans has conducted a biennial *Quality of*

*Life* survey designed to provide an ongoing picture of how voters in the New Orleans area view local government services and the general quality of life. These surveys are useful in highlighting problems that concern the residents of New Orleans. But, more importantly, these surveys provide a 20 year trend in the public's opinion towards the same questions. In this survey series, the following questions (and possible responses) are used to measure New Orleans residents' perception of crime and personal safety on various levels:

- Would you say that the amount of crime in New Orleans has increased, decreased or remained the same over the last several years?
- How often would you say you hear gunfire in your neighborhood: never, a few times a year, a few times a month, or more than a few times a month?
- How safe do you feel around your home during the day: very safe, somewhat safe, not very safe, or not at all safe?
- How safe do you feel around your home during the night: very safe, somewhat safe, not very safe, or not at all safe?
- Would you rate the quality of police service in New Orleans as excellent, good, fair, or poor? (1994 to 2002 only).

Finally, respondents are also asked an open-ended question "In your opinion, what is the biggest problem facing New Orleans?" Respondents' answers are recorded verbatim and grouped according to like responses – here, "crime" is the answer of interest. The results to these questions are displayed in the series of tables below. It is not the intent of this dissertation at this point to further delve into the individual predictors of fear of crime (see Unter 2001) in New Orleans. Rather, these trends will be examined on the surface relative to the changes in crime levels during the same time period (1985–2005).

Table 6-1

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004 on Questions Relating to Crime

“Would you say that the amount of crime in New Orleans has increased, decreased, or remained about the same over the last several years?”

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Increased</u> | <u>Same</u> | <u>Decreased</u> | <u>DK/Ref</u> |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1986        | 68%              | 21%         | 7%               | 4%            |
| 1988        | 71%              | 20%         | 7%               | 2%            |
| 1990        | 87%              | 10%         | 2%               | 1%            |
| 1992        | 88%              | 8%          | 3%               | 1%            |
| 1993        | 94%              | 5%          | 1%               | -             |
| 1994        | 94%              | 5%          | 1%               | -             |
| 1996        | 72%              | 18%         | 8%               | 2%            |
| 1997        | 35%              | 26%         | 38%              | 2%            |
| 1998        | 19%              | 28%         | 50%              | 2%            |
| 2000        | 15%              | 26%         | 57%              | 2%            |
| 2002        | 30%              | 32%         | 36%              | 2%            |
| 2004        | 63%              | 26%         | 10%              | 1%            |

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

Note: 1993 and 1997 were not Quality of Life surveys but other UNO SRC public opinion polls that asked the same question.

As seen in Table 6-1, the percentage of respondents who believed crime to be decreasing rapidly increased from 1996 to 1997 (an increase of 375%, from 8% to 38%), the first year after the implementation of COMSTAT, and to 57% by 2000. Conversely, the percentage of people believing crime to be increasing decreased by over half, from 72% to 25% within the first year, reaching a low of 15% in 2000. This clearly tracks with the declines in crime recorded by the NOPD during the same period. Interestingly enough, there was little change among those people who believed the levels of crime to be the same throughout the period under study.

Table 6-2

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime

“How often would you say you hear gunfire in your neighborhood: never, a few times a year, a few times a month, or more than a few times a month?”

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Few Times a Month or More</u> | <u>Few Times a Year</u> | <u>Never</u> | <u>DK/Ref</u> |
|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1986        |                                  |                         |              |               |
| 1988        |                                  |                         |              |               |
| 1990        |                                  |                         |              |               |
| 1992        | Not Asked Prior to 1997          |                         |              |               |
| 1993        |                                  |                         |              |               |
| 1994        |                                  |                         |              |               |
| 1996        |                                  |                         |              |               |
| 1997        | 23%                              | 18%                     | 58%          | 1%            |
| 1998        | 18%                              | 16%                     | 65%          | 1%            |
| 2000        | 16%                              | 20%                     | 65%          | 1%            |
| 2002        | 22%                              | 18%                     | 59%          | 0%            |
| 2004        | 54%                              | 21%                     | 25%          | 0%            |

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

As Table 6-2 indicates, the number of people who claim to be hearing gunfire in the neighborhood on an apparently regular basis decreased during the last few years of the 1990s, concurrent with the crime declines experienced in the city. Likewise, as reported crime increased between 2002 and 2004, so too did the number of people claiming to hear gunfire.

Table 6–3

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime

“How safe do you feel around your home during the day: very safe, somewhat safe, not very safe, or not at all safe?”

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Very Safe</u> | <u>Somewhat Safe</u> | <u>Not Very Safe</u> | <u>Not At All Safe</u> | <u>DK/Ref</u> |
|-------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1986        | 28%              | 52%                  | 15%                  | 4%                     | 1%            |
| 1988        | 20%              | 56%                  | 19%                  | 5%                     | 0%            |
| 1990        | 25%              | 53%                  | 16%                  | 5%                     | 1%            |
| 1992        | 18%              | 50%                  | 24%                  | 8%                     | 0%            |
| 1994        | 19%              | 52%                  | 17%                  | 11%                    | 1%            |
| 1996        | 19%              | 49%                  | 21%                  | 11%                    | 0%            |
| 1998        | 33%              | 51%                  | 10%                  | 4%                     | 2%            |
| 2000        | 42%              | 44%                  | 10%                  | 4%                     | 0%            |
| 2002        | 32%              | 54%                  | 10%                  | 3%                     | 1%            |
| 2004        | 25%              | 54%                  | 13%                  | 6%                     | 2%            |

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

As Table 6–3 indicates, the number of people who feel safe around their home during the day rose from 68% in 1992 to 84% in 1998 and even higher (86%) in 2000. What is most important however is the dramatic increase in the number of respondents who said they felt “very safe:” from 18% in 1992 to 42% in 2000. This is an increase of 133%, and is indicative of a response to falling crime rates in New Orleans during this time.

Table 6–4

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime

“How safe do you feel around your home during the night: very safe, somewhat safe, not very safe, or not at all safe?”

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Very Safe</u> | <u>Somewhat Safe</u> | <u>Not Very Safe</u> | <u>Not At All Safe</u> | <u>DK/Ref</u> |
|-------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1986        | 20%              | 45%                  | 26%                  | 8%                     | 1%            |
| 1988        | 15%              | 50%                  | 25%                  | 10%                    | 0%            |
| 1990        | 16%              | 48%                  | 24%                  | 12%                    | 0%            |
| 1992        | 13%              | 39%                  | 29%                  | 19%                    | 0%            |
| 1994        | 10%              | 44%                  | 25%                  | 21%                    | 0%            |
| 1996        | 13%              | 43%                  | 24%                  | 19%                    | 0%            |
| 1998        | 22%              | 48%                  | 20%                  | 10%                    | 0%            |
| 2000        | 29%              | 44%                  | 20%                  | 7%                     | 0%            |
| 2002        | 24%              | 51%                  | 17%                  | 7%                     | 1%            |
| 2004        | 18%              | 47%                  | 22%                  | 11%                    | 2%            |

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

Just as with perceptions of safety during the day, people’s perceptions of personal safety at night show a similar positive change: in 1992, barely half of the city felt safe around their home at night, and only 13% of those said they felt “very safe.” This segment further decreased to 10% in 1994. However, by 2000, 73% of respondents said they felt safe around their home at night, with the “very safe” segment rising to 29%, an increase of 190% in six years.

Table 6–5

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1994–2004, on Questions Relating to Crime

“How would you rate the quality of police services in New Orleans: excellent, good, fair, or poor?”

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Excellent</u> | <u>Good</u> | <u>Fair</u> | <u>Poor</u> |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1994        | 2%               | 17%         | 38%         | 41%         |
| 1996        | 2%               | 21%         | 41%         | 33%         |
| 1998        | 7%               | 43%         | 38%         | 10%         |
| 2000        | 6%               | 42%         | 36%         | 15%         |
| 2002        | 4%               | 37%         | 40%         | 18%         |
| 2004        | 3%               | 27%         | 40%         | 29%         |

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

While the previous tables ask about crime, gunfire, and perceptions of safety, Table 6–5 shows the opinions of respondents when asked directly about the police and the quality of their services. As the table indicates, the percentage of people saying the police were doing an “excellent” or “good” job increased from 19% in 1994 (the first year the question was asked by the UNO Survey Research Center) to 48% in 2000. The biggest change is among those who once thought the police were doing a “poor” job in 1994 but believed the police were doing a “good” job by 2000. That these numbers began to decline after 2000 as crime in New Orleans rose appears to link the public’s perceptions of police performance and rising crime – that crime increases perhaps because police are not doing their jobs effectively.

Table 6-6

Survey Results of New Orleans Residents, 1986-2004, on Questions Relating to Crime

Percentage of respondents saying “crime” as the biggest problem facing New Orleans

| <u>Year</u> | <u>%</u> |
|-------------|----------|
| 1986        | 17       |
| 1988        | 27       |
| 1990        | 29       |
| 1992        | 44       |
| 1994        | 78       |
| 1996        | 70       |
| 1998        | 44       |
| 2000        | 26       |
| 2002        | 20       |
| 2004        | 46       |

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

Table 6-6 is perhaps the single biggest indicator of New Orleans residents’ perceptions of the crime rates. From 1986 to 1994, the percentage of people mentioning crime as the biggest problem facing New Orleans more than quadrupled, from 17% to 78%. However, by 2002, the percentage fell back to almost its 1986 level. These survey findings are even more interesting when compared to the crime rates in 1986 and 2002: in 1986, the violent crime rate was 1,625.2 incidents per 100,000 residents; in 2002, the violent crime rate was 930.8, a decrease of nearly 43%. Similarly, in 1986, the overall crime rate was 10,088.0 incidents per 100,000 residents; in 2002, the overall crime rate was 6,412.5, a decrease of over 36%.

Taken individually, these tables show a direct relationship between crime declines and improvements in the multiple dimensions of the public’s perceptions regarding crime and safety, as well as the public’s perceptions of police performance. Taken collectively, the results indicate



a citizenry that appeared satisfied with the direction the city was going in as a result of the changes in policing, starting with the implementation of the COMSTAT process.

#### Other Measures of Policy Effectiveness

Other measures available. In September 1996 and again in March 1999, both as part of Superintendent Pennington’s multi-year strategic plans of action, surveys were distributed to all officers and returned for analysis. Most of the questions on the survey were identical, asking officers over 180 questions regarding their work in the New Orleans Police Department. One of the sections asked NOPD officers a series of questions about their perceptions of their relationship with the New Orleans community. While some of the findings were similar across the three-year period, others stand out as positive indications of change within the NOPD as a result of the changes in police practices.

| Table 6-7   |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Survey Results of New Orleans Police Officers to Selected Questions about Police-Community Relations      |             |             |
| Percent Responding “Strongly Agree” or “Agree Somewhat”   |             |             |
|   | <u>1996</u> | <u>1999</u> |
| The relationship between the police and the people of New Orleans is very good.                           | 23.7        | 52.5        |
| Media coverage of the department helps NOPD officers do their jobs.                                       | 7.6         | 23.2        |
| The public today generally believes that officers use more force than necessary in dealing with suspects. | 76.7        | 69.6        |
| Citizens do not understand the problems of the police.  | 88.3        | 89.0        |
| Police do not understand the problems of average citizens.  | 19.0        | 52.1        |
| The public today generally believes that most NOPD officers work hard.                                    | 37.8        | 15.1        |

Source: New Orleans Police Department

As Table 6–7 indicates, there are mixed messages. As seen in the first question, police officers themselves believed that their relationship with the community improved as crime declined. Similarly, media coverage became more positive to police officers, at least in the sense that officers believed that the media was becoming more of an ally than a hindrance. Officers’ perceptions of the community’s beliefs about the NOPD’s use of force improved only slightly, but it did share a positive relationship with crime declines.

The results of the last two questions are somewhat surprising but do not contradict the more positive findings. Hypotheses for future study can be offered here. Regarding officers’ understanding of average citizens’ problems, perhaps increased contact with citizens through improved or changed police tactics and strategies, both in terms of the sheer numbers and intensity of the contacts, helped to increase officer awareness as to the social dynamics that shape crime occurrences and their reporting. Certainly, the enhanced police-public partnerships expressed through problem-solving policing (as explained in Chapter Four) require a deeper police understanding of the underlying dimensions surrounding crime and the responses to the question indicate that police believe themselves to be less-equipped than they need to be. Paradoxically then, community policing tactics that bring the police closer to the people may enhance officers’ perceptions of social complexities and undermine more simplistic beliefs about crime and its causes.

Regarding the answers to the last question, perhaps the increased numbers of officers during this period led officers to believe that citizens see more officers on patrol or on foot beats, and that citizens not understanding the nuances or full roles of police work (as expressed in the fourth survey question in Table Seven) believe the officers to be not “working hard.” Increased

public opinion surveying of this type would certainly lead to greater understanding of these issues, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

### Conclusion

Public opinion surveys and employee opinion surveys serve as traditional measures of assessing the impact of policy changes, and when used properly, can provide a useful assessment on the effectiveness of those changes. As seen in the above tables, the New Orleans public clearly recognized that crime was on the decline and that the police had some role in it. These results do not give complete credit to the New Orleans Police Department nor do they provide any subjective opinion as to the effectiveness of the NOPD's adoption of the COMSTAT method of policing. However, the results do show that people's perceptions of personal safety increased at the same time crime was decreasing; the results do show that residents reported hearing fewer gunshots in their neighborhood during the period that crime in New Orleans was decreasing; the results do show that people reported that crime was become less of a serious problem as crime decreased during this period. Concurrently, results from the survey of police officers themselves point to improved relations between the police and the public. Police officers' perceptions of their relations with the public and the media improved after the implementation of COMSTAT. At the same time, their increased perception that police lack understanding of citizens' problems may arise from a more accurate and less simplistic view resulting from more frequent interactions between police and the community.

On their face then, these results collectively show a populace that was positively impacted by a drop in crime that began with the change in crime policy, specifically the adoption of the COMSTAT method of policing. That the results have deteriorated as crime has increased

since 2000 is only further evidence of the linkages between crime in New Orleans and residents' strong opinions about them.

## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

According to Chief William J. Bratton of the Los Angeles Police Department,

“I challenge criminal justice researchers to aggressively respond to increasingly conflicting theories and arguments...of some criminologists, academics, and sociologists who diminish, or dismiss outright, the contributions and effectiveness of our police officers and practitioners. Some seek to assert – with what to me and my fellow practitioners sometimes appear to be specious data, faulty assumptions, or ivy tower perspectives – that the police play little or no role in the prevention of crime. I’m sorry. We do.”  
(Bratton 2007, 30).

This dissertation has been an attempt to do just that, utilizing the setting of the City of New Orleans from 1985 to 2005, by asking the question: why did crime decrease so rapidly and dramatically starting in 1996 through 1999 after reaching dangerously high peaks in the years prior? What were the factors that led to this remarkable decrease relative to the rest of the nation?

Again, the impact of the answers to these questions is of sufficient interest for scholars. Despite the decreases in crime since the 1990s and the new strategies of policing, crime in New Orleans and America has only fallen back to the levels of the 1970s – levels still four times higher than that of the early 1960s when American society began undergoing serious change.

Focusing on the New Orleans Police Department as the catalyst for change in New Orleans, this dissertation is an attempt to link the practices and tactics of the NOPD as implementers of crime policy established by the political leaders of New Orleans. Concurrently, this dissertation tests other variables in competing explanations that have also been used as predictors of crime escalations and declines. These include economic indicators such as unemployment, poverty, and household income as well as social indicators such as city demographic composition by race and by age. Bratton calls these competing predictors as “old

so-called causes – which I prefer to describe as influences” which can cause crime to go up or down to “some degree” (2007, 30).

Much like Chief Bratton suggests, the initial hypothesis of this study is that the NOPD was in fact the primary vehicle for effectuating dramatic and sustained crime reduction via its introduction of COMSTAT – the management accountability program first implemented in the New York Police Department (under then-Commissioner Bratton) in 1993. The City of New Orleans presents an optimum laboratory because the city did in fact experience extraordinary decreases in all types of crime. However, in order to add to the existing body of scholarly research on explanations of crime reduction, rival explanations deriving from other disciplines must be offered, tested, and analyzed. These three things are in fact attempted in this study.

#### Competing Hypotheses but Inconclusive Proof

Examining crime and its trends must be done over a long period to fully attempt to explain its peaks and valleys. Utilizing higher-order methodological approaches that have not been traditionally applied to research of this type, e.g., time series analyses, these long-term trends and the on-going effects of each variable were examined over time. New Orleans also presents an optimal city to utilize these methodological approaches because of the availability of sufficient data prior to the implementation of COMSTAT and the sufficiency of data for the post-implementation period. These time-series analyses allow for determination of both immediate and long-term impacts.

#### *Measuring the Impact of the Implementation of COMSTAT*

Using interrupted time-series analysis, the first model attempted to identify the type of impact (abrupt and permanent, abrupt and temporary, gradual and permanent, or gradual and temporary – see Figure 5–16) the imposition of COMSTAT by itself had on the four composite

crime trends: total crime, violent crime, property crime, and murder. Based on statistical interpretation, the imposition of COMSTAT approximated an abrupt impact, meaning a dramatic downward shift in the trend immediately after implementation. However, the results for the growth (or decay) parameter were not robust enough to suggest a permanent change in the direction of the trends. Instead, the overall findings suggest an abrupt and temporary change in three of the four crime trends. In other words, the results suggest that the imposition of COMSTAT in the fourth quarter of 1996 had immediate impact on the total crime, property crime, and murder trends, driving crime downwards in the short term. No statistical conclusions can be made about the longer-term impact, i.e., how long the impact actually lasted on the direction of the trends beyond the general conclusion that absent any other factors, the crime trends will eventually return to their pre-COMSTAT levels.

#### *Measuring the Impact of Police-Specific Variables*

Because there is no conclusive evidence suggesting any determination of how long the effects of the imposition of COMSTAT will last, the use of interrupted time-series analysis alone is obviously not enough to provide a full description of the changes that were happening. While the interrupted time-series analysis provides a parsimonious explanation – adopting COMSTAT will cause dramatic short-term reductions in crime – sustained reductions would appear to require a repeated adoption of COMSTAT, something that is a one-time event. Furthermore, relying on the results of that test alone ignores other variables that have long been used as predictors of changes in the levels of crime.

The police-specific variables utilized in this study were drawn from existing research on policing and crime reduction (see Chapters Four and Five), and they were first tested in traditional time-series models, again separating out the four component crime trends.

Unfortunately, the models provide little, if any, utility in predicting crime declines despite most coefficients being in the hypothesized directions. Some arrest coefficients such as juvenile arrests in the total crime model and narcotics arrests in the violent crime model reach statistical significance suggesting that traditional police activities have an effect on crime rates. However, as evident by the lack of statistical impact of the remaining individual variables – beyond the limited support provided by the immediately preceding two time lags – crime declines appear to be driven by factors not included in these models.

#### *Measuring the Impact of Socio-Economic Variables*

Just as with the inclusion of police-specific variables, the sociological variables included in this study were drawn from existing research on crime reduction. The only variable that shows some explanatory power is the percentage of the black population in New Orleans – the models suggest that crime will increase as the percentage of the black population in New Orleans increases. This variable is highest when tested against the murder trends during the period under study but definitive understanding of this variable's effects cannot be discussed with any confidence because the overall model does not reach statistical significance, nor do any of the other three crime trend models. This finding is nonetheless problematic given the various interpretations that can be attached to it, but FBI statistics (FBI 2006) indicate that much of crime is intra-racial in nature and a greater percentage of black population in New Orleans would suggest more black victims.

#### *Measuring the Combined Impact of All Variables – the Melding Model*

Isolating the models according to the individual approaches yields little value for police practitioners and future researchers alike. To that end, all variables were tested against each of the four component crime trends in time series equations to determine if the crime declines were



the result of a combination of the two approaches. Several police-specific variables reach significance across the models with the Violent Crime and Property Crime models showing the most promise. In the Violent Crime model, four variables reach significance: the imposition of COMSTAT (although the coefficient is in the opposite direction than hypothesized), the number of officers (although the coefficient is in the opposite direction than hypothesized and the size of the coefficient is so minute as to render any interpretation meaningless), state arrests (again, the coefficient is in the opposite direction than hypothesized), and narcotics arrests. In the Property Crime model, four variables also reach significance: state arrests, city arrests, juvenile arrests and traffic arrests. Of the four, the first three are in the hypothesized direction, city arrests having the largest coefficient.

Only one sociological variable reached statistical significance in any of the melding models – the poverty level – and then it only did so in the Violent Crime model. The only variable that had any explanatory power in the sociological model – percentage of black residents – failed to reach significance in any of the melding models.

Overall, both the Total Crime model and the Property Crime model suggest the possibility of serial autocorrelation, probably arising as a result of some specification error. The failure of any sociological variables to reach significance could suggest that the policing variables outweigh any impact the sociological variables would have, but those effects would have been seen in the policing-only models when in fact they were not.

#### The Models' Relevance for Existing Research

The use of interrupted time series analysis confirmed that the implementation of COMSTAT at the end of 1996 did have some impact, albeit temporarily, on the four crime trends in New Orleans from 1985 to 2005. The use of traditional time series analysis both supports and

contradicts existing research, although not in the manners initially hypothesized. For example, those studies that show police-related variables are directly related to crime reductions will not find support from this study, at least as those variables related to crime in New Orleans. Likewise, those studies that show that improvements in sociological conditions reduce crime are contradicted by the findings here, as such improvements in New Orleans between 1985 and 2005 bear no relationship to the crime reductions post-COMSTAT implementation.

Also, this study is not as robust of a test of COMSTAT implementation as could be undertaken. The analysis solely focuses on the implementation phase of the policy process and does not take into account the possibility of any adaptations of the COMSTAT process post-implementation. Future studies should attempt to incorporate an evaluation of the COMSTAT process, that is, changes in the implementation of COMSTAT post-adoption to determine if there has been any erosion in the NOPD's enthusiasm for the COMSTAT approach to policing.

The possibility of specification error in several of the above models suggests that there may be too many factors that affect crime declines and the models' failure to include them (or perhaps including variables that do *not* belong) is the reason for their lack of explanatory power. Accordingly, some recommendations for future research are made here.

#### *Methodological Notes for Future Research*

This study utilizes the UCR crime totals in New Orleans, and as pointed out in Chapter Five, these numbers may not be representative of crime in New Orleans. However, the statistical tests conducted here would not reveal if this was indeed the case. Clearly, testing these models on a different set of crime numbers may result in different findings as the trends may in fact be different from those presented here. Also, only certain measures of police activity were included – personnel levels and arrests – but other factors affect these numbers. For example, personnel

levels are controlled by other political actors outside the police department; it is the elected officials who set the budget of the police department and dictate how much of that will be allocated for recruiting. Arrests may decrease as a result of technical issues that arise – for example, computer systems may crash that delay access to needed criminal history information, creating an artificial decrease in arrests. The issue may be to separate out truly police-related activities and measure them against changes in crime.

As stated in Chapter Five, the sociological variables are not measured on the same time scale as crime reduction, and even if they are, the change may be so small to not be expected to have any effect. A one-tenth of one percent decrease in the poverty level from one quarter to the next, for example, is unlikely to affect quarterly crime rates on even the most minute of levels. Conversely, measuring crime declines on a yearly basis – when larger changes in poverty levels are more likely to be seen – may prevent the use of time series analysis as the time points in the trends are reduced. Furthermore, analyzing changes in crime levels on a yearly basis may be too broad in scope such that immediate and dramatic changes may be subsumed by the aggregation of data.

Similarly, some of the sociological variables may need to be operationalized differently. Utilizing the education level of the population of New Orleans or even the ages of the residents may not be the best methods to measure these variables as there is no quarterly change to the values. Although statistical operations can be undertaken to create quarterly values (as discussed in Chapter Five), the results of this study indicate that this may not be the best approach. Instead, future studies should find new and better methods of measuring the effects of education and age on changes in crime levels.

This study also treats New Orleans as one entity when in fact the city is much more diverse than that. Some neighborhoods experience higher crime than others. As a result, the sociological variables may need to be compared against each other within the city. However, one major hurdle exists with this approach: while the city is broken down into eight police districts, sociological variables are collected by 72 distinctly identified neighborhoods, many of which cut across two or more police districts. This is not to suggest that such analysis cannot be done – it will either be inexact (perhaps leading to additional specification error) or an arduous task for future researchers to align the sociological data along police district boundaries.

As a corollary, this study is a descriptive study of crime trends in one city. Comparisons should be made across cities – both those that have adopted some type of COMSTAT approach and those that have not, and both those that have experienced crime declines and those that have not. Because the sociological variables will also differ across all cities, perhaps stronger findings will be uncovered.

Finally, the time-series itself may be too short, both in terms of the pre-intervention and post-intervention periods. The year 1985 was selected as the beginning of the series to provide an almost equal number of observations pre-COMSTAT as post-COMSTAT. However, crime had already reached high levels by 1985 (as Chapter Two indicates) and although it continued to increase, the immediate decreases post-COMSTAT reduced crime back to levels on par with the 1970s, and those levels were higher than they were of the 1960s and beyond. In other words, while crime in the post-COMSTAT implementation period is lower than it was in the immediately preceding years, it is still not as low as it has been historically.

Concurrently, the post-implementation period may be too short. Hurricane Katrina's effects on the City resulted in the inability of the NOPD to compile crime statistics for the third

and fourth quarters of 2005. Without those figures, quarterly comparisons involving those quarters cannot be made in any post-COMSTAT implementation trend. Similarly, annual UCR totals were not reported to the FBI for 2005, so even annual comparisons cannot be made. This is not to say that statistical methods cannot be employed to account for this missing data should future analysis be done. However, this would place an additional caveat on interpreting any results beyond those already associated with using UCR data. Additional comments on crime and policing in New Orleans post-Katrina will be made later in this chapter.

#### No Single Explanation, but Reductions in Fear among New Orleans' Residents

While the statistical interpretations do not provide any explanation of why crime declined so rapidly beyond the implementation of COMSTAT in the fall of 1996, the citizens definitely expressed improved feelings of safety and reduced levels of fear during this same period. The University of New Orleans Survey Research Center's *Quality of Life* series of public opinion polls demonstrated the following: (1) a perception that crime was in fact declining – 57% of respondents said that crime had decreased in 2000 compared to just 8% in 1996; (2) increased perceptions of safety during the day – in 2000, 42% said they felt very safe around their home during the day, up from 19% in 1996; (3) increased perceptions of safety during the night – in 2000, 29% said they felt very safe around their home during the night, up from 13% in 1996; (4) improved ratings of the NOPD – in 2000, 48% said the police were doing an excellent or good job, compared to 23% in 1996; and (5) less public concern with crime as a major problem – in 2000, just 26% of respondents said crime was the biggest problem facing New Orleans, down from 70% in 1996.

These findings provide an additional, but independent, measure of assessing the impact of a change in crime policy in New Orleans. Given that crime is on the rise again in New Orleans

and that citizens' perceptions are also returning back to levels experienced when crime was extremely high, city decision makers should use these findings to reassess how crime is being dealt with by the NOPD.

#### Crime in New Orleans and the City's Future, post-Katrina

At the end of August 2005, Hurricane Katrina led directly to the breaches in many of the protective walls of the flood canals running throughout the city. These breaches resulted in devastating flooding in many New Orleans' neighborhoods, completely inundating some of them. In addition to trying to protect lives and property in the face of widespread panic and chaos, the NOPD also directed and assisted in many rescue efforts. The evidence of societal breakdown in the immediate post-Katrina environment are legion.

Officers and their families themselves were not exempt from the intensive damage. Nearly 80% suffered losses of their homes and personal property, according to the New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation (2006, 2). The NOPD suffered catastrophic damage to its headquarters building which also housed its Central Evidence and Property Room (which actually suffered total destruction as it was housed in the basement of the headquarters building) and the Radio and Carpentry Divisions. Three district stations were severely damaged and have yet to be repaired or rebuilt as the time of this writing. The Crime Lab was completely destroyed as was the NOPD's Special Operations/Traffic/Tactical Division's headquarters. In addition, much of the vehicular fleet was lost to flooding. Although no NOPD officer was killed as a result of the hurricane or the resulting flooding, four officers committed suicide in the aftermath.

Compounding the serious problems facing the NOPD, a significant percentage of officers chose to act dishonorably. Some officers of the NOPD contributed to the chaos either by participating in the looting taking place or by being one of the estimated 250 officers who

abandoned their posts and fled the city. The Superintendent at the time of the hurricane resigned his post under a cloud of uncertainty within weeks after the disaster. Other rumored incidents of inappropriate police behavior cast aspersions on the NOPD as to whether or not they had completely reformed or had returned to being the organization with a corrupt reputation, as it had throughout its history.

While not an indictment of the whole organization, these incidents have helped set the tone for policing in the post-Katrina era. Among the first residents to return were many of the criminals who took to resetting up in their old neighborhoods, much of which were abandoned and decaying as a result of flood damage. Although murders in the remaining months of 2005 were almost non-existent, the peace has not been maintained. In 2006, New Orleans recorded 162 homicides (FBI 2006). While there were differing population estimates,<sup>12</sup> utilizing the NOPD's figures yielded a murder rate of 67.4 per 100,000 residents, nearly twelve times the national average, and double that of 1999. At the time of this writing, 2007 murder totals are on pace to exceed those of 2006 although recent population increases will likely reduce the per capita rate. However, population is likely to be just over 300,000 based on estimates through the first half of 2007;<sup>13</sup> the resulting murder rate will likely be above 50 per 100,000 residents still making New Orleans a very dangerous place.

While the problems facing the NOPD are too many to list at this point of this study, evidence suggests that the NOPD is not yet up to the challenges of post-Katrina New Orleans. The Louisiana National Guard and the Louisiana State Police have sent officers to assist the NOPD in patrolling the streets, and the Superintendent and Mayor of New Orleans recently asked the Governor to extend the additional officers' tours of duty through the end of 2007.

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<sup>12</sup> Internal NOPD totals taken from the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center put the year-end 2006 population of New Orleans at 240,331.

<sup>13</sup> The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center published a population total of 298,432 for June 2007.

The need for additional officers suggests that a minimum number of police are necessary to secure the city, meaning that police do play a role in reducing crime. The question remains though as to what that exact role is. The COMSTAT method of policing espoused by Chief Bratton and put into place in the NOPD in 1996 indicates that police do matter. This study however finds no definitive proof that more officers in New Orleans equal lower crime in New Orleans. Continued refinement of the hypotheses, variables, and models used may yet yield a conclusive answer to that question.

The study of crime and policing in New Orleans remains paramount given the post-Katrina landscape. The NOPD and the City have, through their rebuilding efforts, an incredible opportunity to again make New Orleans a safe place to live. Continuing to study COMSTAT and its effects on crime reduction may yet provide the political leaders the solutions to their increasing problems.



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