

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATORY

RESEARCH REPORT #9

**AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION OF STREET-TO-SYSTEM CYCLING
OF BLACK, HISPANIC, AND AMERICAN INDIAN MALES**

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Executive Summary

Background

The purpose of this research was to explore how undercount bias was affected by the street lifestyles of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian men who cycle between the street and the "system" (jails, prisons, missions, detoxification centers, among similar institutions). The men in my study are criminals. They spend months in jail or years in prison and eventually return to the street where they might reside in a string of different households, among other living arrangements. Weeks or months after their release, many of them commit another crime and are returned to prison. Over half of the Black, Hispanic, and American Indian prisoner population returns to prison or jail (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1987) within 18 months of release from prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1988). This pattern of recidivism has earned criminals like these (including White offenders) the label of "career criminal."

In this report, I will call their recurring recidivism the "street-to-system" cycle. My research has focused attention on the social characteristics of the street-to-system cycle of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian career criminals. White career criminals were excluded from this research, but in large part, the characteristics of the street-to-system cycle that I discuss for minority career criminals also apply to Whites.

Today, the prison population has reached a record high number. In the first six months of 1989, the inmate population in state and federal prisons increased by 46,004 to a record high of 673,565 men and women; about 45% of prison inmates are Black and about 95% are male (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1987). Approximately 90% of them have histories of violence (DiIulio 1987). As tens of thousands of career criminals are imprisoned yearly, their street-to-system cycle becomes an important issue in research on the undercount. The men I studied, and others like them, do not want to be counted nor do they want to cooperate with anyone who wants to count them.

I collected most of my interview data from felons in state or federal prisons. In doing that, my strategy was to use the system as an easy and relatively safe place to find informants and collect interview data. But, however, how the men in my study spent their time in prison or jail has no bearing on the relationship between the undercount and the street-to-system cycle.

Correctional facilities were excellent places to survey Black, Hispanic, and American Indian criminals of various ages and from wide varieties of social, criminal, and geographic backgrounds. Prisons and jail keep felons pinned down long enough to develop rapport and begin to ask questions. And that is important in ethnographic fieldwork, especially among men like those I studied. After all, when felons are on the street, they try not to be found and rarely are they overly helpful to researchers.

The Black, Hispanic and American Indian criminals I interviewed for this study are, of course, not representative of all Black, Hispanic, and American Indian men. Remember, I studied only felons. In this report, the undercount and everything I say about it should be understood in the specific context of the lives of Black, Hispanic, American career criminals. Readers should not formulate generalizations based on my research that extend to noncriminal males of any race or ethnicity, without first recognizing the limitation of doing that.

Subjects

Almost all of my principal informants are violent career criminals in their late 20s or older (men who have committed serious acts of violence over an extended period of their lives; see Blumstein 1986; Weiner 1989). In addition, I collected informal interview data as well as observational data from about two dozen members of juvenile Black gangs--the Crips, Bloods, and Black Gangster Disciples. The Crips and Bloods are violent street gangs. They are composed predominantly of Black teenagers and young adults (see Fleisher 1989). The Crips and Bloods originated in junior and senior high schools in Los Angeles about 20 years ago and developed out of groups of boys who were loosely organized around consensual leaders. Today in Los Angeles, there are over 10,000 Crips and Bloods who are

arranged into neighborhood gangs, or "sets." Gang members call themselves "gangbangers" and they call their gang activity "gang banging."

Crips and Bloods have moved to all major cities in the western United States, drawn by the profits of drug trafficking. The Black Gangster Disciples, a Black street gang originating in Chicago, has gone into the business of distributing illegal drugs. A profit motive also brought them to many West Coast cities. Crips, Bloods, and Black Gangster Disciples are usually "at war" on the streets in their home neighborhoods. But, however, a profit motive has frequently led these gangs into periods of peace, as they work together to develop drug distribution channels around the western United States (personal communication from gang cops in a major West Coast city and from street gang experts in the Federal Bureau of Prisons).

I met and interviewed Crips, Bloods, and Black Gangster Disciples on the streets of West Coast cities, in city jails, in state and federal prisons, and in police station "holding tanks."

Method

Strategy. It is common knowledge among criminologists, sociologists, and criminal justice staticians, among others, that criminals move from the street to jail or prison and back again. Many criminals do this quite often. There are, however, few studies on the structure and dynamics of individual violent career criminals in the

criminological literature (see Blumstein, et al. 1986; Weiner 1989). There are no published studies relating prison recidivism and the street life of criminals to the undercount.

The first step was to find Black, Hispanic, and American Indian career criminals who were willing to be interviewed. It was important to find career criminals, not just men who were imprisoned one or twice. I wanted the details of the street lives of criminals who cycled repeatedly into and out of the system. Next, I wanted to track the life history of each informant from his earliest recollections up to the moment of his present incarceration or living situation. That strategy would give me longitudinal data on the street-to-system cycle and the pressures on the street which moved them from place to place and from the street into the system. Whenever possible, I collected life history data about members of an informant's nuclear or extended family, trying to understand how my informant's life compared to the lives of his siblings.

Validity. There are limitations to using retrospective ("recall") data as the basis for building a model of a street-to-system cycle (see Widom 1988), but in this case, there were no reasonable alternatives. I do not have the time to track six-year old males from their homes in ghettos or on reservations through their middle-age years.

In this report, I present an internally valid model of a street-to-system cycle based on a limited set of life history data. There are regularities in the street-to-system cycle that are so striking that I believe my model is externally valid as well for most career criminals, independent of their race or ethnicity. In short, I do not think that I have jeopardized the validity of my model by using a recall method for data collection.

Limitations. There are serious limitations in using semistructured interviews with violent career criminals. Informants can pick and choose what they want to talk about and hide interesting or important accounts. The most common problem in my interviews was that violent criminals frequently could not recall their lives prior to their teenage years. Prison psychologists say that this is common among violent men and is an emotional way to hide the trauma of early life abuse. And, of course, many criminals are wonderful storytellers who enjoy embellishing their lives and crimes. Twenty years of prison ethnography among criminals has taught me how to distinguish life history accounts from convict folklore.

Sampling. I chose to select informants from a maximum-security federal prison and from a jail for different reasons. Almost all inmates, with few exceptions, in the maximum-security federal prison where I collected my data were career criminals. On average, inmates in that prison were over age 26, had long histories of drug or alcohol abuse, or both, had criminal records beginning in their early teenage years, had been arrested over ten

times, and had served prison sentences in other federal or in state prisons. Nearly 98% of the inmates in that federal prison had histories of violent behavior. Inmates younger than 26 who were in that prison usually had committed egregious acts of criminal violence. Approximately 25% of all inmates in that federal prison were aged 18 to 26. My federal prison informants were "hardcore" and usually represented the best examples of a clearly patterned street-to-system cycle. These informants also gave me the best data about resistance.

Jail inmates were usually in the early 20s and most of them had committed nonviolent felonies. A majority of them were cocaine or heroin dealers, and some of them had served sentences of five or more years in one or more state prisons. These men were "lightweight" felons and were "closer to the street" (they were serving short sentences) than my informants in federal prison. Almost all of my jail informants lived in or around the major city in which the jail was located. That allowed me to collect detailed data about their movement patterns (the neighborhoods and houses they lived in, for example), when they were on the street the last time. And, I thought, I would be able to meet them on the street after their release from county jail.

At first, I sampled my informants by convenience (I interviewed whomever would talk to me). Then, once I began to understand the pattern of the street-to-system cycle, I interviewed men whom I believed would give me particular types of accounts

(judgment sampling). I usually did this by engaging an inmate in a brief conversation about his hometown or city, his history of arrests, his personal use of drugs, his history of violence, his membership in a street gang, and his siblings involvement in criminal activity. Some jail inmates were too lightweight to interview. They had short, mundane criminal histories and were not adequate examples of a street-to-system cycle. My federal prison informants were usually "heavyweights," but many of them spend more time in the system than on the street. I knew some heavyweights who had been imprisonment in youth authority facilities, jail, and state or federal prisons for nearly twenty years by the time they reached age 35.

Ideally, I looked for informants who had left home by age eight or nine, had some involvement in a gang or deviant teenage organization (as one might find on an American Indian reservation), had some history of violence, had used drugs or alcohol, and had been tossed around by his family (he might have been sent from relative to relative) and by the system, which sent him from youth authority to prison to parole and back to prison. Informants who meet these criteria were all too easy to find.

And, finally, once my interviews began rolling along, my informants started picking other informants for me ("you gotta talk to this guy") (snowball sampling). (See Fleisher 1989 for a discussion of methods of prison research.)

Data Collection. I have life history data on twenty-three jail inmates and seventy-seven prison inmates. I also have "bit and pieces" of life history data collected in informal interviews with about thirty former felons living on the street and with about two dozen street gang members. I maintained contact with many of those prison inmates from December 1988 to December 1989, and was able to accumulate detailed life histories from 48 of them, including eight American Indians, twelve Hispanics, and twenty-eight Blacks.

It was difficult to maintain contact from month to month with jail inmates--most of them were serving short sentences of 30 to 90 days, and with former felons who were living in missions or on the street. Many jail inmates gave me a "home" address and a phone number and told me to call them after their release. I called each inmate, only to find incorrect or disconnected phone numbers, or a person answering the phone who "did not know anything" about the man I was looking for.

In my interviews, I stayed away from any sensational aspects of the crimes committed by my informants and from their most recent criminal activity. I told them that I was not interested in the details of their crimes, but only in the social course of their lives. I assured them that prison or law enforcement authorities would not have access to my interview data. At that, most of them just smiled in disbelief. Informants never gave me self-incriminating information.

Each initial interview lasted about 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews varied in length from 5 to 10 minutes to 60 to 90 minutes. I often had short, "on the run" follow-up interviews with jail or prison inmates as they ate meals, played cards, or "hung out" with cellblock buddies. My most comprehensive interview data come from a combination of private "sit down" interviews in a quiet room and on-the-run interviews.

I used an interview schedule as a general guide for my interviews and obtained informed consent from all of my jail and prison informants. Appendix A includes my interview schedule and an informed consent statement. The interview schedule, informed consent statement, and a proposal outlining this research were reviewed and approved by officials in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Jail administrators were not interested in the formal details of my research, but I gave them a research proposal anyway. I did not ask street informants to sign an informed consent statement, but I always explained the purpose of my research to them. I never concealed my identity as a cultural anthropologist and a researcher commissioned by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The interviews I had with Black, Hispanic, and American Indian men are summarized in Table 1 by their age and ethnic or racial group. I had too many informal interviews ("chats") to keep an accurate record of them.

Data were collected at several sites: a state and a federal prison on the West Coast; a large county jail on the West Coast; on the streets, in the missions, and in churches that care for homeless people of a West Coast city; and occasionally on the streets of one East Coast city.

Analysis. I collected life histories one by one and pieced together a comprehensive model of the social and emotional factors that surround the street-to-system cycle. I always tried to isolate factors that were shared by or unique to racial or ethnic groups. And, I looked for the following things, among others, in my analysis of life history data.

- (1) When and why my informant left home.
- (2) How often he left home.
- (3) Where he went when he left home.
- (4) When he was arrested the first time.
- (5) His history of teenage crime.
- (6) His history of teenage imprisonment.
- (7) His adult criminal history.
- (8) His adult incarceration history.
- (9) What he did on the street between imprisonments.
- (10) Present plans for the future.
- (11) Social support on the street during and after imprisonments.
- (12) His attitudes about his life as he aged.

A major part of ethnographic research is to present an informant's view of the world in his own words. I have done that in the section of this report called The Street-to-System Cycle.

Table 1. Summary of Semistructured Interviews with Jail and State and Federal Prison Inmates.

		Number of Interviews					
	Age	Initial	2-3	3-6	7-10	10+	Total
Black males	18-25	14	11	5	1	--	16
	26-40	54	48	30	25	20	123
Hispanic males	18-25	4	1	--	-	-	1
	26-40	16	14	10	5	3	32
American Indian males	18-25	3	2	-	--	--	2
	26-40	9	6	2	--	--	8
		100	82	47	31	23	182

Principal Findings

My interviews revealed several things. First, my analysis of the life histories of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian criminals in this study has shown that there is, indeed, a structured, street-to-system cycle. Even though I conducted a relatively small number (N=100) of formal interviews, my life history data show common themes in the street-to-system cycle that cross-cut racial or ethnic

lines. These consistencies suggest that my model of a street-to-system cycle may characterize a much larger number of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian men who share a similar lifestyle.

Second, transience (daily life that is sustained over long periods of time outside of one's natal or conjugal home) is a characteristic basic to the street-to-system cycle for the men I studied. These men do not stay in any place for too long, except for jail or prison.

Third, jail or prison is a major component of the street-to-system cycle. My informants do not balk at the thought of going to prison. Many welcome prison.

Fourth, these men do not like to cooperate with anyone. Their resistance is, in part, linked to the "culture" of the street-to-system cycle. Most men in this study said that they have never cooperated with any authority figures, such as local, state, and federal government officials, and have no intention of cooperating. They explain their resistance by saying that the federal government has "offended" them or "their people," so, they ask, "how can the government expect me to cooperate?" Resistance is also an adaptation to street life and criminal activity. I interviewed men who rhetorically asked: "How can I get caught, if no one knows who I am or what I do?" And, resistance among men like those I studied also has its origins in their sociopsychological development.

A major finding of this research is this: by age 30 or so, almost all of the men I studied were "literally homeless" (Rossi, et al. 1986). When they left prison, they had nowhere to go. They might have alienated their former street ties, such as family--if they had any, with their violent behavior, or they might have lost some of their neighborhood companions to street violence, imprisonment, or an overdose of drugs. With these social conditions in mind, leaving the security of a prison routine becomes a problem of personal adaptation. "Where do I go now?" they ask themselves. Some of them go to missions or cheap motels, looking for temporary shelter. Others live as homeless men on the street. Many of them stay in temporary shelters and commit another crime and return to the system. They go "home."

My research suggests that outreach programs targeting men like my informants might work if the programs are focused on middle-age felons, preferably over age 35. Outreach programs trying to reach criminals under age 30 or so will probably be less successful. Younger criminals are enthusiastic about living the street-to-system cycle and will be highly resistant. But, once men like those I studied realize they are literally homeless, alone in the world, many of them react to that awareness by softening their resistance and becoming slightly more cooperative.

The stories and life histories I collected for this research, as well as the patterns of resistance shown by the men I studied, will give the Census Bureau an idea of the kinds of problems which

enumerators might encounter when trying to census men who are living a street-to-system lifestyle.

The Street-to-System Cycle

My research has confirmed some things that were already suspected, and it has produced surprising findings as well. Every violent criminal in my study was exposed to beatings, neglect, and sometimes maternal abandonment. Also, most of the parents of my informants were alcoholics, drug addicts, or both. More noteworthy is the fact that serious and prolonged early family life abuse contributes to a regular pattern of transience in each one of my subjects.

My research shows that career criminals in my study have lived a four stage, street-to-system lifecycle. I call the stages childhood, teenage, system, and adult transience. Most of my subjects had already passed through the first two stages and were in the third stage (as prison inmates), when they talked to me; some were still in the second stage (gang members, for example), others were in the fourth stage (homeless former felons).

Each stage is characterized by an age range, typical behaviors and attitudes, and one or more traits like helplessness, dependency, or aimlessness. The street-to-system cycle applies to men in my study, irrespective of their race or ethnicity.

Finally, each subject's course of social life, moving from early childhood to the penitentiary or post-penitentiary homelessness, has followed a path of "low social resistance." All of my informants had usually avoided face-to-face violent confrontations with authority figures, like parents, police or prison correctional staff. There were notable exceptions. One of my informants bludgeoned his grandparents to death, and another nearly decapitated a law enforcement officer.

Childhood Transience

The cycle between the street and jails, prisons, and similar custodial institutions starts in childhood. In 1986, 12,487,500 people were arrested, and 1.7% were younger than 12 years old (Department of Justice 1986). From about age four to nine or ten, a child is helpless in his out-of-control family. "My coming up years, yeah, I remember 'em. They was tough," said "AD," a Black drug dealer, killer, bank robber, former Los Angeles street gang member.

Tough, indeed. As abused kids, men like AD run away from home regularly and stay away for longer periods each time. They wander from place to place, searching for some sense of security in the homes of friends or with others who live on the street. As they age, burglary, theft or vandalism, among other "kid" crimes, become more frequent, and crime severity increases. Before long, they have their first of many run-ins with police.

"Coming Up Years"

Donnie. One midweek night, I was sitting with Donnie, a 23-year-old Plains Indian, who is serving a sentence of more than 30 years at a federal prison on the West Coast. Donnie is the third oldest of four brothers; his eldest brother (a former state prison inmate) still lives on the reservation, and is always in trouble, according to Donnie. His second youngest brother has "always [had] something wrong with him. If you give him an idea, he wouldn't think, he'd just do it." Donnie's youngest brother shot himself in the head at age 17. When Donnie was 13, he stabbed a teenager to death by plunging a knife into his head.

"I was high on acid [LSD]," Donnie said. I don't remember too much about it. I was sitting on the floor; there was music playing. I saw somebody lean over me, like they was going to hurt me. I picked up something I had and stabbed in the front of me. When I woke up, I saw what happened. I don't remember it."

The data here come from my second interview. We had spent several hours together, a few days earlier, but I could not get him to talk about his preteenage years. This time, I wanted to hear about Donnie's early family life on the reservation. Donnie had a hard time talking about it, and claimed he did not have any memories about his life before the LSD killing.

Donnie said he ran away from home (his mother's house) three times. At age four, he walked out and went to live with his mother's mother, who lived two miles away. "Grandma tried to treat me good," he said. Relatives brought him home. At age five, Donnie said, he ran away again, back to his grandmother's house. Again, he was returned.

"I had to leave my mother's house [at the age of six]. I don't know why. Life in my house, to me, was very boring. They [his grandparents] were too old, and we had to go out and do all the work. My grandmother didn't drink. My father drank, but he didn't beat me. My mother [is the one] who beat me. That's why I took off."

The third time Donnie ran away from his mother's house, he fled with a friend. Together, they ran as far away from his mother's house as they could go. They had horses, he said, so they could ride

to the distant areas of the reservation to avoid capture by the tribal police, and for good reason. "They'd pick you up, and beat the shit out you!" Donnie and his companion broke into reservation houses for food, "most [were] White [people's] houses," he said. After he was caught, the tribal council (some of whom were his relatives) decided to send him to his aunt's house in Colorado.

Telling me about those events did not disturb him. When I asked how he felt about his childhood, if he was well treated by his parents, if he enjoyed being a kid, he said, "Yeah, I guess so." Donnie did not want to talk about his early life, but I did.

Finally, one night, Donnie and I were sitting together at a round cardtable on the "flats" (ground level) of his cellblock. The table was covered with an army blanket. Bill, a chubby White inmate, was sitting at the table. Donnie introduced me to him, and said Bill could stay there during the interview. That was unusual for several reasons. Inmates usually did not want other inmates to hear about their personal lives. Even stranger, Donnie wanted to sit out in the open area of his cellblock. That had not happened before. American Indians at other times had always wanted to get out of the view of both inmates and staffers alike. Now Donnie simply said, "I got nothing to hide."

So, as inmates leaned over the second and third tier railings, watching and listening, Donnie answered my questions. "What's your earliest childhood memory?" I asked.

Donnie paused, staring into the air. "I told you. The time I killed that kid."

"But you were twelve then, right?" I responded.

"Yeah," he said.

"Let's go back before that. How about when you were really young, like three, four, five?"

Donnie just kept staring.

"Tell me about Christmas when you were really young, OK? Do you have any memories of Christmas?"

• "Nope," Donnie said.

At that point, Bill, who considered himself an expert in psychology, jumped into the conversation. "You mean you don't remember Christmas when you were a kid. Didn't you have a tree? You got to remember Christmas!"

Donnie kept staring into the distance at cellblock doors. At last, he told his story. "[My] only Christmas memory, I was living in Denver [with an aunt on his father's side]; we only stayed there a year. It was Christmas and I came down and found my uncle stabbed. He was pretty fucked up. They [his aunt and uncle] must have been drunk. We got sent there; we were just getting out of control [on the reservation]. We wouldn't listen to nobody or anything like that." (Donnie and his two older brothers were sent to his aunt's house; his youngest brother lived with his father. Then Donnie was returned to the reservation and began school there.)

"When I went to school, I didn't get along with anybody. I didn't get along with teachers. I thought they were all out to get me. I had problems all the time with the teachers. I didn't have problems with kids, always with the teachers. I couldn't face looking up to the teachers. My grandmother was always called to the school. I used to get in fights with teachers. If they wanted me to do something and I didn't want to, we'd get into a fight. Until I was eight or nine, I was alright. I decided I could take this for a while, as long as they don't get into my face. When I was ten, I didn't want to go back to school. I told my grandmother that nobody was going to make me go back. Me and Don [his second oldest brother] took off at ten. That's when we started breaking into houses [again]. That's when the real serious trouble started."

Porkie. Porkie (he was nicknamed after his favorite food, barbecued pork ribs) left home, too. A Black drug dealer, burglar, and armed robber, from Washington, D.C. in his mid-20s, Porkie is doing 50 years in federal custody. He did not remember much about his childhood, either. He did remember, though, that his mother would leave him and his siblings for long periods of time.

"Some ol' bitches down the hall would come in looking in on us every now and then. She'd [his mother] be gone for a long time. When I was six or seven, I started hanging out on the street. I lived in reform schools. I lived 10 out of 24 years on the street."

He spent his childhood years on the street, and stayed with his grandmother [father's mother] or anyone else. By age eleven, Porkie was selling drugs and living with his grandmother full time.

"I lived with my grandma when my mother was incarcerated. I had a place in her basement," Porkie said passively. Then he perked up: "My mother is bailing out of jail right now in [a southern state]. She was a professional thief. She was stealing drugs, jewelry. Some of her attributes came to me. She done took me out and we stole together." He laughed. (Porkie's father's brother, father's sister's three kids, and father's brother's son also lived with his father's mother.)

"My father, what was he like? He left my mother when I was seven. He was in and out of the pen. He's running the street with other women. He ain't had time for us children. He didn't want to spend much time with us doing what a father's got to do. If you grow up fatherless, you pick someone as your role model, like my cousin [father's brother's son]. He was into the fast life--drugs, women."

TJ. TJ, a tall, well-built, muscular Black man, was born on the West Coast, and "grew up about a half a mile from USC." Now 36, TJ is serving 20 years for bank robbery. One afternoon, TJ and I sat together in his cell. He smoked Lucky Strikes, one after another.

"I was about seven when I became rebellious. I was a sickly child. I had asthma and got pneumonia. I didn't get medicine for wheezing. I'd get lots of spankings, and hit on the bottom of my feet.

"We were poor. My mother was 16 when I was born. Me and my brother have different fathers. [My father] was a sailor kind of guy in the Navy. He did a lot of time in Japan. For three or four Christmases, we'd get a lot of toys, but that's it. There were a lot of stepfathers around when I was coming up, but I was rebellious to that fact, whereas my brother fell into that trip--he was obedient. I was about seven when I became rebellious. I don't remember good times until I was in the seventh or eighth grade.

"I was arrested [the first time] when I was seven years old. They were building the Santa Monica freeway. We were kicked out of a show [movies] and went to play on the freeway. Someone came up with the idea to drop rocks on the cars, and we broke a windshield. I got into trouble a few more times when I was seven.

"By the second grade, I was arrested at least four times. I ran away from home at least twice and had been to three elementary schools. I was living with my mother, when I was young. We were on the 'honor system' at home, you know. My mother was a nurse who was away from home a lot. We were alone, me and my brother, for years. There was the bitch down the street who checked on us. I ran away from home and lived on the eastside with my godparents. They decided to put some gospel in me, but it didn't work out."

TJ was a gangbanger, too, long before gangs controlled drug trafficking and killed each other with high-power weapons.

"You know this year is the 20-year anniversary of the Crips. I was in the Van Ness Boys [a pre-Crip high school gang]. I was 12 or 13 when I joined. I was in the eighth grade, I think. I never did nothing in my neighborhood, so I couldn't get blamed for nothing. We was fighting rival schools. Ya know, we were into a 'this is our show, and no outsiders allowed' kind of trip. The Van Ness Boys were 16 strong. It was very rare to use knives or guns. Chains, boards, stomping was the thing."

TJ didn't adjust well to school. "I came home [from school], and my uncle was there, and he took me to high school in San Jose, Silver Creek High School. That was 1970. I got kicked out of high school up there, for gambling on the street. I was hustling too--shining shoes, washing car windows. After that I went back to my mother's house until the eleventh grade. Then I got kicked out for gambling, and expelled forever. Craps did it to me."

TJ has spent much of his life in custody. "I been down [in prison] twelve years. Five calendars for the state, and five years, four months for the feds. And then I did a lot of short sentences in jail, month at a time. I been on the run a lot, too. I was running from the state for a year, or about nine months. If you run without them catching you, chances are good they'll discharge you."

"I'm a crook. That's the road I chose, that's the road I got. I've had ample opportunities." TJ is now father to three daughters, born in 1972, 1973, and 1983, to three different mothers. He doesn't support any of them financially.

Pinto. Pinto was willing to talk about his father. As the youngest of eleven siblings, Pinto's teenage years were hectic. He was a heroin addict, a gangbanger, and, by 14, a notorious armed robber. I verified that. Pinto remembers his childhood this way.

"The ol' man [his father] was an alcoholic and beat my mother through the years. He had a few auto body shops. He was in the Army in World War II. I think that's how he got his citizenship--he's from Mexico. Mom worked two jobs and was a nervous wreck. When I was three or four, my father wasn't paying his taxes. Feds took our house, and we all were in foster homes for a while. We all went to different foster homes. Feds put us on the street, and the church came in and put us in foster homes. It had a big effect on the family. My father was never there. He'd come home drunk, beat everybody up, and leave. He had girlfriends. One of them, he's still with today.

"My mother and father have been split up since '57 or '58. My father was never there, and he never really helped financially with anything. Me and Gary [Pinto's brother] would live with him. He didn't want his kids to speak Spanish; he had a hard time with his accent from Mexico. He had a hard time, and he'd meet these women and want to start his life over again. He'd tell his girlfriends I was his only kid. He'd show up, slap my sisters around, beat up my brothers, and never really did nothing for nobody."

"Did he beat you, Pinto?" I asked.

"Only when I deserved it. I'm kind 'a like my dad. I had everything I wanted 'cause I worked for it. I didn't hate him. I lived with him from when I was seven or eight to twelve. I left him when I was twelve, and he waited for me to come back. If I would have lived with him, my whole life would have been different. He brought my wife up here [to visit him at federal prison] twice in five years. That's more than I can say for anybody else.

"I always liked Anthony [ninth in the birth order; Pinto is the youngest]. He's an attorney now. He went to a [Catholic college]. He was an exchange student in Spain, and taught in Bowling Green, Ohio, and in Seattle. He went to Argentina and met a woman there and married her. I helped him out his first two years of law school, but I got busted. He struggled like the rest of us. He was in a foster home. He escaped to school and that kind of shit. I escaped to the street.

"I got involved with Lupe's boyfriend [Lupe is the short form of Guadalupe, the youngest daughter and tenth in the birth order]. My mother put a lot of hate in her for my father. I guess Lupe knew all along that he wasn't her father.

"Lupe had a daughter; she never married the father. They [now] live in HUD housing. She worked different jobs; she struggles along from job to job. She's into a heavy Christian trip now. She had an older boyfriend when she was in junior high--ninth grade--who had been in prison. He was 27, and an ex-con. I used to run with those guys. I was 12, maybe 13."

At 14, Pinto was indicted for 48 armed robberies, among other violent crimes, committed in and around Los Angeles. "They wanted to try me as an adult, and send me to [a] state penitentiary for life. I was lucky, man."

Teenage Transience

The teenage stage of the street-to-system cycle begins in the late preteenage years and continues through teenage high-crime years. In 1986, 19.9% of people arrested were between 13 and 18 years old, [Department of Justice 1986]). This stage is commonly marked by violence, often with such explosiveness that, to an onlooker, the violent acts seem freakish, gratuitous, and capricious. Violence is now accompanied by an adolescent's desperate need to become part of a secure, defensive social group.

Teenage transiency begins when a boy's criminal activity dominates his life. When that happens, he begins to go back and forth between the street and jails or juvenile institutions, or both. This continues until he goes to an adult prison, dies, or somehow breaks the cycle.

The hallmark trait of a teenager's transiency is the expansion of his social network ties, seen in neighborhood camaraderie. Living the life of a teenage criminal, either for long periods on the street or alternating between various institutions and the street, takes

social skill, especially the ability to get things from others. A skillful manipulator can not only remain transient, he can, if he's lucky, elude law enforcement officials entirely. Social manipulation means knowing people who will, as criminals say, provide "protection" ("to lay some protection on [someone]" means 'to give somebody survival information'). Protection can be money, shelter, or knowledge (who's doing what?). A large social network can provide protection. A teenager's social world is composed of four main groups.

• (1) "Homeboys." Homeboys are a teen's closest social ties. Most often, they have grown up in the same neighborhood, or set. Homeboys, or "homies," are "tight," they say. Today, in major prisons which warehouse inmates from many areas around the United States, the term homeboy is often used to refer to men from the same geographic region. For example, in a large West Coast prison, inmates from San Francisco and Los Angeles have grouped together and call themselves "Westcoast Homeboys." Inmates from cities east of St. Louis, except for Washington, D.C., call themselves "Eastcoast Homeboys." Washington, D.C. inmates call themselves "DC Homeboys" (see Fleisher 1989).

(2) "Road dogs," or "partners." Those are close ties, but less so than homeboys. Homeboys or road dogs might be crime partners. All gang members are homies, but only one or two of them might be crime partners. (Homeboy and road dog are street terms that have been brought into prison by street criminals. Terms used by

prison inmates that are not shared by street criminals are specialized vocabulary items that usually refer to concepts of prison culture, such as "time," or cultural items, such as "pruno" (wine brewed in prison), which are not part of street culture [see Fleisher 1972].)

Life history data suggest that criminal teenagers, in childhood or early teenage years, commonly form their closest social tie to their first crime partner. Sometimes, road dogs do juvenile time in the same correctional facilities. They call that "coming up together." First crime partners might go to prison together as well. A teen's first road dog is often the only fellow he has ever trusted, at least for a while. Road dogs, like homeboys, will eventually prove themselves untrustworthy, say adult criminals.

(3) "Associates." Those are teens' acquaintances and are not usually thought of as homies or crime partners. Street gangs are composed of "righteous," or fully initiated, members and associates. Associates are younger teens who often carry a gang's drugs and weapons, and sell drugs on street corners, while righteous members "lay back." Prison associates might call on each other for occasional minor favors, such as passing information to someone on the street through an associate's visitor; or they might run or lift weights together or walk with each other on the yard or hang out in a cellblock.

(4) "Straights" or "squares." These are stable community folks, including parents, grandparents, parents of homeboys, girlfriends, and young wives. Some straights, say criminals, dabble

in illegal activities, such as some drug sales out of a corner store, but those folks are not thought of as criminals by criminals. Those folks do it, say criminals, " 'cause they have to make ends meet." But, they say, their crime "ain't no big thing."

Stable noncriminals, such as neighborhood folks, might get involved in a young criminal's street survival. Straights can launder drug money, deliver bail money, provide a "safe house" to store drugs or weapons or both, or offer the criminals a place to hide when they're on the run. Residential mobility is now linked to criminal activity, as when, for example, gang-affiliated drug dealers move from house to house or apartment to apartment; they might also rent or buy, simultaneously, many houses or apartments, rotating their residence among them. Porkie told me, "In the Black community, they [straights] ain't going to say anything as long as they get theirs too. A hot t.v. or microwave would come into the community; [drug] dealers buy 'em and give 'em away. There's a lot of families living nice off of that drug money."

As young criminals commit more violent crimes, they are often forced to leave their neighborhoods, barrios, or reservations to avoid arrest or to elude retaliation by neighbors, or both. Transiency and resistance to authority now reach their highest level. Eventually, teenage criminals are rearrested and imprisoned again: 76% of Black offenders who were released from custody between 17 and 22 years old were rearrested and 45% were reincarcerated, while 71% of Hispanic offenders were rearrested and 44% were reincarcerated (Bureau of

Justice Statistics 1987). BJS data do not segregate American Indians from among Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Alaska natives; 75% of this cohort were rearrested and 63% were reincarcerated.

Teenage transiency ends when young men are sent to prison. An important consequence of recurring confinement is a loss of social network ties. This loss begins in earnest when they are removed from their home territory for progressively longer prison sentences. But going to jail, juvenile hall or prison isn't too bad. They will probably do "juvie time" with their homeboys, road dogs, and associates, and later they will say they have been "state raised." Institutions are often a positive change, they say, from their dangerous street lives. Remember, their relatives, homeboys, and others whom they left behind on urban streets are just as poor, uneducated, addicted, and hungry as they were-- before they went to prison. Many are just as violent.

"On the Street"

"Darkness. I lived in a world of darkness. The ghetto, the slum," said Cliff. Black, born in the deep south, Cliff and his family moved to a West Coast city, when he was a boy. When I met him at a West Coast penitentiary, Cliff was 42, an AIDS victim (from intravenous drug use), and had spent 22 years in juvenile and adult custody.

Cliff was infamous, too. He took out his scrapbook, tucked away in his cell's footlocker, and showed me frayed, tattered clippings in his city's newspapers. Cliff was the "Pillowcase Bandit," wrote reporters. "I threw colored pillowcases at [bank] tellers and told them, 'fill 'em up!'" Cliff threw a lot of pillowcases. He robbed 16 banks. He was convicted on three counts of armed bank robbery, although he committed seven armed bank jobs, he said.

Cliff was one of eight children, fathered by five different men. "Despite the pain and difficulty she ["Cliff's" mother] had to endure, she loved us all equally. She did the best she could do under those circumstances. I went to school and never learned how to read or write, and went through tenth grade. In those days, they passed you on age, no matter how dumb you were.

"I felt inferior, I felt ugly. Before 1965, Blacks were considered ugly, so I imposed myself on people. I couldn't read so I didn't know what existed in the world, except the slum. I started stealing cars and joined a gang so I could be recognized. If you were a pimp, a dealer, or a drug addict you were somebody. You were recognized. I did all the things that couldn't be done and never learned to do things right. I robbed, raped, shot, stabbed, kicked, and bit. I did every indecent thing that was conceivable to the mind of man. Robbery, deceit, little mindless darkness. So I fiddled and fumbled through life.

"I wanted to be a real professional criminal. I told the judge, 'I been trying to beat you for 25 years. John Dillinger was my ideal. The pimps and the dealers were my ideals. These were the people I loved. They gave me a feeling of being somebody.' The judge said, 'it's a shame that a man of your caliber became a criminal.' It is a shame. But I took an oath that I was going to be a criminal.

"Caesar White was my best friend. He came from a Catholic house. He had a mother and father in the house. They were trying to teach him discipline. My mother didn't do nothing--she was used to it. •

"We made a bet when we were children, who would outlive who[m]. We bet a dollar. I met Caesar in fifth grade. We were together every day until he died; he got killed. A guy shot him at a party. Shot him in the heart. He was real beautiful, real beautiful. In 1968, Caesar got killed. My son's mother came up to visit [me in state prison, just after it happened]. 'Caesar White is dead,' she said.

"I went to prison, I couldn't read or write. I couldn't spell 'what,' 'when' or 'why.' I went to prison [the first time] for kidnapping, rape, oral copulation, robbery, burglary, and for violating a 13-year-old girl. She was a week from being 14. She looked every bit of 18 or 19. Two weeks later, I got arrested, and I found out. For 22 years, I've had to live with being a pervert. She was White, so it was all fun 'n games [in court].

"I went to [state prison] for five years, four months, on a five-year-to-life sentence; my partner was sentenced to YA [Youth Authority]. I learned to read and write in prison. I became a Black Muslim, and in those days, it signified cleanliness, uprightness, and that the White people was the devil. A guy would get up on the podium: 'the White man's the devil. The White man made you a slave, he made you a pimp.' I wanted something to believe in, so I joined the Muslims."

Before his time at [state prison], Cliff said he did five years in a state youth authority facility, doing some time at each youth institution. After prison, Cliff did seven years in another state prison.

"The Gangs. I was the leader of [a gang]. They stole sodas, stole donuts, hopped on trucks, and rode out of town. To go to juvenile hall was a big thing. You could lift weights and get big. You walked around with your back tilted, like you're tough. All those guys are dead. There's only a few still alive. We didn't kill each other [like gangs do today]. We went to school together. And after the dance, we fought each other. Fistfights. The Duke was the toughest. All those years I was afraid. When I was in jail, a guy came back the third time. I said to myself, 'if I have to come back three times, I'm going to throw in the towel.'

"I'm retired from my crime. Let the record show that I've officially retired my crime. I talked to my sister today for the first time in five years. I talked to my mother for the first time

since 1983. I moved my safe to my mother's house, and I came up missing things. I told my mother that if I get out, I'm going to kill my stepfather and my brother. My grandmother was fair. If I gave her something to hold, I could go back ten years later, three years later or ten minutes later, and it would still be there.

"If they parole me, I'd live with my son. I want to die with my family around me. The [Parole] Board can't give me freedom. I gave me freedom. The Board can fix it so it can be more convenient to my family, but I gave myself freedom. I got seven brothers I don't know. I want to live with my family and die peacefully, not like I used to want to go out in a blaze of gun fire!" Cliff wasn't granted a parole. Instead, he was transferred to a medical facility for inmates. The last I heard, Cliff was close to death.

System Transience

In the system phase (long-term imprisonment or a series of short-term prison sentences), a young adult exhibits extreme dependency (if he's an addict, his addiction often becomes acute now) and a need for "maximum social security." A growing dependency on the system might be reflected by the 1986 arrest rate of 14% for persons between 19 and 21 years old, 13.2% for ages 22 to 24, and 17.9% for ages 25 to 29 (Department of Justice 1986).

Crime becomes the key to a regular, solid routine which only prison life can provide. A criminal's dependence on the system might last indefinitely; many men move between the street and prison for the balance of their lives. High rates of recidivism show the movement between the street-to-system. In 1986, 24.3% of state prisoners had served one prison sentence before their present incarceration; 20.3% had served two sentences; 31.9% had served three to five prison sentences; and 23.8% had served more than six prison terms (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1988). Some violent men who are released to the street choose to go straight. They enter the adult phase of the street-to-system cycle.

The system phase begins when teenage criminals are sent to state or federal prison for the first time. A significant attitude change begins to occur. After a few bouts with state prisons or state and federal prisons, men rethink their homeboy and neighborhood relationships. Their homeboys and road dogs are gone. Some have gone to prison if they are lucky, but many have been killed or have died from drug overdoses. Now in their mid-20s, these new inmates see their neighborhoods being controlled by teens who might be even more violent than they were. They feel locked out, and, as their social world diminishes, they rethink the strength and reliability of their youthful social ties. Fellows who were once trusted homeboys are now said to be untrustworthy--they might testify against each other in court. Gaining that awareness took years and multiple bouts with prison.

Withdrawing from the street crime scene is signalled by a change in the talk of these men. It turns from the bravado of street warriors to self-examination of men in their 20s, 30s or 40s. They speak of "changing their lives," and debate among themselves whether they will continue their criminal careers after they are released from prison this time. An inmate's decision to straighten out is entirely personal. His wife's feelings (if he has one) aren't taken seriously. For him, the important question is, do I want to live in prison for the rest of my life? Some do. They commit crimes within hours, weeks, or months after release and are quickly returned "home." In either case, a man now makes a careful, conscious choice about the rest of his life.

"Back Inside"

The Wolf Man, a 34-year-old Hispanic bank robber and heroin addict, is serving 25 years at USP Lompoc for 14 bank robberies. He was gang banging in fifth grade, and has been on the street since junior high school. He began using heroin in eighth grade. I talked to him for nearly 14 hours about his homeboy relationships, among other topics.

"Friendship. Friends share money, share food, share clothes. Friends let a guy hide out in their house, even though he might go to prison behind it. About age 25, maybe 28, I decided that gang banging

was a bad trip. Gang banging was for young men. I got my kids to worry about. Let someone else worry about the neighborhood. They're [neighborhood gangs] not even worrying about it no more. That's even more reason not to worry about it.

"You can't trust homeboys. Drugs got `em. Now they got some new kind of drug called crack. It makes them crazy, man, you know. I'm not tripping on that, man. I only got about 7 homies left alive out of 20 or 25.

Paris, a Black bank robber, crack addict, and pimp in his early 80s is from Los Angeles. He put it succinctly: "When my dope went, my friends went. I always keep a defense up. It's called cover your ass. The people closest to you are the ones who hurt you."

Cliff agreed with Paris. "On the street and in prison, a man only has one person he can depend on, to give him comfort when he needs it, and that [is] hisself. Even people who are bloodrelated, can't help you. In life, the only person you can call on is yourself. I associate. I come in contact with everybody. They all know me. Friendships are situations that just come and go. They [are] just chapters in your book. Only one person is in the beginning and at the end of the book."

Rueben, a Hispanic bank robber from Los Angeles, agreed with the others. "Homeboys [are] just guys you grew up with. You can't trust `em. There's only one or two people in your whole life who you can trust."

I went after the same issue, asking Porkie a different question. "Is there honor among thieves?" Disbelief splattered on his face. He looked at me and just laughed: "It's every man for hisself [sic], motherfucker!"

Some inmates even begin to blame their homeboys for their own crime. Roger Brown, a 28-year-old black drug addict and bank robber from a West Coast city, serving an eleven year sentence, put it this way, when I asked him why he didn't have friends on the street or in prison.

• "That's the way I want it. I want this time to go ahead and be rough. I don't want to have nothing good to remember from prison. I want it to be rough, to make me hard.

"Guys ask me how much time I'm doing. I say eleven years, and they say, 'that's all right.' I never want to get like that, when you think doing eleven years in a penitentiary is all right!

"It's hard for me to classify somebody as a friend. Last time I got out, Bernard [a childhood companion] was doing bad. I helped him [gave him money], but that was in return for what he did for me [Bernard gave Roger a garage to live in once, while he was on the run]. From hanging out with him, I started using drugs, and that's why I'm back here, 'cause I started robbing banks. I knew that bank money was easy to get, and I knew I was coming back.

"I make it a point not to make friends in prison. It's enough on an individual to work your own program to get out of here. If you call someone a friend, you got to be dedicated to each other. So

unless you're doing the same sentence, you got to concentrate on your own program. If I was doing life, if this was the only thing I was going to know, it'd be different. If you got friends, you're loyal. If you have a friend and he gets in trouble, I'm a dedicated person, so I'd be in trouble."

"I'm not in contact with a lot of people in here. Three or four, I'd guess. I knew a couple if 'em on the street. I haven't held anybody in strict confidence as of yet. I'm still fresh in my bit [he had served about a year by then]. I've had enough of that foolishness of the street. To come in here and continue that is foolish shit. If it doesn't concern nobody, keep it to yourself."

With that change in attitude, inmates begin "to do their own time," and they begin to relax as their social world shrinks and their obligations lessen. Self-imposed social isolation inside is matched by an increasing social isolation on the street. Prisoner visiting records show their insolation from the street. Few prisoners visit street people. During the months of February and March 1989, at USP, the average number of inmates to receive visitors was 34; 50 was the highest number of inmates to visit on any single day over that two month period. The average daily penitentiary population for those months at was 1,260. But inmates know they will eventually be released. So planning for that day becomes increasingly important as inmates perceive they are "short" (close to release). (Short is a relative measure of time; in late 1988, Wolfie said he was short-he is scheduled for parole in 1995.)

Middle-aged when they get out of prison, criminals will have few people to call on for help. So they plan for the future by trying to locate street folks they once knew and by strengthening ties to other people they now know. Establishing new instrumental connections is important, too. They commonly reach out to women who, in their quest for a future together, won't ask too many questions about their boyfriends' criminal histories. And even if they do ask questions, they probably would not get truthful answers.

The Wolf Man said, "Dudes live off their ol' ladies or mothers. Other dudes who won't live off their mothers or ol' ladies, pull a job." Lucy, Wolfie's bride since they were young teenagers, and his sister, have provided him with a place to stay since he was a boy. As a teenager of about 13, Wolf Man stayed with Lucy and her parents. When his crime pushed him out of that house, he stayed with his homeboys, "in their garages or I stayed on the floor of their room." As he got older, he stayed with Lupe.

I asked him "if Lucy and your sister weren't around, where would you go to put your head down?" Wolf Man laughed. "Probably the mission. I hate to hear it. Look, either I make it out there (this time) or I live in here the rest of my life. I can't do both." Wolfie is lucky. He has two women whom, he says, he can count on. Other inmates must search for women.

Paris has been "living the sporting life," and is no stranger to prison. As a teenager, he did stint after stint in jails and juvenile hall. State prison followed that, and now Paris is serving a

20-year sentence for robbing twelve banks, "sometimes two a day," he said. Paris is skilled at getting women to help him reestablish himself each time he goes back to the street. He takes great pride in his skill at manipulating people, particularly women--"bitches," he calls them.

"I'm a pimp. P. I. M. P. [He spelled it out.] You know what that stands for? Power In Manipulating People. A guy that's pimping, that's the most prestigious job in the world. Pimping is like a religion, something you live, something you think, something you learn through experience. I was slick, too, man. I had 21 birthdates and 19 social security numbers.

"The jungle creed says a man must feed on anything he can. Pimping isn't beating a woman and stomping her ass. This is my woman and I love her dirty drawers. I have a job. I got to be a bail bondsman. I have to manage the money. I got to fuck the bitch. I got to do everything. It's a job, a helluva job. Pimps need love, too. Read the Bible where King David meets the Queen of Sheeba. Diamonds, cars, physical things don't make a pimp. It's a lifestyle that you live." I asked Paris how he got from pimping to bank robbery.

"The drugs is what fucked me up, man. It can turn you to jellyfish. Pretty soon, the girls left. I was shooting heroin and freebasing cocaine. I got violent with them [his whores], too, a couple of times. My bottom girl, Debbie, sent me to prison, one time. I assaulted her with a lamp, table, chair, and towel rack.

"I've done everything but child molestation, and I never killed somebody. I shot a motherfucker who fucked with one of my whores, but I never killed nobody. I had everything. I never wanted to be a fireman, like Jimmy. I got tired of going to jail, and I got out and decided I wanted to pimp. I've slept in the Bonneventure [Hotel, Los Angeles], and I've slept in cars."

Just before Paris entered federal prison, he did several years at a state Men's Colony (MC). Paris paroled out of MC, and went home with his girlfriend. She took care of him for several days. "I sexed her down real good, and she gave me \$500. She dropped me off with a friend in L.A., and I used the money to buy six ounces of cocaine. We [were] into the money, the material things. I was back in business. Now all I needed was a whore. I prayed to the Pimp God, 'Oh, Pimp God, send me a ho [prostitute], send me a good ho. Send me a White ho."

Soon, though, Paris got back into freebasing cocaine. "I was at this party, and this bitch stuck a pipe in my mouth. I lost everything. Man, there's nothing like it. It feels like you're coming when you blow the smoke out. I got so crazy, I started shooting heroin to come down. I got \$25,000. I bought a house, a white on white on white Brougham [a white Chrysler with a white interior and a white roof], and married some crazy bitch I was with.

"I was smoking, smoking, smoking. My life was worthless. I wanted to die. The dope has did me like this. I wanted to die. I know my only hope is prison. I'm going to rob so many banks, these Whities are going to stick so much dick in me, I'll never get out. The feds ain't to be fucked with.

"You know, man, White society did this to us Niggers. Niggers is scared of the White man. I mean, you know, there's a boundary, a separation, you don't tell them a motherfucking thing. You don't know what you're up against. The government lies, man. The government are [sic] the most habitual, phenomenal liars in the world. The country was built on the Indians, Blacks, and Mexicans' blood and tears. Them Whities stole it from us, man. Jesse Jackson for President, man. That'll never happen, man. This is America. Home of the Rich. I don't have any respect for laws, man. I'm in the devil's house, man. This is Satan's house."

Adult Transience

The adult phase begins when inmates leave prison and do not return. This is difficult, though, after decades of living in maximum security. By now, they know very few people on the street, and fewer yet whom they can ask for help. Their social world has become smaller and smaller as their years in prison have grown longer and longer.

Aimless and helpless, these men panhandle and commit minor thefts to stay alive (see Rossi 1989). Some are moved by authorities from the street to jails, missions, or detoxification centers, or a combination of those places, but only for short periods. These "burned out" felons, junkies, and alcoholics prefer homelessness to prison life, because, they say, it was their choice.

Middle-age criminals have few good choices, and they know it. A question many of them have avoided for years, now looms large: who wants to hire a man who has been in prison most of his life, who can't read well (if at all), who can't write well (if at all), who has weakly developed work habits, and who doesn't get along well with straights? Some become members of the aimless legions of homeless men. Others take the easy way out and reenter system transiency by committing a crime and returning to prison. Many turn to bank robbery because it's a "safe" crime. They can get some money for drugs or whatever, and they're sure to receive long prison terms. Others "go straight," for a while at least. That is their intention, and they talk about it as a hiatus or "vacation" from prison routines. Still others prefer to become street people, and live for years supporting themselves by panhandling, dealing drugs "small-time," petty theft, or a combination of those.

One federal prison inmate summed it up nicely: "I couldn't make it out there when I was coming up. What makes you think I want to try now? It's tough out there, man."

"Back to the Street"

"Here I can relax, man, you know," Wolf Man told me. "It seems like out there I get choked up. I've never been off probation or parole since I was a kid. It's not like I'm free, anyway. One thing leads to another, and I go off. You know, man, I got a home [the prison]. It's my wife who's got it tough. I got everything I need right here."

Roger said it plainly: "It's not society's fault, it's my fault for not dealing with it [his drug addiction]. I'd rather live in the gutter than live in here. Losing your freedom is the worst thing that could happen. In here, you think more about your freedom than on the street. I must admit, though, that when I'm in here I have a more positive outlook on things. Last time [I left prison], I took a positive view to the street and that lasted a while."

One evening during in fall of 1989, I had dinner with Stan and his companion, the Black Hammer, in the dining hall of a federal prison. As we sat together for nearly an hour, each man talked about his future. Stan, age 34, and the Black Hammer, age 36, are Black inmates serving sentences for bank robbery. Stan was first imprisoned in the YA at age 15, and has been inside ever since. The Black Hammer went to the YA at 14, and, since 1972, he has served three separate sentences in federal penitentiaries, each one for bank robbery and related offenses.

Stan said he has two brothers. "One of `em is 22, he's in the Navy. He's got a good future ahead of him. The other's straight, too. He's married with kids. They['re] nice, but they don't want no part of me." I asked Stan, "who else can you rely on out there?" "Me, that's who. There ain't nobody else I'd trust."

The Black Hammer said he didn't have anyone whom he could call after he left prison. "I had a wife, a nice White Jewish girl, when I was up in [a federal prison in the mid-1970s]. That's who gave me this [a mezuzah dangling from his neck]."

• "So what are you guys going to do when you get out of here?" I asked them. Stan stood up from the table and grumbled, "I ain't coming back here, that's for fucking sure. I'm tired of this shit, and the petty bullshit you got to deal with up in this fucking prison, man. I ain't giving up, man. So many of these pathetic motherfuckers in here just give up when they're on the street. Not me."

The Black Hammer replied, "You ain't gonna get a job, Stan. Who's gonna hire a Nigger bank robber?"

Stan jumped at him. "Fuck them. I'll live like them other homeless motherfuckers out there, man, selling drugs and sleeping on the street, before I come back in here to this motherfucking bullshit."

The Black Hammer smiled, "Not me. When I get out there this time, I know that I'll get back into it [bank robbery]. The next time, I'll get 28 years and I'll do 25 of `em. That's alright. I don't mind this. I get everything I want in here. It's tough out there, man."

"You[re] giving up like them other motherfuckers. That's bullshit, man," argued Stan.

"I'll watch, man, you'll come back," laughed the Black Hammer.

"Fuck that bullshit, man," Stan exclaimed, as he walked away from our table.

Some criminals do leave prison and never return. What happens to them? On the streets and in the missions of a West Coast city, I met and talked to many homeless men and women, but I got closest to a small group who lived on the porch of an abandoned house.

I met Sam, a former felon and a homeless American Indian, over the winter 1988-89 in a West Coast city. Sam grew up on a Sioux reservation, but he refused to tell me which one. He was about 6'2", 230 pounds. The bridge of his nose has been punched flat, and he always had a dark beard, several days old. He didn't shower, and his greasy shoulder-length hair hung around his neck.

We met one cold, snowy afternoon. Sam and his road dog, Mark, were huddled in their sleeping bags, sharing a bottle of cheap wine. Sam was petting his dog, Wimpy. They were sitting under the eaves of a church which had a reputation among the city's street people as somewhere to get a shower, to wash their clothes, and to get a free

breakfast--Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, from nine to eleven in the morning, and Sunday afternoon. On Sunday, all comers were fed a huge meal, like spaghetti and bread.

Wimpy stood up and stared at me as I approached them. "Hi, my name is Mark Fleisher," I began my census rap. "I'm an anthropologist at Washington State University in Pullman, and I'm doing a research project. . . ."

Mark asked: "You're a what?"

I answered: "An anthropologist?"

• At that, Sam blurted: "Are you a cop?"

"No! I'm an anthropologist."

Sam: "I'd rather talk to the cops. You guys stole my grandparents' bones. You're nothing but a fucking grave robber. You got any money I could have, Mark? I'm kind of dry."

So our relationship began. As we talked, Albert and Smokey walked up behind me. Both were American Indians; both were very drunk. Then Rick showed up. "Hey, Rick, this guy here, he's a grave robber," Sam announced. Rick, a Black man, was from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, he said. "I thumbed to the northwest in the '70s. I got a wife and two kids in the Tri-Cities (Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco, Washington). My old lady's White, man. Wine has been bringing me down."

Albert, standing next to Rick, was wobbling from side to side--he held a nearly empty jug of Thunderbird. Albert grabbed the sleeve of my heavy down jacket: "I like your jacket. I think I'll

take it. You can have mine," he grumbled, shook a fist in my face, and sprayed me with saliva. He had very few teeth left in his mouth. Albert said he did 13 years in a State Penitentiary for burglary and manslaughter.

Before long, another American Indian "drove up." Rome was drunk, also. We hit it off well, after he found out that I was once close with an American Indian at the Washington State Penitentiary, whom he also knew. Rome said he did five years there for armed robbery.

So the porch group was beginning to assemble--Sam, Mark, Rome, Rick, and Albert. Others joined us before too long, including several American Indian women. One of them was Mark's girlfriend, whose Indian boyfriend was doing a few months in the Seattle jail.

Chicken Wing Charlie, a 1960s hippie, wandered in, after he finished washing dishes at a local yuppie restaurant (Charlie stole food for his companions, thus his street name). Mike said he was in the Marine Corps, and rolled up his sleeve to show me his Corps tattoo. "I got out in 1970, and been on the street since November 1988, this time. I go through these periods of being a wino and [then I] go to the street. I got two kids. Then I go straight, get a job and a place to live and an ol' lady. Then something goes click, and I go off and start drinking."

Soon, Randy, an American Indian, moved in, followed by Brownside Brian and DD. Brian said he regularly hitch-hiked or rode the rails to the city's skid row. Brian talked freely, but he didn't

say too much. "I was state raised in reform schools and prisons. I did ten months in [a state penitentiary] for attempting to kill a cop." Brian talked about himself a bit more, after we got to know each other. None of those men wanted to talk about "yesterday"--just today's panhandling, today's "high," today's adventures.

DD scared me. He had a wild look in his eye, which I had seen many times in the cold eyes of violent men. We talked briefly. "I did 16 months at Atascadero [one of California's facilities for psychotic criminals] for a vicious and malicious assault on an officer with intent to kill. I wanted to kill the motherfucker. He was beating me with his gun. I had one knee on his throat, and I beat him in the mouth. I took his gun and stuck it in his mouth." DD was agitated now, and he mumbled to himself as he walked away. I breathed a sigh of relief.

As I was chatting with the group, Chicken Wing Charlie quietly turned away and strolled to a nearby store. He returned soon with a quart of Mickey's Ale and a bottle of Cool Breeze. Charlie unscrewed the Mickey's bottle top, held the cap upside down between his thumb and forefinger, and poured a capful of ale. He held it out in front of him, paused for a moment, and let the ale drip to the ground. I thought to myself, "Why is this guy wasting his ale?" So I asked: "Why did you do that?" Charlie said, "That's for the brothers. The ones who have died and the ones who haven't got here yet."

Someone then pulled out a Baggie full of weed and rolled a joint. Mickey's, Cool Breeze, and dope occupied everyone's attention, and elevated their spirits in the wet, icy cold weather. Before too long, though, the alcohol was gone, and a hat was passed for more money. I dropped in a few dollars, in full view of everyone, and volunteered to run through the cold rain to get more "fuel." I added a few extra bottles of Mickey's to the booty, and my entre into the porch group was established.

I visited them regularly during the winter months, and before long I was invited to sit on the porch (before that, I just stood on the muddy lawn in front of the abandoned house, and faced the group). Sitting is one thing, getting questions answered is another. No one wanted to be interrogated, so I learned to be very patient and to wait for interesting tidbits to pop up in their conversations. I tried to sneak in a question, here and there, but there was no way to predict how it would be received. Once Burnside Brian had enough of my asking questions. "What, are you writing a book?" he asked rather impatiently. "Maybe," I answered. "That's cool." He took another drink.

One Sunday morning about ten, Sam and several others had already finished one bottle of wine, smoked a joint or two, and were taking up a collection for another bottle. Sandy, one of the American Indian women, had her radio playing rock music. An advertisement came

on for a local hospital's alcohol and drug rehabilitation. "Listen to that bullshit," yelled Sam. "No you can't," shouted Sandy. "You can never get well." They passed another bottle and another joint.

Every week, Sam talked about leaving the city, but he never did. He and the others talked about visiting their relatives, especially if those people lived in warm climates. The winter of 1988-89 was extremely cold.

Sam never told me anymore about himself than that, even after months of acquaintanceship. I talked to a local cop about him. Sam has been a local burglary suspect, he said, and has a long rap sheet that includes burglary, robbery, grand theft auto, and rape.

The last time I saw Sam, it was a cold Sunday morning about ten after nine. I walked up to the porch and called to him.

"Hey, what's up, Sam?"

"Just trying to get high. Got any money?"

Expressions of Resistance

Fieldworkers and enumerators share a common goal of collecting valid data in a reliable way. Unfortunately, many things get in the way of doing that. You would think that interviewing inmates in jail or prison might be easier than interviewing the same people on the street. After all, what do inmates have to lose? Find an inmate who will talk, sit him down, ask him a few questions, and it is over. But it was never that easy. By understanding how prison inmates reacted to me, we can gain a better understanding of how men similar to my informants might react to Census Bureau employees.

Before going to jail or prison, criminals live on the street. It was there that they acquired their resistance, anger, and distrust of government officials, law enforcement representatives, or strangers. Inmates in jail and in state or federal prisons often expressed deception, evasiveness, distrust, resistance, and "mobility." Even my most reliable informants were difficult to deal with at times. When I encountered resistance, it always appeared in one of the ways which I have described below.

I have selected events that emphasize the most common styles of resistance among Black, Hispanic, and American Indian men in my study. For example. Black and American Indian informants most often resisted my requests for information by throwing ideological barriers in my path. Hispanic men in my study did not do that. Rather, they resisted by claiming a desperate need to protect neighborhood families

or the activities of Hispanic criminal organizations. The examples I give below are not intended to be exhaustive of all types of resistance used by a racial or ethnic group.

"Protection" of Information. Self-protection, as well as the protection of family, friends, associates, and the neighborhood, is one reason for concealing information. Surely, this is the simplest way to understand the undercount. Almost all of my Hispanic life history data were collected in a high-security federal prison on the West Coast. There, virtually all of the Hispanics have some link to violent prison gangs called the Mexican Mafia ("Eme") or La Nuestra Familia ("LNF") (see Fleisher 1989). These inmates were either members of the Eme or "LNF" or they were members of a street gang which was linked directly to the Eme or "LNF." According to Hispanic inmates, it might have been life-threatening for an Hispanic gang member to talk to a White man who served the interests of the federal government. That was folklore, but it was an effective barrier.

Here is an example of how an Hispanic gangbanger protected neighborhood information. After several days with the Wolf Man, an Hispanic from Los Angeles, he and I were getting along well and he was beginning to tell me about his wife and children. I thought I had solid rapport, so I asked him a grand touring question about his neighborhood. My strategy was to ask him to draw a map of his neighborhood and to tell me about the members of each neighborhood household. For example: how many people lived in a household? how were they related? what was their source of income?

"Wolf Man, let's do this, man. You know, I can draw a map of my neighborhood and can tell you who lives in each house, how many kids they have, where the ol' man works, what his ol' lady does, and all that shit, you know what I mean? How about if we draw a map of your neighborhood? Would you tell me who lives in each house, how many kids they have, and what they do for a living?"

Wolf Man became angry. His eyes closed a bit, his back straightened, and his hands clinched into fists. He lit a cigarette, took a drag off of it. "No way, man. I told you I don't trip on that shit, man. Listen man, it's getting late, I got to go now. I'll see you tomorrow, if I got time."

I gave Wolf Man some distance and before long, he felt less threatened by me. I found him that night in his cellblock, and apologized for getting too pushy. "It won't happen like that again, Wolf Man. I promise." He accepted my apology, and the next day, we sat together again. Finally, Wolf Man ran out of patience and refused to talk anymore.

Several days later, I wanted to thank him again for helping me, so I went looking for him. When he saw me, he was ecstatic. Wolf Man introduced me to Danny B., who was also from a large West Coast city and a former member of an Hispanic street gang. "Hey, Dannie, this is the dude I was tripping on. He's OK, man, you should talk to him." I looked at Danny. "Will you talk to me? Did Wolf Man tell you what I want?" Danny nodded. "It's OK. I'll talk to you."

Wolf Man was a good but safe informant. In 14 hours of interviewing, he told me a lot about himself, but it was what he did not say that told me the most about him. Wolf Man admitted his heroin addiction. He sported a "heroin dragon" tattoo on his forearm, so it would have been silly for him to deny his heroin addiction. But he never said he was well known as a penitentiary drug smuggler. He never said that his wife had her visiting privileges suspended for more than a year, after she was caught with heroin in the visiting room. He never said anything about his specific criminal gang activities. And he denied that his street gang was involved in criminal activities. Danny B. was a safe informant, too.

Here is another example, this time with a Black inmates. One mid-day during lunch at West Coast federal prison, I walked into the dishroom, located in the rear of the dining hall. As I stood in the doorway, conspicuously holding my notebook, I watched inmates trying not to watch me, as they cleaned thousands of plastic dishes. That's one way I'd pick up subjects. I'd walk into a place full of inmates, stand still, and wait there. Before long, an inmate would approach me, ask who I was and what I was doing. Then, I tried to hook him.

I stood there only a few minutes. A Black inmate walked up to me, trying to make it look like he was not walking up to me. He passed by me, peered out of the dishroom door, and then looked at me. "What do you do here?" he asked. I gave him my standard rap. I explained my purpose there was to interview Black, Hispanic, and American Indian inmates, trying to understand their lifestyle on the

street in order to reduce the minority undercount. I asked him if he would like to help his people, by letting me interview him. He looked suspicious. I knew he doubted everything I said. I explained his rights as an inmate in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and showed him an informed consent statement, but that did not make him less suspicious. He looked at it and laughed.

We "danced" that way for a while, and he finally started to tell me about himself, although he didn't give me his name, even after I asked for it. When I ask his name, he said, "You don't need to know that?" The inmate was a heroin addict and bank robber from the East Coast who had been jumping between jails, prisons, and the street for most of his life. As our conversation became more relaxed, I asked if he would allow me to interview him at his convenience. Flatly, he said: "Nope! Not me, man. Find somebody else." I said, "But you've already started telling me what I want to know about you. Why don't you let me ask you some more questions?" He turned and walked away, then stopped and looked back at me. "Yeah, and I've already told you too much."

Ideology. Before an interview, I frequently engaged in an ideological battle. A young Black inmate, about 25, who grew up on the East Coast, was doing time in a West Coast prison. When I approached him about an interview, he immediately brought up his distrust of the Federal Government. "Trust the government. You know Jonestown? It was a CIA thing, man. They dragged those people down

there, shot 'em in the head, and said they drank some Kool Aid." I did not get that interview. Attitudes like those are the norm among men like these federal prisons, not the exception.

The following conversation took place in a prison dining hall, behind the steamlines and hidden from open view by a wall. Two Black convicts were leaning up against a tiled wall, sneaking a cigarette (smoking isn't permitted there). I walked passed them and nodded. They nodded at me and averted their eyes. After three passes, one inmate stared at me. I take eye-to-eye contact as an opening to a conversation.

"What's up?" I said. He nodded. "Just kicking it for a while, huh?" I said.

"Yeah. What do you do here?" The speaker, "JJ," was in his mid-thirties and grew up in Watts. I gave "JJ" and his buddy my patented rap.

"JJ" responded. "Census Bureau. Who the fuck are they? What do they want?" I explained the undercount, its positive political and financial implications, and its benefits for the Black community. "JJ" did not believe me. No inmates ever believed me.

"JJ": "Shit. That's White-man bullshit, man. No Whitey ever did anything for us Niggers, man. Look around man. I'm in this White man's penitentiary, and my brothers and sister are out there on the street, hustling 'cause they hungry, and Whitey ain't giving us nothing but drugs. Drugs. Heroin. 'caine. Rock. That's the White

man's way of keeping us Niggers down in them ol' ghettos. And when we rise up, they put us up in these ol' penitentiaries. So, man, fuck the Census!"

"I couldn't agree with you more, JJ," I said. "You're right. I agree with you. White men have fucked Blacks and Hispanics and American Indians. They've been screwing Blacks since they put 'em on slave ships. And you're probably right that nothing good will happen for your relatives in Los Angeles, if you talk to me. You're right. But would you like to let me tell the government how you feel about them?" JJ looked surprised by my response, and agreed to be interviewed. My response usually disarmed anti-government inmates. They did not expect a White man who was taking government money to agree with them so easily.

I talked to many Black prison inmates who attributed their criminal behavior, post-prison homelessness, and other life-long problems to a "White conspiracy." Stan, a Black inmate from the West Coast, spent most of his teenage years in state youth authority facilities and most of his adult life in state and federal prisons. Stan is now a federal inmate. Stan's version of the Conspiracy is this.

"Hey, you know why Niggers use drugs? 'Cause when they wake up in the morning in the ghetto, that's the best it's going get for the rest of their motherfucking lives, man. They reach over and pick up that ol' syringe and "Ah," the pain goes away. And the White man like it that way, 'cause then he don't have to deal with a bunch of

pissed off Niggers who are broke and hungry. The only reason Whitey is going after drug dealers now, like they is, is 'cause your people are picking up that syringe now, man, and using that shit. Sniffing it up their noses, shooting it up their arms.

"Niggers have been using [drugs] forever. But Whitey didn't give a motherfuck then! Now white folks is putting us ghetto Niggers in these old penitentiaries, 'cause you White folks is using drugs that you buying from Niggers who are starving 'cause White folks don't give a fuck about them. Don't sound right to me. Does it sound righteous to you, White boy?"

By far, the toughest group of federal prison inmates to "break into" were the American Indians. I had been doing fieldwork with American Indians in a West Coast state prison since 1970. Lucky for me, several inmates I knew then were still there in late 1980s. My old acquaintances introduced me to young American Indian inmates. Unfortunately, my experience in a West Coast federal prison was quite frustrating. There, it took me nearly two weeks to get my first American Indian interview.

I had numerous chats with American Indians who promised to let me interview them. We walked the dirt track together on the big yard; we strolled up and down the main corridor of the prison; we sat together or I stood next to them as they ate their lunch or dinner. Often we talked on weekends near their sweat lodge. I got lots of promises, but no one showed up. That's fieldwork.

I kept after the American Indians. Near the end of week two, I was still trying to get my first interview. One afternoon, just after lunch, I was on the big yard trying to nail down someone to interview. On my way back into the penitentiary, I passed inmate Chenango and another American Indian walking to the yard. I had had an appointment to interview Chenango the night before, but he did not show up. I stopped him.

"Hey, Chenango, when are we going to get together?" I asked.

"What for?" he responded.

"I thought you were going to help me out with this Census Bureau project, I told you about?" I said.

"No, I don't think so. I'm too busy. You don't need me. There's a lot of guys who'll talk to you. I got to go." He walked away.

The next day in mid-afternoon, I ran into Chenango again, this time in the main corridor of the prison.

"Chenango, what the fuck is going on, man? No one wants to talk to me," I exclaimed.

He stared at me, with a bit of a smirk on his face. "I don't know. What's going on?" He lied.

"Look, man, I've been trying to get American Indian guys to talk to me for about two weeks and no one has time for me," I answered. "I can't figure out what's happening here. Come on, man, be straight up with me about this." I hated to beg but pressing convicts makes them angry.

He looked at me for a moment, then said: "You testified against us in [federal] court years ago in that headband case [see Fleisher 1989:88-92]. You went against the Indians, man."

"That's bullshit," I bellowed. "I never testified against Indians or any other inmates in federal court. Where did you hear that?" I asked.

"Well, we heard it," Chenango said.

"I'm telling you, man, that's nothing but bullshit. If I did that, show me the court record where I testified against Indians here or anywhere else," I challenged him.

Chenango was quiet for a moment. Inquisitively, he asked: "You didn't?" And firmly and quietly, I responded: "No, man, that wasn't me." He thought for a second, "OK, I think I have time tonight."

Finally, that evening I met him at his cell. He was there. Success. "Where we going to go to talk?" he wanted to know.

The inmates whom I knew well felt comfortable talking to me in their cells, during the evening. That is when almost all inmates were in their cellblocks, hanging around, and could easily see us together. The better I knew an inmate, the more likely it was that we would sit together in his cell. On the other hand, though, some inmates whom I did not know at all wanted to be seen with me, sitting in their cell at night, in full view of everyone. That was an act of strength, on their part.

"Hey, I can take you anywhere, as long as we stay inside the fences," I joked. We went to the dark and empty dining hall and found a table as far away from the main entrance as we could go, so no one could see us sitting together.

After we talked, I had no problem with American Indians. That is not to say, Indian men welcomed me with open arms or were candid in their interviews. But they did cooperate to a point. Even half-truths, lies, and partial life-histories are better than nothing.

Inmates like those in my study live in a relatively closed social world. Getting information from them can be tough and frustrating, but in prison, there was always someone around who was willing to cooperate. The task of Census Bureau enumerators on the street, who must interview men like those in my study, will probably be much harder.

Anger. My informants were angry men. Many times, inmates enjoyed talking and opened up to me during an initial or follow-up. After dozens of interviews with inmates of all colors, I began to notice a post-interview pattern. The day after an interview, I always thanked my interviewees and acknowledged their cooperation. Usually, I did that outside of public view. Sometimes, I thanked my informant during a meal, while he was sitting with other inmates. Frequently, one of the inmates listening at the table would stare at me and ask: "Who are you?" That was my cue to begin my Census rap and hook another informant.

Many informants who were open with me, closed up quickly after I thanked them for their cooperation. Only a several inmates said anything about our interview, and few of them wanted to be interviewed a second time. Many informants got angry and that caught my attention. I have interviewed hundreds of maximum-security convicts over the years in many state and federal prisons, I never had one of them get angry at me afterward. I thought about it this way. Informal chitchating, even though inmates knew what I was up to, was one thing. A "sit-down and let's talk" interview with an interview schedule and an informed consent statement was another thing.

A glaring example of that happened after I spent an hour and a half with Ricky, a 27 year old Plains Indian. Ricky saw me talking to Chenango one morning on the big yard's weight pile. He approached us, and asked me: "What do you want?" I gave him my standard reply: "I'm an anthropologist at Washington State University, and I'm doing a project for the Census Bureau about the street lives of Black, Hispanic and American Indian men. I want to know where you grew up, what you did when you were a kid, where you moved after you left home, and that kind of stuff. I'm not interested in your crimes. I'm interested in your life." I repeated that tale, hundreds of times. "How about helping me out, huh?"

"What do I get?" Ricky asked. "Will it get me out of here faster?" I smiled. "Nothing you tell me will get back to the Bureau [of Prisons]. Everything is confidential. Here, let me show you this

[an informed consent statement]. If you agree to talk to me, you have rights. The Bureau protects you from people who want to ask you about stuff. Did you know that?"

"Do you work for the feds?" asked Ricky.

"I told you, bud, I work for Washington State University. I been with Indians for a lot of years, too, man. I lived with Salish people on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state for a year. And I did a culture and language school for Nootkan kids on Vancouver Island. I know a lot of Indian dudes in the [state penitentiary]," I told him. When Ricky heard about that, we started to click, and he agreed to talk to me. But our conversation had to be on the weight pile, out in the open, and right then. He didn't want to meet me later.

"How come you want to talk out here in public? A lot of dudes don't want to do that, you know that, huh?" I asked.

"I got nothing to hide, man," said Ricky. So there we sat. Inmates were all around us, some were lifting weights, others were standing around, and everyone saw us together while he talked and I took notes. Soon, the hour struck eleven and it was time for lunch. We parted, and I didn't see him again until we met in the dining hall, about 30 minutes later.

I was standing in back of the dining hall, as Ricky came in. I greeted him, "Hi." Ricky instantly began grumbling at me. At first, I didn't understand him, but as he talked, he got angrier and angrier. "Get away from me, man. I don't want to fucking talk to you, man!"

"What's up, Ricky? What are you pissed off at?" I asked.

"Man, get away from me. You're an asshole, man. I heard about you. You wrote some bad shit in a magazine about inmates' wives. You wrote that inmates' wives were whores, man. Get the fuck away from me, man." This was another version of Chenango's "let's scan the researcher" rap.

"What? That's really some bullshit. Where did you hear that? Yeah, show me the fucking magazine, man. That's bullshit and you know it."

Ricky stood in line, waiting to get his lunch. As we slowly moved toward the steamtable, we kept arguing. Ricky got his grilled cheese sandwich. Still arguing, we stood together as we stood in front of about 600 inmates who were eating their sandwiches. Ricky dismissed me. "Fuck you, man. I don't want to talk to you. You're another White motherfucker wanting something from Indians."

A couple days later, I went to Chenango, asking him for counsel. Ricky and Chenango often ate meals together, even though they rarely walked together. "Did you hear about my argument with Ricky?" He smiled. "What's going on, Chenango. What's all the

bullshit about me?" I asked. "Ricky goes off like that sometimes. It don't mean nothing," decided Chenango. He was right. Ricky was a loner, a marginal member of the American Indian group.

Conclusion

The life histories of my informants share some common behavioral and attitudinal traits which would affect undercount bias among men like those in my study when they are on the street. These traits would also influence the types and effectiveness of Census Bureau outreach strategies which are intended to motivate a growing population of minority criminals who cycle between the street and prison.

Dualism. Violent men like my informants are intolerant of social ambiguity. So, deciding who is the enemy and who is not is a major issue in both their street and prison lives. Living comfortably in prison or on the street means splitting the social world into two small groups, both of predictable composition ("me" versus "them"). This is seen in street criminals' and inmates' cut-and-dry, "cops 'n robbers" dichotomy, or "my neighborhood" versus "their neighborhood," or "my people" versus "the others," such as the police or local government officials. The latter are the enemy, until proven otherwise--and even then, they can't be trusted.

Vulnerability. Violent men feel strongly that people will hurt them, both emotionally and physically. They sense their own vulnerability when they cooperate with people or when they assume personal responsibilities. They are afraid of performing badly on a job or in school because then they will be criticized. Therefore, they don't extend themselves too far beyond their own perceived secure world of neighborhoods, gangs, jails, and prisons. They feel particularly threatened by authority figures (especially parents or "parent-like" figures), but they tend to avoid direct confrontations with them, preferring to take a path around them. That path takes two forms.

The first path is transiency, as they move away from people who might hurt them. The second path is fantasy. Very violent criminals who were victims of serious child abuse frequently protect themselves from the memories of parental abuse by "idealizing" the family life itself or an early life relationship with an abusive parent. Often, I've heard, "Yeah, my father beat me, but I had everything I wanted. I had a good childhood." Very common, too, are criminals' idealizations of their mothers. A convict in a West Coast federal prison told me this: "She [his mother] was always there. It was tough when I was a kid, but she loved me, man." In fact, he had been beaten and abandoned by his mother, before he reached age two (I checked his file). As an adult, he was involved in a killing and an

armed bank robbery; he was a drug addict and pimp; and he had been arrested many times for domestic violence and for beating a child. His juvenile record was lengthy, too.

Restricted Networks. The violent men in my study lived in limited social worlds. Life history data show that they don't usually have too many people whom, they say, they can rely on, nor to whom they are close. Their extreme distrust and anger prevents them from forming close social ties, so they hide their extreme sense of vulnerability by pushing people away. They resist cooperation, they are deceptive, and they are fearful of new people or situations. They also withdraw from the social world by using drugs or alcohol, or both.

Theirs is a frightening world. Life is a continuous battle, but by maintaining a small and controllable social network, violent men feel more secure. I know very few adult violent men who say they have friends. "[Friends] can't be trusted. They leave you out there, and you can get hurt," said a federal prison inmate.

Marriage doesn't help. It just increases vulnerability. Married life requires trust, cooperation, interdependency, and closeness, which violent men say they can't provide. When a violent man is pressured by his wife to get a job, to take care of the kids, or, generally, to become a responsible husband and father, he has only two choices. He can run away, as many do, or he can strike out at her, as many do. His violence pushes her away, sometimes forever.

Outcome. These trends, behaviors and attitudes are outcomes of childhood abuse. A young victim of serious and prolonged abuse defends himself against it by gradually constructing what I call a "violent antisocial worldview" (VAW). A VAW forms during the first several years of life, as a child is rapidly learning about his social and physical world; this is the peak time of language learning as well. This worldview is constructed out of the frightening experiences of menacing socializers who beat, starve, or abandon small children in their care. In response to those experiences, a child's cognitive model for his immediate environment becomes largely defensive. Why wouldn't it be that way? He lives in a perpetually hostile, angry, insensitive, and untrustworthy world.

As a set of "mental rules" governing social classification, as well as a plan of action, a VAW is analogous to the grammar of a language. No one questions that the impression left on a young child's mind by his or her language has permanent and radical effects on a child's conceptualizations and perceptions. Likewise, I suggest that a VAW (the total set of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors which early life violence has brought to a young victim) fundamentally sways that individual's behavior.

In early childhood, a VAW is protection--what other armament does an infant, toddler, or preschool child have? Later, a VAW is a source of "energy." It drives a propensity for violent behavior, an unrelenting sense of personal vulnerability, an unself-conscious splitting of the social world into "friends" and "enemies," and a

tendency to avoid conflict with authority figures. Acting together, these forces result in a very shallow social network for violent men like those I studied. That, too, is protection--a tough shield of social isolation. And, like language, a VAW remains largely out of conscious influence and is virtually impossible to alter in any significant way.

The problem of undercount bias among Black, Hispanic, and American Indian men who cycle between the street and the system could be resolved to some degree, if men like those I studied would cooperate with the Census Bureau. But many things keep them from volunteering their assistance. Their claims about protecting illegal sources of income, their use of anger and violent behavior, and their ideological tirades function to create and maintain a social gap between them and straight society.

I do not believe that it is possible for the Census Bureau to engage the cooperation of the growing population of men who cycle from the street to the system. Surely, "softcore" pleas about future financial or social benefits to Black, Hispanic, and American Indian communities would not work with "hardcore" people.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Interviewee:

Place of Interview:

Date of Interview:

DOB:

POB: Were you born in a hospital?

DO YOU HAVE A DRIVER'S LICENSE? IS IT SUSPENDED? EXPIRED?

OCCUPATION AT PRESENT INCARCERATION:

ADDICTIONS AT PRESENT INCARCERATION:

CURRENT OFFENSE:

ADDICTIONS AT TIME OF INCARCERATION:

INCARCERATION HISTORY

JUVENILE:

ADULT:

MOST TIME SERVED AS ADULT:

AGE AT FIRST ARREST:

TIME BETWEEN INCARCERATIONS

AGE AT FIRST IMPRISONMENT:

AGE AT SECOND IMPRISONMENT:

AGE AT THIRD IMPRISONMENT:

PERSONAL HISTORY

BIOLOGICAL FATHER (AGE AT YOUR BIRTH)

BIOLOGICAL MOTHER (AGE AT YOUR BIRTH)

SOCIOLOGICAL FATHER (NAME)

SOCIOLOGICAL MOTHER (NAME)

HOW WELL DID YOUR PARENTS GET ALONG? HOW DO YOU KNOW?

DID YOU EVER HEAR YOUR PARENTS ARGUE? HOW OFTEN?

DID YOU EVER HEAR YOUR PARENTS FIGHT?

DID YOUR FATHER HIT YOUR MOTHER? HOW OFTEN?

SIBLINGS BY BIRTH ORDER
(OCCUPATION/CRIMINAL HISTORY)

1. BROTHER 1	1. SISTER 1
2. BROTHER 2	2. SISTER 2
3. BROTHER 3	3. SISTER 3
4. BROTHER 4	4. SISTER 4
5. BROTHER 5	5. SISTER 5
6. BROTHER 6	6. SISTER 6

MARITAL STATUS

PRESENT

FORMER

LEGAL WIFE

COMMON LAW

LAST 6 RESIDENCES OCCUPATION
("RENT" PAID BY INTERVIEWEE/ADDRESS)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

WHERE DO YOU STAY WHEN YOU'RE ON THE STREET?
(ADDRESS/RELATIONSHIP TO PERSON STAYING WITH AT TIME OF PRESENT ARREST)

LAST PLACE:

PLACE BEFORE THAT:

COMMON PLACE TO STAY:

OTHER PLACES:

WHEN YOU STAY WITH PEOPLE, HOW DO YOU "PAY" THEM?

FRIENDSHIPS/CLOSEST INTIMATE FRIENDS

WHEN YOU GET OUT OF JAIL/PRISON, WHO DO YOU CALL FIRST?

IF YOU GET ARRESTED AND NEED BAIL, WHO DO YOU CALL FIRST? WHY?

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU ASKED SOMEONE FOR HELP? WHO WAS IT? WHY?

LIFE HISTORY

WHERE DID YOU SPEND YOUR FIRST FIVE/SIX YEARS? WITH WHOM?

MEMORIES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

EARLIEST MEMORY:

DID YOU HAVE A GOOD CHILDHOOD?

EARLY LIFE FAMILY STRUCTURE

FIRST SCHOOL:

WHO FED YOU BREAKFAST?

DID YOU HAVE NICE CLOTHES FOR SCHOOL?

WHO WELCOMED YOU HOME FROM SCHOOL?

DID YOUR FAMILY MOVE A LOT? REASONS FOR MOVES?

DID YOU HAVE BEST FRIENDS AS A KID? WHO WAS YOUR FIRST?

DID YOU BELONG TO ANY SCHOOL GROUPS OR AFTER-SCHOOL GROUPS?

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

JOB HISTORY (MOST RECENT FIRST)

	RESPONSIBILITIES	SALARY
1.		
2.		

3.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN TURNING POINTS OF YOUR LIFE?

DO YOU TRUST THE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT? WHY NOT?

HOW WOULD YOU RESOLVE THE TRUST PROBLEM WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN
MINORITY COMMUNITIES? WHY?

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