

DRAFT For Discussion Only

EMPLOYMENT AND CRIME: A RESEARCH DESIGN

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Employment and Crime: A Research Design

I. Abstract

In September 1977, the Vera Institute of Justice, with funding from the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, commenced long-term study of relationships between employment and crime among several sub-populations. Groups to be studied include women, ex-offenders and "high risk" youths: those aged 16 to 24 residing in inner-city areas that offer both relatively low levels of employment opportunity and relatively high levels of criminal opportunity. This document presents a design for further research on "high risk" youth by Vera's Employment and Crime Project.

A major part of the Project's first year effort was a critical review of the literature on employment and crime, summarized in Section II below. The conceptual framework for the Project's current research is presented in Section III. It sketches a model of employment and crime relationships, specified through selected hypotheses relating employment and crime among groups in the "high risk" population. Section IV is concerned with research strategy: a combination of primary data collection, secondary analysis, and participant-observer field work is

proposed as the best mix to meet Vera's research objectives. The discussion of research strategy relates this three-sided approach to the conceptual framework.

II. Summary of the Literature Review

The Employment and Crime Project has conducted a critical review of research and program evaluation literature on the relationship between employment and crime.* Our review qualifies the widely accepted view that unemployment directly causes crime and that employment is always an effective deterrent to criminal activity. While these direct (causal) relationships clearly obtain for some groups in certain circumstances, they do not fully account for other employment and crime relationships among different sub-populations, nor for divergences within the same sub-population over time. Thus our review leads us to expand and specify particular employment and crime relationships and to consider instances where the relationship between employment and crime is indirect, brought about by other institutional and subcultural patterns.

* Few citations to the literature are made in this document. They will be found in the Project's review of the literature (Vera Institute of Justice. Forthcoming. Preliminary Review of Literature on Employment and Crime Relationships.) Here we use findings from that literature review in order to develop research hypotheses. Statements that are presented here, with or without citation to other research, should be considered as hypotheses even if not explicitly so labelled.

A survey of research on action programs that used employment as a deterrent to crime did not reveal strong or lasting positive program impacts on recidivism. Our review of evaluations of program efforts directed at "high risk" youth, pretrial populations, inmates, and ex-offenders found that there was little rigorous evaluation of program impact on both employment and crime factors, and that little follow-up has been done to measure effects much beyond the point of program termination.

Vocational training, skills development, and even work programs often appear to ignore the nature of unsubsidized labor markets into which participants move. Training, when divorced from concrete employment opportunities, was found to be relatively ineffective. The few studies that did offer careful evaluation of program impact on employment and crime generally failed to yield strong positive findings. Also, the programs reviewed offered types of employment which were restricted to low-level and relatively unrewarding work. This may further account for the observed weak effects of employment on crime. Taken altogether, the program findings suggest that employment per se does not avert crime for every sub-population.

Although disappointing on their own terms, mixed results from evaluation research on employment programs can also be attributed to limitations of evaluation techniques. As currently utilized, evaluation methods operate within a very restricted theoretical context that emphasizes only a direct relationship between employment status and criminal behavior on the individual level. Family and peer group settings, attitudes towards work (and towards program involvement) supported in those settings, urban labor market structures, and the influence of local illegitimate opportunity structures are not amenable to analysis by conventional techniques. What results is a limitation on research that stems from discipline-oriented methods. When it is translated into findings of "no impact" from a program, these limitations may unfairly shift the burden of proof from the evaluation to the program. While continuing to study the results of standard evaluation methods, the Employment and Crime Project sees a need to extend both the scope and the kind of approaches used to assess program efforts.

After reviewing program literature, the Project examined economic studies concerning the relationship between employment and crime, focusing on the direct links between employment status and crime rather than on issues of rehabilitation or diversion. Economists treat property crime as an income generating activity based on the assumed cal-

ulation of relative costs and benefits of both legitimate and illegitimate alternatives. With low returns from legitimate economic opportunities, crime becomes relatively more attractive.

Most economists who have studied crime also focus almost exclusively on the direct relation between employment and other individual properties and crime behavior. Little attention has been paid to the structure of particular labor markets or to other institutional and subcultural factors which affect available work roles, and thus may influence crime in indirect ways. A number of studies by economists which correlate aggregate unemployment rates and crime rates* resulted in a variety of conflicting conclusions: that there is little (or great) relationship between unemployment and crime rates; that there is a strong (or weak) association between labor force participation rates and crime; that there is a strong relationship between youth unemployment (whether divorced from overall unemployment rates or not) and crime.

* Aggregate studies use crimes included in the FBI index (murder and manslaughter, assault, rape, robbery, burglary, larceny, auto theft). This tends to focus these studies on so-called "street crimes", with little emphasis on other criminal activity. Other "street crimes", such as drug offenses, are not included; neither are employee thefts, or "white-collar" crimes, such as price fixing, embezzlement, industrial negligence, and the like.

Granted some correlation between overall unemployment and crime rates, projection of the aggregate-level relationship to the level of individual behavior has usually been done using more or less loosely argued theoretical models.* Almost no study has been made of individual behavior relating employment status to crime outside of program settings. The absence of data at the "micro" level permits the variety of conflicting conclusions from the aggregate data noted above.

The use of such aggregate data, while an important step, has severe limitations. Reliance on overall unemployment rates does not focus on that part of the labor force where fluctuations in employment opportunity would theoretically have the most direct impact on crime. The overall unemployment rate contains groups who have low crime patterns (e.g., older workers and women), as well as workers who have some economic "cushion" against unemployment, such as savings, unemployment insurance, or other earners in the household. It further undercounts groups with high crime rates but with low labor force par-

* These models vary in their degree of rigor, with the tightest presentations found in the work of Becker (1968), Ehrlich (1973), and Block and Heinecke (1973). But the empirical studies have all been based on aggregate data. Manski's (1978) comment on Ehrlich is generally applicable: "The empirical analysis performed in Ehrlich (1973) is at the macro level and only marginally related to the theoretical individual-choice model he develops in the same paper."

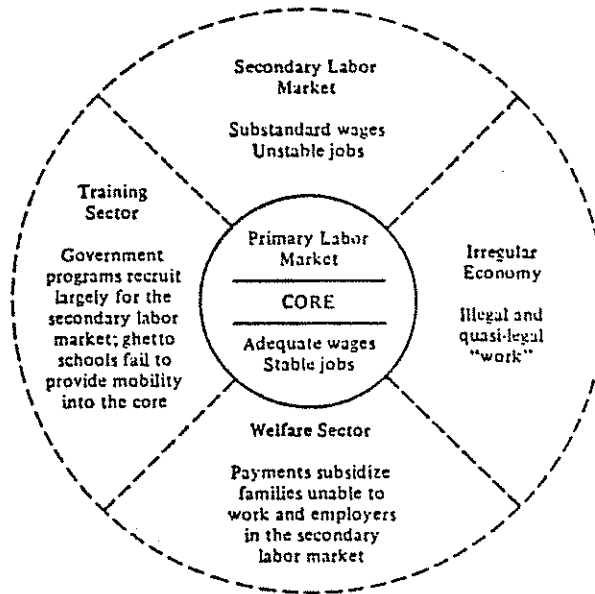
ticipation rates (e.g., black youth). Matching crime rates against unemployment or labor force participation rates for particular sub-populations might provide stronger evidence for the direct unemployment-leads-to-crime relationship that has so far received most attention.

Economic literature concerned with labor market segments and dual labor markets also proved relevant to the Project's model of the relationship between employment and crime. Segmented labor market theory sees the economy as divided between a "primary" labor market--jobs with high wages, opportunities for advancement, union coverage, prospects of stable employment, and good working conditions and benefits-- and a "secondary" labor market--low-paying, dead-end jobs requiring or teaching few if any skills, with little or no chance of advancement. A theory of segmented labor markets attempts to show how recurrent unemployment and non-participation in the labor market are built into some sectors of the economic system.

Some groups are more exposed to risks of unemployment and periodic dropout from the labor force because they are more severely affected by various structural and institutional factors such as racial discrimination, unequal returns to education depending on race and sex, minimal impacts of training programs, unemployment and underemployment, long-term poverty, and limited access to the internal

labor markets provided by large firms and some labor unions. Thus many "high risk" individuals face a limited set of choices which is heavily determined by structural factors. Our review suggests that an understanding of labor market segments is important to an understanding of urban poverty, and of the failure of many employment-related programs to alleviate street crime. Although the literature does not focus on crime, by implication secondary labor market research suggests that the failure of many employment programs to avert crime may be related to their failure to move participants into primary labor markets.

The Structure of Urban Labor Markets



* Taken from Harrison, Bennett. 1972. "Employment, Unemployment and Structure of the Urban Labor Market" Wharton Quarterly (Spring):4-30.

The diagram above locates property-oriented street crime as one of "four kinds of labor-time-consuming and remunerative activities in urban economies which display remarkably similar characteristics." (Harrison, 1972.) Individuals move among these activities in the economic "periphery" with relative ease and frequency, while mobility into the primary labor market, the economic "core", is severely constrained. Rather than there being distinct groups of criminals, secondary workers, welfare recipients, and "hustlers", Harrison suggests that individuals employ these various income strategies at different times in their lives, or sometimes even simultaneously.

But if street crime were determined solely by labor market position, we would expect that all groups of secondary workers would be equally represented in the population of street criminals. (For instance, women are overrepresented in secondary labor markets, but have very different crime patterns than men, both by type and amount.) Examination of employment histories of street criminals belies such an inference; other factors must be taken into account to explain the incidence of street crime.

Sociological literature was reviewed in order to identify other factors which mediate or antecede the relationship between unemployment and crime. For example, family

influences can be seen as factors which affect both employment and crime, with parental work experience fostering work expectations, values, and labor market opportunities for children. Youths from broken homes or homes where parents are in low level jobs are believed to possess less access to family-related job networks, and less knowledge of labor markets in general. It is also suggested that formation of their own households by older youths is an influential factor in both "maturing out" of criminal activity and stability of employment. However, the causal nature of these relationships is unclear.

The literature also suggests that school socialization, educational achievement and sustained adult contacts outside of family settings are important background variables in the work and crime experiences of "high risk" youth. The sociological literature also gives rise to the concept of illegitimate opportunity structures that parallel and compete with the truncated legitimate opportunities available to "high risk" youth. This concept calls attention to the interweaving of legitimate and illegitimate career paths which forms the basis of Vera's model of relationships between employment and crime. (See Section III below.)

Some sociological literature presents subcultural networks as mediating particular employment and crime patterns. We argue that segmented labor market and subcultural approaches can be usefully allied to provide a fuller understanding of employment and crime relationships. Although we believe the range of behavior options available to individuals is determined in the first instance by structural factors, the manner in which these options are perceived, defined, valued and used by individuals is influenced by cultural differences. This is true even for different groups in the same structural position. We wish to avoid what Curtis (1975) accurately characterizes as a "false dichotomy between economic and cultural interpretations."

Segmented labor market theory does not see one homogeneous labor market, but a variety of small, relatively discrete markets. Wages, work rules and hiring patterns are set within these markets by institutional and customary patterns, and not by the monetary value of output of workers as defined by marginal productivity theory. Such an understanding draws on sociological theories of group interaction and behavior, as Thurow (1975) notes: "In many respects the analysis of the labor economist is closer to the sociologist's analysis of relative deprivation than

it is to the analysis of the micro-economist." Such an approach, which has proved fruitful for illuminating particular economic phenomena such as wages and hiring policies, can be extended to help understand the overall structure of the labor market, and its relationship to crime.

Some of the insights of cultural perspectives illuminate the concrete operation of labor markets. If culture is defined in such a way as to emphasize its emergent and adaptive characteristics, then the observed structural features of the labor market will be reflected in subcultural adaptations. Something like this appears to be implied in those viewpoints which see subcultural elements playing intervening roles in explanations of lower class behavior. For instance, several economists have suggested that worker characteristics in the secondary market, such as high turnover and weak job attachment, are partially functions of the poor qualities of the jobs. However, such attitudes and habits may also be transmitted and reproduced through family and subcultural channels, thus reinforcing employers' beliefs that the secondary work force possesses these characteristics. Our formulation sees labor market structure as helping to shape and maintain particular subcultures or subcultural elements; these, in turn, have important feedback effects on the structure of legitimate opportunities.

Criminal behavior, from this perspective, can be seen as an adaptation to inadequate or constrained legal opportunities by taking advantage of illegitimate opportunities. Thus the seemingly simple "rational choice" mechanism of neoclassical economics only makes sense when seen as operating within a field largely defined both by labor market structure and the existence of illegitimate opportunity structures; these help generate a set of shared perceptions, norms and value standards which are shaped by, and in turn shape, individual and group relationships to both structures.

Informal and quasi-organized social networks involved in illegitimate activities have been described by participant-observers (e.g., Ianni, 1974) for auto theft rings, drug dealing, numbers running and the fencing of stolen goods. A review of this qualitative literature on employment and crime, coupled with our interviews with offenders and "high risk" youth, further supported our contention that the relationship between employment and crime is a diverse one, even when explanation is limited to direct causal relationships. While some offenders whom we interviewed ascribed their criminal activity directly to the immediate loss of employment, others had never considered legitimate employment in the face of the rewards they ob-

tained from crime. Others used employment as a "cover" for concurrent criminal activity or as an expedient for financing drug sales, and still others reported criminal activities during, although unrelated to, periods of employment.

Different relationships between employment and crime obtain at different stages of an individual's life. At an early stage, unemployment may lead to crime, with delayed acquisition of employment, high job turnover rates and repeated unsuccessful job search. Somewhat later, inadequate employment may be related to crime, as exposure to intermittent, low skilled, and low paid secondary work roles leads to high quit rates, and disillusionment with legitimate employment. This may be tied to exploration of criminal alternatives. Still later, crime may be related to dropping out of the labor force entirely, if recruitment into more structured criminal enterprises leads to withdrawal from legal labor markets. Finally, for those who become successfully involved in criminal networks, crime may be accompanied by legitimate employment: involvement in quasi-organized crime activities, such as fencing of goods, may foster employment roles either as a "front" to reduce detection of the underlying criminal role, or to allow better performance of the role.

Although these propositions do not exhaust the possible direct linkages between employment and crime, they help illustrate that different relationships between employment and crime obtain at different stages of individual development and with different group and neighborhood settings; this underlies a significant part of the model of employment and crime that emerged from the Project's review of research literature.

Besides direct causal linkages between employment and crime such as those just described, Vera's own qualitative interviews with offenders and a review of delinquency literature suggest indirect linkages in which the role of employment per se does not appear to be central. For example, family affiliations sometimes appear to have a direct impact on both employment and crime behavior. Many youths "mature out" of crime in late adolescence and early adulthood as they enter into marriage and work roles (Briar and Piliavin, 1965). Increasing family ties aid in developing "commitments to conformity" which draw the adolescent away from crime and towards employment, even when work roles may appear intrinsically unsatisfactory. Conversely, it can be argued that weakening family ties

(divorce, separation) may influence young adults to leave employment and enter (or re-enter) crime. In interviews at Rikers Island, the New York City misdemeanor prison, one respondent told us that when his marriage broke up he "didn't care about anything anymore"; he left his job and drifted back into drug use and crime. In such instances, family influences act as antecedent variables in establishing indirect links between employment and crime. Much more research will be required before the inventory of direct and indirect linkages between employment and crime approaches completion.

III. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 on the following page presents a model highlighting what we believe to be the most prevalent criminal and legitimate employment careers attained by individuals in a "high risk" population. The model emphasizes two kinds of determinants of choice between legitimate and illegitimate alternatives. First, the panel across the top of Figure 1 suggests that choice between legitimate and illegitimate alternatives is constrained by economic, institutional and subcultural factors. Second, the model suggests that early choices influence choices that are made subsequently. Thus criminal behavior at any point in time is the result of a complex interaction between economic structure, other institutional and subcultural influences and individual choices.

POSITION IN OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

High ————— Low ————— High

Illegitimate

Legitimate

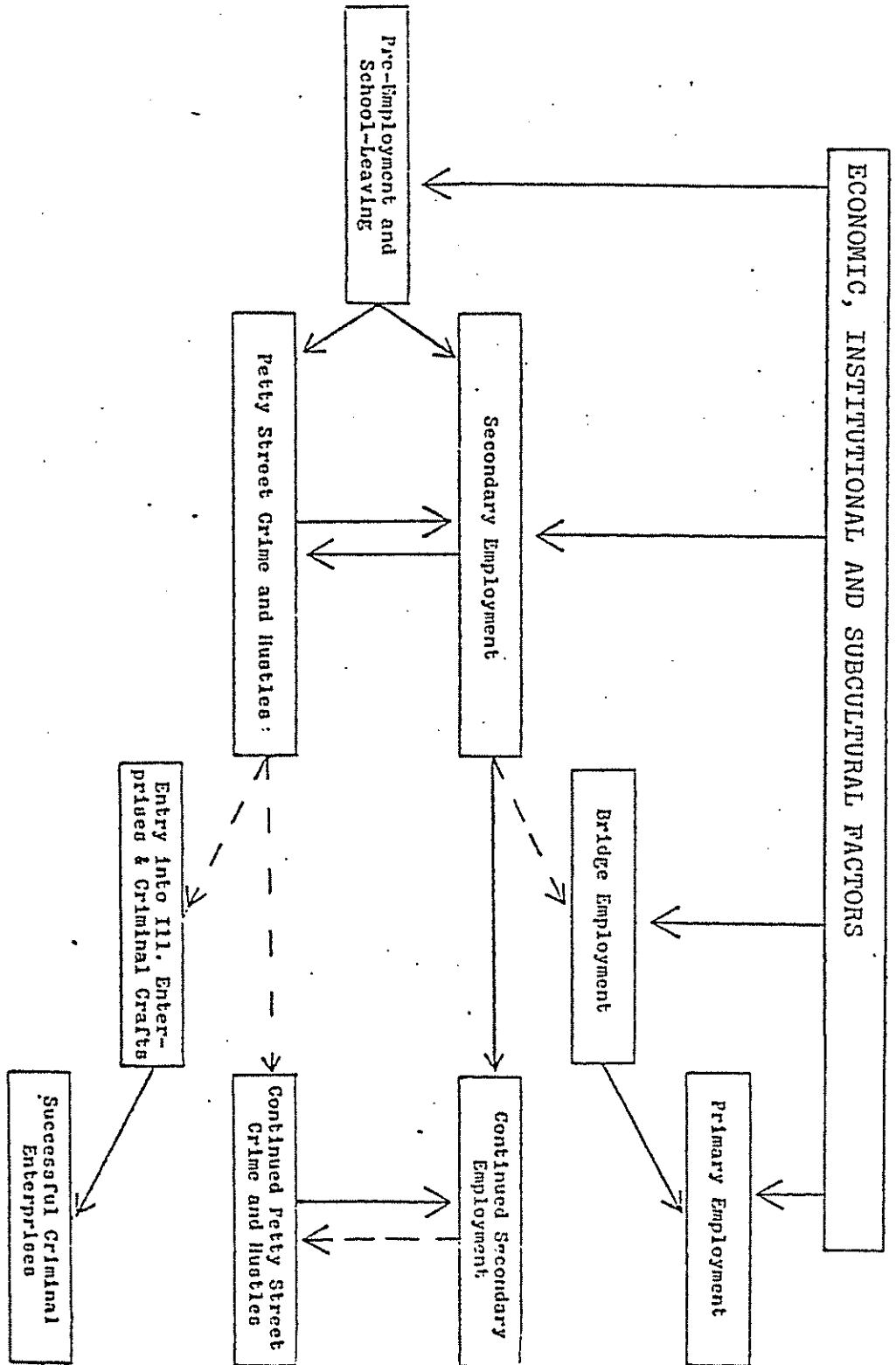


Figure 1

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

(Dotted arrows indicate weaker or less likely connections)

The model emphasizes criminal behavior which is economically motivated. Violent crimes, such as murder, rape, and assault, are not well depicted by this model. The model is descriptive rather than explanatory; that is, the model sketches outcomes from institutionally, subculturally and economically constrained choices but does not present the factors which account for those choices. (Later description of different parts of the model suggests explanations for particular outcomes.)

A final limitation of the model is that it applies only to individuals in a "high risk" population. In terms of Vera's research, "high risk" is defined by residence in inner-city areas which offer both relatively low levels of employment opportunity and significant criminal opportunity. Risk of committing property-oriented street crimes increase with:

--Low levels of access to primary jobs due to lack of direct labor market ties through friends and family; low levels of "human capital"* within the population, including school-

* Blaug (1976) gives a good basic summary of the "human capital" idea:

--"... people spend on themselves in diverse ways, not for the sake of present enjoyments, but for the sake of future...returns." Activities such as education, health care, job search, changing of residence, and training "may be viewed as investment rather than consumption, whether undertaken by individuals on their own behalf or undertaken by society on behalf of its members." The returns to this "capital" are usually seen as resulting in higher levels of earnings for those who make such investments, primarily in education.

ing, job skills and work experiences; and low levels of returns (via occupation and income) to "human capital" because of discrimination, labor market segmentation and other structural factors;

- Increased opportunities for "irregular" economic* and illegitimate activities within densely populated inner-city residential areas (slums, ghettos) due to ethnically and racially segregated housing patterns, intergroup conflict, high alienation from official social control agencies, etc.;
- As age distribution in the population skewed towards the young, or bimodally distributed between young and elderly strata;
- Decreased legitimate opportunities in "maturing" regional or urban economies, where economic growth has slowed or demand for labor has shifted away from industrial employment and toward services and other "post industrial" employment.**

* Ferman defines the irregular economy as "the area of economic activity that uses money as a medium of exchange and is not registered by the economic measurement techniques of the society." Seven types of services and goods are identified: "1) sale and/or production of goods, 2) home related services provided to consumers, 3) personal services provided to consumers, 4) "off the books" employment by a regular establishment, 5) rental of property, 6) provision of entertainment, 7) criminal activities" (Ferman, 1978, pp. 1-2).

** Since Vera's study of employment and crime does not make use of historical data and is initially limited to the New York City area, no data relating to variations in "maturing" regional economies will be available. This factor is nevertheless included in order to form one basis for the choice of research sites for replicating our early results.

When "high risk" is defined by this complex of factors, it becomes clear that the term is more applicable to populations within social and economic contexts rather than to individuals, each considered as actors independent of their history, environment or likely futures. Young men who live in densely settled, poor, inner-city neighborhoods may be more likely to commit crime than those in less densely populated settings linked to a growing regional economy with higher demand for workers, and those with favorable labor market futures due to structurally determined access to primary sector jobs. These differences in risk derive from socially and economically structured situations rather than from intrinsic attributes of individuals.

In Vera's model of employment and crime behavior, only a few elements of a complex process have been highlighted. These elements are grouped into two complementary approaches to the description and explanation of employment and crime.

A. Economic, Institutional and Subcultural Factors

First, the arrows that go down the page from the panel entitled "economic, institutional and subcultural factors", emphasize explanatory elements that define individual behavior options. These factors include local family and neighborhood groupings, schools as parts of local community settings

and local and general economic conditions. Field study may disclose normative patterns relating to prescribed or permitted types of employment as "worthwhile" or "acceptable" endeavors for young men in local settings.

Some of these normative patterns may be age-graded with relative precision. For instance, certain petty street crime may be tolerated until a certain age; non-participation in the labor market may be at least tolerated at age 15, but by age 21, participation is prescribed. Other elements of the patterns may not be age specific at all, but instead tied to overall cultural settings. Once a young worker has entered the labor market, there may be little expectation of career mobility in working class or lower class settings. For instance, civil service employment or trade union membership might be denigrated in a middle class setting where there is more stress on occupational mobility and advancement, especially in the early years of a work career.

Normative patterns can also be expected for illegitimate income-generating behavior. Permissive norms, tolerance of illegal behavior rather than its prescription, and socially patterned insulation from observability of illegitimate roles are more to be expected. Patterns regulating legitimate and illegitimate conduct will in turn

be linked to other institutional and subcultural sectors such as the family, the youth subculture and "street corner" groupings. Field work in local settings may disclose attitudes and expectations concerning legitimate work and illegitimate crime roles which vary with age. These findings will enhance understanding of such frequently considered manpower economics topics as work establishment, job turnover and mobility, and mobility and income aspirations and expectations.

Labor economists who have studied job finding networks report that family and friends networks are important ways in which individuals get tied into labor markets. In addition, they have marked the central role of intragroup dynamics among workers for such areas as wage determination, access to training, work rules, and mobility in firms (Freedman, 1969). But only recently have labor economists begun to consider such issues in the context of diverse subcultural settings (Bullock, 1973). Crime and employment research needs to show the same sensitivity to these settings.

B. Legitimate and Illegitimate Opportunity Structures

The discussion above emphasized institutional and subcultural explanatory factors that were not primarily tied to individual behavior patterns. Consideration now is given to the left-hand margin of Figure 1. It depicts a rough continuum of individual positions within legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures that range from work roles which have many conventionally desirable characteristics ("primary employment") to roles within quasi-organized criminal enterprises. Over time (going from left to right) the model emphasizes the progressive differentiation of employment and crime patterns for a "high risk" population. On the other hand, by no means do all members of a "high risk" cohort climb career ladders in either legitimate or illegitimate structures. Consequently, as Figure 1 attempts to show, over time there is a "fanning out" whereby some among the "high risk" cohort achieve positions within legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures while others continue in "unsheltered" work or crime roles.

C. Elaboration of the Model of Employment and Crime

Work and crime patterns can be developed from Figure 1 by considering long term effects of different early employment and crime experiences as individuals move among the levels laid out in Figure 1. For example, in a period of relatively high demand for low-level workers, resulting from high levels of business activity, the money returns from legitimate versus illegitimate options might favor legitimate employment for labor market entrants. Thus cohorts entering the secondary labor market during periods of favorable business conditions might manifest less crime and more legitimate employment due to the availability of steady and better paid work. Later, cohort members who had acquired relatively extensive work histories, more skills and better knowledge of relevant labor markets might be expected to manifest somewhat higher rates of mobility into "bridge" and subsequently primary employment roles.

Conversely, during periods of economic slowdown, it would be expected that secondary labor market roles would become relatively even less available or attractive to the

cohorts.* A cumulative effect would then be expected as diminished work experience led to disadvantages in competing for further work, and perhaps to lessened commitment to legitimate work roles in early adulthood.

The extent to which commitment to work roles is eroded by unsatisfactory early labor market experiences depends also on the manner in which institutional and subcultural elements mediate the experience for the individual. To summarize, we believe that a given age cohort as a whole is more sensitive to external economic conditions during the early stages of exploratory employment and crime involvements, when attitudes and work commitments are being formed and when labor market information is relatively low. Young individuals may not be willing to resign themselves to a lifetime of secondary employment. This could be shown by high levels of job switching and quitting; non-participation in the labor market altogether; and, potentially, increased criminal activity.

* Availability, of course, means that more job openings exist; with more work available, wages may be bid up. Additionally, non-monetary rewards such as improved working conditions also should be made more attractive by employers seeking workers. All of these effects would take place only to the extent that changes in aggregate economic conditions cause changes in the secondary labor market. The distressingly high levels of minority unemployment during the most recent economic expansion serve as a warning to any simple "trickle down" theory of how the benefits of economic growth are distributed.

Over time, advancement within legitimate employment structures is hypothesized progressively to exclude street crime. But even without upward mobility, older secondary workers who have not attained to work conventionally thought to be desirable may become resigned to limited employment options; the "reference groups" utilized by secondary workers for evaluating economic returns may become narrowed so as to exclude comparisons with the more advantaged. Jobs and pay levels that were unacceptable during the individual's earlier labor market explorations may become more acceptable, especially if comparisons are narrowed. Finally, family obligations can be expected to reinforce work commitments. The status of employee and "breadwinner" probably affords additional favorable self-esteem after establishment of conjugal family ties. Family ties may also increase the desirability of predictable income.

It is likely that relatively few young males in a "high risk" environment are without at least exploratory criminal involvements. This is not because of intrinsic criminality in this population, but because the opportunities afforded by legitimate options in the "high risk" context are perhaps only marginally more attractive than those of illegitimate options. In the "high risk" environment, individuals must

choose among a range of legitimate and illegitimate alternatives, all of which may be unattractive if measured against conventional middle class standards. The sub-cultural contexts of "high risk" environments also have been molded by economic disadvantage and racial discrimination over generations.

D. Key Hypotheses for Employment and Crime Research

The preceding section began discussion of relationships between employment and crime in a population of "high risk" youth by introducing a model of those relationships. Opportunity structures created by subcultural, economic and other institutional factors affecting individual mobility among positions in those structures was emphasized. In this section, different levels will be described in terms of the behavioral patterns and structural conditions characteristic of that level and hypotheses will be formulated concerning transitions from one level to others. These transitions are, in effect, the results of "choices" made by the "high risk" cohort in an employment and crime context where options are defined for individuals by economic, cultural and structural factors, and also by the accrued effects of previous experience and behavior.

Transitions between levels in our model are also hypothesized to be related to increasing needs for independence, economic and otherwise, associated with the maturing of individuals in the cohort. School leaving and intermittent exploration of legal and illegal income options is followed by more full-time involvement with legal and/or illegal activities. Aggregate indicators (rates) of labor force participation, employment and household formation, which show sharp increases between the ages of 18 and 26 (Adams and Mangum, 1978) can be thought of as "benchmarks" for a process of social maturation that concludes with the establishment of relatively stable life patterns. In the following account of transitions between levels of legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures, outcomes are loosely associated with modal age categories (to be tested in later research).

1. Pre-employment and school-leaving (14 to 18 years)

Within this period, a broad range of exploratory behavior may occur. Delinquency and pre-employment options are confronted in settings heavily influenced by peer group interactions. In the background, family and school

relationships may continue to have influence. In both family and school contexts, it is expected that many youth become involved in progressively intense conflicts between their own needs for autonomy, freedom of action and positive self-images and the constraints of institutionally centered expectations (in school) and often intermittent attempts by adults to impose authority or "discipline" (in the family). The economic deprivation experienced by families in the "high risk" environment may further weaken their control over the young.

This period is defined in employment and crime terms by the absence of sustained economic motivation. In this period, there is no normative requirement for self-support and the sanctions for juvenile crime may be seen by some as relatively mild. However, it is likely that behavior in this period, while not stemming from a predominantly income generating orientation, has consequences for subsequent labor market and/or crime involvements. For example, evidence from school drop-out and delinquency studies suggests that while considerable delinquency co-exists with continued enrollment in school, academic success is negatively associated with sustained delinquency (Hirschi, 1969). Thus chronic delinquency probably impedes acquisition of educational credentials in school settings, but may

also reinforce the (possibly correct) perception that school attainments are irrelevant to later economic success, especially for secondary jobs. Over time, we hypothesize that chronic delinquency impairs access to locally available employment and "pre-employment" experiences, such as afternoon and Saturday employment, participation in summer jobs programs, and school-affiliated employment opportunities. In turn, the absence of such early work experiences may further reduce both objective and perceived opportunities available through legitimate employment.

In summary, the behavior of 14 to 18 year old youth is not typically oriented towards achievement of a steady income. While money may be valued as a means to participate in the "youth culture", behavior is often exploratory and "expressive", and available employment and crime options are themselves erratic.

With the onset of sustained economic motivation,* the cohort of 14 to 18 year olds may experience increased pressure to choose between two types of income generation:

* A sustained economic motivation is expected to be associated with school-leaving, increased exploration of labor market options, reduced quit rates and increased labor force participation.

1) legitimate employment, or 2) adult street crime. Although it is correct to speak of the onset of a sustained economic motivation on the part of individuals in this age cohort, the phenomenon is explained by institutional, not individual, factors. It is the socio-cultural patterning of age-graded expectations concerning economic independence and self-sufficiency that is a primary source of individuals' motivations to become independent, coupled with the extremely low levels of resources available to poverty level families. We expect to find a strong association between low levels of family resources and early demands on individuals to generate income. Strivings for individual economic independence are responses to an institutionally derived normative prescription. Although the normative pattern can perhaps be evaded by some "high risk" youth, evasion is liable to be both costly and ultimately ineffective in preserving self-esteem and status within other than "street corner" groups (cf. Liebow, 1967).

It is likely that different levels of involvement in delinquency patterns and in "pre-employment" experiences lead members of the cohort to respond to these

options in different ways. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

- Greater frequency of early delinquent acts increases the likelihood of entry into street crime as an income generating activity. Delinquent experience adds to "skills" potentially available for adult crime roles and thus makes these roles more accessible to the individual. Delinquency may also reduce involvement in socially conforming roles;
- The greater the level of "pre-employment" experiences, including unpaid work in family businesses, the less likely is entry into street crime, and the more likely is entry into legitimate employment. Again, this hypothesis is suggested both because of the possible acquisition of skills in "pre-employment" experiences, and because of the increased "commitments to conformity" accompanying pre-employment;
- Academic success, if not always continued school enrollment, increases the likelihood of "pre-employment" experiences (in part by making the individual more acceptable to local employers) and these experiences in turn reduce the likelihood of entry into street crime and increase the likelihood of entry into legitimate employment. (This may be due to the socializing and work establishment aspects of pre-employment experience).

2. Interplay of legitimate and illegitimate involvements (19 to 24 years)

With the onset of the need for economic self-sufficiency, the "high risk" cohort can be divided for analytical purposes into two segments in terms of how the problem

of income generation is approached: those who initially enter legitimate employment and those who begin by exploring street crime.* The key phenomenon emphasized in Vera's conceptualization is the generally low level of returns from either legitimate or illegitimate activities (which becomes of increasing importance as economic needs increase) and the disjointed and fragmented character of information available concerning the costs of illegitimate options. Exploration of the two types of options is hypothesized to result for many in disillusionment with whichever type of role is first explored, leading to drop-out and the taking up of the other.

Since the process is envisaged as one of vacillating between legitimate and illegitimate options, the starting point for its description is arbitrary. Beginning with early exposure to legitimate employment, it is hypothesized that available work roles consist of low-paying, secondary sector jobs with little or no advancement. Lay-off rates are high in these jobs, so that the probability of unemployment is high even among those who attempt to stay employed. In addition, quit rates are also high, especially

* While useful for analytical purposes, the split between legitimate and illegitimate involvements is doubtless obscured empirically. The discussion below thus describes two "ideal typical" patterns: a segment of "high risk" youth who are initially exclusively engaged in legitimate employment and a segment initially exclusively devoted to street crime. We argue that experiences with either involvement encourages exploration of the other.

for young workers, reflecting dissatisfaction with the quality of work or with its non-economic satisfactions or reflecting inability to adjust to poor working conditions, discipline and work rules.

Thus it is hypothesized that early experience in legitimate secondary employment, or early knowledge about the limits in this market obtained from friends and relatives, is disillusioning and quickly brings about a search for alternatives. Among these alternatives is street crime. Its exploration may be encouraged in part because, in contrast to legitimate work, the money returns from illegal activities are no doubt frequently over-estimated. In street crime, the subjective possibility of "making a big score" is always present, although the objective likelihood may be quite small. Other involvements, like numbers running and low level drug sales, are accompanied by visible displays of cash even if their net returns are low. These displays help to create a "front" that may be intrinsically rewarding, adding prestige to the role.

In contrast, we hypothesize that the low level of returns to secondary labor market roles are easily observed and that, correspondingly few successes in primary employment are available for observation in the

"high risk" setting. For example, some early research suggests that knowledge of wages (or at least relative wages) for different types of work is widespread, even among youth who have little direct work experience and even though concrete knowledge of tasks is limited (Bullock, 1973). Furthermore, there are high levels of agreement on the prestige of different occupational positions; lower class and middle class respondents generally agree on their ranking of occupations (Reiss, 1961). All this suggests that legitimate work roles available to those in the "high risk" cohort are both economically unrewarding and not useful in establishing an impressive "image" vis à vis one's peers.

Since the low status of legitimate secondary employment roles compares unfavorably to some of the images surrounding street crime, at least as reported by criminally involved respondents interviewed by the Project, exploratory involvement in street crime is encouraged. Early crime involvement is also hypothesized to be facilitated by the fact that some of the costs of street crime are not obvious to the newcomer, are more subject to chance, and are not necessarily far reaching. For example, although an arrest means a temporary absence from street

life, it is perhaps no more humiliating than "straight" work as a bus boy or helper in the garment district. The extent of damage to an individual's social reputation stemming from an arrest would appear to depend on subculturally mediated contexts. The effect of an arrest may thus be blunted in some local settings; the punishment for many kinds of street crimes may also be viewed by some as comparatively light. Although conclusions can be drawn only from that portion of offenders who are arrested and convicted, it appears that increased probability of a felony conviction and long-term incarceration occurs only after a cumulative pattern of offenses and arrests. These are costs that are loaded towards the "back end" of the process and therefore are easy to discount when comparisons are made with the "up front" disappointments (also subculturally mediated) attending legitimate occupational involvement.

So a key hypothesis for Vera's research is that many "high risk" cohort members who are originally employed in legitimate secondary labor market roles will become disillusioned and will be drawn into street crime. The chance of a "big score", the prospect of getting away relatively free, and the risk and excitement elements of street crime encourage its exploration. Whether or not

exploration of street crime is immediately occasioned by unsuccessful job seeking, by recent lay-offs, or by disillusionment with secondary work roles, we believe that the structural disadvantages of the secondary labor market contribute to motivating street crime. Entry into secondary sector work roles is disappointing; street crime is therefore one "rational" response as attempts are made to locate other sources of income.

But as members of the "high risk" cohort continue to engage in street crimes, its previously hidden costs become more apparent. Each additional crime adds a positive (if small) probability that a life-threatening situation will be encountered at least once during an individual's criminal career. With the commission of hundreds of acts of burglary, robbery and the like, the chance of arrest approaches certainty.* Additionally, as an individual continues in street crime, it becomes increasingly clear that the once inviting prospect of the "big score" is not likely.

* The cumulative probability of an untoward outcome continues to increase even if the individual becomes more and more skillful and thus is able to reduce the probability of arrest or other undesired outcome associated with each additional crime. This is so because the probabilities associated with newly committed crimes are added to those associated with those previously committed. How this objective situation is viewed subjectively remains to be seen.

Thus, over a period of several years or more, it is hypothesized that street crime becomes self-limiting. To escape the nearly certain prospect of continued arrests, more severe punishments and other risks attendant on the circumstances of the crimes themselves, the "rational" street criminal would seek either the benefits of participation in a quasi-organized crime network or he would leave crime and go into (or return to) legitimate employment. To what degree individuals conform to this rational model remains open to research.*

3. Two subordinate "success" patterns (19 to 24 years)

With acquisition of relatively realistic knowledge of the costs and benefits associated with both legitimate and illegitimate alternatives, the period of initial exploration in Vera's model of employment and crime is concluded. The key outcome expected is a slowing of street crime involvement and a net recruitment of the cohort into secondary employment roles. (Thus in Figure 1 the double solid arrow between "secondary employment" and "petty street crime and hustles" at the left side becomes further to the right a solid arrow towards "secondary employment" but a dotted arrow away from it.)

* The continued mix of welfare dependency, petty crime, "irregular economy" activities and legitimate work is, of course, also envisaged. However, the point emphasized is that street crime per se becomes much less likely after a relatively short period of experimentation.

But there are two subordinate patterns which direct attention to relatively small segments of the cohort. They are successful achievement of "bridge employment" in the legitimate opportunity structure and "successful" entry into quasi-organized illicit enterprises and criminal crafts.

"Bridge" employment provides a linkage leading to primary employment. An example would be provided by a small appliance repair shop located in an inner city neighborhood in which the individual might acquire skills relevant to large scale manufacturing work, or a stable work history which serves as a credential for a primary employer. The "bridge employment" role is also conceived of as intrinsically satisfying to the individual in the role, perhaps because the role is linked to previous hobbies, personal interests or subculturally anchored values of the individual (e.g., in electronics, autos, music, etc.). "Bridge" employment therefore may be expected to reinforce the commitment to work and the development of an occupational identity, and to reduce job switching, periodic dropping out of the labor market and criminal activity.

It is supposed that "bridge" employment roles, just as primary employment roles, are scarce in the "high_risk" setting. It is also likely that those who do find "bridge" employment will more likely include those with other family members engaged in primary work; those who are more successful in secondary employment; and, possibly, those less successful in street crime or less inclined towards crime because of unusually strong family influences in support of conforming behavior or other factors.

Within a particular firm, "bridge" jobs may lie at the bottom of a primary job ladder and may pay the same wages as secondary jobs. But the availability of on-the-job training and the possibility of entry into a structured job hierarchy would offer more security in terms of full-time employment and career advancement--in Marcia Freedman's (1976) terms, "bridge" employment is linked with more "sheltered" segments of the labor market.

Even when "bridge" jobs are not located in a primary firm, they may still function as signals to primary employers than an individual is worth a training investment. Such jobs might be especially important for those youth who have no family ties into primary job ladders and thus must rely on other ways of signaling their acceptability to primary employers (Osterman, 1975). (Military service could also function as such a stability "signal".)

Thus, the likelihood of entry into "bridge" jobs will be increased with:

- Minimal involvement, past and present, in street or organized criminal activity;
- The existence in an individual's life of ties to family and friendship networks involved in the primary labor market;
- The presence of hobbies, interests or subculturally based orientations that increase work commitment in certain roles because they are intrinsically satisfying to the individual.

The remaining subordinate "success" pattern is comprised of those who have splintered away from the main body of the cohort through recruitment into quasi-oriented illicit enterprises or criminal crafts. For this group, the steady accumulation of a criminal record makes it increasingly likely that a significant prison sentence will accompany subsequent arrests. Switching to lesser offenses, or avoiding "heavy" crimes, may temporarily reduce the odds of paying high costs for doing crime, but such maneuvers probably reduce the proceeds as well. A "connection" or route into lucrative criminal activities that also provides protection against the police becomes crucial for the emergence of a stabilized criminal career.

Entry into such a quasi-organized criminal enterprise is hypothesized to have an impact on the individual analogous to "bridge" employment: His likelihood of an arrest would

be reduced, his income and expectations of future income would rise and perhaps a commitment to an illicit occupational identity would even emerge. However, we guess that only very few of the "high risk" cohort can be absorbed into illicit networks. Following Ianni (1974), such criminal enterprises can hardly be thought of as "equal opportunity" employers. Indeed, recruitment into crime networks probably involves an intensified reliance on ethnic, race, neighborhood-based and prison-based identifications that is required to assure the high degree of mutual trust needed in carrying out illegal activities. Among the attributes used for recruitment into illicit enterprises identified by Ianni, only neighborhood-based and prison-based reputation appear to represent statuses that can be achieved partly through individual effort.

Two sub-types within the relatively "sheltered" sphere of criminal involvements are hypothesized. First are involvements that are predicated on organizational features of criminal activity. A loosely organized auto theft ring, a small group of commercial burglars together with their fence, or a network of numbers runners and their "controller" provide examples of quasi-organized illicit enterprises. In these settings, many roles may be performed for relatively high rewards without requirements for conventional credentials,

and perhaps without demanding high levels of skill as well. Rather, the increase in returns and reduced chances of arrest stem from the organized network of contacts itself. A "territory" has been staked out successfully, a connection with a fence or auto body shop has been made, or in some other way organizational factors have been introduced which increase the rewards from the criminal role.

The second sub-type of "sheltered" criminal employment stems from the individual's acquisition of specialized criminal skills. To the extent that such "crafts" are acquired chiefly in prison, prison may be viewed with ambivalence by a small portion of the "high risk" cohort whose entry into mature criminal careers is crystallized by establishment of ties with a prison-based "buddy system."

The likelihood of entry into "sheltered" criminal work will increase with:

- Minimal involvement in conventional (secondary or primary) employment; and
- The existence in the individual's life of ties comparable to those causally important in primary jobs, that is, family and friendship networks tied to organized criminal enterprises or criminal crafts.

What remains is the majority of the "high risk" cohort who continue in secondary employment and in some street crime. Among this group, too, it is supposed that the frequency of criminal behavior declines. However, unlike the few who have

secured "bridge" employment, the decline in crime among those who continue in peripheral employment is probably more tied to low payoffs from crime rather than to increases in the return from legitimate activity.

4. Strata emerging from the employment and crime model
(25 years and later)

With the splintering of relatively small segments of the "high risk" cohort into "bridge" employment and entry into quasi-organized criminal enterprises, there emerges a final differentiation of the cohort into relatively stabilized legitimate or illegitimate roles.

The greater part of the "high risk" cohort remains in the secondary employment sector. Although unsatisfactory, it is possible that marginal improvements in secondary labor market positions accrue to those in the cohort who are able to carve out a "niche" by accumulating experience and "skills" maneuvering within a narrow range of very limited options. The income position of this segment of the cohort may also be helped by liaisons with households that receive welfare and other transfer payments. Manipulation of the welfare bureaucracy also may represent a significant "skill" in terms of income, if not of conventionally defined job titles. Relatively little crime is expected among those who have thus learned to

"cope" within the secondary employment-transfer payment system. Crime may be abated as well due to influences from a variety of institutional factors having little to do with the payoffs or costs associated with crime.

Among the relative few entering "bridge" employment, it is hypothesized that many will succeed at obtaining primary employment and that those who have attained such favorable positions will engage in virtually no street crime.

Among those entering quasi-organized criminal enterprises, crime is expected to continue, but it is hypothesized that the likelihood of arrest and of subsequent successful prosecution and incarceration substantially declines.

A final, but probably very small, stratum of the cohort may remain predominantly involved in petty street crime unaccompanied by significant employment. This segment of the cohort would be expected to manifest, relative to other groups within the "high risk" population, a much greater degree of personal disorganization--alcohol and drug dependence, and a significant record of offenses reflecting on personal conduct. This would be so both because those manifesting such behavior would be less likely than others to be recruited into higher levels of either legitimate or illegitimate activity, and because those who have failed to be recruited, perhaps through no fault of their own, may react to that failure through increased personal disorganization.

IV. Research Strategy

Our model of employment and crime stresses the influence of economic, institutional and subcultural factors as causes of street crime behavior. The positions in legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures occupied by a "high risk" youth cohort, together with changes in these positions over time, have been placed at the center of research attention. To address this model, we propose to combine three different research strategies: (1) structured interviews with a large, randomly selected sample of criminal court defendants; (2) sustained field studies in one or more New York City neighborhoods chosen on the basis of their conformity to our definition of "high risk" and utility in testing our model; and (3) secondary analysis of other accessible and relevant data sets. Each of these strategies is discussed separately below.

A. Interviews with Criminal Court Defendants in New York City

Information on persons 16 years of age and older who are arrested in New York City is provided by interviews conducted by the City's Criminal Justice Agency (CJA). That agency, which was established in 1973 by Vera as the

Pretrial Services Agency, interviews about 140,000 defendants annually in order to determine defendants' eligibilities for release on recognizance (ROR). All individuals arrested on felony charges are interviewed by CJA, as are many others who are arrested on less serious charges. Excluded are persons arrested for some minor offenses (including property-oriented offenses such as shop-lifting) who have been released from police precincts with a summons ("Desk Appearance Ticket" (D.A.T.)) to appear at criminal court arraignment at a later date.* An important preliminary to the criminal court interview study would be pilot testing to develop and refine sampling techniques and questionnaire instruments.

* Virtually all crimes of interest to Vera are classified as felonies by the New York State Penal Law. Exceptions are shoplifting, unlawful use of a credit card, unlawful use of slugs, possession of stolen property in the third degree, jostling, petit larceny and unauthorized use of a vehicle. In many instances, the above mentioned misdemeanor charges accompany other felony charges at arrest. When this is so, the defendant is interviewed by CJA. In still other cases, an arrestee is not granted a D.A.T. even when all charges are misdemeanors. Use of the D.A.T. also appears to vary among police commands and over time. More effort would be required to determine the biasing effect of this procedure for a CJA-based street criminal sample and whether some D.A.T. cases can be included in the sample.

The overall purpose of the interview study of criminal court defendants is to obtain structured data in both crime and manpower areas in order to facilitate cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses of employment and crime relationships. Relating the data set anticipated from CJA with Vera's model of employment and crime relationships, it is expected that a great deal of information will be obtained concerning patterns of alternating between secondary sector employment and street crime. Little or no information, on the other hand, would become available on the small fraction of individuals who enter quasi-organized criminal enterprises or criminal crafts, or on other "high risk" individuals who are not arrested.

The CJA data set would permit multivariate analysis of labor force variables. It would contain both arrest data and data on participation in the labor market for a large, varied set of individuals, a critical need for the behavioral study of crime and employment (cf. Manski, 1978). As far as we can determine, this would be the first study of both factors with a sample of moderately large size.

In the manpower area, the following are examples of questions that would be addressed:

During the year preceding arrest, what was the extent of:

- full-and/or part-time employment*
- spells of unemployment
- labor force drop-out (no employment and no job search)
- hours worked and wages
- primary, secondary and "bridge" employment
- occupational mobility
- participation in the "irregular economy"

An attempt would be made to relate previous and current arrest data to each of the manpower factors just described. For example:

- Do severities and types of current arrest charges differ according to extent of employment experience and labor force participation?
- Does the relationship between current arrest charges and manpower factors depend on other criminal history factors (e.g., number, severities and types of prior arrests, extent of previous incarcerations)?
- In the year prior to the current arrest, can a pattern of intermittent employment and arrests be discerned for some among the criminal court population?
- Is alternating between work and crime itself related to age, age at school leaving, extent of employment experience, type of work, etc.?

* Definitions of unemployment, labor force status and other manpower data elements would be developed in conformity with Bureau of Labor Statistics usage.

Finally, an effort would be made to account for re-arrests over a two year period in terms of the manpower data obtained in the original criminal court interview. Although it is not expected to be possible to reinterview the entire sample of criminal court defendants, the continuing collection of re-arrest information (made possible by CJA's computerized information system) does introduce a longitudinal dimension to the research. Other longitudinal data may become available by incorporating subsequent detailed labor market data (wage levels, employment rates, job openings) into the criminal court data set. Each individual would be classified into an occupational and industrial grouping within the New York labor market using information collected during the criminal court interview. Arrest rates for all those occupying a given position would then be aggregated and trends in the aggregated arrest rates would be correlated with trends in labor market data. Unlike other aggregate employment and crime studies, access to detailed manpower data from a large sample of arrested individuals would permit correlating crime rates with shifts in demand for workers in specific labor market segments rather than global rates for "adult males", etc.

1. Sampling and validation

To obtain participants in the criminal court interviews, a probability sample of 2,000 to 3,000 defendants would be chosen from the population of defendants processed within a two or three month period.* Defendants will be selected and given a project interview in conjunction with the routine interview CJA gives to determine eligibility for ROR. In addition to the major probability sample, other sub-samples of interest may be selected. For example, all defendants from Vera's field study neighborhoods (see "Neighborhood Studies" below) might be identified and given an augmented interview. With this approach, closer links would be forged between the neighborhood field studies using participant-observer techniques and the structured

* About 310 defendants come into CJA's city-wide intake system each day. Assuming that 10 percent of defendants are chosen for the supplementary manpower interview, about nine weeks would be required to obtain a sample of 2,000 cases. On the other hand, detailed review of agency, court and police procedures in each borough may suggest that the sample be restricted to defendants arrested in only one or two boroughs in order to reduce disruption of agency procedures and assure adequate time for interviews.

questionnaire approach. For example, some indication of "who gets arrested" might be obtainable by comparing data on criminal court interviewees on a neighborhood-specific basis with data collected by the Project from the neighborhoods.

- Are the employment patterns of those arrested from the neighborhood typical of those contacted in the neighborhood who have not been arrested?
- Are the arrest charges of neighborhood youth interviewed in criminal court similar to the types of criminal behavior reported to Vera's participant-observers?
- Do those interviewed in the neighborhood by Vera's participant-observers report the same information in the criminal court interview? (Even if only a handful of young people closely studied by Vera in local settings are later arrested and interviewed in the court setting, revealing information testing the cross-validity of the two approaches would be forthcoming.)

CJA interviewers operate within fairly rigid time constraints. With the space of a few minutes, defendants are asked questions about present employment, education, family ties, residence, and other information relevant to release eligibility (Appendix A displays the CJA interview form.) Given these constraints, a complete interview schedule with detailed questions about background, labor market information, attitudes and life style questions is

ruled out. An alternative now under consideration calls for comprehensive coverage of the labor market participation and crime variables of central interest to our study together with different sub-sets of exploratory questions used with randomly chosen sub-samples.

B. Participant-Observer Study of Selected New York City Neighborhoods

During the first year of the Employment and Crime Project, published neighborhood data and police precinct statistics have been reviewed to aid in the decision to select a small number of neighborhoods for field study. Project staff have held discussions with various City agency representatives to get a sense of relevant criteria for choosing likely neighborhoods and to elicit some likely candidates for our field study.

The overall purpose of the participant-observer study is to provide more fully rounded information on relationships between employment and crime in local settings. Observational data would allow description of actual behavior as distinguished from reports of behavior. Field work is needed in order to shed light on various cultural elements and social structures, especially those pertaining to peer

group and street culture settings, that are not readily studied through questionnaire methodology. Observations in neighborhood settings would also provide an opportunity to study how various groups define legal and illegal work activities; how the relationship between employment and crime is perceived; and how various elements of work roles and the availabilities of different types of work may lead to differing impacts in terms of the social control afforded by employment in neighborhood contexts.

In terms of Vera's model of employment and crime relationships, it is also anticipated that observation of local settings would strengthen or weaken the hypotheses that young people enter illicit criminal enterprises at an early age; that frequent switching between legitimate and illegitimate options occurs during a relatively early phase of work or crime "establishment"; and that the decision to engage in adult crime represents a key left step among "high risk" youth.

1. Selection of neighborhoods and methodology

In New York City, variables indicating poverty populations heavily overlap. Indicators such as arrest rates, criminal complaint rates, welfare dependency, other trans-

fer payment status variables, household ownership, socio-economic background data, race and ethnic composition data, and income data cluster in the same geographical areas. On the other hand, most data sources are obtained from the 1970 decennial census and are therefore considerably out of date. Taking into account those data elements that are available on a more nearly current basis, and considering Vera's definition of "high risk", neighborhoods manifesting the following characteristics initially would be considered eligible for field study:

- Over 50 percent of the population is black or Hispanic;
- The unemployment rate for males is within the top two quartiles;
- Property crime arrest rates (burglary, robbery, larceny) are within the top quartile;
- The percentage of males aged 14 to 24 in the population is higher than for New York City as a whole.

After application of these criteria, the problem remains to specify much more narrowly the target areas for study. Field study would take place, at least initially, within very small areas that are themselves located inside of traditionally named New York City areas. (For example, there are 59 Community Planning Districts in the City. These Districts usually include a small number of traditional

neighborhoods, each one composed of census tracts. The population in each tract is about 3,500.* While Vera's researchers would actually work within areas as small as or even smaller than census tracts, the published data initially scrutinized to identify study areas is available exclusively for the larger units.)

To make these final choices of sites for the field work, a combination of theoretically relevant factors and practical considerations would be brought into play. The factors to be used in the final selection of study sites include:

* According to New York City's Planning Board, the outer census tract boundaries of City Community Planning Districts correspond to traditional neighborhood boundaries. Thus it is possible to aggregate 1970 census tract demographic data to learn neighborhood characteristics. However, other variables in Vera's definition of "high risk" are not available at the neighborhood level (for example, arrest data are available only at the police precinct level.) An additional problem is posed by the dearth of post-1970 data on neighborhood-level variables of interest to us (for example, unemployment rates and percentage minority population.) Statistical analysis of neighborhood characteristics would have to rely on projections from 1970 data and on more recently collected proxy variables; for example, percentage of families in the neighborhood on AFDC. See The Neighborhoods of Poverty (New York City, Community Development Agency, November, 1978).

- Areas that have been designated as recipients of special government manpower or rehabilitation programs. Examples include those neighborhoods to be part of the catchment area of the Wingate High School Youth Employment Program or other areas that are part of rehabilitation efforts in the South Bronx;
- Areas that appear to have developed a strong organizational base in support of anti-poverty action programs or other political agendas. Examples include Bedford-Stuyvesant and the Lower East Side;
- Areas of ethnic transition resulting in a bimodal distribution of a young (minority) population in juxtaposition with an elderly (white) population. Such areas may also experience the effects of disorganization due to the failure of existing organizations and institutions in the neighborhood to address the problems of newly arrived residents. Examples include the Highbridge area of the Bronx and Washington Heights in Manhattan.

Among the practical considerations that will enter into our selection of study sites is the availability of informants capable of introducing Vera researchers into the neighborhood. During the course of pilot interviews with respondents at Rikers Island, we have identified some neighborhoods where respondents have indicated a willingness to serve as informants (Fort Greene and St. Albans.) Contacts with action and research projects within and outside Vera would be expected to provide entry into other neighborhoods (e.g., Red Hook, South Bronx, and East Harlem.)

After consideration of statistical data, the second step in the selection of neighborhood study sites would be a series of short field visits to various neighborhoods of possible interest. Each field trip would record physical and social impressions of the neighborhood, attempt to locate informants, secure impressionistic evidence of social changes not available from out-of-date statistical sources and lead to preparation of a preliminary field report to be used to make final decisions on study sites.

After these preliminary studies, the Employment and Crime Project would once more review official data sources and contemplate structured discussions with government officials, researchers experienced with New York City neighborhood studies, and other experts in order to make a final choice of two or three study neighborhoods.

After final selection of the study sites, sustained field work would first begin in only one of the sites. This would enable the Project's supervisor and three field researchers to become closely acquainted with each other and to jointly develop field study techniques. Following a month or so of joint study in one neighborhood, two field workers would branch out to two other study neighborhoods, leaving one field worker behind to continue work in the neighborhood first identified for study.

Much of the Project's initial efforts within neighborhoods would be to establish confidence among neighborhood informants. The systematic work history and crime information gathered during this early effort may thus be limited. It is hoped, however, that these early confidence-building efforts will allow the Project to attempt more systematic data gathering in the future. For example, once the Project establishes legitimacy in a neighborhood, field interviewers may be asked to select an age cohort within a "social block" or other limited area and direct them to the Project's offices for more structured interviewing.

2. Data on young males

Study in the neighborhood would begin by identifying male youths as primary informants. Initially, group contacts will be sought in which fairly informal questioning of a number of youths can proceed without undue stress and without probing into confidential areas. During this period, the field researcher would attempt to identify those informants who appear to be generally representative of the population in the local setting and capable and willing to participate in ongoing and relatively intensive

research. Besides the focus on the individual as a unit of analysis, it is also believed necessary to identify as completely as possible the range of institutional, organizational and informal group activities at work in the neighborhood, and to consider the adequacy of samples of individuals considered as representatives of or informants concerning these larger units.

After their selection, life histories would be obtained from each informant. Life histories would emphasize employment and pre-employment experiences, occupation and income aspirations, legitimate and illegitimate role change turning points, histories of job search, discussions of the meaning of work and crime among peers and family members, and detailed information on the occupational involvements of all members of the informants' family. Analyses of detailed life histories would also help confirm our hypothesized career paths, that is, the various notions developed in Section III above about the decisions to explore street crime and secondary employment in early adulthood, and the progressive branching out into legitimate and illegitimate activities in later adulthood.

3. Family data

From the literature, it appears desirable to involve other peers and family members in the process of developing accounts of each informant. This process allows the researcher to consider other perspectives on past events and on the local context and allows consideration of the degree to which individual responses are idiosyncratic or socially patterned. Access to family members' accounts would also allow some study of family socialization and household formation in relation to work and entering into and maturing out of street crime.

4. Social structural and cultural variables

Social structural elements of interest in the neighborhood studies include both those formal organizations which have an impact in the local setting and informal social organizations which youth in the neighborhood have developed spontaneously and in response to their own needs. In our model, the school and the criminal justice system are formal organizations whose operations have been hypothesized to be of central concern in employment and crime careers. A third type of formal organization is clearly

also of interest--those employers who have provided jobs to neighborhood residents, either locally or in distant labor markets linked to the neighborhood through social channels or for historical reasons. Other organizations such as the housing authority and health units may be of importance as well.

Within each neighborhood, local organizations (churches, anti-poverty groups, recreation groups, political clubs) that act as authority sources within the neighborhood and as political brokers between the local residents and city agencies would also be sought out. These groups are of interest also because--to the extent that they are effective--they may be expected to have an impact on youths' employment and crime paths.

Finally, in making contact with youth informants, close attention will be paid to the existence of informal social organizations such as social clubs, bar and street corner cliques, friendship networks, and crime partnerships. These are of central concern as they may be expected to act as repositories and enforcers of subcultural attitudes related to crime and employment activities of their members.

C. Secondary Analysis of Other Data Sets

Both the criminal court interview study and the participant-observer study in the neighborhoods would develop information relating to New York City populations under current conditions and outside of program contexts. An effort is also being made to locate data sets for other populations. For example, several data sets are available from experimental studies of employment programs directed towards court diversion, school drop-out and other related populations. Vera's own evaluations of the Wildcat supported work program and the New York City Court Employment Project and the multi-site evaluation by the Manpower Demonstration and Research Corporation of the national supported work experiment are examples of data sets offering potential for study of employment and crime relationships. The Project's interest in these data sets is focused on "control group" participants who were not admitted into the programs. These control group participants are presumably exposed to unsubsidized labor market opportunities and thus resemble more closely Vera's study populations.

In addition, a number of data bases have been identified which have no crime information, but substantial labor market data. While these are not useful for model testing, they may be useful to analyze for control purposes. For example, the results of labor market analysis of Wildcat data should be compared with national patterns among equivalent sub-samples of longitudinal studies such as that provided by the National Longitudinal Surveys.

During the Project's first year, an exploratory secondary analysis of Wildcat evaluation data was undertaken as a methodological exercise in order to prepare for subsequent large scale secondary analysis. The reanalysis involved simple mathematical models of employment and crime paths, testing the effects over time of one variable on the other. Concurrently with the primary research, analysis of Wildcat data would continue, incorporating into the analysis intervening variables insofar as they are present in the data. The results of multivariate analysis of Wildcat data would subsequently be compared with data for other populations as these become available.

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