

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEILLANCE:

COMPUTER MATCHES AND TELEPHONE HOTLINES

Research Proposal Submitted to:

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by

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NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

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DIRECTORATE/DIVISION	PROGRAM OR SECTION	PROPOSAL NO.	F.Y.
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<p>TITLE OF PROJECT</p> <p>Collaborative Research on Organizational Surveillance: Computer Matches and Telephone Hotlines</p>			
<p>TECHNICAL ABSTRACT (LIMIT TO 22 PICA OR 18 ELITE TYPEWRITTEN LINES)</p> <p>The proposed research will analyze two relatively new and expanding forms of organizational surveillance aimed at ferreting out low visibility violations: computer matches and telephone hotlines. These unstudied forms of legal mobilization are increasingly important to the social organization and offense patterns characteristic of post-industrial society. Hotlines and computer matches conducted under the auspices of the federal offices of Inspector General and the Government Accounting Office will be studied using interviews, a mail survey, and the analysis of calls to hotlines. In comparing these two techniques to each other and more traditional forms, we will ask four basic questions: 1) In what contexts are these forms of organizational surveillance activated? 2) What kinds of allegation/problems do they surface? 3) What happens to the information once it is revealed? 4) What variables influence the transformation process?</p> <p>These questions grow out of a broader set of theoretical concerns developed in the proposal. These forms of surveillance are more intensive, extensive, involuntary, decentralized, and categorical in coverage than many traditional forms of surveillance. The declining ability of citizens in a democratic society to avoid these forms ought at a minimum to be met with increased understanding of their causes, dynamics and consequences.</p>			

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. INTRODUCTION

The following cases illustrate the results of recent efforts to extend organizational monitoring.

- **** A match of the welfare rolls in 34 jurisdictions involving 5 million records turned up 3500 cases where persons appeared to be receiving public assistance in more than one state
- **** A phone tip led the General Services Administration to discover that \$300,000 had been wasted over a fifteen month period through the government's rental of 18,000 feet of unused office space
- **** A computer match of grocery store sales with the value of food stamps the stores attempted to collect on revealed a number of suspicious stores whose redemptions exceeded the amount of food sold
- **** As a result of a phone tip two university professors were eventually sentenced to three years in prison for converting \$165,000 in federal grant money for their own use
- **** The IRS is matching records from county recorders of deeds with tax returns in an effort to find persons who fail to pay capital gains taxes from the sale of real estate. In order to find other non-filers, it also is matching estimates of income based on the type of car driven and neighborhood an individual lives in with tax returns

These highly diverse examples have at least two things in common -- the information revealed concerns low visibility rule breaking and a decade ago most of it would not have been discovered. Such data now come to official attention as a result of two relatively new and expanding forms of organizational surveillance: telephone hotlines and computer matching.

Hotlines structure the environment so that citizens will be more likely to come forward with information about suspected violations and violators. They disperse discovery agents across social space by making it possible for everyone to play a social control reporting role (a type of de facto deputizing of the entire population). To the Pinkerton's slogan "the eye that never sleeps" can be added "the ear that is never deaf." Toll-free numbers and protection for those who inform facilitate reporting. Because reports can come from anywhere as a result of individual initiative, the information that surfaces is diverse and non-standard.

Computer matches glean organizational data to discover inconsistencies, multiple listings and patterns of behavior that suggest rule violations have, or might occur. Matching may involve the direct comparison of two or more distinct data bases, or it may be used

within a single data base to assess how close a person or event comes to a predetermined model of rule breaking. In contrast to hotlines which depend on human interaction, matching permits a form of "direct checking" (Rule, et. al., 1983) divorced from the actors involved. Organizations may obtain data directly from other organizations. Discovery is technical rather than personal, and the information revealed is standardized in machine analyzable form.

We propose to study telephone hotlines and computer matches used to ferret out rule breaking by or against government programs and agents. These unstudied forms of organizational surveillance are an increasingly important source of legal mobilization with respect to such offenses.

Telephone hotlines and computer matching are among a series of social control strategies aimed at surfacing and preventing low visibility violations. Related social control strategies include: undercover operations, mandatory disclosure laws, inspections, electronic surveillance, and personal "truth" technologies such as the polygraph, voice stress analysis and toxic drug screens. We are writing a book on these forms of social control. Considerable work on undercover operations and electronic surveillance has already been completed. (Marx, 1980, 1982, 1984, Marx and Reichman, 1984, Reichman, 1983a).

In the research proposed here we focus on hotlines and matching because 1) these are among the most important means now used and their use is expanding rapidly; 2) their analysis can shed light on important theoretical questions related to dispute transformation and legal mobilization in post-industrial societies; 3) they are the least studied of any of the strategies; and 4) we have good research access to the considerable data that are available for analysis.

Our exploratory research will have three components. First, we will each address a particular strategy. We will examine what kinds of information are revealed, what kinds of actors and organizations appear as offenders, what happens to information once it is discovered, and the correlates of these. Next we will combine our analyses and consider sources of variation and similarities between the strategies. Finally, we will compare these two forms of organizational surveillance to more traditional means of discovering rule breaking.

B. THE STUDY FOCUS--COMPUTER MATCHING AND TELEPHONE HOTLINES

As indicated by the abundance of rich historical and literary references (from the Bible, to medieval Venice where citizens could inform on their neighbors by dropping notes into the mouths of snarling stone lions, to the sealed letter slid under Sherlock Holmes' door), the idea of informing is hardly new. Hotlines are in some ways the contemporary structural equivalent of gossip as a means of social control in traditional societies. Its reach has simply been extended. (Todd, 1978; Merry, 1984). Comparing documents to ferret out inconsistencies has similar ancient roots.

What is new about hotlines and computer matching is the

aggressiveness with which information is sought, the ease with which it can be transmitted and the scale on which it can be obtained and analyzed. These new forms of organizational surveillance permit a level of abstraction which changes how we watch and/or what we can reveal. Surveillance is no longer as tied to particular persons or places. The substance of disclosure can be removed from the agents who disclose. Information may be "freeze dried" for analysis and used at a much later date and in ways unrelated to its initial collection. The telephone technology which can bring persons closer together also permits a kind of technological distancing that is supportive of anonymous reports.

We will study hotlines and computer matches conducted under the auspices of the federal Offices of Inspector General and the Government Accounting Office. These two organizations were chosen as the setting for our analysis because they are the major innovators and devote extensive resources to these tactics.

1. COMPUTER MATCHING. According to a US Senate Subcommittee there are approximately 500 computer matches routinely carried out at the state and federal level (US Senate, 1982). The number of matches will significantly increase as a result of recent legislation. The Deficit Reduction Act-HR 4170 amends title 11 of the Social Security Act to require states to implement income and eligibility verification systems for AFDC, Medicaid, Unemployment, Food Stamps and a large number of other federal programs.

Among the kinds of problems computer matching has most commonly identified are impersonation and false representation, third parties who exploit a once valid claim, "double dipping," and the failure to meet an obligation. Some of the dimensions useful in classifying and explaining the consequences of computer matching programs are:

- a) whether or not all files in a data base are matched or whether some subset of files are matched;
- b) whether matching is done preventively (e.g. prescreening) or as part of an after-the fact review;
- c) whether a model of infraction is determined before a match is conducted;
- d) whether it is aimed at obtaining information about individuals or organizations;
- e) whether the match is part of an ongoing program of discovery or a one-shot effort; or
- f) whether "hits" are directly indicative of a problem or merely "red flags" suggesting increased probability of a problem.

2. HOTLINES. While the IRS and other federal law enforcement agencies traditionally accepted tips from citizens and sometimes paid rewards, their efforts had (and still have) a rather low profile. Their policies were not widely advertised, there were no efforts to educate citizens about clues indicative of possible violations, and there were no routinely used toll free hotlines.

However, starting in 1979 this was to change for major federal agencies. The first and most important hotline is that run by the

Government Accounting Office. It is popularly referred to as the "fraud" or "whistle blower's" hotline. Its mandate is to receive calls from the public regarding "fraud, waste, and abuse" in federal programs. As of January, 1984 the staff of fourteen had received over 53,000 calls. 14,000 of these were referred to the offices of inspector general or to GAO's own investigators for further review. Callers are promised anonymity and seventy percent request it. Terms such as hotline and warm line and expressions such as "drop a dime" on someone have entered popular language.

Twenty-two other federal agencies (including all nineteen inspector-general offices) also maintain hotlines. The most active are those run by the Departments of Health and Human Services, Defence and Agriculture. There are also a variety of state, local and private surveillance hotlines. State examples include hotlines for reporting consumer abuse and discrimination. Among the better known private lines are TIP (turn-in-a-pusher) and Crime-Stoppers, USA. While the issues raised are similar, we will restrict our attention to the federal hotlines because they are the most important and offer a bounded universe.

Among some of the dimensions useful in classifying and explaining the consequences of hotlines are:

- a) whether or not anonymous calls are accepted
- b) whether the line is oriented toward the public at large, specialized audiences within it, or employees of a particular agency
- c) whether or not it is a toll-free number and operates 24 hours a day ("accessability")
- d) whether or not it has been well publicized
- e) whether or not rewards are offered
- f) whether the line is run by the agency against whom the allegations are made or by an independent agency
- g) whether it is generalized (e.g. the GAO line) or particular (e.g. the IRS line), and open-ended or specific (e.g. seeking information about a known problem or offender)
- h) whether reporting is optional or mandatory (e.g. laws requiring the reporting of child abuse and certain hazardous work and environmental conditions)
- i) whether it is oriented toward obtaining information about individuals or organizations
- j) whether or not informers are notified of the disposition of their tip
- k) the relative importance of apprehension and punishment, deterrence and prevention, intelligence, and management reforms as goals.

What explains the increased prominence of these techniques? There are of course no easy answers. One factor involves the possibilities created by technical developments. Computerization permits collecting dossiers on a scale and analyzing them to a depth that was previously unimaginable. Electronically aided record scans permit a few persons to monitor the behavior of thousands. The telephone is literally everywhere in American society, making virtually instant communication possible no matter where people are

physically located. To receive a message the person at the other end of the line need not even be present at the moment it is sent.

But we must guard against a simple technological determinism when explaining the development of computer matching and telephone hotlines. These advances have occurred in, and been spurred by, a receptive social context. Crucial factors in explaining the spread of these tactics are the changing nature of social organization and changing offense patterns.

In contemporary society the growth in bureaucracies has meant a significant increase in the proportion of transactions occurring between individuals and organizations (Coleman, 1982). The expansion of the welfare state has generated new opportunities for rule breaking (Reichman, 1983). There are now more than sixty federal entitlement programs which depend on an income ceiling or other requirements for eligibility. Such programs have gone from fifteen percent of the budget in 1959 to almost half today. The Department of Health and Human Services, for example, has more than 350 programs which might contain "fraud, waste and abuse," including Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. The vast federal purchase of goods and services also offers a rich context for fraud.

An increasing proportion of legal violations in the United States occur against this bureaucratic background. The apparent rise in white-collar crimes such as price fixing, contract improprieties, false claims, corruption and trade violations is illustrative.

Violations that occur in this context are often of low visibility. Victimization may be diffused, aggrieved parties hard to isolate, and lines of culpability difficult to draw. Some offenses may be hidden intentionally or deceptively masked as legitimate organizational transactions. (Katz, 1978; Altheide and Johnson, 1980; and Vaughan, 1980). Since these organizational infractions occur in contexts of many similar transactions they do not stand out immediately as instances of wrong doing. Unlike conventional offenses, many of these only become problematic when they are joined or aggregated with other acts. Applying for and receiving welfare benefits is legal unless one conceals one's true income as well. In the same fashion selling goods and services to the government is a routine event unless bribes or kickbacks are involved. Offenses may be further difficult to discover because they occur over time and information about them is dispersed across institutional space.

Factors that inhibit the discovery of such low visibility offenses go beyond the physical barriers and the right to privacy that constrain police patrols (Stinchcombe, 1963 and Mawby, 1981). In contrast to more traditional offenses, the routine settings in which these offenses occur and the large proportion of suspects who have no formal contact with the criminal justice system means that control agents usually cannot rely on prior reputation as a means of suspicion. Nor in general can they begin by selecting insiders to the offenses as targets and seek to "turn" them.

Moreover, when organizations are victims the motivation to

report offenses is generally weaker than when individuals are wronged. Because the costs of organizational victimization are diffused, the incentive for any one party to come forward is greatly weakened (Smigel and Ross, 1976; Ermann and Lundman, 1978; and Braithwaite and Geis, 1982). In the absence of special means (appeals to good citizenship, promises of anonymity, rewards) citizens are not likely to volunteer much information about these violations, should they have it.

In the face of changing offense patterns and the greater difficulties of discovery via traditional means, social control also has changed. New more aggressive social control agents such as Inspectors-general, and private fraud specialists who seek out problems before they surface have appeared. The Office of Inspector General in the Department of Agriculture is now the third largest criminal investigative force among civilian federal agencies (Law Enforcement News, June, 1984). Organizations like the Government Accounting Office and the Office of Management and Budget are increasingly involved in ferreting out rule breaking.

In their effort to more systematically locate low visibility violations and violators these new agents have made extensive use of techniques such as computer matching and hotlines. Yet despite the growing prominence and impact of these developments social scientists have paid little attention to them. This is the case even for those who recently have studied Medicare fraud, security fraud and other white collar crimes (Vaughan 1984; Geis, Pontell and Jesilow, 1983; Clinard and Yaeger, 1980; Edelhertz and Rogvin, 1980; Elliot and Willingham, 1980). Shapiro (1984) is an exception.

C. SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVES ON COMPUTER MATCHES & HOTLINES

The study of matching and hotlines might be approached from a number of social science perspectives beyond that of white collar crime. For example the literature on surveillance in post-industrial society (Westin and Baker, 1972; Rule, 1974; Shils, 1975; Rule, McAdam, Uglow and Stearns, 1980; Burnham, 1983; Laudon, 1983;); the public policy and political participation literature on citizen complaints (Guterbock 1980; and Hill, 1974); the literature on social impacts of technology (Perolle, 1983; and Goldman, 1983). We will draw from these materials, but the study will be located primarily within the law and society literature which focuses on the surfacing and transformation of disputes and the use of police discretion.

Studies of judicial institutions have repeatedly shown how the structure and behavior of bureaucratic agents and agencies influence the "founding" and "unfounding" of criminal cases (Skolnick, 1966; Wilson, 1968; and Black, 1980). Furthermore many wrongs or injurious experiences never even reach formal legal mechanisms (Felstiner, 1974, 1975; Galanter, 1974, 1980; Best and Andreason, 1977; and Nader and Todd, 1978). Researchers now have begun to examine the processes by which personal troubles or injuries become grievances, conflicts and eventually disputes that can be mediated, arbitrated or adjudicated (Felstiner, Abel and Sarat,

1980-81; Mather and Yngvesson, 1980-81; and Landinsky, et.al. 1979).

The surfacing and transformation of disputes must be viewed as a dynamic and contingent social process. Whether a contested issue is defined as injury, dispute, mismanagement, error, violation or crime a social construct is involved. Factors offered to explain the dispute process include a mix of social psychological and structural variables (e.g. social status of and relationship between parties to the dispute (Starr, 1978; Abel, 1979); substantive content of the dispute (Nader, 1980); aims and objectives of disputants; audience (Mather and Yngvesson, 1980-81); cultural norms and ideology (Todd, 1978) and available means of redress and remedy (Maccauly, 1979, and Steele, 1977). These studies of dispute transformation and legal mobilization focus on individual and articulable injuries (hence, the tendency to use the extended dispute case, or, in the case of formal institutions, arrests, as the primary unit of analysis). Although a class action may join disputants together, discrete dispute acts and parties can be identified.

These studies have drawn our attention to neglected topics in the sociology of law and have opened new, rich areas for social inquiry. Yet because of the types of dispute they examine and their dependence on personal cognition as a factor explaining the emergence of troubles, they leave untouched the important legal mobilization issues characteristic of post-industrial welfare societies identified earlier. When the transformation of disputes is viewed only as a process of personal perception and social interaction the more abstract technological transformation techniques and the role of third parties in actively seeking out and surfacing problems is missed.

The study we propose of computer matching and telephone hotlines would add to the growing research on dispute processing and legal mobilization in at least four ways. We will:

- analyze two important techniques for surfacing and transforming troubles. The organizational intelligence generated by hotlines and computer matching is often the first step in a transformation process whereby management problems are exposed and translated into cases of civil or criminal violation and/or institutional reform
- generate information on a relatively new and unstudied mobilization agent--the Inspector General-- whose primary function is to ferret out and expose problems that are hidden or masked in conventional activities. Preventing future trouble is as important, and often more important to these agents as is resolving the individual problems they surface
- focus on technical, organizational, or structural problems rather than those involving the interpersonal disputes which have been studied traditionally

--- integrate the dispute processing literature with a broader body of literature concerned with the social organization of industrial society, political participation, surveillance, privacy and civil liberties

Beyond the issues within the legal mobilization and dispute processing traditions a series of more general theoretical issues will guide the study. These are discussed at greater length in Marx and Reichman (1984). They include:

1) the relations between internal and external authority and the question of who guards the guards (Katz, 1978)

2) the implications of social control systems being "flooded" or overrun with data on far more violations than they can ever act upon

3) the irony of control wherein reward systems and the reliance on unsupervised, often anonymous third parties for discovering violations can be wasteful and even criminogenic (Marx, 1981)

4) the irony of neutralization wherein systematization and rationalization of control procedures may net the incompetent and amateur offender, while giving something of a license to the skilled offender who becomes knowledgeable about how the system works (Marx, 1981)

5) the tension between the anonymity and secrecy conducive to initially obtaining information and the difficulty in maintaining these if a valid investigation is to be carried out (Goffman, 1974)

6) a conceptual haziness and goal conflict in programs which seek to both deter and apprehend or prevent and punish (Zimring and Hawkins, 1973, and Gibbs, 1982)

7) the move toward a society where the panoptic eye envisioned by Bentham may gradually become characteristic of the entire society not just its prisons.

The changes noted above with respect to low visibility violations and social control may require revision or at least extension of some of our basic ideas and models regarding social control. Computer matching and hotlines are part of what Marx (1984) calls the "new surveillance." Relative to the past, contemporary forms of surveillance are more intensive, extensive, hidden, involuntary, decentralized, categorical in coverage and less costly to operate. A few persons are able to monitor the activities of many. In a democratic society the declining ability of citizens to avoid these forms of surveillance needs at a minimum to be met with increased understanding of their causes, dynamics and consequences.

D. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Our exploratory study will provide some initial base line data on computer matching and hotline operations. We will develop means to

operationalize the variables that seem important but have not been dealt with by past researchers. The conceptual framework developed and the data gathered will further our understanding of the relationship between surveillance and legal outcomes and help us explore the theoretical questions raised above.

Our first research task will be to examine behavioral variation within each strategy. Our second task will be to compare the analyses of computer matching and hotlines to each other in order to see whether surveillance type is related systematically to the discovery of particular types of offenses or offenders, or to particular sets of legal outcomes. Finally, we will compare our results to previously published research on dispute transformation and legal mobilization in other settings and consider the data in light of theoretical issues involving internal and external authority, deterrence, neutralization, criminogenesis, rewards, "flooding", secrecy and anonymity.

Conceptualizing Variation Within Each Strategy

The research into computer matches and telephone hotlines is guided by four major research questions:

- in what contexts are these forms of organizational surveillance activated?
- what kinds of allegations/problems do they surface?
- what happens to the information once it is revealed (do allegations become violations and if so what kind?)
- what variables influence the transformation process?

1. In what contexts are these forms of organizational surveillance activated?

To answer this question we will consider factors leading to the implementation of computer matching and hotline programs. We will ask program directors to identify the decision making criteria they used when instituting their program. This will allow us to assess whether criteria affecting implementation are in some way related to outcomes. Factors that we will consider are real and/or perceived levels of violation; knowledge of the success or failure of other programs; availability of resources and technical support for program implementation; and legislative requirements affecting program design. Implicit and explicit program goals will be identified. Interviews and content analysis of documents will allow us to rank programs according to the most important perceived factors leading to program establishment and to classify programs according to their explicit goals.

We also will examine the organizational location of the surveillance program relative to actors who can act on the information that is received. Some programs serve solely as

receptacles for data which are passed on elsewhere, while in other programs data gathering and enforcement are joined. In some preliminary interviews several officials have commented on the complications that may arise when surveillance agents are divorced from enforcement agents. We will determine if aggregate case dispositions vary by organizational location.

2. What types of allegations/problems do they surface?

As noted earlier there has been almost no systematic research examining the types of problem or violation exposed through these surveillance programs. Allegations and violations will be conceptualized and measured in light of the following factors:

- legal classification or category (e.g. fraud, embezzlement, theft of service, etc.)
- magnitude of the problem (measured in terms of dollars, number of aggrieved parties, number of violators, time period)
- source of the problem
- structure of alleged offender (individual or organization)

These will be compared to the type and magnitude of allegations/problems surfaced by inspectors general using conventional methods. In some cases breakdowns for this are available. In others we will simply have to compare them to the total array of allegations/problems that inspectors general process. Given the recency of these tactics some before and after comparisons will be possible here. An important issue is whether these new forms of surveillance generate the type of problem that inspectors general have always generated, albeit more efficiently, or whether they in fact bring new types of problems/allegations to the fore.

3. What happens to the information once it is revealed?

To answer this question we must map the movement of information about persons/events from its initial exposure to its ultimate disposition. We will identify distinct stages and categorize outcomes for each stage. The first stage, for example, would be the surfacing of the allegation. Next, might be identification or designation for further inquiry. This might be followed by referral, investigation, and remedial action. For each stage we will identify specific paths (e.g. referral for internal investigation; referral to program management, etc.). We will identify the proportion of total allegations or total records searched that advance through each stage. And for each stage we will look at the distribution of cases that pass through it. Variables that seem relevant to understanding transformation paths include: 1) number of "hits" as a proportion of total records searched 2) proportion of total hits or allegations received which receive further investigation; or 3) proportion of cases investigated which lead to civil or criminal

action, or other outcomes.

4. What variables influence the transformation process?

A partial list of relevant variables can be gleaned from the literature on dispute transformation. These include:

- 1) volume of allegations/problems surfaced
- 2) type of offender (individual or organization)
- 3) status of offender (measured or ranked in terms of occupational position)
- 4) status of problem/offense (measured in dollars)
- 5) recency of offense (already happened, on-going, planned or anticipated, etc.)
- 6) offense context (interpersonal or organizational)
- 7) relationship between parties to the problem/offense (parties include those directly involved in the problem/offense, those surfacing the problem and those able to take action to resolve the problem)
- 8) source of allegation (occupation of informant; or type of records matched)
- 9) motivation to reveal (personal grievance or grudge, advancing one's organizational position, compliance with specific regulation, desire for programmatic reform)
- 10) type of allegation (direct evidence of infraction, circumstantial evidence)
- 11) substance of allegation (victimization, other people's violations, confessional)
- 12) availability of remedy for problem/allegation surfaced (existence and use of follow-up procedures)

In the case of hotlines we are particularly interested in the roles played by anonymity and the relationship of caller to the offence or offender, in both the generation of information and its ultimate disposition.

Conceptualizing Variation Between Strategies

As the above discussion suggests, as reforms designed to surface low visibility problems, hotlines and computer matching have much in common. Yet they also differ in important ways. Table 1 lists four major variables by which surveillance techniques may vary.

TABLE 1: SOURCES OF VARIATION IN TECHNIQUES OF ORGANIZATION SURVEILLANCE

<u>Type of input:</u>	personal	-	technical
<u>Location of discovery agents:</u>	decentralized	-	centralized
<u>Level of expertise necessary to discover:</u>	low	-	high
<u>Type of information revealed:</u>	idiosyncratic	-	standard

The second part of our research seeks to understand the implications of this variation both in terms of the types of information which are exposed through surveillance and the paths violations take once they have been exposed. We will compare program outcomes--e.g. the distribution of allegations surfaced or the percentage of allegations which led to criminal prosecutions--holding other variables constant. For example, holding offense type, victim, and location constant we might compare the percentage of computer matching hits which are investigated to the percentage of hotline tips which are similarly reviewed.

Our preliminary work suggests that because information provided to hotlines is more idiosyncratic and varied, more "static" or nuisance cases will be introduced than will be the case for computer matching where the information is far more standard and controlled. This suggestion bears further empirical scrutiny. Perhaps this is not true for all hotlines nor for all computer matches. Matches which grossly compare two data bases may produce significant levels of "mis-hits" while matches based on predetermined profiles of infractions may be less susceptible to error. Similarly, hotlines which offer rewards for specific types of offenses may produce less "static" (if a higher percentage of "contrived" cases) than hotlines which are open for any offense type.

Computer matching may be more susceptible to neutralization than hotlines because of standardization. Those knowledgeable about the workings of the discovery system may take steps to avoid it. Neutralization is far less likely when the characteristics of information revealed are not known in advance.

Data Collection

The research will combine interviews with inspectors general and officials of the Government Accounting Office, with surveys of computer matching programs, and hotline call data.

A. Qualitative data providing a context for surveillance activity -- Semi-structured interviews with federal inspectors general and members of the Government Accounting Office will be conducted to develop the contextual dimensions of surveillance. How do computer matches and telephone hotlines compare to more traditional forms of discovery? We will seek interviews with all nineteen federal inspectors-general and the heads of their major units. It is possible to study the universe of federal inspectors general since all are headquartered in the Washington, DC area. Our preliminary interviews suggest that there is widespread interest in the issues that we wish to study. In addition we would seek the endorsement of the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency. Tom McBride the founder of this group and former Inspector General in the Departments of Labor and Agriculture is a consultant to the project. He will aide us in

gaining access.

The interviews will provide information on the decision making processes leading to the use of a given discovery strategy. We are particularly interested in criteria affecting technical choices; the operation of computer matching and hotlines; and the labelling process by which initial input is transformed into an unfounded case, a management problem and/or an allegation of fraud. Appendix B outlines tentative interview topics.

The interviews will be supplemented with analysis of secondary documents, in particular the annual (and other) reports that have been submitted to Congress since each office was created. Annual reports will provide illustrative case studies of Inspector general and GAO activities as well as quantitative indicators of activity levels (e.g. number of allegations received, aggregate disposition data etc.) The availability of reports from the initial starting point of Inspectors General activity will permit us to document changes as the programs became fully established. We will collect training materials, policy statements, and program memorandum to the extent available. Finally, we will review legislation and hearings affecting the discovery strategies.

B. Quantitative Data Measuring Program Operations and Outcomes
-- Differences in the organizational structure and location of hotline and computer matching programs produce different types of data available for analysis. Hotlines are relatively few in number, centrally administered and organizationally stable. Quantitative data are available to look at particular programs in some detail. Computer matches, on the other hand, are organizationally dispersed, decentralized and only periodically administered. Quantitative data measuring outcomes (beyond the initial hit) are not generally available. Consequently, data collection strategies will differ.

We will conduct a mail survey of directors of computer matching programs. Surveys rather than intensive interviewing is desirable here as we wish to reach a broad spectrum of programs in many different locales. The survey will involve closed and open-ended questions (appendix A contains a preliminary draft). It will be sent to the directors of 350 computer matching programs contained in a comprehensive listing developed by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency. We already have some preliminary data on these matches (purposes, specific programs, data bases used, time frame, and estimates of results). These data will be coded and analyzed. The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that agencies creating record systems (including those created by matching two data bases) must announce in the Federal Register their intent to do so. A limited amount of data regarding the authority and purpose of the match, files to be matched, data generated and use of results can be obtained from this source. Notices of the matches we survey will be reviewed and some measure of comparison between intent and action will be developed.

The surveys will produce data, not on individual cases discovered, but on the aggregate results of computer matching

programs. From our survey we hope to learn how widespread these tactics are, when and why they began, what their size and volume of activity is, what they actually produce, what they cost, what laws and policies affect them and where they are institutionally and organizationally located. The data generated will allow us to examine the major sources and consequences of variation between similar program types (e.g. organizational location, extent of resources, and uses of the information generated).

For the hotlines rather than a broad survey, we will focus on several of the most active lines run by federal agencies and perhaps one relatively inactive line. One of these studied will be the premier federal hotline run by the Government Accounting Office. Gary Marx has a continuing relationship with the GAO as a consultant and is a member of their review panel for computer matching. Two lengthy interviews have been held with Mr. Gary Carbone, Director of the Fraud Referral and Investigations Group at the General Accounting Office. His group has responsibility for the GAO hotline. He has already provided considerable documentation and data regarding operation of the hotline. With appropriate privacy protections, quantitative data on the hotline will be obtained through this office. Other possible candidates are hotlines run by Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Labor and the Department of Defence. A preliminary interview has been conducted with the director of the Department of Health and Human Services hotline and he has expressed interest in our research.

Interviews will be conducted with hotline directors and telephone workers. Analysis of the interview data will enable us to address issues such as the resources allocated to the programs, non-monetary costs, and general implementation procedures. We will seek to determine how the few programs studied are similar to, or different from, each other and other hotlines.

The primary source of hotline data will come from the calls themselves. Quantitative data concerning hotline operations will be obtained and coded. Appendix E contains a tentative coding sheet and the existing coding form used by one agency to process its hotline data.

- Data analysis

Because data measuring variation in the inputs and outcomes of these forms of organizational surveillance have not yet been collected, our description of data analysis is tentative. Unlike police or court generated statistics whose characteristics are more or less known in advance, there is little precedent for the analysis we propose.

The level and methods of analysis employed for computer matching and hotline programs will reflect the difference in data availability for the two strategies. For computer matching programs we anticipate that only program level data will be available. For hotlines quantitative data will allow us to analyze individual allegations.

Analysis of the interviews with inspectors general and review of relevant documents concerning the new forms of organizational surveillance will yield a classification of transformation paths for the information surfaced. The interviews and documents will also be used to develop the history and organizational structure of the research setting. Information collected here will aid in developing instruments for study of the two forms of surveillance.

The 350 responses to the computer matching survey will be aggregated. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions) will be calculated to paint a broad picture of matching programs. Part of our research task will be to develop categories of program variation. Contingency tables will be created to help display the relationship between independent variables (program inputs such as available resources, data bases used, match type) and dependent variables (program outcomes such as percentage of records searched that resulted in hits, percentage of hits investigated). Because our data are aggregate measures of program output, we will use different techniques for testing differences in sample means and proportions in order to see whether variation in outcome (e.g. number of hits as a proportion of total records searched; relative distribution of offenses revealed; proportion of hits that are investigated) is related to variation in program type (e.g. whether two data bases are compared directly or whether records are searched to discover cases that match predetermined patterns of rule breaking). Analysis of variance will be used to do this.

We will use data available on individual hotline calls to identify those variables that account for differences in the transformation of individual allegations. Sampling calls from different hotlines permits us to bring programmatic variables (e.g. whether rewards are offered) into the analysis.

In addition to descriptive statistics calculated to paint pictures of hotline activity, correlational analysis will be conducted to determine the strength of relationships between key variables identified earlier as being of strong theoretical interest. Results of this initial analysis will be used to help develop structural models explaining different transformation outcomes. Multiple regression or LOGIT coefficients will be generated to further develop or refine these models. An illustration of the type of model we will create follows.

TRANSFORMATION f [PROGRAM TYPE, OFFENSE, OFFENDER STATUS,
INFORMANT STATUS, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
INFORMANT AND OFFENDER, ANONYMITY OR
PROTECTION OFFERED INFORMANT]

Transformation = whether the allegation received any attention beyond the initial intake.

This model is general and meant to be illustrative of the type of

analysis to be conducted. Given the absence of prior research on this topic, the precise variables to be entered into the model will be determined only after the research begins.

TIMETABLE

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEILLANCE:
COMPUTER MATCHES AND TELEPHONE HOTLINES

(January, 1985 - December 1986)

month

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Administration of Project
Start-up

Design interview schedule;
Review relevant documents;
Initiate interview contacts

Interview inspectors general
and GAO

Analyze interviews; design
survey and coding
instruments

Collect Data

Data collection follow-up

Data Analysis

Paper Preparations

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