

# **ARMED ROBBERY**

**Cops, Robbers, and Victims**

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*With a Foreword by*

**Marvin E. Wolfgang, PH.D.**

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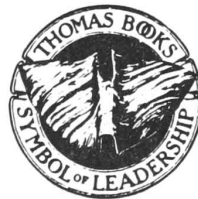
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## FOREWORD

“**W**hen you commit a crime, you don’t think about being caught; otherwise you wouldn’t do it.”

So speaks one of the armed robbers interviewed for the study described by authors Thomas Gabor and André Normandeau. As the quotation indicates, an effort was made to obtain insights from the perpetrators that extend beyond the quantitative analyses of 1266 cases drawn from police files. This combination and integration of research methods make *Armed Robbery* an unusual and sophisticated volume. Moreover, the statistical findings of the original study are placed in a larger frame of trend analyses in Canada and the United States. There is at once in this work some history, social psychology, etiology, typology, victimology and recommendations for social policy.

As a former professor of one of the authors (Normandeau), it is particularly gratifying to see this fruitful product from seeds sown during graduate student days. Dr. Normandeau wrote his doctoral dissertation on “Trends and Patterns in Crimes of Robbery” in 1968, and his professor continues to quote from it during every semester of classes. Now, with this new volume of Gabor and Normandeau, scholars, students, researchers, agents in criminal justice have available one of the most thorough and comprehensive analyses of one of the most serious crimes of contemporary society.

Marvin E. Wolfgang  
*Professor of Criminology  
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## INTRODUCTION

Few things evoke as much fear as the thought of being accosted at night by a stranger on a quiet street. This image of violent predators lurking in the dark is not fiction, but it is a portrayal of only one form of armed robbery—the mugging.

Another common image conjured up by the term “armed robbery” is of a group of professional gangsters robbing a bank after meticulously planning each detail of the offense, from the mapping of the target and the escape route to the agreement on a plan of attack. This form of robbery usually involves greater sophistication than the mugging, as well as more people, superior planning, different weapons and more selectivity in the choice of a target.

There are many other types of behavior that fall within the definition of armed robbery. A group of young thugs wielding knives and preying upon an elderly person is committing armed robbery. The burglar who, upon being surprised by the owner of a home, demands the latter’s wallet with the help of a gun, also is committing an armed robbery. The drug user who suddenly, in the course of a transaction, demands all the drugs and money in the possession of a dealer, too, is undertaking an armed robbery.

Many other scenarios fall within the definition of armed robbery. They all share one common element: the taking of another’s property through the threat of or use of force and with the help of an offensive weapon.

Beyond this similarity, there are probably as many ways of robbing people of their money as there are of making money legitimately. Armed robberies differ on a number of dimensions. They can be directed at people, public facilities or businesses of various sizes and can take place in public places, stores or private homes. They can occur at different hours of the day or night and on different days of the week. They can involve no preparation, minimal or extensive preparation. The perpetrators can vary in their numbers, age, sex, intelligence, skills and motives.



Robberies can vary considerably in the extent of finesse or violence and in the specific tactics used. There are also many forms of weapons and disguises, as well as means of escape.

The consequences of armed robberies, too, can differ in a significant way. The offenders stand to gain varying amounts of money, depending on the nature of the target. They may be apprehended by the police or neutralized by victims at the scene; they may leave the scene successfully and be captured later, or they may evade capture altogether.

The victims of armed robberies may incur vastly different experiences. They may be killed, maimed, injured or they may suffer from some other physical disorder as a result of the crime. The incident may leave them with residual psychological disturbances and enduring feelings of fear or distrust of others. Their lifestyles, interpersonal relations and job performance may suffer. They might also encounter problems coping with the financial loss incurred as a result of the robbery.

The crime of robbery has a long history. In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England, traveling the roads between towns could be a dangerous undertaking, as people left themselves open to robber bands who often not only stripped people of all their possessions but murdered as well (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984). In North America, too, robbery dates back to the development of the frontier. In the United States, it appears to have peaked in the second half of the nineteenth century as a consequence of cattle wars, the Civil War and inadequate law enforcement (Einstadter, 1978). In both America and England, the roots of robbery were in the country; today, it is primarily an urban phenomenon.

The perpetrators of robbery, in history, have been subject to both fascination and contempt. The condemnation of this crime is not so hard to understand. However, the glorification of robbery must be understood in setting the contemporary context of this crime.

In England there was the legend of Robin Hood who, with his gang of Merry Men, redressed social injustices by robbing the rich and redistributing his booty among the poor. The exploits of such American outlaws as the James brothers (Jesse and Frank) were treated with a similar romanticism. The robbery at the Kansas City Fair in 1872, which they may have engineered, was held in reverence by many due to the audacity and apparent fearlessness of its perpetrators (Inciardi and Pottieger, 1978). A reporter of the Kansas City Times described the robbery as "so diabolically daring and so utterly in contempt of fear that we are bound to admire it and revere its perpetrators" (Franz, 1970).

Charles Silberman (1978) has extended this point about admiration for robbers to contemporary urban America. He indicates that in America's urban ghettos, robbers and other offenders may serve as role models to the young. Many blacks may derive at least vicarious gratification from learning about the contempt of some member of the black community for the norms of the dominant white community.

Silberman contends that when a group has faced a history of oppression and persecution they may experience quiet satisfaction from the most audacious acts against their oppressors. Society's norms become inverted and acts with only symbolic value are considered victories, as real victories may be out of the question. The upshot is that among large segments of the black community (and other communities that have faced varying degrees of oppression), there may be some underlying support for violent acts committed against members of the dominant group. The moral inhibitions that one would ordinarily expect to find in relation to serious crime are weak or nonexistent.

The racial disturbances of the 1960s in American cities showed that looting and arson were not aimed randomly at businesses; rather, those businesses owned by white concerns were disproportionately affected (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1975). Furthermore, the taboos relating to interracial crimes have been eroding. Crime such as robbery more often involve blacks victimizing whites than in the past (Cook, 1983).

As we discuss in considerable detail, robbery may constitute the ultimate means by which unskilled and unconnected persons from the lower rungs of society can meet their financial needs quickly and, at the same time, achieve a feeling of potency. The extent of glorification robbery is accorded may reflect the extent of social inequities existing at a particular place and point in time.

Notwithstanding some admiration for the crime and its perpetrators, for many, armed robbery constitutes a serious concern in contemporary North American society. The crime is seen not only as a threat to life and limb or private property, but to the public's general sense of security and quality of life.

## **PLAN OF THE BOOK**

The present work brings together the findings of a series of studies conducted by the Task Force on Armed Robbery at the University of

Montreal over a five-year period. These findings are then integrated into the existing body of information on armed robbery.

We present a multidimensional view by examining the trends and objective characteristics of the crime and the criminal justice system's reactions to it. The perspectives of armed robbers and their victims are also explored. The use of multiple data sources aids in the development of a composite picture of the crime. At the same time, adopting different sources of information can serve to test the accuracy of data. As an example, we sought to determine whether the perpetrators of armed robberies tend to disguise themselves. For this and many other questions we had, at our disposal, information drawn from police files, as well as that obtained in interviews with offenders and victims.

Chapter One sets the context for the discussion by exploring recent trends in robbery (both armed and unarmed) in Canada and the United States. These trends are compared with those of other violent and property crimes to determine whether other crimes have increased as precipitously in the 1960s and 1970s. Some preliminary explanations are advanced for the general growth in crime over this period. We then present some hypotheses concerning the overrepresentation of some groups in armed robbery. Special focus is given to the disproportionate involvement in this offense of French Canadians and black Americans.

In Chapter Two, we move closer to the phenomenon of armed robbery by examining some of its objective characteristics. The debate as to whether the crime is primarily committed by professionals or the despondent is addressed. A total of 1266 armed robberies committed in the Canadian Province of Quebec are examined to clarify this issue and to describe the various elements of these offenses. The factors explored include: the nature of the targets, weapons and disguises used, basic offender and victim characteristics, financial costs, the extent of violence and victim reactions. A typology comprising six types of armed robberies is then advanced.

We then explore the perspectives of the relevant parties. Chapter Three presents the results of interviews with armed robbers to gain insight into their approaches to the crime itself and their motives for committing it. We begin by interviewing 39 convicted armed robbers in the Canadian correctional system, some of whom we classify as chronic and others we consider to be occasional offenders. We let the offenders speak for themselves about such things as their preparation for offenses, the actual execution of armed robberies and their behavior following an

incident. The offenders then address their motives for embarking on their involvement in this crime, their reasons for persisting and, in some cases, for discontinuing their participation in it. Comparisons are drawn between the chronic and occasional group. Following this analysis, we refine our original typology by breaking down the sample into four groups: professional, chronic, intensive and occasional. Finally, we interview a group of former armed robbers who apparently have abandoned their criminal activities entirely. They discuss both the positive and negative factors that have been most influential in their decisions to leave a life in crime.

In Chapter Four, the perspective of armed robbery victims is explored. Owners or employees in a total of 182 small businesses that had been victimized were interviewed. The respondents shed further light on offender characteristics and on what transpires during an armed robbery. We learn more about such things as the amounts taken, the ages and number of perpetrators, weapons and disguises used, as well as about the dynamics of the offense: the extent of threats, resistance by the victim and physical violence. Considerable attention is given to the consequences of armed robberies. These include psychological changes or disorders, physical injuries or disorders and the various social/economic costs (family conflict, absence from work, etc.). The factors that may make these adverse effects more likely are discussed.

The remainder of the work focuses on the containment and prevention of armed robbery. In Chapter Five, we looked at the way in which the police and courts contend with this offense. The 1266 armed robbery cases examined in Chapter Two are retained for this analysis. Each stage of the police response and the judicial proceedings is traced from the initial call for help by victims or bystanders to the passing of sentence. Some of the principal concerns relating to the police are: the speed of the response to the scene of the offense; the intensity of the initial investigation; the solution rates of different types of armed robbery; the manner in which cases are cleared and the factors affecting clearance; and the charges laid. As for the judicial process, we looked at such things as: the frequency of pretrial detention and factors affecting it; the pleas and verdicts; the sentences and factors influencing them; and the amount of time elapsing between the arrest date and passing of sentence.

Various approaches to preventing armed robbery are covered and critically analyzed in Chapter Six. The preventive strategies are placed in one of four categories:

(1) Those aiming to suppress armed robbery through the criminal justice system; (2) those in which treating the offender or potential offender is stressed; (3) those aiming to reduce opportunities for armed robbery; and (4) those stressing the need for broader social reforms.

A section cataloguing some of the major issues and misconceptions about armed robbery concludes the discussion (Chapter Seven). Some of the major findings of our research are highlighted and elaborated in that chapter.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**T**he Task Force on Robbery has been a research group of the International Center of Comparative Criminology at the University of Montreal. The studies of the Task Force were undertaken from 1980 to 1985. A list of these studies can be obtained from the Center.

We wish to thank our colleagues Micheline Baril, Maurice Cusson, Daniel Elie and Marc LeBlanc, as well as our research assistants Sylvie Bellot, Rosette Gagnon, Rejean Cantin, Boniface Diarra, Michele Dionne, Francoise Hetu, Anne Kapetanaki, Anne Morissette, Pierre Pinsonneault, Donat Poirier and Lucie Trudel. We would also like to thank Ms. Tonia Barker for her general editorial assistance and preparation of the index.

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	ix
Chapter One    TRENDS IN ARMED ROBBERY	3
The Causes: A Preliminary Glance	10
What Makes Quebec a Champion in Armed Robbery?	13
Summary	21
Chapter Two    THE NATURE OF ARMED ROBBERIES	24
The Evolution of Armed Robbery	24
Characteristics of Armed Robberies in Quebec	29
A Typology of Armed Robberies	43
Summary	48
Chapter Three   THE OFFENDER'S PERSPECTIVE	50
The Offender Survey	51
The Offenders and Their Offenses	53
The Armed Robbery Incidents	56
The Motives in Armed Robbery	62
Careers in Armed Robbery	69
The Abandonment of a Criminal Career	75
Towards a Typology of Armed Robbers	80
Summary	84
Chapter Four    THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE	86
The Role of Victims in Armed Robbery	87
The Victim Survey	90
The Incident	95
The Success of Armed Robberies	105
Reactions During and Immediately After the Incidents	107
The Aftermath	108
Summary	119
Chapter Five    THE RESPONSE TO ARMED ROBBERY	121
The Police Response	123



	Judicial Proceedings	146
	The Sentences	155
	Summary	163
Chapter Six	PREVENTING ARMED ROBBERY	167
	The Criminal Justice System: Can it Suppress Armed Robbery?	171
	Treating the Armed Robber	174
	Reducing the Opportunities for Armed Robbery	179
	Society's Role in Armed Robbery	192
Chapter Seven	SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ARMED ROBBERY	198
<i>Bibliography</i>		213
<i>Index</i>		219

## **ARMED ROBBERY**



## Chapter One

### TRENDS IN ARMED ROBBERY

The last twenty-five years have witnessed dramatic increases in violent and property crimes on the international level (Radzinowicz and King, 1977). In North America, this trend is nowhere more in evidence than in the case of robbery. Overall, both in the United States and Canada, the greatest increases occurred between 1965 and 1975, although there has been some variation in the timing and pattern of the increases among different regions and cities.

Philip Cook (1983) has called robbery the quintessential urban crime due to the anonymity of city life and the virtually unlimited number of targets available in a large urban center. Uniform Crime Report data in the United States certainly lend support to this statement. There is a very clear linear relationship between the size of a community and its robbery rate. Table 1 shows that cities with a population of over a million have a combined rate of almost a thousand reported robberies per 100,000 people, while those with less than 25,000 inhabitants average under 100 robberies per 100,000 population. Rural areas have rates that are even lower. Furthermore, certain areas within cities are particularly prone to robbery, so that considerable variations may exist in different parts of a city (Feeney and Weir, 1975). An area may be more vulnerable if it has many commercial targets, is inhabited by persons of predominantly low social status and if it is located near a major thoroughfare (Cook, 1983).

Just as there are intra and intercity differences in robbery rates, there are regional and international differences. American and Canadian trends are compared in Table 2. It is hard to compare the two countries over the years because national data on armed robbery was not available in Canada until 1974. Since 1974, the American rates have been between two and a half to three times those of Canada. The gap between the two countries has narrowed between 1974 and 1985 as the Canadian rate has increased from 38.6 to 49 incidents per 100,000 population while the American rate has declined from 137.9 to 120.5 over these years. Both

Table 1

The Population of a Community and its Robbery Rate (USA)

<u>Population</u>	<u>Estimated Rate per Hundred Thousand</u>
1 million and over	964.5
500,000 - 1 million	517.6
250,000 - 500,000	523.4
100,000 - 250,000	298.0
50,000 - 100,000	186.5
25,000 - 50,000	124.3
10,000 - 25,000	70.1
Cities under 10,000	40.8
Rural communities	15.0

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation: Uniform Crime Reports.  
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1985.

countries experienced a peak in their armed robbery rates in the early 1980s and have shown rather steady declines since then. The United States incurred almost a four-fold increase between 1965 and 1981 (the peak year) and the rate in 1985 was still three times the 1965 rate. From that year to 1980, there has been a 45 percent increase in the rate of armed robberies. In the United States, there has been more than a four-fold increase in the armed robbery rate from 1963 to 1980, although the rate of increase since 1974 has not been as sharp as in Canada.

As for robbery in general, a similar situation has prevailed in the two countries (Table 3). The Canadian rate between 1962 (the year the Uniform Crime Reporting System was introduced in Canada) and 1981 more than quadrupled (from 26.6 to 108.6 incidents per 100,000). In the United States, as well, the increase between 1962 and 1981 in the robbery rate has been more than four-fold (from 59.4 to 250.6). Although the rates in both countries had declined by 1985, in that year, they were still at about three and a half times what they were in 1962. The American rate has consistently been about two to three times greater than that of Canada. Figure 1

Table 2

Armed Robbery Trends in Canada and the United States  
(1965-1985)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Canada</u> <u>(Rates per 100,000</u> <u>Population)</u>	<u>United States</u> <u>(Rates per 100,000</u> <u>Population)</u>
1965		41.1
1966		46.8
1967		59.0
1968		79.0
1969		90.6
1970		108.6
1971		122.2
1972		119.0
1973		120.2
1974	38.6	137.9
1975	54.7	141.8
1976	48.8	124.3
1977	46.5	118.4
1978	44.8	119.6
1979	47.4	132.1
1980	55.8	151.5
1981	59.8	155.6
1982	61.3	145.1
1983	53.1	127.8
1984	50.3	120.3
1985	49.0	120.5

SOURCES: Statistics Canada: Canadian Crime Statistics. Ottawa, Supply and Services, 1974-86.

Federal Bureau of Investigation: Uniform Crime Reports. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1963-85.

illustrates this differential and shows how the trends in the two countries are isomorphic.

When we speak of these rates, of course, we are referring to the official rate: those cases reported to and recorded by police departments throughout each country. These rates do not reflect unreported robberies. The

Table 3

Trends in Robbery for Canada and the United States  
(1962-1985)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Canada</u> <u>(Rates per 100,000)</u>	<u>United States</u> <u>(Rates per 100,000)</u>
1962	26.6	59.4
1963	31.1	61.5
1964	29.4	67.9
1965	28.4	71.3
1966	28.5	80.3
1967	35.4	102.1
1968	40.5	131.0
1969	47.7	147.4
1970	54.6	171.5
1971	52.1	187.2
1972	54.2	180.0
1973	59.6	182.4
1974	75.5	209.3
1975	93.4	218.2
1976	86.8	195.8
1977	83.6	187.1
1978	83.7	191.3
1979	88.2	212.1
1980	102.7	243.5
1981	108.6	250.6
1982	110.6	231.9
1983	98.1	213.8
1984	93.2	205.4
1985	90.0	208.5

SOURCES: Statistics Canada: Canadian Crime Statistics.  
Ottawa, Supply and Services, 1962-1986.

Federal Bureau of Investigation: Uniform Crime Reports. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1962-1985.

recent Canadian Urban Victimization Survey of seven cities revealed that over half of all robberies, in urban areas at least, go unreported (Solicitor General of Canada, 1983). The National Crime Survey has

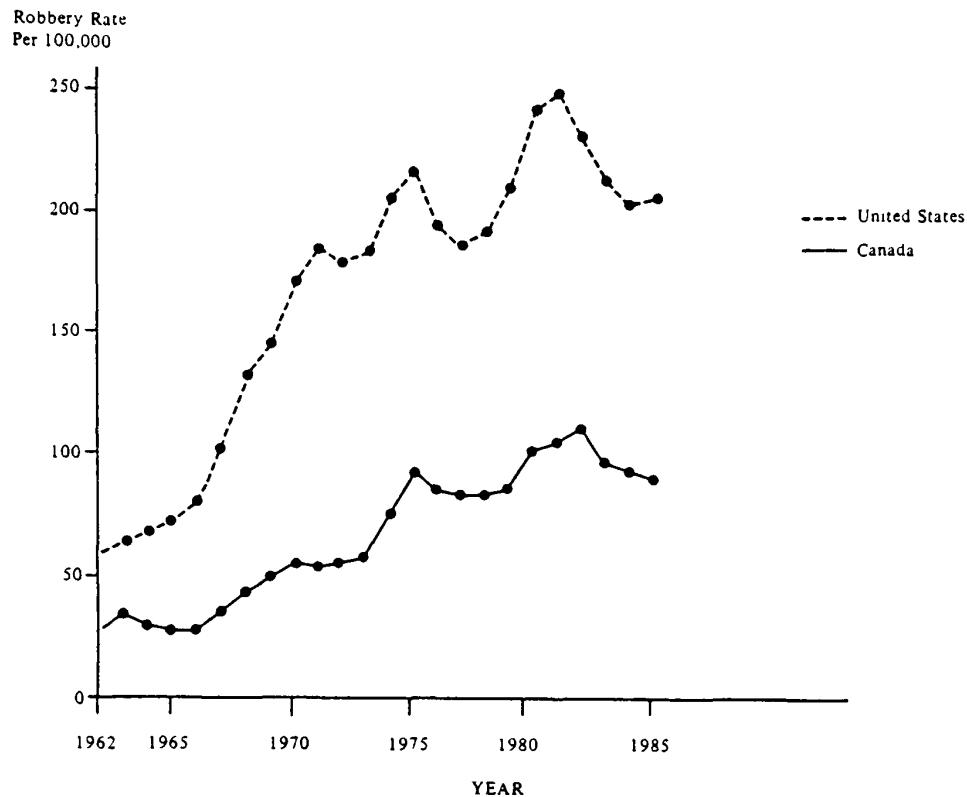


Figure 1.  
Trends in Robbery for Canada and the United States.

shown that a similar situation prevails in the United States (United States Department of Justice, 1986b).

Besides the differences in the rates of robbery along national lines and between communities of varying sizes, there are substantial differences among the large metropolitan centers. Table 4 lists the figures for five major Canadian and six major American cities for 1980. Looking at the Canadian cities first, we observe a wide range in the level of robberies. Montreal was at the high end with a rate of 459.6 offenses per 100,000 and Toronto was at the bottom end with a rate of 96.8. Thus, when the two largest cities (both Eastern) in Canada are compared, almost a five-fold difference exists. Calgary was also at the low end of the list with a rate of 99.5, while two other Western cities have rates somewhere in between the extremes. Vancouver had a rate of 214.2 and Edmonton a rate of 200.6.

The American cities we have listed also show a variation, although less so than the Canadian urban centers we have sampled. Washington, D.C.



Table 4

Robbery Rates for Selected Canadian and American Cities (1980)

<u>City</u>	<u>Rate</u> <u>(per 100,000)</u>
<u>Canada</u>	
Montreal	459.6
Toronto	96.8
Edmonton	200.6
Calgary	99.5
Vancouver	214.2
<u>United States</u>	
Philadelphia	647.4
Detroit	1,121.6
San Francisco	1,116.5
Washington	1,400.6
Boston	1,289.8
St. Louis	1,317.2

SOURCE: Sylvie Bellot and Daniel Elie: Le vol à main armée au Québec (Armed Robbery in Quebec). Montreal, International Center of Comparative Criminology, 1983.

had the highest rate of robbery at 1400.6 incidents per 100,000 population. This rate was only slightly more than twice as high as Philadelphia, the city with the lowest rate (647.4). Even Philadelphia had a noticeably higher rate than Montreal, the Canadian city with the highest robbery rate.

In trying to understand the fairly consistent increases in robbery (both armed and unarmed) since the early 1960s, the question arises as to whether these increases were unique to this crime or occurred in the context of increases in other types of crime. The Brantinghams (1984) show that the rates of violence as a whole more than doubled in both the United States and Canada in just the ten years from 1964 to 1974. These rates were higher still in 1985 for both countries. Both the Canadian and the American rates of violence have about tripled between 1964 and 1985 (Statistics Canada, 1986; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1985;

Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984). Thus, the rates of violence in general have increased at about the same pace as those of robbery and armed robbery since the 1960s. It might be suggested, therefore, that the societal changes responsible for increases in violent crime in general may have been similar to those producing changes in the crime of robbery. As we will see in Chapter Two, there has also been some increase in the viciousness of robberies during these years.

What were the trends in other types of crimes? Have robbery and armed robbery become more prevalent in a context of increasing violence or in a context in which crime in general has flourished? The data indicate that the rates of property crimes, too, have risen noticeably from the early 1960s to the present.

On the basis of an analysis of violent and property crime trends in both Canada and the United States between 1964 and 1974, the Brantinghams (1984) have concluded that violent crime rates have risen faster. Nevertheless, the rate of property crimes more than doubled in the United States and doubled in Canada during those years. Moreover, there is no sign that these rates are leveling off. In Canada, for example, the 1985 property crime rate was 5,555 incidents per 100,000, over three times the 1962 rate of 1,705 per 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 1962 and 1986). In the United States, the larceny-theft rate alone in 1985 was far in excess of the total property crime rate in the country during 1974 (2,901 per 100,000 to 1,900 per 100,000) (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1985).

The trends in armed and unarmed robbery in both countries must be understood, then, against this background of an overall increase in crime. To fully understand robbery, we must therefore also explore the reasons for this general increase in criminality. At the same time, each type of crime is, to some extent at least, unique in its characteristics and patterns. Furthermore, there are certain groups and areas particularly prone to robbery. Consequently, to complete our analysis, we must focus on robbery itself. Such a focus is the principal subject of this book. Before looking at robbery under a microscope, let us look at some of the social trends that appear to be favorable to this crime.

### THE CAUSES: A PRELIMINARY GLANCE

One can easily enumerate a multitude of factors that may underlie any form of criminal activity. Robbery and armed robbery are not exceptions. What is relevant here is an understanding of the dramatic increases in the North American crime situation as a whole; a trend in relation to which robbery was not immune. The North American situation, in turn, must be viewed in a global context.

Leon Radzinowicz and Joan King (1977) have argued that there have been near universal increases in crime since the Second World War, particularly from the early 1960s. Urbanization and modernization have often been mentioned as being associated with rising criminality. City life provides growing criminal opportunities and temptations and, at the same time, fewer controls (particularly informal controls) over behavior. Modernization brings rising expectations and may undermine family cohesion as parents may spend more of their time at work and less time at home.

Some of these factors may have contributed to the rising importance of the peer group and of peer culture. With greater independence, more resources and an increasing access to and control over information (e.g., the film industry), it is easy to understand how youthful rebellion can now be crystallized into more concerted forms of antisocial behavior. Beyond such rebellion, of course, has been the increase in hardcore criminal activity by the young in recent years (Hamparian et al., 1978). The use of hard drugs has been a particularly important development (Inciardi, 1981). The increasing contribution to crime of this segment of society is not only due to changing social conditions, but to mere changes in the proportion of young people in the population.

The postwar baby boom expanded substantially the size of the teenage population in many countries. Sagi and Wellford (1968), in the United States, on the basis of a statistical analysis, have estimated that as much as 30 to 50 percent of the increase in the crime rate between 1958 and 1964 is attributable to this phenomenon alone. Age has long been considered one of the most "energetic" factors in criminality (Quetelet, 1833).

Modernization has also led to an expanding role of women in society and along with it, higher rates of female criminality. Female involvement in most crimes has risen noticeably in the developed world since the early 1960s. The rates of increase in this involvement have even outdistanced those of men in the case of certain property crimes (Gabor, 1986).

The growing contribution of women to crime is less relevant to an understanding of increases in violent crimes such as robbery. Robberies are almost exclusively committed by males (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1985).

There are many other social trends that may have played a role in the international growth of crime in the past 25 years. Two factors that are frequently mentioned as fundamental causes of crime are poverty and racial or ethnic discrimination. Poverty may be particularly criminogenic when those in this state see that there are wide disparities in income and standards of living between themselves and others. If this perception is held by some culturally or racially identifiable group, then collective political activity, perhaps violent in nature, may take place. It is interesting to note that the racially-motivated civil disturbances occurring in a large number of American cities during the 1960s took place in a context of improving, rather than deteriorating, economic and political conditions of the black minority. Civil rights legislation, affirmative action programs, increasing educational opportunities and the general "war on poverty" were met with increases in crime that were possibly unprecedented (Wilson, 1975). Rising expectations and the realization that the dominant sectors in society are even more upwardly mobile may lead to an intensification of resentment. When the expanding hopes are unmet, the reservoir of resentment may boil over and violence may result out of frustration and despair. These frustrations, of course, are experienced on the individual level and rarely are they expressed in a collective fashion. If the minority group is highly organized, collective action may result if the opportunity arises.

Most often, individual frustrations are expressed in a variety of ways, depending upon a person's usual coping patterns and the alternative means existing in a community to alleviate frustration. If a person is "predisposed" to criminal behavior, then the structure of criminal opportunities in his or her neighborhood might shape the nature of this behavior (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). In a community in which organized crime is well entrenched, membership in underworld organizations might be a popular means of adaptation for those unsuited for legitimate occupations. A flourishing drug traffic may serve as an attraction to persons in other communities. Professional gangs engaging in elaborate armed robberies may have an appeal in other situations. Where such sophisticated organizations and opportunities are limited or nonexistent, the individual may have little recourse but to commit unsophisticated

robberies and burglaries to secure money. For a resentful, violence-prone person, a predatory crime such as robbery may afford a sense of power, as well as a monetary gain.

In the United States, the black minority, although over-represented in relation to a number of serious crime categories, is even more heavily involved in the crime of robbery (Table 5). Black suspects actually outnumber whites in three of the index crimes: murder, forcible rape and robbery. Just about half of all murder and forcible rape suspects in the United States are black. Two-thirds of those arrested for robbery are black. This last figure is especially striking in light of the fact that blacks make up just 12 percent of the United States population.

Table 5

Black Participation in Major Offense Categories (1985)

<u>Offense</u>	<u>% of Arrestees that are Black</u>
Murder	50.7
Forcible Rape	50.6
Robbery	66.8
Aggravated Assault	40.7
Burglary	22.5
Larceny-Theft	26.7
Auto Theft	28.9

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation: Uniform Crime Reports.  
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1985.

A similar history of political and economic disenfranchisement can be found in the case of the French Canadians. The Province of Quebec, where much of Canada's French-speaking population is concentrated, has also experienced an upsurge in both economic conditions and criminality. Moreover, as is the case with the black population in the United States, the French Canadians are strongly overrepresented in relation to both robbery in general and armed robbery in particular. As much of the research reported on in this book is based in Quebec, it is appropriate to examine the current social context in that province to determine whether some of the explanations for rising crime already

advanced also apply there. Also, we can identify the factors that are most instrumental in making Quebec especially conducive to armed robbery and draw comparisons with the American situation.

### WHAT MAKES QUEBEC A CHAMPION IN ARMED ROBBERY?

In Canada, Quebec is a clear leader both in relation to its robbery and armed robbery rates. Before exploring the roots of this situation, it might be useful to examine some of the figures.

Since data on armed robbery have been available in Canada (1974), the Quebec rates have been consistently between two and three times the national average (Table 6). In 1985, Canada as a whole had an armed robbery rate of 49 incidents per 100,000, while Quebec's rate was 104. Canada's rate, of course, is influenced by the high rates in Quebec. Thus, the national rate, excluding that of Quebec, would be lower than 49, thereby making the gap between Quebec and the rest of Canada even greater. Since 1974, Quebec has consistently accounted for over 60 per cent of all armed robberies in Canada even though it has only a quarter of Canada's population.

Table 6

#### Trends in Armed Robbery in Canada, Quebec and Montreal for Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Canada (rates per 100,000)</u>	<u>Quebec (rates per 100,000)</u>	<u>Montreal (rates per 100,000)</u>
1974	38.6	82.8	165.4
1980	55.8	134.1	309.6
1985	49.0	104.0	259.0

SOURCE: Statistics Canada: Canadian Crime Statistics. Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1975, 1981, 1986.

Montreal Urban Community Police: Annual Report. Montreal, 1985.

The rates of armed robbery are not evenly distributed within the Province of Quebec. There are considerable differences between urban and rural rates. The city of Montreal, the major metropolis of Quebec,

not only has rates of armed robbery well in excess of the national average, but rates far higher than those in Quebec as a whole. As Table 6 shows, Montreal consistently has had over twice the armed robbery rate of Quebec and four to six times the national average.

The situation is much the same in the case of robbery in general (Table 7). Here, national data are available from 1962 on. The figures show that Quebec has for long been well above the rest of Canada in robberies; in fact, its rates have often been twice the national average. Montreal's rates, in turn, have usually been over twice that of Quebec as a whole.

Table 7

Trends in Robbery in Canada, Quebec and Montreal  
for Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Canada (rates per 100,000)</u>	<u>Quebec (rates per 100,000)</u>	<u>Montreal (rates per 100,000)</u>
1962	26.6	50.5	108.9
1970	54.6	86.7	180.8
1980	102.7	207.2	459.6
1985	90.0	160.0	405.0

SOURCE: Statistics Canada: Canadian Crime Statistics. Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1963, 1971, 1981, 1986.

Montreal Urban Community Police: Annual Report. Montreal, 1985.

Thus, the gap between Quebec and the rest of Canada is substantial for both robbery and armed robbery, although it is greater in the case of the latter. It can be said, therefore, that Quebec experiences a disproportionate amount of robberies and still more armed robberies in relation to Canada as a whole. This latter statement is supported by Table 8 which shows that a higher proportion of robberies in Quebec involve weapons than those committed elsewhere in Canada. Between 1974 and 1980, slightly over half of all robberies in the country were of the armed variety. In Quebec, the proportion of armed to total robberies tended to vary between 65 and 70 percent. In Montreal, this proportion was usually close to or just over 70 percent.

When we look at crimes of violence in general, a startling revelation

Table 8  
The Proportion of Robberies that are Armed in  
Canada, Quebec and Montreal (1974-1980)

<u>Year</u>	<u>% in Canada</u>	<u>% in Quebec</u>	<u>% in Montreal</u>
1974	51.1	63.9	64.1
1975	58.5	71.4	73.1
1976	56.2	70.8	74.7
1977	55.7	67.1	72.6
1978	53.3	67.8	71.8
1979	53.8	65.4	68.4
1980	54.3	64.8	67.3

SOURCE: Sylvie Bellot and Daniel Elie: Le vol à main armée au Québec (Armed Robbery in Quebec). Montreal, International Center of Comparative Criminology, 1983.

occurs. Quebec has been consistently well below the national rates of violence (Table 9). In 1985, Canada had a violent crime rate of 749 incidents per 100,000 people, whereas Quebec's rate was 514 per 100,000. Thus, Quebec has far higher levels of robbery than the rest of Canada and is noticeably lower on other crimes of violence. In 1980, robberies accounted for 15.8 percent of all violent crimes in Canada, but they accounted for 41.9 percent of all violent crimes in Quebec. In Montreal, 51.6 percent of the recorded violent crimes in 1980 were robberies. Cities such as Vancouver and Edmonton have substantially higher rates of violence than Montreal, but they do not approach Montreal's rates of armed and unarmed robbery. In crimes of property, Quebec is slightly below the national average. Then what is it that makes the Province of Quebec and the city of Montreal, in particular, so prone to robbery and even more so to armed robbery?

First of all, we need to explain the dramatic increases in these crimes experienced by Quebec from the early 1960s. The Province of Quebec has undergone an extraordinarily rapid transformation from that point to the present day. This transformation touched all its major spheres and institutions—the political and economic spheres, education, religion, medicine, the family and the role of women, to name a few. Through the