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# THE SCENE OF A SEX OFFENSE AS RELATED TO THE RESIDENCE OF THE OFFENDER

Otto Erlanson\*

In a recent survey made by the Homicide and Sex Offense Division of the Detective Bureau of the Chicago Police Department, it was found that 82% of all male sex offenders committed their offenses within the neighborhood in which they were residing.

For the purpose of this survey sex offenses were tabulated into three groups:

Group "A"—Sex offenses committed in the police district in which the offender resided.

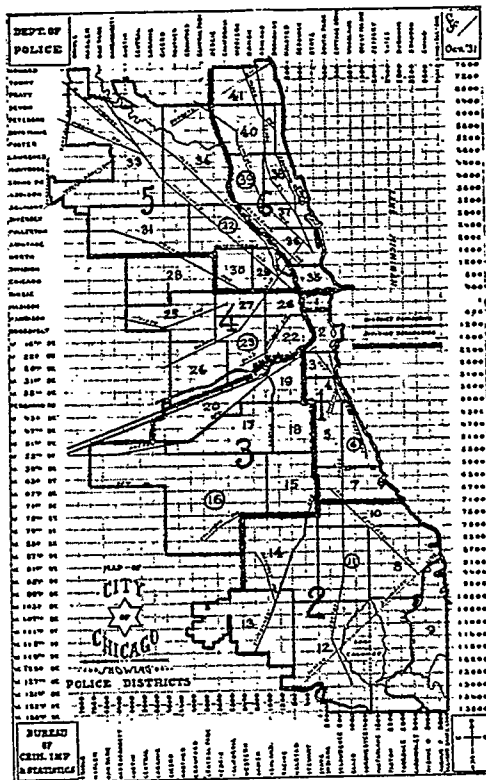
Group "B"—Sex offenses committed in a police district adjacent to the district in which the offender resided.

Group "C"—Sex offenses committed in any police district other than district of residence or districts adjacent to district of residence.

Included in this study are cases from all sections of the City of Chicago which is divided into a total of thirty-nine police districts. (See accompanying map.)

The results of the tabulations by these groups are shown in Table I.

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Map of Police Districts of Chicago

The small numerals on the map indicate police districts. The larger numerals indicate the six police divisions (each comprising a number of districts). Since the preparation of this map, and prior to the time of this survey, Districts 1 and 2 have been combined to form the 1st District. Each small dotted square on the map represents  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a square mile (i.e.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile x  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile.)

Table I

	Number of Offenses	% of Total Offenses
Group "A" (offenders residing in district) . . . .	1680	64%
Group "B" (offenders residing in adjacent district) . . . . .	469	18%
Group "C" (all others) . . . . .	475	18%
Total . . . . .	2624	100%

These 2624 cases represent all adult male offenders residing in the City of Chicago who were arrested and charged with any sex offense during the period from January 1, 1938, to June 30, 1940, inclusive, which is the period from the date of the establishment of the Homicide and Sex Offense Division until the time when this survey was begun.<sup>1</sup> This group of cases does not include juvenile or women offenders,<sup>2</sup> or accused persons in bastardy cases.

The only offenses involved in the survey are those which fall into the following classifications:

#### *Felonies*

Forcible Rape; Statutory Rape; Attempted Rape; Incest; Attempted Incest; Crime Against Nature; Crime Against Child.

#### *Misdemeanors*

Contributing to the Delinquency of Minor; Obscene Literature; Annoying Children; Indecent Exposure; Perversion; Annoying Women; Peeping Tom.

By combining groups "A" and "B" of Table 1, it appears that 82% of all sex

offenses are committed by men who live in the immediate neighborhood (i.e., within a few miles of the crime scene). Even more significant, however, are the findings of this study when an analysis is made of group "C."

Of the 475 offenses included in group "C," 182 (or 38.3%) were committed in the first police district, which consists largely of Chicago's downtown business section or "loop" and the immediately adjacent area to the south—a part of the city containing very few residences. Therefore, knowing that many offenders operating in this district come from other parts of the city, and that only a few reside there,<sup>3</sup> it is of interest to consider a tabulation of all districts except the first (as shown in Table II).

From this tabulation it appears that 87% of the sex offenses (exclusive of those in the first district) are committed by persons residing in the immediate neighborhood in which the offense was committed. This is higher, by 5%, than the corresponding figure in the tabulation based upon all districts, including the first.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Sex Offense Bureau was made a part of the Homicide Division of the Detective Bureau under orders issued January 17, 1938. However, in anticipation of taking over these functions, the files were put in operation on January 1, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> In the City of Chicago juvenile offenders under the age of 17 years are tried in special Juvenile Courts. These offenders are usually handled by Juvenile Officers and do not clear through the Homicide and Sex Offense Division.

<sup>3</sup> Of all the persons arrested and charged with a sex offense committed anywhere in the city during this two and one-half year period, only 59 resided in the first district.

<sup>4</sup> Offenses for the first police district are as follows: Group "A"—42, Group "B"—38, and Group "C"—182. It is interesting to note that of the 59 offenders residing in the first district at the time of their arrest, 42 of the offenders actually committed their offenses in the first district.

**Table II**

	Number of Offenses	% of Total Offenses
Group "A" (offenders residing in district)....	1634	69%
Group "B" (offenders residing in adjacent district) .....	431	18%
Group "C" (all others).....	293	13%
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>2358</b>	<b>100%</b>

Since the foregoing tabulations are based upon a survey of persons "arrested and charged" (and not restricted to "convicted" persons), it was deemed advisable to check the accuracy of the results indicated in Tables I and II by preparing a tabulation of a random sample (283) of all convicted offenders (1493). This third tabulation,<sup>5</sup> based upon 283 convictions, is shown in Table III.

As a result of this survey, the Homicide and Sex Offense Division has supplemented its files on sex offenders by the introduction of a residence and operation file consisting of a residence card and, in cases of offenders who have committed offenses outside of their residence district, an operation card indicating the location of the offense. This file is divided by police districts, and the subdivision under each district

**Table III**

	Number of Offenses	% of Total Offenses
Group "A" (offenders residing in district)....	178	63%
Group "B" (offenders residing in adjacent district) .....	49	17%
Group "C" (all others) .....	56	20%
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>283</b>	<b>100%</b>

These results are practically identical to the results of the first tabulation, which leaves little doubt as to the accuracy of the study, for when considering a group of convicted sex offenders the relationship between scene of offense and residence is just as pronounced as for the entire group of persons "arrested and charged." (It should be pointed out, of course, that the only persons included in this classification of "arrested and charged" are those who were considered actual offenders by one or more of the assistant state's attorneys regularly assigned to such cases.)

is by height of the offender. The value of such a subdivision is at once apparent to those familiar with police work, as witnesses or victims usually have a better estimate of the height of the offender than of any other of his personal characteristics. Thus if an offense is committed in a given police district and a witness states that the offender is a man about five feet two inches tall, a search of the residence and operation file will disclose the identity of all previous offenders whose heights range about five feet two inches.

<sup>5</sup> The sample of 283 convictions was obtained by arranging the total 1493 sex bureau cards of convicted offenders in numerical order and selecting from this group every fifth card. When

the sample was completed, all cards of offenders residing outside of the City of Chicago at the time of arrest were eliminated and the remaining 283 cards were tabulated.

The following information is contained on the residence card: district residing, height, age, weight, complexion, white or colored, nativity, sex bureau number, name, alias, address, offense and date, name and address of relatives, place of employment, district in which offense was committed, and remarks. However, not all this information is placed on the operation card. Only the district of residence, district in which the offense was committed, height, age, weight, complexion, race, nativity, sex bureau number, together with name and address of the offender, are included on the operation card.

Nevertheless, even though the information on both of these cards is not complete, by means of the offender's name and sex bureau number, reference can be made to the "Known Sex Offender Record Card" or the "Sex Offender History Sheet," both of which contain detailed information on the offender, his previous offenses, and the disposition of the charges.

On the basis of the results of this survey, the chances are about 85 out of 100 that the sex offender in any given case is a resident of the neighborhood in which the offense is committed.