

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes findings of two complementary studies, examining relationships between employment and crime: a survey of 900 Brooklyn defendants and an extended ethnographic study of youths in three high-risk Brooklyn neighborhoods. Both studies describe the education, employment and crime activities of respondents and explore ways in which these activities interact. Age and community of residence emerged as central variables, influencing the quality and extent of employment as well as the type and frequency of criminal involvements. Older respondents generally had more and better work than younger respondents; they also had lower rates of arrest for income-oriented crime over a three year period. Distinctive types of employment and crime activities were characteristic of different study neighborhoods and seemed to reflect neighborhood specific structures of opportunity for high-risk youth. Although there was a general inverse relationship between employment and crime apparent in both studies, work appeared to have little influence on the extent of criminal involvement among young respondents; for older respondents, however, the incidence of income-oriented arrest decreased during periods of employment. Although direct effects of employment on crime were limited, indirect relationships between the two, particularly evident in contrasts between study neighborhoods, were pervasive. References.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since the early 1960s, the Vera Institute of Justice has engaged in action programs and research designed to improve the operation of the criminal justice system and the services provided to those involved with it. A number of those programs have utilized employment and vocational services of various kinds to facilitate pretrial release, to divert selected persons from criminal adjudication, to ease the transition from incarceration to independent living in the community, or to assist ex-offenders and ex-addicts in their efforts to live stable, non-criminal lives in the community. By the late 1970s, Vera's experience with such programs suggested that the assumptions which these programs made about the employment experience of their clients, the kinds of efforts needed to increase and stabilize their employment, and the anticipated impact of employment on their criminal activities were too simplistic and in need of sounder theoretical and empirical grounding.

In 1977, the National Institute of Justice made funds available for Vera to take a reflective, in-depth look at the relationships between employment and crime in all their complexity. The long-term research agenda agreed upon with NIJ for the Employment and Crime Project involved Vera in exploring these relationships through two distinct, but related, research strategies -- a survey of over 900 Brooklyn defendants and an ethnographic study of youth in three high-risk Brooklyn neighborhoods. Each of these efforts and the findings it yielded is described in separate reports available through Vera. This document summarizes a larger report that attempts to synthesize the findings from these distinct research efforts.

Because our project was a lengthy one, the list of individuals whose involvement, support and advice contributed to the production of the summary report is extensive. Special thanks are due to officials of the National Institute of Justice for recognizing the necessarily long-term nature of research on this topic and for providing both financial and scholarly assistance over a six-year period. We are grateful in particular to Dr. Bernard A. Gropper, our Project Monitor at the Institute, who provided patient and consistent support, encouragement and advice throughout the research period and during the production of our several reports. In addition, Richard Barnes, our Monitor at the Institute during the early years of the Project, provided helpful suggestions regarding our research design and literature review.

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shared their reactions to our work and guided us in our thinking about policy implications.

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Vera's Director, Michael Smith, was more than supportive of our work. He was actively involved in articulating the logic of our analyses and in relating our findings to current trends in criminal justice policy. Thanks are due also to readers within and outside of the Institute, especially Sally Hillsman, Vera's Director of Research, and Richard McGahey, formerly a member of the Project staff and now Research Associate at New York University's Urban Research Center. Their extensive, detailed reactions to the summary report in its earlier stages contributed substantially to the content and clarity of the final document.

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We are indebted equally to those who carried out the ethnographic side of the Project's research. Mercer Sullivan designed and supervised the fieldwork effort, was integrally involved in fleshing out the Project's model of employment and crime explorations among high-risk youth, collaborated in synthesizing the Project's findings, and produced the separate report on our ethnographic study. Thanks are also due to his staff of fieldworkers -- Richard Curtis, Pharoah Russ, and especially, Antonio Valderrama, whose close involvement with the La Barriada neighborhood enriched our understanding of how local settings affect employment and crime behavior.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many of the individuals arrested for property crimes are either unemployed or working at low-paying, low-skilled jobs; many have relatively erratic work histories. The employment status of such individuals appears to be related to their criminal involvement. But, in spite of more than twenty years of research, the nature of this relationship -- the way in which employment and crime affect each other in the lives of high-risk individuals -- has not been very well understood.

When the Vera Institute of Justice began planning research into the nature of the relationship between employment and crime a decade ago, the conventional wisdom held that there was a strong, direct, nearly self-evident relationship between the two activities. Although only a few aggregate studies of relationships between unemployment and crime rates could be cited in support of this belief, the influential economic model of crime, which viewed crime as resulting from a weighing of the potential returns to criminal activity against potential lost earnings due to incarceration, provided theoretical support, suggesting direct "tradeoffs" between employment and crime.¹ The combination of some early research and economic theory led to expectations of positive results from social programs attempting to reduce crime by providing employment (or income) to offenders and high-risk youth.

Today, the conventional wisdom has been reversed. Recent efforts, including our own literature review, have pointed to the inconclusiveness of aggregate studies of relationships between unemployment (and other economic factors) and crime. Some later modifications of the economic model of crime re-incorporate a moral-ethical dimension in the crime decision from sociological literature and, in addition, suggest that tradeoffs between legal income and illegal income are more

¹Findings about relationships between employment and crime in aggregate studies, program evaluations and sociological-anthropological literature are reviewed in detail in our employment-crime literature review (Thompson, Sviridoff and McElroy, 1981). This literature is far too extensive to summarize here. Interested readers are referred to Becker (1968) and Ehrlich (1973, 1979) for early formulations of the economic model of crime; to Block and Heineke (1975) for a more sophisticated formulation of the economic model of crime; to Gillespie (1975) and Orsagh and Witte (1980) for reviews of aggregate studies of employment-crime relationships; to MDRC (1982), Mallar et al. (1980), and Rossi, Berk and Lenihan (1980) for examples of program evaluations that examined employment-crime relationships; and to the Vera literature review for an overview of relevant program literature.

complex than had been suggested in the earlier version of the model. Recent social experiments have also failed to find strong impacts on either employment or crime from program interventions. Direct tradeoffs between crime and employment now appear to be far less pervasive than they were believed to be ten years ago. A presumption is growing that employment and crime are not related to one another in any important ways.

Since the early sixties, the Vera Institute had been a key proponent of the earlier view. By the mid-seventies, in reflecting on its own action programs and research (pretrial release, supported work, diversion from criminal processing featuring employment services) as well as the research of others, Vera realized that genuine improvements in the employment prospects of ex-offenders were hard to come by and that, even when they were achieved, they did not always eliminate criminal behavior. Therefore, Vera was anxious to undertake a careful investigation of the employment-crime relationship.

In late 1977, Vera received support from the Research Agreements Program of the National Institute of Justice, to undertake a long-term study of the relationship between employment and crime. In the past seven years, the Employment and Crime Project at Vera has engaged in a series of related efforts in this area.²

Although the Project's review of employment-crime literature also failed to find strong evidence of direct relationships between employment and crime, it did point to a need to focus on the behavior of individuals in concrete social settings. Not only were aggregate studies as a whole inconclusive, but also studies that did point to correlations between employment and crime could not explain the nature of the relationship between the two. Although the economic model provided an explanation of aggregate findings, pointing to a "trade off" between the two based on individual-level decision making, individual level data were not employed to test the model.

²An extensive review of the employment-crime literature (Thompson, Sviridoff and McElroy, 1981); a pilot study of employment and crime relationships in a small sample of individuals about to be released from jail (Sviridoff and Thompson, 1983); an exploration of employment and crime relationships in a survey of 902 defendants in Brooklyn, conducted in the summer of 1979 (Thompson, Cataldo and Loewenstein, 1984); a four-year ethnographic study of young people in three selected high-risk Brooklyn neighborhoods (Sullivan, 1984); and a synthesis of the Project's two extended research efforts -- the defendant survey and the ethnographic study -- that brings findings from the research to bear on central questions concerning the nature of the relationship between employment and crime (Sviridoff with McElroy, 1984).

Available individual-level studies were limited to evaluations of programs designed to intervene in the lives of known offenders; they could tell us little about employment and criminal behavior in natural settings. The literature review revealed a need to augment existing knowledge by exploring what these behaviors looked like and how they were structured apart from formal programmatic intervention.

Interest in the study of individuals within natural settings was also increased by evidence in the sociological literature that age was a uniquely important "third factor" in the employment-crime relationship (Greenberg, 1979; Glaser, 1978; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983). It is widely known that an overwhelming proportion of those arrested for property crimes are males between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. Arrests peak for many crimes in the mid-teens and dwindle rapidly thereafter. This age-related decline in arrest rates occurs during the same years in which labor force opportunities and involvements increase (Osterman, 1980; Werthman, 1967; Bullock, 1973).

Although it is now widely recognized that a decline in arrests with age is common in all areas, many sociological studies have also shown that severe and frequent delinquency and youth crime tend to be heavily concentrated in inner-city neighborhoods (Shaw and McKay, 1931; Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin, 1972). Influential theories have suggested that local variations in the structure of both legal and illegal opportunities give rise to youth subcultures whose members' deviant activities vary in both quality and quantity (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Vera's literature review indicated that an individual-level data set could facilitate an examination of the role played by a variety of factors -- age, education, family, community settings -- in shaping employment and crime activities and mediating the relationship between them.

To help design a framework for an individual-level study that would address these issues, Project staff conducted pilot interviews with sixty-one adult male misdemeanants, shortly before and after their release from New York City's Rikers Island correctional facility. This pilot study helped us to identify a variety of possible "linkages" between employment and crime exhibited in a sample of jail inmates. Although a number of respondents did report that they abstained from property crime when they had a job, others used income from crime as a supplement to income from employment. Still others used income from employment as an economic stake for drug sales or other illegitimate economic activity. Although the overwhelming majority of respondents were not employed when arrested, it was clear that the interaction between work and crime was far more complex than the conventional assumption that they were mutually exclusive alternatives.

Comparison of the Rikers Island interviews with similar exploratory interviews conducted with a younger group of defendants suggested further that the linkages between employment and crime characteristic of individuals at different stages in their development might vary considerably.³ We began to speculate on what these stages might be, guided by existing literature exploring the phenomenon through which many young offenders "mature out" of crime.

Based on both the literature review and on patterns observed in the pilot interviews, we began to construct a developmental model of the various relationships between employment and crime. The model, depicting an age-graded progression of involvement in legitimate and illegitimate income-producing activity, was mapped out to guide the development of the Project's empirical research (see Figure 1.1).

The age-graded model envisions both employment and crime behavior as influenced by local economic, institutional and subcultural structures that define the specific and competing legitimate and illegitimate opportunities available in different neighborhoods. The model emphasizes the progressive differentiation of employment and crime patterns for various subgroups within a high-risk population -- a "fanning out" over time in which some achieve relative success in either legitimate or illegitimate opportunity structures and others continue to combine less secure work and crime roles, ultimately mixing income strategies in various combinations.⁴

The model suggested that high-risk youth, shortly after school-leaving, enter an exploratory phase, characterized by alternation between brief secondary employment and petty street crime -- both of which are ultimately unsatisfying. At first, the perceived rewards of crime may outweigh the actual rewards of hard-to-find, low-paying, unsteady employment. Over time, however, the risks of crime (low returns, arrest, potential incarceration) become more apparent and the rewards of employment (increased wages with age and work experience, more visible and accessible pathways to job stability) increase.

³These were participants in a Vera evaluation of New York City's Court Employment Program, which offered diversion from criminal justice processing to selected young defendants.

⁴Some economists distinguish between "primary" employment -- offering good pay, good working conditions and opportunities for advancement -- and "secondary" employment, where opportunities are limited and pay and conditions poor (Doeringer and Piore, 1971). These differences are analogous to differences between positions in organized illegitimate enterprises and unorganized petty street crime.

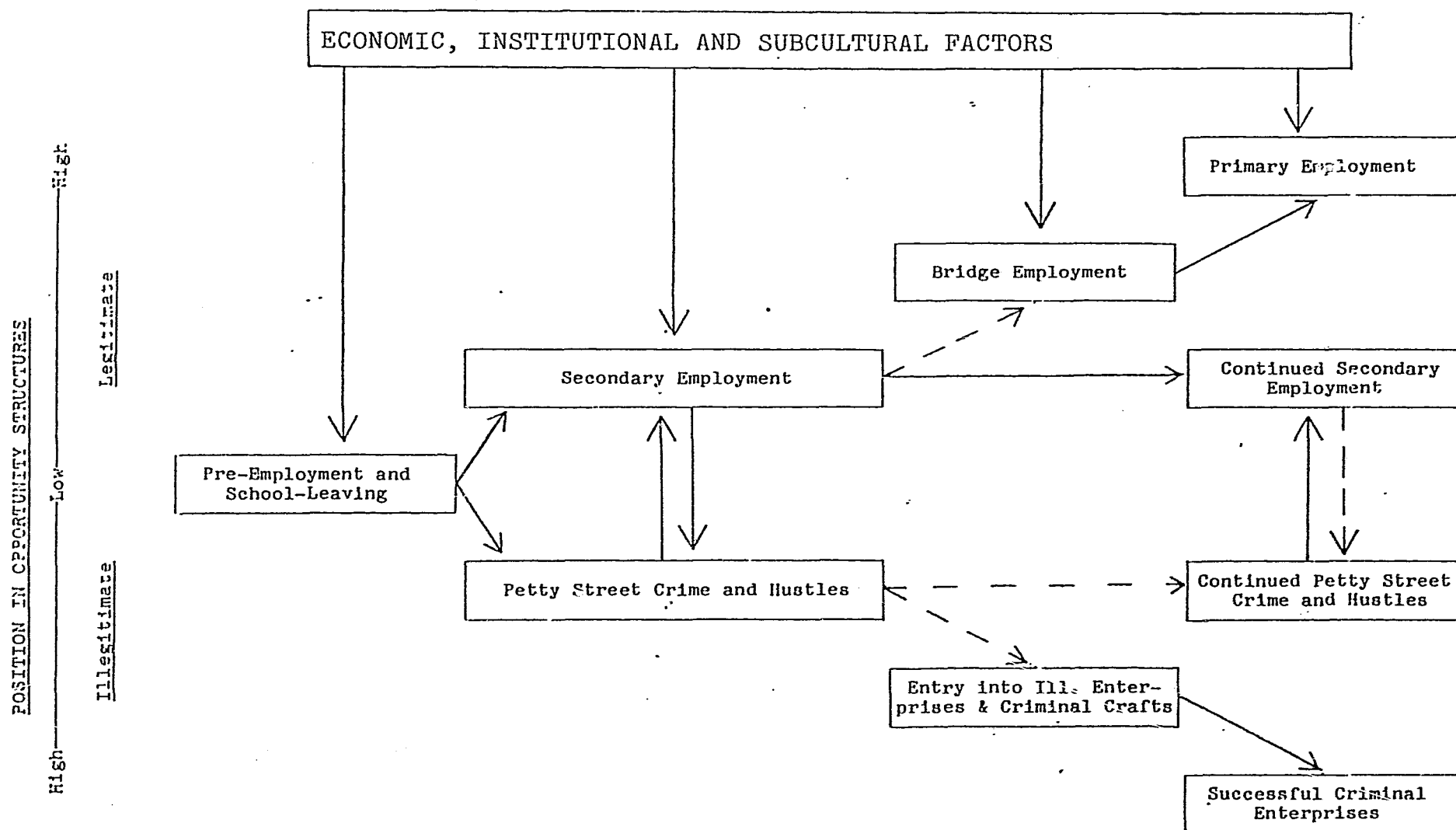


Figure 1.1

Model of Employment and Street Crime Behavior
Among "High Risk" Youth

(Dotted arrows indicate weaker or less likely connections)

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**EMPLOYMENT AND CRIME:
A SUMMARY REPORT**

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Executive Summary

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Most mature out of crime, a few by finding "bridge" employment (employment which can teach skills or create ties to established firms) that may lead to primary sector jobs. Others gain entry into illegitimate enterprises and criminal crafts, which also lead away from petty street crime, occasionally into successful criminal enterprises.

However, those young adults who do not achieve some form of success in either sphere face legitimate opportunities that do not differ greatly from those that faced them when they were younger. On the other hand, the costs of further crime have increased with repeated adult arrests. As a result, most of this group eventually settle into unstable, low-paying jobs with occasional forays into illegitimate activity. A smaller group remains heavily involved in street crime, occasionally supplemented by work.

Age is a central factor in the Project's model of employment and crime relationships. The model suggests that relationships between employment and crime vary for different age groups in different settings.

Project staff decided to study the nature of the relationship between employment and crime and to test aspects of the age-graded model with two different approaches -- a survey of arrested persons in Brooklyn and an ethnographic study of schooling, employment and criminality among young people living in three high-risk neighborhoods in Brooklyn.⁵

In 1979, the Project conducted a survey of a sample of Brooklyn defendants in pre-arraignment holding facilities and initiated the ethnographic study. Both approaches provide relatively broad variation on crime and employment involvements and provided diversity in both age and neighborhood characteristics.⁶ Both studies exclude older, low-risk individuals. The defendant study alone is limited to individuals who have had some contact with the criminal justice system; the neighborhood study includes friendship groups that have been involved with criminal activities, even though some individuals in the groups have never been arrested.

⁵Brooklyn was selected for both approaches because it seemed more representative of large American cities than either Manhattan or the Bronx and because characteristics of its central booking facility permitted easier access to defendants than was possible in other boroughs.

⁶In the defendant survey, race/ethnicity serves as a proxy for differences in community setting. In considering both studies together, community factors appeared to have greater explanatory power than race/ethnicity alone in defining the opportunities that shaped the activities of high-risk youth.

The methods, data and findings of each study are set forth in separate, detailed reports. In the document summarized here, we attempt to integrate both studies by bringing data and findings from each to bear on the same sets of questions and by playing off selected data from one study against pertinent findings from the other. That process yields a broader and deeper understanding of how employment experiences and criminal behavior are related among high-risk populations than could have been developed by either study alone.

Before considering how the findings from the two studies relate to each other, however, it is necessary to describe the characteristics of the separate study populations.

The Defendant Survey

In the summer of 1979, a 40 percent sample of defendants, arrested and held at Brooklyn Central Booking awaiting arraignment, was randomly selected for interview, yielding a sample of 902 defendants who responded to the Project's questionnaire. This group appears broadly similar to the population of Brooklyn male adult defendants, based on a comparison of the Vera sample with a study conducted by New York City's Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) of all adult defendants arraigned city-wide from October 1 through October 31, 1979 (N=8,081). Table 1.1 compares the Vera sample with Brooklyn males in the CJA sample. The two groups are very similar in terms of race/ethnic distribution -- slightly under 60 percent black, 25 percent Hispanic and slightly over 15 percent white. The Vera sample has somewhat more 16-17 year-old defendants (23%) than the CJA sample (16%) and fewer defendants who were 25 years old or older (35%) than the CJA sample (40%). This difference may be related to the summer date of the Vera interviews (a period in which in-school youth are more likely to be arrested) in contrast to the October date of the CJA study. The two samples are nearly identical in terms of the distribution of the severity of arrest charges. Overall, it appears that the Vera sample is broadly representative of the population of adult (16+) males arrested in Brooklyn in 1979.

The defendant survey provided information primarily on employment experience and labor market characteristics (direct information on wages, job duration, etc.), along with educational history and other basic demographic information. The interview focused on the two years immediately preceding the arrest and attempted to reconstruct a time line, illustrating periods of employment, unemployment and out-of-the-labor-force status during those years. The interview moved backward in time, first covering current/recent jobs, then prior periods of employment, and then corresponding periods of not working. Standard labor market and census survey items were employed.

In addition, for each respondent in the defendant sample the Project attempted to obtain information on prior arrests,

Table 1.1

VERA AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCY INTERVIEWS
Selected Comparisons

	Vera Interviews	CJA* Interviews
1. <u>Race/ethnicity</u>		
Black	58%	59%
Hispanic	25	25
White	17	16
Total	100%	100%
N	(894)	(1824)
2. <u>Age:</u>		
16-17	23%	16%
18-19	17	19
20-24	24	26
25+	35	40
Total	99%	100%
N	(885)	(1846)
3. <u>Severity of arrest charge:</u>		
A-B felonies	13%	13%
C felony	14	13
D felony	39	37
E felony	15	19
Misdemeanors or violations	19	19
Total	100%	101%
N	(865)	(1846)

*Represents all adult (16+) Brooklyn male defendants arraigned from October 1, 1979 through October 31, 1979.

subsequent arrests within the year following the interview, case dispositions and periods of incarceration by reviewing official New York State criminal histories (or "rap sheets"). When these rap sheets were unavailable for any reason, New York City's Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) provided some information about the arrest which brought the subject into the sample. To parallel the labor market histories, a two-year criminal history period prior to the sampled arrest was selected for detailed coding.

In addition, a follow-up interview with a small subsample of respondents provided interesting collateral information that could not be obtained elsewhere, such as data on respondents' own criminal victimizations and their perception of the riskiness of different types of crime.

The Neighborhood Study

In the neighborhood study, Project staff drew upon the anthropologist's traditional techniques of participant-observation and life-history interviewing to trace the experiences of three groups of youths, one from each of three low-income neighborhoods of Brooklyn. The small number of respondents, approximately a dozen in each site, is characteristic of this tradition. The youths ranged in age from about fifteen to twenty-two when first contacted. Almost all of them had some employment and some experience with income-oriented crime during the course of a period of two or more years of contact with the Project researchers.

Multi-site research was central to exploring what role different economic, institutional and subcultural factors play. To select study neighborhoods offering variation on dimensions that might affect the work and crime activities of young respondents, we reviewed existing data on Brooklyn neighborhoods, interviewed experts from governmental and community organizations, and toured potential study sites. The extent of poverty, the types of crime opportunity, ethnic composition, the extent of neighborhood organizations and the number and type of government programs were considered in the neighborhood selection process.

Because of the sensitive nature of the information reported to us by these youths, their names and also the names of their neighborhoods have been changed. La Barriada is a low-income, predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. Projectville is a low-income, predominantly black neighborhood. Hamilton Park is a predominantly white neighborhood that is one of the lowest-income white neighborhoods in Brooklyn, but which has higher income levels than the two minority neighborhoods.

La Barriada is not the poorest or the most heavily Hispanic neighborhood in Brooklyn. The neighborhood contains a

mix of white and Hispanic residents. The area has undergone extensive redevelopment in recent years. The block that we studied, however, is in the poorest part of the neighborhood and the family income level there is the lowest among the three study neighborhoods. The youths we studied were all children of first generation migrants from Puerto Rico. Although the block is directly adjacent to waterfront industry, most families on the block were welfare recipients. A few households were supported by working adult men, although even these men did not work directly in the waterfront factories, where good jobs generally go to white people and bad jobs to very recent legal and illegal immigrants. The men in our households generally worked in low-wage service jobs.

Projectville is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Brooklyn. The neighborhood contains a very heavy concentration of public housing projects and very little industry. It has a rapidly dwindling commercial section, and vast areas that are burned-out and empty. We studied a group of youths who had all grown up together in a single project building. They were the children of first and second generation black migrants from the southern states. Many lived in female-headed households supported by welfare, although some of their parents also included transportation, hospital, and postal workers.

Hamilton Park is not an affluent neighborhood, but its residents are better off than the residents of the minority neighborhoods just described. Most are white, generally Catholic, and are descended from earlier generations of immigrants from Europe. The parents of the youths we studied are construction workers, city workers, and building maintenance workers, who hold desirable blue-collar jobs that are relatively secure, unionized, and well-paying. The neighborhood borders Brooklyn's industrial waterfront area and was originally developed as housing for factory workers. Today, however, few local people work at the low-paying production jobs in the factories, most of which are held by Hispanic and other recent immigrants, legal and illegal, who come into the neighborhood during the day and leave at night. The local people who work in the factories generally work in supervisory or secretarial jobs. The houses here are inexpensive, but the residents own them, often with three generations of a single family living on different floors of the same woodframe row house.

The sustained, regular contact Project researchers maintained with study respondents for up to four years permitted us to delve rather deeply into their educational, work, and crime activities. Within each neighborhood, there was remarkable uniformity in the types and patterns of reported behavior, despite individual differences that appeared in the extent and intensity of various activities. As our understanding of these patterns grew, neighborhood context emerged as a dominant factor, shaping and defining educational, employment and criminal opportunity structures for the young residents of these areas.

The Combined Research

Both studies have generated separate reports which present their findings in detail. This summary report, however, considers the two research efforts of the Project together in an attempt to determine how the two, as a combined effort, contribute to our knowledge about employment and crime.

The summary of the two components of the Vera research as presented in this report is primarily exploratory and descriptive. It does not explicitly test hypotheses about the relationship between employment and crime. An earlier report (McGahey, 1982) used the defendant survey to test specific hypotheses, drawn from the economics literature, concerning the relative explanatory power of human capital and segmented labor market explanations of employment and crime outcomes. Instead, this report describes the school, work and crime involvements of relatively young, high-risk groups in an attempt to determine the extent to which the patterns discerned in the two separate Vera studies overlap.

Chapter II describes the educational involvements and attainments of respondents in the two studies and begins to consider the extent to which education ("human capital") is related to labor market outcomes for different groups within the study population. Chapter III describes the work involvements of respondents in both studies and continues to explore the relationship between "human capital" and employment. Chapter IV describes the criminal histories of respondents in both studies, explores the relationship between age and criminal involvements, and considers the process through which respondents appear to "mature out" of crime. Chapter V analyzes relationships between employment and crime in the two studies and assesses the descriptive validity of the Project's age-graded model of employment-crime relationships. Finally, Chapter VI considers the policy implications of the Project's findings.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOLING

School involvements and educational attainments are linked to the extent and quality of employment in a variety of ways. In both of our studies, many respondents were still enrolled in school; being in school affected their labor force participation and the extent of their employment, particularly during the school year. In addition, respondents generally estimated the value of high school diplomas in terms of their perceived payoffs in the labor market.

Human capital theory, in fact, sees school attainments as directly related to labor market outcomes, which are said to be determined by the training and skills a worker brings to the job (Mincer, 1974; Becker, 1975). Other literature, however, contends that differences in employment status cannot be explained by differences in human capital alone, pointing to unequal returns to education by race and gender as evidence of the limitations of human capital theory (Harrison, 1972). Because of these issues, and because of the potential interconnections between school and employment status, Project staff decided that the employment involvements and attainments of respondents could not be fully understood without some attention to past and current education.

The extent of school enrollment varied by age and race/ethnicity. In the defendant survey, 27 percent of all respondents were still enrolled in school. Enrollment was most prevalent among sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds (78% enrolled) and infrequent among older respondents. Young white defendants, however, were far less likely to be enrolled in school (43%) than young minority defendants (84%). Black defendants, at all age levels, had higher school enrollment than other groups (blacks, 32%; Hispanics, 20%; whites, 17%).

In both studies, there was far more school-leaving than school completion. In both, roughly a third of those who left school earned some educational credential (high school diploma or GED). There were also substantial differences in both studies among race/ethnic groups and among neighborhoods in educational attainment. In the defendant survey among those who had left school, whites were more likely (34%) than blacks (21%) or Hispanics (10%) to have high school diplomas. Yet blacks, in both studies, had more continuing educational involvement than others. Hispanics, in both studies, had both limited continuing educational involvement and attainment.

In addition, both studies found a greater likelihood of drop out than of graduation for all groups, and revealed similar reasons for school drop out among different groups. Many left school for income; all groups were equally likely to leave school to take or seek a job. Whites, however, in both

studies, were more likely to find jobs than others. Minority respondents in the neighborhood study were likely to leave school for income, fail to find jobs and become involved in property crime. Minority respondents were also more likely than whites to leave school because of family problems or responsibilities.

Substantial proportions of respondents in both studies also dropped out because they disliked school, or because of trouble in or out of school. The reported dislike of school in the defendant survey (heavily concentrated among Hispanics) mirrored a pattern of hooky/truancy/school-leaving in the Hispanic neighborhood studied. Similarly, in both studies, blacks were more likely to be expelled or to be transferred to special schools for difficult students than other groups.

The two studies also report considerable return to school among high-risk groups. Many respondents went back to get -- or to try to get -- GEDs. Those who earned educational credentials often didn't make it through regular high schools; they either attended alternative schools after dropping out or earned GEDs. The pattern of interrupted schooling was characteristic of all groups, although blacks who earned educational credentials appeared somewhat more likely to have obtained them through GEDs than other groups with credentials. Only a few received higher degrees (survey: 1%); the neighborhood study suggests that the pattern of interrupted schooling was characteristic of higher degree holders as well.

The neighborhood study also showed that school-aged respondents generally believed that school was a good place for them to be, and that the status of "student" was a desirable one. School provided a credible social status (what they should be doing at this age); offered social rewards (sports, girls, friends, community); and, for a few, provided special programs which could lead to skills (i.e., vocational training) or income (i.e., an earn-and-learn program in La Barriada). The desire for schooling was perhaps strongest among Projectville respondents, several of whom aspired to college.

In all neighborhoods, respondents were ambivalent about the value of schooling as human capital. They saw their fathers and older brothers working in jobs that did not require school credentials. They believed the schools provided more adequate occupational training for women's employment than for men's. The school experience itself was full of conflict, chaos, and perceived discrimination. Respondents rated the schools they attended as inferior and unlikely to provide them with substantial skills.

Yet in the defendant survey, it was apparent that skepticism about the value of high school diplomas was greatest among those who had earned such degrees. Young respondents (16-19) and older dropouts were far more likely to believe that

diplomas were a "great deal of help" in the labor market (61% of each group) than older respondents with high school degrees (36%) or those with GEDs (22%).

The neighborhood study suggested that attitudes about the value of schooling as human capital were related to the different vocational goals which were characteristic of the study neighborhoods and to the patterns of schooling which developed in those neighborhoods. In La Barriada, respondents desired good blue-collar jobs, and knew they needed vocational training to get them. Yet most respondents attended a local academic high school that was seen as disorganized and ineffective. Although a few gained entry to one of the city's specialized vocational high schools, personal and family problems kept them from finishing. Although in La Barriada a vocational high school diploma was seen as valuable in the labor market, respondents lacked the personal connections that make such jobs available and the role models that make such goals seem attainable. To finish school in La Barriada, a community of recent Puerto Rican migrants, was to break new ground.

In Projectville, on the other hand, respondents were scattered among a number of academic high schools throughout the borough. After efforts to desegregate inner-city minority schools (formerly the worst in the city), there was no single local high school for them to attend. In part because they were so dispersed, the schooling experience was discontinuous and chaotic. Respondents generally saw somewhat more value in the high school diploma in itself than other groups because it was often required for the kinds of jobs (government civil service jobs) they desired. They also believed in the value of a college diploma. Several respondents in Projectville earned GEDs outside the context of regular high schools, a degree which for some led to college.

Hamilton Park respondents, like those in La Barriada, were drawn to vocational schools because they desired good blue-collar jobs. They did, however, have the family connections to get such jobs. Some of them, with the help of these connections, dropped out of school to work. Others used their diplomas along with personal connections to get into unions. Although the school they attended was seen as equally disorganized as the local academic school in La Barriada, it was recognized as a means of achieving attainable vocational goals. In Hamilton Park, a high school diploma or a vocational school credential and a strong family or school connection to a union job were seen as valuable commodities in the labor market; it was not the diploma in itself that was valued, however, but rather the diploma combined with personal job networks.

The defendant survey demonstrated that for school-aged respondents who dropped out of school, there was an apparent short-term payoff to school-leaving. Of 16-17 year-olds who had dropped out of school, 53 percent had jobs at the time of

the interview compared to 36 percent of those who were in or returning to school. It should be remembered, however, that white respondents were far more likely to have dropped out of school at this age than minority respondents, a fact which appears related to their superior labor market connections. For older respondents in the defendant survey, on the other hand, having a diploma was associated with a significantly greater likelihood of employment at the time of our interview.

In both samples, there were indications that diplomas could and did make a difference in the employment of respondents once they were past school age. There were also indications that the short-term rewards for dropping out of school seemed better for whites. It was also apparent that educational attainments were differentially related to labor market prospects, and that patterns of schooling in particular neighborhoods might be directly tied to vocational aspirations, immediate employment opportunities and established patterns of employment in those neighborhoods.

CHAPTER III

EMPLOYMENT

The employment experiences of participants in both the defendant survey and the neighborhood study varied considerably according to the age and race/ethnicity of respondents and the neighborhoods in which they lived. The exploration of work involvements in both studies ultimately presents us with a story of the work establishment process of high-risk groups -- the movement from part-time temporary jobs as a supplement for parental support to efforts (sometimes failed efforts) to establish full-time, long-term employment. Both studies not only document this process, they also demonstrate the extent to which it varied for different groups in the study populations.

The defendant sample revealed somewhat more work than is generally believed characteristic of an arrested population. At the time of arrest, 54 percent of the sample were currently employed, a figure which compared favorably with the 60 percent employment rate of the Brooklyn male population as a whole. Yet sample members were far more likely to report themselves unemployed (31%), and far less likely to be out of the labor force (15%) than the Brooklyn male adult population (6% unemployed, 33% out of the labor force). In part, this was because of the summer date of interviews -- school-aged youth were more likely to be working or looking for work in the summer months. In addition, the defendant sample was considerably younger than the Brooklyn male population and contained far fewer individuals who were out of the labor force because they had retired.

Comparison of the defendant survey with an October sample of New York City defendants (Criminal Justice Agency, 1980) suggests that the extent of employment in the Vera sample has in fact been somewhat inflated by the summer date of the interviews. Even so, only 6 percent of the defendant sample reported that they had never worked; these were generally young sample members (16-19) who had not yet found jobs. Another 8 percent had not held a job in the two years preceding the sample arrest; this group was typically older than other sample members and more likely to report illness and/or drug or alcohol problems as reasons for not working.

Older respondents (25 and over) were far more likely to be working at arrest (66%) than teenaged respondents (16-19 years old, 45%). In addition, older respondents (25+) had a considerably higher average hourly wage (\$5.19) at their most recent job than teenaged respondents, for whom average hourly wage was no more than the minimum (\$3.35). Not only did older defendants earn more per hour than younger defendants, they also worked considerably more hours per year, held jobs for longer periods of time and had shorter periods between jobs than young defendants. This pattern was mirrored in the

neighborhood study; in all neighborhoods, respondents found more work at higher wages as they moved from the teenaged years into their twenties.

In both studies, white respondents at all ages demonstrated a considerable advantage in the labor market compared to minority respondents. Although young white defendants earned only somewhat more than young minority defendants per hour, they were able to work twice as many hours per year. In the neighborhood study, young whites not only worked far more than minority respondents, they also earned considerably more when they did work. This employment advantage extended to older white respondents in both studies both in terms of hourly wage and hours worked.

The characteristics of respondent employment in both studies were similar -- mostly low wage, predominantly secondary sector,¹ short-term jobs, interspersed with extended periods of joblessness. In the defendant survey, respondents were far more likely to work in service jobs (23%), as laborers (18%), craftsmen (16%) and non-transport operatives (14%) than the adult male labor force in Brooklyn as a whole. Respondents were underrepresented in professional, clerical and sales occupations.

In both studies, job type varied considerably according to ethnicity. Hispanics were more likely than other groups to hold manufacturing jobs. Young blacks had the most experience with subsidized youth employment programs, which in the neighborhood study constituted virtually the only type of job available to them. Young whites had the most off-the-books, private sector employment, even when they were still in school. Older whites were most likely to enter union jobs, offering stability and benefits.

Analysis of the determinants of labor market achievement in the defendant survey revealed that, although age, prior work experience, having a high school diploma, and highest grade completed had significant effects on hourly wage, ethnic differences were far stronger in impact than other variables. The possession of a high school diploma for whites had twice the value in terms of hourly wage than it did for minority respondents. Apparently human capital characteristics (schooling and job experience) had differential impacts on employment for different ethnic groups. Other analysis, however, showed that

¹Some economists (Doeringer and Piore, 1971) distinguish between primary jobs -- characterized by high wages, good working conditions, job stability and opportunities for advancement -- and secondary jobs -- characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, erratic employment and limited opportunity. McGahey (1982) categorized two-thirds of jobs reported in the defendant survey as secondary-sector employment.

educational achievement had positive effects on the number of hours worked for minorities, but not for whites. Apparently, whites could work a great deal with or without diplomas.

In the neighborhood study, it became clear that these marked and persistent ethnic differences in employment were related to variations in neighborhood-specific employment opportunities for the young which grew out of differences in the nature of local labor market networks (family and friendship connections to jobs). There were strong apparent differences between neighborhoods in the amounts and kinds of work available to young respondents. In La Barriada and Hamilton Park, there were many local businesses (factories, shops). Local youth in Hamilton Park frequently obtained work in local employment settings when they were young. Youth in La Barriada found far less work in factories and local businesses when they were young; nevertheless, neighborhood-based employment opportunities for older individuals were evident. In Projectville, on the other hand, there were few local businesses or worksites of any kind. Virtually the only kinds of jobs available to young respondents were subsidized jobs in city-run summer programs. Otherwise, Projectville youth had to look outside the neighborhood to employment agencies and shape-ups to connect them to jobs.

There were also clear differences between the neighborhoods in the extent to which family and friendship networks helped youths find jobs. White youths in Hamilton Park had the best connections both to off-the-books, part-time jobs when they were very young and to skilled blue-collar union jobs when they were older. La Barriada youth could also draw upon family networks to find work, but their connections were generally restricted to unskilled blue-collar jobs. It took luck and intensive effort for one youth to break into a construction union. In contrast, Projectville adults who had the best jobs (civil service, city or postal workers) had the type of work in which personal connections could make little difference. Projectville youth received little help in the labor market through family networks.

It was apparent in the neighborhood study that young respondents were most affected by local opportunity structures. Older youth were somewhat more likely to extend their job search beyond the constraints of local settings and personal networks. Yet local job possibilities and job networks did largely define early employment experiences which, in turn, influenced and shaped subsequent employment prospects for all groups.

In the neighborhood study, respondents' perceptions of what constituted a "good job" varied from neighborhood to neighborhood, mirroring the work experience of their family and friends and the prevalent employment patterns and aspirations in each locale. The defendant survey lends support to the

neighborhood study's finding that there are group differences in work preference: blacks seem drawn to and find work in the public sector more than other groups; Hispanics apparently find more work in manufacturing than other groups; young whites have comparatively more off-the-books, full-time work with private employers, jobs which may be preliminary to the sheltered union jobs held more by older whites than by other groups in the survey.

Although the ethnographic material revealed variation in expressed work attitudes, ranging from a few who said they would rather not work to others who expressed strong dedication to the work ethic, differences in work attitude did not appear related to differences in work experience. Those with the most negative expressed work attitudes worked as much as, and had jobs similar to, those with the best work attitudes.

In the defendant survey as well, there was little evidence that negative employment attitudes were related to sparse work histories. Most respondents reported that they were actively working or seeking work; labor force participation rates, in fact, were considerably higher than in the Brooklyn population as a whole. Of those working less than full-time, 76 percent reported that they desired full-time work, but were unable to find it. Reported "reservation wages" (i.e., the wage below which an individual is unwilling to work) corresponded closely to actual average wages for specific race/ethnic groups at different ages. White defendants, who had the most reported work in the defendant survey, also had the highest average reservation wage. There was no indication that unemployed respondents were "holding out" for unrealistically high wages.

Although the neighborhood study demonstrated a pervasive willingness and desire to work among those without jobs, complaints about jobs among those who had them -- dirty and dangerous conditions, delays in getting paid, various forms of employer abuse -- were common.

Most of the jobs held by young respondents were short-term, sporadic and irregular. Respondents were often laid off and fired. Even more frequently, they quit -- often after disputes with employers about wages, benefits and conditions.

Quitting was common in the defendant survey as well, accounting for 45 percent of all job-leaving reasons. Those who quit their jobs generally did so because of low pay, bad working conditions, problems with their employers or sickness. Quitting because of better job offers or returns to school was infrequent. To the extent that respondents left jobs voluntarily, it might be said that negative work attitudes affected job duration, instead of job seeking and job finding. Yet the defendant survey also shows that voluntary job-leaving was far more common among younger respondents (16-17 year-olds, 79% of job-leaving reasons) than older respondents (25+, 37%). This

suggests that patterns of voluntary job-leaving might have been part of the exploratory phase of work establishment in which adolescents and young adults test a variety of employment settings, moving from working for short-term income needs towards more stable employment (Osterman, 1980). In addition, repeated quitting may be related to the secondary labor market status of the jobs generally held by young respondents as well -- jobs not designed for long-term job retention (Doeringer and Piore, 1971).

Although the majority of young workers from all economic strata hold such jobs, the persistence of secondary sector employment for many respondents in both studies beyond the expected period of youthful work exploration is striking. A considerable proportion of older, predominantly minority respondents continued to work in secondary jobs in manufacturing, service or laborer occupations well past the years of early work exploration. Although approximately two-thirds of older defendants (25+) were working at the time of arrest, for many employment was not substantially better than for respondents in their early twenties.

With age, increased subsistence needs and, perhaps, increasing family responsibilities, some minority respondents appear to settle into longer-term secondary sector jobs, or string together a series of such jobs. Over time, there are marginal wage increases, extended job duration at individual jobs, and reduced intervals of unemployment between jobs. Yet our research indicates only slight change in the quality of employment for minorities once they passed the age of eighteen.

It is apparent in the neighborhood study that access to primary jobs was largely determined by family and friendship networks and neighborhood-based structures of opportunity. The ability to move with age from youthful job exploration in secondary jobs into sheltered, primary jobs (skilled blue-collar jobs, union jobs) appears to be greatly restricted for high-risk urban minority groups.

CHAPTER IV

CRIME

Together, the two Vera studies help document the process by which many high-risk individuals become involved in and most gradually mature out of income-oriented, predatory criminal involvement. The defendant survey provided a broad overview of age-related crime patterns as revealed by official adult criminal histories. Both studies pointed to marked reductions in arrest frequency and income orientation of crimes among older respondents. The neighborhood study provided information on earlier stages of criminal involvement than arrest histories afford, on criminal activity that did not necessarily lead to arrest and on patterns of "maturing out" of criminal involvement with age.

Income-oriented arrest charges were far more frequent in the defendant survey (60%) than non-income-oriented charges (40%). The modal income-oriented charge was burglary (21%), followed by robbery (16%) and grand larceny (11%); other income-oriented arrest charges involved relatively minor property crimes (predominantly petty larceny). The modal non-income-oriented charge category was "assault and weapons" offenses (31%) which were generally associated with low-charge severity; charges involving serious personal crimes (homicide, kidnapping, rape) and drug offenses were infrequent.

Charge type for the sampled arrest varied greatly according to the age of defendants. Robbery charges were most frequent among the youngest (16-17 year-old) defendants, accounting for 30 percent of all their arrests. The youngest defendants were far more likely to be arrested on income-oriented charges (77%) than non-income-oriented charges (23%). The likelihood of income-oriented arrests decreased steadily with age. The oldest group of defendants (25+) was somewhat more likely to be arrested on non-income-oriented charges (54%) than income-oriented charges (46%). Income-oriented charges for older defendants were far more likely to involve minor property crimes (petty larceny) than were the charges of younger defendants.

In both studies there were substantial differences in offense patterns and arrest charge types for various race/ethnic groups. In the defendant survey, white defendants were less likely to be arrested on income-oriented charges (52%) than minority defendants (61%). Robbery charges were heavily concentrated among black defendants (22% of their charges); blacks were less likely to be arrested on grand larceny charges (9%) -- frequently involving auto theft -- than other groups (15%). Hispanic defendants were most likely to be arrested on burglary charges (25%; blacks, 19%; whites, 21%). Similarly, in the neighborhood study, robbery was most common among young black respondents; burglary and auto theft were more frequent among Hispanic and white respondents.

Robbery charges were heavily concentrated among the youngest blacks in the sample. For black defendants, there was a rapid falling off in the incidence of robbery charges with age. This age/robbery pattern was less evident for other groups. Among older groups, there was little difference among ethnic groups in the likelihood of robbery charges, which were relatively infrequent.

Analysis of the criminal histories of respondents in the defendant sample pointed to an expected positive association between age and the number of prior arrests. Age, however, was inversely related to the number of recent arrests (two years before the sampled arrest); young defendants (16-19) had the highest arrest frequency over the two-year recent prior period. Recent arrest frequency diminished strongly with age. There was also a marked association between arrest frequency and both income-oriented charges on the sampled arrest and income-oriented criminal histories. Young high-frequency offenders generally had criminal histories characterized by income-oriented offense patterns.

A follow-up review of the likelihood of rearrest in the year following the sampled arrest complemented the findings based on the review of prior criminal histories. Young defendants (16-19) were most likely to be rearrested in the follow-up year and most likely to have income-oriented charges for subsequent arrests.¹ Defendants charged with robbery on the sampled arrest, however, were less likely to be rearrested than defendants charged with other income offenses. To some extent this may have been related to the fact that those incarcerated on robbery charges were likely to serve more time than those sentenced to incarceration for other offenses. Yet the likelihood of incarceration for those arrested on robbery charges was no greater than for those arrested on other income-oriented charges. Rearrests were relatively infrequent even for those not incarcerated following robbery arrests. This led us to suspect that young defendants arrested on robbery charges might be more likely to "mature out" of criminal involvements which lead to arrest faster than those arrested for other offenses.²

¹Although minority defendants generally had more extensive arrest histories than white defendants, there was little difference between ethnic groups in terms of the likelihood of subsequent arrest. The age distributions of various ethnic groups did not differ.

²These suspicions were heightened by a review of the first-arrest charges of older defendants in the sample. Older high- and moderate-frequency offenders were most likely to have petty larceny and drug-oriented first arrest charges. First arrest charges of robbery were relatively rare (8%).

The neighborhood study corroborated findings of reductions in crime and arrest frequency with age, of variations in ethnic offense patterns and of concentrations of income-oriented predatory criminality among relatively young high-risk individuals. Together, the Project's studies illustrate sequences of criminal involvements for various groups and detail patterns of "maturing out" of crime.

The neighborhood study showed that involvement in criminal activities in high-risk areas typically preceded eligibility for either adult criminal court (beginning at age sixteen in New York City) or legal employment. In all study neighborhoods, respondents became involved in street fighting for turf and status and in exploratory income crime in the pre-teen and early teen years. Such activities were generally group-based and served in large part as necessary conditions for group membership. Early explorations of stealing (shoplifting, breaking into factories, taking radios from other youths) were also engaged in as much for reputation and excitement as for economic motivations. In the early stages of criminal involvement, there were few official contacts with the criminal justice system, either for fighting or for stealing.

Somewhat before the time that respondents in the neighborhood study reached the age of eligibility for processing in adult criminal court, neighborhood-specific patterns of criminal behavior began to emerge. These differences corresponded to differences in local environments: legitimate opportunity structures, markets for stolen goods, the social organization of criminal activities and the nature of both formal and informal social control in study neighborhoods.

In all neighborhoods, however, there were two distinct patterns of criminal involvement: relatively high-risk, peer-initiated, unorganized criminal activities (burglary, shoplifting, chain snatching) and quasi-organized, adult-recruited, criminal enterprises (drug sales, car theft rings). Although the extent of unorganized income-oriented crime and quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises varied among the three neighborhoods, the motives for such activity among high-risk youth in their mid-teens were relatively standard -- to supply income for clothing and recreation (movies, "hanging out," marijuana) not routinely provided by parents.

In La Barriada, by the age of fourteen and fifteen, most respondents were involved in burglarizing nearby factories on a systematic basis. Burglaries were planned to take place at night when factory owners were away from the area; goods were stored in nearby abandoned buildings or basements and subsequently sold to fences, local adult residents and local store owners. As respondents reached the ages of sixteen and seventeen, they began moving beyond the neighborhood and engaging in robberies at knifepoint in more affluent areas. Such activities were far more likely to lead to arrest, conviction and

sentence than factory burglaries. Most respondents had been arrested and placed on probation by the age of eighteen. At this time, a few respondents became involved in more organized activities -- jobs in local "smoke shops," involvement with neighborhood based auto-theft rings and car-stripping operations. These activities were less likely to lead to arrest and could be sustained with little risk for longer periods of time. By the end of the teenage years, however, involvement in systematic peer-recruited theft had generally ended.

In Projectville, there was little industrial or commercial activity in the immediate neighborhood. As in La Barriada, young (14-15 year-old) Projectville respondents became systematically involved in income-generating criminal activity. Their first crime targets, however, were more likely to be persons than places. They began by shoplifting, snatching purses and mugging residents of the projects in which they lived. When they began to be recognized by neighborhood residents, they moved on to subways and downtown stores. By the time they reached sixteen, many of the youths appear to have had decided that stealing for income was too risky and discontinued such activity. Others continued their involvement in property crime, including active participation in a wave of gold-chain-snatching that swept through the city in the early eighties. Such activity quickly led to arrest, conviction and criminal sanction (often incarceration). By the age of eighteen, those who had continued with systematic forms of theft had either been incarcerated for it or had discovered that involvement in local "reefer stores" and drug-selling networks was more profitable and less risky than predatory crime.

In Hamilton Park, there was generally far less involvement in systematic property crime for income. Even so, as in La Barriada, respondents began breaking into local factories in groups around the ages of fourteen and fifteen. Yet in Hamilton Park, reprisals from local factory owners were swift. Only the wildest and most disorganized respondents continued to be seriously involved in property crime in the mid-teen years (16-17), breaking into jewelry stores when high on drugs. There were far fewer robberies than in other neighborhoods, although a few respondents reported stealing the paychecks of Polish immigrants in the neighborhood. As respondents grew older and began to have more personal income, however, there was considerable involvement in drug-selling and minor on-the-job theft -- relatively safe, non-predatory illegitimate activities. The absence of systematic, predatory property crime, however, contrasted strongly with the minority neighborhoods in which there was less parental income and less informal or formal social control. Most members of this group were arrested at some point, but only one was ever convicted of a felony. These differences in outcome were related both to differences in offense patterns and to a greater ability to manipulate the criminal justice system because of established ties to criminal justice officials (police, attorneys).

The two studies point to the mid-teen years (16-19) as the period of high-frequency income-oriented criminal involvement. Both studies suggest that during this period a process of risk-reduction involving either cessation of criminal activity or switching to criminal activity that is less likely to lead to arrest begins. The rapid decline in robbery arrests after the ages of sixteen and seventeen is indicative of this process. The movement observed in the neighborhood study towards more sheltered forms of criminal involvement -- on-the-job theft, drug sales -- once respondents reached the age of eighteen further suggests that those who remained involved in illegitimate activities made decided efforts to reduce the risks of criminal involvement with age.

Based on observations of siblings and neighbors in the neighborhood study, we suspect that the process of cessation or risk reduction continues beyond the age of nineteen and is facilitated by the combination of growing risks of arrest and criminal justice sanction, decreasing peer support for criminal involvement and increasing opportunities for legitimate income.

But what of those who continued to engage in crimes for income in later years? Our research suggests that the majority of older defendants (25+) appeared to have "slowed down" their involvements in income crime. Many older respondents with prior records had not been arrested during the two years before the sampled arrest or in the year following the sampled arrest. This group was more likely to have non-income-oriented criminal histories than younger groups.

Yet there was a small group of older (25+) defendants who departed from this pattern. They had both prior and subsequent arrests and relatively high arrest frequencies. These criminally active older defendants were more likely to have income-oriented criminal career patterns than other older groups. Most had patterns of repeated arrests for petty larceny; they were chronic, low-level property offenders, likely to receive a series of short-term jail sentences rather than long periods in prison for a single serious offense.

Considered together, the two studies suggest that for the young growing up in high-risk areas, involvement in street crime was a relatively common phenomenon. Although the extent to which crime became a widespread, accepted activity among the young was far greater in the minority neighborhoods than in the slightly more affluent white neighborhood, the majority of respondents in all three neighborhoods had some involvement with the criminal justice system during the course of the fieldwork.

For minority respondents, the likelihood of systematic involvement in theft as a short-term adolescent career was considerable. Young white defendants may have been somewhat more deviant within their neighborhoods than young minority

defendants were in theirs (youths in Hamilton Park who were frequently arrested were generally the wildest and most dangerous in the community). Yet age appears to be a far more important factor in determining the extent and nature of criminal involvement than ethnicity. There was a relatively high likelihood that respondents in all three neighborhoods would have some involvement with income-oriented crime during their adolescence.

Those who continued to get arrested for income crimes as adults, however, were not representative of their neighborhoods. Older defendants who had not given up income-oriented crime or slowed down their criminal involvements were exceptions to the general pattern of reduced criminal involvement with age.

Although all relatively young groups (14-19) in high-risk neighborhoods faced high probabilities of criminal involvement during their adolescence, there were nevertheless decided differences in the severity, frequency and motivations for such activity. The urgency of income needs, the extent of formal and informal social control, the extent of formal and informal supports for systematic theft, and the nature of local opportunities for various types of criminal activity varied considerably in the three study neighborhoods. There were also differences in local opportunities for legitimate income during the teenage years. Together, these phenomena strongly influenced the frequency and kind of criminal involvement in the three study neighborhoods. Although being young was strongly related to the propensity for various forms of crime, local conditions strongly influenced the way in which the inclination for illegitimate activities among adolescent males in high-risk neighborhoods took shape.

CHAPTER V

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AND CRIME

Analysis of the employment and crime involvements of high-risk groups in both Project studies pointed to some groups (youth in general, minorities) for whom infrequent low-level employment was associated with extensive involvement with income-producing crime. Other high-risk groups (older defendants, low-income whites) were characterized by more extensive and better employment and substantially less involvement with income-producing crime. These differences between groups seem to point to a potential impact of employment on criminal involvement. Yet it is also possible that the very factors which distinguish these groups from each other (age, ethnicity) might themselves partially account for differences in both employment and crime behavior.

In the defendant survey, regression analysis was employed in an effort to determine the relative contributions of various factors (age, ethnicity, education, employment variables) to criminality, as measured by the frequency of both arrests in general and arrests for income offenses only over the three-year study period. The Project found that selected variables explained little of the variation in total arrests ($R^2=.14$), although the same variables explained considerably more of the variation on income arrests only ($R^2=.25$). In both regression models, age, having a regular high school diploma, the number of hours worked in the two years preceding the sampled arrest, and having a job that offered benefits (i.e., a job more closely approximating primary employment) were all significantly and negatively related to arrest frequency (total arrests and income arrests only) after controlling for other variables. Ethnicity (being black) and being out of the labor force at the time of arrest were significantly and positively related to arrest frequency in both models. Other factors (school enrollment status, hourly wage rate, marital status) showed no significant relationship to arrest frequency in exploratory regression models.

Efforts to determine the independent explanatory power of particular variables in the regression models revealed that the set of employment variables had the most independent explanatory power in relation to total arrests ($r^2=.04$), followed closely by age ($r^2=.03$). Ethnicity and diploma status had minimal explanatory power. Age had considerably more independent explanatory power in relation to income arrests only ($r^2=.14$), followed by the set of employment variables ($r^2=.10$). Again, ethnicity ($r^2=.02$) and diploma status ($r^2=.03$) had far less independent explanatory power than age and employment. Together, age and employment did not explain a great deal of the variation either in total arrests or income arrests only although they did account for a substantial proportion of the

small explained variance in arrest frequency in the models employed.

Exploratory analysis also pointed to interaction effects between age and employment, suggesting that we might learn more about employment-crime relationships by looking at how those relationships differ for various subgroups within the defendant sample. Analysis of employment-crime relationships for different age groups revealed few significant relationships for young (16-19 years old) defendants between employment variables (labor force status at arrest, hours worked, weekly wage at the most recent job, job benefit status) and either annual arrest-rates over a three-year period or the extent of income-oriented criminal histories. In contrast, for the oldest group of defendants (25+) there were significant inverse relationships between most employment variables (hours worked, weekly wage, job benefit status) and both arrest rates and/or income orientation; only employment status at arrest was not significantly related to either crime measure.

It is possible that inverse employment-crime relationships for older groups depend primarily upon a contrast between fully employed individuals, caught up in the sample because of a fluke arrest, and individuals who had given up on employment entirely and were supported by high-rate income crime. In order to determine if there were specific groups for whom having or not having a job had made a difference in criminality, the Project looked specifically at defendants with a mix of working and not-working periods in the two years before the sampled arrest and calculated annual arrest rates for these individuals during both working and not-working periods. In this sub-group, young defendants (16-19) had slightly more arrests during working periods than not-working periods; for somewhat older defendants (20-24), there was no difference in arrest rates during working and not-working periods; yet for the oldest defendants (25+) arrest rates were nearly twice as high in not-working periods as in working periods. This suggests that, for an older sub-group of defendants with a mix of working and not-working periods, having a job may in fact make a difference in the extent of criminality; for young defendants who sometimes have employment, the fact of having a job in itself appears to make little difference.

Separate analyses of employment and crime relationships for various ethnic groups revealed that significant inverse relationships between the two were generally characteristic of minority groups. Whites, however, did not exhibit inverse employment-crime relationships, in spite of the fact that race-specific analyses grouped together young defendants (characterized by relatively low employment and relatively high crime rates) and older defendants (generally high employment, low crime). The absence of significant employment-crime relationships for whites could not be explained entirely by their

relatively small numbers in the defendant sample. In contrast to other groups, there was considerably less difference in arrest rates for whites according to the quantity and quality of employment.

As a whole, quantitative analysis pointed to significant, but weak employment-crime relationships in the defendant survey and suggested that these relationships were far stronger for some sub-groups (older and minority defendants) than for others. These sub-group differences were also evident in the Project's neighborhood study, which helps illustrate and explain the sequence of employment and crime involvements for various high-risk groups. In addition, the community context of that study provides a broader arena for observing individuals for whom employment may have been an effective antidote to criminal involvement and permits us to observe the process by which many high-risk individuals "mature out" of crime.

In La Barriada, there was very little work for young male adolescents (14-16) during the period in which they began to be involved with systematic burglaries of local factories. When respondents reached the ages of seventeen and eighteen, most found some part-time, intermittent employment. For some, having a job led to a reduction in income-oriented crime; for others, work entailed a cessation of criminal activity during the period of employment; for still others having a short-term job had little impact on crime. Some alternated between employment and crime at this stage; for others, the two overlapped. By the time respondents were nineteen and twenty, most had developed more regular patterns of employment and were no longer involved in income crime. Although some continued to alternate between the two or mix them, criminal activity was less risky and less frequent than it had been -- crime appeared to be moderated by both employment and age. One individual, however, became heavily involved in a local quasi-organized auto theft ring; for him, crime became a principal means of support during the early adult years.

In Projectville, there were equally sparse employment opportunities during the period of early adolescence (14-16), although some became involved in summer youth employment programs when they were fifteen and sixteen. In this period, most respondents were engaged in early crime explorations (stealing, shoplifting, picking pockets). Summer employment interrupted crimes for some but had little effect on this activity for others. Once respondents reached seventeen and eighteen, there was still relatively little employment available, although a few found part-time or temporary employment. Nevertheless, several began to drift away from criminal involvement, despite the lack of work. There was an apparent split between those who engaged in violent confrontational crimes and those who did not; employment status did not appear to be a central determining factor in this decision. Once respondents reached the age of nineteen and twenty, most were able to find occasional work

(for many, day labor or agency jobs). Most were not regularly involved in predatory street crime at this stage, although a few were incarcerated during this period for previous involvements. Several respondents, however, became active in quasi-organized drug-selling networks in this period, often in lieu of employment.

In Hamilton Park, there were considerably more opportunities for employment for young adolescents (14-16). Even so, most respondents were actively experimenting with property crime at this stage. These explorations were generally less income-oriented, less serious and less frequent than those in minority neighborhoods. During the middle period (17-18), Hamilton Park respondents continued to have a great deal of part-time off-the-books employment; there was very little involvement with street crime at this stage, except among the wildest and most drug-involved. A few respondents, both working and not-working, began experimenting with drug sales at this stage. In the latter period (19 on) most respondents had steady full-time jobs. Although work did not preclude illegitimate involvements (drug sales, on-the-job theft), involvement with predatory street crime had generally ended.

In all study neighborhoods, age was strongly related to the nature of employment-crime relationships. For all respondents, the years between fourteen and eighteen were a peak period of high-risk criminal activity. Although Hamilton Park respondents differed in the nature and frequency of criminal involvement, they were like other respondents in terms of the age at which they became involved in exploratory property crime.

For most respondents, explorations of income-producing crime preceded employment. In all neighborhoods, there was considerable involvement in such activity between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. In Hamilton Park (where there were more jobs) there was more likely to be an overlap between part-time employment and exploratory property crime; yet early criminal explorations were likely to be less frequent and less income-oriented (more expressive) than in other neighborhoods. Even so, in all neighborhoods most respondents had some involvement with theft for income during early adolescence.

During the middle period (17-18), in the minority neighborhoods there was considerable mixing of employment, property crime and other illegitimate activities -- overlap for some, alternation for others. Work for most was sporadic. In some instances, having a job meant a slowing down or moderation of criminal activities. Those who continued to steal began to engage in more serious, confrontational theft; they did not, however, differ substantially in terms of employment from those who stopped stealing.

During this period as well, a substantial proportion of respondents in all neighborhoods ended involvement in system-

atic theft. In Hamilton Park, stealing during the middle period was infrequent, engaged in only by the wildest youth, and then not primarily as an income-producing activity. In other neighborhoods, there was a gradual division between those who were still stealing (working or not) and those who had stopped.

Also at this age respondents first became involved in quasi-organized illegitimate activities -- organized auto theft in La Barriada and drug selling, to a varying extent, in all neighborhoods. For some, such activity overlapped or alternated with employment; for others, it was independent of employment.

By the time respondents reached the age of nineteen, most had secured at least occasional full-time employment (in Hamilton Park, generally steady, full-time work). Most had also ended involvement in stealing as their major source of income. The few respondents who continued to engage in property crime -- or had not yet returned from prison following incarceration on robbery charges -- were exceptions to the general patterns within their individual neighborhoods. Only respondents who were able to support themselves through quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises continued to engage systematically in crime rather than work.

In all neighborhoods, there continued to be some respondents who "mixed" employment with crime (overlap or alternation); "mixing" at this stage generally involved either selling drugs or on-the-job theft, although there was occasional stealing on a limited basis reported in all neighborhoods. Simultaneous employment and crime was far more common in Hamilton Park, where many respondents occasionally sold drugs on the side, than in other neighborhoods.

Inverse relationships between employment and crime were apparent in all neighborhoods. Yet, if we consider these relationships neighborhood by neighborhood, they seem more closely tied to age than to strictly economic factors. It is only when we contrast the three neighborhoods that the role of local structures of opportunity in shaping the employment-crime relationship becomes clear.

Differences between Hamilton Park and the minority neighborhoods were striking -- both in terms of crime and employment. In Hamilton Park there was generally more income in families, more intact families, less pressing economic need, and more access to part-time work relatively early. There was also concomitantly less income-oriented property crime.

Other aspects of the community differed from the minority neighborhoods as well. Although in both Hamilton Park and La Barriada, factories provided a locus for neighborhood-based industrial burglaries for early adolescents, there were strong

differences in the nature of both formal and informal social control in these neighborhoods. In Hamilton Park, there were rapid reprisals for such activity by factory owners. In addition, routine police order-maintenance activities lent support to the values of older community residents, discouraging congregations of youth, rowdiness and disorder. Community ties to the criminal justice system enhanced order-maintenance and facilitated interventions with authority for neighborhood youth who did get in trouble with the police.¹

All these factors -- including the opportunity for more and better employment -- worked to reduce the level of predatory income-oriented property crime in Hamilton Park. Although in Hamilton Park, employment for the very young (14-16) did not entail the cessation of exploratory property crime, it seemed that employment, working in concert with other social, institutional and ecological influences, strongly affected the frequency and severity of early adolescent criminal activity, the duration of the period of exploratory property crime, and the prevalence of income-oriented street crime during mid-adolescence. Community conditions seemed to support relatively early movement away from such activity into less risky, income-oriented criminal involvements (drug sales, on-the-job theft).

Apparently both age and community had strong effects on the nature of relationships between employment and crime. For the relatively young there was little apparent inverse relationship between employment and crime among respondents within specific neighborhoods. Employment was generally infrequent and short-term. Respondents were as likely to have an overlap between the two as they were to be involved with one or the other alone. Periods of employment did not seem to have more than an occasional moderating influence on established patterns of criminal involvement (stealing and/or drug sales). There was, however, an apparent inverse relationship between employment and crime if we consider all 14-18 year-old respondents from the three neighborhoods together. Young respondents from Hamilton Park had considerably more employment and considerably less involvement in systematic theft than respondents from the minority neighborhoods.

For older respondents there did appear to be an inverse relationship between employment and crime within individual neighborhoods. It became increasingly possible to identify respondents who were primarily involved in employment or primarily involved in crime (generally quasi-organized illegiti-

¹In La Barriada, in contrast, police were not responsive to neighborhood concerns and there was little effort to maintain order in the rapidly decaying neighborhood. Residents were generally dissociated from government agencies (the police, the courts).

mate enterprises). At this stage, it also became increasingly possible to consider extended criminal involvement as generating a cumulating disadvantage in terms of both the labor market and the criminal justice system.

In addition, inverse relationships between employment and crime across neighborhood settings were still apparent, at least if we limit our inquiry to predatory street crime. In Hamilton Park, more and better employment continued to be associated with less stealing per se than in the minority neighborhoods. Ironically, however, among older respondents there was in fact far more mixing of employment and crime in Hamilton Park (in the form of drug sales and on-the-job theft) than in other neighborhoods. Such involvements, however, were not likely to lead to criminal justice entanglements.

In both studies then, it appeared that inverse relationships between employment and crime were less likely for young respondents than for older groups. Similar findings have recently been reported in other contexts (West, 1982; Manpower Development and Research Corporation, 1982). In part, this lack of relationship may be related to the fact that for the young, employment is less likely to be associated with long-term career aspirations than it is for older people. For adolescents, jobs provide, at best, a short-term means of generating income, generally supplementary income; most individuals are not yet entirely self-supporting. Employment is intrinsically less central in the lives of teenagers than in the lives of adults. Job quality is generally limited. Steady, lucrative jobs are generally not open to high-risk teenagers, nor would most of them qualify for such jobs. For all these reasons, it is not surprising that employment had apparently little direct impact on income-oriented criminal involvement for adolescents.

In both studies, we also discovered that inverse relationships between employment and crime were least evident among white respondents. In both studies, whites were less likely to be involved in predatory street crime, offense types which appear to be more affected by employment characteristics than non-income offenses. It appeared that those whites who were at risk of arrest were idiosyncratic within their neighborhoods; the most criminally involved youth in Hamilton Park, for example, were the rowdiest and most heavily involved in drugs. Yet opportunities for employment were relatively plentiful, even for this group. In minority neighborhoods, however, it appeared that patterns of street crime and arrest were not atypical for young males. The criminal involvements of high-risk minority youth as a group seem more related to structural conditions (deprivation, limited educational opportunities, restricted employment opportunities, inadequate local social control) than those of whites.

In both studies, strong inverse relationships between employment and crime were apparent overall; yet these relation-

ships were in part related to age differences in employment and crime patterns, as well as to race/ethnic differences (in the defendant survey), and to community differences (in the neighborhood study). Direct effects of employment on crime were few. In the defendant survey, we located a small subsample of older defendants for whom employment was most likely to have had a direct impact on arrest frequency (the direction of causal relationships for this, as for other groups, could not be determined). In the neighborhood study, we saw a few respondents who gave up criminal involvements after finding a job, and who returned to crime after job loss, suggestive of the direct causal linkage. Others said that having a job led to reductions in the frequency and/or severity of criminal involvement. Nevertheless, the proportion of either sample that demonstrated a direct impact of employment upon crime was relatively small.

Community factors appeared to have strong effects on both employment and crime. The neighborhood study revealed that, for high-risk adolescent males, opportunities for schooling, employment and crime are neighborhood-specific. High-risk youth learn what is available for them through local information networks, communication systems composed of family and friends. In this way, economic, institutional and subcultural factors take on concrete, specific identity within particular neighborhoods -- defined by the particular schools high-risk youth attend, the kind's of jobs they can get, and the kinds of crime they engage in.

Together, the two studies helped the Project modify its model of the sequence of possible employment and crime involvements for high-risk groups over time. The neighborhood study showed that early crime explorations generally preceded school-leaving and opportunities for employment. Respondents began to learn about crime (breaking into factories, shoplifting) before employment was an option.

Once respondents reached the age of sixteen, explorations of employment and crime went on at the same time. Most respondents had already left school, although a few stayed in and earned diplomas. For many, there was relatively little employment. Nevertheless, employment and crime at this stage were relatively independent of each other. The defendant survey also suggests that these were the years of high frequency involvement with serious property crime.

By the time respondents reached the age of eighteen, many neighborhood respondents had already ended involvement in street crime. A few (those who remained criminally involved to a significant extent) had become connected to quasi-organized criminal enterprises (car stealing rings, drug selling operations). Many were just beginning to find their first real jobs -- full-time steady employment apart from a program context.

By the time they reached their twenties, most neighborhood respondents were regularly -- if intermittently -- employed and had "matured out" of street crime entirely (although there continued to be some employee theft and marijuana sales among the employed). A few, however, remained regularly involved in quasi-organized criminal enterprises. The Project was unable to observe whether the few respondents who were incarcerated for income crimes continued to engage in street crime, supplemented by occasional employment, after their release, or whether they too "matured out" of crime into employment.

The defendant sample revealed that many individuals who continued to get arrested on income charges as adults (generally for relatively low-level income crimes) appeared to alternate between occasional employment and occasional crime. For these individuals, the likelihood of arrest was reduced during periods of employment. For this group, employment may, in fact, have had a direct impact on the extent of criminal involvement.

This model of employment and crime sequences does not insist upon direct tradeoffs between employment and crime or direct impacts of employment on crime. It focuses instead on age and transformations in employment and crime behavior over time.

High-risk adolescent males are seen as beginning to explore short-term and long-term career options -- both legitimate and illegitimate. Some escape from this period of exploration relatively unscathed; they "mature out" of criminal activity relatively quickly and come to accept the kinds of jobs that others in their communities have accepted before them. Others, however, may become trapped in a cycle of "cascading disadvantage"; youthful criminal explorations may lead to periods of incarceration, increased contact with criminally involved networks, and reduced exploration of early employment opportunities. For this group, it becomes increasingly difficult to "catch up" with peers who have moved away from crime for family and jobs.

CHAPTER VI

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current debate about employment and crime is unrealistically and unnecessarily constrained by the assumption (implicit or explicit) that only direct relationships, involving short-term tradeoffs between work and criminal activity, are of consequence for crime control policy. Unemployment, in itself, is surely not a necessary cause of crime and is only rarely a sufficient cause. Conventional wisdom now holds that direct relationships between unemployment and crime are less pervasive and less powerful than was previously believed to be so. However, that recognition should not be the sole determinant of the role of employment in crime control strategy.

The Vera research revealed numerous, important indirect relationships between the quality and extent of employment and the severity and extent of income crime for specific subpopulations. There was considerable evidence that chronic, persistent unemployment and underemployment were inextricably related to a cluster of economic, social, and cultural conditions that were more or less characteristic of our study neighborhoods, especially the minority communities -- general poverty, inadequate labor market networks, widespread drug use and dependency on drug-related income, limited successful legitimate role models for youth, patterns of sporadic school attendance, problem-ridden schools, high concentrations of single-parent households, ineffective formal and informal social control, relatively powerless political and community organizations, the flight of small businesses, inadequate maintenance of housing stock, and so on.

This is not a unique finding. There is a second tradition of aggregate research (and, in our opinion, a more provocative one) which relates employment and other economic indicators to the volume and form of reported crime. Sociologists conducting research in the tradition of the "Chicago School" have been documenting the close association between official rates of crime and delinquency and a wide range of social and demographic indicators that describe the neighborhoods of the urban poor.¹

This research tradition focuses attention on the institutional structures of the local community, their stability and their capacity to serve the interests of the people who live there. Chronic unemployment affects those institutions in a

¹Shaw and McKay (1931, 1942, 1969) are generally credited with starting this line of research, but it has been advanced by a number of other scholars, including Lander (1954); Bordua (1958-59); Kobrin (1959); Chilton (1964); and more recently, Bursik and Webb (1982).

variety of ways which, in turn, are productive of high crime rates.

Chronic employment deficiencies relate to the entire complex of conditions that characterize the communities of the urban poor -- as causes of some (e.g., general poverty); as effects of others (e.g., widespread educational failure); and, in the manner of the vicious circle, as cause and effect of still others (e.g., pervasive unemployment among adults constricts the local job network which, in turn, contributes to the employment deficiencies among younger adults).

These conditions of social and economic deprivation increase the likelihood of conventional street crime in a variety of ways. Community tolerance for low-level property crime, especially when committed by teenagers, often increases, generating markets for retail trafficking in stolen goods. Economic deprivation weakens family stability which, in turn, lessens the ability of families to control the behavior of the young and enhance their future employment prospects. Widespread recreational drug use creates a need for funds for some and an opportunity for earning income for others. Pervasive educational failure lowers the level of human capital in the community and erodes the community's trust in conventional institutions. Inability to arrest the deterioration of local housing stock provides evidence of the community's inability to control its own affairs, which, in turn, weakens both formal and informal control mechanisms. Weak social control mechanisms in communities with large numbers of youths, exploring various forms of property crime, are particularly problematic.

In these ways, among others, chronic unemployment and underemployment indirectly contribute to the concentration of street crimes in economically deprived communities. In such settings, the effect of unemployment and underemployment on crime is indirect, mediated by the erosion of legitimate opportunities and social control within neighborhoods. Norms and behavior within neighborhoods adapt rapidly to such physical and economic erosion.

Other recent research has also pointed to the role of community setting as strongly related to the extent of criminality. In a longitudinal study of delinquency in London, West (1982) tried to identify individuals who did and did not become criminally involved and the factors that predicted criminality in a sample of urban working-class youth. He found that high-risk youth who moved out of London generally ended criminal involvement in conjunction with their move, whereas similar youths who stayed in the same neighborhood stayed criminally involved.²

²Similarly, the positive impacts on crime reported in an evaluation of the Job Corps may be related to the fact that the program removed participants from their communities for skills training (Mallar, et al., 1980).

As a whole, our research emphasizes indirect effects of unemployment and chronic poverty on crime and points to the need for a comprehensive, long-term strategy to transform social and economic conditions in high-risk communities. This is not to say that direct relationships between employment and crime do not exist. In the neighborhood study, employment did appear to have a moderating effect on the criminal involvement of high-risk youth. Conversely, job loss was directly related to the return to crime of a few respondents. Yet the defendant survey suggests that such direct relationships were more evident for some subgroups than for others. Specifically, trade-offs between employment and crime were more apparent for older, minority offenders. The employment-crime tradeoff for high-risk youth or for white offenders of any age was far less apparent.

The fact that arrest rates did not vary for younger arrested persons (16-19) according to the extent or quality of employment helps explain why employment programs aimed at young offenders have generally had little impact on crime. These programs assumed that differences in employment status were related to differences in criminal involvement, but we found no evidence of that relationship among high-risk youths.

It must be recognized, however, that both subsidized program and non-program employment were sparsely scattered within high-risk adolescent groups studied; there was not enough employment to compete with and/or transform established peer group patterns of hanging out, getting high and engaging in street crime. It is possible that appreciable expansion of employment opportunities for out-of-school, high-risk youth groups within specific neighborhoods would affect these social patterns and thereby indirectly affect their criminality. Nevertheless, we need to recognize that employment is generally less central for teenagers than for adults, and that the range of employment opportunities for youth in general is severely limited.

The criminality of adult minority property offenders might be more immediately responsive to employment initiatives than that of high-risk youth. We found that most adult minority defendants have already had some (often considerable) work experience. Yet many are removed by incarceration from effective job-search networks and also carry the stigma of their criminal records. For them, rigorous job placement efforts and attempts to maximize existing job networks within their families and communities seem appropriate. For this group, the quality of employment is also important. Minority defendants are experienced with, and may have access to, unstable, low-paying secondary sector jobs. Programs must be able to improve on these options. A decent wage, some employee benefits, the promise of stability and the possibility of future advancement may be necessary to break the cycle of alternation between repeated low-level property offending and short-term secondary jobs.

Interventions designed to improve employment opportunities are an important component of crime control strategy, not only because of their potential direct effects on some individuals, but also because of potential long-term, indirect effects on communities. Yet, in the past, programmatic efforts to affect crime through employment have focused almost entirely on short-term, direct effects. Most such programs were based on an oversimplified understanding of employment-crime relationships, assuming that employment could be directly traded off against crime without regard to other mediating structures (family, community, schools, peer groups). Such oversimplified assumptions led to unrealistic expectations of program impact. There was little expectation that direct effects of employment on crime might be more likely for some subgroups than for others and, consequently, little targetting of strategies for particular age subgroups. Moreover, many employment programs for high-risk groups had little impact on the quantity or quality of employment for such groups and could, therefore, have little expectation of having any effect -- direct or indirect -- on crime.

It is important to note also that some programmatic research and our own analyses of employment-crime relationships among older defendants show correlations between employment variables and reduced crime and recidivism. Typically, those who complete programs have lower arrest rates than do those who drop out early; members of control groups who find work on their own have lower arrest rates than do those who do not work; and, stability of employment is negatively associated with arrests in both experimental and control groups. Surely the process of self-selection is reflected in this phenomenon, but that does not lessen its importance.

The growing tendency to see crime and economic deprivation as unrelated reflects, in part, frustration and disappointment at the apparent ineffectiveness of social intervention efforts of the sixties and seventies. In reaction, legislative and executive officials on all levels of government are extolling the current and potential impacts of crime control strategies that rely either on enhancing the deterrent effects of the criminal justice system or incarcerating for protracted periods those relatively few offenders who commit a great deal of crime, while making room for them by not locking up less frequent, less serious offenders.

Yet efforts to incapacitate only serious, high-frequency offenders seem fraught with difficulty. While it is likely that most serious, frequent predators come within the grasp of criminal justice agencies repeatedly during their careers, the system's capacity to identify them and distinguish the anticipated careerists from those who are likely to desist is fairly limited. Nor is it clear that extensive use of alternatives to incarceration for lower rate offenders will prove acceptable to the general public. Failure to implement effective screening and establish alternatives would convert the policy of "selective incapacitation" into one of "extensive incapacitation."

That, in turn, would drive correctional costs to previously unimagined levels.

On the surface, it seems plausible to expect that greater certainty and severity of punishment will lead to dramatic reductions in the volume of street crime. There appears to be much room for improvement in the certainty of apprehension, conviction and incarceration. But there is not much reason to assume that the operations of the criminal justice system can be changed sufficiently to make those outcomes significantly more probable. The ability of the police to apprehend a suspect for any given crime is highly dependent on the circumstances of the offense, the timing of their arrival and the cooperation of the complainant and witnesses. Research conducted in the last decade does not point to any clear strategies that will greatly reduce response time and improve apprehensions in the kinds of cases (those involving predators unknown to the victim) in which it is important (Kelling, 1978). Moreover, other research suggests that the high proportion of non-convictions in felony arrests results in large part from evidentiary weakness of those cases, including the lack of witness cooperation. Research also indicates that conviction charges resulting from plea bargaining are roughly proportionate to arrest charges (Vera Institute, 1981). Despite the fact that incarcerative sentences are meted out in only a minority of cases that end in conviction, prison and jail facilities at all levels of government are already seriously overcrowded, and the public seems unwilling to commit resources to expand prison capacity.

In short, just as employment programs have often failed to improve the labor market status of those at whom they are aimed, efforts to improve the certainty of apprehension and conviction, or incarcerate only the heaviest offenders, will often fail to do so.

Another reason for caution regarding the potential crime control impact of enhancing deterrence is that its proponents base their hope on almost the same oversimplified understanding of human behavior that led others to expect significant and immediate reductions in crime from employment programs. Both tend to see criminal activity, especially property crime, as a product of a rational economic choice in which the costs of potential punishment are weighed against the potential returns to crime. Many of those who advocated employment incentives during the sixties and early seventies believed that crime could be reduced simply by increasing the attractiveness of law-abiding behavior. Many of those advocating a one-sided emphasis on deterrence today are simply stressing the sanctions side of the same behavioral equation. Simplistic underlying assumptions about human behavior create unrealistic expectations for whatever form of intervention they spawn.

Our research suggests that those rationalist, economic assumptions are somewhat useful in understanding the criminal-

ity of older, minority offenders, but not very illuminating when applied to youth in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods. Over time, the cumulating risk of criminal justice sanctions plays some role in the process of "maturing out" of crime. Yet, at its peak, the criminal involvement of high-risk youth does not seem particularly affected by the risks of punishment or the rewards of employment. Such behavior may not be essentially a product of rational, economic choice.

Even those who emphasize a deterrence strategy for crime control must recognize that the strategy requires that those at whom it is aimed have something to lose by getting caught in the criminal justice net. The costs of punishment are calculated in terms of lost wages. Deterrence theory itself implicitly requires that deterrence and social intervention efforts on behalf of the urban poor proceed in tandem.

If employment programs in themselves have limited direct impacts on the criminality of some groups, and if strategies of deterrence and selective incapacitation prove less successful than the proponents of these strategies expect, then what should be the role of social intervention efforts in crime control strategy? Our research suggests that meaningful change in the conditions that breed heavy concentrations of street crime among the urban poor cannot be realized without substantial change in the employment experience of the adults and the employment prospects of the youth in inner-city neighborhoods.

This can only be done through a combination of improved opportunities and the gradual accretion of education, skills training and/or work experience. In keeping with this longer-term perspective, it is important that youth employment efforts be linked to education and/or skills training. Our research shows that, although the returns to education varied considerably for different race/ethnic groups, there were payoffs associated with high school credentials (or advanced schooling) for all groups. It also shows that the most common reason for leaving school was to search for jobs because of expressed needs for income. Employment options such as the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Projects (Farkas et al., 1982) which encourage high-risk youth to stay in or return to school, while at the same time responding to their income needs, appear promising.

Efforts to improve the employment opportunities of adults in high-risk communities are also important to a crime control strategy because of the potential long-term impacts of economic revitalization on such communities -- in terms of family structure; informal social control; and increased political power to affect the content and quality of schooling, police services, and the physical decay of streets, parks and abandoned buildings. In addition, for those adults who do not entirely end their involvement with income-producing criminal activities, increased and/or improved employment opportunities may in fact represent a real alternative to crime.

From both branches of our empirical work and from our review of other research and literature, we can identify several findings that have implications, we believe, for designing employment strategies for high-risk groups and for reaping crime control benefits from these strategies.

These findings include the fact that the vast majority of low income, urban youths who are involved in criminal behavior in their mid-teens will have generally abandoned that behavior, especially the riskier, more violent forms, by the time they reach twenty years-old. For youths in their early and mid-teens, work is a learning experience and a source of ready income. They are not seriously involved with career concerns or really prepared to commit themselves to full-time employment over the long-term. The high-risk youth (up to mid-teens) in the neighborhoods we studied needed to develop the basic educational skills which most employment presumes, but were increasingly alienated from their conventional schools. Work programs which compete with school, or substitute for school, do not serve the long-term interests of these youths at all.

The availability of legitimate work becomes increasingly important from young adulthood onward. Even at this time, however, the quality of the work (rewards, stability and promise) is important and should be at least competitive with other income sources that are available. In fact, however, much of the work available to young adults in the inner-city is transient in character and offers low pay and few benefits. Educational opportunities to improve basic skills and specific forms of job training may be most useful for young adults who have matured enough to see their utility. However, such opportunities are not easily found at that time in life. The availability of legitimate work appears to be strongly associated with reduced criminality among adult, minority males.

The extensiveness of employment deficiencies and related economic deprivation in the neighborhoods of the urban poor has a variety of effects which contribute indirectly but importantly to the form and prevalence of street crime in those neighborhoods. With these findings in mind, we suggest that employment strategies for high-risk groups be guided by the following propositions:

- o Both employment and deterrence policies should recognize the importance of the "maturing out of crime" phenomenon and should be planned so as to facilitate that process in economically deprived communities.
- o Formal education and the school-to-work transition should be strengthened for teenagers in these neighborhoods. Thus, work opportunities should be developed and delivered to complement and supplement, rather than compete with, educational programs for such youth.

- o Employment strategies aimed at young adults should be sensitive to the quality of employment opportunities. Specifically, they should be sufficiently desirable and offer sufficient prospects for stability to compete effectively with other income streams, including public assistance and low-level street crime.
- o Employment strategies should expect fairly high levels of layoffs and quits among those employed in the secondary jobs typically available in inner-city communities. These strategies should be aimed at reducing the time between the termination of one job and the acquisition of the next in order to increase overall stability of employment.
- o Employment strategies should provide opportunity for inner-city residents to seek additional education or skills training on an intermittent and part-time basis in order to include even employed persons seeking to improve their prospects for future employment.
- o Employment strategies should be planned and implemented on a neighborhood level in order to facilitate local economic growth, take maximum advantage of the local structure of employment opportunities, and encourage the interaction of economic, social, educational and political resources on the neighborhood level.
- o Employment strategies in the neighborhoods of the urban poor should be supportive of public and private efforts to strengthen social organization at this level, improve both formal and informal processes of social control, and increase the residents' capacity to control their own environment.

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