

RANKING OF CRIME SERIOUSNESS BY THE PEOPLE,
THE LAW, AND THE POLICE, IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

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Prior to 1983, there had been no systematic study to determine how well the criminal code of Papua New Guinea (PNG) suits the people to whom it applies. This code, introduced in 1974, should have been an improvement over the Queensland Criminal Code from which it was derived and which was in effect in Papua since 1902 and in New Guinea since 1921. However, the new code has been described as too much of a restatement of the colonial version¹ and as such, is seen as relatively insensitive to the diverse customs and traditional values in Papua New Guinea.²

Public interest in crime has increased with the rise in the number of reports of criminal activity in the Country. One response of the PNG Government has been to introduce minimum sentences for those convicted of particular crimes against persons and property. This amendment has, if anything, reduced the extent to which district courts can take into account prevailing custom and traditional values.³ Regrettably, it appears that this amendment, like many that have gone before, reflects political whim rather than informed judgement.

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1. W.J. Andrew, R.D. Chalmers and D. Weisbrot, Criminal Law and Practice of Papua New Guinea (Sydney: The Law Book Ltd. 1979) p.3
2. B.M. Narakobi, 'Adoption of Western Law in Papua New Guinea' (1977) 5 Melanesian Law Journal 52-69.
3. W. Clifford, L. Morauta and B. Sturt, Law and Order in Papua New Guinea vol.I (Institute of National Affairs, Papua New Guinea, 1984), p.252.

Admittedly, reliable data on crime are woefully scant, as was observed in the "Clifford Report," (1984) and the Law Reform Commission has enjoyed limited resources with which to improve our understanding of crime in PNG. But this does not excuse those critics who have pointed to unacceptable disparities between traditional values and the law without at the same time providing any objective evidence for such disparities. Since many calls for reform are based on the view that there are such disparities, it would be useful to have some support for this view and to have some understanding of where the disparities are greatest, before reforms are considered.

A recent attempt to gather data relevant to this aim consisted of a comparison of rural and legal ranking of the seriousness of nineteen selected crimes. This study showed that in the four rural areas sampled, males ranked crime seriousness in a manner which essentially agreed with the legal ranking but females did not.⁴ However, both males and females in these samples ranked sex-related crimes as more serious than the legal ranks would imply. Of particular interest was the finding that these rural people judged adultery to be the most serious of the nineteen crimes (i.e., rank 1) while the law's rank, based on average penalties associated with each crime was 12! This, and other disparities revealed by the data, indicated that there are genuine grounds for concern of the kind expressed by Strathern who said that the Criminal Code "cannot go against public morality to the point that it becomes unacceptable to the commonsense of the people."⁵ In addition, such findings offer a focus of attention for those whose task it is to recommend reforms. But such a task is not easy because the disagreement evident between public opinion and the law varies widely in extent and content.

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4. D. Moore, B. Richardson and D. Wuillemin, 'A Comparison of Rural and Legal Ranking of Crimes in Papua New Guinea' (1984) 12 Melanesian Law Journal, 149-58.
 5. M. Streathern, Report on Questionnaire Relating to Sexual Offences As Defined in the Criminal Code (Depth. of Law, University of Papua New Guinea, 1975) Report No.5, Section 2(1).

For example, in the areas sampled by the above researchers, the respondents gave car-theft, breaking and entering, and assaults, ranks which were considerably closer to the "less serious" end of the scale than the ranks derived from the legal penalties for these crimes (rank differences were 7, 6, and 7 respectively). In contrast, indecent exposure and adultery were seen as rather serious crimes and were allocated ranks of 5 and 1 (respectively) by these subjects whereas the legal penalties associated with these acts provided ranks of 19 and 12 respectively. Such results do not tell us how great the disparities are because ranks are merely ordinal measurements but they do raise some important questions: How different does public opinion and the law have to be to warrant reform? Should penalties be made more severe or less, or both, in response to public opinion? If changes are to be made, should they apply to all regions of PNG or be tailored to areas according to custom? If they are to be nation-wide reforms, can we expect co-operation from local police (who may be asked to enforce laws which go against their own beliefs as well as those of the people in the area)? How representative of the PNG population were the data collected by Moore et al?

One aspect of the question of representativeness was addressed by Wullemin, Richardson, and Moore⁶ who tested the hypothesis that rural opinion may differ from that of urban people and accordingly they gave to subjects in Port Moresby the same ranking task as that given to rural people in the Moore et al study. The results showed that adultery was again ranked more seriously by the people than by the law but whereas rural people gave this crime rank 1, urban subjects ranked it 6th in seriousness which was at least closer to the legal rank of 12. Also, in the urban sample, both males and females showed significant agreement in their ranking of crime seriousness (unlike the rural sample) and in general showed closer agreement with legal ranks than did the rural sample. For example, murder, rape, pay-back killing, robbery, and breaking and entering, are the five most serious crimes according to their associated legal penalties (i.e., legal ranking) and so they are for the urban sample; Not so for the rural sample.

6. D. Wullemin, B. Richardson and D. Moore, 'Ranking of Crime Serious in Papua New Guinea: The Effects of Urbanization' (1986) 17 J. Cross Cultural Psychology 29-44.

7. See above note 4.

Of particular interest was the finding that the longer urban subjects had been living in Port Moresby, the more they tended to agree with legal ranks, indicating an "acculturation" process in which traditional values may have been modified following the rural-to-urban transition. With reference to this possibility Wullemin et al say:

It seems that the issue raised by Moore et al. (1984) concerning whether the laws should be change to more closely reflect the views of the people (a difficult task in a country with so many different cultural influences) or whether the people should adjust their traditional values to more closely approximate the law, needs no answer. In a developing country with expanding towns and cities it seems that people will change their values by adopting those imposed by the government and its legal system.⁸

However, to find evidence for such attitude change is one thing. To accept it as either desirable or inevitable is another. Since independence there has been a growing movement in PNG towards preserving its culture but there is little agreement about which aspects are most worthy of such preservation. As far as laws are concerned, the work of the above authors gives some idea of which laws are at variance with some cultural values but many questions remain. Although Wullemin et al. compared rural and urban opinion, we cannot be sure that the four rural areas sampled are representative of rural PNG as a whole. Do rural opinions about crime seriousness agree sufficiently to make rural-urban comparisons useful? What can we say of police attitudes towards various crimes? We certainly should have some knowledge of this if we are to be able to gauge the likelihood of successfully implementing new laws. With these considerations in mind, the present study was designed. Its purpose was:

1. to sample a remote rural area of PNG to determine whether rural ranking of crime seriousness can be seen as sufficiently homogenous to claim that rural people in general display a particular set of attitudes towards crimes or whether there are regional differences too great to allow such a generalization;

8. See above note 6, p.42.

2. to assess the attitudes of police towards various crimes and to examine the possibility of an urban-rural difference in such attitudes. Since members of the PNG Police Force are influenced by cultural values and legal duties, a conflict of these influences could adversely affect application of present laws, and changes to them; and
3. to attempt some recommendations based on the results of this study, and the previous studies by the same authors.

Study 1

Method

Subjects

Twenty males and twenty females living in a village in the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea, served as subjects. Their ages could not be accurately determined but they ranged from approximately 16 to 60 years.

Materials and Procedure

Each subject was presented with a set of 19 cards depicting, in "stick-figure" form, the commission of various crimes (see Table 1). The experimenter (a Law student at UPNG and resident of the village) explained what was depicted on each of the cards, arranged them in random order, and then asked the subject to pick up the card showing what he/she thought was the most serious crime. From the remaining 18 cards, the subject was again asked to pick up the one showing the most serious crime and so on, until all 19 crimes had been thus ranked.

Table 1

The Nineteen Crimes/Offences Which Were Ranked by the Respondents for Seriousness.

Assault	: Gambling	: Robbery	:
	:	:	:
Drunk driving	: Car theft	: Drunk & disorderly	:
	:	:	:
Murder	: Wife-beating	: Adultery	:
	:	:	:
Prowling	: Shoplifting	: Break & enter	:
	:	:	:
Rape	: Homosexuality	: Prostitution	:
	:	:	:
Carrying offensive weapon	: Pay-back killing	: Indecent exposure (Female)	:
	:	: Indecent exposure (Male)	:

Results and Discussions

Two problems created some difficulties in interpreting the results. The first was that we could not tell which of several meanings of the word "serious" was used by subjects when ranking the crimes. However, it was felt that attempts to narrow down its meaning to, say, most prevalent, or most immoral, or having the most undesirable consequences etc. would not only confuse subjects but detract from the generality which we wanted in these exploratory studies. The second problem concerns the limitations of ordinal data when used to imply the existence of magnitude, as if on an interval scale. The results reported here do not imply anything about the magnitude of seriousness differences which is one reason for the tentative nature of conclusions based on these ordinal data. The mean rank allocated to each crime was calculated for males and females separately (N = 20 for each crime), and for males and females combined (N = 40 for each crime).

These data are shown in Table 2, alongside the nineteen crimes which are ordered according to the average penalty associated with each one by the PNG legal system.

Table 2

The Nineteen Crimes/Offences Ranked for Seriousness by the Law, Trobriand People, Mainland Rural people, and Urban People with Analysis Shown Below.

CRIMES/OFFENCES	SAMPLE REGION									
	LEGAL	TROBRIAND			RURAL (MAINLAND)			URBAN		
		M	F	M&F	M	F	M&F	M	F	M&F
Murder	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	1	1
Pay-Back Killing	2	2	3	2.5	2	5	3.5	3	3	3
Rape	3	4	5	4	4	2	3.5	2	2	2
Robbery	4	5	6	6	5	13	8	4	4	4
Break & Enter	5	8	7	7	8.5	14	11	5	5	5
Homosexuality (Male)	6	14	16	15	6	6	6	9	10	10
Car theft	7	9	8	8.5	11	18	14	7	9	8
Shoplifting	8	6	4	5	12	12	12	13	15	14
Prostitution	9	17	17	17	7	8	7	8	7	7
Assault	10	7	10	8.5	16	15	17	11	11	11
Wife beating	11	11	11	11	15	9	13	15	12	15
Adultery	12	3	2	2.5	1	1	1	6	6	6
Carrying offensive weapon	13	13	13	13	17	19	19	16	19	17
Drunk driving	14	12	12	12	18	17	18	10	8	9
Prowling	15	10	9	10	13	16	15	18	18	18
Drunk & disorderly	16	15	15	15	14	7	9	17	16	16
Gambling	17	16	14	15	19	11	16	19	17	19
Indecent exposure (F)	18	18	19	18.5	8.5	4	5	14	13	12
Indecent exposure (M)	19	19	18	18.5	10	10	10	12	14	13
Mean difference between legal and sample ranks.		2.4	2.8	2.6	3.7	5.2	4.5	2.3	2.6	2.7
Correlation coefficients for legal samples' ranks.		.77	.70	.75	.62	.22	.43	.83	.79	.80
Correlation coefficients for selected comparisons.		.97			.70			.33		

Also shown in Table 2 are ranks for the same crimes previously obtained from a primarily rural-mainland⁹ sample of Papua New Guineans and an urban, Port Moresby, sample.

At the bottom of the table are mean differences between legal and sample ranks, correlation co-efficients for comparisons between legal and various sample ranks, and correlation co-efficients for selected comparisons among samples.

One of the most striking results is the higher level of agreement between the ranks allocated by Trobriand men and women ($P = .97$, p the mainland rural group. This may well be a reflection of geographical isolation of the Trobriand Islands but it does show a more harmonious inter-sex attitude towards crime than we have seen in any other region sampled. But of greater impact is the significant correlation between the Trobriand and legal ranks ($P = .75$, p males and females combined) and the lack of such correlation between the Trobriand and previous rural sample ($P = .33$, $p > .05$). These results show that Trobriand people have views about crime which are reflected in the general legal view but these people do not significantly agree with rural Papua New Guineans on the mainland.

These results are consistent with those of Moore et al who found, for example, that prostitution was allocated the rank of 2 by North Solomons people but 17 by Western Highlands.

Taken together, these findings suggest that any attempt to change laws, on a nationwide scale, to more closely agree with the traditional values of, say, mainland rural people, will run the risk of increasing disagreement between the law and other peoples in PNG who may be rural, but not mainland. If the views of rural people is not homonogous, a rural-urban comparison is meaningless.

9. The regions sampled by Moore et al were East Sepik, Morobe, Western Highlands and North Solomons but for convenience, these samples are collectively referred to as the mainland rural samples.

If the rural-urban distinction is not a reliable variable to correlate with different attitudes towards crime seriousness, are there other ways of assessing these results? As suggested by Wullemin et al¹⁰ a more sensitive and fruitful analysis of these data may come from an examination of the individual crimes showing greatest disparities between samples' ranks and those of the law. For example, it is noteworthy that the Trobrian sample allocated a mean rank of 2.5 to adultery, differing from the legal rank of 12 by 9.5. The rural and urban samples allocated a seriousness rank of 1 and 6 (respectively), to this crime. The reason for this finding is not clear but the differences are too large and consistent across groups to ignore. There may be important qualitative differences in the attitudes of the law and the people to the crime of adultery and an investigation of this hypothesis is warranted.

Evidently, it is not a simple matter of a seriousness attributed to sexual offences in general although Moore et al, and Wullemin et al reported a strong tendency for the mainland rural sample to consider sex-related crimes (as a group) as more serious than does the law. Although the Trobriand and rural samples seemed to show agreement in that they allocated fairly "serious" ranks to rape and adultery, these two groups differed sharply with respect to the ranks for homosexuality (15 v 6), prostitution (17 v 7), and indecent exposure (18.5 v 5, female offender; 18.5 v 10, male offender) such that the Trobriand Islanders consistently ranked these three sex-related crimes as considerably less serious than did their mainland rural counterparts. It is tempting to hypothesize that Trobriand people distinguish between sex related offences involving no immediate victim (e.g., homosexuality, prostitution, and indecent exposure) and those in which there is a readily identifiable sufferer (the rape victim and the betrayed spouse in adultery), while the other rural (mainland) respondents see all sex related crimes as serious.

10. See above note 6.

In general, the Trobriand Island sample has served the purpose of showing that there is a rural community whose ranking of crime seriousness correlates with that of the law. To the extent that it does not agree with the law (e.g., homosexuality, prostitution, and adultery show Trobriand-legal rank differences of 9, 8, and 9.5 respectively) it seems reasonable to suggest that some "accommodation" of this acceptant attitude should be exercised when sentences are handed down by the courts. However, even this moderate suggestion may show undue focus on people-law disagreements which are in fact less impressive than the people-law agreements. For instance, murder, pay-back killing, rape, robbery, and break/enter are seen as relatively serious crimes by the legal system and the Trobriand people with mean rank differences not exceeding 2 for any of these crimes. The same level of agreement with respect to differences between ranks exist for wifebeating, car-theft, assault, carrying an offensive weapon, drunk driving, drunk and disorderly, gambling, and indecent exposure (male and female). With 14 of the 19 crimes receiving ranks which differ from the legal ranks by two or less, we may justifiably believe that the current legal system is reasonably acceptable to the Trobriand people. The same cannot be said of another "island" sample, North Solomons, whose ranks showed a small negative correlation with legal ranks!¹¹

Another contribution of the Trobriand data (as rural data) is the finding of agreement between Trobriand ranks and those of the law and urban subjects, but not with other rural ranks. So it seems that rural opinion about crime seriousness is not homogenous and that, again, sensitivity to local attitudes towards specific crimes is called for when legal penalties are imposed. The overall results do not support a policy of substantial nationwide changes in penalties. But if any changes are planned, it is worthwhile knowing police attitudes towards such changes because police are at the interface between the government and the people. The next study is concerned with police officer's judgement of crime seriousness.

11. See above note 4.

Study 2**Method****Subjects**

The respondents were 19 senior police officers based at Konedobu, Port Moresby, whose ranks ranged from Sergeant to Chief Inspector, and 14 police officers of similar rank based at Kimbe, West New Britain Province.

Materials and Procedure

The same materials and procedures as those described in Study 1, were used in this study.

Results and Discussion

Table 3 shows the mean seriousness ranks allocated to the 19 crimes by the Konedobu subjects (urban) and the Kimbe subjects (rural) and these ranks can be compared with the legal ranks arrived at by reference to typical penalties associated with each crime. This table also shows that the Konedobu and Kimbe ranks showed positive significant correlations when compared with legal ranks ($p = .64$, $p.58$, $p .01$, respectively) and with each other ($p = .60$, $p .01$).

Table 3

Police ranking of crime seriousness.

	LAW	KONEDOBU POLICE	KIMBE POLICE
Murder	1	1	3
Pay-back	2	4	6
Rape	3	5	7
Robbery	4	3	4
Break & enter	5	2	1
Homosexuality	6	11	17
Car theft	7	6	14
Shoplifting	8	9	13
Prostitution	9	14	11
Assault	10	7	2
Wife beating	11	16	9.5
Adultery	12	12.5	5
Carrying weapon	13	10	15
Drunk driving	14	8	9.5
Prowling	15	12.5	16
Drunk & disorderly	16	15	8
Gambling	17	19	12
Indecent exposure (F)	18	18	19
Indecent exposure (M)	19	17	18
Correlation coefficients for selected comparisons.	.64		.60
	.58		

However, an examination of the ranks associated with individual crimes shows that Konedobu police disagree with the law mostly with respect to the seriousness attached to drunken driving (law rank = 14, Konedobu police = 8; rank difference of 6). This may well reflect the problems these urban police encounter in the execution of their duty rather than a moral or legal judgement about the seriousness of the offence. However, this rank difference is not alarmingly high and neither were the disparities between the legal ranks and the Konedobu police ranks for homosexuality, prostitution, and wife-beating which are all allocated ranks, 5 positions lower than the legal ranks for the same crime. In fact, 11 of the 19 crimes were allocated ranks differing by 2 or less from those of the legal system. Of particular interest is the rank of 12.5 given for adultery by police subjects which differs from the legal rank of 12 by only .5. It seems that Port Moresby police do not share rural attitudes towards adultery which was ranked first in seriousness by both males and females in the mainland rural sample.

The mean rank given by Kimbe police for adultery was 0.5 which indicated a "more serious" label, differing from the law by 7 ranks. The more rural nature of the Kimbe police sample may account for this difference but greater disparity appeared for assault and drunk/disorderly ranks (both differing by 8 from the legal ones) which suggest that Kimbe police may experience particular difficulties associated with these crimes. However, the largest difference between legal and Kimbe police ranking occurred for homosexuality (legal rank = 6, Kimbe police rank = 17), the difference being 11 ranks. With respect to this particular offence it is noteworthy that only the mainland rural sample showed close agreement with legal ranking of seriousness.

The police data allow a cautious conclusion to the effect that there is, in general, agreement between their ranking of crime seriousness and that of the law. However, disparities exist for specific crimes and these are not the same for the Konedobu (urban) and Kimbe (rural) samples.

GENERAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The major finding of this study and the two previous ones (Moore et al 1984; Wuillemin et al, 1984) is that with the exception of females from the rural sample, all group's mean ranks correlated significantly with legal ranks. Although this is encouraging, the strength of these correlations varies considerably and there are not many crimes given consistently higher or consistently lower ranks than those of the legal system.

Table 4

Disparities between ranks allocated according to perception of crime seriousness for various samples.

	Mainland Rural	Urban	Trobriand	Konedobu Police	Kimbe Police	Mean Disparity
Murder	-1	0	0	0	-2	-.6
Pay-back	-1.5	-1	-5	-2	-4	-1.8
Rape	-0.5	+1	-1	-2	-4	-1.3
Robbery	-4	0	-2	+1	0	-1
Break & enter	-6	0	-2	+3	+4	-.2
Homosexuality	0	-4	-9	-5	-11	-5.8
Car Theft	-7	-1	-1.5	+1	-7	-3.1
Shoplifting	-4	-6	+3	-1	-5	-2.6
Prostitution	+2	+2	-8	-5	-2	-2.2
Assault	-7	-1	+1.5	+3	+8	+ .9
Wife Beating	-2	-4	0	-5	+1.5	-1.9
Adultery	+ 11	+6	+9.5	-.5	+7	-6.6
Carrying weapon	-6	-4	0	+3	-2	-1.8
Drunk driving	-4	+5	+2	+6	+4.5	+2.9
Prowling	0	-3	+5	+2.5	-1	+ .2
Drunk & disorderly	+7	0	+1	+1	+8	+3.4
Gambling	+1	-2	+2	-2	+5	+ .8
Indecent exposure (F)	+13	+6	-.5	0	-1	+3.5
Indecent exposure (M)	+9	+6	+ .5	+2	+1	+3.7

A rank ordering of the crimes for which ranks differed most, in a particular direction, would provide a useful summary of the overall findings.

Table 4 shows the differences between legal ranks and mean ranks allocated to various crimes by the 5 sample groups. These data are purely descriptive and no statistical analysis has been applied because the mean ranks shown are not weighted in that many more subjects contributed to the rural column than to the other columns in the table. In spite of this, some interesting trends are apparent which may serve as a focus of attention for more detailed studies or, in their absence, as a preliminary guide for decisions about legal reform.

Table entries with a negative sign indicate that the crime in question was allocated a higher numbered rank and therefore a lower rank than the legal one, and was therefore judged as less serious than the law indicates.¹² Positive entries show disagreement in the opposite direction such that for example the mean rural rank for indecent exposure (female) was 13 places higher (i.e., more serious) than the legal rank for the same offence (the ranks were 5 and 18 respectively). Interestingly, this disparity is the largest in the table and yet female indecent exposure does not carry a legal penalty (within the PNG code) at all.

The right hand column shows the mean disparity between the various sample ranks and legal ranks for each crime. Paramount among these is homosexuality (male) for which no sample yielded a mean rank higher than the law's and for which the unweighted mean rank is 5.8 ranks lower (i.e. towards the less serious end of the scale) than the law's. The penalty for car-theft is perhaps too severe, according to the table of rank differences, as is the penalty for shoplifting and prostitution although these disparities are less marked.

12. A high rank is 1, a low rank is 19, even though the number 19 is numerically higher than the number 1.

It would seem that if we decide it is a good idea to change national laws to more closely correspond to general public opinion, adultery should carry a greater penalty and homosexuality a lower one. Somewhat less obviously, offences involving indecent exposure and drunken behaviour should be treated as "more serious", while shoplifting and prostitution should be treated as less serious offences. In fact, the "mean disparity" column indicates that the crimes ranked by the law as the 9 most serious, are all seen as somewhat less serious by the people. The reverse trend appears for the 6 least serious offences.

However, the variability in the data collected in these studies supports a flexible approach to sentencing rather than a nationwide change in legal penalties. Such flexibility could be achieved if a magistrate or judge referred to a table (such as Table 4) as a guide to local attitudes towards a particular offence. For example, a Trobriand islander found guilty of homosexuality or prostitution (ranked 9 and 8 places respectively, less serious than the legal rank) should receive a sentence of low severity if we wish to show sensitivity to local attitudes towards these offences. Of course, the data presented here are hardly adequate for such reference. They show some important trends and they may serve as an impetus for the preparation of a more detailed table of regional differences in attitudes towards crime within the very different cultural groups comprising the Nation.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The studies reported here are the third set in a series which have addressed the following questions:

1. What is the extent of agreement or disagreement between the people of PNG and its legal system?
2. Does the agreement/disagreement vary as a function of region?
3. For which offences are there maximal people versus law discrepancies and are these region related or nationwide?
4. Should penalties be changed to "fit" people's attitudes?

To tackle these questions, people of both sexes and from various regions of PNG (e.g., coastal, highlands, islands) from different population density regions (urban and rural) and from different socio-economic groups (tertiary vs non-tertiary educated; urban police vs rural police) were asked to rank the seriousness of 19 crime/-offences. The ranks of these samples were compared with legal ranks for which the crimes were ordered according to the penalties typically associated with each crime.

Correlations between legal and sample ranks and, between some sample ranks, were calculated. Where possible, crimes were classified into groups (e.g., sexual, victimless, crimes against property, crimes against persons) and rank differences related to variables such as sex of respondent, sample region, period of residence, and other variables

With the exception of mainland rural people, most samples showed general agreement with the legal rank ordering of crime seriousness, such ordering being based on typical penalties associated with each crime.

However, some crimes tended to be ranked as less serious than the legal penalties for them would imply. These were homosexuality, prostitution, car theft, and shoplifting. Other crimes were ranked in a manner suggesting that penalties are seen as too lenient. These were adultery, drink-related offences, and indigent exposure.

In spite of these trends, there were sufficient regional variations of opinion to suggest that a nationwide reform may do as much harm as good since in many instances, applying a more serious penalty (for example) to a crime may meet with greater approval in one region and greater disapproval in another.

In a very general way, it appeared that what the law ranks as the most serious crimes are seen as somewhat less serious by the people, and what the law sees as the less serious crimes are seen by the people, as somewhat more serious. But the data contributing to this trend are so variable that it would be dangerous to change sentences accordingly.

Instead, what is needed seems to be an increase in the range of penalties applicable to various offences so that local authorities can show sensitivity to the variability in attitude that these studies have shown to exist throughout Papua New Guinea. The very opposite of this principle appears to be embodied in the minimum sentences legislation. In this respect, these studies lend support to related recommendations appearing in the "Clifford" Report.¹³

13. See above note 3.