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The impact of structural context on local crime control strategies and media attentiveness to crime

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Dani Allred Smith entitled "The impact of structural context on local crime control strategies and media attentiveness to crime." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Sociology.

Neal Shover, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)


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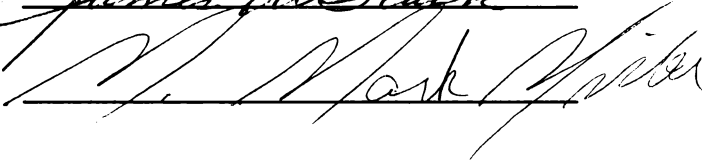


Neal Shover, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:



Interim Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

**THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL CONTEXT ON LOCAL CRIME CONTROL
STRATEGIES AND MEDIA ATTENTIVENESS TO CRIME**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree in Sociology
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dani Allred Smith
May 2001

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The data utilized in my dissertation were made available by The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. The data were originally collected by Herbert Jacob. Neither the collector of the original data nor the consortium bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretation presented here.

ABSTRACT

A neo-Marxist approach has been utilized to explain variation in local crime control strategies and media attentiveness to crime. The present study has argued that increased crime control and media attentiveness to crime result from perceived threats to the economic and social order by subordinate classes rather than from increases in the crime rate. The entire analysis has required two separate methodologies. First, a panel design and residual change regression analysis were used to examine 396 cities from 1950 to 1970. This analysis was used to determine the effect of changes in social and economic variables on changes in police size and police expenditures. The second analysis was based on only 10 cities. Multivariate contingency tables were constructed to analyze the effect of structural context on local crime control strategies and media attentiveness to crime. A dichotomous independent variable representing economic stability/low levels of perceived threat and economic decline/high levels of perceived threat was created for these analyses. Bivariate analyses were presented when there were too few cases to permit statistical control of the total crime rate. The analyses revealed that changes in social and economic factors significantly affect changes in police size and

expenditures, the ratio of arrests to violent offenses, and the proportion of crime news on the front-pages of newspapers.

Overall, the results of this investigation provide support for the neo-Marxist perspective. In particular, the findings confirm that structural factors, independent of crime rates, significantly impact formal responses to crime. Those structural factors which represent perceived threats to the social and economic order from disadvantaged segments of the population, especially nonwhites, have had the greatest impact. Limited support has been found for the measure of employment, civilian labor force, which is significant in the predicted direction only for changes in police size. Political decision-makers seem most likely to increase police size and expenditures in response to population decline and increases in the percent nonwhite. Ideological support for the efforts of political decision-makers in times of economic decline derives from increased media attention to crime news on the front pages of newspapers.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Evidence of temporal and geographic variation in formal responses to crime is easily amassed. For example, Christie (1993) presents cross-national data from 1834 to 1990 which show that the incarceration rate varies substantially over time and between nations. The American experience is similar. The incarceration rate has more than doubled in the years between 1985 and 1998 (Gilliard 1999).

Louisiana's prison incarceration rate ranked the highest in 1998; Texas topped the list in 1997. Similar variations are found by examining changes in prison sentences. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (Brown and Langan 1998) has shown that the average prison sentence in the United States almost quadrupled between 1945 and 1994. The same publication reports that Southern states incarcerate inmates for an average of two more years than states in other parts of the country. Another cross-national study finds much longer prison sentences in the United States than in England (Langan and Farrington 1998). Further examples of temporal and geographic variations can be cited from comparisons of juvenile drug abuse and alcohol arrest rates, the number of prisoners supervised outside a jail facility, jail capacities, and death penalty sentences and executions.

There are two contrasting explanations for variation in formal responses to crime. While some suggest that

political authorities are responding to the crime rate, others argue that political authorities are reacting to social and economic factors which represent a threat to the existing social order and/or elite interests. The neoclassical economic perspective on punishment interprets official crime control strategies as rational government responses to the level of street crime and to the public's fears about crime (Shover and Inverarity 1995, p. 447). As crime increases, citizens demand more crime control services and support increased spending on crime control and those political candidates who are tough on crime (Liska 1987, p. 69). Seen in this way, crime rates and community resources affect aggregate demand for crime control; the power to influence crime control policy is shared equally by all citizens through the electoral process (p. 70). The overall goals of these crime control efforts are deterrence and incapacitation.

In contrast, the neo-Marxist perspective argues that official responses to crime are affected by economic change, independent of significant variation in the crime rate. Criminal sanctions are sketched as part of an overall strategy of social control directed primarily at members of "dangerous" or subordinate classes (Melossi 1989). Declining economic conditions often result in a labor surplus and thus a swelling of the lower class and underclass. Any segment of the labor force that potentially

threatens the status quo has been referred to as "social dynamite" (Spitzer 1975, p. 646). This term encompasses both economically disadvantaged segments of the population as well as youths and minorities. One reason may be that culturally dissimilar groups are perceived as threats to the social order (Liska and Chamlin 1984). Variation in crime control strategies thus reflect the distribution of economic and political power among competing groups (Chamlin 1987, p. 836). These formal control strategies function to minimize the perceived threat to the existing social order and elite interests (Chamlin 1990, p. 485).

The present investigation proceeds from a neo-Marxist perspective and argues that elites, fearing any surge in the lower class or dangerous categories produced from economic downturns, influence political decision makers to act to protect business interests and the status quo. These political decision makers develop crime control strategies to contain the threat posed by the lower and subordinate classes. They also focus media attention on crime in order to generate and rationalize public fear of crime and to garner support for policies to combat crime. Media content promulgates a message which maintains existing social relations and which legitimizes the status quo. Thus, economic and social context impact crime control strategies and the media agenda concerning crime.

Crime Control Strategies

Rusche and Kirchheimer (1939) were among the first to show that crime control strategies change in response to changing economic conditions. They argued that economic crises in capitalistic societies and resulting unemployment bring increases in incarceration. Punishment is reduced when the economy is strong and the labor surplus shrinks; punishment increases during periods of economic crises or stagnation and when the labor surplus is large (Hochstetler and Shover 1997, pp. 358-359). Other historical analyses also reveal that economic crises are accompanied by changing crime control strategies. In particular, Adamson (1984) attributes changes in hard labor and solitary confinement policies in U.S. prisons between 1790 and 1835 to changes in the business cycle and labor supply. This relationship between economic conditions and punishment has been the subject of many empirical investigations.

Unemployment has been used as the sole measure of economic condition by several investigators (Greenberg 1977, Yeager 1979, Parker and Horwitz 1986, Inverarity and McCarthy 1988, Chiricos and Bales 1991, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995; Michalowski and Carlson 1999). Unemployment has sometimes been supplanted by the labor force participation rate (Wallace 1980) or income inequality (Jacobs and Helms 1997). Most often, unemployment has been supplemented with other economic variables such as

government revenue and industrial monopolization (Colvin 1980, Jacobs and Helms 1999).

The most frequently used measure of crime control strategies has been prison admission rates (Greenberg 1977, Inverarity and McCarthy 1988, Chiricos and Bales 1991, Jacobs and Helms 1996, Hochstetler and Shover 1997, Michalowski and Carlson 1999). The incarceration rate has sometimes been supplemented with per capita allocations for adult corrections and the parole rate (Wallace 1980), release rates (Parker and Horwitz 1986), court workload (Bridges et. al. 1987), and with measures of welfare (Colvin 1980). Alternatives to the incarceration rate have included the number of indicted and convicted offenders and average prison sentence (Yeager 1979) and the pretrial incarceration rate for misdemeanors and felonies (D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995).

Research has extended beyond measures of the prison population, particularly at the local level. Many of these macro studies of crime control responses examine the impact of structural variables on police. Table 1 provides a compilation of exemplary studies of local crime control. Police expenditures and police size are examined most frequently. Other local crime control strategies include the ratio of arrests to reported offenses and jail capacity and admissions. Several of these strategies have also been examined at the county, state, and national levels. These

Table 1. A Comparison of Exemplary Studies of Local Crime Control

<u>Exemplary Study</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variable</u>
Chamlin 1990	Chicago	1904-1958	police expenditures	percent black arrest rate city revenue political environment civilian labor force unemployment
Loftin and McDowall 1982	Detroit	1926-1977	police size	Part I crime
McDowall and Loftin 1986	Detroit	1928-1976	police size	city revenue personal crime rate vehicle density percent nonwhite number of worker strikes
Lizotte et. al. 1982	Chicago	1947-1970	police size	percent black surplus labor average size of manufacturing companies

Table 1 (continued). A Comparison of Exemplary Studies of Local Crime Control

<u>Exemplary Study</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variable</u>
Greenberg et. al. 1985	U.S. cities	1950, 1960, 1970	police size	level of violence region percent nonwhite economic inequality mean income crime rate per capita revenue
Liska et. al. 1981	109 cities	1957, 1962 1967, 1972	police size	Index crime rate civil disorders percent nonwhite city population residential segregation region
Jacobs 1978	U.S. cities	1960	police size	economic inequality crime rate population size mean income population change

Table 1 (continued). A Comparison of Exemplary Studies of Local Crime Control

<u>Exemplary Study</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variable</u>
Jacobs 1979	SMSAs	1960, 1970	police size	median family income percent black population size region percent black number of riots unemployment crime rate number drug/liquor stores
∞ Jackson 1986	U.S. cities	1970	police resources	city size percent black black/white median income population size population density percent poor city revenues Index crime rate

Table 1 (continued). A Comparison of Exemplary Studies of Local Crime Control

<u>Exemplary Study</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variable</u>
Jackson and Carroll 1981	90 U.S. cities	1970	police expenditures	racial composition black mobilization frequency of riots 1960s population size population density percent black poverty black/white median income city revenues Index crime rate household activity ratio region
Liska and Chamlin 1984	109 cities	1970	arrest rates	residential segregation income inequality police size population size percent poor crime rate percent nonwhite

Table 1 (continued). A Comparison of Exemplary Studies of Local Crime Control

<u>Exemplary Study</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variable</u>
Liska et. al. 1985	77 cities	1970	ratio arrest to crimes	income inequality percent nonwhite police size residential segregation population size percent poor Index crime rate
Chamlin 1989	109 cities	1972-1982	police size	percent black residential segregation percent farm poverty economic inequality crime rate per capita revenue
Liska et. al. 1999	100 cities	1978, 1983 1988	police expenditures jail capacity jail admissions	percent black crime rate arrest rate unemployment poverty median income percent nonwhite residential segregation population size population density divorce rate

include the ratio of arrests to reported offenses (McCarthy 1991), total correctional expenditures (Jacobs and Helms 1999), police size (Jacobs and Helms 1997), and police brutality (Holmes 2000).

Social factors which represent some threat to the social order or elite interests have also been added to these analyses. Table 1 presents a wide range of structural factors which have been hypothesized to affect police size and expenditures at the local level. The most commonly included social factors are percent nonwhite, economic inequality, median income, percent poor, residential segregation, city revenues, and population size and density. Other studies with different units of analysis have also examined social factors such as poverty or income (Colvin 1980, Bridges et. al. 1987, McCarthy 1991, Jacobs and Helms 1996, 1997, 1999, Hochstetler and Shover 1997), or demographic factors such as race, age, or sex (Bridges et. al. 1987, McCarthy 1991, Jacobs and Helms 1996, 1999, Hochstetler and Shover 1997). Additional supplemental variables have included measures of family breakdown and partisanship (Jacobs and Helms 1996, 1997, 1999) and urbanization (Bridges et. al. 1987). Table 1 also shows that the crime rate is sometimes included in these analyses of local crime control strategies, but is disaggregated and controlled infrequently.

Most studies examine the relationship between economic conditions and formal responses to crime over time (Greenberg 1977, Yeager 1979, Wallace 1980, Inverarity and McCarthy 1988, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995, Hochstetler and Shover 1997, Jacobs and Helms 1996, 1997, Michalowski and Carlson 1999). The time periods for these studies range from 7 to 40 years; studies examining monthly data have been rare (D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995). Data have been gathered at many different levels—cross-national (Greenberg 1977, Christie 1993), national (Yeager 1979, Berk et. al. 1981, Inverarity and McCarthy 1988, Jacobs and Helms 1996, Lynch et. al. 1999, Michalowski and Carlson 1999), state (Wallace 1980, Grant and Martinez 1997), and county (Colvin 1980, Parker and Horwitz 1986, Hochstetler and Shover 1997). As shown in Table 1, several investigations have focused on a single city over time. Most of the longitudinal studies compare, for example, police size at several points in time, but do not account for change in police size over time. Other studies of counties and cities have been cross-sectional.

Regression analysis has been utilized by most investigators who have explored the impact of economic conditions on crime control strategies (Yeager 1979, Wallace 1980, Parker and Horwitz 1986, Inverarity and McCarthy 1988, McCarthy 1991, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995, Jacobs and Helms 1996, 1997, Hochstetler and Shover 1997, Michalowski

and Carlson 1999). However, the findings of these regression studies vary. For example, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg (1995) use an ARIMA modeling procedure on monthly, county-level data, but find no significant relationship between unemployment and pretrial incarceration rates. Residual-change regression analysis is performed on county-level data and is able to identify a small but significant and independent effect of changes in unemployment on changes in imprisonment; however, the best predictor of imprisonment is past imprisonment (Hochstetler and Shover 1997). Similarly, the variation in arrest certainty is explained more by the crime rate than by unemployment in another analysis (McCarthy 1991). The crime rate explains 27 percent of the variation; unemployment adds another 12 percent to the explanation. The amount of variation in the prison population explained ranges from 54 percent when unemployment is the independent variable and conviction rate and average prison sentence are controlled (Yeager 1979) to 38.4 percent when the independent variable is labor force changes combined with other factors (Wallace 1980). The variance explained in studies of local crime control has ranged from 28 to 84 percent (Liska et. al. 1981) when the models include percent black and segregation and from 37 to 54 percent (Liska and Chamlin 1984) when the models include crime rate and income inequality as well as percent nonwhite and segregation.

Most investigators have employed control variables in their analyses. These have included the crime rate, which is often disaggregated into the property and violent crime rates (Wallace 1980, Liska and Chamlin 1984, Liska et. al. 1985, McCarthy 1991, Hochstetler and Shover 1997, Michalowski and Carlson 1999), or some aspect of the criminal justice system such as non-correctional criminal justice expenditures (Wallace 1980), prison release rates (Inverarity and McCarthy 1988), and arrest rates, jail capacity, and the number of assistant state attorneys, assistant public defenders, and criminal filings (D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995). Also controlled are welfare benefit levels (Colvin 1980, Wallace 1980) and demographic or social variables such as geographic region, population size, per capita revenue, age, sex, race, income, and poverty (Wallace 1980, Liska and Chamlin 1984, Liska et. al. 1985, Inverarity and McCarthy 1988, Hochstetler and Shover 1997).

A review of 44 empirical research studies finds that 57 percent of the studies reveal a positive and significant relationship between labor surplus and punishment (Chiricos and Delone 1992). More than 50 percent of the studies find a significant positive relationship when punishment is operationalized as prison admissions or prison population, when the data are national, regional, or county-level, and when the relationship has been examined over time. Studies that control for the crime rate and include measures of

social dynamite also result in more findings of a positive and significant relationship. These results reveal a clear, "direct and substantial labor surplus-punishment link that is independent of the mediating influence of criminal behavior" (p. 429). Past research "provides considerable evidence of a relationship between criminal justice policy and economic conditions" (Barlow et. al. 1995a, p. 191). And this research identifies specific avenues for future investigations, such as the inclusion of social factors and control of the crime rate, and recommends that future studies pursue other crime control strategies and collect longitudinal data on local areas.

Media Attentiveness to Crime

Fairly extensive research has shown that the news media disseminate a distorted image of crime. The media's portrayal of crime misrepresents the volume of crime, ignores white collar and political crimes, and stereotypes offenders and victims (Pritchard and Hughes 1997, Barak 1995a, Chermak 1995b, Ericson et. al. 1991, Garofalo 1981, Graber 1980, Dominick 1978, 1973, Jones 1976). Violent crime, in particular, is overrepresented in the news media (Krisberg 1995, Gorelick 1989, Doob 1985, Surette 1984, Gordon and Heath 1981, Graber 1980, Dussuyer 1979, Sherizen 1978). Thus, crime news does not accurately reflect official crime data (Sprott 1996, Jerin and Fields 1995, Marsh 1991, Windhauser et. al. 1990, Gorelick 1989, Ammons

et. al. 1982, Humphries 1981, Sheley and Ashkins 1981, Graber 1980, 1979, Jones 1976). Since the majority of crimes "are excluded from the public purview," the public relies on the media's narrow and distorted portrait of the crime problem (Chermak 1995b, p. 170). While the media effects literature regarding the impact of that distorted image on the public's perception of crime is not conclusive, there is reason to suspect that certain audiences (e.g., the elderly and females) may express greater fear of crime victimization or that audiences in general may fear violent crime much more than is warranted (Rountree and Land 1996, Marsh 1991). Researchers seem to agree that the media "influence public opinion by providing much of the information people think about and by shaping how they think about it" (Entman 1989, p. 361). Studies have shown that public perceptions approximate the media's depictions of crime (Spratt 1996, Loo 1995, Smith 1984, Sheley and Ashkins 1981). Media-initiated and state-initiated news, rather than incidence of crime, are positively associated with public concern about crime (Beckett 1994).

Journalists rely on government officials and police as their primary sources of information about crime. Police accounts, however, do not mirror actual crime; they are "cultural, legal, and social constraints produced by the police for organizational purposes" (Ericson 1991, p. 220). Criminal justice sources, including police and courtroom

personnel, "pass along crimes that reflect their own perspectives in which seriousness, dangerousness, and crime fighting are emphasized" (Chermak 1995b, p. 19). Several longitudinal studies of media coverage have not found crime news to be related to the crime rate (Barlow et. al. 1995a, 1995b). The reliance of journalists on police and politicians as sources of crime news leads them to "legitimate institutions of social control by disseminating to the public insitutional rationales as facts of the world" (Fishman 1980, p. 154). An ideology of crime, representing an incomplete and fragmented depiction of crime, "helps secure power for a dominant class by diverting attention from alternative explanations for crime" (Gorelick 1989, p. 423). The significant difference between crime news and crime statistics is indicative of an ideological emphasis on violent, individual crime, which "supports the interests of dominant economic classes by not questioning existing property relations" (Barlow et. al. 1995b, p. 9).

The gathering of crime news is fundamentally the coupling of two information processing machines--the news organization and government (Surette 1992, p. 58). However, the media are in a subordinate role because their access to crime information is controlled by official sources. Barak (1995b) concludes that "crime reporting is shaped more by the way the system of law enforcement and crime control works than by official or unofficial crime statistics or by

audience demand" (p. 12). Crime news emphasizes the randomness and impersonal nature of crime violence which suggests that only the state and its agents of control are capable of confronting this violence (Chermak 1995b, p. 141). Kappeler et. al. (1993) argue that the government and media have a monopoly on the myth industry in that they select and focus public attention on crime problems. The government has a "vested interest in maintaining the existing social definition of crime and extending this definition to groups and behaviors that are perceived to be a threat to the existing social order" (p. 6). Crime information "reinforces particular forms of social control" (Barak 1995a, p. ix).

The media, although in an inferior position, are integrated within the power structure and take critical stances only when they can join an elite opposition. The media are components of the dominant power elite, in terms of their shared characteristics and backgrounds, corporate ownership of the media, and the numerous interlocks between the media and business. The media are subordinate to their official government sources, due to the routines of newsgathering which require credible, authoritative, institutional news sources. The media, because of their routine reliance on official sources and ties to the economic elite, reflect either the consensus of or range of conflict within the dominant elite. Therefore, media

content legitimates the status quo and promulgates a message which sustains existing social relations. The media are "hegemonic devices to serve a relatively small number of spokespersons, sources, and interests"; the media "stress images and messages that reflect dominant beliefs and ideologies of that culture (Altheide and Show 1991, pp. 5-7).

Media studies which lack social context have been described as media-centric (Ericson 1991, p. 220). Ball-Rokeach and Cantor (1986) insist that the political and economic institutions of a society "set the stage for the nature of media content" (p. 14). Blumler and Gurevitch (1986) go further, arguing that economic and political domains structure media content (p. 67). Schudson (1986) believes that sociological research on the media should be "grounded in an understanding of social and political processes" (p. 47). Previous research has been criticized for abstracting the media agenda from its economic, political, and social context. Several media scholars have recommended a longitudinal study of the relationship between media content and social structure.

Model and Propositions

In spite of the breadth of the empirical investigations of the relationship between unemployment and punishment, the results of such studies often have been inconclusive. The percent of the variation in punishment explained by

unemployment has been less than 50 percent in many studies; factors other than unemployment are related more strongly to the imprisonment rate or other crime control strategy; and sometimes no relationship has been found between unemployment and formal responses to crime. The present study seeks to rectify particular shortcomings of past research. While previous studies have selected cities as the unit of aggregation, the longitudinal studies have examined a single city or fewer than 109 cities. Other studies of cities have been cross-sectional. The present study examines 396 cities over a period of three decades. Cities can be considered the most important political and governmental agents in law enforcement since local governments have the major responsibility for responding to crime (Jacob 1982, p. 6, 45).

Previous studies of formal responses to crime have tended to focus on only one measure of social control--incarceration rates or police size or police expenditures. This study seeks to remedy that deficiency by examining several measures of local crime control--police size, expenditures, and activity, and changes in city ordinances. The results of some studies which utilize convicted offender data have been inconclusive, perhaps calling into question the presumption that convicted felony offenders are representative of the labor surplus (D'Alessio and Stolzenberg 1995, p. 351). In addition, the use of

imprisonment or even pretrial defendants assumes that judges react to the level of social dynamite on behalf of elite interests and as members of the elite class to protect the status quo. Instead, local political decision makers respond to elite anxiety, and it is in the front-line of the defense against crime--police, city ordinances, and state statutes--where we see the evidence of their responses. Local police have the primary responsibility for enforcing city ordinances and state laws; thus, police represent a particularly local response to crime. An alternative crime control strategy is also needed because several studies have found a strong relationship between past incarceration and present incarceration levels, often stronger than the relationship between unemployment and incarceration (Wallace 1980, Inverarity and Grattet 1989, Hochstetler and Shover 1997).

The selection of cities as the unit of observation has also affected my decision to replace incarceration as the dependent variable. The majority of the incarcerated population is held in federal or state prisons; only about one-third of the incarcerated population is held in local jails. The use of incarceration would also exclude the 72,000 inmates in alternative programs outside of jail which local jail authorities supervise. The use of jail populations as a dependent variable is further complicated by the fact that those in jail may be awaiting arraignment,

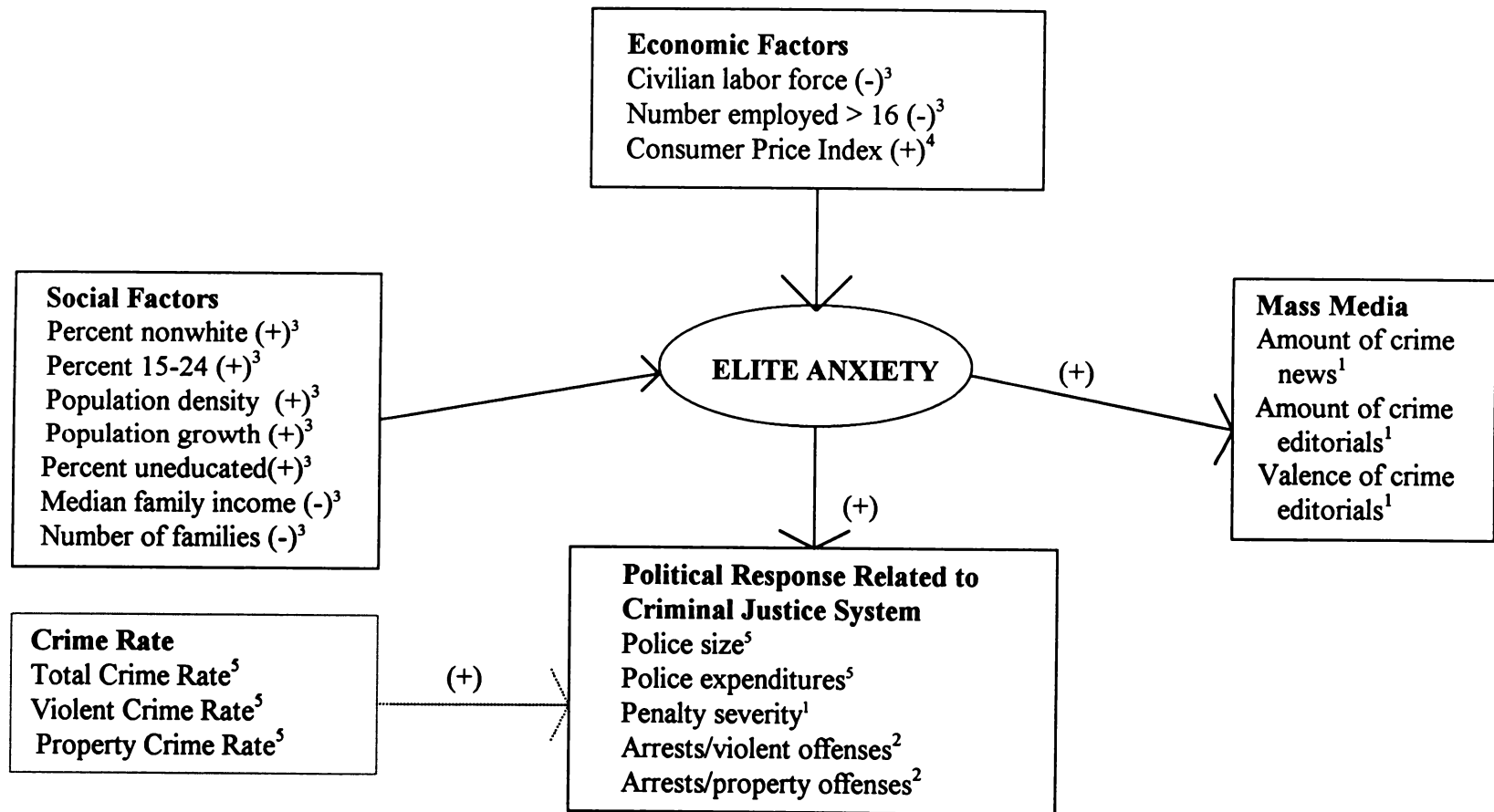
trial, conviction, or sentencing. Juveniles may be detained in jail for mental illness or protective custody. At midyear 1998, 57 percent of jail inmates were unconvicted (Guilliard 1999). In addition, jails are primarily reserved for individuals serving less than a one-year sentence (although because of prison overcrowding, jails may also contain state prisoners). Furthermore, the survey of jails has only been conducted by the Bureau of Justice since 1992.

In addition, past research often has been limited to only one measure of employment levels, either unemployment or labor force participation, and to only a few measures of social dynamite. The present study provides for two measures of employment levels--civilian labor force participation and number employed over age 16--and includes nine social factors which provide a strong measure of those segments of the population which may be perceived as threatening. Furthermore, previous studies have often selected static measures of the structural variables, which can lead to model specification bias (Chamlin 1989). The present investigation utilizes dynamic (change) measures of all variables under study.

Another shortcoming is the exclusion of the ideological dimension in studies of the relationship between labor surplus and punishment. Previous research has been criticized for failing to consider ideological and political forces, as well as the criminal justice system and public

opinion (Garland 1990). The present study adds the ideological dimension by considering the impact of economic and social conditions on media attentiveness to crime and media support for crime control policies. Inclusion of the ideological as well as the economic and political dimensions may help the present study to avoid the criticism leveled at other investigations of overestimating the effect of economic factors. The addition of media attentiveness to crime may also minimize the moral reductionism of both Durkheimian and Marxian explanations for variations in crime control strategies.

Given these shortcomings, I have elaborated a model of the relationship between structural context, formal responses to crime, and media attentiveness to crime. As depicted in the model (see Figure 1), certain economic and social factors which represent an increase in the proportion of those members of society who could be considered social dynamite, and thus a threat to the social and economic order, affect the level of elite anxiety. The specific economic factors are a decline in the civilian labor force and in the number employed over age 16; the social factors are represented by an unstable population which contains a large percentage of nonwhites and uneducated persons and of persons between the ages of 15 and 24, and high levels of density, and with a low median income, and fewer families. During periods of economic



¹annual (10 cities), 1948-1978; ²annual (10 cities), 1958-1977; ³1950, 1960, 1970 (396 cities); ⁴annual (national), 1948-1978; ⁵annual (396 cities), 1948-1978.

Figure 1. Theoretical Model of the Impact of Structural Factors on Political Responses and Media Attentiveness to Crime

adversity, we presume that the dominant class feels particularly threatened and perceives the lower and subordinate classes as threats to economic stability and the status quo. The lower class is probably feared by the middle and upper classes at all times, but this fear increases when the size of the lower class increases.

The economic elite presumably pressures the political institution when any factor threatens the status quo. The political institution seeks to maintain a climate conducive to business growth; therefore, political decision makers act to counter the perceived threat of the lower class. Thus, elite anxiety is translated into political action by members of the economic and political elite, who serve in the local arena as mayors, members of city councils, and state legislators, as contributors to political campaigns, or as advisers to political decision makers. At the local level, these actions will primarily affect police size, expenditures, and activity, and changes in city ordinances and state laws. Elite interests and threats to elite interests are measured indirectly with these structural conditions (Liska 1987, pp. 85-86).

Proposition 1. During periods of economic decline (i.e., decreases in the civilian labor force and number employed over age 16), accompanied by high levels of social dynamite (i.e., increases in percent nonwhite, age 15-24, and uneducated; increases in population density and instability; and decreases in median family income and number of families), we suppose that elite anxiety will increase and will result in government policies which will increase the number of police, police expenditures, police activity (the ratio of

arrests per reported criminal offenses), and penalty severity.

Also portrayed in the model is a relationship between the social and economic factors and between elite anxiety and the mass media. The media, as an economic enterprise owned by and with direct ties through directorships to members of the economic elite, are certainly affected by adverse economic conditions; their stake in the status quo is as great as any other member of the economic elite. Thus, media content mirrors the concerns of the economic and political elite and provides support for political responses to crime. The news media are in a subordinate position to the economic elite because of their position as a profit-making enterprise dependent on advertising revenue and to the political elite because of their need for official government sources. Political decision makers serve as the sources for crime news and as the subjects of editorials concerned with government's response to crime. Therefore, media attentiveness to crime will also increase as the economy declines and the level of social dynamite increases.

Proposition 2. During periods of economic decline accompanied by significant numbers of social dynamite, elite anxiety will result in increased media attentiveness to crime.

Proposition 3. The political responses, which presumably result from elite anxiety produced in the economic and social climate specified above, will be supported through favorable editorial comment.

Proposition 4. Political authorities will be the subject of most editorials about crime.

The crime rate is included in the model as a control variable, as indicated by the dotted line between the crime rate and the political crime control strategies. In this model, the social and economic factors are predicted to affect local crime control strategies and media attentiveness to crime regardless of the crime rate.

CHAPTER 2

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study were gathered by Dr. Herbert Jacob, then a professor of political science and urban affairs at Northwestern University, as part of a National Institute of Justice funded project which investigated local governmental responses to crime from 1948 to 1978. Jacob collected baseline data on 396 U.S. cities with populations over 50,000. Ten of these cities were selected for further analysis because of their range of values for political structure, fiscal strength, quality of life, and urban condition, as well as for race, age, median family income, police expenditures, and violent and property crime. Other factors which affected the final selection of the 10 cities were regional distribution, research capacity, accessibility, and prior research. The ten cities were Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Houston, Texas; Indianapolis, Indiana; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Newark, New Jersey; Oakland, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; and San Jose, California. In addition, Jacob conducted a content analysis of newspapers published in nine of the 10 cities between 1948 and 1978. Newark was excluded because of its wide readership of New York newspapers, which lack coverage of Newark. Data were also collected on changes in city ordinances and state statutes over the 31-year period.

As with most types of secondary analysis, the intent of the original study differs from the intent of this study. As a result, the conceptualization and operationalization of variables are not necessarily optimal for this study. Jacob was interested in the relationship between crime and social factors such as race and poverty and between crime and police size and expenditures. Almost no attention was paid to the economic factors which are essential to this study. In addition, several variables which would have been assets to this study were excluded. These include jail admission rates and the size and expenditures of all of the components of the local criminal justice system.

Because record-keeping at the local level has not been consistently maintained over time, much of the analysis in this study is based on 10 U.S. cities over a 31-year time period. This small sample size limits the types of analyses that can be performed. Thus, the case-study approach has been selected to test the entire theoretical model. The case-study approach has been used to compare criminal justice systems (Brereton and Casper 1981-82, Welsh and Pontell 1991) and to assess theoretical models (Castallano and McGarrell 1991). The analysis of the 10 sample cities provides for an intensive and historical specificity which may avoid the criticism of superficiality leveled at some studies.

The limited generalizability of findings based on 10 cities is a potential problem. The entire model can only be tested using the data on 10 cities. Although these data are extensive, the small number of cities calls into question the representativeness of the findings. Another limitation derives from the time period of the original study, 1948-1978. Data representing 1978 to the present, especially annual data, would be a welcome addition to this analysis. However, this investigation provides a foundation for continuing the analysis into the present.

Independent Variables

Specific measures of economic and social context are available in baseline data which Jacob collected from census publications. The specific economic and social factors are listed in the model contained in Chapter 1. All of these factors are available for the 396 cities for the years 1950, 1960 and 1970.

Economic Factors

civilian labor force
number employed over age 16

Social Factors

percent nonwhite
percent age 15-24
population density (population per square mile)
population growth (percent population change)
median family income (standardized in 1967 dollars)
number of families
percent uneducated (percent 25 years and older with less than a fifth grade education)

These economic and social factors are also used to construct a dichotomous independent variable representing structural context. The attributes of the structural context variable are economic stability/low levels of social dynamite and economic decline/high levels of social dynamite. The dichotomous independent variable is used when analyzing the 10 cities.

Dependent Variables

The crime control strategies examined in this study are police size, expenditures, and activity and changes in penalty severity. The number of police officers per 1,000 population and per capita police expenditures (standardized in 1967 dollars) provide measures of formal responses to crime for the 396 cities. The ratio of arrests to reported criminal offenses (violent--homicide, robbery, assault--and property--burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft) serve as a measure of intensity of police activity for the 10 cities. Data on the number of police officers, arrests, and criminal offenses were obtained from the Uniform Crime Report; data on police expenditures were obtained from a census publication. In addition, the changes in city ordinances (in the 10 cities) and in state laws (in the states represented by the 10 cities) for 11 offense types permit the examination of changes in penalty severity (increase, no change, decrease). The specific ordinances and statutes

were coded by Jacob. All of these variables are available for the 1948-1978 time period.

To investigate the impact of economic and social factors on the media, two measures of media attentiveness to crime are utilized. Crime news is a staple of typical news coverage (Berkowitz 1997, Chermak 1995a, 1995b, Erickson et. al. 1991, Kaniss 1991, Graber 1980, 1979, Dominick 1978). Newspapers were chosen to represent the media because they are the most important news source at the local level (Reagan and Ducey 1983, Bogart 1984, Latimer and Cotter 1985). Newspapers are "America's premier source of public affairs information" (Robinson and Levy 1996, p. 135). The content of the front-page and editorial pages of the local newspapers in 9 of the 10 cities for the 31-year period were coded as part of the Jacob (1982) study. A randomly constructed week for each four-month period resulted in 21 issues per city; the proportion of circulation was considered in selecting from multiple newspapers in the same city (p. 18). The reliability of the sample size was at the 95 percent level of confidence. Media attentiveness to crime is operationalized as the proportion of crime news to total front-page news and of editorial content concerning crime issues to total editorial content. An additional measure examines the valence or position of editorial comment (critical, favorable, neutral) concerning crime and the subject of that comment.

Control Variables

Neo-Marxist approaches to punishment assume that the effect of economic and social factors on formal responses to crime are independent of the level of crime; therefore, the crime rate will be controlled in this analysis. It also seems important to control for crime given the results of past research discussed above. Yearly data on the total, violent, and property crime rate were obtained from the Uniform Crime Report for the 396 cities from 1948 to 1978.

Analysis Plans

Two methodologies were used to analyze the impact of structural factors on local crime control strategies. The combination of time-series and case-study analyses of longitudinal data on U.S. cities permits the assessment of the impact of economic and social context on local government's response to crime and local newspapers' attentiveness to crime and support for crime control policies. The first methodology is a panel design which compares the 396 cities at three points in time (1950, 1960, and 1970). This design controls for variation between cities as well as for trend effects (Parker and Horwitz 1986, Hochstetler and Shover 1997). Residual-change regression analysis is used to eliminate the effect of initial or previous values of the independent and dependent variables on changes in those variables. The procedure also

controls for trend effects common to all cities (Hochstetler and Shover 1997, p. 363). Both the panel design and analysis of change scores provide for a dynamic, rather than a static, measure of the variables under study (Chamlin 1989). The selection of cities as the unit of observation makes it possible to avoid the difficulties associated with larger geographic units, such as the masking of unique variations due to the heterogeneity of the larger unit, the canceling of measurement errors between subunits, and the rising of national series over time (Wallace 1980, Galster and Scaturro 1985, Chiricos and Delone 1992, Hochstetler and Shover 1997).

A regression analysis is performed on the 396 cities. Residual-change regression analysis permits an examination of the impact of changes in the economic and social factors on changes in police size and expenditures, controlling for the crime rate. Change in these factors from 1950 to 1960 and from 1960 to 1970 can be examined by regressing the variables on their previous level to derive a predicted value and then subtracting the predicted from the observed value (Hochstetler and Shover, p. 363). Thus, the residual-change scores for police size and expenditures will be regressed on the residual-change scores for the specific variables identified as economic and social factors (p. 363). Change scores have been shown to be highly reliable when the intent is to assess the effect of the independent

variable on subsequent (Time 2) levels of the dependent variable with the initial (Time 1) level of variability in the dependent variable controlled (Allison 1990). This analysis tests the portion of the model dealing with the influence of economic and social factors on two of the variables which measure the actions of political decision makers in response to elite anxiety.

The second methodology utilizes a case-study approach to analyze the 10 cities and to test the entire theoretical model. Structural context, represented here by economic and social factors, can be distinguished by following a procedure used by Barlow et. al. (1995a) and Hagan and Bernstein (1979). Descriptive data will be relied upon to compare the 10 cities along a dichotomously created independent variable representing economic decline/high levels of social dynamite and economic stability/low or stable levels of social dynamite. Both crime control strategies and media content are compared for the two time periods. The level of crime is controlled to ensure that it is economic and social context, not simply increasing or decreasing crime rates, which affect formal responses to crime and media content. Multivariate contingency tables are presented to reflect the impact of structural context on the law enforcement variables and the media agenda concerning crime, while controlling for crime. Chi-square analysis is used to determine level of significance.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

The results of the analytical procedures detailed in the previous section follow. The findings from the residual-change regression analyses of changes in police size and in police expenditures for the 396 cities are presented first. The impact of changes in nine structural factors on changes in police size and in police expenditures over two decades is evaluated. The outcome of the multivariate contingency analyses of police size, expenditures, and activity in the 10 sample cities is described next. The multivariate analyses compare the law enforcement variables in two economic periods while controlling for the crime rate. Additional analyses of police activity and penalty severity indicate whether there are significant differences between periods of economic decline and economic stability. Further multivariate analyses examine the variation in media attentiveness to crime in the two periods.

Regression Analyses

Residual-change regression scores have been calculated for the social and economic factors, for the property and violent crime rates, and for police size and police expenditures. The change scores are the difference between observed and predicted values for each variable over two

time-periods: 1950 to 1960 and 1960 to 1970. Therefore, the 1950-1960 change score for the dependent variable police size represents the difference between the actual police size in 1960 and the police size predicted for 1960 based on known police size in 1950. The change scores are entered into a regression model, which displays the direct effect of changes in social and economic factors on changes in police size and in police expenditures. The zero-order correlation between changes in the two measures of employment are quite high ($r = .72$ for 1950-1960; $r = .97$ for 1960-1970); therefore, number employed over age 16 has been removed from the analysis. For all other variables, collinearity diagnostics reveal minimal problems with multicollinearity (tolerance levels are sufficiently high).

Included in each summary regression table are the unstandardized coefficients and the standard error for those coefficients for each independent and control variable. The final column contains the beta coefficient for each variable and asterisks are used to designate those beta values which are significant. The significance is tested by the t statistic. The beta coefficients "represent the relative amount of contribution of that variable, after contributions of the other variables included in the regression equation are taken into account" (Loether and McTavish, 1974, p. 313). Thus, the beta coefficient values statistically control for the other variables (p. 313). The beta

coefficient permits the comparison of the relative contribution of each variable to the prediction of the dependent variable (p. 314).

Separate regression analyses were performed for changes in police size and in police expenditures for each time period (1950 to 1960 and 1960 to 1970). The explained variances are higher for the 1950 to 1960 models for both police size and police expenditures ($R^2 = .342$ and $R^2 = .386$, respectively) than for the 1960 to 1970 models ($R^2 = .331$ and $R^2 = .272$, respectively). The combined factors account for 34 percent of the variation in police size and 39 percent of the variation in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960. These factors explain somewhat less of the variation in police size and expenditures between 1960 and 1970. The weaker relationship in the latter decade may be due in part to the unique social and economic conditions of the 1960s. For example, the economy moved from a period of stability to a period of decline in the mid-1960s (Michalowski and Carlson 1999). In the latter half of the 1960s, manufacturing jobs diminished and minority workers were displaced (p. 225). The 1960s were also a period of social disorder, characterized by protests over the Vietnam War and civil rights.

Changes in five of the social factors and the economic factor, as well as in the property crime rate, are

Table 2. Summary Table for Regression of Change in Police Size (number of police per 1,000 population) on Changes in Independent and Control Variables, 1950-1960

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Population growth	-0.003	.001	-0.277***
Population density	-0.000	.000	-0.087
Median family income	0.000	.000	0.188**
Percent uneducated	0.039	.015	0.157*
Percent nonwhite	0.019	.005	0.242***
Number of families	0.000	.000	0.171**
Civilian labor force	-0.000	.000	-0.200***
Percent age 15-24	0.004	.010	0.023
Violent crime rate	-0.015	.018	-0.056
Property crime rate	0.008	.002	0.201***
Constant	-0.027		
N	= 247		
R ²	= .342		

* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

significant predictors of change in the number of police between 1950 and 1960. Table 2 reveals a significant and positive relationship between changes in police size between 1950 and 1960 and changes in percent nonwhite (beta = .242), median family income (beta = .188), number of families (beta = .171), percent with less than a fifth grade education (beta = .157), and the property crime rate (beta = .201). A negative and significant relationship exists between police size and population growth (beta = -.277) and the civilian labor force (beta = -.200). Table 3 indicates that changes in four of the same social and economic factors have a direct impact on change in the number of police between 1960

Table 3. Summary Table for Regression of Change in Police Size on Changes in Independent and Control Variables, 1960-1970

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Population growth	-0.003	.001	-0.184***
Population density	0.000	.000	0.056
Median family income	0.000	.000	0.012
Percent uneducated	-0.005	.021	-0.014
Percent nonwhite	0.013	.005	0.167*
Number of families	-0.000	.000	-0.404***
Civilian labor force	-0.000	.000	-0.105*
Percent age 15-24	0.003	.011	0.014
Violent crime rate	0.039	.012	0.194**
Property crime rate	0.001	.002	0.023
Constant	0.006		
N	= 291		
R ²	= .331		

* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

and 1970. Number of families (beta = -.404), population growth (beta = -.184), and civilian labor force (beta = -.105) are negatively related to police size. Change in the property crime rate, however, is replaced by change in the violent crime rate. Both percent nonwhite (beta = .167) and the violent crime rate (beta = .194) are positively related to police size.

The results of the regression of change in police expenditures between 1950 to 1960 are somewhat similar to the analysis of change in police size for the same period. Table 4 confirms that changes in two of the same social factors, as well as in the property crime rate, have a significant effect on change in police expenditures between

Table 4. Summary Table for Regression of Change in Per Capita Police Expenditures (standardized in 1967 dollars) on Changes in Independent and Control Variables, 1950-1960

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Population growth	-0.027	.006	-0.268***
Population density	0.000	.000	0.027
Median family income	0.000	.001	0.048
Percent uneducated	0.097	.175	0.037
Percent nonwhite	0.166	.057	0.211**
Number of families	0.000	.000	0.131
Civilian labor force	-0.000	.000	-0.086
Percent age 15-24	0.212	.128	0.097
Violent crime rate	0.446	.191	0.168*
Property crime rate	0.064	.029	0.149*
Constant = -0.488*			
N = 202			
R ² = .386			

* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

1950 and 1960. Change in population growth (beta = -.268) is negatively related to police expenditures; percent nonwhite (beta = .211) and the property crime rate (beta = .149) are positively related to change in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960. An additional factor is change in the violent crime rate (beta = .168) which is also positively related to police expenditures. Changes in both social factors are stronger predictors than either crime rate variable.

Results of regression analysis of change in police expenditures between 1960 to 1970 differ from results of the previous analyses because no crime rate factor is significant. Instead, two social factors, percent nonwhite

(beta = .431) and number of families (beta = .195), are significantly and positively related to police expenditures between 1960 and 1970 (see Table 5). Change in the percent nonwhite has been a strong and significant factor in all four analyses, and is especially strong in predicting change in police expenditures between 1960 and 1970.

Table 5. Summary Table for Regression of Change in Per Capita Police Expenditures on Changes in Independent and Control Variables, 1960-1970

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Population growth	0.004	.016	0.016
Population density	0.000	.066	0.066
Median family income	0.001	.001	0.094
Percent uneducated	-0.072	.263	-0.017
Percent nonwhite	0.349	.061	0.431***
Number of families	0.000	.000	0.195***
Civilian labor force	-0.000	.000	-0.081
Percent age 15-24	0.094	.133	0.041
Violent crime rate	0.067	.134	0.034
Property crime rate	0.023	.022	0.071
Constant = -0.058			
N = 258			
R ² = .272			
* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001			

Other studies have found percent nonwhite to be an important determinant of society's response to crime, and in particular related to police size and expenditures (Jacobs 1979, 1989, Jackson and Carroll 1981, Liska et. al. 1981, Greenberg et. al. 1985, Jackson 1986, Chamlin 1989, 1990, Liska et. al. 1999, Holmes 2000). Liska et. al. (1981) find

a strong racial composition effect in the 1950s and 1960s. Hawkins (1987) argues that nonwhites are perceived as particularly threatening. Spitzer (1975) suggests that the threat from "dangerous" classes is related to the size of the group and its degree of political organization. Blalock (1967) agrees, suggesting that nonwhites are more likely to be perceived as economic and political threats when they are a larger proportion of the population and mobilized. Liska and Messner (1999) conclude that percent nonwhite has a more consistent effect on crime control efforts than economic factors. The results of this investigation support that conclusion as well as the overall contention that perceived threats to the social order precipitate increases in formal social control.

The direct effects of changes in the crime rate on changes in police size for both periods and on change in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960 were unexpected. The crime rate, however, has been significant in previous studies of the relationship between structural factors and punishment (e.g., Liska et. al. 1981, Liska and Chamlin 1984, Chamlin 1989, McCarthy 1991, Hochstetler and Shover 1997). Three other results require an explanation. First is the unexpected negative relationship between population growth and changes in police size and expenditures. This result suggests that population decline is a more critical factor than population growth in explaining formal responses

to crime. The number of cities experiencing a decline in population size increased from 6 percent in 1950 to 21 percent in 1960 and to 32 percent in 1970. The decline in population coincides with changes in the composition of the city's population. American cities were transformed in the years following World War II when a growing middle class fled to suburban areas and left the urban poor and nonwhites behind. The perceived threat represented by these "dangerous" segments required a larger police force to protect business interests and to keep order in the central city. The civil disorders of the 1960s represented additional threats to the status quo. Police size and expenditures rapidly expanded in this period (Jacob 1982, Liska and Messner 1999). A second problem is the positive relationship between change in median family income and change in police size between 1950 and 1960. The third problem is the positive relationship between change in the number of families and change in police size between 1950 and 1960 and also change in police expenditures between 1960 and 1970. Both findings appear to provide greater support for the neoclassical economic perspective. Increases in income and number of families may have resulted in increased demands for police services in spite of the stability which both factors represent. Changes in family structure may offer another explanation for these findings. Such changes could represent a threat to the status quo.

Multivariate Contingency Tables

The significant factors from the residual-change regression analyses have been examined to determine which years reflect economic stability/low or stable levels of social dynamite and economic decline/high levels of social dynamite. These factors tend to be more similar for 1950 and 1960 than for 1960 and 1970. Thus, the break between the two time periods occurs within the 1960s. Selection of the specific year to differentiate the time periods is based on an examination of the national consumer price index for the years 1960 to 1970. The increases in the consumer price index which begin in 1967 are larger than in previous years in the decade and continue to the end of the 1960s and through 1978. Therefore, the years 1948 to 1966 are designated as the period of economic stability and the years 1967 to 1978 as the period of economic decline. These designations correspond to Michalowski and Carlson's (1999) periods of consolidation and decay and Barlow et. al.'s (1995a) periods of expansion and decline.

The two time periods are utilized in the investigation of the dependent variables which are available for the 10 sample cities. A comparison of the dependent variable during the two time periods is presented in each multivariate contingency table. Each time period is examined when the crime rate is low and when the crime rate is high. The percentages for the low crime rate periods can

be compared to the percentages for the high crime rate periods. A similar pattern for both indicates that the crime rate is not responsible for the differences between the two economic periods. The propositions are valid only when the higher value for the dependent variable is accompanied by a greater percentage for the period of economic decline than for the period of economic stability. Chi-square values are used to identify significant differences between the two time periods.

Police size and expenditures are examined first. The total crime rate is the control factor in the multivariate analyses. The mean value of the total crime rate (49.10) differentiates low and high crime rates. Substituting the median value (39.50) for the mean violates the expected frequency criterion for calculating chi-square. Table 6 shows that a significant difference exists in police size between the two time periods regardless of the crime rate. The number of police is greater in the period of decline whether the total crime rate is low or high.

Table 7 reveals similar results; police expenditures differ significantly between the two time periods when the crime rate is controlled. Per capita police expenditures are higher in the period of decline than in the period of stability.

Multivariate analysis is not possible for the ratio of arrests to reported criminal offenses for total crime,

Table 6. A Comparison of Police Size in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Number of Police (per 1,000 population)</u>	<u>Low Crime Rate^a</u>		<u>High Crime Rate^b</u>	
	<u>Economic Stability 1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline 1967-1978</u>	<u>Economic Stability 1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline 1967-1978</u>
1.72 or less	61.5 %	12.0 %	76.2 %	33.7 %
> 1.72	38.5	88.0	23.8	66.2
Total	100.0 (N=169)	100.0 (N=25)	100.0 (N=21)	100.0 (N=95)

^aChi-square = 21.608; p < .001; ^bChi-square = 12.810; p < .001

Table 7. A Comparison of Police Expenditures in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Per Capita Police Expenditures</u> <u>(standardized 1967 \$)</u>	<u>Low Crime Rate^a</u>		<u>High Crime Rate^b</u>	
	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>
\$17.27 or less	71.6 %	20.0 %	76.2 %	13.7 %
> \$17.27	28.4	80.0	23.8	86.3
Total	100.0 (N=169)	100.0 (N=25)	100.0 (N=21)	100.0 (N=95)

^aChi-square = 25.469; p < .001; ^bChi-square = 35.837; p < .001

violent crime, or property crime because of the missing data on arrests for almost one-half of the years from 1948 to 1978. The criterion regarding expected frequency size is violated when the crime rate is high; the chi-square value computed when the crime rate is low is not significant for total or property crime. The ratio of arrests to violent offenses when the crime rate is low is significantly different ($p < .05$) between the two time periods. This ratio is higher in the period of decline and lower in the period of stability. Thus, police activity directed toward violent crime when the overall crime rate is low is greatest in the period decline and least in the period of stability. This result supports the proposition that police activity will be greater during periods of economic decline. A bivariate analysis of arrests/offenses for violent and property crime reveals similar results. Table 8 permits

Table 8. A Comparison of Arrests/Property Offenses in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Arrests/Property Offenses</u>	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>
< 15 percent	19.7 %	44.3 %
15 - 20 percent	47.0	32.1
> 20 percent	33.3	23.6
Total	100.0 (N=66)	100.0 (N=106)

Chi-square = 9.522; $p < .01$

the ratio of property arrests to property offenses in periods of economic stability and decline to be compared. The property offenses are limited to burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. This ratio varies from 7 to 48 percent and the larger than expected ratio is due to the large number of motor vehicle thefts and the greater success of police in arresting these offenders (the maximum value for the ratio of arrests to offenses for motor vehicle theft is 61 percent). Arrests/property offenses are significantly different in the two time periods, but in a different direction. The ratio is higher in the period of economic stability rather than in the period of economic decline as proposed. Police activity is less in the period of decline. Table 9 displays the results for the ratio of violent arrests to violent offenses. Violent offenses are limited to assault, homicide, and robbery. The ratio for arrest to

Table 9. A Comparison of Arrests/Violent Offenses in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Arrests/Violent Offenses</u>	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>
< 1 percent	92.4 %	73.3 %
1 - 2 percent	4.5	14.3
> 2 percent	3.0	12.4
Total	100.0 (N=66)	100.0 (N=105)

Chi-square = 9.522; p < .01

violent offenses ranges from 0 to 42 percent. The ratio for homicide and robbery are quite high; however, there are many more assaults than homicides and robberies and the arrests/assaults is quite small. Table 9 reports that arrests/violent offenses are significantly different in the two periods in the direction specified. The ratio of arrests to reported violent offenses is higher in the period of decline than in the period of stability.

A second dependent variable, penalty severity, is available only for the 10 cities and also requires bivariate analysis due to the small number of cases. Changes in the severity of penalties for 11 offenses are examined at the state and local levels. The offenses are public drunkenness, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, loitering, prostitution, gambling, drugs (heroin, marijuana, and other narcotics), and weapons (firearms and other weapons). The number of changes made to state laws and city ordinances during each period are significantly different ($p < .05$); 58 percent of the changes were made in the period of economic decline. Only about 51 percent of the changes in state laws increase or decrease the penalty for one of the 11 offenses. Of the 216 penalty changes in state laws, over one-half involve an increase in penalties for minor code revisions and 20 percent an increase in penalties for major code revisions. Table 10 shows a significant difference in state penalty changes between the two time periods. A

Table 10. A Comparison of Penalty Severity in State Laws in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Change in Penalty Severity in State Laws</u>	<u>Economic Stability 1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline 1967-1978</u>
Increased	86.7 %	63.9 %
Decreased	13.3	36.1
Total	100.0 (N=83)	100.0 (N=133)

Chi-square = 13.425; p < .001

larger percentage of penalties were decreased in the period of economic decline than in the period of economic stability, even though more penalties were increased during both periods. There are significant differences ($p < .05$) in the maximum penalty allowed by law between the two time periods. The maximum penalty allowed is more likely to include jail, fine or both and much less likely to specify both jail and fine in the period of decline. The maximum number of years specified for incarceration is more likely to be over five years in the period of stability and equally likely to be less than five, five to 25, or more than 25 years in the period of decline. However, the amount of the maximum fine tends to be \$5,000 or less in the period of stability and more than \$5,000 in the period of decline.

Fifty-eight percent of the changes in city ordinances involve changes in the severity of the penalty for the 11 offenses. Table 11 reveals no significant difference in the

Table 11. A Comparison of Penalty Severity in City Ordinances in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Change in Penalty Severity in City Ordinances</u>	<u>Economic Stability 1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline 1967-1978</u>
Increased	69.4 %	58.0 %
Decreased	16.3	31.9
No change	14.3	10.1
Total	100.0 (N=49)	100.0 (N=69)

Chi-square = 3.737; N.S.

direction of penalty changes in city ordinances between the two time periods, although there are significant differences ($p < .05$) in the maximum penalty allowed by law. The amount of the maximum fine is less likely to be over \$500 in the period of economic decline than in the period of economic stability. Jail sentences are only specified in 43 percent of the changes in city ordinances; however, the maximum jail time is significantly more likely to be over 90 days in the period of stability and less than 180 days in the period of decline.

The final multivariate analyses can be performed on media attentiveness to crime and valence of editorial content because the front- and editorial pages of a large number of newspapers (N=6,034) in the 10 cities were coded. Two measures of media attentiveness to crime, total crime news as a proportion of total news and total crime

editorials as a proportion of total editorials, are examined. Table 12 shows that the proportion of crime news differs significantly between the two time periods when the total crime rate is controlled. A larger percentage of front-page newspaper stories devoted to crime news appears in the period of economic decline than in the period of stability. Almost one-half of the newspapers contain more than 18.5 percent crime news on their front-pages in the period of decline. This increased focus on crime news on the front-pages of newspapers provides evidence of greater media attentiveness to crime during periods of economic instability.

Although 97 percent of the newspaper issues contain an editorial and most between three and four editorials, only 22 percent of all of the editorials are considered crime editorials. Table 13 presents the breakdown for editorial attention to crime--total crime editorials as a proportion of total editorials, controlling for the crime rate. The proportion of crime editorials differs significantly between the two time periods only when the total crime rate is low. A larger percentage of crime editorials appears in the period of economic decline. When the crime rate is low, editors address the topic of crime more in the period of economic decline than in the period of economic stability. This result supports the influence of social and economic factors on editorial attention to crime. When the crime

Table 12. A Comparison of Front-Page News Stories Devoted to Crime News in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Percentage of Front- Page News Devoted to Crime</u>	<u>Low Crime Rate^a</u>			
	<u>Economic Stability 1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline 1967-1978</u>	<u>Economic Stability 1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline 1967-1978</u>
None	17.3 %	17.0 %	30.0 %	20.3 %
1.00 - 18.50	48.7	34.2	38.3	32.8
18.51 - 100.00	34.1	48.8	31.7	46.9
Total	100.0 (N=3,362)	100.0 (N=535)	100.0 (N=303)	100.0 (N=1,790)

^aChi-square = 48.297; p < .001; ^bChi-square = 26.918; p < .001

Table 13. A Comparison of Editorials Devoted to Crime News in Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Percentage of Editorials Devoted to Crime</u>	<u>Low Crime Rate^a</u>		<u>High Crime Rate^b</u>	
	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>
None	80.3 %	70.2 %	80.7 %	76.1 %
1 percent or more	19.7	29.8	19.3	23.9
Total	100.0 (N=3,284)	100.0 (N=526)	100.0 (N=295)	100.0 (N=1,721)

55

^aChi-square = 28.034; p < .001; ^bChi-square = 3.008; N.S.

rate is high, editorial attention to crime is quite similar regardless of the economic climate. On the surface, this latter result may seem to challenge the proposition that media attention is greatest during periods of economic decline. Further examination of Table 13 reveals that the amount of editorial attention to crime is the about the same in periods of economic stability regardless of the crime rate, but is less in periods of decline when the crime rate is high. A larger percentage of editorials make no reference at all to crime in the high crime rate period than in the low crime rate period. If editors were responding to the crime rate alone, one would expect the reverse to be true--that editors would write more editorials about crime when the crime rate was high.

The increasing number of missing cases as each of the five items on the editorial page is considered complicates analysis of the valence of crime editorials. Therefore, the content for the first item coded from the editorial page is analyzed. Twenty-five percent of the first item are coded as editorials (N=1,499). Most of the subjects of the crime editorials are crime incidents (31.5 percent), legislation (28.1 percent), criminal justice agencies (13.5 percent), and proposed or adopted policy changes (13.5 percent). The crime editorials refer to the mayor (17.8 percent), police (9.2 percent), city officials (5.0), state officials (15.8 percent), federal officials (18.4 percent), court officials

(7.1 percent), offenders (7.4 percent) private attorneys (0.8 percent), and victims (0.5 percent). The valence of these editorials (N=1,482) is displayed in Table 14. With the total crime rate controlled, the results reveal no significant difference in valence between the two time periods. Editors are most likely to take critical stances in editorials addressing crime issues regardless of the crime rate or economic conditions. A larger percentage of crime editorials are neutral in the period of economic decline than stability. Editors may drop the usual critical stance in an effort to support elite interests during troubling economic times.

Table 14. A Comparison of the Valence of Editorials Devoted to Crime News during Periods of Economic Stability and Economic Decline

<u>Valence of Editorials Devoted to Crime</u>	<u>Low Crime Rate^a</u>		<u>High Crime Rate^b</u>	
	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>	<u>Economic Stability</u> <u>1948-1966</u>	<u>Economic Decline</u> <u>1967-1978</u>
Critical	54.9 %	48.4 %	57.7 %	48.8 %
Favorable	25.8	24.2	23.1	22.0
Neutral	19.3	27.3	19.2	29.3
Total	100.0 (N=802)	100.0 (N=161)	100.0 (N=78)	100.0 (N=441)

^aChi-square = 5.313; N.S.; ^bChi-square = 3.491; N.S.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

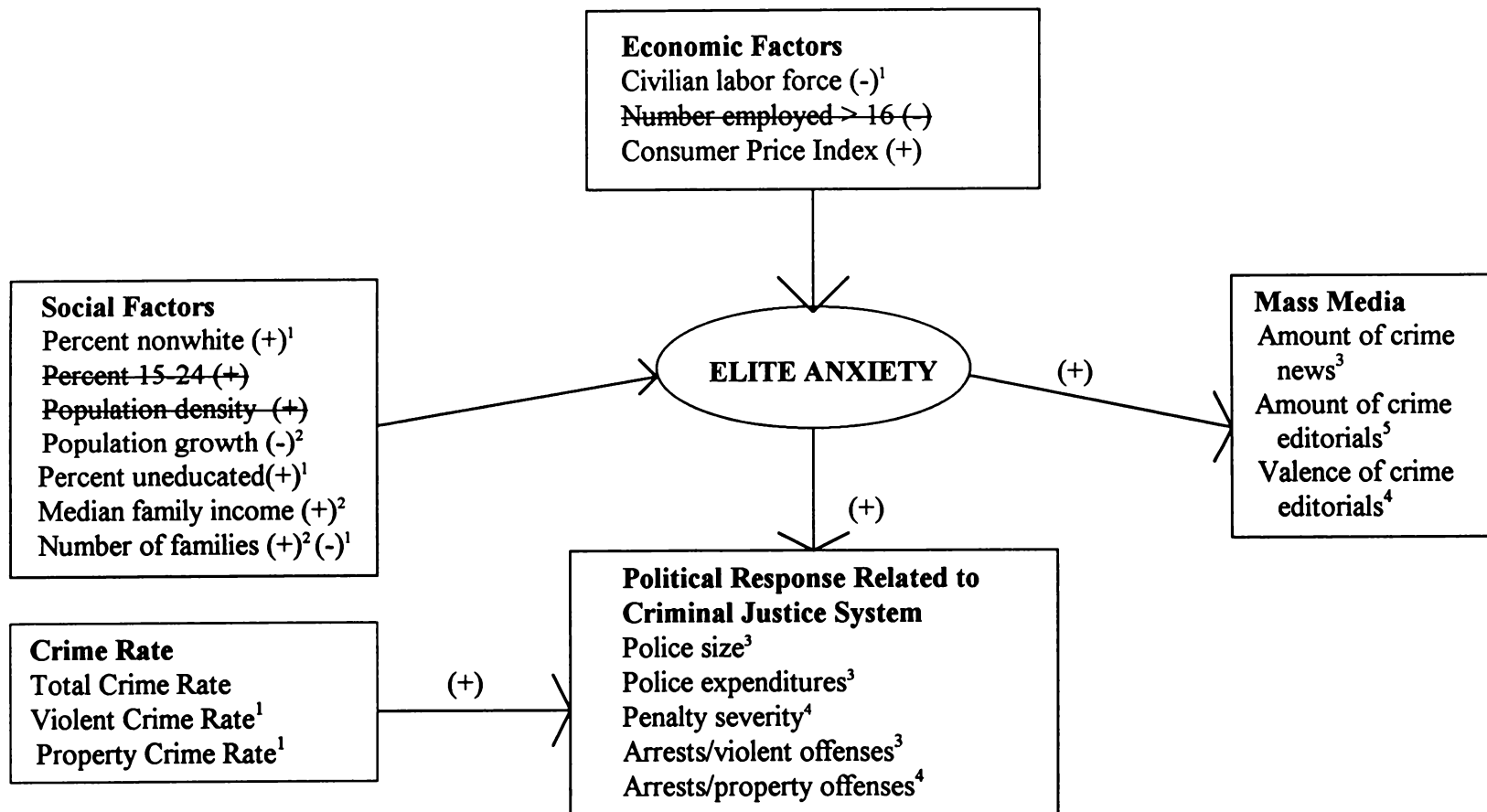
A neo-Marxist approach has been utilized to explain variation in local crime control strategies and media attentiveness to crime. I have argued that increased crime control and media attentiveness to crime result from perceived threats to the economic and social order by subordinate classes rather than from increases in the crime rate. The present study has extended past research by examining a larger number of cities over time, by using dynamic change measures for all variables and multiple measures of local crime control, and by including an ideological dimension to supplement the political and economic analysis. The entire analysis has required two separate methodologies. First, a panel design and residual change regression analysis were used to examine 396 cities from 1950 to 1970. This analysis permitted me to determine the effect of changes in social and economic variables on changes in police size and police expenditures. The second analysis was based on only 10 cities. Multivariate contingency tables were constructed to analyze the effect of structural context on most of the local crime control strategies--police size, expenditures, and activity--media attentiveness to crime, and valence of editorials. A dichotomous independent variable representing economic stability/low levels of perceived threat and economic

decline/high levels of perceived threat was created for these analyses. Bivariate analyses were presented when there were too few cases to permit statistical control of the total crime rate. The analyses revealed that changes in social and economic factors significantly affect changes in police size and expenditures, the ratio of arrests to violent offenses, and the proportion of crime news on the front-pages of newspapers.

Overall, the findings of the present investigation provide support for the neo-Marxist perspective. In particular, the findings confirm that structural factors, independent of crime rates, significantly impact formal responses to crime. Although the regression analysis shows that the crime rate has a significant and positive affect on police size and expenditures, I still interpret the results as providing support for the neo-Marxist perspective. The results show that social and economic factors have an independent and stronger influence on police size and expenditures. Other studies such as Liska et. al. (1981) made a similar interpretation. Those structural factors which represent perceived threats to the social and economic order from disadvantaged segments of the population, especially nonwhites, have had the greatest impact. Limited support has been found for the measure of employment, civilian labor force, which is significant in the predicted direction only for changes in police size. Political

decision-makers seem most likely to increase police size and expenditures in response to population decline and increases in the percent nonwhite. Ideological support for the efforts of political decision-makers in times of economic decline derives from increased media attention to crime news on the front pages of newspapers.

The model presented in Chapter 1 has been revised to reflect the findings of the present analysis (see Figure 2 on the following page). As the revised model shows, percent nonwhite is positively related to police size and expenditures. Other social factors which are positively related to police size and/or expenditures are percent uneducated and median family income, as well as the violent and property crime rate. The civilian labor force and population growth negatively affect police size and/or police expenditures. One social factor, number of families, is positively related to police size in the earlier decade and negatively related in the latter decade. These factors are, for the most part, significant in the predicted direction. Only population growth, median family income, and number of families are not in the expected direction. A portion of the first two propositions were supported. Changes in social and economic factors affect changes in police size and expenditures, and in the ratio of arrests to reported violent offenses. Also supported is the proposition that the amount of crime news will increase



¹significant in predicted direction; ²significant but NOT in predicted direction; ³Proposition is supported; ⁴Proposition is NOT supported; ⁵Proposition receives mixed support.

Figure 2. Theoretical Model Revised to Reflect Study Findings

during periods of economic decline. Only partial support is gained for the proposition that the amount of crime editorials will be greater in the period of decline. The analyses do not support the proposition that the social and economic factors affect penalty severity or the ratio of arrests to reported property offenses. Also failing to receive support is the proposition that the valence of crime editorials will be more favorable during periods of economic decline. The model has been revised to show the positive effect of the crime rate on local crime control efforts.

The data and analysis provide no direct measure of elite anxiety and thus we infer from the model that the social and economic factors represent threats to the social order and elite interests. Using structural context as an indirect measure of elite anxiety, we can conclude that perceived threats to social and economic stability represented by increases in the percent nonwhite and declines in the labor supply result in increases in the size of the police force and in law enforcement expenditures. In addition, a sharply rising consumer price index and a larger nonwhite population is associated with increased front-page coverage of crime. The political decision-makers respond to the increases in the perceived threat by hiring more officers and spending more money on law enforcement. The media support those efforts by directing greater attention to the crime problem. Additional research on the

perceptions of economic and political leaders at the local level would provide a stronger test of the model and reduce the criticisms of "teleological and tautological propositions" (Liska 1989, p. 86).

The residual-change regression analyses of the 396 cities lead us to conclude that changes in social and economic factors significantly affect changes in police size and police expenditures. Only one social factor impacts both dependent variables positively in both periods: change in the percent nonwhite. Three other social and economic factors--changes in population growth, number of families, and the civilian labor force--affect changes in police size in both periods. Change in police size between 1950 and 1960 is also affected by changes in percent with less than a fifth grade education and median family income. Additional factors predicting change in police expenditures are change in population growth between 1950 and 1960 and change in the number of families between 1960 and 1970. Changes in the crime rate are significant predictors in three instances. Change in the property crime rate influences change in police size between 1950 and 1960; change in the violent crime rate affects change in police size between 1960 and 1970 and change in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960. The crime rate is never the strongest predictor. Two of the social factors, population density and percent age 15-24, are not significant in any analysis.

Hochstetler and Shover (1997) suggest that previous levels of imprisonment are responsible for the low explained variance ($R^2 = .14$) from their residual-change regression analysis of changes in imprisonment at the county-level between 1980 and 1990. The explained variance from this investigation is higher ($R^2 = .272$ to $.386$), and inclusion of the previous levels of the dependent variables does not produce results as dramatic as those of Hochstetler and Shover. The increase in the explained variance is small for changes in police size (from $.342$ to $.366$ for 1950 to 1960 and from $.331$ to $.340$ for 1960 to 1970) and in police expenditures for 1960 to 1970 (from $.272$ to $.300$). A larger increase in explained variance is found for change in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960 (from $.386$ to $.443$). The previous levels are significant predictors in all cases except for police size in 1960. All significant factors remain the same, except for the addition of change in percent age 15-24 which positively impacts change in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960. The previous level of the variable is never a stronger predictor than the social and economic factors already identified for police size between 1950 and 1960 and for police expenditures between 1960 and 1970. Police expenditures in 1950 is a stronger predictor of change in police expenditures between 1950 and 1960 than all factors other than percent nonwhite.

The multivariate contingency analyses of police size and expenditures in periods of stability and decline, while controlling for the total crime rate, substantiate the findings from the regression analyses. Police size and expenditures are greater in the period of economic decline/high social dynamite. The multivariate analyses of media attentiveness to crime has produced mixed results. Crime news receives greater media attention in the period of decline regardless of the crime rate. This conclusion confirms the work of Barlow et. al. (1995a), who found more crime articles during periods of high unemployment and periods of economic decline. We concur with Barlow et. al. that "conditions in the political economy are relevant to changes in news media representation of crime" (p. 196). Crime editorials, however, are more likely in the period of decline only when the crime rate is low. No difference between the two economic periods is detected when the crime rate is high. The crime editorials are as likely to be critical, favorable, or neutral in the two economic periods when the crime rate is controlled.

The bivariate analyses of police activity and penalty severity also produce mixed results. Neither police activity nor penalty severity is more likely to increase in the period of economic decline/high social dynamite. More arrests per reported violent offenses and fewer arrests per reported property offenses occur in the period of decline

than in the period of stability. More changes are made to state laws and city ordinances in the period of economic decline. The changes in state laws are more likely to result in penalty decreases in the period of decline. Maximum penalties, whether fines or jail/prison sentences, are greater in the period of stability. Only the maximum fine allowed by state law tends to be higher in the period of decline. Change in control strategies rather than harsher punishment is more common during the period of economic decline; Barlow et. al (1995a) derive similar conclusions. Political decision-makers respond to the uncertainties of economic decline by making changes in the criminal justice system.

The present empirical investigation contributes to the understanding of the relationship between structural factors and formal responses to crime. Those structural factors which pose threats to economic and social stability are partly responsible for the crime control strategies initiated by political decision-makers. This study reveals the benefits of a longitudinal analysis of local crime control efforts. The substitution of civilian labor force for unemployment and a range of local crime control strategies for imprisonment expand and support the labor surplus--punishment thesis. The analytical techniques used in the study have provided internal corroboration of the findings. A final advantage of this study is provided by

the inclusion of social, economic, political, and ideological dimensions in the examination of the impact of structural factors on local responses to crime.

Limitations of the present study are due to the difficulties which arise from missing data, especially for 1950 and on arrests. In addition, the reliance on 10 cities for the analysis of police activity, penalty severity, and media attentiveness to crime reduces the generalizability of the findings. And finally, some important variables are lacking because they are unavailable for cities for 1950 and 1960 or on an annual basis which would be preferable to decennial data. An extension of this longitudinal analysis of city-level data would remedy some of these shortcomings. Census data in later years contain additional relevant variables on U.S. cities and more city-level data are being collected annually. The addition of the 1980-1990 data would add the third period, exploration, identified by Michalowski and Carlson (1999), and permit further comparisons with their findings as well as with others such as Hochstetler and Shover's (1997) study of county-level data from 1980 to 1990. The addition of several decades which do not contain a major war or economic depression would remove one limitation to the present study (Liska 1987, p. 80). Further analysis of formal responses to crime at the local level can be supplemented with other control

strategies such as local pretrial incarceration rates and sentencing decisions.

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