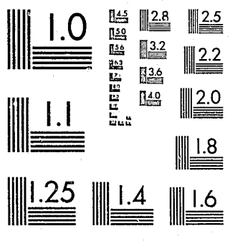

AGE AND THE CHANGING CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT OF ORDINARY PROPERTY OFFENDERS

by

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ABSTRACT

For decades, social scientists have known of the inverse relationship among adults between age and the probability of arrest. This relationship has been commonly known as the maturation effect. However, because there have been few studies of the later stages of criminal careers, we have lacked an adequate understanding of the experiential nature of this process.

This report describes how a group of ordinary property offenders, released from prison from four months to 28 years earlier, changed their perspectives toward life and criminal behavior as they got older. When interviewed in 1980-81, very few of the men were still engaged in crime. The men had experienced two types of changes in their lives, orientational and interpersonal, which led them to modify their calculus of ordinary property crime. In turn, this led to changes in the frequency and visibility of their criminal behavior.

Importantly, some of the age-related changes the subjects experienced differ little from those experienced by non-offenders. Consequently, the findings challenge certain critical assumptions about offenders employed by contemporary advocates of repressive crime control measures.

The findings are briefly interpreted and discussed in the light of both control theory and Glaser's theory of differential expectation. The latter is seen as the preferred theoretical "home" for the findings. The report concludes by noting some possible age-related changes in the deterrence process.

> [S]o far as I can judge, present-day research into the problem of recidivism or 'repeating' offenders tends to concentrate . . . a little too much on the subject of failure. This is . . . not hard to understand for sheerly practical reasons -- because the failures, the ones who come back to prison, are of course the easiest specimens to study -- they are available to be examined, diagnosed, analysed, catalogued and categorised. But if the same sort of work could be done on the successes -- on the people who, having had several convictions, had been in prison a number of times, manage at last as it were to put the brakes on and succeed in reintegrating themselves with society -- how interesting it might be to try to find out just how they managed it, what sort of things helped them, what they found the most difficult problems to face, how they now look back on their successes and mistakes, and so on.
>
> ----- An English convict (Parker, 1967:23)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I incurred debts to, and taxed the patience of, many persons in the course of this research, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank them for their forebearance and help. First and foremost, I appreciate the assistance provided by the men who were my research subjects. With remarkably few exceptions, they tolerated my intrusion into their lives gracefully, in some cases, with a great deal of cooperation. My experiences with them more than contradicted the dire predictions of friends and associates who had doubted the likelihood of completing the planned research project.

Four persons in the National Institute of Justice were supportive and offered encouragement and assistance. Conversations with Patrick Langan helped me sharpen and refine some of my early interpretations of the data. Pat also pointed out useful theoretical and research literature and, as the project monitor, served as a reminder to keep the project on at least a semblance of the original schedule. His successor as grant monitor, Helen Erskine, steered me over the final steps of project completion. Anne Schmidt and Richard Titus offered useful suggestions and encouragement at various stages of the research.

Several persons provided research assistance. Hildy Saizow helped launch the project and was an intelligent, cheerful companion in the early stages of data collection. Later, Jim Sulton helped speed the pace of data collection. I am especially grateful to Melvin Jackson, who guided me through several of

Washington, D.C.'s most interesting street corner scenes to men who made excellent research subjects. Finally, in this project as in an earlier one, I appreciate the assistance provided by the man identified in chapter 3 as "Jack Noble."

If not for the help of persons in a number of official agencies, the research either would have been impossible or would not have been completed with nearly as much enjoyment as it was. Stephen Reynolds, in the Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts, guided me through the procedures required to secure approval and cooperation from that agency and from several U. S. Probation offices. In the Research Office of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, both Harriet Lebowitz and Katherine Tallis remained accommodating and cordial despite the demands of working with me. John Burkhead, at the F.C.I. in Lexington, Kentucky helped me locate some potential reserch subjects there. Personnel in the Washington, D.C. Department of Transportation (Jim Nance) and the district court in Shady Grove, Maryland (Jeff Ward) permitted me to use their driver license records in my efforts to locate some of the men I wished to interview.

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CHAPTER 1

AGE, CRIME AND MATURATION

Daily the mass media report the "street crimes," burglaries, robberies, and assaults, which concern so many citizens. But, even a casual review of these media reports suggests that street crimes are committed primarily by persons between the ages of 16 and 25. Uncommon are reports of such crimes being committed by preadolescents or persons in their middle years. Rarer still are reports of older perpetrators, say age 40 and above. In short, street crimes are committed infrequently by the very young, the middle-aged, or the old.

Criminological research supports this conclusion. For example, in a self-report study of residents of three states, Rowe and Tittle (1977) found that the percentage of subjects who admitted stealing something worth $50 or more "during the last five years" decreased consistently from the 15-24 age group to the 65-93 group. They found similar results for other types of offenses. Aggregate arrest statistics paint a similar picture (Sellin, 1958; Hirschi and Gottfredson, in press). In 1980, 69.7 percent of all persons arrested for Index crimes in the United States were age 24 or under. Comparable percentages for the 25-34, and 35 or older age groups were 18.5 and 11.8 respectively. When the offenses of homicide and assault are excluded, leaving only ordinary property offenses, the relationship is even stronger (F.B.I., 1981:200-01).

Of greater importance perhaps, the inverse relationship among adults between age and involvement in ordinary property

crimes is also true of individuals with official criminal records (e.g., Cline, 1980; Peterson and Braiker, 1980). Thus, various types of data on a variety of populations all point to the same conclusion: advancing age -- beyond a threshold at least -- produces decreasing rates of involvement in crimes such as robbery, burglary, and theft.

Simple bivariate relationships such as this are subject to a variety of interpretations. The present case is no exception (Moberg, 1953). Nonetheless, those who have probed this relationship generally agree that it is not an artifact, and that the aged do in fact commit fewer such crimes (Rowe and Tittle, 1977; Hirschi and Gottfredson, in press). However, we must go beyond statistical description and explanation of this relationship; we also want to understand it experientially. As Wootton puts it, "the fact that people tend to reform as they grow older is just what we are out to explain" (1959:163). Clearly, something about advancing age produces reduced participation in ordinary property crime, even by those with extensive criminal records. Therefore, we must explore the human and social meanings of this statistical relationship.

THE MATURATION EFFECT

In their pioneering longitudinal studies of offenders, Glueck and Glueck searched for variables or factors which differentiate men who terminate their criminal behavior from those who persist at it. They reported:

> Aging is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reformative process when our cases are analyzed

> en masse, the principal (though not necessarily the only) explanation of the reform which has occurred in our group is to be found in that factor (1937:105; emphasis in the original).

The Gluecks referred to this age-crime relationship as "maturation." However, as Wootton correctly notes, this is "one of the -- unhappily not infrequent -- occasions on which a label has been mistaken for an explanation" (1959:164).

With few exceptions, criminologists apparently have been content with this "explanation." For example, Inciardi's otherwise excellent discussion of criminal careers (1975) contains only a four page chapter on "exits" from professional theft. But, development of an understanding of the maturation effect, requires longitudinal and follow-up studies of offenders at various stages of the lifecycle. Unfortunately, very little research of this type has appeared. Consequently, although forty years have passed since the Gluecks' research, "the exact mechanism for this so-called maturation effect remains unclear" (Peterson and Braiker, 1980:44).

FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH ON ADULT OFFENDERS

Previous follow-up studies of adult offenders can be grouped into three broad categories. One type makes use of only official records for information about offenders and their behavior, and subjects these data to statistical analysis. Generally, such studies are atheoretical, being stimulated by practical, correctional concerns and assumptions. The outcome variable

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usually is treated as a dichotomy. Traditional parole prediction research is typical; official records are used to determine which variables differentiate parole "successes" and "failures." Usually a short follow-up period of three or four years is employed, although occasionally a longer period is used (e.g., Kitchener et al., 1977).

A second genre of follow-up studies combines the use of official data with interviews of offenders or former offenders in order to identify those variables which differentiate offenders with particular career characteristics. Although much of this research is dicatated by correctional concerns such as parole prediction or the desire to evaluate correctional programs, some of it has been conducted to develop more general knowledge of criminal careers (e.g., Petersilia, Greenwood and Lavin, 1978). Perhaps the best studies of this type are guided by theoretical interests, either of a theory-generating or theory-testing nature (e.g., Glaser, 1964; Erickson et al., 1973; Waller, 1974). Their principal strength lies in the effort to place the findings in a theoretical framework which interprets and explains them. Still, most of this second type has used a short follow-up period -- the Gluecks are an exception. Also, while many have used personal interviews with offenders or ex-offenders, these tend to be highly structured in order to elicit similar, comparable data from all subjects.

Investigations of a third type generally are pursued with little or no interest in correctional concerns and with limited use of official records. Instead, the investigator is guided

primarily by theoretical interests and usually employs a relatively unstructured, inductive interview methodology to understand and depict the fates and careers of ex-offenders from their vantage point(s) (e.g., Ray, 1964; Finestone, 1967; Wiseman, 1970). Thus, an important distinguishing characteristic of this research is a willingness to treat the offender or ex-offender as an intelligent, self-aware informant rather than a passive subject. Unfortunately, much of this research has used a rather short follow-up period, and several studies relied exclusively upon incarcerated subjects (e.g., Stebbins, 1971).

Clearly, studies of the third type hold the greatest potential for developing an understanding of the age-crime relationship among known offenders. I now turn to a review of existing research of this type.

Recent Studies

Irwin (1970) interviewed 15 ex-convicts who had remained out of prison for many years. (The sampling procedure is unspecified.) Most had modified or terminated their criminal involvement. They did so for several reasons: (1) fear of further imprisonment; (2) "exhaustion from years of a desperate criminal life and a deprived prison life" (1970:196); (3) a reduction in sexual and financial expectations; (4) "an adequate and satisfying relationship with a woman" (1970:203); and (5) involvement in "extravocational, extradomestic activities" such as sports or hobbies (1970:203).

Bull (1972) examined the merits of Kierkegaard's philosophy of the stages of personal and spiritual growth in the human life

cycle. He also interviewed 15 ex-convicts and found that as they aged, feelings of despair motivated them to modify their lives and so reduce their criminal behavior. These modifications represented a shift, in Kierkegaard's terms, from an aesthetic to an ethical stage of life.

Investigators have produced a somewhat larger body of research on drug addicts' experiences. Building on Winick's suggestive comments (1962) on "maturing out of narcotic addiction" and Brill's work (1972) on "de-addiction," several investigators have examined the process of "natural recovery" (e.g. Jorquez, 1980). Despite this research, questions remain about the natural recovery process (Waldorf, 1983; Waldorf and Biernacki, 1979; 1981). Specifically, it is unclear (1) as to the number and nature of pathways out of heroin addiction; and (2) whether a "rock bottom experience" is a necessary contingency for successful recovery. Presently, the research demonstrates clearly that substantial numbers of heroin addicts do modify their drug habits as they get older. As such, the insights derived from this body of research proved useful in collecting data for this study.

This brief review of offender follow-up studies suggests that our understanding of the age-crime relationship has not progressed substantially in the past forty years.

ANALYTIC APPROACH

I approached this research with the assumption that it would be possible, after locating a group of offenders with similar

characteristics and experiences to discern, describe and explain discrete patterns in their experiences as they aged. I assumed, because they would have traversed similar social and experiential terrains, that they probably encountered similar obstacles in their travels and fashioned similar responses to them. The search for these commonalities was enhanced by an awareness of certain sociological concepts and metaphors which have been developed and applied in other research, specifically, the concepts of career and career contingency.

The concept of career refers to common experiences among individuals who have encountered, grappled with, and resolved similar problems. Careers have two related, though analytically distinct, sides -- the objective and the subjective (Stebbins, 1970). The objective career is open to public view, and includes changes in lifestyle and official positions. The subjective career is less visible. It includes changes in identity, self-concept, and the framework of imagery employed to judge oneself and others. Changes in both the objective and the subjective careers often occur together. Thus, to understand careers adequately, not only must we examine each of the two sides, but also how they fit together.

Career contingencies are significant occurrences, common to members of a social category, which produce movement along, or transformations of, career lines (Goffman, 1961:133). Just as we can speak of objective and subjective careers, so too can we distinguish between objective and subjective career contingencies. The former are "objective facts of social

structure" while the latter designates "changes in the perspectives, motivations, and desires" of individuals (Becker, 1963:24).

I employed these concepts as analytic metaphors. And while I use aging as the major explanatory variable in this report, I do so only for the sake of brevity and convenience. The biological process of aging is not the focus of attention; rather, it is the socially constructed and negotiated changes in perspectives which accompany aging. The bulk of this report describes these changes and their impacts.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

I used both primary and secondary sources in collecting the materials for this report. Specifically, I used: (1) personal interviews with 50 men who previously were convicted of and incarcerated for ordinary property crime; (2) arrest and correctional records for each interview respondent; and (3) a systematic examination of autobiographies of comparable offenders -- insofar as they include descriptions of the later phases of the authors' criminal careers.

I employed a variety of strategies to identify, locate and contact the ex-convicts. Initially, I employed any sampling plans which seemed likely to ensure a wide range of offender types who presented a variety of characteristics in the later stages of their criminal careers. The later stages of data collection were guided by considerations of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Consequently, the interview subjects should be regarded as an availability sample. In addition to the 6 imprisoned subjects, I conducted 36 interviews in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, 4 in northern Ohio, and 3 in east Tennessee.

At the outset, I determined to limit the sample to men whose dominant pattern of criminality was ordinary property offenses such as burglary, robbery, auto theft, and grand larceny. I excluded from consideration offenders whose crimes mainly involved forgery, interpersonal violence, or white-collar offenses. A variety of social science research suggests that

offenders of the latter type may differ in important ways from ordinary property offenders (e.g., Lemert, 1953; 1958). By excluding them I was able to reduce the possible influence of confounding variables.

Initially, I identified a pool of potential subjects by listing the names of men who were released from any federal penal institution to either Washington, D.C. or Baltimore during the period 1955-60. This was accomplished by using files maintained by the U.S. Probation Offices in these two cities. (I reasoned that these men now would be old enough to justify discussing the later stages of their criminal careers.) I consulted available records -- primarily telephone directories and driver license records -- to secure current addresses and, where possible, telephone numbers for some of these men. I telephoned those for whom I could secure a number, explained the research to them, and asked for their help. I sent a letter to those men for whom I had no telephone number. The letter was worded rather vaguely so that it would not create problems for the addressee if some other person happened to read it. (A copy of the letter is included in the Appendix.)

Eventually, 22 of the men I interviewed were located via this process. They proved to be among the most stable and conventional of the men I interviewed. Consequently, early in the data collection I determined to use other strategies to identify subjects whose careers had taken a somewhat different turn (e.g., those still engaged in crime, or those who for some other reason were leading a less conventional life style). At

this point, after originally employing an academic research assistant, I employed a black ex-convict to work with me. He provided me with introductions to a number of hustlers, both active and retired. I then selected those whom I wished to interview -- 13 men from the total of 50 men.

To obtain a diversity of respondents, I also queried U.S. Probation Officers in four cities for the names of active or former parolees who possessed some theoretically interesting or unusual characteristics. (For example, one of the men located through this process had a lengthy criminal record in his youth but later maintained a crime-free record for fifteen years. This period was broken by his involvement in and subsequent incarceration for a bank burglary.) Five respondents were identified and interviewed in this way.

Also, I contacted an ex-convict whom I had interviewed as part of an earlier project (Shover, 1973). I interviewed him again and through his assistance I located and interviewed 3 additional men.

Finally, I interviewed six older men incarcerated in federal penal institutions. (Two of these men seem content to live their remaining days in the penitentiary. Both of them are almost 70 years old -- one has spent nearly 40 years in various jails and penitentiaries.)

Excepting the 6 imprisoned men for whom federal prison regulations prohibit payments, each subject was paid the sum of $50 for the interview. The interviews, all of which were tape recorded and later transcribed, ranged from 30 minutes to more

than six hours in length; the modal length was approximately two hours. A topical guide was used to give some minimal, uniform structure and coverage to the interviews. The guide was revised several times during the course of the study. (The final version of the interview guide is included in the Appendix.) Of the 50 interviews, I conducted forty-five. The remainder were conducted by the research assistants.

Initially, I assumed that it would be necessary for me to interview the men at a time and place of their choosing. Further, I assumed the men would be reluctant to come to my office at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) or to the offices of the U.S. Probation Officers -- where I was able to use an empty room to conduct interviews. I realized rather early, however, that this was not the case; although many of them were dependent upon public transportation, they generally were willing to meet me anywhere that was convenient. Consequently, I interviewed the men a variety of locations. Eleven men were interviewed in their own homes, 17 were interviewed in my office, either at the NIJ or at the University of Tennessee, ten were interviewed at the U.S. Probation offices, six were interviewed in prison, and six were interviewed in other locations (park bench, automobile, restaurant, public library, place of employment).

When the research project was in the planning stages, friends and colleagues suggested it would be extremely difficult to complete. They believed that I would meet with hostility and a lack of cooperation from the ex-convicts I contacted.

Gradually, as a result of their expressed concerns, I too developed doubts about the project's feasibility. However, once I began making contacts with the research subjects, I discovered that such concerns were unfounded. Believing that the research might in some way prevent younger men from repeating their mistakes, many of the subjects happily assisted me. As one man said:

> I looked forward to the interview. I could sit here and talk to you for hours and just tell you my theories, and what other people have done, 'cause I don't think I'm stupid. And I know what I'm talking about, I've been through it. . . . I would be glad to help [you] in any way. I think it is very interesting.

Apparently for such reasons, some of them declined my standard interview payment. (I eventually persuaded them to accept the payment, explaining that it would create accounting problems for me if they failed to do so.) The men seemed to welcome the opportunity to share their retrospective understandings of their youthful experiences. Nearly all the interviews were relaxed, even pleasant, experiences for me. This seemed true for the subjects as well. Impressionistically, more than half of the men -- approximately six of them expressed this spontaneously -- seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk openly and seriously about past experiences which they were unable to talk with others about in their day-to-day lives. In fact, at the conclusion of their interview, two men said they felt they should pay me for the interview. After saying this, one man told me:

That's the way I feel, 'cause I feel so much better.

Q: I'm not sure I understand that. Why?

A: I don't know, that's just the way I feel, 'cause you sort of give me the feeling to relax myself. And, like I say, I've seen myself but I never told anyone about the way I feel concerning myself before.

Clearly, then, the problems of identifying and locating former offenders can be difficult, time-consuming and tedious. Once located, however, they generally are much more approachable and helpful than our fears would lead us to believe.

There were some exceptions. One man I telephoned greeted my request with a great deal of hostility. Another initially seemed willing and cooperative, although the following day I received an inquiring call from his attorney and was told that the subject was not interested in participating in the project. Several men made but failed to keep interview appointments. Moreover, a few men were extremely nervous during the interview and while most of them relaxed as it progressed, two or three respondents clearly were relieved when it ended.

All the men were asked to sign a form granting me access to their correctional records. One subject declined to do so and the records of four other men could not be located. In addition to prison and parole records, I secured a current F.B.I. "rap sheet" for all but two members of the sample. They were of limited value. Typically, fingerprint notations from the District of Columbia Department of Corrections do not show the ultimate disposition of arrests. Whereas other jurisdictions

usually enter a separate notation when a person arrives at a penitentiary, D.C. officials do not. Consequently, rap sheets for men confined in D.C. correctional facilities usually do not show even that they received prison sentences. I had to rely on the subjects' recall, or information contained in other correctional records.

The official records were useful largely because they gave me a more complete picture of each man. They also provided a crude validity check for some materials elicited in the interviews. Although the interviews contained numerous minor factual errors, nearly all of these apparently resulted from faulty recall. Only two men related materials which, seemingly, were falsified intentionally. One insisted he never had used narcotics, even though his correctional records contradicted this assertion. Another man claimed to be a decorated Korean combat veteran although his records indicated that he had failed to report for induction, was a mediocre soldier, and made no mention of combat awards.

OFFENDER TYPES

Although each respondent had been convicted at least once of an ordinary property crime, this superficial similarity masks a great deal of diversity among them. This diversity is not without limits, however, for there are definite patterns among and types of offenders. On the basis of my previous research (Shover, 1971; 1973), I developed an ad hoc offender typology by cross-classifying two behavioral dimensions of potential

etiological importance: (1) the degree of financial success achieved via criminal behavior, and (2) whether or not one ever identified with and considered using crime as an occupational activity. Table 2-1 is produced by dichomotomizing and cross-classifying these two variables.

---- Table 2-1 about here ----

The cells of Table 2-1 can be interpreted to accommodate Irwin's (1970) typology of criminal identities. Using Table 2-1, I categorized each man whom I interviewed on the basis of (1) their own accounts of the crimes they committed, and (2) their official records, especially descriptions of their criminal offenses. Cell a consists of good thieves and hustlers, who used crime as an occupation and prospered at it. Five of the men I interviewed fall into this category. I designated them "successful" offenders. Cell c consists of men who achieved limited monetary success at crime, although at some time or another, however briefly, they entertained the notion of using crime as their sole source of income. Using Irwin's typology, they are disorganized criminals and state-raised youths. Thirty-six subjects fall into this category. These "unsuccessful" offenders rarely gained more than a few hundred dollars from any of their offenses, and most of them spent many years in prison. Cell d is reserved for square johns and lower-class men. I placed nine of the men in this category. I designated them as "uncommitted." Finally, cell b is reserved for those offenders who achieved a high degree of financial success at crime even though they did not see crime as a means of livelihood. I did

TABLE 2-1

TYPOLOGY OF OFFENDERS

Degree of Financial Success at Crime	Ever Wanted to Use Crime as an Occupational Activity	
	Yes	No
High	a	b
Low	c	d

not interview any men who fit into this category. Inasmuch as most of the men fall into category c, the findings reported here apply most accurately to them, although the other two types of offenders reported some similar experiences.

Using official records and the subjects' reports, Table 2-2 contains some limited descriptive data on the sample.

---- Table 2-2 about here ---

TABLE 2-2

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

	Total (N=50)	Unsuccessful Offenders (n=36)
Percent Black	52.0	63.9
Percent who served time as a juvenile	48.0	52.6
Mean ($\bar{X}$) adult felony convictions	2.7	3.1
Mean ($\bar{X}$) years of felony confinement	9.1	11.1
Age when interviewed		
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	51.0	51.2
Median	52.0	49.5
Current primary means of financial support:		
Full-time employment	18[a]	11[b]
Part-time/Occasional employment	10	9
Welfare or S.S.I.	3	3
Spouse/Family/Friends	6	3
Semi-retired/Retired	2	-
Crime	5	4
Principal type of crime committed by those known to be engaged in crime:		
Index crimes	2[a]	1[b]
Other felonies	4	2
Misdemeanors	6	5

[a]Does not include 6 incarcerated subjects. Therefore, n=44.

[b]Does not include 6 incarcerated subjects. Therefore, n=30.

CHAPTER 3

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

Here I present brief sketches of seven of the men. The men are typical of the theoretical categories presented in chapter 2. Consequently, I have grouped them into three categories which correspond to cells a, c, and d of Table 2-1. Much of the material is drawn from official correctional reports.

THE UNCOMMITTED

Lonnie Eaton

Lonnie Eaton was born and reared in the D.C. area. When he was quite young, the parental home was broken by the parents' deaths. After that time he lived with various relatives, eventually spending most of his time with a sister and brother-in-law. Unfortunately, relations were not good, especially between Lonnie and his brother-in-law. At the age of 16, Lonnie dropped out of school. On his 17th birthday, he enlisted in the Marine Corps. According to a presentence report completed several months later, he did so "because he didn't care to live with his brother-in-law any longer."

Lonnie did not adapt well to the military and was AWOL on four occasions. During the fourth and final occasion, he went to a friend's home and, gradually, over a period of days, the idea of committing crimes took shape. Lonnie remembered that his brother-in-law kept a pistol in his home. Lonnie took the pistol, intending to use it to commit crimes. Within one week, Lonnie and two other boys broke into several buildings, stole at

least one automobile, and committed at least two armed robberies of gas stations and convenience stores. Apprehended, he received a sentence of 2-12 years and was transferred to the Federal Reformatory at Chillicothe, Ohio.

The institutional classification report says of Lonnie Eaton: "Youthful in appearance, he has a pleasant manner and does not display any of the aggressiveness that one might expect from the nature of his offenses." Indeed, in the vernacular of correctors, Lonnie Eaton made an "excellent adjustment" during his confinement at Chillicothe. His entire period of incarceration was spent on a clerical assignment in federal penal industries and he maintained a clear conduct record. A parole progress report prepared three years after Mr. Eaton began his sentence remarked that he

> has maintained above average work reports from the beginning. His supervisor states he has always found Eaton to be reliable and trustworthy in his work, and possessing a good wholesome attitude . . . [He] is an excellent worker. In July 19--, he was named representative of his quarters to the 70th Inmate Advisory Council . . . He has matured from an 18 year old boy to a 21 year old man and is considered one of the best inmates of the institution by both staff and fellow inmates.

Lonnie was paroled after spending nearly four years in confinement, including nearly six months awaiting trial. When paroled, however, he was turned over to police in a D.C. suburb

to face additional charges for the crimes which led to his incarceration. He appeared in court, and the charges were dismissed.

> I can remember when [the judge] let me go. They said, "you've been released." And I walked all the way across that bridge from Arlington, Virginia home. I didn't even want a cab. It was raining like the dickens outside . . . It didn't bother me at all. It was cold and it was raining but, boy, I'll tell you, it was the best thing in the world -- to know that I could walk across there like that.

A day or so after receiving one of my letters, Mr. Eaton called me and I explained the research project to him. We met at my office on a Saturday morning to do the interview. Mr. Eaton proved to be a helpful, interesting subject. He was, however, extremely nervous. On the recording of the interview, one can easily hear the distinct smack-like noises he made as he tried to moisten his lips and mouth. He is one of only three persons in the sample who has never told another person about his experience of arrest, conviction and confinement.

Now 45 years old, Mr. Eaton has worked over 20 years at the same skilled job -- the installation and repair of industrial equipment. He acquired this job only a few months after parole, and except for changing employers once, he has worked at it since that time. His work pays well, and the fear of repercussions are the principal reason he never disclosed his criminal record to others. There were occasions when he feared his criminal record

would become known -- at least twice he underwent a security check as part of his work. However, no one ever indicated knowledge of anything unusual about his application or background.

Shortly after his release from Chillicothe he looked up an old girlfriend. They began dating, and married a few months later. Although four children were born in rather rapid succession, the marriage was not a good one and there was much conflict. Marital problems were the focus of many comments in the parole officer's reports during the nearly 9 years that Lonnie was under supervision. By the time he was discharged from parole the the parole officer's report indicated some improvement in the marriage. He noted further:

> The subject has gotten along excellently. He has a good job, is buying his home, has not been arrested and generally is making a fine adjustment. . . . [H]e is friendly and cooperative. The chances of his, again, being arrested are minimal.

The parole officer's prediction proved correct. Mr. Eaton's rap sheet shows no arrests since his release from Chillicothe. However, at the time of the interview he was in the midst of a divorce. He also indicated that his wife once had him arrested -- and he spent one night in jail -- on a charge of non-support. The likelihood that Mr. Eaton ever again will be involved in any serious criminality seems extremely remote.

In conversation today, Mr. Eaton's comments do not sound atypical of a white, lower middle-class individual. Like nearly

all my respondents who never were not heavily involved in crime to begin with, Mr. Eaton believes it was good that he was arrested; otherwise, he and his friends might have continued committing crimes until someone was killed. At the same time, and although he didn't find incarceration difficult, he found it a waste of his life. He resolved never again to do anything which could result in confinement. Today, Mr. Eaton supports capital punishment and acknowledges that he favors a "law'n order" approach to crime and offenders. Asked about the irony of this given his own criminal record, he stated:

> I figure what I did was bad. I figure what I did was -- they was kind of hard on me. I think 2-12 years is a hard sentence for what I did, being that I'm a first offender. I mean, I never did this before . . . I think I got it hard. I think they made me spend four years, out of my life, the first time I done anything like this.

Again, like other subjects who essentially are square johns, he couples these sentiments with a rather critical appraisal of today's criminal sentences:

> [I] look at these things today. And these guys out here for three or four armed robberies get two years, and out on probation within a year. That's not justice.

Wesley Barnett

The youngest of six children, Wesley Barnett was born in the rural South to a family of sharecroppers. The family moved

to D.C. when Wesley was 11 years old. The father, a heavy drinker, separated from the mother the following year. Later, according to correctional records, he was convicted of homicide and incarcerated in the penitentiary. Following the parents' separation, one of Wesley's brothers was convicted of robbery and served a sentence in a state penitentiary. Another brother -- perhaps the same one, the records are unclear -- later was incarcerated in a federal reformatory.

Correctional records indicate that Wesley only attended school through the third grade and dropped out at age sixteen. He spent a portion of his school years in a special program for children considered retarded. (Subsequent testing at Chillicothe indicated he was of borderline intelligence.) He was placed on probation at age 12 for the theft of a bicycle but had no other juvenile record.

Mr. Barnett's first marriage occurred when he was 18 years old. He and his wife eventually had two children. The marriage was stormy and he apparently maintained steady employment, Wesley spent much of his time "running around and drinking" with one of his brothers. At age 20 he and another man, after spending an evening in several bars, assaulted a man on the street and took his wallet. They were arrested a few days later and Mr. Barnett spent nearly one year in the D.C. Jail awaiting disposition of his case. Eventually, he was sentenced to 2-6 years, which he served at Chillicothe.

Mr. Barnett spent approximately two years at Chillicothe and worked in the chair factory the entire time. A report written

just prior to Wesley's parole noted that he had maintained a clear conduct record and had made "outstanding reports" on his work assignment. It stated, further, that

> [Wesley] has been consistently well-behaved, mixes with a mature group, and is very considerate of others. He has always been cooperative and willing, had needed only a minimum of supervision, and has always made a careful conscientious effort to do a good job.

He attended evening academic classes and was described as a "quiet, pleasant person who [takes] interest in his work."

Paroled after two years at Chillicothe, Mr. Barnett returned to D.C. to find, by his account, his wife pregnant. Regardless, he moved back in with her and their two children. The relationship was conflict-ridden and Wesley's responses to the conflict apparently were rather simple, if indeed not primitive. For example, he and his wife quarreled over her use of the telephone. Eventually, according to Mr. Barnett,

> I called the phone company up and told them to come and [take out the phone.] And they said they'd be down there in a half-hour, forty-five minutes. I waited that long, I waited about an hour, hour and a half, two hours. They never did come. So I took it and snatched it out of the wall, threw it out the window.

On another occasion he reacted to marital conflict by leaving home. He moved, temporarily, to another city, and it was not until later that he considered the possible repercussions for his status as a parolee -- he failed to secure permission to move.

Eventually, however, he contacted his parole officer and returned to D.C. The parole officer placed him in jail for several days before a decision was made to continue his parole. Eventually, Mr. Barnett decided the marriage could not be salvaged, and he moved out on his own.

Throughout his term on parole, and continuing for several years thereafter, Mr. Barnett worked as a counterman and short-order cook in a small restaurant. The records indicate that he was a steady, dependable worker. He maintained this line of employment until he began construction work some 16 years ago.

I found Mr. Barnett's name in the telephone directory and called him. He readily consented to talk with me. He and his second wife, and 17 year old son, live in the apartment where I interviewed him.

Mr. Barnett proved to be a rather simple, unreflective respondent, one who answers questions quickly and with little elaboration. Several weeks before the interview, his driver's license was revoked for 30 days when he refused to take a breathalyzer test following a minor traffic accident. Besides the license revocation Mr. Barnett was cited for driving while impaired, but was hopeful his license would be returned the following day. He did tell me that several months before this incident he was cited for driving while intoxicated.

From some of his other comments it seemed apparent that he spends a substantial portion of his leisure time drinking and socializing in bars and taverns. He has tatoos on both arms and on his back, all of which he acquired during his stay at

Chillicothe. Overall, he seems to epitomize the type of offender Irwin (1970) sketched as the lower-class man.

Assessing his incarceration from the vantage point of the nearly 30 years which have passed, Mr. Barnett states that he

> brought it on myself. I might have been [bitter] at first, you know, 'cause I was young and just didn't care then, more or less. That's the way I feel . . . [I was] just young and wild, that's all. Just didn't care about nothing . . . [I'd] do anything, just didn't care.

However, he says that he learned from his experiences.

> It don't pay to get in no trouble . . . When that judge says "2-6 years," my knees buckled. He says "not less than 2 and no more than six." I never will forget that. My knees buckled, too.

Except for worrying about his wife and children, his two years of incarceration were not difficult. He gambled and engaged in some petty hustles and while he is not afraid of confinement, he sees it as a waste of time and a severe deprivation. He has learned that "the only way you can get anything honest is to work for it. Ain't nobody gonna give you nothing for nothing, you know."

THE UNSUCCESSFUL

Robert Timmons

Robert Timmons' name was given to me by another member of the sample, David Colby, who once had been incarcerated with him. Mr. Colby said he knew where Mr. Timmons was employed and would

ask him to give me a call. Later that day I received a phone call from Mr. Timmons, I explained the study, and we made plans to meet later for an interview.

An only child, Mr. Timmons was reared by his mother, whose regular employment left him with little supervision. As Mr. Timmons tells it today, "my mother didn't have too much control over me because I ran in the streets. I was a street child, really . . . I was in the streets most of the time." He first came to the attention of officials at the age of 9, charged with being incorrigible. A report from that time states that he is "constantly truant from school, stays out late, lies, and steals." Released on probation, Robert was placed in a boarding home. However, because of misconduct and running away, eventually he spent some time in the D.C. Industrial Home School at Blue Plains, Virginia.

Robert was before the juvenile court again at 13 for taking a bicycle (placed on probation) and at age 15 for housebreaking (again placed on probation). When he appeared in court again at age 15, this time charged with unlawful entry and escape from the detention home, he was committed to the Bureau of Prisons' National Training School for Boys (NTS).

After three escapes -- during one of them he was charged with assaulting a woman with an iron bar -- and while not yet 17 years old, Mr. Timmons was transferred to Chillicothe. He remained there for two years before returning to NTS and a parole two months later.

Less than two months after his release from NTS, Robert was

convicted of attempted housebreaking and received a 60 days sentence. Released, less than one year later he was sentenced to 6-18 months on a charge of assault with a deadly weapon. Again, within a few weeks of his release Mr. Timmons was convicted on multiple charges of carrying a deadly weapon, unlawful entry, and larceny. He received combined sentences of 15 months. Within one year he was convicted of robbery and received concurrent sentences of 1-3 years and 2-7 years. He began this sentence at the D.C. Reformatory at Lorton, Virginia. Following a knife fight with another convict and the loss of 200 days of "good time," Mr. Timmons was transferred to the federal penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia. After serving nearly 6 years, he was discharged via conditional release. Six months after release from Atlanta Mr. Timmons and another man were arrested and, eventually, convicted on multiple charges of armed robbery. They were arrested shortly after making their getaway from a cleaners which they had robbed. He received a total sentence of 9-27 years, which he began at Atlanta.

Mr. Timmons has been a Muslim for many years, and openly acknowledged this during his various period of incarceration. Along with what I assume was his own inability or refusal to kowtow to correctional personnel, his religious beliefs and his insistence on practicing them probably added substantially to the problems he encountered from the correctional establishment. As he says today: "See, now, I was defiant. And for a black person to be defiant in an institution, he's asking for trouble." During his stay at Atlanta Mr. Timmons was accused of

proselytizing and with holding a "cult meeting" on the prison yard. After one year at Atlanta he was recommended for transfer to the federal penitentiary at Alcatraz Island, California. The report which recommended transfer charged that "he is a rabid racial agitator and is constantly trying to stir up trouble in that connection." Further, it charged that "he is a definite menace to the morale and good order of the institution." Convinced of his dangerousness, the Bureau of Prisons transferred Robert Timmons to Alcatraz, where he remained for more than 8 years.

Today, Mr. Timmons states that when transferred to Alcatraz he believed he never would be released alive from confinement. This belief only served to reinforce his resistance: "I was really defiant, even to the warden. And I said, if I have to die, I'm gonna die just like I am. [I] said, nobody's gonna change me." As good as his word, Mr. Timmons proved to be a problem for the prison officials at Alcatraz. Although he did not receive many misconduct reports, included among them were reports for fighting, fighting in the dining room, insolence, and refusal to obey orders.

He did, however, acquire some experience at a variety of work assignments while there and, eventually, worked as a barber. He continued to practice his religion -- a report notes that he is "very faithful" to it -- and was seen by the prison staff as "race conscious." Despite the ominous tones of the official reports, Mr. Timmons states that he began to change himself while at Alcatraz.

In the early 1960s, when the Bureau of Prisons closed Alcatraz, Mr. Timmons was returned to Atlanta. Today he states that the transfer made him feel "fantastic" and "for the first time I felt free." Nevertheless, he remained there for another 6 years and, while doing this time, continued the process of self-change which he states began during his days at Alcatraz.

Mr. Timmons' final release from confinement occurred nearly fourteen years ago. He was arrested approximately one year after release, but the charges were dismissed. This was his last contact with the criminal justice system.

The contrast between the Robert Timmons described in his correctional records and the man I interviewed is substantial. I found him to be pleasant, almost ebullient, and interested in my research. Now nearly 60 years old, he has been employed for the past 13 years as a hospital technician. There is nothing about him or his demeanor to suggest that he was "state-raised" and has spent nearly half of his life in correctional institutions.

Although Mr. Timmons married after his final release from prison, he is separated from his wife at the present time and lives in an apartment in a Washington, D.C. suburb. He berates himself for what he regards as an excessive personal indebtedness but otherwise expresses happiness and contentment with his present life. He no longer is active in Islam because his fondness for women conflicts with its teachings and he doesn't want "to be a hypocrite." He says that he enjoys his work, and this is confirmed by the way he talks about it.

Mr. Timmons' mother died several years ago. Until that

time, he believed he had no living relatives. However, he was contacted by a woman who told him she was his aunt. Through his newly-discovered aunt he learned that he has several step-siblings. The discovery of family ties has a great deal of meaning to him now. He visits his family often and obviously enjoys the warmth of these contacts. As yet, none of his relatives know about his prison record, but he plans some day to tell them about it. As he puts it, "I would like them to know that I haven't always been the nice person I am today."

In discussing his life, Mr. Timmons divides it into two portions. The first part is filled with the experiences of youthful misconduct, adult crime and years of imprisonment. The second part consists of his final few years of incarceration and the years since his release. He is proud of his transition, in defiance of the supposed odds and experts, from part one to part two.

Carl Horton

A rather passive, quiet man in his mid-50s, Carl Horton appears to be overwhelmed by life, especially by the downward turns his has taken. Most of Mr. Horton's youthful dreams, both legitimate and illegitimate, have vanished. He does not have regular employment. Instead, he relies on day labor and work with self-employed friends who occasionally require help.

The youngest of five children, Carl's parents separated when he was approximately 12 years old. Carl remained with his father for a year, and then joined his mother and siblings who since had migrated to D.C. There was very little family cohesion and

Carl, being the youngest, was left to fend for himself. Although he apparently was free of official involvement in delinquency, he began drinking heavily by age twenty-one, a habit he has maintained his entire life.

Mr. Horton attributes nearly all his criminality to the combined effects of momentary need for money and the influence of alcohol. He says that when pressured for cash and intoxicated he is easily led and also tends to do "stupid" things. Mr. Horton never has robbed anyone, and estimates that he has committed no more than 10 burglaries in his entire life. They were unskilled and yielded little return; he noted that he never made more than $200 from any of the crimes he committed. By his calculations, Carl has spent nearly 17 years incarcerated -- this seems too high. However, it is impossible to determine with precision since virtually all his arrests and confinements have occurred in D.C. -- and, in fact, he was on mandatory release at the time of the interview.

Today, Mr. Horton has few occupational and social resources from which to draw. He never married but did father a child by a girlfriend some years ago. He has no contact with either of them today. His siblings live in another city and, so long as his fortunes are down, Mr. Horton avoids contact with them, primarily because of the embarassment it would cause him. Mr. Horton feels that he wasted many years of his life and, indeed, tends to speak about it in the past tense. He is dissatisfied with his present life and believes that his advancing age makes it unlikely that he will be able to secure work and a steady income.

Asked to describe a typical day, Mr. Horton told me:

> Well, I get up about 5:30. I shave and wash up. I come out and if my friend, William, don't have any jobs, I go down to, go catch the bus to Georgia and Alaska -- that's the District line -- and stand around and wait for somebody to need somebody to dig footings, or pour concrete, or something like that. . . . And I would stay there until about 9:30. If I don't catch out [get day labor] by 9:30, I hitchhike a ride back downtown. If I got money, I catch the bus. But if I don't have money, I'd hitchhike a ride. And I come downtown and stop around two or three places where the guys hang around. They drinkin' wine and stuff like that. Somebody always got something. We drink some wine or, you know, whatever. And if I got anything at home, I go home and eat me a sandwich or something like that. If not, I'll go around to one of these places where they give away free food. They got about 3 or 4 places around here where you can go and all you have to do is line up and go in and eat. . . . That keeps you holdin' together, in physical condition, you know. That's about it.

Ray Jackson

Carl Horton and Robert Timmons are clear examples of men who did not succeed at crime; they realized minimal economic returns yet spent many years in prison. The next man I discuss, Ray

Jackson, is similar to them, with one difference: he continues his criminal pursuits and clings to the belief that he yet can acquire the monetary returns to reverse the pattern of his earlier years at crime. It is too early to know whether his high hopes will be realized. However, despite his plans, his previous experiences indicate clearly that he belongs with other men who have been unsuccessful at crime.

Although he is in his early 40s, Ray Jackson has been convicted of felonies on four different occasions, spending approximately 17 years in prison. Referred to me by another subject, I interviewed him at his home. He was on parole at the time, having been released from the penitentiary several months earlier.

I was able to secure very few official records on Mr. Jackson so most of what I learned about him and his background was gleaned from the interview. Ray was born in Baltimore, and reared in a small, intact family. His first arrest, at age 11, was for burglary, which resulted in probation. Three years later he was arrested for auto theft and sentenced to the state training school where he remained for 9 months. After nearly one year on parole Ray was recommitted to the training school. However, he ran away less than 2 weeks after his recommitment.

Mr. Jackson was arrested in another state, charged with auto theft, and sentenced to 3 years. He was three months short of his eighteenth birthday when he began his sentence in the state reformatory. He served almost the entire 3 year sentence. Correctional records indicate that he encountered many problems.

In the reformatory, Ray was involved in several fights with other convicts, was implicated or suspected of thefts, and generally displayed "aggressive tactics." Correctional officials charged that Ray had a "hostile and resentful attitude" and "constantly displayed contempt for the regulations and routine." After a few months in the reformatory, he was transferred to the state penitentiary. Mr. Jackson's behavior showed little change in the penitentiary setting, and he was tagged as a "paranoid schizophrenic." After a few months he was transferred to the state's institution for the criminally insane.

Today, Mr. Jackson states that because of his age and youthful appearance he was subjected to sexual pressures from other convicts in the reformatory. Predictably, these problems persisted, if indeed they did not intensify, in the penitentiary setting.

> I was only 18 <u>then</u>. And I was way too young for that institution. And, yeah, there was so much pressure on me there. I think I just, well, I <u>did</u> lose it; there was no doubt about it. Then when I went to the [unit for the insane], I spent, all the time I was there I spent locked up.

Nevertheless, "hospital" records indicate that he was involved in an incident described as a "mutiny" and "riot," during which he was in "possession of dangerous instrumentalities." Denied early release, Ray was described as a "very dangerous, assaultive, and paranoid schizophrenic" who "has been involved in assaultive behavior and has shown a persistent pattern of hostility."

Looking back at his first period of felony confinement Mr. Jackson says that it "was a hell of an experience for me" and "they really put it on me." He became extremely bitter about the treatment he received from justice and correctional officials during his initial term of imprisonment.

> Q.: Do you still have a lot of bitterness toward prisons generally, and prison employees?
>
> A.: Yeah, I've got a lot of bitterness toward doctors, preachers, social workers, and people who call the shots at the penitentiary. Like the warden, the associate wardens, the brass . . .
>
> Q.: You say you hold some animosity toward social workers. Why?
>
> A.: Well, I don't know. I just always associated that kind of work with trying to improve other people's way of living, or something, you know. I thought they were there to <u>help</u>. And you know, it's, hell, they're so caught up in the system, they're just there to draw a paycheck, you know. They don't really give a fuck about what happens . . . Psychiatrists and psychologists, they're worse. Especially the psychiatrists. I'd say I had some of my worst experiences at their hands. They just don't give a shit at all.
>
> Q.: Why do you say they're worse?
>
> A.: Well, the worst places I've been in were run by a psychiatrist . . . The doctors know all [about the sadistic treatment]. The doctors weren't doing it themselves, but they knew what was happening. They call the shots . . . I'm embarassed to even try to tell somebody some of the things I've seen, 'cause it's just too unbelievable.

He harbors very little bitterness toward the other prisoners who preyed upon him during this time. As he says now:

> I was more pissed at authorities for putting me in a position where I would go through all that shit . . . That's not only doing 3 years, that's putting me through a lot of torment besides.

Released at age 20, Ray returned to his mother's home. Today, however, he says that when he "got out of that [institution] I wasn't really prepared to live anywhere else, other than a penitentiary. They really put a trip on me." After a few months in the free world he was arrested on a charge of assault and battery. Convicted, he served 6 months in the county jail. A few days after his release he was arrested for burglary and unarmed robbery. He was convicted of these charges -- and also a charge of attempted jail breaking -- and sentenced to the state penitentiary. He served nearly 6 years before his parole. After less than two weeks in the free world he was arrested on a charge of armed robbery and returned to the penitentiary, remaining there for 6 more years. Paroled again, he remained in the free world for nearly 5 years before being arrested for burglary and safe cracking. Sentenced to 2-10 years, Mr. Jackson was paroled after a year and a half, several months before I

interviewed him.

Mr. Jackson says that he did not get along well during his early prison terms and spent much of his time in "the hole." Later this pattern changed.

> 'Course, after awhile, you know, I was in there so many years I finally began to -- I learned how to manipulate the system, you know. And, like when I went back this last time, you know, when I went in, I got the right cell block, the right job, you know. I manipulated the system to work for me. But most guys don't know how to do that. But it took me years to learn that, too . . . Like this last 10 years or so I done, it was real easy time . . . I didn't do that much of it in the hole or anything. I didn't have that hard of a time.

He completed many educational programs while in the penitentiary and later was an instructor in a vocational program.

During the early years of his second lengthy prison sentence -- 6 years -- Mr. Jackson resolved to turn away from future crime and try to "make it" by working. However, he remained in the penitentiary for several more years and gradually became increasingly pessimistic about his chances of succeeding at legitimate work. Nevertheless, when released on parole, he felt that he "wanted to get a job and work for a living" and that he "wanted to stay out of the penitentiary." Once again, however, he says he was ill prepared for life in the free world:

> I got released from a maximum security institution. And the whole line of thinking in one of them

> institutions . . . is altogether different than what it would be in the world, the free world. And my thinking was geared to that penitentiary. And . . . it took me a long time to sort of get my feet on the ground . . . I was far too violent, for one thing. And people were uneasy around me, and it showed, you know. I was just too violent, and I probably brought a lot of that penitentiary paranoia out with me. So it seemed like the only people I could relate to . . . were other ex-convicts who'd done a lot of time, like I had . . . At that time I didn't really feel like I had a whole lot to talk to [other people about]. I personally had never been out of the penitentiary enough.

He made some effort to work but supported himself primarily by "petty hustles" he learned in the penitentiary. After one year on the streets, he decided to devote his time and energies to becoming a thief.

Mr. Jackson states that he had a "good name" from his years in prison and also had established contacts with some men who were skilled thieves, primarily burglars. He began stealing with them. He states that the financial returns from their burglaries were high and he lived well during his more than 5 years of freedom -- his longest period of uninterrupted freedom since age fifteen. Eventually, however, their good fortune ended with arrests, and Mr. Jackson was sentenced to 2-10 years.

Today he intends to resume his criminal pursuits. Mr. Jackson views his earlier criminality as nothing more than

"getting into trouble" and he contrasts this with the crimes he committed during his earlier, 5 year period of freedom.

> I started stealing when I was a kid but . . . the trouble I got into, I was really never after no financial gain. I was just, it was more of a delinquent problem than I was trying to achieve anything. I never really decided that I wanted to steal anything for profit until I was about 35 . . . [A]ll the time I did prior to this last sentence , you know, I never made no money at all . . . If I'dve got away with the things I did I wouldn't have made no money . . . Now I know that's [stealing] what I want to do . . . I just don't want to hurt no one. I don't want to do anything violent to hurt anyone . . . But I'm going to steal.

I asked Mr. Jackson if he has any regrets about the past 20 years of his life.

> Well, I just wish I had gotten my shit together a little bit earlier about what I wanted to do and what I didn't want to do. I wish I'd been able to make a decision about what I wanted to do with my life a lot sooner than I did . . . I regret the fact that I wasted so much of my life for bullshit in the penitentiary, you know, where I wasn't even trying to accomplish anything. I just really flushed it down the drain for nothing. I regret that. Like this last sentence I did, I really don't feel bad about it . . . It was a

> different kind of a bust than the other ones I had.

Ray says that he weighed the potential gains and losses carefully and concluded that he has little to lose by returning to theft. So long as his crimes are non-violent he risks, in the event of arrest, rather short prison sentences. He feels reassured and confident because he believes he is risking little more than 18 months confinement if arrested. He wants to be a "good thief." I asked him why this is his ambition.

> Well, at this stage of my life I think that's the only thing left open to me, that I can really profit from. I'm not going to be successful working. I don't want to work. I don't want that day-to-day grind and I don't want that regimentation that goes along with working a job. 'Course to be successful stealing you've got to have a lot of regimentation . . . You got rules to follow, too. But they're easier for me to follow.

Mr. Jackson doesn't "want to take no unnecessary chances," but says that he is "going to try to make some money." He is optimistic about the future:

> [A]ll the experiences, all the things I've learned over the years, the people I've met -- mainly the people I've met -- just sort of finally jelled for me, you know. We're not talking about stealing no $300 or $400 or something. We're talking about, we're talking about pretty big money, you know . . . I'm interested in stealing as long as the money's right. I'm not

> interested in stealing just to be stealing. I'm just strictly interested in the money. If it's profitable, I'll do it. And I think what I know, and the people I know, can be profitable now. It was profitable when I was out before . . . Like I say, things just began to jell for me . . . I <u>can</u> make money from stealing. The chances of me getting busted are pretty slim, you know . . . I know the odds are on my side, as far as getting away with a crime.

Ray indicates, however, that he only has a few more years to devote to stealing -- "another six or eight years, or something like that" -- before he gets too old to steal. He intends to steal until age catches up with him, his skills become obsolete, or the threatened penalties are raised to a point where he is unwilling to gamble his future.

THE SUCCESSFUL

<u>Jack Noble</u>

Today, Jack Noble is in his upper-60s and lives with his second wife in a quiet, older suburban neighborhood near Baltimore. His two grown children live nearby and visit often. His wife purchased their house during Mr. Noble's final term of incarceration and few if any of his neighbors know much about his background or reputation. But, when asked if he thinks of himself as a <u>retired thief</u>, he immediately replies: "Well, what else? That's all I've done all my life." His statement is an exaggeration, of course, since he did hold some legitimate jobs

during his working life, and operated his own business for a short time. But, it is substantially correct. For the better part of 40 years, Jack Noble worked as a burglar.

Mr. Noble was incarcerated first at age 14 for auto theft, an offense for which he claims innocence. He was committed to the state training school, an austere place where the treatment was harsh.

> Now, you see, at a tender age . . . you can build up a pretty good well of hate from being mishandled and abused . . . And I'll guarantee you, when you came out of there, you would either never steal again or you didn't fear God himself.

Jack spent approximately 18 months in the training school. Several years after his release, in the depths of the great Depression, he was sentenced to the state reformatory, again for auto theft. He was released after serving approximately 2 years.

Following his release from the state reformatory, Jack became serious about stealing. Up until that time, his offenses were rare, and generally an incidental result of youthful fun, playfulness, or trouble. As he tells it today, he was in the county jail for some reason and was passing time by playing poker with some other jail inmates, one of whom was a well-respected thief.

> And this guy, he was, locally, he was a pretty big man. Now, I don't mean he was a big man [in the sense] that he was a local Mafia figure, or an overlord, or something like that. But he was pretty well respected

in the community, being a very capable man. He was a thief, ran gambling joints and after-hours joints. And I was a young, stand-up kid. So, it was a kind of a mutual respect.

The two won all the money from their fellow inmates, but then decided to return some of it so the others would be able to buy cigarettes and candy for the remainder of the week. This gesture impressed the older man. According to Mr. Noble, several weeks later the older man "pulls up in front of the house. Nice car. Went for a ride, went out and had dinner."

Mr. Noble began spending increasing amounts of time with the older man. Eventually, he was asked to serve as the driver on a burglary. This led to participation in further burglaries. However, he always remained outside while his confederates made the entry and did the inside work. Mr. Noble says that in those days older thieves were often reluctant to teach younger men all their skills, fearing that the students eventually would have little need for their teachers. However, on several occasions he was needed inside and was able to observe the others as they by-passed alarms and opened safes. Later still, Mr. Noble and his tutor planned to "take off a score" but the latter was unable to participate. He encouraged Jack to go ahead and "get the place."

> So, I went in and attacked the damn thing [safe]. I got a local guy with me and bing, bing, bing and the damn door swung open. I liked to fainted: "well, I'll be damned . . . Look at that" . . . I got a hell of a break, you know . . . I knew what to do, but I didn't

have any confidence in myself because I never tried it before.

Mr. Noble continued stealing with his older colleague, who had connections in several parts of the country. The two of them traveled and "worked" in many states. During a period of 25 years he was arrested often but managed to avoid incarceration on all but one occasion -- he served 3 years for breaking and entering. Mr. Noble was married and divorced during this period. He lived comfortably and spent his leisure time, in the style of most thieves, traveling, gambling and partying. Later he married again and secured legitimate employment. His marriage, job, and the birth of the couple's first child caused him to cease crime almost entirely. As he puts it today:

> Right after my daughter was born I was working for a reputable company in town, making a living, getting along all right . . . I could see myself looking forward to no problems . . . And I was not what you would call resigned to my fate, I was quite content with it.

This interlude ended, however, when Mr. Noble received a call from another thief who assured him that he knew where "there's twelve tons" of money.

> I said "good, I'll be down." Well, you can't hold a responsible position and just take off when you want to, right? In any field. And I wasn't in a position where I was an executive or working in an office, where I got to have a couple of days off "to go visit my sick

mother." It doesn't work that way. [So], I just weighed the job against the potential that I had to gain, and I had to quit.

By the late 1950s, Mr. Noble regularly received information about individuals who had made large sums of money illegally that they were hoarding. He began to specialize in burglaries of this type (e.g., bootleggers, professional gamblers) and traveled throughout the United States in his work.

At age 50 he and two other men traveled to one of the western states to commit a burglary. They checked into a motel and contacted their "tipster." However, local police, alerted to the presence of suspicious persons at the motel raided their room. They found a combination of explosives and burglary tools. Despite their intentions, Mr. Noble and his colleagues had not yet committed a crime. Believing they were arrested and convicted wrongfully, they waged a lengthy legal battle to avoid incarceration. Eventually, an appellate court overturned his conviction, but the issue was moot by that point since he already had served four and one-half years in prison. After his parole Mr. Noble secured legitimate employment and worked for nearly 8 years until his retirement.

Mr. Noble did not terminate his criminal activities entirely during the first few years after his parole; however, he was involved in only a few burglaries. As time passed, these activities declined to the point that now he no longer participates. However, he still "thinks like a thief" and insists there remains the possibility that he would return to

stealing. It would require an extremely large inducement "but, still, I'll be honest enough to say that I could still be enticed, sure. Why, why should I fool myself?"

Eventually, as he aged and terminated direct involvement in burglary, the information he received from others, which is essential to the thief, changed in kind.

> I think when somebody contacts me now they want something. They don't want to <u>give</u> me something. Where, over the years before, they wanted to <u>give</u> <u>me</u> something. Of course, they wanted to acquire my expertise or ability or further connection into some other field. But now, it's for something; then, it was to give something.

Mr. Noble says that the information he receives about potential burglaries has "diminished practically to a trickle."

Much of the reason for this is grounded in shared beliefs about age and the decline of one's capabilities. Thieves are no more immune from these assumptions and beliefs than are those in the straight world.

> [T]here's many things that a man 25 or 30 can do that a man 60, 65 can't do. He's much more flexible. He's quicker. Now, this doesn't apply to all individuals, of course. But the man of 30, he can out think, out perform -- he's got more strength, quicker witted, reflexes are 100% better than a man of sixty . . . If you was going to have a major operation, now, would you go to a surgeon that is 65, or would you go to a

> surgeon that's forty? . . . [The younger surgeon] has learned later techniques. His hand is more sure, he is not stuck in a mold where he only does things one way. His mind is fresher . . . And still, he's not green because he's been practicing for, what, 10 years.

But if one no longer can play an active, direct part in scores as he ages, there are other roles which are open to the aging thief. He can, for example, search out potentially lucrative scores and pass along the information to others, who can exploit it. So, even as they taper their direct involvement in crime, "they always got their eyes open for some mark they can give somebody else that's still operating." With time, however, even this type of work becomes less common as one's contemporaries die and old connections dry up. For some, however, there remains an occasional opportunity even as they drift out of crime. Mr. Noble gave some hypothetical examples:

> A couple of thieves are coming to town on a <u>hot</u> one. They don't want to check into a hotel, in case they try to make the hotels later on, looking for check-ins. "You got anyplace we can stay?" "Yeah, bring them out to my house" . . . [Or,] "we need a switch over car, just in case ours is seen. We'll take the switch over on the mark and then come back and pick ours up. Do you know where we can get a car?"

As he says, even for aging thieves, "<u>somewhere</u>, along the line, they got -- just to relay a phone message -- <u>somewhere</u> they've got to get their finger in the pie."

Mr. Noble says that he would have preferred to spend his working life in a legitimate pursuit, but he didn't see sufficient opportunity for him there. He was determined that he would not be a "working stiff" who is stuck in a menial, deadend job. Consequently, he has few regrets about the way he chose to spend his working life. He is not <u>ashamed</u> of his past. Moreover, in some ways Jack feels that his life has been preferable to the one lived by square johns who devote their lives to low-paying, "man-killing" jobs.

> I don't know his life. He doesn't know mine. I know portions of his life, but he doesn't even know a portion of mine. [The average square john] has no idea, but <u>I</u> have an insight into <u>his</u> . . . I know definitely that I am more traveled, and my line of thinking is much more varied. I'm far more widely educated, in every phase of life . . . When you're a thief, or at least presumably a professional thief, you make your living by stealing. Then your mind is alert and alive. It has to be.

Today Mr. Noble, an extremely self-reliant individual, and his wife live in a style which seems indistinguishable from that of most couples in which the husband labored as a blue-collar craftsman.

<u>Johnny Price</u>

I interviewed Johnny Price in the suburban home he shares with his second wife and stepdaughter. A distinguished looking man in his mid-60s, he was on parole at the time, having recently

served nearly two years in prison. He drives a new luxury automobile, and owns a farm in another state. His recent felony conviction was his first in more than 40 years, a remarkable record considering the fact that he has worked all that time as a card and craps hustler and con man.

Born and reared in the southwest, Johnny Price spent nearly five years in various state penal institutions during the great Depression. Released from his fourth sentence at the age of 22, Johnny left his native state. He worked for several weeks and hustled part time until he met an older hustler from his home state. He then quit his employment and began hustling full time. He did not hold another legitimate job until two years ago when his parole officer pressed him to secure one as a condition of parole.

Johnny was reared in a large, intact family. The father worked as a construction craftsman, but the family's size meant that family resources were very limited. Today Mr. Price speaks of both his parents as "good people," but dwells on the complete absence of open displays of affection in the home. During Mr. Price's late pre-teen years oil was discovered on the family's land and their economic fortunes improved substantially.

Mr. Price did not progress beyond the fifth grade of school and spent his free time with a group of older boys, a "stealing clique," as he calls it now. At age 16, he was sentenced to the state reformatory after conviction for stealing chickens. A few months after release he was convicted of burglary and sentenced to the state penitentiary. Again, shortly after release he was

sentenced to the same institution after conviction of grand larceny. This pattern was repeated one more time before Mr. Price, following his fourth release from confinement, at age 22, left his native state and moved to California.

During the Depression years, discipline was lax in many state prisons. Convicts gambled and hustled openly, and some earned large incomes from these activities. Possessing a reputation for integrity, Mr. Price was accepted by some convicts who were deeply involved in the prison's sub rosa economy. As he says, "I learned to hustle in the penitentiary."

> [When I was locked up the prison yard] looked like a casino, . . . poker games and crap games everywhere you looked. So, I just kind of fell into the clique there and got to running a game for the people, and one for myself. . . . On weekends there, well, hell, I'd make $100. . . . Hell, I never ate in the kitchen, I'd eat out of the canteen, steak and eggs, . . . anything you wanted.
>
> Q: The people just gambled openly, huh?
>
> A: Oh yes, wide open, all over the yard.

In addition to gambling, the convicts organized a crafts industry:

> Everybody got into working leather there. See, we contracted leather work out. (I never done any of it, but I was in with that.) Where we bought the leather, buy hide after hide. Make saddles, boots, purses, pocketbooks, any leather goods you'd want to make, we

was making it. . . . We'd farm out the hide to make purses with. Next guy, over here, might be making pocketbooks. Then we'd make connection with the bootmen. And all that sold through the front office. All the tourists come through there, you know, and had a chance to buy it.

Mr. Price acquired both skills and contacts during his years in prison. Consequently, a few weeks after moving to California, he met an acquaintance, a hustler, from his native state. He then began hustling full-time, the occupation he practiced for the next 40 years. During that time he traveled widely over the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world. He states that he was highly successful at his trade and developed several innovations which eventually were adopted by other hustlers. During his hustling activities he acquired a personal reputation for honesty, integrity, and loyalty which is a source of pride to him. Partly for this reason, at the peak of his hustling activities, he received telephone calls daily from people in different sections of the U. S. wanting him to "come here and play, come here and do this, come here and play." He estimates that he earned several million dollars gambling and today he owns property in several states and appears to be secure financially.

When young men first begin committing crimes, they do so for a variety of reasons, including excitement and fun. Gradually for most of them, pursuit of money becomes the dominant, almost the sole, reason for crime. Mr. Price is different in this regard. He says that money means little to him, and he always

has enjoyed the challenge of hustling successfully far more than the income it yields. Moreover, he has no hobbies. He does not drink alcohol. Not only is hustling his occupation, but it is also the only activity he finds challenging; it is the only activity he derives pleasure and satisfaction from doing. He believes this is the major reason he became involved in shoplifting ("boosting") for many years. He also believes this explains why he, unlike most hustlers, never has "chilled up," i.e., lose their nerve, and eventually curtail or quit hustling.

Mr. Price began boosting many years ago after meeting professional boosters. In the beginning he bought stolen merchandise from them, but he gradually began working with boosters as a "rounder" and "blocker." But, "that wasn't my thing, you know. I didn't get no kick out of that." As a result, he began boosting alone.

> So, now I just got me a box and made a boosting box. About this long, you know. Had string wrapped around it. It was all glued, papered and everything else, you know. Ribbon and everything on it, like it was a gift. I'd go in those high line stores, . . . I'd go in the best men's stores or whatever it was, . . . I always wanted good merchandise, you know, not the cheapie stuff.

But he boosted almost entirely because of the challenge it represents, for the satisfaction and "high" of beating security personnel.

> Q: Why'd you get into that, if you were making good

money gambling?

A: I just didn't get, I just got a kick out of doing that. . . . That's what it was, a challenge to me. To get something out of that store without them seeing me and knowing it. The bigger the thing, the better it was. . . . See, now, that is really a challenge in them card games and stuff, 'cause I really like that too. But, then, there's nothing like the boosting. The boosting is the biggest charge . . . that I ever got.

Although his present wife has persauded him to stop boosting, he still speaks of the enjoyment it would give him today.

See, when I got with this woman, you know, she pulled, she's the one that stopped me, you know. If it hadn't been for her, I'd still been going. . . . [Boosting] gives me a, it just gave me a drive you know. In the morning I'd get up feeling low, tied down, you know. . . . Hell, I might run up here, you know, [to a convenience store], anywhere you know, [and boost] $20 worth of stuff and just, hell, I'd feel good. And I'd pick right up, you know.

Given the meaning to him of boosting, perhaps it is not surprising that he gave away nearly all the merchandise he boosted, sometimes after permitting it to pile up in his living quarters: "I don't guess I sold, in my life, I never sold $200 worth of stuff."

Together with another man, Mr. Price was arrested in the mid-1970s on a federal charge. As he says:

Now [aftermy arrest] they gonna get the rundown on me, and get my record. [And they said] "Oh, lord, this guy here has slid around, been doing this for 40 years. . . . Well, lookie here, he's got a rap sheet this long, nothing but hustling and con and everything else." So, they said, "we gotta give him a little rest."

After two jury trials, Johnny was convicted. However, he appealed his conviction, ultimately, to the U.S. Supreme Court. In the process, he paid nearly $100 thousand in attorneys' fees. In retrospect, he says that no amount of money could have won his freedom. Eventually, after approximately 18 months in federal prison, he was paroled and returned to live with his second wife.

Today, Mr Price is extremely ambivalent about his lifestyle and personal circumstances. He loves and respects his wife, a strong woman, and she has had a decided influence on him -- he even attends church with her. He has found love, emotional security, and acceptance from her and her children. At the same time, he feels almost as though he is incarcerated, and he misses the travel and hustling life. He has not quit hustling entirely, but definitely has reduced his activities, primarily because of being on parole. He insists that he has not retired from hustling.

CHAPTER 4

AGING AND ORIENTATIONAL CHANGES

In this chapter, and in chapter 5, I describe the maturational changes which occurred in my sample as they got older. Although most of the men were 35-40 years old when these changes occurred, there was substantial variation in the matter. For some of the men, the changes occurred in their late 20s, while one was in his 60s when they occurred. As his parole officer noted in a report: "[He is] a long-time crook, finally settling down (at age 64, no less)." The inevitable future research on aging offenders almost certainly will lead to qualification of the findings of this study. Use of larger, more representative samples may, for example, lead to a more precise specification of the critical age(s) for maturational changes.

ORIENTATIONAL CHANGES

When asked if they "had changed over the years," virtually every man responded affirmatively, some in emphatic and unequivocal terms. For example:

> Practically all my life I was in some kind of an institution. . . . And they called me "incorrigible." I laugh at it now: 'incorrigible.' I couldn't be changed.
>
> Q: Why do you laugh at it now?
>
> A: Because they're "experts," they're experts. And they're supposed to be able to analyze a person and come up with the exact answer. There was nothing that could be done with me. I would never change. I have changed.

Often the men spoke in global terms of the changes they saw in themselves as they approached or passed age forty. As one man said: "It took a long time before it dawned on me, you know, before it really soaked in that I wasn't goin' nowhere." Reflecting on themselves, they said they had "mellowed down," become "more mature," "softer," or "more responsible." They employed these linguistic labels to designate a variety of broad changes which they perceived in their fundamental motivations and approaches to problem solving.

Intwined in these larger patterns of change, however, were others, that were described in more precise and narrow terms. These served as clear empirical evidence of the former. As such, these narrower changes represent the experiential core of the broader ones. Taken singly or in combination, they are the heart of the maturation process.

SPECIFIC CONTINGENCIES

Changes in the subjects' criminal behavior generally were influenced by two types of experiential contingencies: orientational and interpersonal. The former are subjective changes in one's identity or self-concept and significant events or patterns of events in one's life. The latter is an objective change in one's social relationships or networks. The remainder of this chapter examines orientational contingencies. In chapter 5 I will deal with interpersonal contingencies.

Subjects' reports included descriptions of four

orientational contingencies: (1) a new perspective on the self; (2) a growing awareness of time; (3) changes in aspirations and goals; and (4) a growing sense of tiredness.

A New Perspective on the Self

During their late 30s to early 40s, most of the men began to take stock of their lives and their accomplishments. In the process, most confronted for the first time the realization that (1) their criminality had been an unproductive enterprise; and (2) this situation was unlikely to change. In short, they realized that ordinary property crime was a dead end. They developed a critical, detached perspective toward an earlier portion of their lives and the personal identity which they believed it exemplified.

As Meisenhelder (1977) suggests, offenders sometimes acquire this new perspective when they apply to themselves perceptions of others' experiences. Several of the men related such experiences:

> I changed because I felt that the trend I was following was wrong. And I was making comparisons between myself and those who was around me. You see, it's like looking in a looking glass when you see someone else like you. And I had a whole lot of them around that was like me.

Several of them spoke, sometimes poignantly, of the availability of free time in the institution as one avenue by which they started creating this new perspective. As one said:

> I had a lot of time to think. Every time you go to jail -- all right, all day long I'm running around playing with dudes -- but think about them nights. Man, I'd be in them cells. I got to be by myself and can't go to sleep. I got to think, and if you sit down and think enough, something's going to come to you, . . . first thing, you going to start trying to figure out things.

Parenthetically, acquisition of an altered perspective on their youthful self and activities sometimes made it difficult for the men to answer questions without first qualifying their answers. I asked several men if there was anything they could recall that they liked about doing time. One man responded by saying:

> Maybe I did. There's some things I might've liked, because I got a lot of recognition. I was, you know, accepted. Maybe I liked that part about it, . . . but, see, I'm tryin' to put two things together. In my thinking <u>now</u> I can't see <u>nothing</u> that I can say I enjoyed. But, probably then I did.

Another man echoed these comments:

> In retrospect I would say I wasted [my earlier years]. But during that time I thought that, for me, it was productive. But now I can look back and say it's wasted, 'cause all I gained from those years is experience and knowledge on how not to act no more, you know, how to keep out of trouble. But during that

particular time, anything somebody say, "boom, I'm ready to go," you know.

Just as many aging non-offenders develop a wistful, detached perspective toward their youth, the aging men gradually viewed their youthful self as "foolish," or "dumb." They decided that their earlier identity and behavior were of limited value for constructing the future. This new perspective symbolized a watershed in their lives. As one man said:

> Hey man, everybody got the nature to want to live good, you know, a desire to live good. And I thought that was the best way to do it, you know, by stealing. You know, I could get things that I ordinarily couldn't get by working. But, man, now I don't look at it that way. I think I was stupid.

Similarly, a 54 year-old man said he learned how to serve time when he was young.

> I can handle it, if I have to serve time. But now I know how stupid I have been. And for me now to do something as stupid as I have done, and go back to serving time, it would drive me crazy.
>
> Q: Why would it drive you crazy?
>
> A: Because now I, like I told you, I see these things. I see myself. And see how my path has been so wrong when I thought I was bein' smart, or thought that I was bein' hep, or thought that I was this or that. And it's a dream.

As this suggests, the aging process of most ordinary property

offenders includes a redefinition of their youthful criminal identity as self-defeating, foolish, or even dangerous.

Awareness of Time

Neugarten (1968) has studied age-related changes in the perspectives of the general population. She found that her subjects consistently changed their time orientation as they aged, restructuring life in terms of time-left-to-live rather than time since birth. For most persons this occurs during the decade of the 50s, along with formulation of new perceptions of the self. Neugarten suggests further that these changes occur earlier in the lifecycle for those from working-class backgrounds. Both her observations are consistent with changes reported by the men I interviewed; they experienced nearly identical changes, but they did so earlier in the lifecycle. The difference in findings, however, may be due to the fact that virtually all my subjects were from working-class backgrounds.

While taking stock of their lives, most of the men became acutely aware of time as a diminishing, exhaustible resource. As one man said: "I did not observe the value of time until I was damn near 46 or 47 years old." After achieving this new perspective he, like others in my sample, began constructing plans for how to use the remainder of their lives. As this new perspective developed, the future became increasingly valuable, and the possibility of spending additional time in prison especially threatening. Not only would another prison sentence subject them to the usual deprivations, but it would expropriate their few remaining, potentially productive years. They feared

losing their last remaining opportunity to accomplish something and to prepare financially for old age. Like many subjects, one man said he did not want to spend any more time in prison because "when I come out of there, that's it."

Q: What do you mean, "that's it?"

A: I'd be old, you know. . . . The whole world be done passed me by, man.

A 45 year-old parolee also said he did not want to serve any more time in prison. Asked if he was "afraid of doing time now," he replied:

No, I'm not really afraid of it. I don't know, I just don't want to do it. . . . It's just knocking time out of my life.

Q: Are you trying to say that the years you have left are more precious to you?

A: True. And they're a lot more precious to me than when I was 25 or 30. . . . I guess you get to the point where you think, well, . . . you're getting old, you're getting ready to die and you've never really lived, or something. You don't want to spend it in the joint, treading water.

The men dreaded receiving a long sentence, but believed that because of their previous convictions, any prison terms they received would be lengthy.

Hey, I'm 47, you know. And if I get one of them big numbers [long sentences] now, hey, I'm through bookin', you know. I'm through bookin'. . . . One of them big

numbers, man, would do me in, you know. And I could not stand it.

This growing awareness of time as a limited resource intensified subjects' fears of dying inside prison. As one man said:

Man, the time, I didn't pay no attention to time [when I was younger]. They give me time, man, I just went in there and did the time and come on right out. And man, didn't give it no thought. I'd go right back and [commit crime]. . . . [Now] I'm gettin' older. Hey man, I ain't got to make it. See what I'm sayin'?

Q: No, I don't know what you mean. You "haven't got to make it."

A: I'm gettin' older. . . . As a young man I had a better chance of livin' and gettin' out. . . . I've seen dudes die in the penitentiary. . . . So, I don't know what it is, something make me think about things like that now.

Changing Aspirations and Goals

Many men no longer felt they wanted or needed to strive for the same level of material fulfillment and recognition which they had sought when younger. As an ex-offender has written:

I've got to a point where things that were important to me twelve, fifteen years ago aren't important now. I used to have a lot of ambitions, like everybody else has -- different business ventures, stuff like that. But today, why, with what I have to buck up against,

why, I could be just as happy and just as satisfied with a job that I'm getting by on, where I knew I wasn't going to run into trouble or anything (Martin, 1952:277-78).

And another man said:

> Hey man, . . . I like fine things, you know. I'd like to have me a nice automobile and -- see, I don't have no automobile, man, you know. At one time I used to dress, man I used to love fine clothes and things, you know. I don't have that shit no more. . . . It's not going to worry me, . . . because me throwin' bricks at the penitentiary to obtain this? I'll never have it.

Just as important, the men revised their aspirations, assigning higher priority to goals which formerly were less important. As one man said:

> The things I like to do, they don't require having a million dollars. I like to do things, I like to walk, many times, down by the Tidal Basin, Jefferson Memorial, I see people walking. I see people out there fishing. These are things I like to do. . . . Just like the song says, the best things in life are free.

Like the middle-aged non-offender, an interest in such things as "contentment" and "peace" became important to them. A 57 year-old man said:

> I've thought about having a lot of things tangible. But I know these things will not really make me happy. . . . I've been over in Crystal City . . . a couple

days in the past week. You look at those structures [buildings], and they are very beautiful, you know. But, . . . what is it if people are not at peace with themselves?

And, referring to his earlier activities, a 56 year-old man said:

> I don't want to live that kind of life no more. I want peace. I want joy and harmony. I want to be with my children and my grandchildren. I got a bunch of grandkids, and I want to be with them. I want to be with my mother. And when she passes on -- I was in prison when my daddy died, I got to come home for five hours in handcuffs to see him -- and when my mother passes on, I want to be there with her.

This man's newly-kindled interest in family members is not unique. Several other men revealed similar sentiments which, they acknowledged, developed only as they approached or attained middle-age.

The men realized that they could achieve their revised aspirations on a modest income, so long as it was consistent and predictable. Thus, several of them spoke of achieving the realization that they actually could support themselves in the free world by legitimate work. One man said that in his early years of imprisonment,

> I was defiant to the point of not having no one to change me. . . . But I changed those thoughts when I was in Alcatraz. And I realized, after I became a tailor, after I was in the unholstering shop, that if I

got in the street, I said, I could make a nice living.

Even those who continued their criminal activities often were content with committing less hazardous offenses, even if this meant accepting smaller economic rewards. Those who turned to legitimate work began to appreciate the advantages of a job with secure benefits such as sick leave and a pension. A 56 year-old man said:

> I'm satisfied now, you know. There ain't nobody can get me to do nothin' [commit a crime]. Not now. Not the way I'm goin' now. . . . Every year I go away on vacation. I got three weeks now. Next year I get four weeks. Yeah. So I'm happy, you know, right now.

A Sense of Tiredness

The men began to see the entire criminal justice system as an apparatus which clumsily but relentlessly engorges offenders and wears them down. They began to experience the prison as an imposing accumulation of aggravations and deprivations. They grew tired of the problems and consequences of criminal involvement. Asked why he had abandoned crime, a 53 year-old man answered succinctly:

> Being tired, you know. Just collapsing, that's all. I'd say age made me weak, made me tired, you know. That's all.

The men gave different reasons why they gradually tired of their former experiences. For example, one said:

> Q: Do the main problems of doing time change as you age?

> A: They intensify, you know. The rhetoric, the environment itself, you know. I mean, who wants to walk around talkin' about fuckin' somebody all day long, or somebody gettin' fucked in the ass and shit? . . . I mean, this kind of shit, you, when you get older you can't relate to that kind of shit.

Still, for some ex-offenders the specific origins of this emergent perspective often seem obscure and difficult to articulate. One has written:

> I really don't know why I went straight. I just decided that after I got out. It wasn't fear of the law, it isn't fear of the penitentiary, 'cause I've sat down and thought it out very seriously, but I just had enough of it, that's all (King, 1972:158).

A 53 year-old man explained that he never committed and would never again attempt the "big score," the one highly lucrative crime which would permit him to retire in comfort. Asked why he had given up this dream of many thieves, he said: "Because I know how the system is. . . . The system is bigger than me."

SELF-APPRAISALS

Most of the men who experienced the foregoing changes generally were happy with themselves now. In day-to-day life, some of them encounter, face-to-face as it were, empirical manifestations of their former lives. For example, one man told me:

> Hey, I remember one time I had to be on 14th Street

every night, 14th and T, 7th and T, or something. Hey man, I don't even go up town no more. I don't even hang in the street no more.

Others spoke of the new levels of self-control they developed:

I've changed in speakin' up. I found that out, if I keep my mouth shut sometimes, you know.

Q: Why do you do that?

A: Well, for one thing I'm gettin' older. And sometime when somebody say somethin' to me that I don't like, I don't say anything. I just walk away, you know, 'cause I figure if I say, if I say one word, that's gonna lead him to say somethin'. Then we get into it. So, to avoid that I say, "O.K., man, you right," and walk away. I found out that's best.

There were exceptions, however. All the men were not equally or uniformly happy with the changes they had experienced. For example, one man both acknowledged some of the changes I have discussed and also said he was not happy with his new self:

I used to be a real violent guy. Now I'm kinda submissive. I'm not as violent as I used to be now. . . . I've mellowed. [When I have a disagreement with another person] I try to listen, I try to understand why they sayin' this. And I tell myself, "just be calm, and just let it pass." . . . But, that's not the way to be. Be yourself. . . . That's why, sometimes I look at myself in the mirror and I really don't like myself.

Note, however, that even these exceptions attest to the pervasiveness and strength of the changes I have described. Put differently, these changes occurred in some cases even though the man experiencing them was not always happy with them. It is as if the changes occurred involuntarily.

OTHER ORDINARY PROPERTY OFFENDERS

The other types of offenders are exceptions to the pattern I have described: those who I classified as (1) uncommitted offenders; or as (2) good thieves and hustlers.

Uncommitted offenders are exceptions only because their criminal careers never progressed beyond youthful misconduct, a single criminal act or a series of acts. For most, the experience of incarceration had a strong impact on their lives. It served as a painfully graphic portrayal of the futility of their flirtation with crime. In the interviews, the uncommitted offenders, especially the square johns, consistently stressed that when incarcerated they felt different from other inmates. For example:

Q: Were you scared before you went to the joint?

A: Of course. Outwardly I wasn't, but inwardly I was. I didn't know what to expect. I think the worst part of everything that I can remember, the worst part was when I stopped in Martinsburg, West Virginia. There was a jail there, and that is when I met the lower part of humanity, in that little Martinsburg jail. These people that they depict in movies now, from Deliverance and things like that, you never see again in your life.

> And you never want to be associated with. . . . When you are dealing with me you are not dealing with the regular criminal. . . . I knew that when I was in that institution that this was not the class of people that I was used to. This was not my class of people. . . . I felt I was better than these people.

This man went on to describe one other experience which appears repeatedly in the restrospective descriptions provided by uncommitted offenders: shame and the feeling that they had disappointed significant others.

> I was with two other prisoners, being transported. And we had to stop somewhere and get gas. And they had us chained with a waist chain and leg shackles and, I guess, handcuffs. And that is the worst part I ever felt, when I got out of that car to go to the restroom and had eight or nine people looking at me. And the shame of it all.

Lower-class men were less likely than square johns to derogate their fellow inmates in moralistic terms but they were equally likely to interpret and describe their earliest incarceration as "stupid" and a waste of time.

The experiences of successful offenders were different. They had prospered financially from crime, and had assimilated subcultural perspectives which aided them in coping with adversity -- such as a term of confinement. Therefore, despite experiencing some of the contingencies I described, these changes had less impact on them. The good thieves and hustlers I

interviewed generally asserted that men like themselves were unlikely to change their behavior unless they experienced something, either positively or negatively, traumatic. As one of them told me:

> It takes a shock to turn around a life time of one way of living and training, and everything. But, basically, I doubt, even in those type of people, if you dangle a big enough plum out there, they'll come charging.

Given the small number of good thieves I interviewed, it is difficult to be as confident about them and the changes they experience. Both autobiographies (e.g., Hohimer, 1975) and my interviews suggest that even good thieves and hustlers experience some of the aforementioned contingencies. True, they may experience them at a somewhat more advanced age than is true of unsuccessful offenders. But, when they do experience these orientational contingencies, good thieves and hustlers occasionally respond to them in ways similar to other types of offenders. However, this probably is less frequent. Consequently, a larger proportion of successful offenders terminate their criminal behavior involuntarily because of advancing age. One man told me:

> [O]ver the years that I participated in it, while there were a few older [thieves] around, you more or less, seems unkind, but actually what use would you have for them? I don't mean that to be as cruel as it sounds, but here's a guy that's, say, 65 and not too mobile.

He can't go up and down walls, and jump off buildings. And his hearing is probably slightly impaired. His eye sight is not too good. Now, with all the capable, qualified people that are physically able to go out and do these things, what would you want with him? His knowledge is not that indispensable. In fact, his knowledge is probably outdated.

CHAPTER 5

AGING AND INTERPERSONAL CHANGES

Occurrence of one or more of the orientational contingencies led, albeit indirectly, to a modification of the subjects' criminal behavior. Of the 30 unsuccessful offenders not in prison, 27 reported experiencing one or more of the four temporal contingencies. However, when only these contingencies occurred, the break with crime tended, at least in the early stages, to be a grudging one. Orientational changes alone provided negative incentives to change. But when coupled with an interpersonal contingency, they provide support for the positive change incentives which occur with the latter. Interpersonal contingencies are establishment of a personally meaningful tie to one or more conventional (1) others, such as a woman, or (2) lines of activity, such as a job.

THE CHANGING MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INTIMACY

For the men who altered their criminality, orientational changes produced a disenchantment with the activities and lifestyles of their youth, and resulted in an interest in and a readiness for fundamental change in their lives. A 47 year-old subject told me that after two terms of imprisonment,

> I had already been convinced that I couldn't beat the system anyway, you know. What I was doin' wasn't gettin' nowhere, you know. It was just a dream.

By their late 30s to early 40s, the men realized all too clearly, with an insight that was both painful and liberating, that they

were unlikely ever to excel at crime. Those who did so, got their start much earlier in life, and had opportunities available which were denied to the subjects. So, disenchanted with themselves and their unsuccessful attempts at crime, the aging men wanted to "give something else a try."

They frequently developed an interest in supportive and satisfying social relationships; actually building such a relationship represented an interpersonal contingency in their lives. The social relationship(s) resulting from this interpersonal contingency assumed a special importance. It was a secure, social niche. It provided the men with commitment or "side bets" which they realized would be jeopardized by involvement in crime -- or, high-risk crimes (Becker, 1962).

INTERPERSONAL CONTINGENCY

Ties to Another Person

The establishment of a mutually satisfying relationship with a woman was a common pattern. Of the 30 unsuccessful subjects not in prison, seven mentioned this, either alone or together with other contingencies, as an important factor in the transformation of their career line. Although many subjects maintained involvements with women when younger, they said these were not important influences on their behavior. As a 46 year-old man said:

> I remember one time, man, if a broad couldn't get no money -- I'm gonna show you how stupid people used to think. If a girl couldn't get no money, you know, or wasn't sellin' no pussey, bringin' me some money, hey

> man, she couldn't have me. Isn't that a hell of a thing for a motherfucker to say, "she couldn't have me."

With age, as these comments suggest, the meaning of personal relationships changed and they assumed more importance.

> When I reached the age of 35 it just seemed like my life wanted to change. I needed a change in life, and I was tired of going to jail. And I wanted to change my life and stay out here. And by meeting the woman that I met, it just turned my life completely around. . . . When I met her it just seemed like something in my life had been fulfilled.

Another man, who still engaged occasionally in property crimes, said he once had stopped committing crimes entirely while living with a woman for several years.

> I started living with this woman, you know, and my life suddenly changed. . . . I was contented, you know, bein' with her. . . . I cared about her, you know. I wanted to be with her, you know. That was it. . . . And, hey, I just found enjoyment there.

A 56 year-old man, separated from his wife at the time of the interview, talked about her influence on him during earlier periods of unemployment:

> I loved my wife -- I love her still -- and she talked to me a lot. . . . And if it wouldn't been for her, no tellin' where I'd be at, 'cause I'd most likely had a gun in my hand and robbed a bank or something. Or took

something from somebody to get some food, you know. . . . She helped me along.

Several men acknowledged also that family relationships meant little to them during their earlier years. And they spoke about the changing meaning of family ties as they aged.

> I have a daughter-in-law [and] a pretty fair son. He's never been arrested. I think I owe, I have a debt, you know, owe these people a debt, you know. . . . I feel that I should be dedicated to try to erase some of this bullshit that's been, . . . what you call it? Negative thinking.

Ties to a Job

Five of the 30 unsuccessful men indicated that having a satisfying job, either alone or combined with other experiences, was an important influence on their career. Several men acknowledged retrospectively that they had held potentially satisfying jobs earlier in their lives but had not seen or appreciated them at the time. One man told of securing a job, as a youth, in the U.S. Government Printing Office where an older employee wanted to teach him how to mix and use inks. But,

> I said to myself I didn't even want to be there. As much as possible I went into the men's restroom and went to sleep. And I was glad to get out of there when it was time to get off, and I wound up resigning the job.

As the subjects' perspectives changed with age, legitimate

employment assumed more importance. For example, a 56 year-old man remembered when, as a younger man, he was interviewed for a job with a beauty and barber supply company:

> The guy liked me from the jump. And that's when I hooked up with him. And I went straight a long time without the intentions of going straight. . . . That was one turning point in the later part of my life.

A 48 year-old man recalled his experiences 17 years earlier:

> When I got out [the second time], . . . I sold a suit for ten dollars and I bought [some tools], just the bare necessities of what I needed, and I met a guy who carried me on the job. . . . So, at that time I could make $160 a week. . . . And so, with this earning power I didn't have -- I didn't have to steal. . . . So this was right down my alley.

Several of the men spoke about their current employment with obvious pleasure. For example:

> Q: Do you like your work?
>
> A: Very much.
>
> Q: What do you like about it?
>
> A: Well, I know the work, and I like the people I work around. I'm comfortable with them. Practically everybody knows me, throughout the hospital, because of all the major departments I have to go to, see. So, I like the work, I like the people. . . . I'm very comfortable with the job, and I'm making a nice salary.

In addition to ties to another person and a job, two men

said that religious experiences and the close social relationships they produced influenced their criminal careers. Also, a 48 year-old man, a successful case, told how enrollment in a college program affected him:

> I was learning things I didn't know anything about. And, I'm not saying I liked all of it, you know, but I worked at it. And I think for the first three quarters I had a 4.0, and that made me feel good, the whole self-concept, you know, kind of thing. . . . Plus, some of the classes I really enjoyed. . . . And so, I kind of got into it. I like it.

Regardless of how they acquired it, the interpersonal contingency was extremely consequential for the men. Successful participation in a personal relationship, a job, or some other conventional line of activity provided personal rewards and reinforced a non-criminal identity. A 47 year-old man told of some changes that occurred after he met a woman:

> Through her I met a whole lot of straight people, you know, that I enjoyed bein' around, you know. Like, her people, her parents, her sisters and brothers, you know, her mother. I enjoyed bein' around them. And they was straight, you know, never been incarcerated, never been affiliated with the law, and shit like that. I enjoyed bein' around them, because they did some things. Like, we played cards, played little games, you know. I like sports, you know; we'd sit down and talk about sports, and do things of that nature.

For many, development of commitment in someone or some line of activity generated a pattern of routine activities -- a daily agenda -- which conflicted with, and left little time for, the daily activities associated with crime. I asked a 48 year-old man if his former crime partners ridiculed him since he "squared up."

> No, see, I spent very little time with these people anyway. By me working during the week, I might see them on the weekend. . . . Everybody knew that I was a bricklayer, that I was making good money, that I didn't have to [commit crimes].

And a 46 year-old former addict told me:

> [At] one time, man, I used to come down the street, right? All right, dudes run to me and hold conversation, you know: "Hey, John," so and so. They gonna talk about something. . . . At one time we could always, they'd see me and they'd talk about what, you know, happened the night before, or what party, or what crap joint we'd been in. But now, man, all they do is speak, because like we don't be together. We don't go to the crap games. We don't be with the hos [whores] and shit together.

Those aging unsuccessful offenders who succeed in stabilizing themselves in conventional roles sometimes adopt a critical stance toward their former activities. As one man told me:

> Maybe some time I be in a cab or something, and I go ride through 14th Street, and see a <u>whole</u> bunch of

dudes hangin' there. I know they usin' stuff. And I say to myself, man, just think I used to do some shit like that. I said, man just think, that used to be me. But now it seems stupid to me, seriously; but then it didn't.

CONTINGENCIES: TEMPORAL ORDER AND INTERDEPENDENCE

The five contingencies discussed in chapter 4 and here did not occur in an invariant sequence. They varied in the age at which they occurred and their interdependence.

In some cases, the precise point of occurrence of the separate orientational contingencies could not be isolated easily. Rather, one or more occur simultaneously, as an "experiential cluster." A 55 year-old man reported:

> I think I had been up [at the state reformatory]. I just said to myself, "well, shit, this isn't getting me nowhere." . . . So I come out and I did get a good job, . . . and they treated me good, and they trusted me, you know. . . . And I figured, well, these people are good enough to trust me, I'm good enough to play it straight with them. . . . Then I got married and that more or less helped too.
>
> Q: How so?
>
> A: Well, I married a good woman, I guess.

While the orientational and interpersonal contingencies operated both independently and jointly, each type produced modifications in the nature, or reductions in the frequency, of criminal behavior. In several cases, the two types of

contingencies interacted with or followed one another as a dynamic process, with one type increasing the probability of occurrence for the other(s). For example, in at least one case, establishment of a relationship with a woman stimulated a fundamental re-evaluation of the subject's life. Imposition of a rigid temporal and causal order on this process would be arbitrary and, given our present state of knowledge, premature as well.

Although the orientational contingencies typically set the stage for the interpersonal one, occasionally the latter occurred independently. It then produced a set of subjective career contingencies which strengthened the man's sense of commitment and his resolve to avoid crime -- or at least high risk crime. Meisenhelder (1977) refers to these secondary subjective contingencies as the "pull of normality." They were of some importance in my subjects' retrospective accounts, especially the feeling of relief over no longer having to fear the police. Several men spontaneously mentioned this as one of the advantages of the "square" life.

> I can go to bed, hey man, I don't have to worry about [the police] kickin' my door down, you know, comin' and gettin' me. Because I'm not doin' nothin'. And man, I can remember one time, every time I see the police, hey man, I know they was comin' to my house. And sometimes I wasn't wrong. . . . But I don't worry about that now.

While any combination of the five contingencies usually led

to changes in criminal behavior, the nature of these changes varied. In general, the most abrupt and complete changes seem to result when all five contingencies occurred. Nevertheless, we must await further research on maturation if we are to acquire a more confident understanding of the differential impacts of different combinations of the contingencies discussed here.

CHAPTER 6

AGE, MATURATION AND THE CHANGING CALCULUS OF ORDINARY PROPERTY CRIME

The maturational changes described in chapters 4 and 5, combined perhaps with other age-related changes, caused the men to modify their calculus of ordinary property crime. I employ this concept to refer to the subjective assessment of potential benefits and costs anticipated for a particular criminal act. Figure 6-1 depicts the relationships between orientational and interpersonal contingencies and the calculus of ordinary property crime.

---- Figure 6-1 about here ----

Changes in the subjects' calculus produced by aging and maturation are comprehended easily when compared to their youthful calculus.

THE CALCULUS AND OFFENSES OF YOUTH

For many youth, involvement in delinquency contains a rich variety of motives and subjective meanings. Pursuit of material rewards is only one of them; often, it is not a primary motive. Juveniles "slide into" delinquent acts for a variety of non-rational, often situationally-based reasons (Matza, 1964). For example, a 45 year-old man told me:

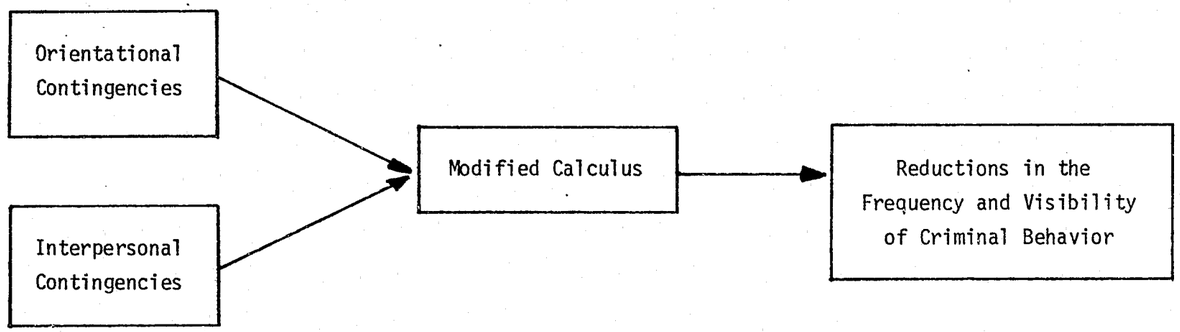
> I was, like years ago, I was a peeping tom -- when I was a kid, you know. . . . I enjoyed this, you know. . . . But, anyway, then I got married young, and I had two children. And I had bills, you know. I was a kid

CONTINUED

1 OF 2

FIGURE 6-1

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MATURATIONAL CHANGES AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR



and I had a man's responsibility. . . . Now, what's the best way to make money? With something you know. I had been peeping in windows when I was a kid. So, I knew, you know, like where the windows would open, where the -- you understand what I mean? And then I broadened my sense, after while I started mixing business with pleasure, you know. I would peep and then later come back and, you know, take this or that.

Another man told of his adolescent fascination with automobiles, especially their steering wheels. As a youth, he often roamed through parking lots, admiring the steering wheels of parked cars. From there, it was a short, tentative step to breaking into the cars and stealing their contents.

More common than these cases, however, were accounts in which the spontaneous pursuit of fun and excitement provided the impetus for delinquency:

> [When I was a kid] I wasn't a sports enthusiast. I played sports very rarely, but it just wasn't exciting enough. . . . None of [the "normal" adolescent activities] were exciting to me. . . . It's just that we, there was a feeling of participating in something that was daring and dangerous.

For other youths, participation in delinquency resulted from the interactional dynamics of streetcorner peer groups. Some boys experience a situational need to maintain personal status and "face" with their peers (cf. Short and Strodtbeck, 1965; Jansyn, 1966). These needs meld into a complex set of behavioral

motives which, occasionally, find expression in crime. Braly (1976:11-12) writes:

> I began to steal seriously as a member of a small gang of boys. We backed into it, simply enough, by collecting milk and soda bottles to turn in for the deposits, but, after we had exhausted the vacant lots, empty fields, and town dumps, we began to sneak into garages, . . . and, having dared garages and survived, we next began to loot back porches, and, finally, breathlessly, we entered someone's kitchen. . . . Clearly, this was an exercise of real power over the remote adult world and I found it exciting. I liked it. . . . [A]nd it is only now, some forty years later, that I begin to see how stealing cast me in my first successful role.

Similarly, one of my subjects said:

> Everybody would look up to me, you know, when I was young. . . . And, seem like every time they wanted something, they'd come to me and say, "Jack, well, come on and do this," or "help me do this," you know. Fuck it, you know, I had an image I had to live up to, you know. I'd say, "fuck it, man, come on."

Several men also indicated that many of their youthful crimes were impulsive and poorly-planned. For example, one man said:

> Q: Did you do a lot of stick ups [when you were young]?

A: Oh yeah, you know. . . . [We] stole and shit like that, you know. I didn't give it no thought, no plan, don't know how much money's in it. You know what I mean? Just go in there and say, "we're gonna do it, we're gonna do it." . . . That was it.

Another man related an incident of armed robbery that occurred when he was young. His account illustrates some of the observations I have made about the impetuous nature of juvenile crime:

> [One day] we were just walking up First Street and [one of my friends] said as we were approaching Rhode Island Avenue, "let's go in here and rob this drug store," because [another friend] had a gun. We said, "okay, let's go in here and rob the drug store." Went in there, the soda fountain was filled up, . . . robbed everybody on the stools. Went back in the post office, stole money orders and stamps and stuff, took the cash box. And we turned our backs on everybody in the store, going out. We didn't know whether the proprietor had a gun or what, but it just so happened that he didn't. But, that's just the atmosphere in which, you know, that took place.

Precisely because many of the criminal incidents of youth are responses to group dynamics or "moods," they may "break out" in situationally propitious circumstances. Put differently, a great deal of juvenile misconduct is not calculated carefully.

Overall, the men reported that as juveniles and young adults

they pursued crime with considerable intensity. One man told me:

> [W]hen you're young, or when -- the people that I've known who are young, it was nothing to go out and break into two or three places a week just looking for money.

Similarly, a retired English thief writes that "when you're young you tend to have a go at anything" (Quick, 1967:142).

Several subjects indicated also that as juveniles and young adults they had little appreciation or awareness of the legal and personal repercussions of their criminality. This was true especially in their perceptions of time spent in institutions such as training schools and prisons. One man said:

> I've seen the time in my life, man, where it might seem foolish, 'cause it seems foolish to me now. When I was in the street, hustling, I'd say, "if I get knocked off and don't get but a nickel" -- five years -- I said, "hell with it," you know. The only thing would be in my mind, if I got busted could I hang around, try to have my lawyer try to get me some kind of plea or something so I wouldn't get but a nickel. 'Cause I knew I could knock five years out.

Another man echoed these remarks, saying that when he was young,

> I don't know, man. I just didn't give a fuck, you know. I was young, simple, man. I didn't care, you know. Shit, doing time, you know, I didn't know what doing time was all about. Doing time to me was nothing, you know.

Of course, while juvenile crime is impetuous and fun, it is

also monetarily rewarding. Often it appears to be more rewarding than any other available activity. Especially for youths from impoverished backgrounds, the sums of money garnered by crime seem princely indeed. It opened up for them new worlds of consumption and leisure activities.

The net result of these youthful meanings and motives was that the potential repercussions of crime were blunted in some way. The men lacked a precise and consistently applied metric for assessing the potential consequences of delinquency involvement. They failed to "see" or to caluculate seriously their potential losses if apprehended. For many youth, crime is a risk-taking activity in which the risks are only dimly appreciated or calculated.

THE CALCULUS AND OFFENSES OF MATURING MEN

In many cases, this poorly developed youthful calculus is transformed by the process of arrest and confinement. By their early to mid-20s the unsuccessful offenders had begun to develop a keener awareness of the potential costs of criminal behavior. Gradually supplanting the non-rational motives and lack of knowledge of youthful offenders was a clearly articulated understanding of the price they would pay if caught. They acquired the ability to "see," to appreciate, and to calculate more precisely some of the potential penalties they would pay if apprehended for crime. In this sense, aging brings with it an increasing rationalization of ordinary property crime.

This is not accompanied by any significant reduction in criminal activities. In fact, the opposite occurs. Young men

tend to exaggerate their ability to rationalize their crimes and so to commit them successfully. For example, Braly could be speaking for several of my subjects when he writes:

> Whenever I began to steal it was always with the rationale I wouldn't make the mistakes I had made before. . . . It didn't occur to me there were literally thousands of ways I could get caught. I was sustained by the confidence nothing truly awful could happen to me (1976:65).

Often such offenders confidently assume there are only a limited number of ways that any particular criminal act can fail. Consequently, they sometimes analyze past offenses for information that will lead to ever more perfect criminal techniques. Parker's interview (Parker and Allerton, 1962:149) with an English thief reveals this reasoning process:

> Q: When you're arrested, what are your reactions at that moment?
>
> A: I think the first thing's annoyance -- with myself. How could I be so stupid as to get nicked? What's gone wrong, what have I forgotten, where have I made the mistake?

As they rationalized the process of theft, money became the principal objective for committing crime. After serving a term in the National Training School, one man and his friends began robbing gamblers and bootleggers. I asked him:

> Q: Did the desire for excitement play any part in those crimes?

A: No, I think the desire for excitement had left. It was, we recognized that it was a dangerous mission then, because we knew that gamblers and bootleggers carried guns and things like that. And it was for, you know, just for the money.

Another man made the same point succinctly, saying that "whatever started me in crime is one thing. But at some point I know that I'm in crime for the money. There's no emotional reason for me being into crime." And another thief has written:

> When I first began stealing I had but a dim realization of its wrong. I accepted it as the thing to do because it was done by the people I was with; besides, it was adventurous and thrilling. Later it became an everyday, cold-blooded business, and while I went about it methodically, . . . I was fully aware of the gravity of my offenses (Black, 1926:254).

The men developed and assessed crimes with an increasingly narrow and precise metric of potential benefits and costs. In this sense as well, their crimes became more calculating and rational.

As the men failed at crime, got older and matured, their rationalization of crime changed. As a result, they entered a third and final stage of their criminal careers. Increasingly, they came to see ordinary property crime as a poor risk. They realized that the anticipated monetary returns from criminal involvement were paltry, both in relative and in absolute terms.

Simultaneously, they began increasingly to see that their potential losses, if imprisoned again, would be immense. Because

of the nature and length of their previous criminal record, they believed there was a good chance they would receive a long prison sentence if convicted. Also, those who experienced the interpersonal contingency were increasingly reluctant to risk losing their new-found social ties. Thus, the maturing men began to include factors which previously had been absent from their calculus of potential criminal acts. A 46 year-old former addict said:

> If I go out there and commit a crime -- now, I got to think about this: Hey, man, I ain't got to get away. See what I'm sayin'? I have -- man, it would be just my luck that I would get busted. Now I done fucked up everything I done tried to work hard for, man, you know, to get my little family together.

In sum, as the men matured, their perception of the odds narrowed while the risks became greater. Echoing the remarks of many, one subject told me:

> I realized that, even though in crime, even though you might get away, let's say 99 times, the one time eliminates your future. You don't have no future. Regardless of what you have gained, you lost all of that. A rabbit can escape 99 times and it only takes one shot to kill him. So, I was a rabbit. . . . I want to enjoy life. But I know I can't do it successfully by committing crimes.

This does not mean that the men ceased thinking about crime altogether. Rather, they developed a more complex set of reasons

for avoiding it in most situations. However, in more advantageous circumstances, some believed they still were capable of resorting to crime. One man spoke for several when he told me:

> Now, I'm not going to tell you that if you put $100,000 on that table and I saw an opportunity, that I felt that I could get away with it, that I wouldn't try to move it. But there's no way, even now, there's no way that I would endanger my freedom for a measley four, five, ten thousand dollars. I make that much a year now, you know. And I see the time that I wasted -- well, I figure I wasted about four or five years when I was younger.
>
> Q: What do you mean, you "wasted" it?
>
> A: In and out of jail.

For those men who continued to pursue a criminal career, their approach to crime changed. First, they decided to avoid some of the crimes more characteristic of their youth. They selected offenses that were less visible and less confrontative. An imprisoned man said:

> When I go out, I'm goin' for the "soft" stuff. I'm going to book the numbers, you know, . . . but <u>hard</u> crime, . . . I gave that up a long while ago.

In shifting to such offenses, the men believed that they reduced their risk of arrest. And even if arrested, they believed they would receive lower penalties. One man reflected on the changes in his criminal behavior over the previous 15 years:

> I caught one number -- that ten years, all them

> robberies -- and then, you know, everything I did then was more like a finesse thing. . . . I'm not gonna stick no pistol in nobody's face, man, you know. I'm not gonna strong arm nobody, you know. I'm not gonna go in nobody's house. You understand what I'm sayin'? I'm not gonna do that.
>
> Q: You figure as long as you don't do those things you won't go to the penitentiary?
>
> A: Hey, you better believe it. You better believe it.

Along with this reduction in the visibility of their offenses, the men tried to reduce the frequency of their crimes. One subject, who still engages occasionally in nonviolent felonies told me how he had changed:

> I done got a little softer, you know. I done got, hey man, to the point, you know, where, like I say, I don't steal, I don't hustle, you know. But I don't pass the opportunity if I can get some free money. I'm not gonna pass. . . . I don't hustle, you know. I don't make it a everyday thing. I don't go out <u>lookin'</u> for things, you know.

Another man said:

> When you're younger, you can . . . steal to pay the rent, you know. Hell, you can go out and steal seven days a week. And sooner [or later] . . . you learn that -- to me, it's <u>exposure</u> <u>time</u>, you know. You don't want to get "exposed" too much.

NEGATIVE CASES

The burden of my explanation has been those men who discontinued entirely their commission of crimes. Among those who failed to do so, habit was mentioned several times as a factor which led to occasional, almost playful crimes. Several men told me that hustling or stealing simply was in their "blood." A former ordinary property offender who read and commented on a portion of this report -- he is now a successful writer -- wrote me:

> I think you should, if possible, show that even when . . . burnout occurs the individual may continue criminal behavior out of habit. A ship cannot change its course on a dime, nor can a human being change the habits of a lifetime overnight even when the motivation is there. I've seen men go through the motions of crime after the burnout because they didn't know what to do (Confidential, 1982).

Uncommitted Offenders

Unlike the unsuccessful offenders, many square johns and lower-class men needed only one serious encounter with the criminal justice apparatus to clarify or transform their calculus and make ordinary crime appear a poor gamble. The experience of institutionalization only served to sketch more starkly for them the undesirable, even painful consequences which stemmed from involvement in crime. They saw little that was romantic or alluring about the lives of their fellow convicts. To square johns, especially, men who spend time in prison are "losers" and

"chumps." An uncommitted offender, confined at age 17 for attempted bank robbery, told me:

> I knew I was wrong. And I made up my mind that if I ever got out I wouldn't go back. And I kicked myself a million times for even getting there to start with, 'cause I felt like I was just so different than the rest, than a lot of the rest of them, you know, that just didn't care.

Successful Offenders

For present purposes, I emphasize two important characteristics which distinguish successful offenders from the other types. First, the former rationalized their calculus of crime -- in the ways I discussed -- at an earlier age. In some cases, by their early 20s they were engaged in carefully planned crimes, almost entirely for the expected monetary rewards. However, this difference is not universal, as the comments of a retired successful offender suggest. Even some successful offenders never discard entirely some of their non-monetary motives for criminal behavior.

> I know a guy who's relatively well connected, if you know what I mean -- with the Outfit. [He would] go on any score. Now he needed money like I need a double hernia. But, [he] just loved -- don't care if there's any money there or not: "Let's go." [It was] the thrill. I never got any thrills like that myself. . . . The thrill I got [was] counting the money. That's

enough thrill.

And second, their crimes usually were substantially more rewarding than the criminal activities of uncommitted and unsuccessful offenders.

Despite these differences, some successful offenders also experienced one or more of the contingencies I described in chapters 4 and 5. In such circumstances, some respond in ways similar to unsuccessful offenders (Hohimer, 1975). Unlike unsuccessful offenders, however, they often times make "adjustments" in their work without necessarily discontinuing it entirely.

They can do so, in part, because their theft activities provide them opportunities not available to unsuccessful offenders. For example, because some of them have established extensive social contacts through their work, it is easier for them to reduce their level of involvement, or to shift its nature. Others utilize their connections to move into the background of crime (Shover, 1983). Still others manage to save enough money from their working years to retire with a degree of security and comfort. One man suggested these two strategies account for most late-life patterns of successful offenders like himself. As he put it: "[T]hey're either sitting in the rocking chair or out finding something soft for somebody else to pick up." In general, there appear to be a greater number of later career paths for successful offenders.

Still, a substantial percentage apparently continue "going to the well" despite their advancing age. Thus, an English thief

has written:

> I content myself with the dream -- the one that all criminals have -- that one day I'll get the really big tickle. . . .
>
> That's all I can do now, take my time and wait for the chance to come. I've no intention of going straight, I'm just being more careful, that's all -- and I'm getting cagey, I won't take unnecessary risks. It used to be I wanted a fifty-fifty chance, now I want it better than that, somewhere like seventy-five to twenty-five. But sooner or later it'll come, the job will be there, I'll do it, get the big tickle, and then I'll retire. . . . This is it, this is the dream, the great rock candy mountain that beckons us all (Parker and Allerton, 1962:189).

This man subsequently was reimprisoned several times (Parker, 1981).

Unsuccessful Offenders

The bulk of my presentation has focused on the experiences of unsuccessful offenders. Among them, there are two distinctly different categories of negative cases. First, there are men who simply did not experience the maturational changes I described and so they failed to modify significantly their calculus of ordinary property crime. In assessing their past criminal behavior several of them used almost identical terms: "They [police and the courts] could never get even." The men used this description to support their contention that they had avoided

arrest and prosecution for so many crimes that, even if they were caught for all future crimes, the ledger books still would show an advantage for them. A man who shoplifts almost daily as a means of support told me:

> Q: Have you ever thought that you were a good thief, or a good hustler?
>
> A: Yeah, I am. . . .
>
> Q: What makes you think you're a good hustler?
>
> A: 'Cause I produce.
>
> Q: Yeah, but you've done a lot of time, too, haven't you?
>
> A: Yeah, but considering, you know, in comparison, I ain't did that much. I think, if they gave me 199 years they couldn't get even. . . . They couldn't get even.

Second, there are men whose careers are more troubling and perplexing. These men, despite their failure at crime and the fact that they experienced one or more of the orientational contingencies, reacted alternately with resignation or despair to the belief that it was "too late" for them to accomplish legitimately anything in life.

Many of the men indicated that the years spent in prison made it difficult for them to achieve some of the objectives acquired normally by their non-criminal contemporaries. For example, a 50 year-old man said:

> I wants to have a good life, you know, but certain things will always be out of my reach because it's been

> so long, you know. I've been incarcerated so long.

Along the same lines, an imprisoned man told me:

> A lot of guys here tell me, say, "man, why don't you straighten up? Why don't you straighten up?" I tell them all the same thing: "Why? Why?" If I work every day of my goddamned life from now on I'll never have nothing. Only way I'm going to get what I want is to steal it. . . .
>
> Q: You don't have any hope anymore?
>
> A: No, I'm just too old now. I'm not going to have nothing. I'm not going to live the way the everyday guy does -- got his wife, couple of kids running around, work everyday and makes his house payments. Sure, I'd love to do that. . . . I ain't never going to have it.
>
> Q: What makes you so sure?
>
> A: My age. I'll be 47 when I get out of here. And there's no way possible for me to ever get ahead now. It's too late in life. A guy's got to start about 21 or 22 years old if he's going to get something out of his life.

Such men believe their entire panoply of work and social skills have atrophied from their years in prison. They feel like strangers in the free world, having lost all or nearly all contacts there. In short, they believe the outside world has passed them by, and they no longer see any possibility of making it back into the mainstream of life.

Searching for a magic solution to their problems, and animated by a sense of "nothing to lose," some men of this type resorted to desperate, high-risk crimes, with apparent disregard for the potential consequences (Camp, 1968). For example, after several years of freedom, a divorced 56 year-old man experienced severe strains in his family relationships. Making little effort to conceal his identity, he robbed a bank. Apprehended several hours later, he insisted on pleading guilty at his arraignment. He told the judge that his only friends were police and correctional personnel, and that prison was the only place in which he felt accepted and comfortable. He was pleased when he received a 20-year sentence.

After a few years in prison, others seemingly lose their ability to cope with the routine problems of everyday life -- it may have been fragile to begin with -- and increasingly feel overwhelmed by them. One such man, an English parolee, has written:

> I have been in prison most of my life and its effect on me is that I cannot face problems, not having had any at all inside. Very little things can upset you to the point of desperation, things that seem ridiculous to a normal person but huge and impossible to overcome for someone like me, and I get into a panic and try and do something silly (Fletcher, 1972:132).

The same man describes committing an impulsive, inept offense during an earlier period on parole. He made no effort to flee the scene and was arrested.

> So when I went before the Court, . . . and the Judge asked me if I had anything to say, I told him I could not live outside, so would he please send me back to prison for as long as he wished. By so doing he would be helping and not punishing me, as I enjoyed being in prison (Fletcher, 1972:110).

When released from prison, men of this type ineptly commit crimes which, even were they successful, would yield practically no economic return. Apparently, these men do not care if they are arrested (Parker, 1963).

Another reason for this apparent indifference toward, or desire to return to, imprisonment is the custodial care that prisons provide older offenders. While viewing the prison as a tolerable residence in old age was rare among those I interviewed, an imprisoned 62 year-old said:

> In a way, I'm looking forward to getting out, and another way it don't much matter to me. . . . I know everybody here. . . . I do almost like I want. I go to early chow. [Earlier today] I went down to the law library and used their copying machine. I can do fairly well what I want to do without anybody bugging me about it 'cause all the officials know me.

Of my sample, four men, not in prison, spontaneously mentioned the care older persons receive in nursing homes and similar establishments. Arguing that convicts are treated better than nursing home residents, they said they would opt to spend their final years in prison if they had to make a choice.

> If I got to a point where it's either go to an old folks' home, or an old soldiers' home -- [I'd] figure, hell, if I robbed a bank, . . . if I got away I'd get enough money to last me the rest of my life. If I got caught, I'd go to prison and they'd give me better treatment there. . . . What would a fella have to lose, even if he went in and pretended to hold up . . . if he had nothing on the outside? . . . You got somebody [in prison] checkin' on you <u>all</u> the time. And in an old soldiers' home, if you call a nurse, you're lucky to get anybody.

This man subsequently qualified his statement, saying that it applies primarily to federal institutions. It had been nearly 20 years since his last state confinemenmt and, he acknowledged, "I don't know much about these state places."

CHAPTER 7

AGE AND STIGMA

Among sociologists, the early 1960s saw the synthesis and ascendant popularity of an alternative view of deviants and their activities: the labeling or societal reactions perspective. Starting from a tendency to identify with the plight of deviants, its supporters analyzed the nature and impact upon them of various strategies of social control. Labeling theorists and researchers explored the impact that official agents of social control have on deviants' self and social relations. They noted that frequently this process is stigmatizing and triggers a process of social exclusion which may escalate the probability of further deviance. Given this important tradition of scholarly work on the processes of stigma and exclusion, I explored these issues with my subjects.

STIGMA

Sociologists can be sorted arbitrarily into various categories which define their approaches to fundamental issues in the discipline. Two such categories are <u>structuralists</u> and <u>interactionists</u>. Those in the former focus their analytic eye on the nature and transformations of the normatively patterned relationships among members of social groups. Interactionists focus on the negotiation of identities and the mutual alignment of action in face-to-face situations. The two approaches complement one another; neither exhausts the theoretically significant questions we can ask about social concerns and

occasions.

From a structuralist perspective, the men I interviewed possessed a potentially stigmatizing attribute -- the status of ex-convict. As Goffman (1963) notes, on the basis of interactional experiences, individuals tend to develop expectations about the kinds of people they are likely to encounter. Consequently, when we encounter strangers in everyday social situations, we typically impute to them a social identity. However, the stigmatized person possesses a discrediting attribute which represents a discrepancy between the identity we are prepared to assign him and his actual social identity. In short, possession of a stigmatizing attribute makes the person discreditable in face-to-face social situations. Possession of this attribute does not, however, ensure interactional difficulties. Rather, it varies situationally.

Viewed from the vantage point of the person with a potential stigma, its situational significance varies along at least two distinct dimensions: salience (McCall and Simmons, 1966) and felt discreditability. In other words, the person with a stigma does not experience it as salient in all situations. Similarly, he does not always believe himself discreditable. Table 7-1 shows the relationships between these two dimensions.

---- Table 7-1 about here ----

Cell a of Table 7-1 represents situations in which the person with a potentially stigmatizing attribute perceives it as interactionally salient and believes himself discreditable for that reason. Labeling theorists focused much of their attention

TABLE 7-1

A TYPOLOGY OF POTENTIALLY STIGMATIZING SITUATIONS

		Person Fears Being Discredited	
		Yes	No
Person Experiences Deviant Identity as Salient	Yes	a	b
	No	c	d

on situations of this type, largely because they present the deviant with the most serious problems of stigma management. (Sometimes labeling theorists seemed to suggest that deviants spend their entire lives in an unbroken chain of these situations.)

Cell b represents situations in which the deviant identity is salient, but the deviant does not experience the threat of being discredited. In such situations, the identity as an ex-convict is highly salient, and yet the person does not feel discreditable. Many contacts between control agents and deviants are of this type. For example, contacts with parole officers are routine for the deviant, and consequently he does not feel discredited in these situations.

Cell c, while a logical possibility, would seem to be an experiential impossibility. Presumably, for any situation in which the deviant felt discreditable, he also would experience his deviant identity as salient.

Cell d represents many routine situations of everyday life, for the deviant, presumably, as well as for those without a potential stigma. Shopping for groceries, or taking a walk are two examples.

SALIENCE OF THE EX-CONVICT IDENTITY

For the men I interviewed, feelings of stigma and the felt necessity to manage their stigma were not serious problems. Put differently, they reported very few situations in their everyday lives that correspond to cell a of Table 7-1. Rather, most of the social situations they encountered fell into cells b and d of

Table 7-1, and the vast majority of these belong in cell d. That is, situations in which the ex-offender's deviant status is not salient, and he does not feel discreditable. The men offered a number of reasons for this.

To begin with, several men suggested that it is commonplace for blue-collar workers to encounter men with prison records. For example:

> Sometimes [at work] you're sittin' around talking to dudes, and that's all the dudes be talking about. . . . Lot of dudes, you know, done some time. You find a whole lot of dudes out of North Carolina, South Carolina, you know -- bricklayers and things. And they sit down at lunch time, you know, and they be talkin' about [it]. . . . So, you know, whole lot of people been in jail, you know.

Also, those men who came from working-class backgrounds, as did the overwhelming majority of my subjects, suggested that prison records are not uncommon for persons in that social strata. As one man said:

> I don't meet too many people who care one way or the other [about my prison record], really. Most of the people I know are familiar with jails. They're familiar with, they're from a society that knows all about jails. They've had cousins or brothers, or they've been in jail themselves. . . . Maybe they're completely honest, but they know the difference. And it doesn't make any difference to them if a person's

been in jail.

This lack of novelty itself produces a lessened fear of discreditability. It probably results in a lower level of salience as well.

Just as important, a substantial majority of the men claimed that in day-to-day interaction there is little opportunity or need to mention or discuss their criminal record. As one man said:

> I'm not ashamed that I was in jail. But I don't volunteer, if the subject's not brought up. I ain't gonna say, "well, I've been in jail," or something like that. I'm not gonna walk into somebody's home and just say, "well, I've been in jail," without the subject being brought up. But if it's brought up I won't try to hide it.

And another subject, a lower-class man, said:

> I don't think that anybody [in my neighborhood] knows about my past, to tell you the truth. I live over in Silver Spring, Maryland and I don't think anybody knows. If they do they have never said anything. . . . The people I associate with and all, they know me as "nice-Jack, who-owns-a-restaurant," and they accept me. There has never been any -- I think you are looking for something -- but in my case it never has been a stigma or anything, as far as ever being ashamed of it, or I would be ashamed if people know. Because, see what I have done over the 20 years that I have been out, 21

> years. I have reestablished myself in the community as a good citizen, as a good parent, and a decent businessman. So, it is no big thing.

For many men, as these comments suggest, successful performance in non-deviant roles produces a sense of incremental <u>social margin</u> on the part of ex-convicts (Wiseman, 1970). However, I emphasize that, by itself, the passage of time also produces a subjectively perceived social margin. Put differently, both successful performance in non-deviant roles and the passage of time tend to erode the salience of the ex-convict identity as well as the degree to which it is experienced as discrediting.

DIVULGENCE

Nonetheless, there are occasions when a man, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, divulges his ex-convict identity. Not surprisingly, divulgence is related to the perception of potential risks involved. Those employed in blue-collar jobs expressed little fear that their ex-convict identity would become known. Occasionally, they disclosed it voluntarily. For example:

> [There was] a dude workin' with me, . . . [and] he was in the service. And the service is almost like a penitentiary, you know, the food line, and stuff like that, you know. Like, we relate, you know. He say, "man, you know, sometimes the line be like in the Army. By the time I'd get up there the food would be cold, you know." "Well," I said, "that's the same way it is

in the penitentiary. Sometimes you get up there and you is the last person [that] comes in. . . . The food is cold." . . . And he said, "you've been in the penitentiary?" And I said, "yeah, I've been in the penitentiary."

Clearly, divulgence and discussion of the convict experiences are most likely to occur in situations corresponding to cell b of Table 7-1.

Non-discrediting Divulgence

In such situations, the ex-convict discloses his identity when: (1) he encounters family or friends who are going astray, and his expertise about the criminal justice process may dissaude them from their errant path, or (2) he perceives a high level of misinformation about the nature of the criminal justice process or some component of it (e.g., the prison). In all such cases, the ex-convict does not fear being discredited.

In one type of situation, the ex-convict actually divulges or discusses his previous criminal behavior as a method of building situational credibility. Often, for example, ex-convicts voluntarily assume the role of "expert" in hopes of dissauding others, usually friends or relatives, who have shown signs of criminal proclivities. Many men related such experiences. One said:

Q: Are there any situations in which you have volunteered to other people that you were in jail?

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me about them.

A: Well, they come up with either my son, who is 13 years old, or some close friend, . . . when I see them heading in that direction that I headed in, where they could possibly end up with some jail time, where I would bring it up that I had been in jail. And that I knew what I was talking about.

Several men indicated there are risks in taking a public stand of this type. Most feared that the intended object of the advice might romanticize the ex-offender and his former exploits or simply dismiss them out of hand. Thus, their activist role might backfire. Remarks by an imprisoned man show one of the hazards:

My cousin, . . . she's got two boys who are teenagers now. So, they started playing a little game of stealing stuff out of stores, you know. So I wrote them a letter and I really put it down heavy about how it is in prison and what you got to go through when you first come in. You want to be a little girl, they'll make a little girl out of you, if you don't know somebody, you know. I really laid it down heavy to these boys. You know what the boys said to me: "Well, it can't be so bad, you keep going back." So what the hell was I going to say then?

Some men told of incidents during their confinement when older inmates talked to them about the futility of engaging in ordinary property crime.

I knew some people that had been in jail, . . . that

had been in and out of institutions all their life. . . . And all these guys used to, you know, preach to me, you know, "hey, this ain't it, you know. This ain't it. . . . Stay straight, stay straight."

Ironically, some men recalled incidents during their final periods of confinement when they assumed this role and tried to educate younger inmates about the futility of a criminal career. For example:

> Gettin' older in the penitentiary you get a good chance to try to rectify some of the mistakes that you've made, man. You see a young guy, you know, you know he's goin' down the wrong path, . . . you sit down and talk to him, . . . and telling him don't look up to you as no big guy or nothing. And then go on to tell him how foolish you was, and things. . . . Because I definitely wouldn't want to see any young guy go through life as I have gone through.

The men acknowledged, however, that initiatives of this type rarely produced the intended results. As one man told me:

> [N]o matter how you try to help some of the younger [convicts], they have this dream, that we may have had at one time in our lifetime, that they're smarter and wiser, and to hell with this old man, and so forth and so on. And when you try to help, pull their coats to things, they'll tell you to kiss their butt, or so forth and so on.
>
> Several men told me that they are viewed by family and

friends as experts on the worlds of crime and imprisonment. Occasionally, therefore, they are called on by "squares" for informational purposes. For example, a man who once used and sold drugs said:

> [G]uys at work, my co-workers, you know, have conversations sometimes. . . . [O]ne of them might come up to me and say, well, "man, my son had some stuff and it was brown, and in foil," and he said "I threw it away. But I should have brought it in so you could see. Tell me what it was, you know." And I say, "well, only could have been two things, you know." I say, "it could have been 'mud' or it could have been hash, you know." I say, "mud is a brown substance, dope in powder form." I say, "hash is a brown, cube-like lump of sugar, only smaller."

At other times, friends or relatives who have gotten into some kind of "trouble" seek the ex-offender's counsel:

> Q: [Your nieces] all know you were in jail at one time?
>
> A: Right.
>
> Q: That doesn't make them avoid you, or anything?
>
> A: Uh uh. See, 'cause they'll come to me if something bothering them, they'd come to me and talk about it, you know, and shit like that. You know what I mean. They know I been there. . . . [One time] my niece had hooked school, you know, and they was in this house. . . . I don't know if they was housebreakin' or what.

Anyway, they had no business in there, you know. She came to me, you know, and sit down and talked to me about it, you know.

Q: Was she worried?

A: Yeah, she wanted to know what should she do. . . . So, I sat down and talked to her about it, you know.

Discrediting Divulgence

The men occasionally found themselves in situations corresponding to cell a of Table 7-1, i.e., where they experience the ex-convict identity as salient and also fear that divulgence would be discrediting. Certain types of situations in which this occurred were mentioned by several men. Discussions of crime and imprisonment are the most common type. A once imprisoned square john told me:

The hard part is to keep your mouth shut when people are on that subject [prisons]. . . . [Say], something's in the paper -- and, especially Lewisburg [federal penitentiary] -- a couple of times people talked about Lewisburg. And, you know, it's hard. I just thank God I'm successful in not saying a word, just listening. But it's hard. And a few times, too, they were saying things that weren't really true, at least not as I knew them.

Another man said:

There's been occasions where, maybe a guy'll come up and say something about prison. And maybe I won't

discuss it, but my mind wonders back to it. Many of times this has happened, . . . but I don't open my mouth to comment on it, . . . but it brings a lot of thought to my mind, you know. I think of it.

In such situations, the ex-convict does not divulge his potential stigma if he believes it will be discrediting.

In other situations, however, he does so because he feels either obligated or compelled to do so. Usually this occurs in hopes that future "surprises" or problems can be avoided. In such situations, rare in occurrence, a man may divulge his criminal record in order to forestall potential problems at a later time. At the same time, he hopes that divulging "up front" will win him benefits for candor and honesty. For example, if the person plans a business venture with another, he may tell him about that fact. Or, if he retains an attorney he may do the same.

BUREAUCRATIC STIGMA

I have discussed incidents of volunatry divulgence or discussion of the ex-convict identity. I found that very few of the men reported problems in managing their potential stigma. However, the standard operating procedures of bureaucracies created problems of another sort. These had proven to be more troublesome and intractable than the interpersonal problems created by the voluntary disclosure of their criminal records. The men reported two different situations of this type.

In the first type, they were harmed because of standard bureaucratic procedures. In such situations, their criminal

reccords prevented them from securing equal treatment from bureaucracies. For example, a 42 year-old man said:

> Q: Has that experience of having been locked up for three years had any negative consequences for you over the last twenty years?
>
> A: The only thing I can remember really having any trouble doing was getting in the service. And the reason I couldn't get in the service was because of my record, you know.

The men expressed regret, but little anger, at situations such as this.

However, in a second type of situation, individuals employed by bureaucracies used their access to records about one or more of the men to spread the man's stigma (Studt, 1973). Incidents in which this apparently was done in hopes of harming the ex-offender were sources of anger and bitterness. One man, employed at the time, told of being stopped by the police because of suspicious circumstances. After learning about his criminal record the detective informed his employer, who drove to the police station, only to discover that the subject no longer was a suspect.

> So, they let me go. So, we came on out and he dropped me off home, and told me he'd see me in the morning. He didn't say anything that day about it. . . . And, [the next day] he told me, he said "what kind of police is that?" Said "he tell me about you had a record, did I know it, and why I let a man work with me with a

> record," and all that. So, I played mum on him, to see what he was going to say. So, that's when he said, "well, by you being an ex-convict, so what?" Said, "I'm going to treat you right. How you going to treat me?" I said, "I'm going to treat you right." And, after that it was never mentioned again.

Another man, employed as a chauffeur, related a similar incident. He expressed some fear because the records of his earlier misconduct were readily accessible to ordinary bureaucratic functionaries and could be misued so easily. For example, a self-employed businessman told me of problems he encountered when he sued a person over a failed business venture:

> So, we went for a deposition with his lawyers and mine, see, and they brought up, "well, have you ever been in prison? Weren't you put in prison for bank robbery?" . . . They knew, they knew. How they found out, I don't know, you know. It just shocked me when they asked me. Well, rather than go through court and have all that come out, and hurt me, I just had to drop it.
>
> Q: That's why they did it, isn't it?
>
> A: That's why they did it. And I was in business, I couldn't afford, . . . I've got a good reputation . . . and I really didn't feel I could . . . have all that come out in court.

Still, even a bureaucracy's ability to keep track of stigmatized individuals is imperfect. For example, one respondent told me that he never had divulged his criminal record

for fear that it would jeopardize his employment. He also told me that he had been through two security checks and in neither case was he challenged. Others related similar experiences.

CONCLUSION

Sensitized by the labeling perspective's emphasis on the potential importance of interpersonal stigma, I was surprised to discover that very few of the men I interviewed regarded it as a major problem in their later years. As they got older, the bulk of their day-to-day social situations increasingly "settled into" cell d of Table 7-1. So long as they dealt with individuals on a face-to-face basis, the men seemed confident of their ability to manage their stigma. Thus, the fact that they are ex-convicts created few interactional problems for them; however, the occasional problems created by bureaucracies with access to their criminal records remained a threat for some.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has reported some of the first systematic data on the process of "maturing out of crime." It suggests, rather strongly, that the overwhelming majority of ordinary property offenders eventually modify and terminate their criminal behavior as they grow older. With two exceptions, the findings from this study are compatible with those of both Irwin (1970) and Meisenhelder (1975; 1977). Contrary to Irwin, this analysis did not find "extravocational" and "extradomestic activities" especially important in the eventual modification and termination of criminal behavior. Similarly, unlike Meisenhelder, "certification" does not appear to be a necessary or even an important component of the process of exiting from crime.

As they age, changes in the criminal behavior of ordinary property offenders are influenced both by orientational and interpersonal experiential contingencies. Equally interesting, these contingencies, when considered in their totality, closely parallel some aspects of the aging experiences of non-offenders in socially comparable segments of the general population.

First, my subjects tended to modify and leaven their aspirations and dreams with increasingly more honest appraisals of their life chances. These perceptual adjustments are similar to changes reported by a broad cross-section of males in the American population. The net result is a growing willingness to settle for, indeed to find satisfaction in a level of success and a range of activities different from the much loftier

aspirations fashioned at, say, age twenty-five.

Second, it appears that ordinary property offenders, like the general population of working-class males, gradually realize that life is a finite entity, that much of it already has elapsed, and that an increasingly smaller portion of it remains. In turn, these changing temporal perceptions foster a determination to use their remaining time more wisely.

Third, as ordinary property offenders age, they gradually develop a holistic interpretation of the lifecycle, and the existence and importance of developmental sequences in the production of alternative, late-life outcomes. Like non-offenders, they begin to see certain, seemingly ineluctable stages, in life. A lower-class man's remarks illustrate the development of this detached analytic stance toward the lifecycle:

> I see life, like gates, like a ski trail. I've seen gates, where things could have gone either way. And I could have gone into a different canyon completely, and my life would have changed.

Another man's remarks demonstrate a similar, belated, awareness of the existence of cultural timetables in the lifecycle and the difficulty of overcoming them as well:

> [T]hat's one thing I regret, you know, not having my own family, you know, and things like that. That's one phase in my life, man, that I didn't do when I was ready, you know.
>
> Q: Do you feel that you've lost the opportunity to do

that?

A: Yes, really.

These changing perspectives are stimulated, first, by aging offenders' examination of comparisons between themselves and their contemporaries. Increasingly, the futility of their criminal efforts are mirrored in the experiences of some of their crime partners and penitentiary acquaintances (Meisenhelder, 1975). As one man said:

> [As you get older,] you look around and you see, like friends, your buddies that was raised up with you, that you know. And, you know what <u>you</u> been doin', and what they been doin'. And, if they have been doin' the same thing that you have, and you look and see how they have deteriorated and say: "I don't want that happening to me."

Also, the changes in perspectives which accompany aging also are stimulated by an occasional tendency to compare oneself with legitimate contemporaries, persons whose efforts once seemed hopelessly square and futile. Now the aging offender begins to develop a measure of grudging respect, even envy, for the lifestyles of such persons. One man said:

> I've had more money than all my brothers and sisters done had, I think. But, man, they put theirs to more use than I did. That's why they got something today, and I haven't. . . . I no sooner got spent what I done stole, you know, and, man, I was goin' to get some more. So, I didn't put no value on nothing, where they

did.

Most of the changes the ex-offenders experienced seem indistinguishable from those encountered by non-offenders. However, at least one change is primarily characteristic of men with considerable first-hand experience at the hands of the criminal justice apparatus: a growing sense of tiredness with the lifestyle of the ordinary property offender.

Whatever their origins, the changing perspectives that accompany aging produce an interpretation of criminal behavior, and the chances of realizing substantial profits from a criminal career, which is decidedly more rational -- and pessimistic -- than the calculus of younger offenders. Consequently, the majority of ordinary property offenders eventually reach the point where they, as one of my subjects put it, decide they would "rather be a bum in the street, than a millionaire in the penitentiary."

DIFFERENTIAL EXPECTATION

This report has described the contingencies which comprise the maturation process in ordinary property offenders. In a broader sense, the findings are interpretable within the framework of two theories of criminal behavior: control theory (Hirschi, 1969; Meisenhelder, 1977) and differential expectation theory (Glaser, 1980). I reject the former as a suitable home for the findings, because its theorists tend to regard the subjective meanings of criminal behavior as unproblematic. Believing it unnecessary, apparently, to investigate the

offender's understanding of his behavior, control theorists focus their attention on understanding or fashioning effective control mechanisms. However, my findings suggest that age-related changes in the perception of social controls appear to be more important, ultimately, in deterring criminal behavior than is objective variation in the social control apparatus itself.

By contrast, the focus of differential expectation theory is the subject's own analysis and evaluation of various behavior options. It assumes that individuals choose to engage in behaviors which, on the basis of culture and experience, are most likely to prove rewarding. Whereas control theorists pay little attention to age-related changes in the meaning of criminal behavior, differential expectation theory clearly can accommodate these changes and use them to explain the inverse relationship between age and criminal behavior. In a word, the metaphor of differential expectation theory accommodates easily what this study has shown to be true: that age contributes to, and changes, the calculus of ordinary property crime.

THEORETICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings have implications for control efforts, especially repressive, deterrence-based ideologies and programs. First, they suggest that some of the underlying assumptions of politically reactionary crime-control programs are incorrect. First, the threat of harsh penalties may have the least impact on younger offenders, precisely because they often fail to calculate rationally the potential outcomes of alternative courses of action.

Second, these findings suggest that, with advancing age, men increasingly become deterred, not so much because of the nature of external social controls, but primarily because of changes within themselves. These changes cause offenders to attach greater, or different, values to formerly taken-for-granted aspects of life, and to calculate more carefully the potential costs of criminal behavior. In turn, these changes produce a new definition and appreciation of those controls. Ironically, the harshness of threatened formal social control measures becomes decreasingly important as the targeted population ages.

Finally, it appears that we would be mistaken to assume that any significant proportion of ordinary property offenders are so irrevocably fixed in their criminality that they require increasingly lengthy prison terms.

In the broadest sense, the policy implication is this: we should not build our crime control efforts on the assumption that offenders are different from the presumably law abiding population. Rather, we should emphasize, programmatically, that they, at least after a certain age, tend to be very similar to the rest of society. We should capitalize on the knowledge that the perspectives of offenders and non-offenders converge as they get older. From a policy-making standpoint, the challenge is to devise programs which hasten this convergence process. It seems likely that neither rehabilitative programs predicated on a view of the offender as "sick," or repressive policies intended to cow and hold him at bay offer much promise in this regard.

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APPENDICES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

1115 Volunteer Boulevard / Knoxville, Tennessee 37916

January 10, 1981

Mr. John Doe
1234 T Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 12345

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am a writer, and I teach at the University of Tennessee. However, this year I am on leave, living in the Washington, D.C. area, and gathering materials for a book.

I believe you may be able to help me with this project and I would like to talk with you, if possible. Of course, I am willing to pay you for your assistance, which would take the form of an interview lasting approximately one hour.

If you will please telephone me at my home in Takoma Park, I will be happy to explain the project to you in more detail. My phone number is 270-4416.

I sincerely hope you will give me the opportunity to talk with you about the project.

Very truly yours,

Neal Shover

Neal Shover
Professor

Telephones: (615) 974-2153, Dept. Office and Head; (615) 974-6021, Faculty

FINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. DATE OF BIRTH

II. HISTORY OF ARRESTS AND CONFINEMENTS

Beginning with juvenile period, secure a brief description of all arrests which resulted in a sentence.

- A. where arrested and for what crime(s)
- B. sentence(s)
- C. if confined, where
- D. how long actually confined
- E. date and method of release

III. FAMILY AND RESIDENTIAL BACKGROUND

- A. place of birth
- B. reared by whom
- C. family composition
- D. reared where
- E. parents' occupation

IV. CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR/IDENTITY

- A. brief history of nature, frequency, and meaning of criminal involvement
- B. ever viewed crime as a potential means of livelihood
- C. every supported self by crime
- D. when, and for how long
- E. what types of crime
- F. ever wanted to be a good thief or hustler
- G. why, or why not
- H. if ever supported self by crime, did you ever achieve this goal
- H. why, or why not

V. THE PRISON EXPERIENCE

- A. total number of calendar years spent in institutions
- B. doing time when young
  1. principal problems, if any
  2. principal approach to doing time
  3. things that you liked, if anything
  4. anything that made the time easy/easier to do

C. doing time when older

1. principal problems, if any
2. principal approach to doing time
3. things that you liked, if anything
4. anything that made the time easy/easier to do

D. aging and doing time

explore any changes in the subject's approach to, and perspectives toward, doing time as he got older.

VI. ANTICIPATING RELEASE FROM PRISON, AND POST-RELEASE LIFE

For each release from confinement, explore:

A. subject's hopes for the future, if any
B. the problems he thought he would have
C. reasons for 1 and 2
D. stance toward potential future criminal behavior
E. problems actually encountered, if any
F. criminal behavior

1. if returned to it, when
2. circumstances surrounding return to it
3. if avoided it, why
4. problems, if any, in avoiding return to it

VII. AGING AND CRIME

A. any changes in criminal behavior as subject aged
B. reasons for/circumstances surrounding the changes
C. ever a time when subject wanted to give up crime

1. when
2. why (or) circumstances surrounding the desire to do so

D. ever a time when subject completely gave up crime

1. how many times
2. when
3. circumstances surrounding each occasion
4. why gave it up
5. how long did it last
6. things which made it easy, if anything, and why
7. things which made it difficult, if anything, and why
8. if it ended, why (or) the circumstances surrounding the return to crime
9. any changes in the crimes committed

VIII. LONG TERM IMPACT OF CRIME AND IMPRISONMENT

Explore how involvement in crime, and imprisonment, has effected subject's: views of, any changes in views, and reasons for any changes, of:

A. ease of committing crime
B. chances of committing crime successfully
C. problems of committing crime
D. conventional or legitimate persons and their activities
E. the life the subject has led
F. the experience of imprisonment

VIII. THE PROBLEMS OF BEING AN EX-CONVICT

Explore with each subject:

A. any feelings of stigma he may have
B. any changes over the years in feelings of stigma
C. reasons for any reported changes
D. any problems related to being an ex-convict
E. situations, if any, in which subject is most aware of being an ex-convict
F. situations, if any, in which subject is unaware or unconcerned about being an ex-convict
G. situations, if any, in which subject is aware of need to keep his ex-convict identity secret
H. situations, if any, in which subject voluntarily discloses that he is an ex-convict

1. circumstances
2. outcome

IX. PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES

A. living arrangements
B. means of support
C. criminal involvement
D. level of satisfaction with life
E. reasons for dissatisfaction, if any
F. reasons for satisfaction, if any
G. regrets, if any, about earlier years of life
H. feelings of satisfaction, if any, about earlier years of life

END