

in particular. Most of the respondents identified hipness and coolness with being popular, chic, trendy, and successful; few supplied adjectives that would indicate that they approved of rejecting mainstream values and seeking ways to be part of a youth-oriented underground value system or counterculture (Karmen, 1994).

## EIGHT

### Lessons from the New York Experience

#### **The Anatomy of a Crime Wave**

The mystery behind New York's crash has been solved. No single factor—such as innovative policing strategies—deserves the lion's share of the credit for the rapid improvement in public safety. The turnaround at first took place gradually but then accelerated suddenly as a number of positive developments all kicked in and pulled together in the same direction—downward. The best way to describe the City's situation in the 1990s was that a “fortuitous confluence” of underlying factors materialized. Luckily for City residents—and for those in positions of authority and trust—every one of the causal factors known to affect crime rates moved in the desired manner. No force or condition was out of step. The local economy recovered and the problems of unemployment and poverty in inner-city neighborhoods, although stubbornly persistent, were not as severe. More importantly, the dream of occupational mobility attracted greater numbers of generally hard-working, law-abiding people from around the world to seek their fortunes in New York, and it motivated increasing numbers of students, even from low-income families, to finish high school and enroll in college. The crack epidemic that devastated entire communities in the late 1980s subsided because it failed to recruit new adherents. While crack smoking was waning, heroin was not making its anticipated comeback, in part because an entire generation of potential victims recoiled in horror after witnessing firsthand how these twin vices had wrecked the lives of their families, friends, and neighbors. Although pot smoking and beer drinking remained popular,

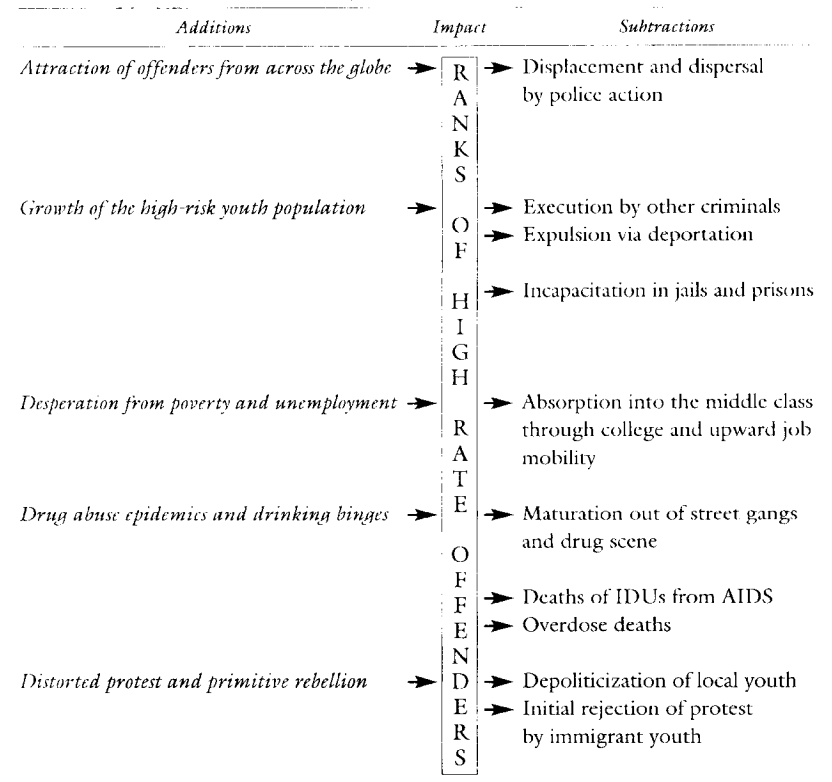
the consumption of another crime-facilitating drug—hard liquor—kept declining. At the same time, the NYPD was reengineered, and became energized, better managed, more technologically advanced, and more proactive. The new NYPD regained control of the streets and shut down the open-air drug bazaars that had lured poor young men into selling crews that fiercely fought one another for competitive advantages. As the drug scene downsized and customers and providers were driven behind closed doors, the arms race that the once-flourishing trade had spawned quickly deescalated. The upstate prisons continued to fill up with dangerous persons whose absence from the streets became noticeable. Throughout the period, a predicted contraction took place in the ranks of young people in their most crime-prone years. The number of teenagers who had dropped out of school and couldn't find work dwindled even further. The ranks of the City's criminal element took a further hit when substantial numbers of high-rate offenders either killed one another off, died prematurely from AIDS contracted by IV drug use or from overdoses, were expelled as undesirable aliens, or fled due to intensified law enforcement pressures. Most important of all—and this “changing values of youth” factor could explain crime's reduction across all categories and throughout the nation—a shrinking number of young people expressed their angst via drugs/guns/gangs as a large share of members of their parents' generation had done during their youth amidst more turbulent political times.

However, one single factor did stand out as more important than the rest. New York's murder rate definitely soared in the late 1980s because of the crack epidemic. Otherwise, underlying conditions were becoming increasingly favorable for a continuation of the drop in crime that materialized in the first half of that decade. The police force was growing in sophistication and in size, as was the prison population, and the courts were processing felony cases more seriously. Poverty and unemployment rates were slipping, drinking was declining, increasing numbers of students were going to college, immigrants were pouring in, the size of the youth cohort was shrinking, and the values of young people were changing. The explosion of the crack-smoking craze, with its abusers desperate for money, and flagrant curbside selling provoking turf battles among heavily armed dealers, ruined everything. The crash could not begin until the epidemic ran its course and wound down.

The best way to conceptualize the dynamics behind the building-up, cresting, and receding of a crime wave is to focus on inputs and outputs (see fig. 8.1).

Crime waves are the product of the interaction of a wide array of forces and conditions. These affect the collective actions of many potential offenders. If the ranks of street criminals grow larger, or if each member becomes more active, more incidents will take place, boosting crime rates. The pool of active offenders grows through recruitment if additions exceed subtractions through attrition. Crime waves resemble epidemics. At some point on the way up, a critical mass develops that encourages even more people to join in. For example, once a sufficient customer base is established, a drug market can flourish; similarly, an

Figure 8.1. Dynamics of a Crime Wave



adequate number of thieves makes fencing operations and black market distribution channels profitable. Conversely, at some juncture on the downward spiral, a tipping point is reached (see Gladwell, 2000), wherein involvement in street crime becomes a rejected, even despised life-style. As former participants abandon these activities in droves, crime rates tumble faster.

Certain specific factors are particularly difficult to evaluate and require much more careful and thorough investigation because they virtually defy measurement. More attention must be paid to the role of private security forces, surveillance cameras, and antitheft hardware; the out-migration of active criminals displaced by intensified police pressures; the underground economy as a source of off-the-books, uncounted employment and income; and community organizations combating the street culture values that youths pick up during adolescence.

### **They Said It Couldn't Be Done: Ideological Stakes in the Search for Crime's Causes**

Lurking behind the dispute are powerful ideologies. The success of New York City, and of the many other cities that have established similar efforts to restore order, directly contradicts the ideology that has reigned in American criminology since the 1960s. According to the older view, poverty, racism and social injustice cause crime. To deal with crime, society must deal with its causes. Therefore, police can do little about crime except respond after it occurs and, perhaps, "displace" it—move it around a bit.

—Rutgers University professor George Kelling (1997:25)

As the impressive drop in crime gained national attention during the latter part of the 1990s, self-interested parties advanced competing claims for credit with unusual vehemence. As always, professional lives hung in the balance. Incumbents tried to further their careers by insisting they were responsible for the improvement, vaguely tracing it back to some policy or program they had instituted or favored a few years earlier. But soon the situation became highly politicized, not just in the contest-for-elected-office sense, but ideologically. An entire school of thought was put on trial. Conservatives interpreted the falling crime rates as evidence of the intellectual bankruptcy of liberal thinking about crime. Criminol-

ogists on the political left remained convinced that street criminals are "drawn" to illegal opportunities or "driven" to commit desperate acts by the deprivations and injustices imposed upon them. Criminologists on the political right maintained that the crime problem arises from personal shortcomings and spiritual or "moral poverty" that afflict deviant individuals who "choose" to commit antisocial acts because they cannot fit into an essentially fair and sound social system (see the contrasting views of Bennett, DiIulio, and Walters, 1996, and Currie, 1998, 1999). To conservatives, New York City's meanest streets became the proving grounds for one of their most cherished ideologically driven proposals: that crime rates can be substantially reduced through get-tough policies, and that it is not necessary to tackle the alleged "social roots" of crime that would take vast sums of money and many years of intensive social intervention to correct. Advancing this argument rhetorically, Governor George Pataki (quoted in Nagourney, 1998:B4) described as "nonsense" the view that a criminal's actions stemmed from "a culmination of social factors beyond his control . . . we, as servants of the people, are not charged with carrying out a sociological study. We are charged with maintaining public order and saving lives." His alternative explanation was "to embrace what—for you and I—is an incredibly simple principle: that criminals cause crime." Clearly, the attack on "root cause theory" was based on a belief that offenders exercise free will, and on a faith in the efficacy of punishment and the repressive potential of strict policing and a ready resort to imprisonment.

As this political debate intruded itself into the controversy surrounding the reasons for the drop in crime in New York, tremendous confusion arose concerning the distinctions between "root causes of crime," crime theories, and crime rates. Crime rates indicate how much illegal activity is going on. Social roots generate criminal activity. Crime theories that focus upon social roots explain why certain people are more vulnerable to the temptation to violate the same laws that most others obey. But crime theories that identify economically hard-pressed people as being more "at risk" do not predict with any precision how many of these individuals at any given time will succumb to pressures and get swept up into illegal activities, thereby influencing the crime rate. Even though murder rates declined by more than two-thirds during the 1990s in New York, the characteristics of the remaining one-third of

perpetrators and their victims did not vary. Before, during, and after the crash, they continued to be drawn disproportionately and predominantly from the ranks of lower-income young men. This poor-male-on-poor-male carnage, proceeding at a much diminished level, actually confirmed that economic hardships were still deeply implicated as a root cause of street crime. As long as this pattern persists, there is no reason to abandon the traditional criminological theories that locate the risks of involvement in social deprivation. “Liberal” criminological theories were not really on trial in the social laboratory of New York neighborhoods, and these explanations certainly have not been negated by the evidence that crime rates can fall sharply, suddenly, and unpredictably in just a few years, even though poverty persists, or even intensifies.

However, the New York experience does cast doubt on two widely held beliefs in criminology: that growing inequality inevitably generates greater dissatisfaction; and that a “revolution of rising expectations” causes an upsurge in crime if conditions are improving but not rapidly enough. The gap between the City’s rich and poor widened, while the problems endured by lower-income people were ameliorated to only a small degree amidst incessant talk of prosperity, and yet crime rates tumbled.

Actually, sharp increases and decreases in crime rates undermine the credibility of theories that involvement in criminal behavior is somehow genetic and inherited or otherwise biologically determined and fixed by human nature. Similarly, those psychological explanations that focus upon individual pathology and personality disorders as the underlying cause of criminal behavior also cannot account for sudden yet profound short-run changes in collective lawbreaking versus law-abiding behavior, since child-rearing practices and treatment modalities evolve slowly. Only social and economic conditions and subcultural outlooks can vary dramatically over a period of a decade or less.

### What Really Works?

A summary of the findings of this research project appears in table 8.1. This summary indicates the results that emerged when the leading hypotheses were tested with the available data. It is clear that many of the widely circulated—and firmly believed—explanations for New York’s

Table 8.1. Summary of Findings

<i>Possible Reason for the Crash</i>	<i>Qualifications, Anomalies, and Contradictions</i>
<i>Improved Policing by the NYPD</i>	
New NYPD strategies since the advent of Compstat reengineering quickly produced results.	The claim is difficult to evaluate because the innovations were not introduced piecemeal, as a controlled social experiment. Some types of street crimes were already falling in early 1994 before Compstat innovations were implemented. Murder declined in cities even if their police forces were demoralized or poorly managed.
A greater uniformed presence deterred murders in outdoor locations visible to officers on patrol.	Murders committed indoors declined almost as much. Police presence in the aftermath of crimes (response time) did not improve. The increasingly visible presence of private security personnel plus greater use of surveillance equipment and anti-theft devices may account for some of the deterrence.
New tactics enabled detectives to solve more murder cases, as well as other violent crimes, to above average levels.	The same percentage of current cases were solved; more old cases were solved, boosting the annual clearance rate. Vehicle theft rates fell as much, yet this clearance rate did not improve.
Zero tolerance for quality of life infractions restored order, as hypothesized by the “Broken Windows” thesis.	A crackdown on minor offenses did not stem the tide shortly after the outbreak of the crack epidemic. Murder dropped as much in other cities in which mass arrests were not made.
Zero tolerance deterred gun toting.	Gun arrests did not rise; they kept falling ever since the 1990 peak in gun murders. The proportion of gun arrests that led to indictment and conviction did not improve.
More aggressive tactics chased career criminals out of town.	Reports of displacement remain largely anecdotal.
<i>A Tougher Criminal Justice System</i>	
More offenders than ever before were incarcerated in upstate institutions, incapacitating them and deterring others.	New York’s incarceration rate and prison expansion rate does not top the list. The proportion of felony arrests leading to indictment, conviction, and imprisonment actually declined after 1993. Crime rates did not decline in the late 1970s and late 1980s even though inmate populations grew rapidly. The number of new commitments to prison fell along with the felony arrest rate. Parolees reentered the City in large numbers. Jail inmates declined even though total arrests increased.

(continued)

Table 8.1. (continued)

Possible Reason for the Crash	Qualifications, Anomalies, and Contradictions
<i>The Drug Scene Dwindled</i>	
The crack epidemic began to wane after 1990, especially in terms of young new recruits.	The crack epidemic declined as much in Philadelphia without producing the same relief.
As the drug market matured and as it was driven indoors by intensified police pressures, violence broke out less often.	The overall proportions of arrestees with cocaine and heroin in their systems did not dramatically decline.
The narcotics squad dismantled many of the City's drug-dealing operations.	Fewer victims had used cocaine before they died, and overdose deaths diminished but hospital emergency room episodes increased. Large numbers of sellers and users continued to carry out transactions and get arrested.
Overall alcohol consumption declined.	It can't be established that alcohol consumption by poor young men declined.
<i>The Local Economy Boomed</i>	
The recovery and prosperity alleviated the stresses on poor people, from whose ranks street criminals are disproportionately drawn.	Poverty rates of black and Hispanic New Yorkers did not fall.
More jobs were created during the second half of the 1990s than in recent decades.	Other metropolitan areas enjoyed much lower unemployment rates. Unemployment rates for Hispanic men dropped, but did not improve dramatically for black men. Perhaps a growing underground economy of off-the-books jobs enabled those who were officially poor and unemployed to earn money.
More people were able to make the transition from welfare to work	In the past, expanding welfare rolls were associated with lowered murder rates.
Greater numbers of at-risk youth were absorbed into student culture at two- and four-year colleges across the country.	The college-going rate has been increasing for decades.
Record-breaking numbers of generally law-abiding immigrants settled in the City.	Immigration to New York has been increasing for decades.
<i>Favorable Demographic Trends Materialized</i>	
The number of active offenders declined through attrition.	Death and expulsion are not admirable social policies for others to emulate.
The number of young males dropped after the baby boomers matured.	Much of the decline took place among white youth, who were far less involved in street crime.
The number of at-risk youth not in school and not at work dropped.	This vulnerable group shrank during the 1980s, and is only inferred to have diminished further during the 1990s.

Table 8.1. (continued)

Possible Reason for the Crash	Qualifications, Anomalies, and Contradictions
<i>Changing Values of Teenagers and Young Adults</i>	
This could explain the nationwide decline in crime across-the-board.	It is difficult to verify that a change took place, other than through opinion poll results.

crash contain at least a kernel of truth, but qualifications, anomalies, and contradictions abound for many of these assertions. Policymakers must commission further studies before accepting any of these explanations and acting upon their implications.

Four policies merit special emphasis. First, encouraging most high school graduates, even those who are underprepared and are unlikely to graduate, to enroll in college serves the worthwhile social purpose of reinforcing crime-resisting tendencies. Universal exposure to higher education is a sound collective investment for a number of reasons, and counteracting the values of street culture can now be added as a demonstrable beneficial side effect. Second, welcoming hard-working immigrants into the City's multicultural mix is a wise social policy that is rarely presented as an anti-crime measure, but it serves that purpose as well. Third, discouraging drinking, especially to excess and in public, through law enforcement strategies and educational efforts, has the potential to substantially curb violence as much as other anti-drug strategies. Fourth, a job creation program that would offer meaningful occupations at a living wage would go a long way toward luring the remaining car thieves, burglars, and others engaged in property crime, rackets, and scams to try their hand at legitimate opportunities.

An unprecedented massive and sustained offensive against drugs launched in tandem with the advent of Compstat was able to drive some cocaine, crack, and heroin dealers out of town, and force the remaining participants to discreetly carry out their transactions behind closed doors, but it was not able to deliver a knock-out punch. The resulting stalemate underlines the necessity of investing more resources in the two other anti-drug strategies, treatment and prevention through education.

Until the law enforcement strategies accounting for some of the drop in crime are identified and evaluated with greater precision, and their impacts "weighted" statistically, it is premature to draw the conclusion that

expensive and controversial anti-crime tactics (like zero tolerance, aggressive stop-and-frisk practices, and mass imprisonment) are “worth it,” in terms of the social costs they exact: the alienation of minority youth from the police, the negative stereotyping that leads to racial profiling, and the stigmatizing long-term impact of criminal records on job prospects.

Finally, more efforts must be undertaken toward improving race relations. Most low-income young black and Hispanic males were law-abiding even in the bad old days when crime rates were much higher. Yet, ironically, after the crash, when they collectively were behaving so much better in the statistical sense, they were still treated indiscriminately as potentially dangerous persons by the NYPD, and were not given any credit for turning their backs on hard drugs and violence by commentators in positions of authority and influence. A “reachable” moment materialized but was largely missed. The latter 1990s were a time when discriminatory barriers based on class and race should have been dismantled—in housing, schooling, job training, hiring—much more thoroughly and enthusiastically than they were.

### **Imagine . . .**

Some of the most important lessons from the New York experience concern policy shifts and events that never happened.

One striking conclusion is that allowing law-abiding people to go about their business armed with handguns is not necessary to prevent crime. Advocates of armed self-defense have succeeded in 31 states since 1987 in passing “shall issue” laws that make it easier for individuals with clean records to get permits to carry guns for self-protection (Ratnesar, 1996). Criminologists have not found any solid evidence that a more heavily armed populace was a safer one (see McDowall, Loftin, and Wiersenna, 1995), but gun enthusiasts proclaimed that these new laws brought down the crime rate in a number of states (Kopel, 1995; Polsby, 1995; Lacayo, 1996; Lott, 1998). If the New York State legislature had enacted a right-to-carry law that enabled apprehensive residents to go about the city with handguns in their pockets, briefcases, and purses at the start of the 1990s, wouldn’t the gun lobby trumpet the New York miracle as definitive proof that would-be “bad guys” can be deterred by

the threat of an armed citizenry, causing them to either leave town for greener pastures where unarmed victims are still ripe for the taking, or to stifle their urges to rob, rape, and assault complete strangers? But New York State did not loosen up its gun permit laws. In fact, the NYPD became much stricter about issuing right-to-carry permits within city limits (Marzulli, 1999a).

Nor is a reliance on capital punishment needed to quell murderous rampages. Death penalty proponents argue that the prospect of execution can be a persuasive general deterrent that can cow would-be killers into abandoning their deadly plans. However, the potential benefits of executions can’t be realized until they occur with regularity (see DiIulio, 1995a). Imagine if the New York State legislature had pushed through a death penalty statute by overriding Governor Mario Cuomo’s veto during the 1980s, and a spate of successful prosecutions and a well-publicized series of executions of cold-blooded killers had taken place at the start of the 1990s. Wouldn’t people who have faith in the power of punishment have concluded that the government can stifle interpersonal violence by making a negative example out of certain murderers to scare others into behaving? But execution did not loom as a deterrent until 1995, when the legislature and the newly elected governor, George Pataki, restored capital punishment as a penalty for certain types of slayings. And by the close of the century, just one murderer out of several thousand killers apprehended within the five boroughs had been sentenced to die, and no execution date was in sight because of a lengthy appeals process. As Kings County district attorney Joe Hynes summed up the situation (quoted in Barrett, 1999:6): “It has not proven to be a deterrent. It’s no small irony that I’ve asked for the most death penalty cases in the state, and the numbers of murders [in Brooklyn] have gone up.” Therefore, execution’s supposed chilling effect could not account for the plunge in homicides, and certainly could not cause auto thefts, burglaries, and robberies to tumble.

An even longer list of strictly hypothetical candidates for the honor of helping to bring down the crime rate in the City could be drawn up. Imagine if some brilliant doctor had discovered an effective cure for drug addiction and had set up a chain of clinics to help addicts break their habits. What if some new rehabilitation programs were training and educating prisoners and finding good jobs for them after they were released

back into society? Suppose techniques of “fair fighting” (with words) and of conflict resolution were part of the curriculum in every high school, and had to be mastered before graduation. What conclusions would be drawn if the City Council had imposed a strict curfew on juveniles, as was done in hundreds of other cities? What claims would be made if early in 1994 several massive religious revival rallies to inspire errant men to change their ways had been held in Yankee Stadium or Central Park? Or if a tough new law had sent a stern message to criminals with two strikes against them that one more felony conviction would seal their fate? This kind of speculation could go on and on. Although these factors might account for some of the drop in crime in other parts of the country, they must be eliminated from consideration as the reasons behind New York’s crash because none of these sudden changes actually took place before crime rates tumbled. The lesson to be learned is that when a new policy is implemented or a social event takes place and then crime rates go down (or up), what appears to be linked might really be unconnected or merely coincidental.

### **Final Days: When Did the Crash End?**

It is quite unlikely that street crime has permanently gone out of style and will never make a comeback. It is probable that another crime wave will engulf the City in the near future. What changes could usher in another painful period of fear and suffering? And what factors might stave off the inevitable? A deadly combination of several of the following developments hitting the City at once would bode ill for the foreseeable future.

First, the prosperity bubble will surely burst, triggering a severe downturn in the local economy. This shift in the business cycle will set adrift once again many of the poor young men who finally had been absorbed into the world of legitimate work by years of sustained economic growth. They will be cast out by the principle of last hired, first fired when massive layoffs take place. Second, a predictable boomlet or bulge currently moving through the age structure unavoidably will provide a larger pool of potential new recruits for street crime. Third, if restrictive admission and retention policies force a contraction in the size of the student body attending the metropolitan area’s low-tuition public colleges, a reduced

share of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds will be involved in student culture and inoculated against the self-defeating norms of street culture and the temptations of illegal money-making schemes. Fourth, a new drug epidemic, perhaps of “crank” or “ice” (smokable speed), which appeared on the West Coast years ago but whose spread eastward stalled during the 1990s, could wreak havoc in impoverished communities, the way the crack attack did. Fifth, an upsurge in binge drinking, especially in public spaces, would be ominous. Sixth, any choking-off of the flow of new immigrants also could be deleterious. Seventh, a return to a reactive mode by a decenergized NYPD would endanger public safety. Finally, and most damaging of all would be a shift in the values and lifestyles of adolescents and young adults back toward self-destructive, counterproductive forms of superficial rebellion, ineffective protest, and misdirected hostility, as had developed after the idealism and optimism of the 1960s dissipated into cynicism and despair.

During 1999, the crime crash came to an end, at least as far as murder was concerned. The body count rose to roughly 667 (unofficially), up about 6 percent from the year before (McQuillan, 2000). During the first few months of 2000, the death toll continued to mount at a frightening pace (Flynn, 2000). This was ominous, since several decades of past experience indicated that whenever New York’s murder rate went up, it kept on climbing for several years in a row before reversing direction. It rarely fluctuated in a choppy fashion, up one year and down the next (refer back to graph 1.1). Furthermore, both gun and non-gun killings increased during 1999 (Marzulli, 1999b). The rebound in fatal stabbings was particularly troubling since non-gun murders had been falling steadily for decades (refer back to graph 2.3), and knives were more difficult for the police to go after than guns. On the other hand, the crash was not over in terms of less-than-lethal violence and stealing. The additional six closely watched street crimes, including automobile theft, continued to drift downward throughout 1999 (off another 10 percent)(Flynn, 1999e). This decoupling was puzzling, since vehicle thefts are very reliably reported and had been rising and falling in lock-step with murders since 1978 (refer back to graph 1.2).

No one knew for sure why murder was making a comeback. Even though the decade of the 1990s was heralded as the Information Age, no comprehensive monitoring and data-retrieval system had been set up

to integrate the record-keeping systems of the NYPD, the five district attorneys, the medical examiner's office, the courts, the jails, the prisons, and the Health Department's death certificate database. Up-to-date social, economic, and demographic data won't be accessible to researchers for years.

Although the NYPD labored mightily, applying all the Compstat strategies it claimed it had perfected, it could not stem the rising tide of killings at the turn of the century. Since its champions had proclaimed that improved policing deserved all the credit for the crash, they were in no position to suddenly point to social, economic, cultural, or demographic factors as the culprits for the resurgence in lethal violence. As a result, the NYPD accepted responsibility—but actually didn't. Top officials at City Hall and Police Headquarters seized the opportunity to blame a growing chorus of critics for interfering with the department's ability to continue to carry out the aggressive stop-and-frisk and zero-tolerance policies that had (allegedly) worked so well since 1994. Their official explanation was that the condemnation of the Street Crime Unit in particular (after four members killed an unarmed young black man, Amadou Diallo, in the Bronx in February 1999) caused a drop-off in gun arrests and seizures and a consequent spike in killings (for example, see Herszenhorn, 1999; and Flynn, 1999d, 1999e). This version of events, although repeated over and over again by a host of top officials, never was directly challenged in the media, even though it lacked empirical support and seemed illogical on its face. First of all, the rebound in murders did not take place after the Diallo shooting and the subsequent protests in early 1999, but actually began during the second half of 1998, months earlier. This fact was masked by the substantial drop that had continued into the first half of 1998, which was sufficient to bring down the rate for all of 1998 compared to 1997. (Therefore, the crash in murder rates technically ended around July 1998, not at the end of December.)<sup>1</sup> Second, the murder rate continued to fall in the immediate area of the Diallo shooting, the Bronx, throughout 1999 (Kapstatter, 1999). Third, gun arrests had been dropping ever since 1990, not just since February 1999 (refer back to graph 3.3). Fourth, the overall importance of the Street Crime Unit in ferreting out gunmen was being exaggerated.<sup>2</sup> Fifth, the alleged "virtual handcuffing" of the NYPD by

the unfavorable public outcry against its aggressive tactics did not explain why aggravated assaults, forcible rapes, robberies, burglaries, grand larcenies, vehicle thefts, and larcenies kept falling while killings started rising.

The rise and fall of murders in New York City generally has been in step with negative and positive developments throughout the rest of the United States (refer back to graph 1.3). Therefore, something greater than just deteriorating conditions within the City might be behind New York's latest woes, and tougher times may loom for the nation as a whole after a time lag of a year or two. A new mystery is materializing, one that needs to be solved with far greater urgency than the reasons for the much-welcomed crash of the 1990s—the mystery surrounding the ominously rebounding murder rate of the twenty-first century.

#### Notes

1. Ever since the beginning of 1994, succeeding half year (January to June, July to December) totals were lower than the previous time period, until the second half of 1998. The totals for 1998 and 1999 were as follows, according to the FBI's UCRs for 1998, and the NYPD's figures released to the media: first six months of 1998, 303 murders; second six months, 330; first six months of 1999, 341; second six months, 326. Therefore, it turns out that after two consecutive six month periods of rising body counts, murders fell in the second half of 1999, even though protests continued.

2. Commissioner Safir repeatedly claimed that the Street Crime Unit was responsible for 40% of all gun arrests (for example, see Kocieniewski, 1999). But the 1998 NYPD Complaints and Arrests annual report credited the SCU with just 610 dangerous weapons possession arrests, less than 20 percent of the total force's 3,830 felony weapons arrests that year.