"Dial 999 for help!"

"Dial 999 for help!" The Three-Digit Emergency Number and the Transnational Politics of

Welfare Activism, 1937-1979.

Since 1937 calling for help has meant dialing three digits on a telephone. "999" — the emergency telephone number originally devised in London as the call signal for police, fire brigade, or ambulance assistance — has been appropriated as the model of emergency communications in 162 countries to date, with some variation in the actual digits (for example "911" has been used in America since 1967, while across continental Europe "112" has offered the same connection since 1991).[1] Yet despite the sheer global reach of the system the three-digit emergency number has featured merely as a footnote to discussions of the rise of ever more technologically-driven forms of policing after the Second World War.[2] In this article, I use the emergency number system to rethink the relationship between citizens, state, and local communities in the diverse historical and geographical settings of its introduction. By enhancing the possibilities for citizens to intervene in rescuing one another from "danger," the system enables citizens to coordinate the speed and location of state response to an event deemed an emergency, via the medium of the telephone. It thereby rests on an idea of citizenship characterized by active and reciprocal surveillance of each other's behavior (anticipating the Neighborhood Watch schemes of the 1980s), as well as democratized access to medical or other emergency assistance, evoking the ethos of the National Health Service introduced after the war.[3] However, this article suggests that the system has been marked by its uneven distribution in economically-deprived communities (conditioned in part by the commercial imperatives of telephone companies), compromising the reach of the most fundamental arms of "British" welfare apparatus in this era and reinforcing inequalities of access to state services along lines of class and race both domestically and internationally.

Indeed, this research uses the three-digit emergency number to reframe national and transnational histories of mid-century and post-war welfare provision, crime prevention, and consumption. Telephone access, as I will demonstrate, has followed an uneven path of compromise between the commercial interests of telephone companies, in which the state has been consistently implicated, and the public demand for fast and easy communication, especially in an emergency. The urgency of acquiring a more coherent service was aggravated by the greater atomization of neighborhoods and families as a result of suburbanization in the post-war West.[4] In Britain, this was manifest in police reporting their struggle to find sufficient personnel to patrol the ever-expanding cities, while in the United States the sheer volume of emergency call numbers for different city districts became a (rather unfunny) joke; in 1968, one hundred and sixty-one different emergency numbers were recorded for St. Louis, forty-five for Washington, and over fifty in Los Angeles — just to contact police.[5] Inevitably, following the introduction of the emergency number those able to afford private telephones, initially solely in the purview of white upper- and middle-class subscribers, enjoyed accelerated access to emergency services and acculturated more swiftly to the role of monitoring and reporting "offensive" behaviors.

Correspondingly, those outside these groups have tended to experience a slower service, or have been excluded altogether where telephone companies have simply not targeted them as markets. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as I will show, this was particularly pronounced among working-class, black and ethnic minority communities in the southern states of America, rendering them more likely to be the subject of emergency calls than making them. This has ramifications for our understanding of the locus of enduring tensions between police and certain marginalized communities, recently manifested in a wave of police shootings of black teenagers in 2016 that fueled riots and protests in Dallas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Los Angeles, Charlotte, and Tulsa.[6] It also underlines the irony of the "I Don't Dial 911" slogan

popularized by the National Rifle Association among primarily white male handgun owners since the 1970s. Their fears about needing guns as a more immediate form of protection against the perceived criminality of African Americans belies the structural vulnerability of African Americans themselves to becoming victims of police discrimination and violence.[7]

The introduction of the three-digit emergency number in three countries — the United Kingdom, United States of America, and New Zealand — forms the substance of this article. The United Kingdom was the originator of the system, and I have chosen to examine its adoption in America and New Zealand because of the particular political relationships with one another that supposedly characterized the three countries' interactions. America, for instance, has been identified as emerging in the post-war period as a "consumer empire" to challenge the dominance of the United Kingdom and Europe, while New Zealand has been situated as a former colony still politically and culturally "in thrall" to London.[8] Instead of reproducing these narratives, I present the emergency number as an exemplar of the *mutually constitutive* transnational networks, exchanges, and points of rupture that should characterize the way historians examine globalization and consumer culture in the twentieth century.[9]

Thus by "transnational" I do not refer here to the emergency number as a system that "transcended" national boundaries, thereby "diluting" the nation state as an organizing structure. Instead, I build on the ideas of scholars who look to identify a "transfer" of knowledge and/or systems across and between national borders, and the historically- and geographically-specific relationships and networks that facilitated those interactions.[10] Transnational history is not about removing the nation-state from the picture, but about properly contextualizing its place within currents of thought, processes, and systems circulating at other levels.[11] Here, I embrace the idea of the emergency number circulating internationally as both a technology and an ideology. Orientated around the civil right to state protection from harm, demand for the single emergency number took root in each country through a different set of

actors and political, social, and economic conditions, but contained some similarities in terms of discrimination and gradated forms of access that are important for us to reflect upon.

Within England during the middle decades of the century the 999 service became increasingly decried for its inefficiency in regional areas outside of London, while in Northern Ireland frustrations over the painfully slow, piecemeal pace of its introduction were blamed on poor communication between central and local government. The new telephone emergency system thus tended to reinforce or even exacerbate class, regional, and national inequalities, through inconsistent patterns of ownership and access. Moving into the 1960s, public demand for improvement led to greater correspondence with police by concerned citizens over the issue, with reference to individual's tax contributions to the service animating the debate over the provision of emergency services as a matter of civil rights or consumer demand.

This was a debate echoed in America, one of the last countries to adopt a single emergency number. "911" was trialed first in the city of Haleyville, Alabama in 1968, followed slowly by other cities and states at their own discretion and only gaining a mandate in law as a nationwide service in 1999.[12] As this suggests, America experienced an extremely heated and long-fought political contest over the introduction of the service, due in part to its identification with British (and more broadly European) social welfare provision. Impediments to funding for the emergency number also, however, emerged from the same local and commercial prejudices that restricted African-American access to the post-war suburban housing market, recently explored in Liz Cohen's examination of the complicity of estate agents in racial "zoning."[13] I will analyze how the leader of the campaign to deploy 911 throughout the United States, Congressman John Edward Roush of Indiana, drew upon the support of an extraordinary range of national and local pressure groups and activists in coordinating the ten-year campaign that took on the telephone companies and the government to secure federal funding for 911 in 1973 from a reluctant President Nixon.

New Zealand has been regarded by historians as the crucible of the welfare state following the universal pension, unemployment and disability benefits introduced under the Social Security Act of 1938.[14] In this context, and given the country's close trading, political, social, and cultural relationship with Britain, it swift introduction of the three-digit emergency number during the 1950s was unsurprising. Yet its "111" emergency number was integrated in response to the country's distinctive transition to a tourist economy, with an increasingly mobile population for whom road accidents were growing in frequency. These circumstances focused implementation of the service within urban centers despite the relatively common incidence of fire and inconsistent medical service in rural areas. Here, the situation cultivated increased political participation, activism, and agency as rural communities cooperated to secure the new technology through petitioning local M.P.s and collaborating with the local press to draw national attention to their ongoing lack of emergency number.

Scholarship on how the greater use of commercial security technologies has affected social relations has been dominated by the "risk society" thesis of sociologists Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. They suggest that these devices represent a western shift towards self-interested forms of consumption used to fortify private wealth, fostering alienation between citizens and agents of the state (especially police) amongst whom interpersonal contact has diminished.[15] By contrast, recent studies in the history of consumption in local and global contexts have stressed a quite different psychology of consumer behavior to that propounded by Beck and Giddens. In these accounts, political participation, ethical concerns, and collective bargaining have consistently been more pronounced than individualism during the nineteenth and twentieth century — even in America.[16] I take as the remit of this article Frank Trentmann and John Brewer's call to recognize the "politics of consumption" as a "system of values, not just for individuals but also for states and social movements" to understand which historians

need to pay attention to the "changing moral landscape" in which "goods" like the emergency number were created, bought and sold.[17]

My argument is that telephone ownership, and the demand for access to telephones in order to be able to call for help in an emergency, channeled political energy between certain citizens and government to coordinate safeguarding citizens against crime or injury. Crucially, the telephone itself has been regarded by the public not as a dehumanized cog in the impersonal machinery of regulation, but as the avatar for having police or other emergency services persons virtually resident in people's homes and on their street corners. Accordingly, where access to telephones has been impeded, the political contests generated over the provision of the emergency number as a matter of civil right offer historians a fresh avenue for interrogating how notions of state and civic responsibility were historically shaped at the intersection of state and commercial interests.

I

The invention of "999" in Britain in 1937 was attributed to a great tragedy. In 1935, a fire had broken out at a house in Westminster, central London, killing five people. Hearing the cries of those trapped inside a neighbor, Dr Norman J. Macdonald, attempted to use his domestic telephone to call for the fire brigade but discovered to his horror that the line was busy. After an agonizing wait, Macdonald was still trying to connect to the operator when a fire engine arrived in response to a street alarm bell ringing — too late to rescue the victims inside.[18] The victims had apparently possessed no telephone with which to call for help. Lacking dedicated emergency telephone lines, an official from the General Post Office (the government department then controlling the telephone network) advised the press that the quickest way to contact the fire brigade, police, or ambulance services was to find the nearest fire brigade

"alarm post," which contained telephones that connected to the station. Alternatively, were no alarm posts located nearby, members of the public should find a telephone box on the street and either push a "special alarm button" located under the dial or ring the number "0" to connect to the telephone exchange. Neither of these methods would ensure the caller would immediately talk with the emergency service they required, though; they would still need to instruct the operator to dial one of the separate numbers for "Fire," "Police," or "Ambulance." As the *Daily Mail* opined, this long-winded set of instructions raised "the question of the value of the telephone in cases of fire or similar emergencies."[19]

The report that followed the Wimpole Street incident compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Guy Symonds, Fire Advisor to the Home Office, focused on how to strike a balance between democratizing emergency communications whilst preserving the telephone as a desirable domestic commodity:

> In making a broad survey of the problem, it must be borne in mind that the telephone subscriber, faced with any emergency in his own premises, or in those of a neighbour, properly regards his telephone as his ever ready help; indeed, the value of the telephone in times of emergency is used by the Post Office itself as a "selling point" in its favour. The administration, therefore, will be open to attack if it fails to provide the most efficient and reliable service for handling emergency calls that can be devised.[20]

Symonds' recognition of the "selling point" value of telephones-as-protection invoked the close interrelation of media, state, and market interests in directing consumers towards

telephone ownership. Citizens' emotional investment in telephones as their "ever ready help" could have forged a basis for arguing for the installation of telephone lines into every household throughout the country. Yet Symonds merely indicated that where telephones existed, there should be a new method of speedier communication with the emergency services.

His reluctance to undermine the commercial value of telephones to promote public safety was mirrored in the government's attitude towards other forms of security technologies, particularly anti-burglar devices such as locks, safes, and alarms. Since the late-nineteenth century the state had been complicit in promoting the purchase of branded anti-burglar devices, through endorsing burglary insurance policies that required police to testify to the presence or absence of locks and safes of a sufficient strength to thwart (or significantly impede) a burglar.[21] The fact that this industry prospered in a context of statistically-declining rates of theft and violence at a national level demonstrates how a market for these products was successfully achieved through cultivating exaggerated fears of burglary in insurance advertising specifically targeted at the middle-classes, whose rates of home ownership dramatically increased by the 1930s.[22] Both in this case and in relation to telephones, the manipulation of citizens' inclination to trust in new technologies to engender a *feeling* of domestic security formed a lynchpin of the harmonious relations between security industry, insurance agents, and police.[23]

Nearly two years after the Wimpole Street incident, the emergency services devised a solution to their communications problem that democratized access to telephones within the city whilst also retaining the privileges of domestic telephone subscription. The new "Emergency Calls System" ensured that those who dialed the number "999" on a telephone would circumvent the operators employed in directing the traffic of calls at London's Telephone Exchanges. 999 callers would be connected directly with operators at a switchboard

for one of three services — police, fire brigade, or ambulance. As the press release for the new system issued by the General Post Office on 16 February 1937 stated,

> London's emergency telephone calls in case of fire, crime, or accident are to be considerably speeded up. Soon two of the most efficient telephone rings will encircle inner and outer London. Police stations, fire brigades and ambulance services will be linked up with them. The system devised is the most advanced of any previous design and it will reduce the operation of making emergency calls to seconds. Both the inner and outer London rings of the Metropolitan Police Force are to be so equipped.[24]

In this press release, the rhetoric of the police and other emergency services "encircling" London to enable them to act at speed was particularly striking, evoking as it did the "panoptic" vision that residents of the metropolis were at all times surrounded by the agents of the state and only seconds from encountering them should a problem arise. By providing brightly-colored blue telephone boxes on street corners from which residents could exclusively place "emergency" calls without charge, those who did not yet own telephones in their homes could theoretically acquire the same level of state intervention as wealthier residents should they demand it. As the Belgrave Committee — convened of Home Office and emergency service representatives to review the emergency calls system — noted in April 1937, it was "necessary to visualize callers of all degrees of intelligence and excitement," a comment as much inflected with the prejudices of its members towards the poorer classes as it revealed a genuine concern for broadening accessibility.[25]

Unfortunately for the Belgrave Committee, the first call made using the new number brought into relief enduring social hierarchies of access to the system. On 7 July 1937 at 4:20 a.m. Mrs. Beard, of Elsworthy Road in Hampstead, North London, dialed 999 on the house telephone at the instruction of her husband, who had been woken by the sound of someone moving on the terrace outside their window. According to press reports, "within five minutes" the police arrived and captured a man named Thomas Duffy, who was charged that afternoon at Marylebone Police Court with attempting to commit burglary. Newspapers, predictably, made much of this event, with headlines focusing particularly on the "under five minutes" in which it had taken police to reach the scene.[26] Notably, a quotation by Mr. Beard that recurred in press reports in the *Star*, *Evening News*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Evening Gazette*, *Morning Post*, *News Chronicle*, and *The Times*, praised the new service in economic terms:

> As a result of using that signal almost instantaneous connexion was made with the police station, and in less than five minutes this man was arrested. It struck me as a householder and a fairly large taxpayer that we were getting something for our money, and I was very much impressed by it.[27]

Despite the seemingly unfettered expansion of emergency services into the lives of Londoners that had accompanied the 999 service, therefore, the policing of burglary was still articulated as a product of monetary exchange between state and society, inflecting the prevention of crime with the influences of class and wealth. Besides the question of how far taxes were viewed as "payment" for police response, this first call made in response to a burglary from a prosperous home in the salubrious area of Hampstead highlighted that those capable of subscribing to

private telephone lines retained a privileged position in relation to the state. Appended to the article was an image of Mrs. Beard (Figure 1) showing her making the famed telephone call from within her home, as against calling from one of the public phone boxes located on street corners across the city. The "less than five minutes" in which the emergency services arrived made no mention of the comparable time it would have taken to reach the nearest phone box, nor did it factor in the additional cost of telephone subscription — estimated as equivalent to the cost of hiring a maid in a publicity film issued by the General Post Office in 1934.[28]

Despite the expense of domestic telephones, however, the 999 system was gradually extended across Britain after the Second World War. By 1947, the Post Office recorded that 602 telephone exchanges in England, Scotland, and Wales were now equipped to provide the three-digit emergency number, with Northern Ireland having begun implementing it from June 1946 in Ballymena, Belfast, Enniskillen, and Londonderry.[29] This was a striking development in post-war Britain, corresponding with a period that Claire Langhamer characterizes as a peculiarly "home-centered" society in the wake of wartime upheaval. [30] Protecting the home and its inhabitants through a closer network with emergency services apparently superseded the growing cultural emphasis on the inviolability of domestic privacy, although this tension was recognized — sometimes comically. In the Ealing Studios police drama *The Blue Lamp* (1950), an elderly woman shown using 999 to report a burglary at her neighbor's house unwittingly drew police attention to his fraudulent jewelry business, evoking the ability of the emergency telephone caller to subject their neighbor's private affairs to public scrutiny.[31]

Yet, with fears about juvenile criminality on the rise, the new emergency number did more to assuage the middle classes' desire for greater security than it did imperil their cherished privacy. The advent of the so-called "permissive" decades posed unanticipated challenges for police and public alike, with family breakdown reportedly leading to a "wave" of juvenile robberies in Scotland, and cities such as Manchester confronted by a thriving teenage "club

culture" — the "coffee club menace" — where drug abuse, violence, and underage sex flourished.[32]

The impetus such fears gave to citizens wanting to make use of the new number came into conflict with the restriction of access to it according to wealth, which was to endure and become exacerbated along regional and national lines. Accompanying the expansion of the emergency number system were complaints received by the Home Office about the slowness of the service, both in regard to geographical distinctions and in relation to the actual process of dialing. As Assistant Commissioner of Metropolitan Police Robert Mark wrote to D.J. Trevelyan of the Home Office in 1967, although the system worked "remarkably well in the Metropolitan Police District" (London) there had been "complaints in the United Kingdom generally" due to callers not realizing that they might be talking to emergency call operators located at exchanges distant from their neighborhood, or even in another city.[33] These operators could frequently be unfamiliar with local addresses, and callers already in a state of panic struggled to understand why they needed to answer basic questions about where they were calling from or repeat answers multiple times.

This issue was compounded by the reportedly limited audibility over certain long-distance telephone lines. The combination of delays from answering operators' questions and the difficulties in hearing them generated an average response time in Kent of approximately 6.4 minutes or more between the caller dialing the number and an emergency service arriving.[34] Admittedly, this was still fast; however it was noted in a memo by the Metropolitan Police's Communications Branch of August 1967 that there <u>was</u> some variation in emergency service response time outside London, due to inconsistent levels of staffing in regional call centers.[35] In addition, since only 22% of British households owned their own telephone by 1965, with the cost remaining largely prohibitive for the working and lower-middle classes, most callers

already had to spend precious minutes getting to their nearest public phone box before making the call, significantly heightening their sense of frustration. [36]

Northern Ireland was the worst hit by the slow implementation of the emergency number service. Towns like Dunamanagh, in the province of Ulster were still waiting to receive it in 1956.[37] Where the service was available in the country, there was disruption to the speed at which calls were answered, a theme that transpired in Home Office correspondence with the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in May 1954. At this time, the Chief Constable was instructed to direct police officers to swap the term "Urgent Police Call" for "Police Flash Call" when dialing 999, in order "to ensure that the call is given special attention and connected as quickly as possible without question," implying that this had not been achieved to date.[38] As the correspondence made clear, these frustrations were largely blamed on the Home Office, who were cited as making a "slip-up" in a letter to District Inspector of Belfast J.E. Reid by failing to alert him previously of new procedures to accelerate the calls, underlining the divide between the service in Belfast and that offered to residents in England.[39]

This must have struck police in Northern Ireland forcefully as they struggled to contain successive violent protests and bombing incidents that greeted Orange marches through Catholic areas of County Down during 1952-1956, while their counterparts across the water were mainly occupied with catching black market profiteers and policing youthful promiscuity in nightclubs.[40] Indeed public faith in the Royal Ulster Constabulary was generally uncertain at the best of times, since as Joanne Klein remarks they were dogged by suspicions about whether police served the public or constituted a para-military force. This was exacerbated by their being armed, unlike police forces elsewhere in the United Kingdom.[41]

The comparative calm in England did not stop people complaining about the speed of the service, however. Between the years 1945 and 1966 the Metropolitan Police received fifty-six letters from members of the public asking if "999" might be changed to "111" or a single-letter

code, which, on the then-popular model of telephone with a spherical dialing face, would be much quicker and quieter to ring.[42] As Mr. Thorburn wrote to the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police in 1961,

In fact in a real emergency of burglary etc. you might get knocked out before you completed the 999, whereas you might well get the 111 off before this happened. Of course just dialling 1 would be quickest of all but this might not suit the telephone people. After all there is a good old legal maxim saying that time is the essence of the contract. I am a retired solicitor and chiefly defended in criminal cases.[43]

Here, police duty to attend in an emergency was articulated explicitly in terms of a "contract" between state and society, inferring that the state, through its own technological failures, was in part responsible for what the criminal could achieve in the interval between a homeowner reaching the telephone and a police officer arriving in the home. Other letters echoed this theme, imagining various situations in which a criminal might prevent 999 being successfully rung, occasionally with a rather dry sense of humor: "…the victim who is tied hand and foot and manages to wriggle his big toe free might have a chance of dialing 111 when he could not attempt 999! (On the assumption his attackers had not cut the wire)," wrote Lieutenant Commander Robert Wilson in June 1946.[44] Some correspondents were provoked into writing by contemporary cinema. As Dr E.C. Parker Williams outlined in his letter of February 1965 "one only has to watch thriller films" to appreciate the "considerable time and quite an appreciable amount of noise it takes to Dial 9… with a possible intruder in the adjoining part of the house."[45] Indeed, prior to Williams' letter this scenario had featured as a plot device in

popular crime films *The Blue Lamp* (1950), *Nowhere to Go* (1958), and *The Painted Smile* (1962).[46] The criminal possibilities presented by the likelihood of delays in contacting police on the telephone even became the hallmark of television series *Dial 999* (screened on the ITV channel during 1958-1959).[47] Images used to advertise the program foregrounded the interrupted telephone call in their visualizations of the murder of a respectable-looking office worker (Figure 2) and an imminent attack on a young, attractive woman by an armed robber (Figure 3).

Although unable to transfer the number to "111" due to technicians advising it would entail a greater likelihood of accidental calls, the Metropolitan Police faced something of a quandary over how to appease the demand for accelerated access to the 999 service by the early 1960s.[48] This quandary was magnified when the American District Telegraph (ADT) security company offered to mount a widespread installation of their burglar alarms across London in return for what they promised would be far more direct (and purportedly, reliable) control over the emergency number telephone wires in place of the General Post Office. In their 1961 correspondence about ADT, who were always referred to as "The Americans," the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police expressed concerns that allowing ADT to intersect their anti-burglary devices with the 999 telephone wires meant they would take over five current direct lines to the Information Room at Scotland Yard, one of which originated at Windsor Castle and another at the Bank of England.[49] The Commissioners conceded they should allow ADT to do so if they could maximize communications between police and public, while voicing reservations about the "sales talk and propaganda for which Americans are famous"; additionally, they insisted that ADT staff in London should predominantly be British subjects.[50] It appeared that Scotland Yard's willingness to extend its services through the highest bidder was checked when confronted by a blurring of national boundaries for purposes of domestic regulation. Challenging the character of the police force as an arm of the state or a

commodity subject to global market forces, the American bid to coordinate the emergency number system and in so doing, garner a swifter police response and market for their security devices proved irreconcilable with the well-publicized idea that the system forged a direct link between state and citizen. Hence, when terminating the contract with ADT in 1962 after just one year, it was significant that the Metropolitan Police insisted that they operate central stations like other companies to access 999 and discontinue their direct line into Scotland Yard, writing to ADT that in choosing to end their relationship "due regard was paid to the important question of police responsibilities to the public as a whole."[51]

As the following section will show, questions about citizenship lay at the heart of how access to the emergency number was negotiated during the slow and hard-fought campaign for its integration in America after 1967. Engaging a grassroots movement of local, institutional, and political activism for the service on a scale that eclipsed the quiet grumblings of discontent in Britain, its architects drew negative comparisons between the kind of progressive social welfare — indeed, the kind of society — in Britain that the emergency number system connoted and the 'self-interested' political and civic culture of America.

II

The problems of crime bring us together. Even as we join in common action, we know there can be no instant victory. Ancient evils do not yield to easy conquest … We must, with equal resolve, seek out new knowledge, new techniques, and new understanding.

Message from President Lyndon B. Johnson to Congress, 9 March 1966, cited as

preface to *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (1967).

In July 1965 President Johnson, a Democrat whose presidency was distinguished by a program of domestic social welfare reforms known under the political slogan "The Great Society," established a new Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. Its remit was to investigate the incidence of crime across all fifty states of America, reviewing the actions of police, judiciary agencies, and other public institutions in the containment and prevention of crime through extensive field studies, social surveys, and interviews. Having a "liberal cast" both in ethos and methodology, the Commission notably required law enforcers and those working outside the justice system to collaborate, employing police chiefs, lawyers, journalists, and even civil rights leader Whitney Young and President of Yale University Kingman Brewster to oversee its findings.[52]

The diverse composition of the Commission reflected the scale and complexity of the problem crime represented. By 1965 property crimes had reached nearly 2.5 million annually, with the most serious offence, burglary, also being the most prevalent.[53] Fears about burglary had energized the creation of new security devices in Britain, despite the incidence of the crime being comparatively low in relation to other forms of larceny.[54] In America, it seemed, the fear was far more justified; yet a "liberal cast" still shaped the recommendations of the Commission's Report *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, finally published in 1967. Emphasizing the endurance of widespread racial discrimination and the lack of employment and education opportunities among the poor as responsible for the "plague" of crime then besetting inner city areas, the report recommended subtle environmental and technological

changes that could help — including improved street lighting, public telephones designated for emergency use, and the adoption of a single, national, emergency telephone number.[55]

The recommendation for a single national emergency number was given with explicit reference to the use of 999 in Britain, first mentioned in the *Task Force Report on Science and Technology* issued to the President's Commission in 1967 in advance of its own report. A key arm of the Commission's inquiries, the Task Force on Science and Technology consisted of a committee made up primarily of academics and businesspeople involved in international communications industries; in fact, eight of the twenty-seven strong staff were lecturers drawn variously from the Universities of California, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Rhode Island School of Design.[56] The willingness of committee members to recognize the success of policing strategies used in other countries can therefore be attributed to its academic mentality and international, outward-facing aspect. As the committee admitted in the preface to its report, "the Task Force staff of scientists and engineers had little prior knowledge of criminal justice operations," and had therefore turned for advice to the International Association of Chiefs of Police as well as the Agency for International Development.[57]

This was, in fact, a golden age of international cooperation and exchange on matters of crime prevention and social welfare. Ideas and models of policing were shared between seventy-two countries, as well as forty-five organizations including the International Penal and Penitentiary Foundation and International Law Association, through the quinquennial United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime, instituted in 1955. At the third Congress in 1965, focused on the social and environmental causes of juvenile offending and its impact, delegates collectively agreed that greater community participation in policing behavior offered the best solution (the Secretariat also presented a seventy-page working paper to this effect).[58] Given the fracturing of communities caused by urbanization, blamed on the sheer weight of

population leading to greater anonymity and less local or familial supervision of youths, the Congress concluded that initiatives to encourage community intervention should be engineered at a national level.[59] Though not mentioned explicitly, the emergency number system as deployed in the United Kingdom mirrored these principles, anticipating the rhetoric surrounding calls for its integration in America and thereby framing the transnational circulation of idea and technology.

Certainly, when outlining the problems then facing America with regard to emergency communications between police and public the analysis offered in the *Task Force Report* echoed the concerns which had earlier prevailed in Britain:

> When trying to call police from an ordinary telephone, a person is faced with a bewildering array of police jurisdictions and associated telephone numbers. In the Los Angeles area alone, there are 50 different telephone numbers that reach police departments within Los Angeles County. It should be possible to use a single telephone number to reach the appropriate police department (or some other emergency center) directly. Great Britain has such a universal emergency number, "999."[60]

The *Report* similarly highlighted delays in calls reaching the operator due to the sheer volume of traffic in competing (non-emergency) phone calls, as well as the economic and commercial implications of introducing an emergency number for both citizen and telephone companies; "The victim of a robber careful enough to steal his last dime cannot now use the public telephone. …Adapting [police] callboxes to permanent public use would, *at a little cost*, double

the number of available locations from which citizens could notify the police of observed street crimes or auto accidents [my italics]."[61]

The Task Force's recommendations, therefore, were alive both to the practical limitations on the current telephone system's operation and the ways in which the cost of using public telephones favored neither victims of crime nor the poor, who did not have access to either public or domestic telephones under the current conditions. The police were also left at a disadvantage by their technological isolation from citizens calling for help. As David Sklansky observes, the new post-war "wave" of police reformers "viewed the public through the lens of consumerism, as a market that was and should be cultivated and directed."[62] Correspondingly, the aims of reformers were to encourage police to "sell themselves" through professionalizing and standardizing the service they offered — including, as the Task Force Report made clear, by halving the time it took to respond in an emergency and thereby significantly improving arrest rates.

Forcing wealthy telephone companies such as American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) to cooperate, at the expense of their profit margins, with the creation of a tariff-free national emergency number scheme further dovetailed neatly with the climate of middle-class political support for the regulation of big business in the public interest.[63] Aligned with a new phase of consumer advocacy then animating the professional and managerial classes and led by prominent political lobbyist Ralph Nader, this shift in attitudes was made manifest in Congress passing measures including the 1970 Clean Air Act and Occupational Safety and Health Act during the first year of Republican Richard Nixon's presidency.[64] Thus Lyndon Johnson's earlier call for public and politicians to "join in common action" against crime appeared prescient, anticipating how his liberal welfare reforming agenda would transform into a broader mandate for activism in support of new citizen-led policing strategies.

Among the earliest, and most significant, to take up the mantle was Congressman John Edward Roush, Democrat Representative of Huntington, Indiana. On 10 August 1967 Commissioner of Metropolitan Police in London, Sir Joseph Simpson, received a letter from his Chief Superintendent of Communications remarking that "It is interesting to note that as recently as a fortnight ago an enquiry was received from U.S. Congressman J. Edward Roush as to the operational efficiency of the '999' system as steps are currently being taken with a view to offering the United States public a standardized system."[65] Roush, who cited this correspondence in press articles publicizing his campaign for an American equivalent, began generating support for a three-digit emergency number when *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* was still hot off the press.[66] In preparation for a *Parade Magazine* article he bluntly entitled "Dial 999: This number is the one you call for firemen or police anywhere in England. We need a similar system here" published on 17 September 1967, Roush claimed to have already recruited nearly 40 police and fire chiefs across the country to his cause.[67] Although this particular phase of correspondence is not archived, familiarity with Roush's papers lends it credence. Roush, a prolific and persistent letter-writer, sent 230 letters to the mayors of cities and towns throughout the nation during January 1972 alone requesting they agitate for 911 (the number agreed with AT&T) to be introduced in their locality.[68] Subsequently, from 1973 to 1975 Roush personally introduced nine Bills, and four Resolutions, to Congress calling for funds to support the establishment of 911 nationally as amendments to existing legislation on Communications and Federal support for local government, which stalled at the Committee stage. Additionally, he offered his support to a further six Bills introduced along the same lines by other Congressmen (also stalled).[69]

Roush's reasons for championing the campaign were made clear in his widely-reprinted article for the *Readers Digest* in 1968.[70] Recalling numerous incidents (including a recent fire in a nursing home) when the existence of a three-digit emergency number would have saved

lives or property, Roush despaired that certain telephone companies still refused to believe the service was "really wanted." Dragging their heels even further, AT&T had quoted a figure of $50 million to install the service nationally. This meant, Roush explained, that

> No community will get 911 unless it asks for it. A little gentle pressure will probably be needed to get the emergency services in your town to cooperate. So, if you want the service, write your municipal or county officials, your local phone company, and any state officials who regulate utilities. Remember, the initiative for getting better emergency phone service must come from each community.[71]

Roush was not merely rabble-rousing. At stake in the campaign to acquire 911 nationally were not only citizens' lives, but America's reputation as a socially- and technologically- advanced country on the domestic and international stage. An article in *Life Magazine* of March 1968 stated scathingly that "the wonder of it all is that it took the nation with half the phones in the world until 1968 to decide that the traditional means for reporting emergencies are close to anarchy."[72]

The Cold War also scripted this perceived crisis. According to historian Deborah Nelson, in the political and cultural discourse of the United States during the late 1950s and 1960s the well-publicized rhetoric of American protection of the 'sanctity' of homes and citizens' autonomy was frequently juxtaposed *against* the omnipresent forms of state surveillance identified with communist Russia.[73] 911 could be viewed as similarly interventionist; therefore its proponents had to find ways to align the system with cultural icons and achievements antagonistic to Russia. Sub-titled "007 done in by 911?," the *Life Magazine*

article suggested the emergency number might eclipse the famed numerical signifier of fictional British spy James Bond, a Cold War hero then employed in rescuing his country from disaster on cinema screens globally, hinting that 911 could achieve similar status as national "savior."[74] Similarly in 1972, Roush used a speech to the State, Commerce, Justice, and Judiciary Sub-Committee to contrast the lack of a nationwide emergency number with the "irony of the Apollo 14 crew's successful mission to the moon," effectively situating it as a goal alongside America's triumph over Russia in the space race.[75]

Space also provided the discursive context to identify 911 as a form of consumer interaction with state and market, rather than citizens having the system forced upon them unwillingly. Addressing the House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Public Health and Environment in 1973, Roush spoke of his campaign for 911 being "stimulated" when, as a member of the Science and Astronautics Committee during the 1960s, "we discussed the uses of technology for consumer need."[76] Here, by explicitly talking of citizens as consumers whilst couching the system in terms of a "need," Roush cleverly assuaged any political antipathy towards the emergency number as "socialist"; government action was required to make it available in response to a market "demand," driven by the country's technological advancement.[77]

Others, however, were less optimistic than Roush of negotiating the complex national, state, and local political agendas to bring the emergency number into being. In April 1970, the *New York Times* contrasted the British embrace of the number by its emergency services as "as a public duty" with the United States, where "most large cities have resisted adopting the '911' emergency number. These cities, including Los Angeles and Philadelphia, fear that the system would delay emergency help, rather than speed it, because of jurisdictional and communications problems among police and fire agencies."[78] Suggesting that vital co-operation between emergency agencies was impeded by bureaucracy and petty quarrels over

jurisdiction, the article implicitly criticized these institutions' sense of public duty as diminished in relation to their British counterparts. The sense of embarrassment and frustration was also aired from within the agencies themselves. "The concept [of the three-digit number] is not new or beyond present-day-state-of-the-art technologies," fumed a reporter on the slow implementation of 911 in the *International Fire Chief* journal in May 1973, before listing off emergency numbers in use in England, Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and Japan.[79]

To modify the argument of historian Jonathan Bell, therefore, those on the American right who were unwilling to endorse the social welfare programs gaining currency in post-war Europe did not always accrue political capital from this stance. Instead, the nascent emergency number system formed one unusually concrete product of the outward-facing, internationalist liberal agenda for social democracy based on greater state intervention that otherwise struggled to gain purchase in America during this era.[80] An important feature of Roush's campaign was, however, his solicitation of a much broader base of grassroots support than merely targeting fellow politicians. In seeking to obtain the new service, students at Tennessee University, the Washington Council of Governments (an independent association of elected leaders of local governments), the United Methodist Churches of Mishawaka, the Central Labor Council of Texas, and the National Retired Teachers Association all corresponded with Roush.[81] Declaring their willingness to sponsor the 911 campaign, they asked for advice on pressuring telephone companies and politicians to cooperate in allocating funding.

Similarly, in February 1972 Roush was contacted covertly in a letter addressed from "Several police officers of Decatur, Indiana," applauding the "fantastic" system that in their opinion would "greatly increase the efficiency of the safety for the public." Certain that they could acquire funding after the recent election of a Democrat Mayor to replace their city's previous Republican incumbent — inferring their alignment of the service with the Democrat politics of welfarism — the officers were thwarted by their Chief of Police, who "doesn't seem

to be interested in the idea, or anything else for that matter."[82] Such efforts in the cause of acquiring the new technology to enhance "efficiency of safety" for the public, potentially at the risk of their jobs for some, indicates how Roush forged a nexus of shared political, social, and consumer interests between these disparate groups, channeling political energy between the three domains.

The success of these maneuvers was recorded in a survey by the General Telephone Company, a competitor of AT&T. "As of August 1973," the survey reported, "320 '911' systems were currently in service serving more than 22,000,000 people. Sixty of these systems were operated by independent telephone companies."[83] Indeed, the spread of the service was all the more remarkable in light of a subsequent report issued by the esteemed Franklin Institute Research Laboratories the following year, monitoring the progress of legislation on 911. Despite receiving returns from all states, only five had enacted legislation to provide a three-digit emergency number service and of these "only one, California, can be truly said to have developed and passed comprehensive 911 legislation." The report therefore concluded that although "communities" had managed to organize with local councils and telephone companies for 911 to be implemented, "few states have taken the initiative to ensure that any individual, at any time, anywhere within the state, will have access to a single emergency telephone number."[84]

Despite this apparent triumph of grassroots liberal welfarist activism, however — and Roush's own political party affiliation — consideration must be given to the fact that the demand for the 911 system grew in a context of heightened racial tensions after the assassination of Martin Luther King in Tennessee in 1968, and the widespread rioting and incidents of interracial violence in impoverished inner city areas that followed.[85] In a March 1969 article criticizing the slow implementation of 911 as a national emergency number entitled "What's the Hang-Up?" a journalist for the *Tulsa World* newspaper of Oklahoma had

joked "A person in emergency trouble needs help, now! …Would a Democrat refuse to ask for help from a Republican in an emergency? Would a white person refuse aid from a Negro?"[86] Yet in reality, the opportunities and "right" for African Americans and marginalized ethnic groups to obtain equivalent access to the service (where it existed) was protean and vulnerable, limited practically by the uneven distribution of telephone access.

Claude S. Fischer notes that during the early decades of the twentieth century, the telephone companies largely "shunned" targeting African American or recent immigrant communities, particularly excluding black farmers in the Deep South and those living in urban centers from their marketing campaigns.[87] This was due to the poverty of these groups and to enduring cultural assumptions about their ability to negotiate the technology, which made the companies "dismissive" of them as "unlikely customers."[88] Fischer's statistical analysis of telephone subscription rates does, however, lead him to suggest that "By 1970, however, all but the poorest few percent of American households had telephones, more than had automobiles."[89]

However, a slightly different picture emerges when one examines the data on access (rather than subscription) to telephones, an important distinction given that many poorer families were tenants living within rented property rather than homeowners. Data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) collated by researchers at the University of Minnesota from census data and population surveys suggests that between 1960 and 1970, the access of black Americans to telephones remained overwhelmingly restricted within the Southern states of Virginia, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Texas, Arizona, and Kentucky (Table 1). This data is consistent with Fischer's earlier assessment of the economic and cultural factors informing telephone companies' racially-exclusive operation in these states. In addition, correspondence between Roush and Mayor J.J. Underwood of Columbia, Tennessee (copied to six of Tennessee's other

Republican representatives) revealed some political resistance to funding the emergency number system as a free service in this region. As Underwood wrote bluntly to Roush in March 1972, "Why in the name of Heaven and hell should the Federal government pick up a tab for a telephone service in matters of this character? I think your proposal for the allocation of Federal funds in regard to this matter is both ridiculous and asinine."[90]

The rapid adoption of 911 across America during the early 1970s did not, therefore, signal a closer relationship between state emergency agencies and all citizens; nor did the grassroots consumer activism the system engendered mitigate existing social and racial tensions. Exclusions or restrictions from telephone use merely entrenched another arm of the historic inequalities of access along racial lines to the emergency services. As Underwood's reaction indicated, local politics played a significant role in the extent to which 911 was integrated. Unlike Britain's centralized policy-making mechanisms, America's criminal justice system relied on local government to allocate funds to the police service, and locally-elected officials, prosecutors, and judges to decide where that money was best spent. The politics of race could easily become more pronounced in this model, since as William Stuntz argues it was easier (and cheaper) for local governments to appease voters simply by escalating the numbers they imprisoned — following existing models of racial profiling — rather than enhance their methods of policing.[91]

This approach had a long-established history. In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois identified how the "color line" extended not just to schools but also to "asylums and jails, hospitals and graveyards," to the latter of which African Americans were frequently refused entry.[92] Police, ambulance, and fire remained slow or unresponsive to the needs of ethnic minority communities throughout the twentieth century, the health system operating exclusion in more subtle ways via "market forces" of medical insurance creating what historians have described as a "tiered" system of "haves and have-nots" particularly detrimental to African Americans.[93]

More glaringly, while police were reluctant to assist ethnic minority groups, disproportionate arrest and execution rates of black Americans for various forms of crime flourished during the early 1970s, an incidence particularly pronounced in the Southern states.[94]

In this light, one can reasonably speculate that the 911 system was more likely to be used as a form of surveillance against these marginalized groups rather than operated by them (despite the unfortunate paucity of statistics on the social breakdown of 911 calls in this period). As Daniel Frick and Mark Hamilton Lyttle observe respectively, the "law and order" agenda on which Nixon swept to power in 1969 — transforming the previously Democratic votes of the South into a Republican stronghold — had an "unambiguous racial cast."[95] Indeed among Nixon's early policies was the District of Columbia Court Reorganization Act (known as the D.C. Crime Bill), which targeted the "heavily black and crime ridden" capital city by enabling judges to detain suspects in jail for sixty days before trial, and gave police powers to enter homes without a search warrant.[96] Supposed to act as a nationwide model of policing, the D.C. Crime Bill served to establish "middle-class, white America," as those whose interests the police were mandated to protect in reality. Black Americans' inability to access state services from a comparable position to whites was further reinforced by discrimination within Federal housing policy, as revealed by the Kerner Commission Report of 1968. The Report showed that Federal housing benefits were largely allotted on a basis of racial preference, with policymakers and estate agents working to ensure the continued segregation of the urban black population through "zoning" them into areas outside the suburbs, generating "persistent segregative disadvantage in education, employment, security, and residence."[97]

While reports such as Kerner's highlighted ongoing discrimination, political tensions over funding for the 911 system, now firmly situated within a package of welfare reforms, continued to restrict its access in deprived areas. In March 1973, Roush had elicited a National Policy Statement on 911 from Nixon to the effect that the Administration would 'urge its

nationwide implementation' by applying pressure to Federal departments to assist those communities who demanded its introduction.[98] Although this was a significant concession in regard to the principle of facilitating universal access to the service, Nixon stopped short of elevating it to the status of a civil right by refraining from establishing a fixed funding regime. In August 1973, Roush's latest attempt to obtain funding for 911 by inserting it into a clause of the Emergency Medical Services Bill that would have poured $185 million into improving the condition of hospitals and other emergency medical equipment, including communications, was stymied yet again when Nixon used his Presidential veto to scupper the Bill.[99] Amidst publicized outcry from Senators including Edward Kennedy and Alan Cranston (who was quoted in the *Congressional Record* stating "I challenge the President's priorities. I would by far prefer to spend millions of dollars to save lives than continue to spend billions of dollars in military operations that destroy lives"), Roush authored a press release highlighting the broad base of support for a three-digit emergency number system.[100]

Denouncing the President's veto as "an absolute shame," Roush commented "many health, labor, and senior citizens' groups worked hard to get the bill passed. Perhaps most vocal in support of the bill were veterans' groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars."[101] Despite cleverly aligning the failed emergency services funding with the President's misguided military strategy in Vietnam, and offering the specter of Nixon's denunciation by war veterans as a new political blow on the eve of the Watergate scandal, Roush was unable to secure a commitment for Federal funding. Nevertheless, Roush had established a grassroots agenda for the service to be made nationwide. In 1999, approximately 68 million Americans had access to it.[102] This was a remarkable achievement given that the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act (or "911 Act") passed into law by President Bill Clinton again failed to mandate federal funding for it, whilst reaffirming 911 as the national emergency number.[103]

The gradual implementation of 911 in America both serves to challenge the "Americanization" thesis that characterizes much of the literature on post-war international relations, and starkly illustrates how the three-digit emergency number brought into dialogue a diverse range of political, institutional, and local interest groups and actors. America was not unique in this respect. One can similarly look to the experience of New Zealand when exploring these themes. In 1958 New Zealand was among the first countries to introduce an emergency number, 111, after the Second World War. Given the country's colonial history, and enduring cultural, political, and economic ties to Britain despite declaring itself independent in 1947, its swift imitation of Britain's emergency communications might appear inevitable.[104] New Zealand has even been credited, along with Britain, as the social democratic "experiment" from which American liberals took greatest inspiration when advocating for universal cradle-to-grave social security and healthcare.[105] However, New Zealand's telecommunications and information technology systems were increasingly targeted by American exports during the post-war period. As James Belich notes, this framed a perceived Americanization of popular culture and industry in the country that could have led to a hostile commercial landscape for introducing an emergency number system along British lines.[106]

Additionally, the early 1950s witnessed fierce debates about police powers to intervene into private life, amid a turbulent period of strikes on the part of miners and dockyard workers that led to a number of civil liberties being temporarily suspended under Conservative Prime Minister Sidney Holland.[107] The 1951 Watersiders strikes created what Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow describe as "a virtual police state," wherein the government declared a state of emergency, suspended freedom of speech and the press, and used police to raid the homes and underground meeting places of those involved in the strike.[108] Yet despite the furor that ensued,

public support for police may well have been restored by the late 1950s, when rates of recorded crime began to increase (they would do so sharply from the 1960s until the 1990s) to similar levels to those found in England. Troublingly, car thefts and assaults rose alongside petty crimes such as theft. Although a society that prided itself on its reputation for being "open" and "welcoming," New Zealanders took a historically dim view of those who threatened its social cohesion (including immigrants), erring on the side of imprisonment for even minor crimes.[109] Keen to secure the "crime free paradise" to which its national identity clung, the time was ripe to discover new systems for maintaining this record of swift discipline.

Accordingly, in 1957, on the cusp of a new Labor government being elected under Prime Minister Walter Nash, the General Post Office (which like Britain controlled New Zealand's telephone exchanges) released a *Technical Report on the Emergency Services* calling for a single emergency number. Within its recommendations, it highlighted three domestic developments that such a number would address:

4.1 The rapid growth of population and the general development of the country enhance the need for prompt and efficient Emergency Services.

4.2 The influx of different nationalities into the country and the speed of modern transport no doubt adds to the problems of policing the country.

4.3 The increasing mobility of the population and faster transport also trends towards a higher accident rate and to more accidents external to the home. Demands for ambulance services will no doubt increase.[110]

The General Post Office's argument therefore coalesced on the advantages to the relationship between citizens and all three emergency services, rather than focusing primarily on the police as had been the case in Britain and America. Certainly, in light of the recent tensions between police and citizens, it was noteworthy that the Report chose to emphasize how the emergency number would augment the efficiency of the ambulance and also the fire service, subsequently commenting that "Fire services, as always, play a part in national welfare and economy which is ever increasingly important."[111] Thus the domestic and tourist economy was pinioned on improved emergency communications, encompassing the attractions of an enhanced citizenry newly equipped to protect one another — and visitors — through the emergency number. Accordingly, in 1958 the new emergency 111 system was rolled out in urban centers of Masterton and Carterton in the Wellington region on the north island, with explicit reference to the British model on which it was based. As a memo to the Chief postmaster of Christchurch dated 1967 explained, "The number 111 on New Zealand telephone dials is … equivalent to '999' on United Kingdom telephone dials," a deciding factor in the number's selection that, having little practical application (its position, on the country's reversed dials, taking the longest time to ring), laid bare an astonishing tactile and material homage to the system's originator.[112] Consequently New Zealand's citizens would, the memo continued, accrue "precisely the same advantages" as British citizens in terms of speed of emergency agencies' response and citizens' ability to remember the number easily; by implication, also sharing in their reputation as a model of democratic social welfarism.[113]

New Zealand thereby demonstrated an extraordinary concern to openly share an emergency response system identified with its former colonizer internationally even as America's "Market Empire" gained ascendancy.[114] It would not do to overstate this homage as "subordination," however, and again it is worth considering this interaction in the context of transnational exchange since, like the United States, New Zealand participated vocally in the

UN Congresses on Crime Prevention and like many other countries at the third Congress, was seeking ways to enhance community participation in crime prevention and public safety. Indeed, the General Post Office's integration of 111 extolled the system as necessary for meeting everyday dangers particular to modern ways of living in New Zealand with particular reference to the growth of tourism and managing rural access to fire services.[115] Yet, as in the United Kingdom and later on in America, this somewhat overestimated the evenness of infrastructure for 111 across the country, notably on the basis of wealth (in relation to domestic telephone subscription). As one specialist at a conference for the Institution of Fire Engineers commented in February 1959, the integration of the emergency number into public telephones

> …brings the Emergency Service out of the restricted scope of the home and the office onto the street … each [telephone] will therefore in due course become a potential alarm point for the local pedestrian, for the passing traveller and for those unfortunate people (who we hope will eventually be very few) who do not have a 'phone at home.[116]

Those "unfortunate" people were indeed likely to struggle with the new system given the ratio of domestic phone ownership to public telephones at this time; the former was estimated at 480,000 while the latter numbered just 2,850 in total throughout New Zealand's streets.[117] Thus a disproportionate number of those able to afford a telephone subscription could immediately claim swifter access to emergency services than those reliant on pay phones. This situation became even more pronounced following the initial concentration on using the emergency number to bulwark the country's economic prosperity, which meant that whereas urban centers

such as Wellington, Invercargill, Timaru, and Hamilton were swiftly equipped with the system, by the late 1960s access in certain rural areas remained patchy or non-existent.[118]

For example in May 1975 the residents of Kirwee, a township on the outskirts of Christchurch, in collaboration with the Federated Farmers' Association (which was agitating independently for access to the emergency number across Springfield, Sheffield, Hororata, Darfield, and Kirwee), petitioned the General Post Office for access to the service.[119] The petition was signed by 118 residents of Kirwee, identifying themselves variously as "housewife," "catering assistant," "teacher's aide," and "farmer," to "driver," "engineer" and "garage proprietor," demonstrating a confluence of interests across gender and profession.[120] Here, cooperation had been engendered by a recent tragedy involving the death of a child in a road traffic accident, for which police and medical services had arrived too late due to inconsistent telephone coverage in the area and lack of access to 111. "Feelings in Kirwee are very high and a determination exists to find a solution," wrote the Secretary of Kirwee Township in official correspondence.[121] This was no temporary alliance of interests. A further four years of public meetings and petitions were required to secure from Chief Postmaster J.C. Smith an update to the emergency service communications system, which was characterized as "efficient" and "the standard call-out system designed for rural automatic exchanges," in his investigation of the Kirwee township's claims.[122] Finally obtaining the service for the entire Darfield toll group in 1979, it was the threat of press publicity and a Ministerial Enquiry after eliciting the involvement of Minister for Transportation C.A.A. McLachlan that forced the General Post Office's hand.[123] The sustained and contested nature of this campaign, however small the scale in comparison to that in America, nevertheless reveals chinks in the universality of New Zealand's post-war welfare apparatus that tested public expectations and encouraged political activism.[124] Noting in 1977 that of the forty-five telephone toll groups in the country, eleven were still awaiting the 111 service, a report circulating within the General Post Office

commented nervously that due "to the general expectation by the public that the Emergency '111' Service is available throughout New Zealand, it is important that the scheme be extended and introduced in other areas."[125]

The experience of New Zealand thereby demonstrates the distinctive pressures brought to bear on individual countries' implementation of the three-digit emergency number system, as well as the way in which the chronology of its integration can act as a register for the strength of demand for intervention between local communities and state institutions. Consequently, the adoption of the emergency number in non-European contexts cannot be caricatured into a narrative of either Britain or America wresting a kind of cultural or commercial imperialism from the British Empire's demise. Instead, historians should consider citizens' ability and desire to "call for help" as an opportunity to re-think the impact of transnational systems of regulation in constituting the relationship between citizen and state at the level of the local and domestic.

Conclusion

Research into the deployment of the three-digit emergency number system in the United Kingdom, United States of America, and New Zealand during the middle decades of the twentieth century thus reveals how welfarism — in the form of the government assisting citizens to safeguard against crime, fire, or injury using the telephone — was married with progressively technocratic and commercialized forms of collaborative surveillance. Although the service retained its aspect as part of the apparatus of social democracy, its implementation within these countries served to reveal, and reinforce, fracture lines in the relationship between the state and certain citizens. The inconsistent provision of the number for the economically-deprived and those considered racially 'other' demonstrates the limits of social welfare in this

era, whilst it also served to channel political agency and energy within members of those groups who cooperated to agitate for equivalent access to state emergency agencies. Notably in the case of America, the long-standing resistance of successive Presidents and Congressional Committees to legislate for uniform national funding for the scheme ironically served to incubate a persistent, albeit localized, mass movement of consumer activists for it, coupled with ongoing political agitation at a local and national level. The sustained demand for a system explicitly identified as British in origin and frequently, ethos, also supports the growing historiographical rejection of "Americanization" as a coherent model for understanding the politics of consumption and citizenship in the post-war period. Instead, "calling for help" on the telephone through the emergency number circulated via a transnational exchange of this model of telecommunications, accompanied by geographically- and historically-specific interpretations of "active" forms of citizenship, that have endured into the twenty-first century.

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[1] "International Numbering Resources Database," International Telecommunications Union, online at http://www.itu.int/net/itu-t/inrdb/e129_important_numbers.aspx accessed March 27 2015. "112" is also available in Britain, though it has not superseded "999".

[2] Sarah Manwaring-White, *The Policing Revolution: Police Technology, Democracy and Liberty in Britain*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1983), 19; Chris Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain 1775-1975: From Parish Constable to National Computer* (Manchester, 2014), 162.

[3] Chris Moores, "Thatcher's Troops?: Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and Ordinary Thatcherism in 1980s Britain," (forthcoming, *Contemporary British History*). My thanks to Chris for allowing me to cite him here. This emphasis on reciprocity in regard to surveillance marks a departure from the "liberal" forms of governmentality identified with late-Victorian and Edwardian measures to combat crime, orientated around environmental regulation such as street lighting and sanitation. Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003), 144-205; Chris Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago, 2008), 173-213. On the origins of the National Health Service see Pat Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State* ([1982] London, 2016), 218-220.

[4] Richard Hornsey, "'Everything is Made of Atoms': The Reprogramming of Space and Time in Post-war London," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34, no.1 (2008): 94-117.

[5] Indiana University Archives (IUA), Roush Papers box 105 file 2, John Edward Roush, "911- A Hotline for Emergencies," *Readers Digest*, October 13, 1968.

[6] "Young Black Men Killed by US Police at Highest Rate in Year of 1,134 deaths," *Guardian*, December 31, 2015, accessed July 9 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men; "Five Dallas Officers Were Killed as Payback, Police Chief Says," *New York Times,* July 8 2016, accessed 9 July, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/09/us/dallas-police-shooting.html?_r=0; "Charlotte Protests: Governor of North Carolina Declares State of Emergency," *Guardian*, September 22, 2016, accessed October 13, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/22/charlotte-protests-north-carolina-governor-declares-state-of-emergency; "Activists Channel Anger After Latest Tulsa Police Shooting of Unarmed Black Man," *Guardian*, September 21, 2016, accessed October 13, 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/21/terence-crutcher-police-shooting-tulsa-activists-anger; "Los Angeles Police Release Video of Fatal Shooting; Say Man Had Gun," *New York Times*, October 4, 2016, accessed October 13, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/05/us/la-police-release-video-of-fatal-shooting-of-man-say-he-had-a-gun.html?_r=0.

[7] Jennifer D. Carlson, "'I Don't Dial 911': American Gun Politics and the Problem of Policing," *British Journal of Criminology* 52, no. 6 (2012): 1113-1132.

[8] Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th-Century Europe* (Harvard, 2005); Felicity Barnes, *New Zealand's London: A Colony and its Metropolis* (Auckland, 2012).

[9] Tamson Pietsch, "Rethinking the British World," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2 (2013): 441-463.

[10] C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review*, 111 no. 5 (2006), 1441-1464.

[11] Erik van der Vleuten, "Towards a Transnational History of Technology: Meanings, Promises, Pitfalls," *Technology and Culture*, 49 no. 4 (2008), 984-6.

[12] Peter P. Ten Eyck, "Dial 911 and Report a Congressional Empty Promise: The Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999," *Federal Communications Law Journal,* 53, (2001-2): 54-5.

[13] Liz Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003), 216-228.

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