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EMPLOYMENT AND CRIME:  
A SUMMARY REPORT

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

In 1977, the National Institute of Justice made funds available for Vera to take a reflective, in-depth look at the relationships between employment and crime in all their complexity. The long-term research agenda agreed upon with NIJ for the Employment and Crime Project involved Vera in exploring these relationships through two distinct, but related, research strategies -- a survey of over 900 Brooklyn defendants and an ethnographic study of youth in three high-risk Brooklyn neigh-

borhoods. Each of these efforts and the findings it yielded is described in separate reports available through Vera. This document attempts to synthesize the findings from these distinct research efforts.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Conventional wisdom tells us that employment and crime are inversely related. We expect that people with stable and lucrative employment will have little involvement in crime. We also suspect that a small number of people, sometimes labeled "career criminals," have little involvement with employment, and chronic, serious involvement in crime (Greenwood et al., 1982).

Between these two extremes, we have learned to expect an intermediate group, whose size is unknown, who engage in both employment and income-producing crime in varying combinations over the course of a lifetime. Many in this group experiment with crime for brief periods when they are young; others may sustain a mixed strategy throughout their careers. It is possible that in some groups at high risk of criminal involvement (residents of some inner-city neighborhoods or populations of defendants) there may be far more mingling of legal and illegal income strategies than in other groups. Even so, we expect that more and better employment will be associated with less frequent income-oriented crime. It is on these high-risk groups that concern about relationships between employment and crime is focused, and toward this population that policy decisions about employment and crime are directed.

In the past twenty-five years, there has been increasing interest in the relationship between employment and crime on the part of policy makers and researchers. This interest has gone beyond the commonsensical belief that the two are inversely related, to explore more difficult and complicated issues. Does unemployment cause crime? Can provision of employment, either through programs or through efforts to stimulate the economy, reduce or avert crime? If not, for what subgroups might it do so?

By 1975, the growing interest in these issues had generated a considerable body of knowledge and experience. Yet much of what was learned was inconclusive. Different studies produced contradictory findings about relationships between unemployment, labor force participation and crime. Programs had not been overwhelmingly successful, either in improving employment or reducing crime. It was clear that, even after considerable effort, we still did not know how to describe the relationship between employment and crime and how best to build upon that knowledge to improve employment and reduce crime in high-risk areas.

In 1977, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) determined that a number of crime control programs funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) flowed from one or another set of assumptions regarding the relationship between employment and crime. Therefore, a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of that relationship is important to the formulation and management of crime control policy. For that



reason, NIJ issued a request for research proposals on the topic.

In initiating this research, the National Institute created an unusual funding program. The Research Agreements Program (RAP) was based on the Institute's recognition of a need for comprehensive, long-term research to illuminate fundamental criminal justice issues. By providing researchers with a promise of long-term (approximately five years) support, the RAP encouraged them to broaden the range of research questions; to commit substantial resources to the review, critique and synthesis of existing knowledge on the topic; and to undertake ambitious, new empirical inquiries important to building knowledge.

The Vera Institute has long had interest in this area. Since discovering in the early 1960s that bail decisions were influenced by the defendant's employment status (the Manhattan Bail Project), Vera had developed several programs intended to improve the employment prospects of defendants, ex-drug addicts and ex-offenders. Indeed, Vera designed and implemented the concept of "supported work" for ex-addicts and ex-offenders and evaluated its effects using an experimental research design (Friedman, 1978). Vera also designed, implemented and later evaluated the Court Employment Project which attempted to divert defendants from criminal processing and provided a short-term program of counselling and employment service (Baker (Hillsman) and Sadd, 1980).

By the late seventies, in reflecting on its own action programs and research, as well as the research of others, Vera realized that genuine improvements in the employment prospects of ex-offenders were hard to come by and that, even when they were achieved, they were not always a substitute for criminal behavior. Therefore, Vera was anxious to undertake a careful investigation of the employment-crime relationship.

In late 1977, the Vera Institute of Justice, sponsored by the Research Agreements Program of the National Institute of Justice, began a six-year project exploring the relationship between employment and crime. In the past six years, the Employment and Crime Project has engaged in a series of related efforts in this area: an extensive review of the employment-crime literature (Thompson et al., 1981); a pilot study of employment and crime relationships in a small sample of individuals about to be released from jail (Sviridoff and Thompson, 1983); development of a model of employment and crime relationships based on the literature review and the pilot study; and an exploration of employment and crime relationships in two, separate large-scale studies -- a survey of 902 defendants in Brooklyn, conducted in the summer of 1979 (Thompson, Cataldo and Loewenstein, 1984); and a four-year ethnographic study of young people in three selected, high-risk Brooklyn neighborhoods (Sullivan, 1984). In addition, a lengthy examination of relationships between human capital, labor market structures, employment and crime, based on the Project's survey of Brooklyn defendants, was conducted (McGahey, 1982).

### A. Literature Review

The first major task of the Project was an extensive review of the literature, which ultimately helped shape the method and content of the empirical research. The Project reviewed four specific areas in the literature: the economic model of crime; aggregate studies of relationships between work- and crime-related variables; program literature, evaluating efforts to improve the employment and reduce the criminality of high-risk groups; and sociological and/or ethnographic literature, pointing to the interaction among various social and cultural variables, including employment, and crime.

The economic model of crime conceives of income-producing criminal acts as the product of a "rational economic choice" in which individuals weigh the costs of crime (for example, wages lost due to incarceration) against potential economic benefits (Becker, 1968; Ehrlich, 1979). As developed in the past two decades, the model's emphasis on economic rationality challenges psychological theories which see crime as a manifestation of aberrant cognitive or emotional states, and sociological theories which trace crime to social and cultural structures and processes operating at the family, peer group, community and societal levels. The economic model parallels the commonsense notion of the inverse relationship between employment and crime -- the greater an individual's attachment to the labor force, and the greater his/her earning potential, the more he/she has to lose, if arrested.

Yet the economic model is more sophisticated in method and complex in both theory and application than the commonsense notion. It argues that crime is itself a form of work, and that the allocation of time to criminal activities can be modeled on the same formal basis as the allocation of time to legal work (Ehrlich, 1973).

Although the model appears to focus on the behavior of individual actors, tests of the model's mathematical constructions tend to be based on aggregate-level data rather than on surveys of individuals (Freeman, 1983). As the basis of a description of the behavior of individuals in high-risk subgroups, the model is inadequate because it reflects broad heterogeneous populations; it is not sensitive to the full range of opportunities and incentives that relate to the criminal behavior of groups who are the subject of policy makers' concerns.

Some tests of the economic model of crime use aggregate data to explore relationships between large-scale economic and crime indicators (unemployment measures and arrest rates over time; comparisons of labor force participation and crime rates in several cities), in an attempt to address broad issues: Does unemployment cause crime? Are the labor force participation rates of young males related to crime rates (Phillips, Votey and Maxwell, 1972; Leveson, 1976)? The evidence from these studies, conducted over the past twenty years, is mixed and widely recognized today as inconclusive (Gillespie, 1975; Orsagh and Witte, 1980). Although some individuals may mani-

fest certain direct relationships between unemployment and crime, (e.g., those who steal specifically because of job loss and poverty), most studies, based on aggregate data, have been unable to demonstrate a strong, unambiguous direct relationship between unemployment and crime.

This may be because aggregate measures reflect marginal differences or changes in employment and crime in total populations. High-risk groups, on the other hand, constitute only a minority of the total population, and their behavior may not be highly sensitive to the types of economic fluctuations that unemployment rates reflect. Their conditions are more likely to be characterized by chronic poverty and generally high rates of unemployment. Their economic status may be slow to change, and relatively unaffected by either recessions or brief spurts of economic growth. It is possible, therefore, that the criminogenic dimensions of chronic poverty are not discernible in these studies.

Evaluations of employment programs for high-risk groups have been equally inconclusive. Generally, they find that efforts to improve employment skills or provide employment directly to high-risk groups have had little impact on criminality. However, these results must be seen in the context of related findings; in many instances such programs could report little impact upon employment either (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), 1982; Baker (Hillsman) and Sadd, 1980). Programs appear to have considerable difficulty increasing the extent and duration of employment for high-risk youth and ex-offenders.

In some instances, even when subsidized employment has been provided as part of the program itself (as in the supported-work programs for ex-offenders and high-risk youth), there was no difference between the criminal involvement of program participants and a control group even during the program period (MDRC, 1982). It is possible that there may be something about subsidized program employment that is intrinsically different from the jobs people find in natural settings -- like the difference between a dress rehearsal and a performance. Alternatively, it may be that the characteristics of program employment -- low wages, little prospect of advancement, limited duration, strict or erratic enforcement of work rules -- are so like the low-level jobs generally available to high-risk groups that neither are capable of making very much difference in the lives of those who find such jobs. In general, although program evaluations have not conclusively demonstrated that improved employment can reduce or avert criminality, they have also not dispelled the notion that a secure foothold in the labor market, if it could be provided, might have some impact on the incidence of high-risk, low-return crime.

Still other literature focuses on a variety of non-economic factors -- schooling, family, age, subculture -- which may directly or indirectly affect both employment and crime, and which might be seen as mediating the relationship between the two (Briar and Piliavin, 1965; West, 1974; Elliott and Voss, 1974; Hirschi, 1969; Rodman and Grams, 1967; Short and

Strodtbeck, 1974; Miller, 1958). Although this literature is generally convincing that such factors operate, the effects appear subtle, and there is no strong evidence that a single factor (with the possible exception of age) can explain very much of the observed variation in employment and crime.

Age, however, does appear to be uniquely important in this relationship (Greenberg, 1979; Glaser, 1978; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983). It is widely known that an overwhelming proportion of those arrested for property crimes are males between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. Arrests peak for many crimes in the mid-teens and rapidly dwindle thereafter. This age-related decline in arrest rates occurs during the same years in which labor force opportunities and involvements are increasing. This phenomenon of "maturing out" from crime has been variously ascribed to age (or physical maturation) itself, increasing criminal sanctions, family formation, changing peer group influence, "commitments to conformity" and improved employment. It is likely that none of these variables by itself can fully account for the rapid reduction in criminal involvement evident in age-related arrest data.

In reviewing the literature on these issues from several intellectual disciplines, Project staff also became particularly interested in two distinct theoretical approaches to employment and crime. First, the competing schools of human capital and segmented labor market theory in economics offered alternative explanations of employment outcomes and, to a lesser degree, criminal involvement for high-risk groups

(Becker, 1975; Doeringer and Piore, 1971). Second, the concept of opportunity structures as defined by sociologists also seemed to provide a relevant theoretical framework for understanding employment and crime (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Human capital theorists stress the importance of education, skills, and work experience (i.e., achieved characteristics of individuals) in enhancing productivity and thereby determining the wages and benefits that employers offer employees. The human capital approach accords with the economic model of crime; that model contends that individual shortcomings in skills or educational achievement lead to failure in labor market competition and thereby make criminal involvement a rational economic choice.

Segmented labor market (SLM) theorists, on the other hand, argue that the structure of the labor market is far more important than individual characteristics in determining labor market outcomes. Although they concede that human capital factors explain a great deal of labor market success in "primary" jobs (jobs with high wages, good working conditions, employment stability, job security and potential for within-firm advancement), they contend that there is another stratum of "secondary" jobs (featuring low wages, job instability, few benefits, poor working conditions, harsh and arbitrary discipline, and little opportunity for advancement) in which differences in human capital have very little effect on wages. In the secondary sector, they argue, formal schooling offers scant economic rewards.



SLM theorists see the ability to obtain a good job as far more related to personal and family networks than to human capital ("who you know" rather than "who you are"). They also point to ascribed characteristics (race and gender) as influencing opportunities to enter the primary sector, despite acquired status or credentials.

Some SLM theorists also suggest that individuals who cannot gain access to primary jobs (the economic "core"), are forced to choose among (or mix together) income strategies characteristic of the economic "periphery": secondary jobs; subsidized job programs; "underground" employment (i.e., "off-the-books" jobs); dependency (welfare or SSI); and income-producing crime (Harrison, 1972). They argue that for those who cannot obtain sheltered primary jobs (i.e., jobs in established firms, providing ladders for advancement), there is considerable mixing of these inadequate forms of employment and crime.

SLM theory on labor market structure and the sociological concept of "structure of opportunities" complement each other. In its best known formulation (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960), opportunity theory suggests that the availability and attractiveness of both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities are functions of local social structures. In localities where legitimate opportunities are blocked, illegitimate opportunities are likely to develop. The theory focuses on the social and psychological processes which lead particular groups to adapt to limited opportunity in various ways (stealing, fighting,

taking drugs). Like segmented labor market theory, therefore, it emphasizes the role of social rather than individual characteristics in influencing employment and crime behavior.

**B. Developing a Conceptual Model**

Examination of what was known about the employment and crime relationship led to a focus on the behavior of individuals in concrete social settings as a way to explore this complex set of issues. The Project staff chose to study neither aggregate national crime data nor relationships between unemployment and crime using large aggregate datasets. Instead, the Project focused on local employment and crime experiences -- the employment and crime activities of specific high-risk individuals of different ages and races, confronted with various sets of locally based opportunities for both types of behavior.

The considerable body of aggregate-level research accumulated over the past several decades offered little knowledge about the nature of employment-crime relationships in high-risk groups. Individual-level studies, on the other hand, were limited primarily to evaluations of programs designed to intervene in the lives of individuals in these groups; thus they also tell us little about employment and crime behavior in natural settings. There was a need to augment existing knowledge by exploring what these behaviors looked like and how they were structured apart from formal programmatic intervention, in order to inform policy making and to improve planning efforts for such programs. Such research would also be able to explore the influence of other factors -- age, education, family, peer groups, community settings -- in shaping employment and crime activities and mediating the relationship between them.

Finally, knowledge about real economic opportunities for these groups and how individuals saw them and made use of them was lacking.

To design a framework for an individual-level study that would address these dimensions, Project staff conducted a series of pilot interviews with sixty-one adult male misdemeanants, shortly before and after their release from New York City's Rikers Island correctional facility. This pilot study helped us to identify a variety of possible "linkages" between employment and crime exhibited by sample members. Although a number of respondents alternated between periods of employment and periods of crime, others used income from crime as a supplement to income from employment. Still others used income from employment as an economic stake for drug sales or other illegitimate economic activity. Although the overwhelming majority of respondents were not employed at the time of the arrest that led to their current incarceration, the various patterns of employment and crime involvement they reported were far more complex than a simple correspondence between unemployment and crime.

Comparison of the Rikers Island interviews with similar exploratory interviews conducted with a younger group of defendants<sup>1</sup> suggested further that the linkages between employment and crime characteristic of individuals at different stages in their development might vary considerably. The Project staff

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<sup>1</sup>These were participants in a Vera evaluation of New York City's Court Employment Program, which offered diversion from criminal justice processing to selected young defendants.

began to speculate on what these stages might be, guided by existing literature exploring the "maturing out" phenomenon of crime.

Based on both the literature review and the pilot interviews, Project staff began to develop a "stage" model of the various relationships between employment and crime. For high-risk youth, it appeared that highly visible illegitimate activities might offer more accessible sources of income than less visible, less accessible legitimate ones. Somewhat later, a pattern of alternation between employment and crime might develop. If exploration of legitimate jobs produced frustration with unskilled, low-paying secondary jobs, it could encourage further development of criminal alternatives. At the same time, however, the escalating risks from such criminal involvement might encourage such secondary employment despite its disadvantages. Later, still, various "commitments to conformity" -- household formation, settling into more stable work roles -- might lead many to a "maturing out" stage of development characterized by more permanent work activities and less frequent (and less risky) criminal involvement.

Other linkages revealed in the interviews appeared to be more elaborate adaptations to economic conditions, prevalent at later stages, and characteristic of individuals who do not entirely abandon criminal involvement as young adults. Some might mix employment and crime, either by stealing from the job or stealing in off-hours. A smaller group might become involved in established criminal networks, which provide an

alternative to legitimate employment (drug sales, gambling operations, etc.).

In the Rikers' sample, no one interviewed appeared to engage in crime exclusively. Those who had not worked in several years tended to be older members of dependent populations who had been disabled by years of alcohol or drug abuse. Although some remained essentially street criminals, most were personally disorganized and socially unconnected, supplementing inadequate public assistance with petty crimes for economic gain.

Based on both the literature review and the pilot study, a broad conceptual model of employment and crime relationships, depicting an age-graded progression of legitimate and illegitimate involvements, was mapped out to guide the development of the Project's empirical research (see Figure 1.1).

The age-graded model envisions both employment and crime behaviors as influenced by concrete economic, institutional and subcultural structures that define the specific and competing legitimate and illegitimate opportunities available in different neighborhoods. The model emphasizes the progressive differentiation of employment and crime patterns for various subgroups within a high-risk population -- a "fanning out" over time in which some achieve relative success in either legitimate or illegitimate opportunity structures (i.e., either primary employment or established criminal networks) and others continue in combining "unsheltered" work and crime roles, continuing to mix income strategies in various combinations.

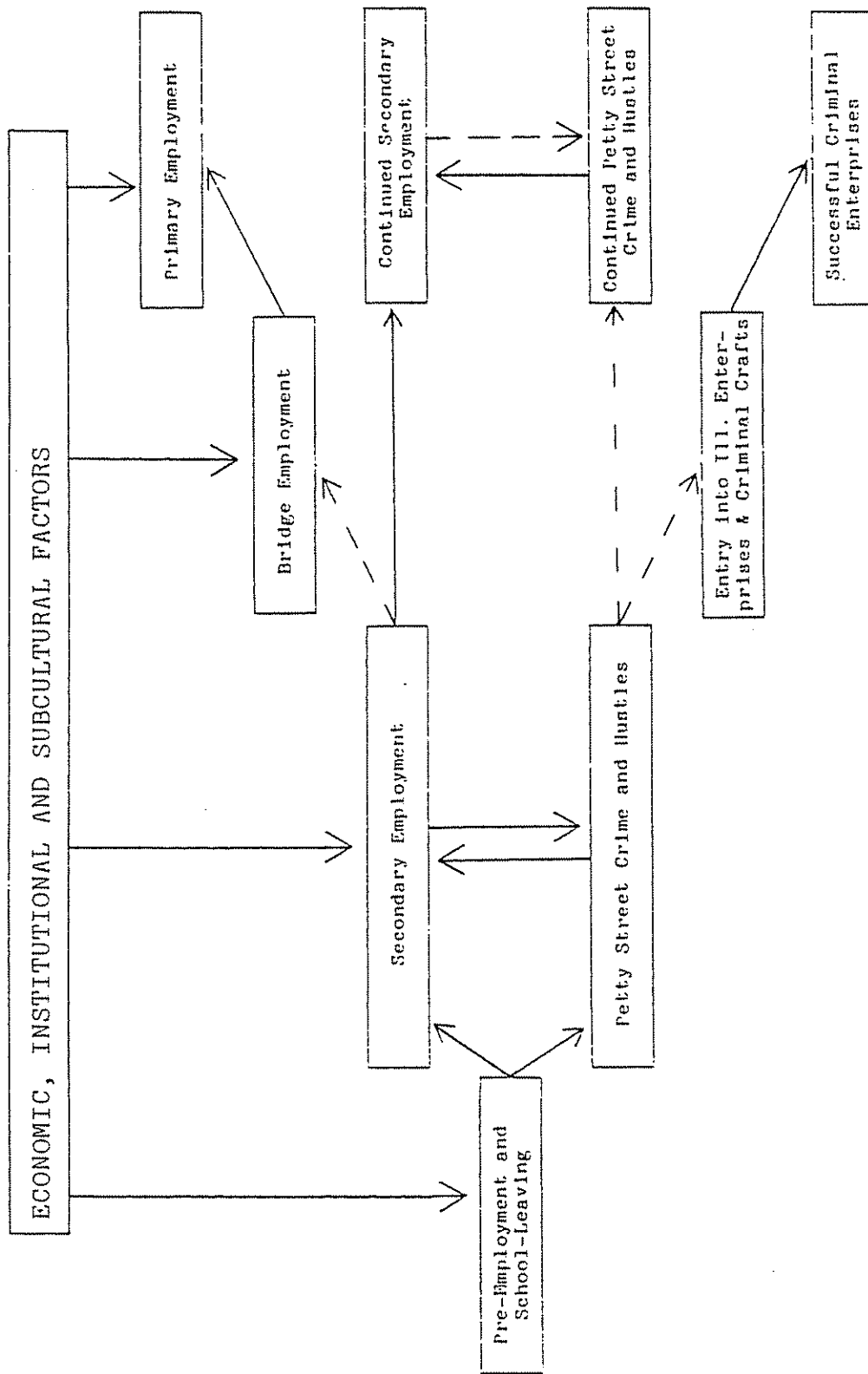


Figure 1.1

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

(Dotted arrows indicate weaker or less likely connections)

HIGH OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES  
 Low  
 High  
 Intelligence  
 Intelligence

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

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

Those adults who do not achieve some form of success in either sphere, however, face opportunities that do not differ greatly from those that faced them when they were younger -- however, the costs of crime have increased because they are adults and the returns to secondary employment may be somewhat improved because they are older. Most of this group eventually settle into some form of secondary employment, with an occasional foray into illegitimate activity, generally far less risky than the street crime of their youth. A smaller group



continues involvement in street crime, occasionally supplemented by work. It is expected that most of the preliminary tracking envisioned in the model takes place between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four, although the relationship between age and the various stages in the model is not fixed.

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

### C. Central Research Efforts

The Project's development of a model, featuring a developmental progression of employment and crime, guided its subsequent research. In essence, the model served to collate and organize a number of hypotheses in the literature and to suggest modifications of commonsensical assumptions about the inverse relationship between employment and crime for various high-risk groups. The model qualifies the commonsense assumption we started with -- that there is an inverse relationship between employment and crime for an intermediate group of employment and crime "mixers" -- by pointing to age as a major factor affecting the nature of that relationship. The model suggests that for the very young, engaged in early exploration of both crime and employment, the inverse relationship may be weak, at best.

Once the model was conceived, one of the major decisions faced by the Project involved the choice of an appropriate study population. It was apparent even in the pilot study that a sample of ex-offenders or incarcerated individuals would not permit extensive description of the full range of employment and crime behaviors outlined by the model. These groups were already deeply involved with the criminal justice system. Many had already restricted their employment opportunities through that involvement.

Clearly the fullest range of variation would be presented by "the entire population of an area," (everyone in New York City, for example) the population Manski (1978) recommends for

study of deterrence and criminal decision-making. Such a sample would permit exploration of the characteristics of those who do and do not become criminally involved in a given area. Yet, a sample of a total population would be costly, difficult to obtain, and would not provide enough apparent criminal behavior to be relevant to the Project's concerns.

Ultimately, the Project staff chose to focus on two intermediate high-risk populations in two separate studies -- a survey of Brooklyn defendants and an ethnographic study of youth in three high-risk Brooklyn neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> Both samples provide relatively broad variation on crime and employment variables; nevertheless, they are both in some sense restricted -- neither includes a substantial proportion of older, low-risk individuals.

The sample of Brooklyn defendants is confined to individuals who have had some contact with the criminal justice system. There are several, generally recognized limitations of such a sample. First, it does not represent the total population of those who commit crimes, although it comes closer than

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<sup>2</sup>Brooklyn was selected for two reasons. First, characteristics of the Police Department's central booking facility in that borough made it far easier to obtain seven-day-a-week, round-the-clock access to defendants before they were arraigned than in either of the other two boroughs with high-arrest volumes in New York City. Second, Brooklyn, unlike Manhattan or the Bronx, seemed more representative of other large American cities -- offering a wide variety of residential neighborhoods that offer ethnic diversity and span the socioeconomic ladder. Brooklyn has all the characteristics of a large central city (a major downtown shopping area, an extensive industrial employment base) with none of the special characteristics (extensive tourism, broad-scale physical desolation) of Manhattan or the Bronx, respectively.

most other types of samples (e.g., prison populations) in doing so. Some individuals -- most likely those involved in sheltered criminal enterprises -- may never be arrested.

Another problem with relying on a sample of defendants, and using arrest as a proxy for criminal behavior, is that it is difficult to know how much criminal behavior is represented by each arrest. Some may be arrested, but innocent. Although arrests may be the best proxy we have for criminal behavior, it is generally recognized that most property offenders commit more crimes than they are arrested for; it is difficult to estimate the size of this ratio, which appears to vary according to the nature of offense charges (Blumstein and Cohen, 1979).

The neighborhood study of high-risk youth, on the other hand, permits us to explore actual behavior in individual neighborhoods systematically. It allows deeper, more detailed exploration of the role of potential third factors (family, schooling, neighborhood) than does the defendant survey. It also permits a broader range of variation than the defendant survey, allowing us to include individuals who are never arrested, although they commit crime, and individuals who resist criminal involvement.<sup>3</sup>

Yet there are limitations to this study as well. The size of the groups we studied (about a dozen youths in each of three

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<sup>3</sup>It also can give us some idea of the arrest/crime ratio, although this is not its central purpose. The number of respondents is far too small to provide a general estimate of that ratio. Victimization studies are more valid in this respect.

neighborhoods) is too small to permit quantitative analysis. Generalizations, however, can be made for the purpose of generating hypotheses and ideas for future testing.

In addition, we are faced with a possible selection bias. Our field researchers were particularly concerned with making and maintaining contacts with crime-committing groups. Because of this, the contacts they made may not reflect those who have little or no crime involvement in the study neighborhoods. Once our contacts were established, however, we did seek out such individuals. In the two minority neighborhoods, our impression was that there weren't very many of them and that our respondents seemed typical of the areas in which they lived -- relatively small subsections of specific high-risk neighborhoods. Although there appeared to be somewhat higher concentrations of criminally involved youth in these subareas than in the total neighborhood, the behavior of minority respondents appeared to be representative of high-risk youth behavior within these particularly disadvantaged settings.

Selection bias, however, may be evident in the working-class white neighborhood studied. There, Project researchers made contact with a drug-using clique, who may have had more criminal involvements than other youth in the neighborhood. They were recognized within the area as among the "wildest" groups, specifically because of one or two notorious individuals within the group. We suspect that this group is less typical within their neighborhood than are the minority groups studied within theirs.

Together, the two studies explore relationships between employment and crime from somewhat different perspectives that are shaped primarily by the methods used -- the sample survey and the ethnography. The populations of the two studies differ, as do the methods of sample selection (random sampling and "snowballing" field contacts). The ethnographic respondents are younger than the Brooklyn defendants, and some have no official criminal justice contacts. The defendant survey includes older individuals, some of whom have had repeated involvement with the criminal justice system. Together, however, the two samples include individuals who fall across the total spectrum of the population we wanted to study -- high-risk, inner-city individuals likely to mix employment and crime in the course of their early years.

The methods, the data and the findings of each study are set forth in separate, detailed reports. In this document, we have attempted to integrate both studies by bringing data and findings from each to bear on the same sets of questions.

For example, our model delineates a sequence of employment and crime experiences for high-risk populations. The survey data identify a number of younger offenders with fairly substantial arrest histories, but very insubstantial work histories. This suggests that, at least for some offenders, criminal experience precedes meaningful employment experience.

The neighborhood study also indicates that criminal experience precedes meaningful work experience, while broadening and deepening our understanding of this phenomenon. This study

shows that criminal activity typically starts in adolescence, a fact not revealed by adult criminal histories. It also indicates that at least some involvement in criminal behavior is the norm, rather than the exception, for adolescents living in economically depressed, high-risk communities. The neighborhood study also points out that the earliest criminal involvement is not strongly motivated by economic considerations and begins at a time when the opportunities for legitimate employment are severely limited for high-risk youth.

Thus, by using data and findings from both studies, we are able to describe the early sequencing of employment and crime experience rather fully and relate it to the operation of employment structures on the neighborhood level. This method of using both survey and ethnographic data to address each set of research questions has been employed throughout this document. In some instances, qualitative material is used to describe a social process that is suggested by the survey analysis. At other times, a relationship observed in the neighborhood study prompts analysis of the survey data to confirm the observation and determine whether the relationship prevails among a cross section of offenders.

In short, we have attempted to integrate the studies by playing off selected data from one study against pertinent observations and findings from the other. That process yields a broader and deeper understanding of how employment experiences and criminal behavior are related among high-risk populations than could have been developed by either study alone.

1. The Survey of Brooklyn Defendants

During the eight weeks between July 5 and August 31, 1979, 902 men arrested and held before arraignment were interviewed by Vera staff at Brooklyn Central Booking within a few hours of arrest. Vera interviewers randomly selected respondents from log books maintained by New York City's Criminal Justice Agency, which conducts pre-trial interviews (to determine recommendations for Release on Recognizance) with all defendants awaiting arraignment in the holding pens.<sup>4</sup>

A 40 percent sample of arrested defendants was originally selected (1,511 defendants). Of this original group, nearly 40 percent were not interviewed. Some were transported to court before the Project could get to them (260, 17%); others refused to participate (203, 13%); and finally a few were not interviewed because of language barriers,<sup>5</sup> illness or intoxication (136, 9%). Because transportation to court was arranged by police at nonsystematic intervals, it is likely that the largest group of lost cases does not at all affect the representativeness of the remaining sample.

The group of defendants who responded to the Project's questionnaire appear broadly similar to the population of

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<sup>4</sup>Individuals charged by police with most violations and many misdemeanors are given a Desk Appearance Ticket (DAT) and are not arrested and held in Central Booking. These individuals are not included in the sample. Because of this, the defendant sample has a greater proportion of individuals charged with felonies (82% felony top charges; 18% misdemeanor top charges) than a sample which included DATs. This was desired, since those given DATs are generally charged with minor, non-property crimes and non-criminal violations of law.

<sup>5</sup>Project staff conducted interviews in both English and Spanish. Forty-three respondents spoke neither.



Brooklyn male adult defendants, based on a comparison of the Vera sample with a Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) study of all adult defendants arraigned city-wide from October 1 through October 31, 1979 (N=8,081). Table 1.1 compares the Vera sample with Brooklyn males in the CJA sample. The two groups are very similar in terms of race/ethnic distribution -- slightly under 60 percent black, 25 percent Hispanic and slightly over 15 percent white. The Vera sample has somewhat more 16-17 year-old defendants (23%) than the CJA sample (16%) and fewer defendants who were 25 years old or older (35%) than the CJA sample (40%). This difference may be related to the summer date of the Vera interviews (a period in which in-school youth are more likely to be arrested) in contrast to the October date of the CJA study. The two samples are nearly identical in terms of the distribution of the severity of arrest charges -- the CJA sample has slightly more E felony charges (19% compared to 15%) and the Vera sample slightly more D felony charges (39% compared to 37%). Overall, it appears that the Vera sample is broadly representative of the population of adult (16+) males arrested in Brooklyn in 1979.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>In addition, a comparison of the Vera sample to a Brooklyn subsample (N=342) of the CJA October 1979 sample who responded to a detailed questionnaire administered by CJA revealed broad similarities in terms of educational attainment (Vera, 26% completed 12th grade or more; CJA, 30% completed 12th grade or more) and the proportion of the two samples with full-time employment (Vera, 38%; CJA, 33%). A substantially greater proportion of the CJA subsample, however, were not employed at the time of arrest (63% in the CJA subsample; 45% in the Vera sample), a fact which may be related to the greater extent of part-time summer employment in the Vera sample (16%, compared to 4% in the CJA subsample).

Table 1.1

VERA AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCY INTERVIEWS  
Selected Comparisons

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

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

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

Half of the sample was also given a supplement that obtained information on the respondent's first and longest-held jobs to permit examination of occupational mobility issues. The other half of the sample was given a supplement on perceived barriers to and attitudes towards work.

In addition, for each respondent in the defendant sample the Project attempted to obtain information on prior arrests, case dispositions and periods of incarceration by reviewing official New York State criminal histories (or "rap sheets"). When these rap sheets were unavailable for any reason, the CJA interview provided some information (for approximately 130 respondents) about the arrest which brought the subject into the sample.

To parallel the labor market histories, a two-year criminal history period prior to the sampled arrest was selected for detailed coding. Because the respondents' post-interview arrest experiences were also of interest (for example, to determine whether subsequent arrests can be predicted by employment and labor market experiences), the time frame covered by the arrest history included an additional one-year post-interview period.

To augment data from the labor market survey and criminal history information from rap sheets, the initial research design contained a follow-up interview with a subsample (N=399) of the original respondents one year after the original survey. The follow-up was designed to register changes over time in labor market histories and to probe in selected areas (self-reports of crime, arrest outcomes, perceptions of the "riskiness" of various crime types, etc.) deemed too difficult and too sensitive for the initial interviews conducted with individuals in custody.

In practice, however, it proved difficult to re-contact those respondents who had agreed to be re-interviewed one year later even though they had provided us with substantial re-contact data for that purpose. Of the 399 respondents in the follow-up subsample, 157 (39%) were interviewed a second time; several items in the questionnaire yielded only scanty information.

After a review of the preliminary data from the second interview, Project staff decided that many items -- particu-

larly detailed employment batteries that were designed to parallel sections of the first interview -- should be dropped. This decision was tantamount to eliminating the longitudinal dimension of the survey design and to restricting the analysis to the retrospective parts of the design.

Nevertheless the follow-up did provide interesting collateral information that could not be obtained elsewhere, such as data on participants' own criminal victimizations and on respondents' perceptions of risks associated with different types of crimes. In general, however, the follow-up dataset is useful only as a qualitative adjunct to the initial work experience interview.

## 2. The Neighborhood Study

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

Multi-site research was central to exploring what role different economic, institutional and subcultural factors play. To select study neighborhoods offering variation on dimensions that might affect the work and crime activities of young respondents, Project staff reviewed existing data on

Brooklyn neighborhoods, interviewed experts from governmental and community organizations, and toured potential study sites.

Five factors were identified as relevant to the selection of neighborhoods for study. The first factor, dictated by the Project's desire to study "high-risk" areas, was that the neighborhoods chosen should all be poverty neighborhoods, in which low levels of opportunity for employment existed. The decision to study high poverty neighborhoods assumed that relatively high levels of crime opportunity would be present. It was also hoped that some variation might be found in the second factor, the types of crime opportunities available in different neighborhoods. Variation among the neighborhoods was also sought in ethnicity (and degree of ethnic transition), in order to capture ethnic variations in crime and employment opportunities and experiences. The number and type of neighborhood organizations and of special government interventions were the final two factors for which variation among the sites was sought. It was thought that organizations and programs at the neighborhood level might be significant mediating factors in employment-crime choices among local youth.

An additional factor, not formally considered as a criterion for selection, has been found important during the course of the research. Neighborhood ecology has emerged as a significant dimension of neighborhood variation. Differences in the concentration of factories and commercial strips, for example, affect both the proximity of local employment opportunities to neighborhood residents as well as the availability

of certain options for criminal income. The predominant type of housing in a neighborhood may include high-rise public housing, aging tenements, or brownstone and row houses. These housing types may affect the regulation of public behavior and the ability of residents to create "defensible space" (Newman, 1972). Other ecological factors of interest include the distance from downtown or other areas with a large number of jobs and the prevalence of large numbers of abandoned buildings and empty lots.

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

La Barriada is not the poorest or the most heavily Hispanic neighborhood in Brooklyn. The neighborhood contains a mix of white and Hispanic residents. The area has undergone extensive redevelopment in recent years. The block that we studied, however, is in the poorest part of the neighborhood and the family income level there is the lowest among the three study neighborhoods. The youths we studied were all children of first generation migrants from Puerto Rico. Although the block is directly adjacent to waterfront industry, most families on the block were welfare recipients. A few house-

holds were supported by working adult men, although even these men did not work directly in the waterfront factories, where good jobs generally go to white people and bad jobs to very recent legal and illegal immigrants. The men in our households generally worked in low-wage service jobs.

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

Hamilton Park is not an affluent neighborhood, but its residents are better off than the residents of the minority neighborhoods just described. Most are white, generally Catholic, and are descended from earlier generations of immigrants from Europe. The parents of the youths we studied are construction workers, city workers, and building maintenance workers, who hold desirable blue-collar jobs that are relatively secure, unionized, and well-paying. The neighborhood borders Brooklyn's industrial waterfront area and was originally developed as housing for factory workers. Today, however, few local people work at the low-paying production jobs in the factories, most of which are held by Hispanic and other



recent immigrants, legal and illegal, who come into the neighborhood during the day and leave at night. The local people who work in the factories generally work in supervisory or secretarial jobs. The houses here are inexpensive, but the residents own them, often with three generations of a single family living on different floors of the same woodframe row house.

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

### 3. The Combined Research

Both studies have generated separate reports which present their findings in detail. This summary report, however, considers the two research efforts of the Project together in an attempt to determine how the two, as a combined effort, contribute to our knowledge about employment and crime. At times, we found that knowledge gained in the neighborhood study helped explain some of the defendant survey findings. At other times, survey data provided evidence that various behavior patterns observed in the neighborhood study (school, work and crime activities) were typical of other high-risk groups in Brooklyn.

Woven together, the two studies provide qualified support for the proposition that in high-risk groups there is an inverse relationship between employment and crime.

In both studies there is strong evidence that age is a central factor in this relationship. Yet at times it is difficult to draw inferences about age-graded employment and crime patterns -- particularly in analysis of the survey data. The different age groups within the Brooklyn defendant sample are a poor proxy for a longitudinal study. The youngest group contains a substantial proportion of individuals who will mature out of crime in the next few years, and another group who will continue to be arrested again and again as they age. The older group contains a substantial proportion of chronic recidivists and another group of individuals with "fluke" arrests, individuals with no prior arrests, picked up on assault or drug charges. In addition, the older group contains a small group of out-of-the-labor-force individuals, who we suspect, based on the follow-up interviews, may be burdened with serious personal problems -- alcoholism, drug addiction. Given the diversity of the population, we cannot point to the older group as representative of what young defendants will become. We can, however, try to identify who drops out of crime and who does not.

In addition to age, race/ethnicity also appears in the survey data as a central variable. The survey revealed major differences in the school, work and crime activities of different race/ethnic groups. This does not, however, suggest that race/ethnicity determines the nature of these activities,

but only that these activities are typical of these groups in particular settings.<sup>7</sup>

In the neighborhood study, race/ethnicity appears to be a less important variable than the neighborhood structure itself, although the neighborhoods selected do represent the three central race/ethnic groups in the defendant survey. Neighborhood emerges as more important than strictly racial factors because the research indicates that the unique configuration of economic, institutional and cultural factors within local settings largely define the opportunities and shape the activities of high-risk youth. We believe that the social/cultural characteristics of neighborhoods have far more explanatory power than race/ethnicity alone.

The summary of the two dimensions of the Vera research as presented in this report is primarily exploratory and descriptive. It does not explicitly test hypotheses about the relationship between employment and crime. An earlier report (McGahey, 1982) used the defendant survey to test specific hypotheses, drawn from the economics literature, concerning the relative explanatory power of human capital and segmented labor market explanations of employment and crime outcomes. Instead, this report describes the school, work and crime involvements of relatively young, high-risk groups -- a sample of defendants and "friendship groups" drawn from three low-income Brooklyn

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<sup>7</sup>Analysis revealed that the age distributions of the three race/ethnic groups in the defendant sample did not differ. Race/ethnic differences in the sample are independent of age differences.

neighborhoods -- in an attempt to determine the extent to which the patterns discerned in the two separate Vera studies overlap.

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

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOLING

#### Introduction

The Project staff paid particular attention to the role of schooling in relation to employment and crime experiences for several reasons. Because of the youth of many individuals involved in extensive property crime, school and school-leaving figure centrally in the Project's longitudinal model of employment and crime relationships. In both the defendant survey and the neighborhood study a substantial proportion of respondents were school-aged; many were still involved in school; others were early dropouts from school, some of whom planned to return for high school diplomas.

Education also plays a central role in theories focusing on the role of human capital and/or labor market structure in employment outcomes. Human capital theorists argue that schooling determines subsequent labor market outcome by defining the level of a worker's potential productivity; failure to complete school is seen as accounting for relative failure in employment as well. Segmented labor market theorists, on the other hand, argue that structural factors, such as racial discrimination, intervene in the relationship between education and employment; they point out that the labor market returns to education are considerably less for minority, inner-city youth than for others. Other SLM theorists (Harrison, 1972) echo Bowles's and Gintis's claim that characteristics of inner-city

schools (tolerance of truancy and irregular behavior in class) prepare their students for the marginal forms of employment (secondary jobs; recurrent layoffs) which most of them will ultimately accept (1976).

In both the defendant survey and the neighborhood study, there was far more school-leaving than school completion. This was not unusual in the New York City school system in the late seventies and early eighties. New York City public schools currently have over 50 percent minority enrollment; over 40 percent of students entering high school do not graduate (New York Times, 4/13/84, B1). Schools in poverty areas report even higher school-leaving rates. Although the city offers some of the best specialized academic and vocational schools in the nation, competition for entrance to these schools is intense. High school students in the city currently have wide choice in terms of where they want to study,<sup>1</sup> but many end up in disorganized, heavily minority neighborhood schools where chronic truancy is endemic. It is likely that the school completion rates of both Vera samples (approximately a third) are representative of low-income minority neighborhoods (i.e., low in the context of the city or nation as a whole).

This chapter reviews information on school-leaving, educational attainments, perceptions of the value of the high school

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<sup>1</sup>High school students need not attend a neighborhood school if there is an opening in another school they prefer. In addition, neighborhood schools provide upper-level "tracks" for college bound students; the city as a whole also provides a lower-level track, called "600" schools, for troublemakers.

diploma, and relationships between education and work establishment in both the defendant survey and the neighborhood study. Section A summarizes findings from the defendant survey on school enrollment, attainments, dropout and reasons for dropout, and the relationship between education and labor force status. Section B reviews patterns of school attendance and educational attainment in the three study neighborhoods. Section C considers the evidence about the desire for schooling, and actual school experiences found in both studies, examined together.

A. Education in the Defendant Survey

1. School Involvements and Attainments

Because so many respondents in the defendant survey were school-aged at the time of the interview (between 16 and 19), it is difficult to estimate the proportion of defendants who ultimately will either graduate from high school or earn a high school equivalency degree. Over a quarter of the sample (27%) reported that they were still in school. As expected, younger members of the sample reported considerably more continuing educational involvement than older members: 78 percent of 16-17 year-olds were still in school, as were 27 percent of 18-19 year-olds, 9 percent of 20-24 year-olds, and 5 percent of those over 25. In addition, blacks were far more likely to still be enrolled in school (32%) than Hispanics (20%) or whites (17%).<sup>2</sup> Although many of the sample were still enrolled in school, over a fifth (22%) of the sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds were out of school and did not plan to return.

School enrollment for different racial groups was concentrated at different ages (see Table 2.1). Blacks, except for the sixteen-year-olds, were generally more likely to be enrolled in school at each age level than the other groups (32% of all age groups compared to 20% of the Hispanics, and 17% of the whites). The youngest Hispanics (16-years-old) were heavily enrolled (95%); older Hispanics (20 years plus) had minimal school involvement -- far less than other groups. The youngest

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<sup>2</sup>As mentioned in Chapter I, the age distributions of black, Hispanic and white defendants did not differ.



Table 2.1

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY AGE AND BY RACE  
(Percent in or returning to school)

AGE	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races
16	91% (77)	95% (21)	50% (16)	86% (114)
17	83 (48)	54 (26)	36 (14)	67 (88)
18	43 (44)	14 (28)	40 (10)	33 (82)
19	28 (36)	12 (17)	20 (15)	22 (68)
20-24	11 (118)	4 (55)	8 (37)	9 (210)
25+	7 (182)	1 (69)	2 (49)	5 (300)
All ages N	32% (505)	20% (216)	17% (141)	27% (862)

Note: In this table, the number reported in parentheses represents the total number (or base number) of respondents in a given category of the independent variable. The actual number of cases represented by each percentage can be calculated by multiplying the percentage by the relevant base number.

$\chi^2 = 20.10$ ;  $p < .0001$  for race/ethnic groups

whites were far less likely to be in school than other sixteen-year-old groups (50%). Older whites, however, reported considerably more continuing education than Hispanics, although less than blacks.

In the sample as a whole, 71 percent had already left school: 20 percent of the sample left with a high school diploma, 6.5 percent earned a GED, and 44 percent dropped out of school without a diploma. Of those who had already left school, 63 percent had dropped out and had earned no degree.

Table 2.2 shows the proportion of school-leavers who dropped out of school without a diploma by age and race. Hispanic school-leavers were far more likely to have dropped out of school without a diploma (90%) than whites or blacks (67% each). As expected, most out-of-school young (16-17) defendants dropped out, rather than graduated.

School attainments in the sample vary by age and race. Table 2.3 shows that only 1 percent of the 16-17 year-olds left school with a high school degree, 9 percent of the 18-19 year-olds, 27 percent of the 20-24 year-olds, and 33 percent of those 25 and over. Whites were more likely to have a high school diploma (34%) than blacks (21%) or Hispanics (10%). Older whites had the highest educational attainments of any group.

Another measure of school attainment, highest grade completed, indicates that Hispanic defendants not only dropped out of school more than other defendants, they also dropped out earlier. Among sample members aged twenty and over, Hispanics

Table 2.2  
 PERCENT OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS WITHOUT A DIPLOMA  
 BY AGE AND BY RACE<sup>a</sup>

AGE	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races <sup>b</sup>
16-17	92% (13)	100% ( 9)	86% (14)	92% (36)
18-19	86 (51)	97 (35)	89 (18)	90 (104)
20-24	66 (96)	90 (51)	56 (34)	70 (181)
25+	61 (165)	85 (66)	60 (48)	66 (279)
All ages <sup>c</sup> N	67% (325)	90% (161)	67% (114)	73% (600)

Note: In this table, the number reported in parentheses represents the total number (or base number) of respondents in a given category of the independent variable. The actual number of cases represented by each percentage can be calculated by multiplying the percentage by the relevant base number.

<sup>a</sup> Of those in the sample who had already left school, 35.5 percent had a high school diploma or GED.

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2 = 29.44$ ;  $p < .0001$  for age groups

<sup>c</sup>  $\chi^2 = 32.67$ ;  $p < .0001$  for race/ethnic groups

were most likely not to have gone past ninth grade (42% compared to 17% for the rest of the sample). The proportion is even higher among Hispanic defendants aged twenty-five and older (53%). It is possible that this group of older Hispanics contains a substantial proportion of first generation Puerto Rican settlers in New York, whose education was completed in a social context characterized by low educational attainment.

Table 2.3

PERCENT OF SAMPLE MEMBERS WITH REGULAR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS, BY AGE AND BY RACE

AGE	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races
16-17	1% (124)	0% (47)	7% (30)	1% (201)
18-19	10 (80)	4 (46)	12 (26)	9 (152)
20-24	27 (122)	13 (55)	47 (38)	27 (215)
25+	35 (176)	17 (71)	51 (47)	33 (294)
All ages N	21% (502)	10% (219)	34% (141)	20% (862)

Note: In this table, the number reported in parentheses represents the total number (or base number) of respondents in a given category of the independent variable. The actual number of cases represented by each percentage can be calculated by multiplying the percentage by the relevant base number.

$\chi^2 = 32.39; p < .0001$  for race/ethnic groups

The three racial groups vary considerably in terms of the mean highest grade completed: 9.7 for Hispanics, 10.7 for blacks and 11.1 for whites. In spite of the heavy dropout rates of young white defendants, whites as a whole had the highest educational attainments in the sample. Black defendants in the sample, however, were considerably more likely to be enrolled in school, and might therefore approximate the educational attainments of the whites in the future.

## 2. Reasons for Dropping Out

Defendants who left school without a diploma reported a variety of reasons for leaving school when they did. Some left because family duties, employment or desire for employment and/or military service "pulled" them out of school (51%). Others left because they didn't like school or were doing badly (34%). Still others were expelled, arrested or so involved with drugs that they were effectively "pushed" out of school by authorities or circumstances (16%).

The data reveal that defendants of different ages were likely to report different reasons for school-leaving (see Table 2.4). Teenagers were most likely to report dislike of school as a reason for dropout. The oldest sample members, on the other hand, reported that they were pulled out of school by family or jobs far more than other age groups. This may be a cohort effect -- jobs may have been more plentiful when older sample members were teenagers. Or, it may be that the memory of low grades and disliking school fades with age. There was little difference across age groups (except for the 16-17 year-

Table 2.4

AGE AND REASON FOR LEAVING SCHOOL  
(School Dropouts Only)

REASON FOR LEAVING	AGE				
	16-17	18-19	20-24	25+	All age
Job, family, military (pulled out)	36%	26%	47%	69%	51%
Disliked school, no ability (drifted out)	61	54	35	17	34
Expelled, arrested, drugs (pushed out)	4	20	18	14	16
Total N	101% (28)	100% (92)	100% (115)	100% (166)	101% (401)

$\chi^2 = 59.95; p < .0001$

olds) in the extent to which defendants were "pushed" out of school -- a specific event not likely to be forgotten.

There were also considerable differences among race/ethnic groups in the reported reasons for leaving school (see Table 2.5). Black dropouts were most likely to have been "pushed" out of school. In particular, they were far more likely to have been expelled (12%) than other dropouts combined (5%).

White and Hispanic dropouts, on the other hand, reported far more school-leaving because of low grades or ability or dislike of school than blacks (36%, 36%, 25%, respectively). The finding that black dropouts were least likely to leave for

Table 2.5  
 RACE AND REASON FOR LEAVING SCHOOL  
 (School Dropouts only)

REASON FOR LEAVING	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races
<u>"Pulled Out"</u>				
To find work	19%	19%	12%	18%
To take a job	11	8	17	11
Family	15	20	10	16
Military	2	1	1	2
<u>"Drifted Out"</u>				
No ability	4	1	5	3
Disliked school	21	35	31	28
<u>"Pushed Out"</u>				
Expelled	12	5	4	8
Arrested	6	3	2	4
Drugs	2	1	2	2
<u>Other</u>	7	8	14	8
Total	99%	101%	98%	100%
N	(211)	(146)	(77)	(442)

these reasons is consistent with the earlier discovery that black defendants stayed in school far more than other race/ethnic groups.

All dropouts were equally likely to have been "pulled" out of school by jobs or family needs. Hispanic dropouts were most likely to leave school because of family duties (20% compared to 15% of black dropouts and 10% of white dropouts). White dropouts were more likely than other dropout groups to leave school to take a job (17% compared to 11% of black dropouts and 8% of Hispanic dropouts). Black and Hispanic dropouts, on the other hand, were more likely to be seeking work (19% each) than white dropouts (12%). The fact that white dropouts were more likely than others to leave school for an actual job suggests that they may have had better job opportunities than other dropouts; black, Hispanic and white dropouts were equally likely to choose to leave school for a job (close to a third of all dropouts), but whites were more likely to find one.

### 3. Education and Labor Force Status

It is important to realize that being in school at the time of the interview did not necessarily mean that defendants were not working. Because the interviews were conducted in August, many had summer jobs. Others worked part-time even during the school year. Although those enrolled in school were somewhat less likely to be working (41%) than not working (59% were unemployed or out of the labor force), many were working, often at summer jobs. The opposite is true for the out-of-school group -- more were working (57%) than not working (43%).



In-school sixteen- and seventeen-year-old defendants were least likely to be employed of all sample groups (36%); out-of-school sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds on the other hand, were employed (53%) almost as much as all dropouts (57%) (see Table 2.6). This strong relationship between school status and

Table 2.6  
 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE WORKING,  
 BY AGE AND BY SCHOOL STATUS

AGE	SCHOOL STATUS			
	In or returning	Out without diploma	Diploma or degree	All school statuses
16-17	36% (147)	53% (32)	(2)* (3)	39% (182)
18-19	50 (40)	48 (89)	89 (9)	51 (138)
20-24	47 (17)	56 (123)	63 (49)	57 (189)
25+	(9)* (14)	63 (171)	72 (87)	66 (272)
All ages <sup>b</sup> N	41% (218)	57% (415)	70% (148)	55% (781)

Note: In this table, the number reported in parentheses represents the total number (or base number) of respondents in given category of the independent variable. The actual number of cases represented by each percentage can be calculated by multiplying the percentage by the relevant base number.

a  $\chi^2 = 51.46$ ;  $p < .0001$  for age groups

b  $\chi^2 = 38.30$ ;  $p < .0001$  for school status

\* Too few cases to percentage

employment status, however, applies only to the sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds, who were heavily enrolled in school. For other ages, there is little difference between the employment rates (during the summer of 1979) of those in school and those out of school.

For those over eighteen, having a diploma seems to have some effect on employment status. Older defendants with diplomas were far more likely to be working at the time of arrest than dropouts or those in school. There appear to be short-term rewards for dropping out of school for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds, but longer-term payoffs to those who get a diploma.

It also appears that the short-term rewards for dropping out of school may be greatest for young whites, who reported more actual jobs as a reason for leaving school than others. White dropouts were far more likely to be working (68%) than black dropouts (52%) or Hispanic dropouts (55%). In Chapter III relationships between school and employment in the defendant survey will be explored in more detail.

B. Education in the Neighborhood Study

In the three study neighborhoods most of the Project's respondents had dropped out of school without receiving a diploma. The neighborhoods differ, however, in terms of the extent of high school completion, the type of schools attended, reasons for leaving school, the types of schooling that are thought to be valuable and the relationship between educational achievement and employment. The following describes the school experiences of respondents in three study neighborhoods, beginning with the Hispanics in La Barriada, who were least likely to finish high school, and ending with the whites in Hamilton Park, who were most likely to obtain a high school degree.

1. La Barriada

There were two types of schools available to La Barriada youth, at least as they perceived it. The local neighborhood school (here called Fillmore) had a predominantly minority student body and was generally perceived as disorganized -- that is, offering classes that were too large, too raucous, unable to educate, and relatively ineffective in helping people get jobs.

Int: How did you know that Fillmore wasn't good enough?

Respondent: I know a lot of people who went there . . . they pass you without teaching you nothing. When you're graduated out of there you don't know nothing. I know this friend of mine, he graduated from Fillmore. He's working in a factory making \$3.10 an hour. A guy with a high school diploma, he don't know nothing, so, what trade's he got?

Young males in La Barriada generally preferred (and two were accepted by) vocational/technical schools that could teach them a specific skill (electrical installation, drafting). They thought Fillmore was more useful to female students, who could train to be secretaries in the school's business program, than to male students. The La Barriada respondents who enrolled in one of the city's competitive, respected vocational schools did not finish.

La Barriada youths dropped out of school for a number of reasons. Some needed money. One youth, who lived alone with his disabled mother, had to leave school for a year and work loading trucks, to supplement his mother's meager welfare allotment and pay off debts; he subsequently returned to school, and graduated at the age of twenty. Others spoke of personal income needs -- desires to dress well or to have money to impress girls.

Others dropped out because they got into trouble. One stopped going to a respected vocational/technical school after six months in jail had interrupted school attendance; he didn't want the school to know he had been incarcerated, and was "discharged" as a chronic truant. Other neighborhood respondents started playing hooky very early, and would routinely remove school notices of truancy from their mailboxes, so their parents would not find out.

Several youths found school difficult because of language problems. Nearly half of them had substantial reading problems, although a few were quite literate. Illiteracy clearly

played some role in school-leaving, although some of those who read poorly had other school problems (truancy, fighting) as well.

Although most respondents left school by the tenth or eleventh grade (several considerably earlier), for many the option to resume schooling remained open. At least three respondents attempted to earn GEDs, but failed the tests. Others frequently discussed plans to enter GED programs, although they have not yet done so.

There were also a variety of factors which influenced respondents' decisions to stay in school. One youth signed up regularly, although he did not go to class, because he didn't want his mother "cut off welfare." Another worked two hours daily in a federally funded youth employment program within the school, which enabled him to contribute twenty dollars a week to his large, welfare-dependent family. Others stayed in, at least for a while, because of intensive involvement with an athletic program and an individual coach. Others found school a good place to meet girls.

The youth who left school and returned to graduate after working for a year claimed he liked both the social context of school and the classwork. Another successful respondent attributed his ability to finish high school and, ultimately, college to the fact that he was put into a special College Bound program in Fillmore which offered smaller and better classes than the rest of the school.

But generally, a high school diploma was not perceived as particularly valuable in itself in La Barriada. It was valued only insofar as it was viewed as a help to respondents in obtaining a skilled trade. However, La Barriada youth were ambivalent about the value of schooling in preparing them for employment as well as about its intrinsic value.

Only two neighborhood respondents obtained high school diplomas, both from Fillmore -- the youth who graduated from college and the youth who returned to school after working. Completing eleven school grades was considered "doing well" in La Barriada. Those who completed a significant part of high school were more likely to enter clerical or service jobs, than others, who generally worked as manual laborers after leaving school, and had few other employment opportunities.

## 2. Projectville

Projectville youth had no single local school to serve as a central gathering place for neighborhood youth. The original neighborhood school had been one of the worst in the city, and was closed in the late sixties, partly in response to demands for more racial balance in the schools. As a result, respondents were scattered throughout several schools in the borough -- one school with a predominantly minority student body in a neighboring black community and five or six other schools, which were largely white, required relatively lengthy commuting, and exposed Projectville youths to hostility, discrimination, and, at times, race-related assault. Discrimination within the schools and hostility of other students was a theme

voiced repeatedly by Projectville respondents. In addition, the dispersing of local students to other areas broke down whatever social cohesion had developed in early grades, destroying one of the commonly cited incentives for staying in school.

Unlike La Barriada youth, Projectville respondents enrolled -- and wanted to enroll -- in academic high schools, featuring general curricula, although they too questioned the value of high school diplomas:

Int: Do you feel you have any kind of advantage in getting jobs because you have a high school diploma?

Respondent: What do I need a high school diploma for, to mop a floor? Look in here [pointing to newspaper employment ads], you don't see anything there says high school grads. They don't want no high school people. It's all college.

As in La Barriada, schools were seen as offering better opportunities to females, who could take business courses and become secretaries.

Projectville youth left school for a wide variety of reasons. Some began to cut school and "hang out" with friends. Others related trouble in school to "hanging out with a gang," in defense against predominantly white fellow students. A few respondents left school because their girlfriends became pregnant and they had sudden, increased economic needs. Others, as in La Barriada, simply felt a need for personal income for clothes and girls.

Several Projectville youths left school because of delinquency and contact with the criminal justice system. One youth was shifted from school to school as he awaited the outcome of

a court case; he eventually stopped attending, although he remained enrolled, and ultimately earned a GED at the age of nineteen. Other youths were sent to "600 schools" after they got into various kinds of trouble (accused of harrassing a girl with a group of boys; accused of purse snatching) which they claimed to have had no part in. One youth was sent to a "600 school" in fifth grade, although he was transferred back after "trying his best":

Int: Did you get in a fight or something?

Respondent: No. It was really 'cause of the teacher. I got in a car accident and I hate for people to twist my ears.

Int: You hurt your ear in a car accident?

Respondent: Yeah. And she twisted it, so I got mad, but I didn't really hurt her. I just pulled her wig off and that was it. And I started getting in trouble.

Many simply stopped going, either because of repeated trouble or because of the enticements of youth culture. They found it relatively easy to sign in in the morning and sneak out before class.

Yet a few stayed in school, either because they became involved in athletics, as in La Barriada, or because they liked it and wanted to go to college. Others dropped out and returned -- a few to independent alternative schools (offering more individualized programs than other schools to those who do not do well in regular high school and are not violent). Two respondents earned GEDs in such schools. Two others earned GEDs independently (one in a jail-based program).



Projectville respondents had more academic attainments than those in La Barriada. Besides the four who had GEDs, two had regular high school diplomas. Three eventually enrolled in college (the two high school graduates and one GED).

High school diplomas were valued in Projectville only if they could lead to either college, a city or clerical job, or the armed services. Projectville youth had no interest in the vocational/technical trades that were respected in La Barriada.

### 3. Hamilton Park

Hamilton Park respondents generally did not go to local academic high schools. All of them went to a single vocational high school (predominantly white) in an adjacent industrial neighborhood. Some went from parochial schools to vocational school. It was generally acknowledged by neighborhood youth that parochial schools were better at teaching basic skills (reading, especially), and that public elementary schools were chaotic and disorganized. Many perceived the vocational school as disorderly; it was widely recognized as a "pot school" and a "party school"; drug use, cutting class, "goofing off" and in-school fighting were common.

Hamilton Park respondents were somewhat more likely to finish high school than those in the minority neighborhoods, but there was still considerable dropout. A few respondents were admittedly illiterate (they had gone to local public elementary schools) and left school early. One left because of parental pressure when his girlfriend became pregnant. Others got in trouble for fighting in school. Two were sent to "600"

schools for fighting (one hit a teacher).<sup>3</sup> Others became too involved with drugs and/or alcohol to stay in school.

Those who did stay did so for work-related reasons. A vocational school diploma was seen as a passkey to union membership. Although the vocational school they attended was not considered one of the best in the city (the trade school chosen by La Barriada youth was far better) it could provide a sufficient credential for union membership:

Field Notes: T. told me that his father is an engineer. I asked what kind of engineer and he said that he works on heavy construction equipment. T. himself has dropped out of school and says that his father wants him to go back because he can get him into the union, but only if T. has a diploma.

The vocational school also provided direct connections to jobs through teachers who had ties to local industry.

Hamilton Park youth had strong family connections to good blue-collar jobs. Even those who did not finish school left in the knowledge that they could still get work. When they left school, they were more likely to find jobs than respondents in other neighborhoods. One such youth was quite explicit about the loose relationship between education and admittance to many of the jobs available in the neighborhood: "It's not what you know, it's who you know."

Hamilton Park respondents had several degrees. One youth earned a GED in a drug program. Two had vocational school

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<sup>3</sup>They claim to have dropped out because the "600" school was too strict, they weren't learning anything, and there were "too many minorities."

diplomas and two had academic high school diplomas (one of whom had gone to vocational school, but failed his computer animation credentialing exam). One of the vocational school graduates was enrolled in college.

Hamilton Park respondents, however, were less oriented toward college than Projectville youth. They knew that with a high school diploma and a family or personal connection (perhaps a recommendation from a teacher at the vocational school) they could get a good job. They could work without a diploma, but with one vocational opportunities were enhanced.

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

Yet they still tended to consider themselves in school even if they were not attending. This tendency was related to the fact that schooling was seen as defining their social identity. For youths generally, school status can powerfully affect their relationships with families and social institutions. In this sense, there were quite practical reasons for respondents maintaining that they were still in school, even if they never planned to attend again.

C. Schooling: The Combined Research

1. The Desire for Schooling and the Perceived Value of Diplomas

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

In addition, a desire to return to school, or earn educational credentials, was evident among dropouts. One respondent told us that, although his friends would not generally admit it, each felt a need to get back to school or earn a credential; they expressed such feelings only in heart-to-heart conversations. Many dropouts, disappointed by their job prospects, began to feel that more education might improve their labor market opportunities.

Yet the neighborhood study also suggests that many high-risk youth were skeptical about the value of the high school diploma as "human capital." All seemed to feel that it was not enough, in itself, to help them achieve their vocational goals. In La Barriada, respondents thought a basic academic diploma was of little value. They desired a vocational credential and the skills that could help them into a good blue-

collar job. In Projectville, a high school diploma alone was thought to be relatively ineffective in the labor market, although respondents attended academic high schools; Projectville youths were drawn to college, yet few achieved that goal. In Hamilton Park, on the other hand, a high school diploma or a vocational school credential and a strong family or school connection to a union job were seen as valuable commodities in the labor market; it was not the diploma in itself that was valued, however, but rather the diploma combined with personal job networks.

There was evidence of a desire for schooling, or a felt need for improved educational credentials in the defendant survey as well. This was apparent in the continuing school enrollment of black defendants beyond school age, and in the substantial proportion of GEDs among degree holders.

Yet opinions about the value of high school diplomas as "human capital" were mixed. All survey respondents were asked whether a high school diploma was "no help," "some help," or "a great deal of help" in winning adequate employment. Slightly more than half the sample (54%) saw it as a great help. Those who had no diploma were likely to see it as having "a great deal" of economic potency (61%). Those with high school degrees and GEDs were far less likely to perceive diplomas as a great deal of help (36% and 22%, respectively). Only the small group who had some form of college credential (AA/BA, N=12) were as optimistic about the value of educational credentials (58%) as those who had none.

Apparently, the more likely defendants were to have high school diplomas, the less likely they were to believe in their labor market efficacy. Younger defendants (16-19) were more likely to see diplomas as "a great deal of help" (64%) than older defendants (46%) who had both more educational credentials and more exposure to the labor market. Those who were in or returning to school were more optimistic about diplomas (71%) than dropouts (56%) or those who had diplomas (34%). Whites, who were most likely to have educational credentials, reported that diplomas were "a great deal of help" far less (46%) than blacks (55%) or Hispanics (57%).

On the whole, sample members were more likely to believe in the work-related efficacy of the diploma than not, but there was considerable skepticism, particularly among those who had both credentials and actual labor market experience. Nevertheless, nearly three-fourths of those with diplomas, responding to an attitudinal supplement to the interview, reported that they had been helped in the labor market by their educational achievement, compared to 39 percent of those with no diploma.<sup>4</sup>

It appears that the pervasive dropping out observed in both samples was, at best, only partially related to a belief that high school diplomas were valueless. The survey demonstrates that such skepticism was strongest among those that had diplomas. Respondents in the neighborhood study seemed to feel that a diploma plus something else (family ties, vocational

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<sup>4</sup>Only half the sample were asked to respond to the battery of work-attitude questions which was administered as a supplement to the interview.

skills) had considerable value in the labor market. Although they generally failed to graduate from high school, many believed that they should be in or returning to school. Respondents generally adhered to the conventional belief that schooling in some form could provide human capital which would be valuable in the labor market; but, for a variety of reasons they did not stay in school long enough to graduate.

## 2. The Schooling Experience

In both the neighborhood study and the defendant survey, roughly a third of those who left school earned some educational credential (high school diploma or GED). In both studies, there were also substantial differences among race/ethnic groups and among neighborhoods in educational attainment. Whites were more likely than blacks, and blacks more likely than Hispanics, to earn educational credentials. Yet blacks, in both studies, had more continuing educational involvement than others. Hispanics, in both, had limited educational involvement and attainment.

In addition, both studies found a greater likelihood of dropout than of graduation for all groups, and revealed similar reasons for school dropout among different groups. Many left school for income; all groups were equally likely to leave school to take or seek a job. Whites, however, in both studies, were more likely to find jobs than others.<sup>5</sup> Minority respondents, on the other hand, were more likely than whites to

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<sup>5</sup>As becomes clear in Chapter IV, minority respondents in the neighborhood study were likely to leave school for income, fail to find jobs and become involved in property crime.

leave school to help their families or because they discovered themselves with families (girlfriends and babies) to support.

Substantial proportions of respondents in both studies also dropped out because they disliked school, or because of trouble in or out of school. The reported dislike of school in the defendant survey (heavily concentrated among Hispanics) mirrored the pattern of hooky/truancy/school-leaving in La Barriada. Similarly, the likelihood of expulsion for blacks in the survey parallels the "negative tracking" of Projectville respondents into "600" schools.

The two studies also both report considerable return to school among high-risk groups. Many respondents went back to get -- or try to get -- GEDs. Those who earned educational credentials often didn't make it through regular high schools (they either attended alternative schools after dropping out or earned GEDs). The pattern of interrupted schooling was characteristic of all groups, although blacks who earned educational credentials appeared somewhat more likely to have obtained them through GEDs than other groups with credentials; this was very evident in the neighborhood study, and also appeared in the defendant survey (blacks, 26% of those with any H.S. degree; Hispanics, 24%; whites, 18%). Only a few received higher degrees (survey: 1%); the neighborhood study suggests that the pattern of interrupted schooling is characteristic of higher degree holders as well.

There is considerable overlap in the educational experiences and attitudes toward education in the two study samples.



It is apparent that differences in schooling observed in the study neighborhoods reflect broader race/ethnic differences among high-risk groups in Brooklyn as a whole. The neighborhood study alone, however, provides potential explanations for the apparent impact of race/ethnicity on education.

In the three study neighborhoods, respondents faced entirely different structures of educational opportunity; they also approached education with different occupational goals, expectations and connections.

Blacks in Projectville were confronted with perhaps the most chaotic set of school choices. Because of efforts to desegregate inner-city minority schools (formerly the worst in the city school system) Projectville respondents had no single local high school to attend; they were scattered and transported throughout Brooklyn. It was difficult to stay in and finish regular high school. Yet, the kinds of jobs Projectville respondents desired (government civil service jobs) often required high school degrees. The educational credentials of Projectville respondents came from outside the context of regular high school (GED programs, independent alternative schools). GEDs, in Projectville, could lead to college.

Hispanics in La Barriada, on the other hand, did have a local academic high school, although it was seen as disorganized and ineffective. Yet La Barriada respondents desired good blue-collar jobs, and knew they needed vocational training to get them. Those who were admitted, did not, however, complete vocational training (one was arrested; another left to try to

earn money). School-leaving for the few accepted to better schools is difficult to explain. It may be that for these youths, the path from vocational school to a good job was not clearly defined. They lacked the personal connections that make such jobs available and the role models that make such goals seem attainable. To finish school in La Barriada, a community of recent Puerto Rican migrants, was to break new ground.

Hamilton Park respondents also were drawn to vocational schools because they desired good blue-collar jobs. They did, however, have the family connections to get such jobs. Some of them, with the help of these connections, dropped out of school to work. Others used their diplomas to get into unions. Although the school they attended was seen as disorganized as the local academic school in La Barriada, it was recognized as a means of achieving attainable vocational goals.

The relationship between school characteristics and educational outcomes is relatively complex. The local school in La Barriada and the vocational school attended by Hamilton Park respondents were seen as equally disorganized. The differences in the extent of school completion in the two neighborhoods seems more related to external contexts -- differences in opportunity structure and in the perceived value of the diploma in the labor markets youths were about to enter -- than to the quality of the schools themselves.

Yet some respondents had the opportunity to attend good schools. The two La Barriada youths who entered a respected

vocational school failed to finish. This was not because of the school, but because their lives outside of school (arrest, pressing income needs) made school enrollment difficult to sustain. For some Projectville youth, assigned to better academic high schools in white neighborhoods, the opportunity to attend organized, well-staffed high schools was counterbalanced by the perceived discrimination within those schools and the disruption of social cohesion caused by the assignment process itself.

It appears that both the structure of educational opportunities and the educational outcomes in the three neighborhoods differed, but that the differences in outcome cannot be accounted for by the structure of opportunities alone. In La Barriada, respondents received few credentials, whether they went to the disorganized local high school or to the better vocational school. In Projectville, respondents received relatively more credentials, but generally not from the schools to which they were assigned, although the schools were relatively good. The fact that they were scattered and social cohesion disrupted seems to have affected the continuity of schooling. Hamilton Park respondents earned as many credentials as blacks from the single vocational school they attended, in spite of the disorganization of that school.

Many, in all neighborhoods, dropped out of school, or had interrupted school experiences. The high rate of dropout seems as much related to external life events -- family needs, desire for income, the opportunity to work, criminal justice involve-

ments, youth culture -- as to educational opportunities in themselves.

In all three neighborhoods, respondents left school with limited skills -- both basic skills and job-specific attainments. In both La Barriada and Hamilton Park, several respondents were barely literate. In Projectville, although literacy was not a particular problem, some respondents had difficulty with basic computation. The vocational schools La Barriada and Hamilton Park respondents attended were capable of teaching job-specific skills, but La Barriada youth left without credentials and, presumably, without sufficient skills. A few Hamilton Park respondents, however, obtained vocational credentials and some received various kinds of vocational training (plumbing, electrical installation, construction), although they did not win a credential.<sup>6</sup> Generally, the schools in minority neighborhoods were said to be most successful in imparting secretarial skills to female students; they offered little in the way of basic vocational skills to male respondents.

In both samples, there were indications that diplomas could and did make a difference in the employment of respondents once they were past school age. There were also indications that the returns to education might be greatest for whites -- although the short-term rewards for dropping out of school seemed better for whites as well. It was apparent that educational attainments were integrally related to labor market

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<sup>6</sup>Other Hamilton Park youths were able to obtain good blue-collar jobs through family connections without either basic or job-specific skills.

prospects, and that the structure of educational opportunities in particular neighborhoods might be directly tied to the structure of vocational opportunities.

In Chapter III, we will explore in more detail the extent to which having a diploma affects labor market outcomes and attempt to determine the relevance of "human capital" and SLM theories in the combined Vera research effort.



## CHAPTER III

### EMPLOYMENT

#### Introduction

Before exploring the relationships between employment and crime in the two studies, Project staff thought it necessary to address basic questions concerning the quantity and quality of work for high-risk and arrested populations. The Project staff sought to document the nature of employment in the study populations -- the actual employment experiences of sample members; job types; the amount of work for different groups; wages and job durations for different groups at different ages; perceptions of employment among different groups; job-leaving reasons; the relationship between educational achievement and employment outcomes; and the impact of family and neighborhood upon employment. In large part, this chapter attempts to reconstruct the story of the process of work establishment (see Freedman, 1976) for high-risk populations -- the movement from part-time temporary jobs as a supplement for parental support to efforts (sometimes failed efforts) to establish full-time, long-term employment and self-sufficiency.

This chapter describes the employment goals and experiences of both the defendant sample and neighborhood groups. Section A describes the labor force involvement, job characteristics, and determinants of labor market achievement in the defendant survey. Section B considers the employment experiences of high-risk respondents at different ages in the three

study neighborhoods. Section C reviews the perceptions of employment, the structure of employment opportunities, and the actual employment experiences from the vantage point of both Vera studies considered together.



A. Employment: The Defendant Survey

1. Labor Force Involvement

At the time of the defendant interviews, 85 percent of all respondents were labor force participants (i.e., either working or looking for work). There was no difference between ethnic groups in the rate of labor force participation. Yet the reported labor force participation rate of the sample (85%) was considerably higher than the annual labor force participation rate for Brooklyn as a whole (67%: males only, 1980 Census). To some extent the difference is related to the summer date of the interviews (in-school youth often join the labor force for the brief summer period). In addition, the relative youth and disadvantage of the defendant sample might affect labor force participation -- fewer retired individuals; many hard to employ 16-20 year-olds; and fewer in-school youth who could afford to be out of the labor force in the summer than in the population as a whole. Finally, it is possible that respondents were affected by the nature and setting of the Vera interviews. It was to their advantage to have the court believe that they were in the labor force if they were not working, and respondents may not have distinguished between the Vera interview and other court-related pre-arraignment interviews. Data on reported labor force participation, therefore, may not be completely reliable.

Accordingly, the distinction between those in the sample who were working at the time of arrest and those who were not may be a more accurate reflection of current employment status

than descriptions of official unemployment rates and labor force participation rates.<sup>1</sup> Table 3.1 shows that race/ethnic group members within the study sample were only slightly less likely to be employed than were the members of corresponding race/ethnic groups within the Brooklyn population as a whole. White defendants, in fact, reported slightly more employment than Brooklyn whites (67% compared to 62%) -- although, as we shall see, there are differences in the quality and duration of that employment. It is likely that seasonal impacts affect the employment rate of the sample as much as, if not more than, the labor force participation rate. Comparisons with CJA defendant samples (see Chapter I) suggest that defendant groups interviewed in October are similar to our sample in all respects, except that their employment and labor force participation rates are lower. It is likely that the employment rate of Vera sample members before or after the summer was close to that of the CJA sample (37% working, 63% not working).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Table 3.1 demonstrates that the official unemployment rates (not working, but looking for work) of the various ethnic groups within the sample were each almost four times greater than those of the corresponding ethnic groups within the Brooklyn male population in the 1980 Census. Yet, this seems related to the high reported labor force participation of sample members. Sample members who were not working, when asked standard BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) questions about whether they had looked for work in the past month were more likely than non-working Brooklyn males as a whole to say they had looked for work. Although we expect unemployment rates of defendants and high-risk groups to be substantially higher than those of the entire population, the difference here may be somewhat inflated because of the circumstances of the interview.

<sup>2</sup>Again, it is possible that interview bias affected the reliability of reported employment in both CJA interviews and the Vera survey. If it did, it is likely that it did so to the

Table 3.1  
**LABOR FORCE STATUS BY RACE**  
**1980 CENSUS VS. 1979 BROOKLYN DEFENDANTS**  
 (Census data on Brooklyn males 16 and over)

LABOR FORCE STATUS	BLACK		HISPANIC		WHITE		ALL RACES	
	1980 Census	1979 Defendant	1980 Census	1979 Defendant	1980 Census	1979 Defendant	1980 Census	1979 Defendant
Employed	57%	51%	60%	54%	62%	67%	60%	54%
Unemployed	9	34	8	31	4	18	6	31
Out of labor force	34	15	32	15	33	15	33	15
Total N	100% (209K)	100% (481)	100% (110K)	100% (206)	99% (467K)	100% (141)	99% (786K)	100% (828)
Unemployment rates*	14%	40%	12%	37%	6%	22%	9%	36%
Labor force participation**	66	85	68	85	66	85	67	85

\*The unemployment rate is the result of dividing those unemployed by the sum of the employed and unemployed (i.e., by all of those in the labor force).

\*\*Represents those in the labor force (i.e., all those in the labor force as defined above, as a percentage of the total sample).

It appears that season had a strong effect on working/not working rates, and that both season and interview bias had effects on reported unemployment/out-of-the-labor-force rates. We suspect that the influence of interview bias (the over-reporting of labor force participation) is evenly distributed among different age and race/ethnic groups within the sample; seasonal impacts, on the other hand, would have the strongest effects on younger groups, particularly minorities (young whites, as we will see later, have more year-round employment than other groups).

Although we must recognize these effects, we can discern clear differences in reported labor force status among different age groups and race/ethnic groups in the sample and these differences may be relatively impervious to interview bias and seasonal impacts. Table 3.2 shows that, for all race/ethnic groups, older respondents (25 and older, 52%) had the highest proportion of full-time work (16-19, 26%; 20-24, 41%) and the highest proportion of work at all (full- and part-time). The differences would be even stronger if we controlled for summer-only employment. Whites, at all ages, were more likely to be working (particularly full-time work) than other groups. Reported labor force participation was highest for the 20-24 year-olds, as might be expected (91% in the labor force).

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same extent, since both sets of interviews shared a similar context. We believe that reports of employment are considerably more reliable than reports of labor force participation, because both interviews gathered considerable information on reported jobs held and because defendants are told that CJA attempts to verify employment information. Labor force participation is less verifiable and its reliability is, therefore, more suspect.

Table 3.2  
DETAILED LABOR FORCE STATUS, BY RACE AND BY AGE

	Black			Hispanic			White			All races		
	16-19	20-24	25+	16-19	20-24	25+	16-19	20-24	25+	16-19	20-24	25+
Working full time . . . . .	23	35	51	24	39	53	39	61	53	26	41	52
20-30 hrs/wk . . . . .	13	41	10	14	43	4	9	57	81	13	45	56
Less than 20 hours/week . . . . .	5	3	8	5	12	10	9	14	9	6	7	9
Unemployed . . . . .	41	42	21	40	35	18	30	14	9	39	35	18
Out of labor force . . . . .	19	10	14	17	10	16	13	6	26	17	9	17
Totals . . . . .	101	100	100	100	100	100	100	101	100	101	101	101
N . . . . .	(194)	(115)	(169)	(86)	(51)	(68)	(54)	(36)	(47)	(334)	(202)	(284)
Unemployment rate** . . . . .	50%	48%	25%	48%	39%	21%	34%	21%	11%	47%	39%	22%
Labor force participation**	81%	90%	86%	83%	90%	84%	87%	94%	74%	83%	91%	83%

\*The unemployment rate is the result of dividing those unemployed by the sum of the employed and unemployed (e.g., by all of those in the labor force).

\*\*Represents those in the labor force, e.g., the denominator of the unemployment rate, as a percentage of the total sample.

Older respondents (25+) were as likely to be out of the labor force as 16-19 year-olds (both 17%). The different labor force non-participation rates of various age groups in the sample appear to be related to specific subgroups who have chosen not to seek work: in-school youth; older debilitated defendants, dependent on public assistance.

Although 54 percent of the sample were working at the time of arrest, a far greater proportion (86%) had worked within the two years preceding arrest. Only 52 respondents (6% of the sample) had never worked; over two-thirds of this group (69%) were between sixteen- and nineteen-years-old, many of whom were just entering the labor force. Only five respondents over twenty-five-years-old had never worked. There was no difference in the proportion of those who had never worked across ethnic groups.

Another 64 respondents (8% of the sample) reported some work experience, but had not worked in the past two years. This group was significantly older than the rest of the sample (mean age, 31). Respondents who had no recent work were somewhat more likely to have been identified as intoxicated at the time of the interview (13%, compared to 6% of the rest of the sample) and far more likely to report that they were out of the labor force (36%, compared to 13% of the rest of the sample). Over half of those who had no recent work and reported that they were not in the labor force gave illness as their reason for leaving their most recent job. Apparently, many older respondents who had not worked recently were relatively

debilitated (sick, alcohol problems, drug problems) and, therefore, do not correspond to the conventional notion of the non-working career criminal.

The fact that so many respondents reported work in the past two years lends credence to their reports of high labor force participation, even though there is not a perfect correspondence between those with recent work and those who said they were unemployed, but still in the labor force. Clearly, some young respondents had recently entered the labor force, although they had no recent work, and some older respondents, who had worked in the past two years, had recently dropped out.

Overall, the defendant sample was slightly less likely to be employed than Brooklyn males in general, although much employment was summer employment. The sample was, however, far more likely to be officially unemployed (seeking work, but not working) than the general population, although some of the reported labor force participation of the sample may have been exaggerated. Yet there was, in general, far more reported work in the past two years than is expected of a predominantly young, defendant population.

## 2. Characteristics of Jobs

Table 3.3 shows the industry classification of the jobs held at arrest or the jobs held most recently prior to arrest compared to the distribution of jobs by industry for Brooklyn as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Respondents were more heavily concentrated in

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<sup>3</sup>Industry-occupation codes are standard descriptors of jobs and are useful in characterizing regional changes in industrial composition over time. For our purposes, these codes

Table 3.3

INDUSTRY COMPARISONS OF JOBS HELD BY BROOKLYN POPULATION  
IN 1980 AND BY 1979 DEFENDANT SAMPLE

INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION	1980 CENSUS BROOKLYN*	1979 DEFENDANT SAMPLE
Agriculture & mining	0%	1%
Construction	3	9
Manufacturing	19	18
Transportation	7	7
Communications & other public utilities	3	1
Wholesale trade	5	5
Retail trade	13	25
Finance, insurance & real estate	13	3
Business & repair services	6	9
Personal, entertainment, & recreation services	4	6
Professional & related services	22	12
Public administration	5	3
Total . . . . .	100%	99%
N . . . . .	(820K)	(791)

\*Source: U.S. Census, Advance Estimates of Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics, 1980.



construction and retail trades than the Brooklyn population as a whole, which, in turn, had greater concentrations of "finance, insurance and real estate" and "professional and related services." In addition, the jobs of the defendant sample were centered in manufacturing (18%), business and repair services (9%), and transport (7%). The fact that a considerable proportion of the sample held jobs in industries classified as "professional" (12%) should not be misconstrued; most of these jobs involved menial hospital work, educational services and welfare services -- often low-skilled state or city employment.<sup>4</sup>

Close reading of interviews reveals that many of the jobs held by respondents were low-level, despite industry classifications that sound more substantial. Most construction jobs derived from government programs and provided relatively short-term, low-paid work. Retail jobs generally involved grocery stores and automotive repair shops -- respondents were often freight handlers or stock clerks. Similarly, office workers (finance, insurance and real estate) were generally messengers and office boys, or shipping and receiving clerks. Respondents often held the most menial roles within their industries.

It is perhaps of more descriptive value to consider the

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are of limited utility as descriptors of job type, but are useful as broad indicators of what job sectors the jobs of defendants are concentrated in. In Chapter VI, we consider the long-term employment prospects in these sectors for high-risk populations.

<sup>4</sup>Professional industries include accounting firms, architectural firms, engineering, hospitals, law firms, social work agencies, and so forth.

occupations of sample members than the industries they worked in. Comparisons afforded by Table 3.4 with the U.S. Census also support the general point that an arrested persons' sample occupies a marginal position in the labor market. Only a third as many sample members (3%) as Census respondents (9%) are in professional or managerial occupations (and subordinate counseling and program assistant roles are included in this category); conversely, many more of our sample (18%) than Census respondents (4%) are "laborers," and our sample shows further relative concentrations in "craftsmen and kindred" (16% vs. 10%), "operatives, non-transport" (14% vs. 9%), and "services, non-household" (23% vs. 14%).

Table 3.4 also breaks down the occupations of sample members by race. Whites were more highly represented in skilled trades (craftsmen and kindred, 25%) and professional/managerial and administrative occupations (12%, grouping together two categories) than other groups. Blacks were slightly more likely than others to be in clerical jobs (11% compared to 8% of others), but were primarily concentrated in labor and service occupations (20% and 25%, respectively). Hispanics were more likely to be non-transport operatives (i.e., factory workers) than others (21%, compared to 12% of others).

There was additional evidence that jobs held by different race/ethnic groups within the sample were concentrated in different occupations. Table 3.5 shows that for all groups, the most common type of employer was a private company (74%-85%). Hispanics were heavily concentrated in private sector

Table 3.4

OCCUPATIONAL COMPARISONS OF JOBS HELD BY  
DEFENDANT SAMPLE BY RACE

CENSUS OCCUPATIONS	RACE/ETHNICITY				1980 Census Brooklyn (16+)
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races	
Professional and managerial	4%	1%	4%	3%	9%
Managers and administrators	4	3	8	5	11
Sales	4	6	6	4	9
Clerical and kindred	11	8	7	10	27
Craftsmen and kindred	14	15	25	16	10
Operatives, non-transport	13	21	7	14	9
Operatives, transport	5	8	9	7	4
Laborers	20	16	18	18	4
Services, non-household	25	21	16	23	14
Household workers	-	-	-	-	1
Total . . . . .	100% (455)	99% (197)	100% (135)	100% (787)	98% (820,786)
N . . . . .					

X<sup>2</sup> = 46.17; p < .001

Source: U.S. Census, New York and New Jersey Volumes.

employment (85%), many of them in the declining manufacturing sector. They were less likely than other groups to hold full-time non-program jobs in the public sector (Hispanics, 2%; blacks, 6%; whites, 5%). The jobs held by white respondents were as likely to be private sector employment as those of Hispanics (84%), but blacks were less likely to be in private sector employment (74%). In contrast, blacks held the greatest proportion of jobs outside the private sector (6% non-program public sector and 14% government program jobs). Government program jobs constituted 10 percent of all jobs held. Most program jobs were traditional summer youth employment (82% of program jobs) -- temporary, low-paying and offering little or no skill acquisition.

Table 3.5  
TYPE OF EMPLOYER BY RACE

TYPE OF EMPLOYER	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races
Private company or agency	74%	85%	84%	78%
Government	6	2	5	5
Government program	14	6	1	10
Self-employed	5	8	9	6
Other	1	0	1	1
Total . . . . .	100%	101%	100%	100%
N . . . . .	(455)	(194)	(136)	(785)

$\chi^2 = 44.00; p < .0001$

Although approximately half the jobs held by in-school respondents were summer jobs (48%), and over half the summer jobs (56%) were government programs, only 18 percent of the in-school whites held summers-only jobs. They were far more likely than other in-school groups to be working at year-round, full-time private sector employment. The availability of such jobs to young whites may, in fact, have been a factor in decisions of school-aged high-risk whites to drop out of school (see Chapter II).

Although there are many possible ways to distinguish between "good jobs" and "bad jobs" (wage rates, job stability, subjective appraisals), we attempted to do so by establishing a shorthand of job quality based on the extent to which jobs offered benefits (health plans, paid vacations, paid sick days, pensions, etc.) and whether or not taxes were regularly withheld. We reasoned that "off-the-books" jobs (no taxes, no benefits) -- job characteristics of the underground economy -- are often intrinsically short-term and unstable, the least sheltered form of employment. Jobs that offer benefits, in contrast, are closest to the sheltered jobs defined by some economists (Freedman, 1976) -- jobs offering good wages, stability and possibilities of advancement.<sup>5</sup>

The extent to which the current/most recent jobs held by respondents provided benefits, and/or withheld taxes varied by

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<sup>5</sup>Analysis revealed that our "off-the-books" measure was strongly correlated with some measures of primary/secondary labor market position (Gordon, 1971).

age and race (see Table 3.6). Over a quarter (28%) of all respondents held off-the-books jobs; approximately a third worked on-the-books (36%, taxes withheld) but received no benefits; another third worked on-the-books and received benefits (36%).

Young whites were far more likely to be working off-the-books than others; older whites were more likely than other groups to have "benefits and taxes withheld" (i.e., relatively sheltered jobs). Blacks, on the other hand, held the greatest proportion of taxes-only jobs, a fact which seems related to the pattern of government program jobs in the sample (programs typically withhold taxes, but provide no benefits).

Older respondents generally were more likely to have jobs which provided benefits. Yet older Hispanics held a relatively high proportion of off-the-books jobs -- a job type more typical of younger groups. This may be related to cohort differences -- low-level jobs may be characteristic of older, less educated Puerto Rican migrants. Or, it may be that the jobs held by Hispanics offered little chance of advancement.

Reconsideration of our findings suggests that the relationship between "off-the-books" jobs and "bad jobs" may not be as clear as first expected. For the young, working off-the-books may have advantages. Since no taxes are taken out, take-home pay is higher. Job instability may not worry young workers who are not ready for long-term work establishment in a single firm. Although young white respondents held more off-the-books jobs than other respondents, they also had more year-round full-time work than others and, as we will see below,

Table 3.6

JOBS CHARACTERIZED BY BENEFIT STATUS,  
BY RACE AND BY AGE

AGE	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races <sup>a</sup>
<u>16-19</u>				
Off-books	29%	35%	56%	34%
Taxes	59	44	22	49
Taxes and benefits	12	21	22	16
Total ....	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>99%</u>
N .....	(170)	(81)	(45)	(296)
<u>20-24</u>				
Off-books	25	34	38	30
Taxes	37	26	24	32
Taxes and benefits	38	40	38	39
Total ....	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>101%</u>
N .....	(102)	(47)	(34)	(183)
<u>25+</u>				
Off-books	19	30	10	20
Taxes	27	23	16	24
Taxes and benefits	54	48	73	56
Total ....	<u>100%</u>	<u>101%</u>	<u>99%</u>	<u>100%</u>
N .....	(165)	(61)	(49)	(275)
<u>All Ages<sup>b</sup></u>				
Off-books	24	33	34	28
Taxes	42	33	20	36
Taxes and benefits	34	34	46	36
Total ....	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
N .....	(437)	(189)	(128)	(754)

a  $\chi^2 = 110.66$ ;  $p < .0001$  for age groups

b  $\chi^2 = 21.74$ ;  $p < .001$  for race/ethnic groups

slightly better wages than others. For the young, off-the-books employment may be a characteristic of desirable jobs. For older groups, however, jobs with benefits are clearly better than off-the-books unsheltered employment; this measure does seem to reflect good job/bad job differences for older groups.

The average hourly wage of respondents in their current/most recent jobs was \$4.31, nearly \$1.00 above the minimum wage (\$3.35). Wage rates varied considerably according to age and race. Of 16-19 year olds, whites reported the highest average wage rate (\$3.65/hour) compared to \$3.33/hour for Hispanics and \$3.30/hour for blacks. Among 20-24 year olds, whites also had the highest average hourly wage rate (\$5.07/hour); Hispanics earned \$3.79/hour and blacks earned \$3.68/hour. The oldest respondents (25+) had the highest average hourly wages of all age groups: again, whites led with \$6.82, compared to blacks, \$4.96 and Hispanics, \$4.49. At all ages, whites fared best in terms of wages; whites who were over twenty years old demonstrated a strong wage advantage.

Annual earnings of respondents were affected more by the number of hours worked during the year than by the hourly wage. Young whites (16-19), on average, worked far more hours per year (907) than young blacks (457) or Hispanics (427), giving them twice the annual income of other young groups. They were likely to work both more hours per week, and more weeks per year than others. Older whites (20-24) continued to work substantially more (1,312 hours) than blacks (859 hours) or



Hispanics (859). The average "hours worked" advantage extends to the oldest whites (25+) -- 1,462 hours compared to 1,107 hours for Hispanics and 1,080 hours for blacks. The oldest groups, particularly whites (who had substantially higher wages and significantly more hours than other groups) clearly earned the highest annual incomes of all age groups.

### 3. Determinants of Labor Market Achievement

In analyzing the employment data for the defendant sample, multiple regression was used to identify factors that affected hourly wages and the number of hours worked annually (see Thompson, Cataldo, and Loewenstein, 1984). The analysis found that, for the sample as a whole, age, prior job experience, having a high school diploma and highest grade completed had significant positive effects on hourly wage; being in school was negatively and significantly related to current hourly wage.<sup>6</sup> However, the analysis also showed that, holding other factors constant, race/ethnic differences were far stronger in impact than other variables. Even after controlling for differences in age, education, and work experience in the analysis, minority respondents showed a substantial earnings disadvantage, earning only about 78 percent of what a typical white with identical characteristics would earn.

Whites also showed more than twice the marginal returns to having a high school diploma than either the blacks or Hispa-

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<sup>6</sup>Marital status showed a positive, significant relationship to wages for blacks, but was not significant for other groups.

tics -- a return of \$1.68 an hour over the mean sample wage of \$4.19 for whites without diplomas (40% increase) compared to an increase of \$.68/hour over the mean wage of \$3.65 for blacks without diplomas (19% increase) and an increase of \$.67/hour over the mean wage of \$3.71 (18% increase) for Hispanics without diplomas.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, individual "human capital" characteristics (education and job experience) had differential impacts on job success for different race/ethnic groups.

The number of hours worked annually was also strongly affected by race. Prior job experience and having a diploma had strong positive effects on the number of hours worked; yet, controlling for all such factors, blacks worked an average of 217 hours less per year than whites, and Hispanics an average of 252 hours less than whites. Separate regressions by race showed that educational achievement (diploma or highest grade completed) had positive effects on hours worked for minorities, but not for whites. Apparently, whites could work a great deal with or without diplomas, although the hourly wage returns to schooling for whites were greater than for others.

Of those working at the time of arrest, whites were more likely to have jobs of longer duration at arrest (367 days median) than blacks (211 days median) or Hispanics (124 days median). There was, however, little difference in median durations of the most recent period of joblessness (before the

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<sup>7</sup>These estimated differences are based on the different returns to schooling found in our earnings regression run separately by race. Simple comparisons of mean earnings of sample members with and without diplomas show equally strong ethnic differences.

current job, or between the two most recent jobs) for different ethnic groups. White defendants were out of work as long as others when they were out of work, but they found better jobs when they found them (better pay, more benefits, more full-time employment), and they stayed in those jobs for longer periods of time. For all groups, age was negatively associated with the length of jobless spells.

The fact that minorities worked fewer hours than whites seems directly related to differences in labor market opportunity. The majority of the sample -- all races -- desired full-time employment. Ninety-one percent of those who were unemployed at the time of arrest wanted to work thirty-five hours a week or more. Three-quarters of those working part-time at arrest (76%) would rather have been working full-time. Although minorities did not differ in the extent to which they desired full-time employment, they were less successful in obtaining it (see Table 3.2). The relative underemployment of the minority groups in the sample seems to result directly from inferior access to jobs.

Table 3.7 attempts to shed light on job advancement prospects by comparing proportions of respondents receiving raises or promotions in current/most recent jobs in different age and ethnic groups. The white subsample shows a higher incidence of raises or promotions across all age groups. The black and Hispanic proportions are comparable through age twenty-four; the Hispanics are the only group not to show a notable increase in raise/promotion incidence after age twenty-four.

Table 3.7

PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS GIVEN RAISE OR PROMOTION  
AT CURRENT OR MOST RECENT JOB, BY RACE AND BY AGE

AGE	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	All Races <sup>a</sup>
16-19	15% (170)	12% (83)	44% (45)	18% (298)
20-24	33 (102)	42 (45)	41 (29)	37 (176)
25+	52 (152)	40 (52)	56 (43)	50 (247)
All ages <sup>b</sup> N	32% (424)	28% (180)	48% (117)	34% (721)

Note: In this table, the number reported in parentheses represents the total number (or base number) of respondents in a given category of the independent variable. The actual number of cases represented by each percentage can be calculated by multiplying the percentage by the relevant base number.

a  $\chi^2 = 71.16$ ;  $p < .0001$  for age groups

b  $\chi^2 = 21.01$ ;  $p < .01$  for race/ethnic groups

The persistent race/ethnic differences in the survey reinforce the earlier suggestion that the three groups may be operating in somewhat different labor market settings. Although private sector employment was the major source of jobs for all groups, blacks showed the strongest orientation toward government and institutional channels for advancement (school

involvement; government programs), yet seemed to lack access to better opportunities in the private sector. Many black defendants demonstrated a pattern of school involvement subsidized by government summer program jobs; they were less successful than whites, however, in securing stable government employment.

Hispanics had substantial involvement in the private sector, yet much of their employment was confined to the decaying manufacturing sector. Young Hispanics (16-19) did as well as others in terms of hourly wage, yet older Hispanics (25+) did relatively poorly. It is difficult to determine whether this was due to poor advancement prospects for those who performed unskilled manual labor in the manufacturing sector or to a more general employment disadvantage of the older Hispanic cohort.

White defendants clearly have the most and the best employment in the sample. Young whites were heavily employed in the private "underground" economy (off-the-books jobs) and seemed able to work full-time, year-round at such jobs. Older whites were most likely to have legitimate (on-the-books) full-time, long-term jobs, offering benefits. Although the returns to schooling were greater for whites, the younger group, who dropped out of school more than others, seemed capable of finding a good deal of work.

The survey as a whole documents returns to schooling and job experience for all groups, but makes it clear that labor market payoffs to "human capital" are far greater for white defendants than for others. It provides general support for

the contention that ascribed characteristics lead some groups to be blocked from labor market opportunity and from maximizing returns to human capital.

**B. Employment: The Neighborhood Study**

Although it is clear in the defendant survey that employment opportunities (wage rates, hours worked, the availability of jobs) were better for older respondents, the neighborhood study provides far more detail about the early stages of work establishment and about variations in local structures of employment opportunity. Neighborhood respondents ranged in age from the mid-teens to the early twenties. Over the course of the study, the Project researchers were able to observe their experiences with pre-employment, early employment and preliminary work establishment. In addition, researchers were able to obtain retrospective accounts of early employment experiences from older respondents, and observe the employment patterns of older siblings.

Although in all three neighborhoods labor market opportunities improved significantly with age, there were clear differences between the neighborhoods in the kinds of jobs young people desired, their motivations for early employment, their job search methods, and the quantity and quality of the jobs found and held. The following describes the employment experiences of respondents in the three study neighborhoods.

**1. La Barriada**

Respondents in La Barriada generally wanted better jobs than those of their fathers, some of whom had washed dishes for twenty years or worked in menial jobs in local factories. They aspired to skilled blue-collar jobs, manual work such as electrical installation or construction. They were drawn as poten-

tial employees to the surrounding factories, but they found that many factory jobs were not available to them -- either because they were too young (many factories required employees to be at least eighteen) or, as they saw it, because factory owners preferred to hire illegal aliens, who would work below the minimum wage.

Several respondents desired full-time, year-round work before they had reached their eighteenth birthdays, generally because they wanted the income jobs could provide. One or two needed to help their families or to support themselves. Others were supported by parents but needed money to meet the consumption demands of youth culture -- clothes, entertainment, drugs, money to impress girls. For those who had dropped out of school, work was also a desired and sometimes necessary status, evidence that they were doing something worthwhile:

I was about 16-17, my father used to get on my case, "If you're not gonna go to school, work," you know. Then one time I got busted, and when I came out my father really went off, "You'd better get a job or do something."

Criminal justice involvements were motivating factors leading to employment for a few respondents. One respondent worked at a variety of jobs in hopes of influencing the outcomes of two court cases -- a part-time clerical job, obtained with the help of a social worker, and, shortly before final disposition of his more serious case, a full-time factory job, obtained with the help of family connections. The judge sentenced him to probation rather than incarceration partly because he was employed.



Despite their need and desire, the quantity and quality of jobs available to La Barriada respondents before they were eighteen were limited. A few found occasional work loading trucks for local factories. The single greatest source of work was a steel warehouse that hired several of them as loaders for a period of several months. Those jobs ended, however, when the company moved to New Jersey. A few other young respondents found part-time work as "superintendents" in their tenement buildings, although the pay was negligible (for one respondent, \$30 a month and use of the basement). Two respondents obtained full-time factory work before they were eighteen (one because his father worked in the factory and helped him), but both lied about their age to be hired.

Once respondents turned eighteen, job opportunities improved. Some found work in local factories and restaurants through personal and neighborhood-based connections. Those who had more education found quasi-clerical jobs as messengers, mail clerks or stock clerks. The respondent who had gone to college eventually earned his master's degree in construction management and became a supervisor of skilled blue-collar workers (employees who had the kinds of jobs many neighborhood youth desired). By this time, his family had moved out of the neighborhood, and his employment status was more in keeping with his new environment.

One of the respondents who had lied about his age to get factory work was relatively successful at securing employment. He held a series of jobs: loading trucks, delivering furni-

ture, repairing buildings on a part-time basis, doing construction, refinishing furniture, and working in a candy factory. At times he held two jobs at once. Although his first few jobs were relatively brief, interrupted by disputes with employers and court involvements, as he neared twenty he began to work more steadily, stay at jobs longer, and receive higher wages and promotions. He had apparently picked up a variety of skills on the job and continued to look for better job opportunities based on his acquired experience and record of job stability.

Other respondents became involved in a local CETA job training program, which was highly prized in the neighborhood because it involved skilled manual work (building demolition) and because participants were treated better than in comparable, available employment. When the program ended in the early eighties, however, very few participants were placed in private sector jobs. More recently, a foreman who supervised participants in the program attempted to break his participants into local demolition jobs, to which they normally had no access, through aggressive picketing and lobbying. With his help, one respondent obtained enough demolition work to gain entry to the union. He now earns fifteen dollars an hour and is steadily employed.

Yet success stories are few. In general, the jobs found by La Barriada respondents were low-paying and insecure. Respondents had access to jobs through family and neighborhood networks, but these jobs were not very good. Most jobs ended

after a few months in layoffs or quits, followed by spells of unemployment. Few respondents found work in the skilled, blue-collar jobs to which they aspired. Nevertheless, by their late teens most respondents were working more often than not.

## 2. Projectville

Projectville youths had less interest in manual work than respondents from the other two neighborhoods. The best jobs held by adults in Projectville were civil service and city jobs -- in the post office or with the transit authority. Their lives seemed centered around traditional institutions and bureaucracies: they lived in projects, received welfare, believed in the value of education, and desired employment in large institutional settings. Yet if their aspirations led them toward city/civil service jobs, such jobs were not available to them in their early teens and twenties.

In fact, in some ways, the opportunities for youth employment in Projectville were more restricted than in either of the other neighborhoods. As one youth put it:

There ain't no social programs, no after school programs, no part-time jobs, no nothing out there you could get into to keep off the streets.

The motivation to find work at an early age was as strong in Projectville as La Barriada. One or two youths needed to support themselves. (One youth, in fact, left school at fifteen and supported himself unloading milk trucks.) Others lived at home, desired income, and were subjected to the pressure of proving they were doing something worthwhile. Some, as in La Barriada, sought work to prove to the court that they had

legitimate sources of income. As respondents grew older and faced the responsibility of impending fatherhood, the need for subsistence-income and employment increased.

Yet the surrounding neighborhood offered few possibilities for local employment, and the better kinds of jobs held by relatives (post office, transit authority) did not afford job connections. Almost the only jobs available to respondents before they were eighteen were summer program jobs, obtained in large part through the schools. These jobs provided income, but did little in terms of providing skills or promoting positive work attitudes -- many respondents signed in in the morning and left. Some saw program jobs in youth recreation centers as subsidized play. Yet most respondents had at least one summer's experience in such a job and could report little other early employment beyond odd jobs. Only one youth found private sector work, in a flower store in his aunt's neighborhood, a considerable distance from Projectville.

Respondents were drawn to bureaucratic employment settings even outside the neighborhood. Several respondents were aware of the Job Corps as a possible option. A friend of a respondent, who came to the office for an interview, had in fact been in the Job Corps, where he was trained as a printer; he subsequently worked as a printer in Brooklyn for four years, but quit after a dispute over pay. Another respondent sought entry to the armed forces, but failed to pass the entry test required of those who have no high school diploma.

Once they reached eighteen, job opportunities for Projectville respondents improved somewhat. A few found jobs in furniture stores or dry cleaning establishments through personal connections, yet these jobs were irregular. Others found some work in fast food chains and other service sector jobs.

Few, however, found work through either family connections, the neighborhood, or want ads; they turned instead to employment agencies and shape-ups to find jobs. Private agencies charged a fee (generally around \$50) and provided clients with a list of jobs. Respondents' experiences with these agencies were often discouraging. They were sent to factory jobs where there were either no openings or types of work (hazardous, noisy, filthy) that they found unacceptable. Agencies would send them out as messengers or security guards. Some respondents went regularly to shape-ups for day labor:

You get there at five, you be the first person in line and this way you know you gonna get some work. Otherwise you in bad shape.

Although respondents could be hired on a regular basis once they demonstrated persistence, the shape-ups and agencies which catered to them appeared primarily to connect these young unskilled workers with the dirtiest, most dangerous, least desirable jobs.

A few respondents, those who managed to earn a high school diploma and enter college, had better job prospects. One or two neighborhood youths became bank tellers, or had brothers who worked as bookkeepers. Yet the city/civil service jobs to which respondents aspired were not readily available until they

were considerably older. Family connections to such jobs could help respondents know when to sign a civil service list, or when tests would be given; they could not, however, help respondents pass the tests or circumvent the bureaucratic barriers to job entry.

Many of the jobs held by Projectville youth ended in layoffs or quits, particularly jobs found through agencies and shape-ups. Such jobs, designed for temporary, short-term employees, were classic secondary employment, featuring harsh and erratic discipline and violations of work rules (regarding overtime, breaks, regular pay schedules). By the late teens, however, many respondents were able to replace such jobs with other jobs or had returned to school.

### 3. Hamilton Park

The employment prospects and patterns of the Hamilton Park respondents differed greatly from those of the youths in the minority neighborhoods, especially during their mid-teen years. As in La Barriada, Hamilton Park respondents aspired to skilled blue-collar jobs, preferably union jobs. As teenagers, however, they were not drawn to factory jobs, as were La Barriada youth, in spite of the fact that both neighborhoods contained local manufacturing plants within them; the assembly jobs in the Hamilton Park factories were largely staffed by minority workers and illegal aliens from outside the neighborhood. Hamilton Park youth tended to have family role models of a different kind of work -- fathers and uncles in construction unions, building maintenance unions, and other skilled trades.

Hamilton Park respondents sought work as teenagers because they wanted spending money, although they were generally supported by their parents and did not need subsistence income. They were less likely than minority respondents to report that they needed a job to prove that they were "doing something." None of them sought jobs to influence the criminal justice system.

Hamilton Park youths generally looked for and found work through family and friends, as well as neighborhood and school connections. Some respondents also reported finding jobs through newspaper ads, but the newspaper itself was neighborhood-based -- a local publication, documenting neighborhood concerns and distributed primarily to neighborhood residents. None of the Hamilton Park respondents had any experience with subsidized employment and/or training programs. Only one reported ever using an employment agency.

As in La Barriada, work rules prohibited younger respondents from finding work in the local factories, but they were able to find many part-time, off-the-books jobs on their own. One respondent was working full-time in a bakery while he was still in high school. Others found odd jobs through parents' employers or found part-time supermarket jobs, building renovation and factory work through relatives. One respondent's older brother had worked for several years part-time, before and after school, for a beer distributor. Although most of the jobs were part-time and, generally, off-the-books, most respondents had had three or four neighborhood-based jobs by the time

they were twenty. Jobs held by young respondents often paid far more (\$5-\$6/hour) than the minimum wage jobs found by minority youth.

As Hamilton Park respondents became older, they were no longer barred from jobs because of work rules and a greater variety of employment became available. The youth who worked at the bakery while in school later got a unionized maintenance job through his uncle. Other respondents followed older brothers into similar maintenance jobs. Some respondents did take factory jobs, generally on loading docks, but these jobs paid far more than comparable jobs in La Barriada (\$8-\$10/hour) although the work was far more intensive and supervision stricter. Many of the jobs obtained by older respondents were basically dirty, hard work, but they paid well and were respected in the neighborhood.

With increasing age, however, some Hamilton Park respondents were having trouble finding the kinds of jobs held by their fathers and brothers. Skilled blue-collar employment is rapidly diminishing in New York City, as manufacturing jobs are drawn away from eastern urban centers. Some respondents in their early twenties complained that local employers would hire new men and lay them off shortly before they completed the six months required for union eligibility. Several older brothers of respondents moved out of state, some to the Sunbelt, in an attempt to follow the jobs. Two respondents had been in the Marines, although they were dishonorably discharged.



Hamilton Park youths, whose neighborhood offered them far more employment opportunities than minority respondents, were apparently more mobile in their search for work than youths from other neighborhoods. Nevertheless, there was little long-term, stable employment among any of the neighborhood groups. One Projectville youth worked for two and a half years at a dry cleaner, but his employment was irregular. Hamilton Park respondents were beginning to enter what they hoped were permanent placements, but their long-term outlook was affected by the changing urban labor market. The likelihood of respondents finding skilled, well-paying jobs, offering possibilities for advancement and/or security was related to school achievement, age, race and, above all, family-neighborhood connections.

C. Employment: The Combined Research

Many of the findings of the defendant survey and the neighborhood study concerning the distribution of jobs among high-risk populations are complementary. Together, the studies illustrate the age-graded structure of employment experiences -- the school-to-work transition of the very young, during which employment is primarily an income subsidy; the exploratory search in the early twenties for more and better employment; the settling into more work and better pay, at least for some, in later years; and the persistence of serial employment, secondary job after secondary job, for others. The defendant survey suggests the importance of race/ethnicity as an important function affecting the quantity and quality of work among high-risk young people; the neighborhood study suggests that many of these differences can be explained as differences in labor market structure, labor market returns and internal social organization at the neighborhood level.

The following section addresses some employment issues not discussed so far in our summaries of study findings: the different perceptions of employment among various groups in the studies; the variety of job-leaving reasons (quits, layoffs, new jobs) and their distribution; and the significance of pervasive job-quitting in a secondary labor market context. It also considers the relationship between the findings of the two studies concerning the structure of employment opportunities, the actual employment experience, and the role of subsidized programs in the work establishment efforts of high-risk

youths. Finally, it considers the findings of the two studies in relation to the human capital/segmented labor market debate, discussed in Chapter I, about what determines employment outcomes.

1. Perceptions of Employment

In the neighborhood study, respondents' perceptions of what constituted a "good job" varied from neighborhood to neighborhood, mirroring the work experience of their family and friends and the prevalent employment patterns and aspirations prevailing in each locale. The defendant survey lends support to the neighborhood study's finding that there are group differences in work preference: blacks seem drawn to and find work in the public sector; Hispanics apparently find more work in the private sector, often in manufacturing; young whites have more off-the-books, full-time work with private employers, jobs which may be preliminary to the sheltered union jobs held more by older whites than by other groups in the survey. The job-holding patterns evident in the defendant sample are consistent with the job preferences expressed by neighborhood respondents.

In addition, in the attitudinal supplement to the survey, the defendant survey attempted to elicit information on respondents' perceptions of employment by asking how respondents felt about their current/most recent job, and what kind of job they would most like to have. Respondents holding jobs in four job categories (professional/white collar; semi-skilled office; skilled blue-collar; semi-skilled blue collar) were asked how

much they liked recent jobs (very much; fairly well; dislike).<sup>8</sup> Skilled blue-collar workers were most likely to like their jobs "very much" (60% compared to 41% of all others). Respondents were least likely to report dislike for professional/white-collar jobs (6%) and skilled blue-collar jobs (10%); about a fifth of those holding semi-skilled jobs of either type claimed to dislike those jobs. Semi-skilled jobs apparently afforded the least satisfaction to those who held them, but there was apparently little difference in job attitude between skilled white-collar and skilled blue-collar employees.

Skilled blue-collar employees were also most likely to report aspiring to jobs of the same type as their current/most recent job (i.e., other skilled blue-collar work): 70 percent of skilled blue-collar workers wanted better jobs of the same type, compared to 50 percent of professional/white-collar workers, 22 percent of semi-skilled office workers, and 19 percent of semi-skilled blue-collar workers. Skilled blue-collar work was also the type of job cited most often (45%) by those who aspired to work of a different kind (professional/white collar, 17%; semi-skilled blue collar, 16%; semi-skilled office, 11%).

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<sup>8</sup>Current/most recent jobs of those responding to the supplement were categorized by grouping together occupational codes and defining jobs as either "professional and white collar" (this excludes blue-collar jobs in professional firms), which constituted 4 percent of supplement jobs; semi-skilled white-collar jobs, which constituted 15 percent of the jobs; skilled blue collar (craftsmen and kindred), which constituted 17 percent of jobs; and semi-skilled blue collar, which constituted 64 percent of jobs.

The overwhelming belief in the desirability of skilled blue-collar employment in the survey strongly echoes the findings in the neighborhood study about what constitutes a good job for some high-risk populations. Many of the aspirations reported by both defendants and neighborhood youth are relatively realistic expressions of a strong desire, felt by the disadvantaged, to gain a foothold in the working class.

Neither the survey nor the neighborhood study was able to explore in detail the way respondents felt about work in general (i.e., the recurring question of how much high-risk groups want to work). In the defendant sample, most respondents reported that they were actively working or seeking work, and wanted to work full-time. Seventy-six percent of those working under thirty-five hours a week reported that they would prefer full-time work. Yet those who question the strength of desires to work among high-risk groups are generally not satisfied with simple reports that the unemployed say they "want to work" or reports of repeated job searches and failures.

It is possible that there was some difference in willingness to work between the race/ethnic groups in our sample. One way to approach the willingness or personal incentive to work is to compare an individual's reservation wage (the lowest wage at which he is willing to work) to the wage he is likely to receive in the labor market. We compared the mean reservation wages reported by respondents who were unemployed at arrest (N=259) to the actual mean wages reported by comparable age and race/ethnic groups. Mean reservation wages were very close to mean actual wages for the 16-19 year-old blacks (\$3.31),

Hispanics (\$3.28), and whites (\$3.60). The minority youths' lower reservation wages correspond to the lower actual wages they received on the market. Thus we find no evidence here of race/ethnic differences in willingness to work at available wages.

Although among teenagers there was little difference in mean wage rate and mean reservation wage according to race/ethnic groups, there were dramatic differences in total hours worked. Teenage whites worked far more hours than did teenage blacks or Hispanics, giving white teenagers about double the annual income of minority teenagers despite similar hourly wage rates. Wage incentives or reservation wage effects cannot explain the contrasts in hours worked in this group: the relative underemployment of the minority groups seems to result directly from inferior access to jobs.

For older groups as well, reservation wages for specific race/ethnic groups generally corresponded to the mean hourly wage of corresponding sample members. There was no indication that unemployed respondents were "holding out" for higher wages than the market could bear.

The neighborhood study adds another dimension to this issue. It was clear that in all neighborhoods, for all respondents, some form of labor force participation (especially a readiness to accept work and an alertness to new employment opportunities) was continuous; for some young respondents, however, concrete paths to actual jobs were hard to discover.

There was also evidence of a distinction between respondents' general readiness to take a job and the expression of

work attitudes, which varied greatly from individual to individual. In La Barriada, for example, it became apparent to observers that respondents professed quite different general attitudes towards work. Some respondents clearly enjoyed work and disliked idleness; they took pride in their basic manual skills and familiarity with tools. Yet other respondents were openly living with women who were receiving welfare and readily admitted that they preferred not to work if they didn't have to. Others stood somewhere between these extremes; they were generally laconic about work, treating it as intrinsically neither desirable nor undesirable, but simply necessary. For all these differences in work attitude, these youths nevertheless had remarkably similar employment experiences. All sought and found more work (of a similar kind) as they reached their later teens; all were laid off from or quit early jobs, often after disputes with employers over working conditions. This suggests that at this age, at least, individual work attitudes tended to be less influential in determining work behavior than the structure of employment opportunities -- the amount and kinds of jobs typically available to high-risk youth in different settings.

## 2. The Structure of Employment Opportunities

In the neighborhood study, there were strong differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of work available to young respondents. In La Barriada and Hamilton Park, there were many local businesses (factories, shops). Local youth in Hamilton Park frequently obtained work in local employment settings when

they were young. Although youth in La Barriada found little work in factories, at least when they were young, neighborhood-based employment opportunities were evidently there. In Projectville, on the other hand, there were few local businesses or worksites of any kind. Virtually the only kinds of jobs available to young respondents, therefore, were subsidized city-run summer youth job programs. Otherwise, Projectville youth had to look outside the neighborhood to employment agencies and shape-ups to connect them to jobs.

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

It was apparent in the neighborhood study that young respondents were most affected by local opportunity structures. Older youth were more likely to extend their job search beyond the constraints of local settings and personal networks. A few



even attempted to move beyond local opportunities by leaving the neighborhoods behind -- exploring Sunbelt opportunities in Hamilton Park, or trying to join the Job Corps or the military in Projectville. Local opportunity structures (neighborhood job possibilities and local personal networks) did, however, largely define early employment experiences and aspirations; these early experiences in turn influenced and partially shaped subsequent employment prospects for all groups.

By inference, data from the defendant survey generally support the findings of the neighborhood study about differences in the structure of employment opportunities for various groups. Whites generally had consistently better employment than minorities. There appears to be little difference between the kinds of jobs held by minority defendants in the survey and the kinds of jobs actually available in the minority study neighborhoods. There are, however, some disparities between the apparent employment opportunities of Hamilton Park respondents and of white defendants which suggest some differences between the two white samples. In Hamilton Park, respondents who left jobs were able to find other jobs relatively easily; in the defendant survey, whites had as much difficulty finding new jobs as minorities (i.e., all groups had jobless spells of equal length). Young Hamilton Park respondents earned far more per hour (often \$5-\$6/hour) than young minority respondents (\$3.65/hour); in the defendant sample, young whites (16-19) differed only slightly in terms of mean hourly wage from minority groups. This is somewhat surprising because Hamilton

Park is among the lowest-income white neighborhood in the borough, and even there employment opportunities are significantly better than in minority neighborhoods. It appears likely, therefore, that young white defendants, unlike minority defendants, may not be as representative of youth in low-income white neighborhoods. Even though white defendants did better at work than minority defendants, they may have been relatively deviant within their neighborhoods -- at least in terms of employment and did not (or could not) take full advantage of the local structure of employment opportunities in their neighborhoods.

### 3. Employment Experience

In both studies, the characteristics of respondent employment were similar -- mostly low-wage, predominantly secondary, short-term jobs, interspersed with extended periods of joblessness. In both, there were clear indications that employment (wage rate and hours worked) improved with age. There were also similarities between the employment experiences of the race/ethnic groups in the survey and the patterns of experiences found in the three neighborhoods.

In both studies, minority youth unemployment rates were far higher than white youth unemployment rates. Young whites had considerable off-the-books, full-time or part-time, private sector employment even when they were still in school; older whites were most likely to enter sheltered union jobs. Blacks had the most experience with subsidized summer jobs programs. Hispanics held disproportionate numbers of manufacturing jobs.

For both study populations pervasive unemployment, particularly for minorities, and extensive underemployment at all ages were characteristic. In the defendant sample, out-of-work respondents attributed their unemployment to a variety of factors, some structural (no jobs, 43%, the most common single factor), some involving individual human capital deficiencies (no skill, 4%; insufficient education, 9%; no experience, 8%). Others attributed their inability to find work to their age (6%), criminal records (9%), or drug/alcohol problems (1%). Generally, those who reported personal problems as the reason (criminal record; drug/alcohol) had longer periods out of work (median: 399 days and 543 days, respectively) than did those who claimed there were no jobs (median: 207 days) or who pointed to various human capital deficiencies (no education, 185 day median; no skill, 281 day median).

Those who were employed tended to have had a wide variety of complaints about those jobs. In the neighborhood study, complaints about working conditions -- noise, filth, danger -- were common. Youths sent by agencies to work as security guards reported exposure to armed robbers and lack of police back-up. Others complained of various forms of employer abuse. One respondent reported working for over a year without being given any of the vacation he was due; when he asked to take his vacation, he was accused of stealing from the job and fired. Others reported work experiences including irregular pay procedures, being shorted on checks, or being made to work ten hours a day, but only paid for eight. Minority respondents

saw themselves as competing for jobs with illegal aliens, who would tolerate such work-rule irregularities and accept minimum wage violations.

Although occasionally the cause of complaint, the fact that many of the jobs available demanded intensive physical labor was accepted. For example, the La Barriada respondent who went to college worked at factory jobs during the summer where there were intensive production demands:

I was a steampresser. No matter how much you did, it was never enough . . . if you did 600, they wanted 700, if you did 700 they wanted 800. Nobody ever said, "Hey, you guys are doing O.K. You did 800 pants for me." What they did, which I think was wrong, was they kept me overtime. "Hey, can you stay overtime, I want you to stack up the pants for me?" I was only working for the summer to get money for college so I didn't mind. But the next morning they'd [the workers] come in and find out I had stacked up the pants in the front of the line. Then the boss would come around and say to them, "Look at that stack of pants and look what's coming behind you. Speed it up, speed it up."

As a temporary employee, he was exempt from the informal work norms which other workers had established to control the pace of production. The fact that many respondents worked in temporary, part-time or seasonal positions suggests that they too may have been subjected to more intensive work demands than regular full-time employees.

Most of the jobs held by young respondents were short-term, sporadic and irregular. Respondents were laid off and fired often. Even more frequently, they quit -- often after disputes with employers about wages, benefits and conditions. To some extent, the repeated job-leaving of respondents is part of the exploratory phase of work establishment in which

adolescents and young adults move from working for short-term income needs towards more stable employment (Osterman, 1980). In part, repeated quitting was related to the secondary labor market status of jobs themselves -- jobs intrinsically not designed for long-term job retention (Doeringer and Piore, 1971).

In another sense, the frequent job-leaving of respondents (quits and fires) was an integral part of a complex of irregular work behaviors developed by respondents as a means of enduring unpleasant working conditions and harsh, arbitrary supervision. Respondents in the neighborhood study often were absent, late, found means to do as little work as possible, or devoted themselves to on-the-job pilfering. Although these behaviors are not uncommon in many types of workplace, they seemed particularly prevalent in the jobs respondents held -- poor quality jobs in which adolescent misbehavior was tolerated as long as they showed up with some regularity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The question of whether such work behaviors are more related to job type and structure or to individual characteristics is essentially a chicken-egg question. We believe, however, that the preponderance of evidence in the neighborhood study suggests that job structure determines the behavior of young employees. Irregular work behaviors -- absenteeism, goofing-off -- were pervasive at some job sites, characteristics of employee groups rather than individual employees.

Examination of a pair of job settings from La Barriada and Hamilton Park is illustrative. In La Barriada, several respondents worked in a stop-and-start pattern loading trucks as the work came in, fooling around during lulls. They earned minimum wage at the age of 16-17; they left the truck loading job only when the firm moved out of state. In Hamilton Park, slightly older respondents worked on the loading dock of local factories, also loading trucks, earning well over the minimum wage (\$8-\$10/hour). They were closely supervised and the work was heavy, exhausting labor with hardly a minute's break. In these two settings the nature of the work determined the pace of activities and the appropriate type of work behavior.

Quitting was pervasive in the defendant survey as well, accounting for 45 percent of all job-leaving reasons (laid off, 20%; temporary job, 18%; fired, 13%; arrested, 3%; other, 2%). The majority of quits were attributed to working conditions (9%), low pay (11%), problems with the boss (7%), and illness (8%). Only a few respondents quit for positive reasons such as another job (2%) or a return to school (3%).

Younger respondents were far more likely to quit jobs than older respondents. When asked if they had left most recent jobs voluntarily, 16-17 year-olds were most likely to say that they had (79%; compared to 58% for 18-19 year-olds; 61% for 20-24 year-olds; 37% for 25-34 year-olds). Although the small group of defendants who were over 35 were as likely to report voluntary job leaving as the 20-24 year-old group (59%), this appears related to the high quit rates for illness reported by this group (30% of job-leaving reasons). Some of this group left jobs voluntarily because they were dropping out of the labor force. In contrast, the youngest respondents seem to quit as an intrinsic part of labor force exploration.

Median jobless duration was highest for those who quit because of illness (614 days) or arrest (667 days), and lowest among those who reported quitting for another job (116 days); because of a layoff (138 days), problems with the boss (149 days), firing (172 days) or low pay (179 days).

Data from multiple regression analysis of the length of current jobless spells revealed that age and hourly wage were inversely related to the length of jobless periods -- that is,

older and more highly paid respondents had shorter jobless periods (see Thompson, Cataldo and Loewenstein, 1984). This suggests that more highly paid and, perhaps, more highly skilled sample members can replace lost jobs more easily than can others. It also complements the finding in the neighborhood study that, as respondents aged, they were more capable of replacing one job with another.

The expressed reasons for quitting in the defendant survey echo many of the neighborhood study respondents' complaints about their jobs -- bad working conditions, low pay, problems with boss. It is apparent that respondents in both studies frequently took undesirable jobs because they needed them and stayed in those jobs as long as they could stand them. Many were unable to move easily from one job to another, although their ability to do so improved as they grew older. Everything they told us, however, indicated a strong desire to replace one job with another, and explore their labor market options. Given the chance, it is likely that most respondents would have acted like Hamilton Park respondents, who quit jobs often in the typical fashion of adolescent work exploration, but who found new jobs more readily because they had more access to the kind of jobs they wanted to explore. Or, as the defendant survey suggests, with access to better jobs, some respondents might have stayed in jobs longer.

#### 4. Employment Program Experience

During the period of our neighborhood research and the defendant interviews (1979-1983), the quantity of subsidized

government employment and training programs, including summer youth employment, was far greater than it is today. CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) programs had not yet been drastically cut back.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many respondents in both studies reported considerable involvement in such programs, particularly summer youth employment programs.<sup>10</sup> In both studies, it appears that involvement in such summer programs was most common among black youth, and largely limited to minorities.

Both studies suggest that subsidized summer employment programs were valued primarily as an income supplement. Neighborhood study respondents reported that there was little possibility of their learning job skills in such settings, and they complained about the lack of supervision and "real work." Similarly, in the defendant sample, 60 percent of 16-19 year-olds reported that they learned no skills in program jobs.

There was little evidence of respondents in either study being involved to any great extent in organized, long-term skills-training programs for out-of-school youth. The demolition program in La Barriada was an exception. In that program,

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<sup>10</sup>At first glance, survey data did not reveal how large a proportion of all jobs program jobs constituted. Many respondents seemed unaware that they were in fact in subsidized summer employment programs, and failed to identify their jobs as such when specifically asked. After careful examination of job characteristics and review of a Department of Employment list of program sponsors and settings, researchers determined that many jobs reported by young defendants were in fact program jobs.



respondents learned skills, did real work and were well supervised; they were glad to be in the program, even though they earned no more than the minimum wage. But when the program ended, most respondents reported discovering that there was little chance for their new skills to be used in an unsubsidized employment setting. That realization led to considerable disillusionment. The fact that one respondent was able to secure full-time union employment in demolition work through the efforts of a program supervisor, after several years had passed, points to the strong dedication of program personnel and the need for close ties to private sector employment, if programs are to have positive employment outcomes.

Program employment opportunities within high-risk neighborhoods did little to affect the long-term employment opportunity structures of local residents. They did, however, provide income and work experience to some young respondents who had little opportunity of finding other forms of work. Both studies suggest that even the considerable number of summer youth employment jobs available in New York City in 1979 were unable to satisfy the demand for employment among the high-risk youth studied.

##### 5. The Relevance of Human Capital/SLM Theories

In the initial phase of this research, there was considerable interest in exploring the relative explanatory power of human capital/economic choice models and segmented labor market theory (SLM) in relation to employment outcomes. Human capital theory holds that labor market outcomes are determined by

education, skill and work experience and that there are equal returns to human capital (productive potential) for all groups. SLM theory, on the other hand, argues that the human capital model holds only in the "primary" labor market, which features good-paying, stable jobs with prospects for within-firm advancement; they contend that in the secondary labor market -- in which wages are low, jobs short-term and unstable, benefits rare, specific skills and credentials unnecessary, and advancement unlikely -- human capital differences do not matter. SLM theorists also point to unequal returns to education and work experience by race and gender as evidence that the human capital model provides an inadequate explanation for labor market outcomes.

An economics doctoral dissertation produced by a Project member (McGahey, 1982), focused specifically on these issues, in relation to the defendant survey. McGahey divided the jobs held by survey respondents into primary and secondary categories according to an SLM job classification schema. Although in the nation as a whole, approximately two-thirds of all jobs are primary, and a third secondary (Gordon, 1971), in the defendant survey a third of the jobs held were classified as primary and two-thirds classified as secondary. As expected, defendants were far less likely to hold stable jobs or to have long-term prospects for advancement within those jobs than the population as a whole.

McGahey used the defendant survey data to test various employment and crime hypotheses proposed by human capital theorists and implicit in SLM theory. He found that earnings

responded to human capital variables in the primary labor market, but not in the secondary labor market. For secondary workers duration of the longest held job was more predictive of earnings than human capital. He also reported unequal returns to human capital for different race/ethnic groups in both the primary and the secondary sectors -- a finding not predicted by SLM theory (which sees the secondary sector as relatively impervious to individual differences) but which supports the SLM claim that human capital models fail to account for persistent labor market discrimination. In general, McGahey found that SLM theory provided a better explanation of labor market outcomes in the defendant survey than human capital models.<sup>11</sup>

Although Vera's employment and crime research as a whole is less centrally focused on the human capital/SLM debate, SLM theory does seem to explain a great deal of the employment experience of respondents in both studies. Most of the jobs held by respondents, in large part unskilled blue-collar jobs, seem generally describable as secondary sector employment. Only 36 percent of jobs in the defendant sample offered employee benefits and regularly withheld taxes. In both studies, there appeared to be unequal returns to schooling for different race/ethnic groups and restricted access to primary jobs for minority groups. Whites, even those who dropped out of school, generally had more, better paying, and longer jobs than minorities, as predicted by SLM theory. Although human capital

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<sup>11</sup>McGahey also found that neither SLM theory nor human capital theory provided an adequate explanation for the variation in crime, as measured by arrest frequency and arrest charge severity, in the defendant sample.

theory might indeed provide adequate explanations of employment outcomes for middle-class populations with more access to primary sector jobs, it was insufficient as an explanation of employment for high-risk and defendant groups.

The high quit-rates, absenteeism and other employee behaviors characteristic of study respondents are also predicted in SLM theory as compatible with the structure of secondary jobs, described as "characterized by considerable instability in jobs and high turnover among the labor force" (Piore, 1977: 126). SLM theorists argue that in the secondary market, employers do not want a stable long-term work force that might try to bargain for higher wages and benefits. In some cases, the work itself may be intrinsically short-term, and the demand for employees may expand and contract seasonally or cyclically. Descriptions of the characteristics of secondary jobs correspond with the respondents' descriptions of their actual work experience.

It is also possible that high quit-rates and rapid turnover are by-products of the work explorations of predominantly young respondents. The characteristic work behaviors of young workers are neatly matched to secondary job structure and it is not surprising that the majority of young workers, from all economic strata, hold secondary sector jobs. What is not predictable, however, is the persistence of secondary sector employment for many respondents in the neighborhood study and the defendant survey beyond the expected period of youthful work exploration.

Apparently, a considerable proportion of older, predominantly minority respondents continued to work in secondary jobs in manufacturing, service or laborer occupations well past the years of early work exploration. Although approximately two-thirds of older defendants (25+) were working at the time of arrest, for many employment was not substantially better than for respondents in their early twenties.

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

It is apparent in the neighborhood study that access to primary jobs was largely determined by family and friendship networks and neighborhood-based structures of opportunity. Race/ethnicity was strongly related to the quality of these opportunity structures. The ability to move with age from youthful job exploration in secondary jobs into sheltered, primary jobs appears to be greatly restricted for high-risk urban minority groups. Although movement from secondary to primary jobs for these groups is apparently possible, given long-established social, economic and structural barriers to mobility, it seems to be difficult and infrequent.



CHAPTER IV  
CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENTS

Introduction

This chapter considers the criminal involvements of respondents in the defendant survey and the neighborhood study. It reviews the kinds of criminal activity engaged in by different groups at different times in their lives, the intensity and duration of criminal careers among various groups, the extent to which crime was expressive or income-related, the extent to which crime was a group activity or a solitary enterprise, and the prevalence of certain types of criminal activity in different communities. It is basically descriptive -- a review of who engages in what kinds of crime at what age.

Because it relies almost entirely on criminal justice records, the defendant survey is limited in the extent to which it can describe the criminal behavior of respondents. These records tell us more about involvements with the criminal justice system than they do about the underlying behavior which leads to that involvement. It is widely recognized that arrests represent only a fraction of the crimes reported to the police, and that crime reports greatly underrepresent the amount of crime actually committed. It is also recognized that arrest and conviction charges may have a limited relationship to the kinds of behavior which those charges typically suggest; statutory charge categories may cover a wide range of alleged behaviors.

In addition, a defendant sample is restricted in its ability to tell us about those who commit crime and do not get arrested or those who have "matured out" of crime; because these individuals do not get arrested, they do not appear in the sample. Although longitudinal data are required for direct observation of the dropout phenomenon, the cross-sectional survey data presented here are useful in making some inferences about this phenomenon.

Finally, the defendant survey can tell us little about the social context in which criminality develops. Follow-up interviews with some of the initial respondents in the study do provide some data on their neighborhoods and peer relations. In addition, the interviews contain some information on the respondents' perceptions of the riskiness of criminal activity.

The defendant survey has the advantage of a wide age distribution for respondents, permitting us to investigate the criminal careers of defendants of different ages. The large number of respondents in the defendant sample also permits a review of borough-wide offense patterns, which will help us place the various offenses observed in the neighborhood study in a broader context.

The neighborhood study, although limited in size and age range, tells us considerably more about actual criminal activity -- how and why respondents became involved with crime, what they actually did at different ages, how often they did it, and why many eventually ended their involvement with street crime. It also can tell us something about individuals who commit



crime, but are never arrested; the relationship between criminal activity and arrest; and the extent to which young defendants were representative of youth populations in their communities as a whole. Finally, it can tell us something about the kinds of sanctions (both formal and informal) that were imposed and the effects of those sanctions upon respondents.

This chapter describes what we have learned about criminal activity and criminal justice involvements in the two studies. Section A reviews data from the defendant survey on the sampled arrest and on prior and subsequent criminal histories; it also considers data from the follow-up interviews that illustrate contexts of and motivations for criminal behavior. Section B describes the criminal involvements of respondents in each of the study neighborhoods. Section C combines the two studies and considers the patterning of criminal careers -- the onset, persistence, and waning of various criminal involvements -- for different subgroups.

A. Criminal Involvements: The Defendant Survey

1. Current Arrest

Information on the arrest charge of respondents interviewed before arraignment in Brooklyn in the summer of 1979 was collected by gathering criminal history data ("rap sheets") for all respondents from the Police Department or, in cases where no rap sheet was available, by reviewing the arrest charge recorded in the Criminal Justice Agency's (CJA) information system.<sup>1</sup> We divided the sampled arrest charges into seven crime types, and further distinguished between two larger categories -- income-producing crime, which includes four crime types (robbery; burglary; grand larceny; other income offenses), and non-income-producing crime, which includes three crime types (serious violence; assaults and weapons; drug possession and other). When individual arrests involved more than one charge, the arrest was coded according to the most serious charge (the "top charge" -- i.e., the highest misdemeanor or felony weight). If an arrest involved an income-producing and

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<sup>1</sup>Rap sheets were available for all but 129 respondents. In New York State, cases which end in dismissal, acquittal or ACD (Adjourned in Contemplation of a Dismissal) are officially sealed under CPL §160.50; no public record (including rap sheet) should be available. Defendants under nineteen who are adjudicated Youthful Offenders are covered by a less inclusive sealing statute (CPL §720.15). In 1979, however, sealing statutes were not applied regularly in all cases. Missing rap sheets may, in some cases, reflect the sealing of records, but they may also reflect the fact that some unsealed records were missing.

non-income-producing charge of equal charge weight, the income-producing charge was coded.<sup>2</sup>

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of charges for the sampled arrest, broken down into the broad array of original charge types.<sup>3</sup> Income-producing crime charges dominated (60% of all charges). More than one-fifth of the sample (21%) were arrested on burglary charges; another 16 percent were charged with robbery. "Assaults and weapons," a non-income charge, which includes a small proportion of non-violent offenses, was the largest single charge type (31%).<sup>4</sup> Charges of serious

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<sup>2</sup>This was because the Project was primarily interested in theories of crime as an alternative source of income (i.e., an alternative to employment) rather than theories which see assaultive crime as a reaction to the frustration of unemployment or poverty. The Project wished to get as accurate a picture as possible of the extent of income crime in the sample. Moreover, when both types of charges were associated with the same incident, it is likely that the motivation for the incident was the income-producing crime.

<sup>3</sup>Of the seven charge categories used by the Project, arrests coded as robbery were most likely to involve a mix of income and non-income charges (67%); robbery is often categorized as a "personal" rather than a "property" crime, because it necessarily involves violence or the threat of violence. Only a quarter (25%) of arrests involving other income-producing crime charges were accompanied by a non-income-producing crime charge. Non-income crime charges as a group were less likely to be mixed with income charges (8%), largely because "assaults and weapons" charges, the modal non-income category, were generally unmixed (4%). The relatively small groups of "serious violence" and "drug possession and other" charges were associated with income charges more frequently (21% each).

<sup>4</sup>"Assaults and weapons" charges did not involve events that were as serious as the name suggests. These charges were generally related to unusual situations (bar fights, domestic disputes) rather than systematic criminal involvement. This charge category was less likely to be associated with repeated arrest than income charges in general and was associated with the lowest mean charge severity score of all charges.

Table 4.1

ARREST CHARGE TYPES FOR SAMPLED ARREST

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>INCOME CHARGES:</u>		
Robbery	138	16.0%
Burglary	183	21.2
Grand larceny	99	11.4
Other income:	97	11.2
(Arson)	(5)	(.6)
(Fraud)	(12)	(1.4)
(Gambling)	(12)	(1.4)
(Pimping)	(2)	(.2)
(Drug sales)	(5)	(.6)
(Prostitution)	(2)	(.2)
(Petty larceny)	(59)	(6.8)
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>517</u>	<u>59.8</u>
<u>NON-INCOME CHARGES:</u>		
<b>Serious violence:</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>6.0</b>
(Murder & manslaughter)	(29)	(3.4)
(Kidnapping)	(1)	(.1)
(Rape)	(22)	(2.5)
<b>Assaults &amp; weapons:</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>31.4</b>
Assault	(138)	(16.0)
Weapons	(107)	(12.4)
Conduct	(20)	(2.3)
Resisting arrest	(5)	(.6)
Other non-income	(1)	(.1)
<b>Drug possession &amp; other:</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Drug possession	(24)	(2.8)
Morals	(1)	(.1)
<u>Total Non-Income</u>	<u>348</u>	<u>40.3</u>
<u>TOTAL ALL ARREST CHARGES*</u>	<u>865</u>	<u>100.1%</u>

\*Missing arrest charges = 37.

violence and "drug possession and other" were relatively rare (6% and 3%, respectively).

Charge severity varied greatly with charge type. In order to determine the relationship between charge type and charge severity, the Project assigned numbers to the felony weight of the top charge of sampled arrest.<sup>5</sup> Robbery charges had the highest mean charge severity (6.16), followed by serious violence (5.91), and burglary (5.05). Grand larceny (4.31) and "other income" (4.22) charges were charges of relatively moderate severity.<sup>6</sup> "Drug possession and other" and "assaults and weapons" had the lowest mean charge severity (3.4 and 3.33, respectively).

Table 4.2 presents the distribution of charge types for the sampled arrest by age. Entry into New York Criminal Court begins at age sixteen. Sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds were far more likely to be arrested on income charges than older respondents. The likelihood of robbery charges was strongly related to age: for 16-17 year-olds, robbery accounted for 30 percent of all charges; for those twenty-five-years-old and older, it

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<sup>5</sup>The charges were ranked as follows: A felony, 8; B felony, 7; C felony, 6; D felony, 5; E felony, 4; A misdemeanor, 3; B misdemeanor, 2; Violation, 1. For the distribution of felony and misdemeanor charges in the sample, see Chapter I (Table 1.1).

<sup>6</sup>Over a third of the grand larceny arrests (38%) were specifically identifiable as Grand Larceny Auto.

**Table 4.2**  
**CHARGE TYPE BY AGE**  
(Sampled Arrest)

CHARGE TYPE	AGE				
	16-17	18-19	20-24	25+	All ages
<u>Total income</u>	<u>77%</u>	<u>73%</u>	<u>56%</u>	<u>47%</u>	<u>60%</u>
Robbery	30	18	14	8	16
Burglary	28	26	21	15	21
Grand larceny	14	18	10	8	12
Other income	5	11	11	16	11
<u>Total non-income</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>27%</u>	<u>43%</u>	<u>54%</u>	<u>40%</u>
Serious violence	7	3	6	6	6
Assaults & weapons	14	24	34	43	31
Drug poss. & other	2	0	3	5	3
<u>Total all charges</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>99%</u>	<u>101%</u>	<u>100%</u>
N	(195)	(148)	(214)	(304)	(861)
Missing					(41)
All cases					(902)

X<sup>2</sup> = 118.17; p < .0001

accounted for only 8 percent of all charges.<sup>7</sup> The relationship was less strong for burglary arrests, although the pattern was similar. Grand larceny charges, however, were not strongly related to age, although there was a tendency for younger defendants to have such charges. "Other income" charges, in contrast, were most frequent among older respondents.

The age pattern was reversed for some non-income crimes. Respondents who were twenty-five-years-old or older were most likely to be arrested for "assaults and weapons" charges (43%); those 16-17 years-old were least likely to have such charges (14%). Among the oldest group (25+), non-income crime charges were more frequent than income crime charges. Yet, charges of serious violence, which were relatively rare, were not strongly associated with age.

A review of literature on the relationship between crime charges and age might seem to suggest a shift over time from income-producing to non-income-producing criminal activities, and/or a decided effort at "risk reduction" in regard to income crimes (the possible tendency for some older offenders to give up such crimes as robbery and turn to other offenses -- petty larceny, for example -- that seem to pose less risk of arrest, sanction or physical harm to the offender).

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<sup>7</sup>The peak age for robbery arrests in New York City (16-17) is somewhat lower than for the nation as a whole (18-19) (Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 1971). This may be because "street muggings" are the most common form of robbery in New York City and are more likely to be committed by younger perpetrators than the armed holdups of grocery stores and bars (robberies which require getaway vehicles), which are more common in other parts of the country.

It should be pointed out that a simple analysis of charge type by age can tell us little about individual criminal careers. These data are not capable of illustrating the full range and variety of possible patterns (dropout; slowing down; steady persistence or increased frequency; shifts in crime type -- income/non-income -- or within type -- from robbery to burglary to petty larceny). The apparent association between charge type and age with respect to the instant arrest may reflect a concerted shift away from income crime or, instead, the emergence of new groups of individuals, first arrested in their twenties, charged with non-income crimes. We can best address that issue, however, by looking at the arrest history information on sample members. Those data and their bearing on the relationships between charge type and age are considered in Sections A.2 and A.5 of this chapter.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4.3 presents the distribution of current arrest charges by race/ethnicity. Blacks and Hispanics were equally likely to be arrested on income charges (61%). White defendants were somewhat less likely to have such charges (52%); they were more likely than other groups to have been arrested on "assaults and weapons" charges (39%, whites; 32%, Hispanics; 29%, blacks).

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<sup>8</sup>There is a considerable literature on the phenomenon of "dropout" from or "maturing out" of crime (Sellin, 1958; Greenberg, 1979; Matza, 1964). Even in our cross-sectional sample of defendants, dropout or slowing down can be inferred from the reduced frequency of arrests with age; similarly, risk reduction can be inferred from the reduced incidence of arrests for street crime among older offenders.

Some efforts have been made to learn about moderation in crime with age (slowing down) among incarcerated groups --



Table 4.3

CHARGE TYPE BY RACE  
(Sampled Arrest)

CHARGE TYPE	RACE/ETHNICITY			
	Black	Hispanic	White	Total
<u>Total income:</u>	<u>61%</u>	<u>61%</u>	<u>52%</u>	<u>59%</u>
Robbery	22	7	9	16
Burglary	19	25	21	21
Grand larceny	9	15	15	11
Other income	11	14	7	11
<u>Total non-income:</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>48%</u>	<u>40%</u>
Serious violence	6	7	6	6
Assaults & weapons	29	32	39	31
Drug poss. & other	4	0	3	3
<u>Total all charges</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>99%</u>
N	(508)	(214)	(142)	(864)

$\chi^2 = 51.03; p < .0001$

i.e., those who do not "drop out." Some studies do show sharp declines in crime frequency with age. For example, Rand researchers interviewing 624 incarcerated male felons in five California state prisons developed a "total offense score" that took into account both the variety and frequency of self-reported crime. A dramatic decline in "offense scores" with age was reported (Peterson and Braiker, 1980).

In their analysis of FBI criminal history records for a sample of persons arrested in 1973 in Washington, D.C. on selected serious charges, Blumstein and Cohen (1979) found a similar pattern of declining individual arrest rates with age. They point out, however, that arrest rates differed among different "cohorts" (i.e., persons born in the same calendar year). They argue that offenders who were twenty in 1960 may have had different crime rates than offenders who were twenty in 1970. Indeed, in separate analyses of four different cohorts, the authors found no decline in crime frequency with age; for some crime types there was an apparent increase in frequency with age.

There were substantial race/ethnic differences in charge type within the "income" subcategory. Blacks were far more likely to be arrested for robbery (22%) than other groups (whites, 9%; Hispanics, 7%). Whites and Hispanics had a higher incidence of grand larceny arrests (15% each) than blacks (9%). All defendant groups had a considerable proportion of burglary charges, although Hispanics were most likely to be charged with burglary (25%, compared with 19% among blacks and 21% among whites).

More detailed analysis of age-race patterns reveals that the age-related decline in robbery charges does not apply equally to all ethnic groups. Robbery arrests were heavily concentrated among young black males (16-17 year-old blacks, 39%; 16-17 year-old Hispanics, 15%; 16-17 year-old whites, 11%). Robbery charges were relatively rare (8%) among defendants who were twenty-five-years-old and older; for them, there was little difference between ethnic groups in the proportion of robbery arrests (blacks, 8%; Hispanics, 6%; whites, 10%). It appears that the apparent decline in robbery with age was largely confined to blacks. For others, robbery was a relatively infrequent arrest charge and its frequency did not appear to be greatly affected by age.

There were also apparent differences in charge type for the sampled arrest among those over eighteen-years-old who had successfully completed high school and those who had not. Table 4.4 shows that defendants with high school diplomas were less likely to be arrested for property crimes with relatively

Table 4.4

CHARGE TYPE BY HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION AND BY AGE  
(Sampled Arrests of Those 18+)

COLLAPSED CHARGE TYPE	18-19		20-24		25+		ALL AGES (18+)	
	NO Dip	HS Dip	NO Dip	HS Dip	NO Dip	HS Dip	NO Dip	HS Dip
Robberies & burglaries	44%	(5)*	39%	26%	25%	19%	35%	23%
Grand larceny and other income	31	(1)	20	24	25	21	25	21
Serious violence	4	(0)	8	3	5	10	6	7
Assaults & weapons	21	(7)	32	38	40	47	32	44
Drug possession and other	0	(0)	1	9	5	3	2	5
Total N	100% (134)	- (13)	99% (155)	99% (58)	100% (192)	100% (94)	100% (481)	100% (165)

$X^2 = 8.23$   
 $p < .05$

$X^2 = 10.81$   
 $p < .05$

$X^2 = 4.47$   
n.s.

$X^2 = 30.96$   
 $p < .0001$

\*Too few cases to percentage

high charge severity (robbery and burglary) than high school dropouts. At all ages, defendants who had graduated had a higher proportion of "assaults and weapons" charges (the charge category associated with the lowest mean charge severity) than those who had not graduated.

In addition, for older sample members (25+), there was an apparent relationship between marital status and charge type for the sampled arrest. Twelve percent of older (25+) currently married defendants (who constituted 35% of the older group) were arrested on robbery or burglary charges, compared to 35 percent of older defendants who had never married (who constituted 32% of the older group). The other third of the older group, those who had common-law relationships, or who were separated or divorced, occupied a middle ground -- 21 percent were charged with robbery or burglary. Currently married older respondents, along with those who were separated or divorced, were more likely to be charged with assaults and weapons (52%) than others (34%).

## **2. Criminal Histories: Prior Arrests**

As expected, Table 4.5(A) shows that the total number of prior arrests for respondents was strongly related to their age. Overall, 69 percent of the sample for whom rap sheets were available had reported priors; 31 percent had none. The proportion of those arrested for the first time was highest among the youngest group (16-17, 61%) and lowest among the oldest group (25+, 20%). The likelihood of having seven or

Table 4.5

A. PRIOR ARRESTS BY AGE

TOTAL PRIOR ARRESTS	AGE				
	16-17	18-19	20-24	25+	All ages
0	61%	30%	22%	20%	31%
1	16	18	12	11	13
2-3	14	24	22	17	19
4-6	7	18	24	17	17
7+	2	10	19	34	19
Total N Missing	100% (165)	100% (135)	99% (196)	99% (276)	99% (772) (130)

$\chi^2 = 155.29; p < .0001$

B. PRIOR ARRESTS IN LAST 2 YEARS BY AGE  
(18 and over)

PRIOR ARRESTS IN LAST 2 YEARS	AGE				
		18-19	20-24	25+	All Ages (18+)
0		40%	44%	60%	51%
1		22	23	19	21
2-3		16	21	14	16
4+		22	11	7	12
Total N		100% (135)	99% (196)	100% (276)	100% (607)

$\chi^2 = 42.28; p < .0001$

more prior arrests was directly related to age. The strong direct relationship between age and priors can be explained by "time at risk." Because entry into New York Criminal Court begins at age sixteen, older defendants have had far more time to accumulate prior adult arrests than have defendants who are closer to age sixteen, the age of adult jurisdiction in New York State.

Table 4.5(B) controls for the "time at risk" factor by looking only at the number of recent arrests (i.e., within two years prior to the sampled arrest) and suggests an inverse relationship between age and frequency of arrest. The youngest group (16-17) are not included in this table, since they had not been "eligible" for adult arrest for two years at the time of the sampled arrest (for them, the number of total prior arrests does not differ from the number of recent prior arrests). For those eighteen-years-old and older, the frequency of arrest during the two years before the sampled arrest was inversely related to age. Younger defendants (18-19) were most likely to have had recent arrests (60%) and most likely to have had four or more of them (22%). The oldest defendants were least likely to have had recent arrests (40%) and least likely to have had four or more of them (7%).

Recent arrest data serve to qualify the direct relationship between total prior arrests and age; older respondents generally had more total priors than younger respondents, but younger respondents generally had far more recent arrests. Although 80 percent of the 25+ group had priors, half that

proportion (40%) had recent priors, suggesting that a "slowing down" process may have taken place.<sup>9</sup>

Both the total number of priors and the frequency of recent priors differ somewhat by race/ethnicity. In terms of arrests, white respondents were most likely to have been arrested for the first time (43% compared to 29% of minority respondents) and least likely to have had four or more priors (24%, compared to 38% of minority respondents). Similarly, white respondents have the fewest recent arrests (65% no recent arrests, and 6% with four or more; compared to 51% of minorities with no recent arrests, and 12% with four or more). Minority groups did not differ significantly from each other in terms of the number of priors and recent priors, although blacks tended to have more prior arrests than Hispanics.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4.6(A) shows that respondents arrested with top charges of "drug possession and other," and "other income" (mostly petty larceny) were those most likely to have had prior

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<sup>9</sup>However, we cannot determine definitely whether older defendants were once similar to younger defendants in arrest frequency, but have subsequently slowed down. Our dataset was not large enough to permit analysis of arrest frequencies at different ages among different cohorts (see Footnote 8 above.)

<sup>10</sup>Within age/race-ethnic groups, it appeared that young Hispanics were more likely to have prior records than blacks; among older minorities, blacks were more likely to have prior arrest records and to have more extensive arrest records than Hispanics. The oldest Hispanics (25+) did not differ greatly from others in terms of total arrest history, but they were considerably less likely than other groups to have had recent priors (29%, compared to 44% of blacks and 41% of whites).

Table 4.6

A. PRIOR ARRESTS BY CHARGE TYPE

CHARGE TYPE	0	1	2-3	4+	TOTAL	N
Robbery	34%	10	24	32	100%	124
Burglary	30%	13	20	37	100%	168
Grand larceny	32%	17	17	33	99%	87
Other income	22%	15	16	47	100%	86
Serious violence	38%	10	20	32	100%	50
Assaults & weapons	33%	12	18	36	100%	223
Drug poss. & other	19%	29	14	38	100%	21
All charges	31	13	19	36	99%	759
Missing						143
Total						902

$\chi^2 = 23.03; n.s.$

B. RECENT PRIOR ARRESTS BY CHARGE TYPE  
(2 Years Preceding the Sampled Arrest)

CHARGE TYPE	0	1	2-3	4+	TOTAL	N
Robbery	48%	18	21	14	101%	124
Burglary	48%	23	17	12	100%	168
Grand larceny	51%	21	11	17	100%	87
Other income	53%	16	19	12	100%	86
Serious violence	64%	20	6	10	100%	50
Assaults & weapons	60%	18	15	7	100%	223
Drug poss. & other	43%	43	14	0	100%	21
All charges	53%	20	16	11	100%	759
Missing						143
Total						902

$\chi^2 = 29.66; p < .05$



arrests (81% and 78%, respectively.) This association is at least partly related to age; older offenders were more likely to be arrested on these charges and more likely to have prior arrests. Those arrests on "serious violence" charges (not associated with age differences) were least likely to have had prior arrests (62%).

Table 4.6(B) shows that defendants charged with "drug possession and other," robbery, and burglary were most likely to have had recent priors (57%, 52% and 52%, respectively). Approximately half of those charged with grand larceny (49%) and "other income" offenses (47%) had recent priors; those charged with grand larceny had the highest proportion of respondents with four or more recent priors (17%, compared to 10% of respondents with all other charges). Those charged with "serious violence" and "assaults and weapons" were least likely to have recent priors (36% and 40%, respectively).

Income charges were generally associated with a relatively high frequency of recent arrest. Individuals with extensive recent prior arrest records (who tended to be relatively young) were somewhat more likely to have been charged on the sampled arrest with income offenses associated with a higher felony weight (robbery & burglary) than were those individuals (often older) who had the most extensive total prior records ("other income").

Nearly a third of the sample (31%) had previously been incarcerated -- 15 percent for a year or less, cumulatively; 16 percent for over a year, cumulatively. Older defendants were

far more likely to have been previously incarcerated -- and incarcerated for longer periods -- than young defendants. Whereas 14 percent of the 16-19 year-olds had ever been incarcerated, 38 percent of the 20-24 year-olds and 45 percent of the 25+ group had been. Nearly a third (32%) of the oldest group (25+) had previously been in jail or prison for more than a year.

Individuals arrested on less serious income charges ("other income") were most likely to have been previously incarcerated (37% compared to 31% of others); those arrested on robbery charges were least likely to have been previously incarcerated (23%). The relationship between charge type and prior incarceration seems largely related to age. Robbery charges were heavily concentrated among the young, many of whom had no prior arrests; less serious income charges were characteristic of older offenders with extensive arrest histories.

Black defendants were more likely to have been previously incarcerated (36%) than Hispanics (27%) or whites (21%). These race/ethnic differences in prior incarceration were largely a function of differences in the charge type of prior arrests and in the extent of prior records (as mentioned previously, the race/ethnic groups did not differ according to age).

### 3. Case Outcomes of the Sampled Arrest

Overall, 56 percent of the sample for whom dispositional data were available were convicted (pled guilty or found guilty) for the sampled arrest; 44 percent were not convicted (case dismissed, adjourned in contemplation of dismissal (ACD),

or ended in acquittal).<sup>11</sup> There was little difference between age groups and race/ethnic groups in the likelihood of conviction, although whites were somewhat less likely to be convicted (52%) than others (57%). This small difference may be related to differences in charge type.

There was a strong relationship between charge type and the likelihood of conviction. "Assaults and weapons" charges (the kinds of charges on which white respondents were disproportionately likely to be arrested) were least likely to end in conviction (41%). In contrast, serious violence (71%), burglary (70%), robbery (64%) and "other income" (64%) were very likely to lead to conviction. Top charges of "drug possession and other" (55%) and grand larceny (51%) occupied an intermediate position in terms of the likelihood of conviction.

Incarceration rates were also strongly related to charge type. Of those for whom data on incarceration were available,

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<sup>11</sup>Data on both conviction and incarceration for the sampled arrest were more likely to be missing (N=657) than data on the charge type (N=865), for which we had data from CJA to supplement our review of "rap sheets." For various reasons, the "rap sheets" obtained may not have reported final case disposition. It is possible that the conviction and incarceration rates of the defendant sample are somewhat inflated, because missing data (no rap sheets or incomplete information about case outcomes on rap sheets) may have reflected the fact that cases were sealed (dismissals, ACDs, acquittals). It is difficult to determine where sealing has taken place or where data were simply missing for other reasons.

It is apparent, however, that the rate of dismissals in Brooklyn in 1979 was somewhat higher than our data suggest. According to the Second Annual Report of the Chief Administrator of the Courts for New York State, in Brooklyn, in 1979, 50 percent of all disposed cases ended in dismissal and 50 percent ended in conviction. We suspect, therefore, that a substantial proportion of the sample cases for which dispositional data were not available ended in dismissal.

19 percent -- 35 percent of those convicted -- were sentenced to either jail or prison. Respondents arrested on charges of burglary, serious violence, robbery and grand larceny had the highest ratio of incarceration to conviction (49%, 46%, 45% and 44%, respectively). In contrast, there was a relatively low likelihood of incarceration for individuals convicted following arrest charges of "drug possession and other," (0%), assaults and weapons (16%) or "other income" (27%).<sup>12</sup>

There was little apparent relationship between incarceration rates and age. Multiple regression analysis of relationships between incarceration and charge type, charge severity, age, race/ethnicity, school status, employment status and prior arrests revealed that charge type and charge severity alone were significantly related to the extent of incarceration for the sampled arrest.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Charge categories differed in terms of the likelihood of both conviction and incarceration. Burglary, serious violence and robbery all carried relatively high likelihood of conviction and, if conviction occurred, of incarceration. Grand larceny arrest charges had a relatively low likelihood of conviction, but a relatively high likelihood of incarceration for those convicted. Respondents arrested on "other income" charges were relatively likely to be convicted, but, if convicted, not particularly likely to be incarcerated. Finally, those arrested on assaults and weapons, drug possession and other non-income charges had a relatively low likelihood of conviction and, if conviction occurred, of incarceration.

<sup>13</sup>Although race/ethnicity did not emerge as independently related to incarceration in the multiple regression, it should be noted that blacks were far more likely to be incarcerated for the sampled arrest than others (40%, compared to 29% for Hispanics and 19% for whites). These differences, however, were strongly related to differences in charge type and prior criminal justice involvements.

Although overall there was little relationship between incarceration for the sampled arrest and age, for respondents arrested on burglary and grand larceny charges the likelihood of being incarcerated if convicted did increase strongly with age. It is likely that criminal history, the fact and extent of prior records, had a relatively strong effect on the kinds of sanctions imposed for these respondents.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Subsequent Arrests

Table 4.7 presents the distribution of subsequent arrests by age. In the year following the sampled arrest, 44 percent of the sample were rearrested -- 24 percent once, 17 percent two times, and 4 percent three times or more. There was a strong inverse relationship between subsequent arrest and age. The youngest defendants (16-17) were most likely to have had subsequent arrests (60%), and the oldest defendants were least likely to have had them (27%). Eighteen- to nineteen-year-olds were most likely to have had four or more subsequent arrests in the follow-up year (7%, compared to 3% of others). In general, younger defendants (16-19) had a substantially greater probability of more frequent subsequent arrests than did older defendants.

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<sup>14</sup>Additional evidence concerning the influence of prior arrest history on sentencing is seen in the fact that individuals who had been incarcerated before the sampled arrest were significantly more likely to be incarcerated for that arrest. Only 9 percent of those not previously incarcerated were incarcerated for the sampled arrest. In contrast, 38 percent of those previously incarcerated for a year or less and 49 percent of those previously incarcerated for more than a year received an incarcerative sentence for the sampled arrest.

Table 4.7  
**SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS BY AGE**  
 (One Year Follow-up)

SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS	AGE				
	16-17	18-19	20-24	25+	All ages
0	40%	41%	57%	73%	56%
1	32	29	26	15	24
2	26	22	16	8	17
3+	2	7	2	4	4
Total N	100% (165)	99% (135)	101% (196)	100% (276)	101% (772)
Missing					(130)

$\chi^2 = 73.75; p < .0001$

There was no significant relationship between race/ethnic groups and the likelihood of subsequent arrests. Whites were somewhat less likely to have been rearrested (38%) than others (blacks, 46%; Hispanics, 42%). Blacks were more likely to have been rearrested two or more times (23%) than others (Hispanics, 17%; whites, 13%).

There were strong differences in the likelihood of re-arrest according to charge type on the sampled arrest. Respondents charged with "other income," grand larceny and burglary were most likely to have been rearrested in the follow-up year

(55%, 51% and 51%, respectively, compared to 35% of those with other charges).

Table 4.8 presents the distribution of those rearrested in the follow-up year by charge type and age. Although overall there was an association between income charges and the likelihood of subsequent arrest, the difference in the frequency of subsequent arrest between individuals arrested on income and non-income charges was greatest for older respondents. The youngest respondents (16-17), in fact, were slightly more likely to have been rearrested if they were charged with non-income offenses for the sampled arrest. The likelihood of rearrest for those charged with "assaults and weapons" offenses was inversely related to age.

The extent of rearrest among those charged with income offenses for the sampled arrest was also related to age. Among the two youngest groups (16-17, 18-19) burglary and grand larceny charges were most likely to be associated with rearrest. Among older respondents (20-24, 25+), "other income" charges were most likely to be associated with rearrest. Among all age groups, robbery charges were least likely to be associated with rearrest; this is particularly true among the youngest groups (16-17, 18-19), who were generally characterized by high levels of rearrest and continuing criminality.

It is perhaps surprising that the very young (16-17) charged with "assaults and weapons" charges were more likely to be rearrested than those charged with robbery. It is possible that young people charged with robbery dropped out of crime in

Table 4.8  
PERCENT REARRESTED BY CHARGE TYPE AND BY AGE

CHARGE TYPE	AGE				
	16-17	18-19	20-24	25+	All ages
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>58% (125)</u>	<u>60% (96)</u>	<u>46% (112)</u>	<u>37% (132)</u>	<u>50% (465)</u>
Robbery	42 (52)	43 (23)	42 (26)	30 (23)	41 (124)
Burglary	76 (45)	68 (37)	45 (44)	33 (42)	55 (168)
Grand larceny	65 (20)	70 (23)	33 (21)	35 (23)	51 (87)
Other income	(4)* (8)	54 (13)	62 (21)	45 (44)	51 (86)
<b>Total non-income</b>	<u>62% (34)</u>	<u>51% (35)</u>	<u>39% (82)</u>	<u>17% (141)</u>	<u>33% (292)</u>
Serious violence	36 (14)	(2)* (5)	43 (14)	12 (17)	30 (50)
Assaults and weapons	76 (17)	53 (30)	40 (62)	15 (112)	32 (221)
Drug possession and other	(3)* (3)	-- --	(1)* (6)	42 (12)	42 (21)
<b>Total All Charges</b>	<u>59% (159)</u>	<u>58% (131)</u>	<u>43% (194)</u>	<u>27% (273)</u>	<u>43% (757)</u>
Missing					(152)

Note: In this table, the number reported in parentheses represents the total number (or base number) of respondents in a given category of the independent variable. The actual number of cases represented by each percentage can be calculated by multiplying the percentage by the relevant base number.

\*Too few cases to percentage



the follow-up year after initial criminal justice contact. It is also possible that they did not reappear in our sample because they were off the streets for much of the time, incarcerated or detained before disposition for their first offense.<sup>15</sup>

The likelihood of subsequent arrest was also strongly related to the extent of recent prior arrests, although there was no apparent relationship between subsequent arrests and total prior arrests. This is not surprising, given the fact that both subsequent and recent prior arrests were most frequent among young respondents; the total number of prior arrests, on the other hand, was directly related to age. Table 4.9 shows that those with no recent prior arrests were least likely to have had subsequent arrests (32% with subsequent arrests); those with the greatest number of recent priors (4+) were most likely to have subsequent arrests (72% with subse-

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<sup>15</sup>The project did not explore the relationship between time at risk and subsequent arrest in the follow-up year because data on the extent of pre-trial detention or the length of actual time served were not available. We do know that for 16-17 year-olds robbery charges led to incarceration for almost a third (31%) (more than any other charge type). The impact of incarceration on subsequent arrests in the follow-up year may, therefore, have been considerable for the young.

It should also be noted, however, that, for all age groups robbery was far less likely to be associated with rearrest than other income offenses. Yet, burglary charges, which were frequently associated with rearrest (55%), were more likely to lead to incarceration than robbery charges which were not (41%). Analysis of the relationship between incarceration for the sampled arrest and subsequent arrests in the year following that arrest by charge type reveals that, for those arrested on robbery charges, incarcerated respondents were less likely to be rearrested (32%) than respondents who were not incarcerated (43%). For those arrested on burglary charges, the reverse was

quent arrests). The extent of recent priors was also related to the likelihood of having had four or more subsequent arrests.

Table 4.9  
SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS BY RECENT PRIORS

SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS	RECENT PRIORS				
	0	1	2-3	4+	Total
0	68%	49%	45%	28%	56%
1	21	25	28	27	24
2	9	24	24	28	17
3+	1	2	3	16	3
Total N	99% (414)	100% (155)	100% (120)	99% (85)	100% (774)

$\chi^2 = 104.69; p < .0001$

true: incarcerated respondents were slightly more likely to be rearrested in the follow-up year (60%) -- and more likely to be frequently rearrested (35% more than once) -- than those who were not incarcerated (55% rearrested, 24% more than once).

For respondents charged with burglary, incarceration (or reduced "time at risk") did not have an apparent effect on rearrest. Vera's earlier study of felony arrests (Vera Institute, 1981) suggests that most respondents incarcerated on burglary charges were jailed for short periods as misdemeanants. For them, the fact of incarceration was related to arrest frequency; they remained high-frequency offenders after release.

For respondents charged with robbery, incarceration did appear to have some impact on rearrest, although far less than we might expect. Vera's study of felony arrests reveals that periods of incarceration for those arrested on robbery charges were considerably longer than for burglary (robbery arrests frequently led to Supreme Court, felony dispositions and prison time). Even so, only 43 percent of non-incarcerated respondents charged with robbery had rearrests -- far fewer than respondents with any other income charge, incarcerated or not. The evidence suggests that robbery charges may, in fact, be associated with either low-rate arrest patterns or relatively short-term criminal careers.

5. Criminal History Patterns

Together, data on prior and subsequent arrests serve to generate information on criminal histories as a whole. Table 4.10 shows the distribution of respondents according to whether they had prior arrests and/or subsequent arrests by age. Nineteen percent of all respondents had neither prior nor subsequent arrests; 37 percent had prior, but no subsequent arrests; 12 percent had subsequent, but no prior arrests; and 31 percent had both prior and subsequent arrests.

Table 4.10

TOTAL ARREST HISTORY BY AGE  
(Prior and Subsequent Arrests)

ARREST HISTORY	AGE				
	16-17	18-19	20-24	25+	All ages
No priors/No subs	27%	16%	17%	17%	19%
Priors/No subs	13	25	40	56	37
No Priors/Subs	34	14	6	3	12
Priors/Subs	26	44	37	24	31
Total N	100% (165)	99% (135)	100% (196)	100% (276)	99% (772)

$\chi^2 = 171.98; p < .0001$

The youngest group (16-17) was most likely to have had only one arrest -- the sampled arrest -- (27%, compared to 17% of all others) and most likely to report subsequents without priors (34%, compared to 6% of all others). The frequency of "one arrest only"

and "subsequents, no priors" for 16-17 year-olds is clearly related to their age-truncated prior adult arrest histories. This group was underrepresented in terms of prior arrests because many had just become eligible for processing in the adult courts. Their subsequent arrest records, however, suggest that they were one of the most criminally active age groups (60% with subsequent arrests compared to 27% of the oldest group). Those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four were most likely to have had both prior and subsequent arrests (18-19 year-olds, 44%; 20-24 year-olds, 37%). The oldest group (25+) had the greatest proportion of prior arrests without subsequent arrests (56%, compared to 27% of others). Overall, a picture of acceleration among younger respondents and deceleration among older respondents is suggested by these data.

Race/ethnic groups differed significantly in the extent of prior and subsequent arrest patterns. Blacks were least likely to have only one arrest (neither priors nor subsequents: blacks, 16%; Hispanics, 21%; whites, 28%) and most likely to have both prior and subsequent arrests (blacks, 34%; Hispanics, 29%; whites, 24%).

There was also a significant relationship between the charge type of the sampled arrest and criminal histories. Table 4.11 shows that charges of burglary, "other income," and "drug possession and other" appeared to be associated with more extensive patterns of arrest. Individuals charged with these offenses had relatively low likelihoods of having only one arrest recorded (11%, 14% and 19%, respectively, compared to

Table 4.11

PRIOR AND SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS BY CHARGE TYPE  
(Table is read vertically)

CHARGE TYPE	No Priors/ No Subs	Priors/ No Subs	No Priors/ Subs	Priors/ Subs	TOTAL
<u>Total income</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>100%</u> <u>(465)</u>
Robbery	20%	40	14	27	101% (124)
Burglary	11%	33	19	36	99% (168)
Grand larceny	20%	30	13	38	101% (87)
Other income	14%	35	8	43	100% (86)
<u>Total non-income</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>100%</u> <u>(294)</u>
Serious violence	36%	34	2	28	100% (50)
Assaults and weapons	24%	44	9	23	100% (223)
Drug possession and other	14%	43	5	38	100% (21)
<u>Total all charges</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>100%</u> <u>(759)</u>
Missing					(143)
Total					(902)

$\chi^2 = 49.53; p < .0001$

24% for those arrested on other charges); they also had a relatively high likelihood of having both prior and subsequent arrest records (36%, 43% and 38%, respectively, compared to 27% for others). "Serious violence" and "assaults and weapons" charges, in contrast, were most likely to be associated with neither prior nor subsequent arrests, (36% and 24%, respectively) and less likely than most charges to be associated with both prior and subsequent arrests (28% and 23%, respectively).

Thus far, we have identified patterns of criminal careers simply in terms of the presence or absence of arrests before and after the sampled arrest. We have also examined the relationship between these career patterns, and the sample members' age, race/ethnicity and category of arrest charge. We look now at the content of those careers in the two years prior to and the year following the sampled arrest to see whether the sample members tended to specialize in particular kinds of offenses.

Review of individual rap sheets indicates that most defendants had a mix of specific arrest charges over this period, rather than identifiable charge specialties. There were few individuals with all robbery charges, all grand larceny charges, or all "assaults and weapons" charges. However, there was some patterning in terms of the broader categories of income versus non-income crimes. Nearly half (45%) the sample had only income-oriented arrest charges over the three-year period studied in detail. Another fifth (18%) had a mix of charge types in which income charges were predominant. Ap-

proximately a fifth (22%) had only non-income charges.<sup>16</sup> Only 4 percent had a mix of charge types in which non-income charges were predominant. Ten percent had an equal mix of income and non-income charges.

Table 4.12 presents a summary of mixed and unmixed recent career patterns by the extent of prior and subsequent arrests. Although income charges predominate among those with only the sampled arrest (neither prior nor subsequent arrests), this group was far more likely than other groups to have had non-income charges alone -- (45% compared to 17% of others.)<sup>17</sup> The extent of "non-income only" charges for this group was greater than the extent of both "non-income only" and "predominantly non-income" added together for any other group.

Among higher frequency defendants (those with both prior and subsequent arrests) there was considerable mixing of crime types. Nevertheless, "income only" and "predominantly income" career patterns account for the overwhelming majority of career patterns for those with both prior and subsequent arrests (72% together, 33% and 39%, respectively) -- far more than for any other criminal history pattern.

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<sup>16</sup> Respondents with non-income charges only were far more likely to have had neither prior nor subsequent arrests (76%) (i.e., the sampled arrest only) than were those with income charges only (44%). There were very few respondents with more than two recent non-income top charges. Respondents with a series of recent income charges, on the other hand, were not uncommon among those with only income charges.

<sup>17</sup> Older defendants without criminal histories beyond the sampled arrest were far more likely to have been arrested on non-income charges than others. There was a dramatic shift with age in the proportion of non-income arrests only among those with neither prior nor subsequent arrests (16-17 year-olds, 18%; 18-19 year-olds, 36%; 20-24 year-olds, 52%; 25+, 68%).

Table 4.12  
 RECENT ARREST PATTERNS (Income/Non-income)  
 BY TOTAL ARREST HISTORY (Prior and Subsequent Arrests)

RECENT ARREST PATTERNS	TOTAL ARREST HISTORY					All arrest history patterns
	No Priors/ No Subs	Priors/ No Subs	No Priors/ Subs	Priors/ Subs	All arrest history patterns	
Income only	55%	48%	54%	33%	45%	
Predominantly income	-	12	13	39	18	
Non-income only	45	28	13	5	22	
Predominantly non-income	-	3	5	8	4	
Equal income/ non-income	-	9	15	14	10	
Total N	100% (148)	100% (286)	100% (95)	99% (242)	99% (771)	

X<sup>2</sup> = 215.70; p < .0001



There was also a dramatic reduction with age in the extent to which income charges were characteristic of recent career patterns. Among the 16-19 year-olds, 77 percent of recent careers were categorized as income only and predominantly income. Among those 20-24, 60 percent of recent careers were so categorized. Among those twenty-five-years-old and older, 49 percent of recent careers were so categorized.

In addition, among the most active defendants (those with both prior and subsequent arrests) younger groups were also most likely to have income only and predominantly income charges (16-19, 82%; 20-24, 69%; 25+, 61%). Younger respondents (16-19) with both prior and subsequent arrests did not differ greatly from other younger respondents in terms of the rate of income/predominantly income recent careers. Older respondents (25+) with both prior and subsequent arrests, however, were far more likely than other older respondents to have income-oriented career patterns.

It is among the oldest group of defendants (25+) that the concept of changing patterns in the course of a criminal career can best be examined -- although such an analysis applies only to those with identifiable career patterns. Younger groups simply have not had enough time at risk of adult arrest or enough adult arrests for patterns to be observable. Many of the young respondents will eventually drop out of crime, or stop getting arrested. Yet the oldest group represents, in large part, a group that continued to get arrested past the age when many young property criminals are thought to abandon property crime.

There are three separate criminal patterns visible in the oldest (25+) group of defendants. The first does not involve a criminal career. Nearly a fifth of the oldest group (17%) had neither prior nor subsequent arrests. They were new entrants to adult criminal courts. Most of them (62%) were arrested on "assaults and weapons" charges. This group was disproportionately white, compared to the defendant sample as a whole; far more likely to have graduated from high school than other older defendants; and somewhat more likely to be currently married than others.

The largest 25+ group (56%) -- those with priors and no subsequent arrests -- seemed to be slowing down the extent of their criminal involvements. Although all of them, by definition, had prior arrest records, only 39 percent of this subgroup had been recently arrested (i.e., within the two years preceding the sampled arrest). These individuals were also more likely to have been arrested on non-income (54%) than income charges (46%) on the sampled arrest. They were disproportionately minority. In many respects, they were generally representative of the 25+ defendant group as a whole in terms of marital status, educational achievement, prior incarceration and incarceration for the sampled arrest. We might think of them as late, but probably eventual, "maturers out."

A third older (25+) group, those with both prior and subsequent arrests (24% of those 25 and older), seem to have been chronic, high-rate offenders. Most (76%) had been arrested at least once within the two years preceding the sampled

arrest. Many (47%) had been incarcerated before the sampled arrest, and over a third (36%) received an incarcerative sentence for that arrest. They were less likely than others of their age group to have been married or to have a high school diploma (22% had GEDs, often earned in prison). Although many had some non-income charges in the course of their arrest histories, they were more likely than other older offenders to have been charged with a property offense (burglary, grand larceny, or, most often, "other income") on the sampled arrest (72%). This group does not appear to have "slowed down" their income-oriented criminal involvements, but aggregate data suggest that they may have engaged in "risk reduction" -- the shift from high-risk, dangerous property crime (robbery, for example) into petty larceny -- criminal activity which is less likely to lead to injury or incarceration.

To determine whether older defendants did in fact engage in "risk reduction," we examined the early arrests recorded on the rap sheets of respondents who were twenty-five-years-old and older to identify the charge types of the first two recorded arrests. Older respondents without priors were not included in this review, since their first arrest did not differ from the sampled arrest. This review revealed that, although a few older respondents did exhibit patterns of "risk reduction," most older respondents had arrest histories characterized by relatively stable offense severity. There were only a few individuals first arrested on charges of robbery who had a series of petty larceny arrests in their later careers. Most

careers were characterized by relatively low-severity offense patterns. Many older respondents were, in fact, first arrested for either petty larceny or drug possession.

As a whole, the rap sheet review led us to suspect that there might be cohort differences between older and younger respondents in terms of the charge types of their first arrests. To determine if there were in fact such differences in early arrest charges, we compared the arrest charges of 16-19 year-olds who had been arrested for the first time in the 1979 study with the first two arrest charges of older (25+) respondents with priors -- separating older respondents with both prior and subsequent arrests from older respondents with prior arrests only. Table 4.13 shows that the first arrests of 16-19 year-olds in the 1979 sample were far more likely to involve robbery and burglary than the first arrests of older respondents, who were more likely to have charges of "other income," "assaults and weapons" and "drug possession."

Among older respondents with prior, but no subsequent arrests, early charges of "assaults and weapons" were more frequent than for older respondents with continuing criminal careers. This is in keeping with their recent patterns of non-income orientation. A review of rap sheets for this group revealed that, although there did seem to be a recent "slowing down" in arrest frequency, their early careers were generally characterized by lower frequency offense patterns (i.e., moderate arrest frequencies) than those of older offenders with both prior and subsequent arrests, who began their careers as high-frequency offenders and remained high-frequency offenders.

Table 4.13

FIRST ADULT ARREST CHARGES FOR SELECTED AGE/ARREST PATTERN SUBGROUPS

CHARGE TYPE	Arrest charges: 16-19 year-olds First arrest only	Early arrest charges:* 25+ Prior, no subsequent arrests	Early arrest charges 25+ Prior and subsequent arrests
<u>Total income charges</u>	<u>79%</u>	<u>45%</u>	<u>56%</u>
Robbery	27	9	8
Burglary	31	9	14
Grand larceny	14	12	12
Other income	3	15	22
<u>Total non-income charges</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>56%</u>	<u>45%</u>
Serious violence	7	5	3
Assaults and weapons	15	28	21
Drug possession and other	0	23	21
<u>Total all charges</u>	<u>101%</u> <u>(138)</u>	<u>101%</u> <u>(278)</u>	<u>101%</u> <u>(146)</u>

\*We counted arrest charges of the first two arrests recorded for older (25+) respondents.

There are several possible explanations of the differences in charge type of the first arrests of 16-19 year-olds arrested for the first time in the 1979 sample and of the early arrests of older (25+) respondents with priors. These differences might be explained as cohort differences. Most older respondents were first arrested in the sixties and early seventies, a period in which the volume of robbery complaints in New York City increased over 400 percent (1966 - 23,539; 1980 - 100,550) and the proportion of reported felonies constituted by robbery complaints more than doubled (6%, 1966; 15%, 1980).<sup>18</sup> Apparently, there has been considerable change in the kinds of criminal activity engaged in by the young in the past fifteen years -- particularly the increase in robbery among young black males.

Other cohort differences may be more related to changes in enforcement and charging patterns than changes in behavior. In the early to mid-seventies, police enforcement of misdemeanor drug possession offenses fell off considerably; possession of marijuana in small amounts was reduced to a non-criminal violation. It is not surprising that many older respondents were first arrested on drug possession charges in the sixties, when drug possession was far more heavily enforced. In addition, it is possible (although not verifiable) that some behaviors now charged as robbery at arrest were charged as "larceny against

<sup>18</sup>Source: Statistical Report: Complaints and Arrests, Crime Analysis Section, N.Y.C. Police Department, 1960-1982. We use 1966 as a comparison year because it corresponds to a major reform in crime reporting procedures, the beginning of the system currently in use.

the person" in earlier years. (In the neighborhood study, we observed such a change in charging patterns when chain snatching on the streets and subways reached epidemic proportions.)

It is also possible that individuals charged with robbery and burglary on their first arrests in the sixties were less likely than other offenders to become chronic, high-rate offenders. The relatively low rearrest rates among currently young respondents charged with robbery in our sample suggests that drop out from crime following robbery arrests may be very frequent.

#### 6. Risk Perception and the Contexts of Criminal Activity

The defendant survey itself tells us little about actual criminal behavior -- the underlying events that led to the arrest charges reviewed above. Although only a subset of the sample responded to the Project's follow-up interview request,<sup>19</sup> that effort produced additional data regarding other aspects of respondents' criminal behavior -- particularly the extent to which crimes were planned, performed with others, committed in respondents' own neighborhoods, etc. The follow-up interview also explored respondents' perceptions of the riskiness of various criminal activities, their expectations of financial returns to such activities, and their perception of the prevalence of criminal activity in their own neighborhoods.

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<sup>19</sup>Only 39 percent of the subsample (N=399) asked to come to Project offices to respond to follow-up questions actually did so. Nevertheless, analysis of the characteristics of follow-up respondents reveals that they did not differ from the sample as a whole in terms of age, race, arrest charge, or educational attainment.

In the follow-up interview, the Project staff also questioned respondents on their perceptions of the risks of injury and arrest associated with six specific crime types (burglary, robbery, "grab and run" thefts, shoplifting, marijuana sales, and operating "con games").<sup>20</sup> The Project staff also asked respondents to estimate the potential weekly earnings of individuals engaging in such crimes.

Figure 4.1 depicts the extent to which respondents, on average, found these six crime activities to be "very risky," "somewhat risky," or "not risky" in terms of both arrest and injury, and reports their estimates of average weekly returns to such activities.<sup>21</sup> There was general agreement among respondents on the extent to which different crime types were associated with relatively high risk and relatively high economic return.<sup>22</sup> Respondents tended to perceive robbery and burglary as posing the greatest risk of injury and arrest; "grab and run" thefts were seen as equally risky in terms of arrest, but slightly less likely to lead to injury. Con games (generally "three card monte") were seen as more than "somewhat

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<sup>20</sup>Con games were exemplified by "three card monte," a fraudulent gambling enterprise widely engaged in by young hustlers deceiving the unwary on New York City streets.

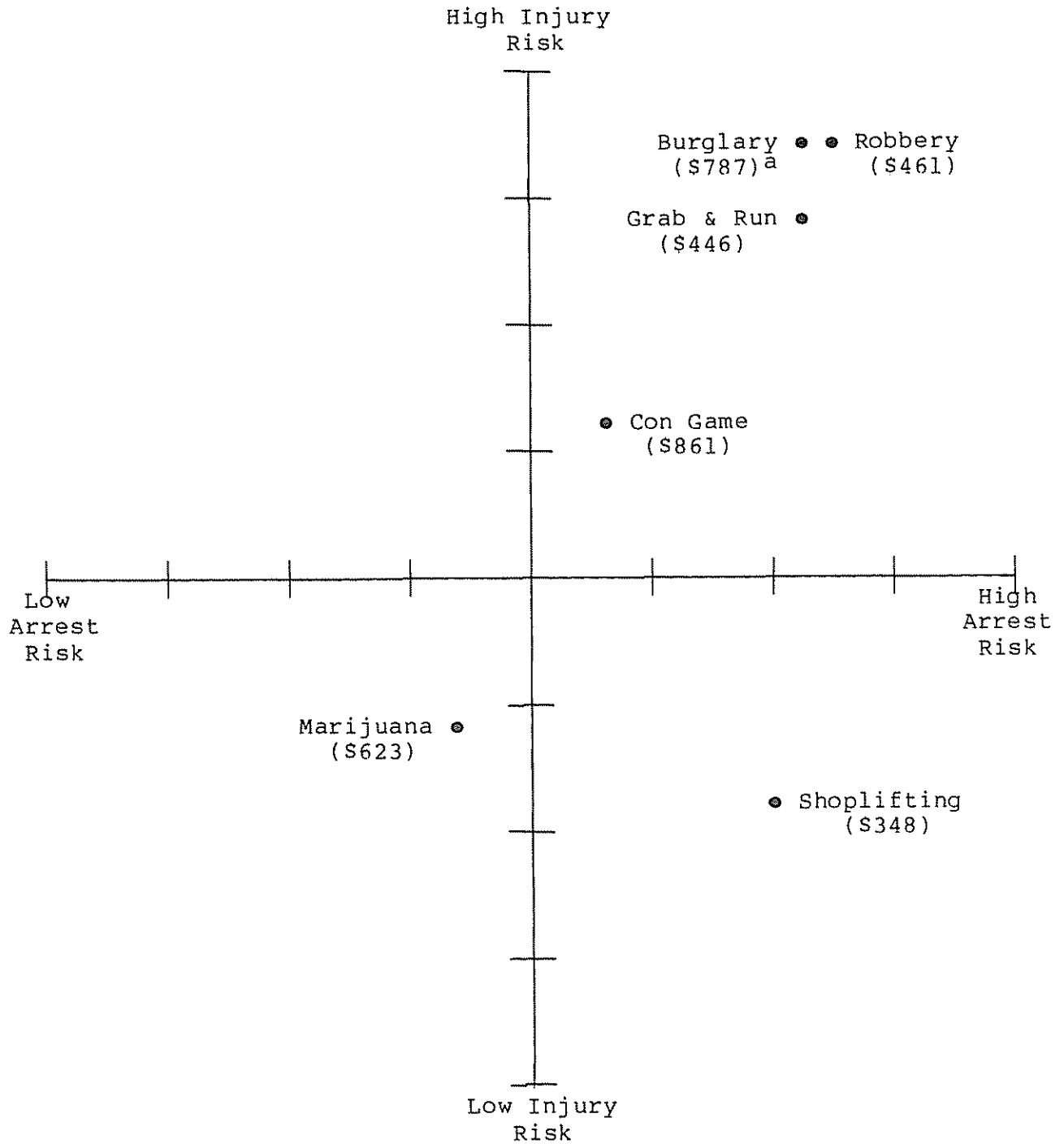
<sup>21</sup>For each of the sample crimes, respondents were asked to describe "What would the risk of (arrest, injury) be?" Answers were in the categories: "very risky," "somewhat risky" and "not risky at all." The point of intersection of the injury/arrest risk axis in Figure 4.1 is the "somewhat risky" response category.

<sup>22</sup>Street crimes were generally seen as "high risk," "moderate return" by respondents. The neighborhood study, however, and other research on criminal income leads us to suspect that respondents' estimates are greatly inflated (the "best you can do" rather than the typical return to street crime).



Figure 4.1

DEFENDANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RISKS AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS  
ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES



<sup>a</sup> Dollar amounts in parentheses refer to estimates of average weekly earnings for the respective crime types.

risky," in terms of both arrest and injury, but less so than typical property crimes. Both shoplifting and marijuana were seen as "low risk" crimes, in terms of injury; shoplifting, however, was perceived as having relatively high risk of arrest. Marijuana sales were clearly seen as the least risky of all criminal activities on both dimensions.

Respondents' estimates of the potential dollar returns to different activities led the Project staff to wonder why respondents would engage in high-risk activities, such as robbery and burglary, when there were lower risk alternatives, believed to be equally lucrative.<sup>23</sup> One possible explanation is offered by respondents' perceptions of the comparative skill involved in different activities. Both "con games" and "shoplifting," which were seen as relatively low-risk activities, were also seen as involving considerable skill by respondents. The Project staff also speculated that the lowest risk activity (marijuana sales) probably involved considerable investments of capital (up-front money) and time and, therefore, may not have been a viable alternative for many.

Differences in risk perceptions were associated with differences in charge type for the sampled arrest. Those arrested on non-income charges perceived the risks associated with the six income crimes explored to be greater than did those arrested on income charges. They also estimated the economic

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<sup>23</sup>The Project staff, of course, knew nothing about the extent to which survey respondents in fact engaged in criminal activities involving low risk of arrest. It only knew that many were charged with relatively high-risk, low-return offenses.

returns to these crimes as, on average, lower than respondents arrested on income charges. Apparently, risk perception and expected returns to criminal activity were to some extent related to criminal behavior. Nevertheless, respondents, particularly young respondents, were very likely to be charged with offenses which they perceived as involving high risk of both injury and arrest; this suggests that their criminal activity was as much influenced by their opportunities (skill level; capital; connections) as it was by their perceptions of risk.

Responses to other follow-up questions indicated that, for many, crime was a relatively common occurrence in their neighborhoods. Over two-thirds (68%) characterized their neighborhoods as "very tough" and half of the respondents (52%) reported that they had themselves been victims of crime. Many (62%) indicated that friends supported their criminal involvement, although fewer than half (40%) reported that most of their friends were involved in criminal activity. Forty-three percent indicated that other family members had been arrested.

Although as a whole these responses seem to point to individual neighborhoods as the locus for group-based and, in some cases, group-supported criminal activities, there were strong differences among race/ethnic groups in the extent to which this was so. Although white defendants were as likely to have been victimized as others, they were less likely to report that they lived in a tough neighborhood (42%, compared to 70% of others); to report that other family members had been arrested

(23%, compared to 45% of others); or to report that most friends were involved in criminal activity (30%, compared to 40% of others). It appears that white defendants were less like other relatively young males in their neighborhoods in terms of their criminal involvement than were minority defendants.

Respondents of different ages also differed in the extent to which their neighborhoods or peer groups were associated with criminality. Older respondents (25+) were less likely to report that they lived in tough neighborhoods (52%) than others (76%).<sup>24</sup> They were also less likely to report that other family members had been arrested (28%) than other respondents (48%). Respondents twenty-years-old and older were less likely to agree that most of their friends were involved in criminal activity (34%) than younger respondents (48%). These age differences in response to follow-up questions generally support the common notion that the crimes of the young are strongly related to community-based peer group influences. For older defendants, this is less true. Individual differences rather than structural influences may be related to continuing criminal activity and/or arrest for older individuals. Perhaps the strongest indicator of this phenomenon is the fact that nearly half (48%) of the oldest defendants (25+) reported that they had drug and/or alcohol problems; only 12 percent of younger respondents reported such problems.

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<sup>24</sup>They were also more likely to report having been victimized, but this may be related to time at risk. Older respondents have had more time to have been robbed, burgled or assaulted than others.

The Project staff also questioned respondents in the follow-up interview about the characteristics of the event that led to the sampled arrest. Respondents generally reported that there was not a great deal of planning behind that event, although those arrested on burglary charges were considerably more likely to report planning (59%) than others (22%). Respondents charged with income crimes tended to report that they had acted with someone else (78%); those arrested on non-income charges were less likely to have done so (47%). Those charged with burglary and "assaults and weapons" were most likely to report that the incident took place in their own neighborhood (79% and 75%, respectively), but neighborhood-based criminal activity was relatively frequent for other charges as well (57%). Respondents charged with robbery were most likely to report that a stranger was involved in the crime incident (78%, compared to 40% of respondents with other charges). Most respondents (71%) reported that they were arrested right after the incident took place, although respondents charged with grand larceny (often auto theft) and robbery were slightly less likely to have been arrested immediately after the event (55% and 60%, respectively). Respondents' characterizations of the incidents that led to the sampled arrest largely point to unplanned, spontaneous activity, mostly carried out with others, frequently taking place in their own neighborhoods, often involving victims who were known to the offender, and rarely leading to arrest after extensive time had elapsed.

**B. Criminal Activity: The Neighborhood Study**

The Project's study of high-risk youth in three Brooklyn neighborhoods provides more detailed information than the defendant survey on the actual criminal activities of young respondents. Through interviews and observation, the Project staff was able to learn a great deal about respondents' early involvements with delinquency (street fighting and group-based experiments with stealing); their experiences in the mid-teens with burglary and robbery as deliberate, income-producing activities; and their involvement with quasi-organized, adult-recruited, illegitimate activities (drug sales, auto theft rings) in the mid- to late teens.

In all three neighborhoods, there was considerable involvement in early delinquency -- specifically group-based adolescent street fighting -- engaged in for the preservation of individual status and the protection of collective "turf." Although La Barriada was the only neighborhood with recognizable, named youth gangs, there was little difference between the neighborhoods in the extent of pre-teenage and early teenage violence among male cliques. Peak involvement in fighting with other youths generally preceded involvement with systematic economic crime.

In all three neighborhoods, there was also considerable exploration of economic crime in the early teen years. These explorations were often initiated for expressive reasons -- risk, status, thrills. Early stealing -- shoplifting, breaking into factories -- was generally associated with vandalism and

rowdyism; stealing, at first, was seen as a way to have fun, rather than a way to generate income. For the young, crime was an alternative to, and extension of, "hanging out"; employment was not yet a viable option.

Once respondents reached the ages of fourteen and fifteen, short-term theft, for some, came to be engaged in on a more systematic, short-term basis as a major source of income. At this stage, there were strong apparent differences between neighborhoods in the nature and extent of criminal involvements. These differences corresponded to differences in local environments, legitimate opportunity structures, local markets for stolen goods, the extent of local criminal organization and the nature of both formal and informal social control in the three neighborhoods.

Although the extent of income-oriented crime and involvement in quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises<sup>25</sup> varied in the three neighborhoods, the motives for such activity for high-risk youth in their mid-teens were relatively standard. Contemporary adolescents are consumer-oriented. Young respondents felt strong needs for money to spend on clothing and recreation -- movies, marijuana, "hanging out" money. A few young respondents (for example, those whose girlfriends were pregnant) began to use illegitimate income for subsistence as well as consumption. Older respondents, particularly those who

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<sup>25</sup>In all study neighborhoods, some respondents had contact with drug suppliers, "reefer stores," and/or car theft rings. We call such enterprises "quasi-organized" to distinguish them from large-scale, hierarchical, organized criminal enterprises.

became systematically involved in quasi-organized criminal enterprises for relatively long periods, were more likely to depend on income from criminal activities for their own support.

The following examines the various patterns of criminal activity in the three study neighborhoods. For each neighborhood, we consider first the nature of unorganized, peer-recruited criminal activities. These generally preceded the involvements of some respondents with quasi-organized adult-recruited illegitimate enterprises.

1. La Barriada

The respondents studied in La Barriada were primarily drawn from a single block -- a block that had a reputation for relatively extensive criminal involvement among resident teenagers. This was partly because of the block's close proximity to local factories, which were the locus of dozens of commercial burglaries during the study period. The block was relatively isolated from the rest of the neighborhood, separated by a large highway running overhead. The factories were empty at night and, in the early years of the study, relatively unprotected; owners lived outside the neighborhood. Abandoned buildings provided considerable storage space for stolen goods and facilitated quick escapes from the police.

Neighborhood conditions generally did not serve to discourage non-violent criminal behavior. Ties to local police were limited. There was a considerable market for stolen goods among local residents and shops. Drug sales and gambling took



place openly on the streets, and there was little disincentive to youthful loitering. Although local adults did not explicitly approve of commercial burglary, many would buy stolen goods. They did, however, condemn robbery and acts of violence, and spoke with anger of local junkies' indiscriminate looting of neighborhood buildings.

For most La Barriada respondents, systematic theft from factories became a persistent income-generating activity in their early teens. Although those respondents who broke into local factories before they were fourteen years old did so for largely expressive reasons, they quickly learned that commercial burglary could be profitable and devoted considerable planning to such activity. They knew a great deal about what goods were manufactured on specific floors of individual buildings, the kinds of security systems in place, the best ways to get in and out, where to store stolen goods and how to dispose of them. They worked in semi-organized teams with assigned lookouts, generally at night, when the factory owners had deserted the neighborhood:

We would go out, wait till, say, seven, eight o'clock the next night. You don't expect the owner of the place to be up here at this time. What are your chances of the owner of that factory walking through here at eight o'clock, nine o'clock at night? Wow, chances are hard, damn. You would not get that guy. You'd find a regular person -- "Hey, you wanna buy a nice typewriter, nice calculator?" -- whatever had to be sold.

Although some respondents engaged in local commercial burglaries for no more than a few months, several respondents continued such activity for two to three years. One respondent,

the most meticulous and manually skilled burglar of the group, began at the age of twelve. He reported averaging approximately seventy-five dollars a week from persistent commercial burglary. He appears to have been the most active burglar of the group. Most of the respondents reported that they could not estimate the number or frequency of their burglaries ("when you run out of money, you have to do it again").

Yet with time, it became increasingly difficult for respondents to engage in commercial burglary. It became known in the neighborhood that they were responsible for the rash of burglaries in local factories and some apartments. Factories tightened their security measures.

The risk of arrest and sanction for such activity increased with time. One respondent overstepped the bounds of what was "acceptable," burglarizing a local repair shop that had close ties with the neighborhood: this led to his arrest. Although several respondents engaged in minor retaliation against those who gossiped about them, or "ratted" against them, by the time they reached sixteen, many had been arrested -- discovered moving stolen property or interrupted while burglarizing a neighborhood apartment. For a few, violent confrontations resulting from interrupted burglaries led to serious sanctions.

By the time they had reached sixteen, local burglaries were no longer seen as a viable means of generating income. One respondent referred to them as "little sneaky things I did when I was a kid." Some respondents, at this age (the peak of

their involvement in income-generating crime) turned to confrontational theft -- muggings, robbery at knifepoint -- outside the immediate neighborhood. Such activity required less planning and less skill, although it involved more risk of both injury and arrest. Most robbery careers were fairly brief. Some respondents simply did not like confrontational crime. Those who persisted were exposed to violent encounters, higher probabilities of arrest and conviction, and mounting sanctions.

A few discovered that they could rob illegal aliens (many of whom worked in the neighborhood) with relative impunity. Illegal aliens could not go to the police, and were not protected by the informal norms which prohibited victimization of local residents. Such activity, however, was relatively infrequent.

Involvements in peer-recruited, income-oriented crime began to dwindle by the time respondents reached eighteen. During this period, many respondents began to find employment. Instead of systematic burglary and robbery, they became involved in occasional on-the-job theft as a supplement to income. Two respondents returned to income crime after layoffs: one committed three muggings in thirty-six hours after being laid off from a clerical job; the other held up a local salesman at gunpoint, an offense for which he ultimately served eighteen months. Yet for most of those who had been systematically involved with income crime, serious intensive criminal activity was a thing of the past.

Other respondents, who had experimented with robbery, discovered, when they were approximately sixteen years old, that they could generate income stealing cars and auto parts and working in concert with a thriving auto theft operation ("chop shop") located in the neighborhood. Some stole batteries or other easily removable parts. Others looked for cars with keys in the ignition. One respondent reported stealing eighteen cars in this manner, selling parts to various buyers -- both individuals and small businesses. A few acquired considerable skill and sophistication in the ways of auto theft after a brief apprenticeship:

I learned in one day. This friend of mine, Cisco, you could say he recruited me. We went up to a car that was already stripped but it still had the ignition. He showed me how to take off the door cylinder with pliers. Then there's this tool called a butterfly, it's a bad tool, you stick it in the key and you just slap it out in one shot and pull the starter and turn it with a screwdriver.

Those who became systematically involved in auto theft were trained and recruited by older men in the neighborhood, who used local youths for the riskiest activities (thefts and driving stolen vehicles), while they stripped and resold the cars as parts. Many of the older participants in auto theft had criminal records and wanted no more arrests. They believed that neighborhood youths were more likely to "get a break" from the courts.

Ultimately, growing involvement with the risks of active auto theft (both injury and arrest) led one respondent to give up stealing cars to join the older organized group who stripped stolen cars:

We got a little set-up in this backyard. Me and two other guys are the only ones who have the key. I let 'em in if he tells me to. I don't do any actual stealing no more. I just do the stripping. I get the customers too sometimes. I get parts or they'll throw me something, \$50 or \$25 for getting them the customers.

It's about fifteen cars back there now. They go in, they don't come back out. We take out the motor, the interior, everything.

For a period of some months, the backyard lot flourished; it almost had to be abandoned because it was too full of stripped cars. At that point, someone placed a call to the city to complain about the lot. City workers appeared and cleared out the remains of several dozen cars. Afterwards, the operation resumed.

During the course of the study, the block deteriorated dramatically: buildings burned, junkies moved into abandoned buildings and stripped copper from whatever buildings were left standing. In the ensuing devastation, it was not possible to shelter the car stripping operation behind abandoned buildings; they were disappearing too quickly. Ultimately, the lot was abandoned and the respondent who helped run it returned to stealing cars.

At the close of the fieldwork period, this respondent had been actively involved in organized auto theft operations for three years, going from stealing and driving, to stripping and buying, and back again to stealing (letting younger neighborhood residents drive for him). He had acquired professional expertise and organizational affiliations which cut his risks and increased his profits; even so, he was unsure how long he

could continue in organized auto theft before he was arrested, convicted and sentenced to jail or prison.

Involvement with adult-recruited organized criminal enterprises permitted longer and more lucrative illegitimate careers than peer-recruited street crime. Neither type of activity, however, was risk-free. By the end of the fieldwork period, the majority of respondents had been arrested. Most had been sentenced to from three to five years of probation by the time they were seventeen or eighteen. Two had been criminally active, but never arrested. Another two had never become involved in systematic theft. Three of those who were heavily involved in income crime during the fieldwork period were sentenced to either jail or prison.

## 2. Projectville

Characteristics of the neighborhood itself were strongly related to the nature of early criminal involvements for Projectville respondents. Nearly all the respondents in this neighborhood were drawn from a single building in a modern high-rise public housing project. Residents were mostly black and there was a high proportion of elderly and female-headed households.

The projects were basically isolated from the rest of the community. There were few shops or factories; the small, decaying retail section was increasingly burned-out during the course of the fieldwork. The projects were surrounded by open space containing basketball and handball courts and a few benches. Local youth congregated inside and outside the build-

ings, in hallways, stairwells, and, in decent weather, on the basketball courts. Hanging out was pervasive, and frequently led respondents into criminal involvement during the out-of-school, out-of-work mid-teens:

I go down to play basketball, but you can't play basketball all the time. All they want to do down there is get high. They say, "Come on, let's go get a trey bag" [three dollars worth of marijuana]. Now I won't lie. I like to do that sometimes, but some of those dudes, that's all they ever do, and if nobody got any money, it's "Let's get down; let's go get paid."

"Getting paid" in Projectville involved different forms of criminal involvement than in La Barriada. Opportunities for commercial and residential burglary were extremely limited, given the absence of local factories and the quality of security within project apartments. A few respondents did experiment with apartment burglary around the ages of fourteen and fifteen, either climbing through windows and along ledges, or snatching housekeys from visiting neighbors' pockets. There was little opportunity for such activity, however. Early criminal involvement in Projectville largely entailed shoplifting in surrounding drug stores; picking pockets, for a few; and purse and chain snatching -- crimes involving direct confrontations with persons. As in La Barriada, younger respondents tended to be more involved with crimes of stealth rather than confrontation; but in Projectville confrontational crime began relatively early.

Early adolescent criminal involvement persisted in Projectville in spite of intensive efforts to achieve formal social control. Respondents felt that they were under constant

harassment from the authorities -- housing police, the housing office, city police and tenant volunteer patrol groups. Project residents were engaged in a continual struggle to keep youths from loitering in stairways, elevators and lobbies. City police were known to come into building lobbies with pictures of young crime suspects:

Sometimes the cops come in the lobby. They're holding pictures in their hands. They look at the pictures. They look at our faces. If nothing matches, they leave.

Housing police frequently handed out summonses to youths for loitering or smoking marijuana; if youths pled guilty, their families were fined through the housing office and the fine had to be paid along with the next monthly rent payment.

By the time they reached fifteen, some respondents were already involved in mugging local residents in elevators and hallways, a practice in which risks were partially decreased by the anonymity of the projects. Respondents had grown up playing in and around the elevators and knew how to use them to their advantage:

Another time, we got on top of the elevator. A lady got on. We cut off the lights, jumped down. That shit is dark. Then we take her money, get back on top, open the door, get on the other elevator. She never knew who did it.

Residents considered stairways even more dangerous than elevators.

By the time respondents reached the age of sixteen, they began to divide into two distinct groups: those who were no longer involved in stealing and those who were repeatedly



involved in it. Respondents who stopped stealing did so for a variety of reasons. Some had been recognized by neighbors and they feared retaliation. Others were arrested and deterred from further criminal involvement by their experience with the criminal justice system.

Those who continued to steal regularly after they reached the age of sixteen gradually moved outside the projects to nearby shopping areas, subways and the business districts of Brooklyn and Manhattan. They realized that it was increasingly dangerous to continue to victimize their neighbors. One respondent who went too far in this regard, in fact, was forced to leave the neighborhood and spend several months with relatives in South Carolina; men had come looking for him with guns.

In the summer of 1980, respondents who continued stealing became heavily involved in an epidemic of "chain snatching" or "snatching gold" which swept through the streets and subways of New York City. Chain snatching took respondents farther from home and provided a relatively plentiful source of fast money. Gold prices were high and gold jewelry was easy to sell -- either to established jewelry stores that served as fences, to small business establishments, or to independent entrepreneurs. One respondent who was acquainted with older local hustlers told us:

Now they have a new thing. They buy and sell gold. They stand in front of the jewelry store and catch people on the way in and say, "I'll give you top dollar." They have a kit with acid, a pennyweight scale, just like a jeweler. They check the prices every day. Of course you got to have money to make

money. He said you need about five, six hundred dollars a day to do this. But the other day he bought a bracelet for \$700 and resold it for \$1500. That's all profit.

Within a few months, however, the risk of being convicted of robbery rather than grand or petty larceny after being apprehended for chain snatching increased dramatically. For several respondents, chain snatching eventually led to apprehension, conviction and, for some, substantial incarceration.

Around the time of the chain snatching craze, one respondent realized that he could make steady money selling marijuana, without participating in risky and violent encounters. He began going to Central Park every day with a friend and fifteen dollars worth of marijuana from a local "reefer store" to roll "loose joints," which he could sell individually for a total of fifty to sixty dollars. His drug-selling career came to a halt when his mother had him placed in a residential institution out of the city, where he remained for the next year. His brother, who stayed in the neighborhood, began working in a local "reefer store" when he could find no other employment. He discovered, however, that illegitimate enterprises were far from risk-free:

I sit there behind a plexiglass window. There's a nine millimeter machine gun under the counter. I hope I never have to use it, but there you are, between the cops and the robbers, wondering which one's going to show up first.

Drug selling in Projectville, like auto theft in La Barriada, provided opportunities, through participation in organized, adult-run criminal enterprises, for gaining regular

illegitimate income at less risk than street crime. Two older respondents from the Projectville area were heavily involved in drug selling. One graduated from street crime into drug sales, where he could make regular money selling marijuana in Manhattan parks, after building up a clientele. He did this for a couple of years, off and on, until he began to run into various difficulties -- police confiscation of his "product," arrest, fear of reprisal due to inability to cover the cost of drugs taken on consignment. He was eventually arrested while transporting heroin in quantity for others, an activity which associates felt he "wasn't ready to get mixed up in." He was sent to prison following that arrest.

The other respondent who supported himself entirely from drug sales had never been involved in adolescent theft; he became a successful hustler, selling drugs in clubs and on the streets. He was well-connected with higher-level dealers who provided him with advice as well as merchandise. He took great care in determining where and what he would sell. Yet even he eventually got in trouble with the law, after an incident in which he was robbed at knifepoint; his associates identified and severely assaulted his attacker. The case (involving charges and countercharges) went to trial twice, and was ultimately dismissed. Yet the incident focused police attention on the area. Within a week the respondent was arrested in the park, after a police search in which a weapon was discovered.

After this incident, the respondent moved away from selling in the streets. For a short period, he and four associates

operated their own "reefer store." Although it was busted by the police on its third day of operation, the respondent was not personally arrested; he lost little money, because the operation nearly broke even in two and a half days. Although the respondent was eventually convicted on both the weapons charge and a subsequent charge of cocaine possession (following a police search of an after-hours club), he was not sent to jail for either offense. During his period of peak involvement in drug sales he estimated that he was able to earn from \$500 to \$1000 a week. At the age of twenty-three, however, he began to talk about getting out of the drug business because of fear of future arrest and increasing sanctions.

As in La Barriada, respondents who became involved in quasi-organized, adult-recruited criminal enterprises were better able to make regular sustained income from criminal involvement than those active in peer-recruited theft. In Projectville, respondents involved in chain snatching and muggings faced quicker and heavier sanctions than La Barriada respondents. All but two Projectville respondents were arrested at some point during the research. Five were ultimately sent to either jail or prison; two other respondents spent time in group residential homes.

### 3. Hamilton Park

Hamilton Park resembled La Barriada in terms of the close proximity between the neighborhood and local factories. It differed from the minority neighborhoods, however, in most other respects that related to the opportunities for and preva-

lence of criminal involvement. Hamilton Park respondents did not live in an area isolated from the neighborhood as a whole; they were in easy reach of the main shopping street.

Informal social control was strong in the neighborhood; factory owners lived near their factories and were quick to retaliate -- either formally or informally -- against burglars and vandals. Many respondents' parents owned their own homes; there were far more adult male-headed households than in the other neighborhoods. Many residents had personal ties to local police or criminal justice officials. Although there was considerable traffic in drugs and stolen goods (generally merchandise obtained through on-the-job theft), such activity was far less open than in the minority neighborhoods.

Although Hamilton Park respondents were involved in some exploratory theft during their mid-teens, none of the respondents became involved in systematic theft as a primary source of income. In Hamilton Park, wages and parental support provided more income than stealing.

Respondents' experiences burglarizing local factories involved strong expressive elements. They went to the factories as a "sport" -- to climb roofs and hang out. Stealing was secondary.

You go down the street from where I live and there's where the lots and factories are. I know the rules over there like a book. There's this one trucking company, we used to hang out in the trailers during the winter and outside during the summer and we used to climb around on the roofs all smashed out of our minds, drinking and smoking or sometimes, you know, take a little mescaline or acid. One time we were running around and one of my friends fell through the

skylight and we got a rope to pull him out and he goes, "I don't want to leave. There's toys down here, bicycles, everything." So we tied up the rope and were pullin' the stuff up through the roof.

Interviewer: What did you do with it?

We sold most of it. Some of it, the big guys came and stole it from us. We sold some of it right on the street: "Hey, you want a bicycle frame, ten dollars. . . ."

Reprisals from factory owners were swift. One factory owner offered a reward to learn who was responsible for a factory fire: information was soon forthcoming. Another local youth was severely beaten after being identified as responsible for a factory burglary. In the face of these reprisals most respondents soon desisted from factory burglary.

A few respondents experimented briefly with auto theft, although most did so more for joyriding than for income. Occasionally, they would take and sell spare parts -- radios, spare tires -- but never whole cars. After one local youth was arrested for such activity, his friends stopped stealing cars.

There was little evidence of street robbery in Hamilton Park, with one exception. A few respondents told us that they occasionally preyed upon Polish immigrants who spoke little English and were unlikely to go to the police. These attacks generally occurred on weekends, when the men made themselves easy targets by getting very drunk and staggering home with a week's pay in their pockets. Respondents in their mid- to late teens engaged in such activity (again confrontational crimes were generally later than crimes of stealth). They did so only infrequently.

By the late teens, most respondents reported that they no longer stole, except occasionally from the workplace. A small group, however, did engage in a series of jewelry store burglaries when they were seventeen. The two respondents who were the most violent and heaviest drug users were involved. Their accounts of these incidents reveal that the motivation was as much expressive as income-oriented, and that personal disorientation and drug use were strong factors in their criminal involvement:

I got arrested five times that summer. That was the worst year of my life. The last time I got busted was the worst. We went into Manhattan. I was high on quaaludes, did two, then another one. I don't know why I went that time. I had a whole bunch of change in my pockets. I went to jail with \$50 in my pockets. Plus, when we busted the window I stuck my head under the glass and a big piece fell down on my neck and I was bleeding all over the place. I couldn't even find my way back to the car, so the other guys left without me.

This activity differs significantly from the carefully planned and executed commercial burglaries of La Barriada respondents. Such behavior was far from typical within the neighborhood, and was engaged in only by the wildest, most dangerous and least predictable youths.

The two respondents involved were known for taking risks -- one was so heavily involved with barbiturates that he was in and out of drug programs throughout his mid-teens; the other, whose father had served time for armored car robbery, went on a brief shooting spree in a distant neighborhood after receiving a gun from his father for his eighteenth birthday. Their behavior was deviant within the neighborhood.

Work-related theft, on the other hand, was not infrequent. Respondents at an early age kept proceeds from their paper routes, claiming the money had been stolen. Later, if security permitted, they took whatever they could from the workplace -- hubcaps, auto parts, baby clothes, "velours."

Quasi-organized criminal involvements were perhaps more prevalent in Hamilton Park than peer-recruited street crime. Drug use was pervasive, and by the end of the fieldwork period a few respondents were experimenting with heroin. The variety and quantity of drugs used was wider than in the other neighborhoods. Most respondents had sold marijuana and/or pills in their late teens, although they generally did so as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for legitimate wages. One claimed to have made as much as a thousand dollars in a single deal, selling angel dust. Older neighbors of respondents sold as much as twenty pounds of marijuana a week. Pick-up money from quick drug transactions was easy to come by. Although two respondents did appear to depend on drug sales as their primary source of income, most respondents sold drugs for supplementary income only, in small to moderate volume with relative regularity.

One respondent and his girlfriend used money from employment to get started selling marijuana; when he lost his job, he was able to sell small quantities only on a consignment basis; when he began working again full-time, his drug selling greatly increased. Eventually, after a separation from and reconciliation with his girlfriend, he quit both using and selling



drugs. Drug selling in itself did not constitute an adequate illegitimate career option for him.

Three respondents had more extensive ties to organized crime. A pair of brothers came from a family with connections in local crime organizations. Their father had carried gambling slips when he was younger, and the brothers each had a weekly job doing so; they earned seventy-five dollars a week carrying slips. One brother also worked as a "debt collector" in the gambling operation, using his ability as a fighter to intimidate those who owed money. At the age of sixteen, however, they became too old for such activities. As in the other neighborhoods, organized illegitimate enterprises employed the very young in the riskiest, most exposed positions, counting on their relative immunity to criminal justice sanctions.

Another youth was "recruited" in his mid-teens by a local criminal organization through his association with a neighborhood social club operated by his brother-in-law. He reported that he did "insurance jobs," robbing cars for the wealthy and "dumping them in the river." He also "made money with fighting," beating up debtors or people "bothering" clients for a fee. This respondent had a considerable reputation for violence and had been heavily involved in the limited amount of street crime that took place in the neighborhood in his mid-teens. He was on probation for robbery and assault. As he grew older, however, he confined his activities to working with relatively organized criminal enterprises and efforts at drug selling.

Most respondents in Hamilton Park had some contact with police, generally for drinking or hanging out in local parks. They were issued many summonses. Most (all but four) had been arrested at some point, but several of those arrests were relatively trivial -- marijuana possession, joyriding -- and quickly dismissed by the court.

Others, whose arrests were for more serious offenses, dealt more actively with the criminal justice system than respondents in other neighborhoods. They all made bail, rather than wait in jail in pretrial detention. They hired private attorneys and activated ties to criminal justice officials and local politicians to speak in their behalf. Several had relatives who were in the police department and helped them deal with minor police contacts. Such contacts solidified ties to formal agencies of social control, a relationship which stands in contrast to that in Projectville, where formal social control agencies were distant and bureaucratic, and that in La Barriada, where there was little reliance upon such agencies. Perhaps because of these ties there were few formal sanctions imposed on Hamilton Park youth. Most cases were dismissed. Three respondents were placed on probation.

Despite its reputation as a low-crime neighborhood, Hamilton Park did in fact accommodate a certain amount of criminality from its youthful residents. The types and amounts and sequences of criminal involvements among its youths, however, differed considerably from those found in the other neighborhoods.

C. The Sequence of Criminal Involvements: The Combined Research

1. Early Criminal Involvements

The Project's information about when and how respondents first became involved in crime is drawn entirely from the neighborhood study; the defendant survey reflects only official adult (16 and older) criminal histories. We learned in the neighborhood study that involvement in crime in high-risk neighborhoods typically preceded eligibility for either adult criminal court or legal employment. Respondents became involved in street fighting for turf and status and in exploratory income crime in the pre-teen and early teen years.

Such activities were generally group-based and served in large part as necessary conditions for group membership. Rewards were largely expressive, rather than economic -- group cohesion, within-group status, definition of territory. Street fighting and confrontation could at times involve taking the property of others. Street fighting also taught techniques of violence which some respondents went on to apply to a systematic pursuit of income. The costs of early confrontational activity were more likely to involve injury than official reaction. Respondents generally felt that they had to fight if the group demanded it. Yet the fighting could grow quite violent. Many respondents reported possessing or having possessed knives and guns; accounts of killings in street fights (not involving respondents) were recorded in each neighborhood.

Early explorations of stealing (shoplifting, breaking into factories, taking radios from others) were also engaged in

partly for reputation and excitement, although there was an element of economic motivation as well, particularly in the minority neighborhoods. The undeveloped nature of these economic motivations was evident in both respondents' own evaluations of why they first committed thefts and in the way they handled the proceeds of those thefts. Many stole initially in order to enjoy direct use of the stolen objects. Stealing that took place in adolescent street fights, for example, usually involved the appropriation of youth culture consumer items such as radios, bicycles, sneakers, or coats, which were as likely to be used as to be resold. Initial experiences with stealing cars were often for the purpose of joyriding. Some youths who snatched jewelry on the streets and subways did so initially in order to wear the gold. They were often unaware of the worth of stolen merchandise; when they did sell stolen goods they received only a fraction of their worth, even on the black market.

At this stage, there were few official contacts with criminal justice officials, either for fighting or for stealing. Except when there were major gang fights with serious consequences, neighbors rarely reported such activity to the police. Few of the early explorations of economic crime led to either arrest or serious sanction.

## 2. Persistence and Change: The Middle Years

After the first few experiences with stealing, respondents' motivations began to change. As their needs for income increased, they discovered that crime could be a way of system-

atically generating income and learned what prices to expect for stolen goods.

In the neighborhood study, once respondents reached this stage local conditions and differences in opportunities for criminal behavior appeared to influence the nature of respondents' involvements in criminal activities. Respondents turned to factory burglary in La Barriada and Hamilton Park, and to more confrontational crimes -- mugging, purse and chain snatching -- in Projectville. These differences in crime type among neighborhood groups were mirrored in the defendant sample by the tendency of young black defendants to have been arrested for robbery, and of other young defendants to have been arrested for burglary and/or grand larceny auto.

The defendant survey demonstrates that the frequency of arrests for income crime was highest among young defendants (16-19). The neighborhood study also reveals that these were the peak years of involvement in systematic theft as a means of generating income. While most neighborhood respondents were ultimately arrested for such activity, there was a great deal of stealing which did not lead to arrest. Burglary and auto theft, particularly, were engaged in as temporary careers for considerable periods before arrest and criminal justice sanctions became likely. Robberies were more likely than other income crimes to lead to arrest, and more likely than other charges to lead to the rapid imposition of severe sanctions. Perhaps because of this, robbery in both studies appeared to be a relatively short-term "career."

During the mid-teens, most income crimes were generated in the peer group and were performed as group activities. The follow-up to the defendant survey also reveals that the income crimes of the young were largely group activities engaged in with peer support. Local markets for stolen goods (individual buyers, fencing operations, auto rings, gold wholesalers) lent informal support to various forms of theft.

The rewards of engaging in systematic theft were largely financial -- stealing was a way to generate income. During the middle years of criminal involvement, the rewards of status and reputation conferred by the peer group gradually diminished. Although much activity continued to be peer-based, there was growing coolness toward those who were heavily involved in crime and recognized within the community as being so involved. In contrast to the early years, crime was less important as a proving ground and more important as a way of making money.

The costs of engaging in crime mounted during this period. It became increasingly difficult for respondents to victimize members of their immediate community. They were too easily recognized over time and confrontational crimes were not tolerated. In areas where informal social controls were relatively strong, respondents risked reprisal and injury. The risks of arrest mounted with increased crime frequency and the risks of criminal justice sanction mounted with increasing arrest.

By the time neighborhood respondents reached the late teens and early twenties, their involvement with peer-recruited, income-generating crime was greatly reduced -- for many, it ended (we don't know whether the few respondents who are still in prison, following robbery arrests, will again engage in income offenses after their release). In the defendant survey, as well, it was apparent that the rate of arrests within the two years preceding and in the year following the sampled arrest declined greatly once respondents reached the age of twenty. It was also apparent that older defendants (20+) were far less likely to be arrested for high-risk income crimes (robbery, burglary, grand larceny) than those who were 16-19 years-old at the time of arrest.

The neighborhood study also suggests that the relatively small group who became involved in quasi-organized illegitimate activities (car theft rings, drug sales) on a systematic basis were capable of sustaining criminal careers for relatively long periods of time. If individuals had the appropriate contacts, such activity was less likely to lead to arrest, and more likely to provide regular, steady income. Yet even the respondents involved in such activity began to speak of the increased risk of continued involvement. The possibilities for rewarding, lifelong careers in illegitimate enterprises were limited.

The defendant survey cannot provide much information on involvement in quasi-organized illegitimate activities (the risk of arrest is less than for street crime; arrests for some organized activities -- car theft, assaults -- were not distin-

guishable from other arrests). The fact that there were very few arrests for either drug sales (5, 2%) or drug possession (24, 3%) seems to support the belief expressed in both the neighborhood study and the follow-up interview that the risk of arrest for such activity was far less than for other types of criminal involvement.

There is some evidence in both studies that during the middle years of potential criminal activity (16-20) a process of dropout from crime or "risk reduction" (switching to criminal activity that does not lead to arrest) was initiated. The rapid decline in robbery arrests after the ages of sixteen and seventeen is indicative of this process. The movement in the neighborhood study towards more sheltered forms of criminal involvement -- on-the-job theft, drug sales -- once respondents reached the age of eighteen further suggests that those who remained involved in illegitimate activities made decided efforts to reduce the risks of criminal involvement with age.

### 3. The Waning Years

In the neighborhood study, once respondents reached the age of twenty-one, involvement in street crime had virtually disappeared. Those respondents who had managed to develop ties to quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises, specializing in drug sales or auto theft, were able to continue to earn money from crime on a systematic basis as adults. Our information on their criminal involvements, however, is limited to the period of the fieldwork; we do not know how long they remained active or what risks they encountered as they entered the mid- to late twenties.



Most of our information on those who remained criminally involved past the age of twenty-four, therefore, is drawn from the defendant survey. Among older respondents, involvement in income crime was indirectly related to age. Those who were over the age of twenty at arrest were far less likely to be charged with income crimes in general; there were dramatically fewer robberies and grand larcenies. Those who seemed to have continuous involvement in property crime were generally charged with either burglary or petty larceny (often shoplifting).

Based on observations of siblings and neighbors in the neighborhood study, we suspect that many older individuals continued the process of "dropping out" from crime entirely or reducing their risks by switching either to on-the-job theft or drug sales as a supplement to income from employment. The growing risks of arrest and criminal justice sanction combined with decreasing peer support for criminal involvement and increasing opportunities for legitimate income worked in concert to facilitate this process.

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

slightly more likely to have been charged with "non-income" offenses on the sampled arrest than with "income" offenses. For this group, involvement in income-producing crime seemed to be limited, although a relatively small subset of this group (those with recent prior arrests and income charges on the sampled arrest) remained actively involved in property crime.

This subset of older defendants who had prior, but no subsequent arrests, closely resembles the group of older defendants (those with both prior and subsequent arrests) who were most akin to some conventional notions of the "career criminal." Criminally-active older defendants were far more likely to have been arrested on income charges than non-income charges, to have had recent arrests and to have criminal career patterns categorized as "income-oriented" than other older groups. Unlike the conventional notion of the "career criminal," however, many had patterns of repeated arrests for petty larceny; they were chronic, low-level property offenders, likely to receive a series of short-term jail sentences rather than long periods in prison for a single serious offense.

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

For minority respondents, the likelihood of systematic involvement in theft as a short-term adolescent career was considerable. Young white defendants may, to some extent, have been more deviant within their neighborhoods than young minority defendants (youths in Hamilton Park who were frequently arrested were generally the wildest and most dangerous in the community). Yet age appears to be a far more important factor in determining the extent and nature of criminal involvement than race/ethnicity. There was a relatively high likelihood that respondents in all three neighborhoods would have some involvement with income-oriented crime during their adolescence.

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

If all relatively young groups (14-19) in high-risk neighborhoods faced high probabilities of criminal involvement during their adolescence, there were nevertheless decided differences in the severity, frequency and motivations for such activity. The urgency of income needs, the extent of formal and informal social control, the extent of formal and informal supports for systematic theft, and the nature of local opportunities for various types of criminal activity varied considerably in the three study neighborhoods. There were also differ-

ences, reviewed in Chapter III and to be considered again in Chapter V, in local opportunities for legitimate income during the teenage years. Together, these phenomena strongly influenced the frequency and kind of criminal involvement in the three study neighborhoods. Although age -- being young -- was strongly related to the propensity for various forms of crime, local conditions strongly influenced the way in which the inclination for deviant activities among adolescent males in high-risk neighborhoods took shape.

## CHAPTER V

### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AND CRIME

#### Introduction

In our separate reviews of educational, vocational and criminal experiences in the defendant survey and neighborhood study, age emerged as a central factor in explaining the nature and extent of respondents' school enrollment, work, and criminal activities. The fact that major transitions in the extent of school, work and crime involvement all occur in a relatively brief period in the lives of high-risk youth seems to point to a nexus of interrelationships among these statuses and activities.<sup>1</sup> The fact that crime decreases and employment increases

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<sup>1</sup>Relationships between school enrollment, the quantity and quality of employment, and age are strongly tied to institutional structures. Official school-leaving is not permitted until the age of sixteen -- the official age of entry into legitimate employment. Some forms of employment (factory jobs, for example) are closed to individuals under the age of eighteen. These institutional factors help define normative ages for educational and vocational activity; employer preferences, along with experience and skill requirements, reinforce the extent to which employment characteristics are related to age.

The relationship between the extent of criminal activity and age-graded institutional structures is less clear. It is possible that structural characteristics of the criminal justice system (relatively mild sanctions in Family Court; increasingly harsh sanctions after entry into and repeated involvement with Criminal Court) have some connection to the crime-age relationship (Greenberg, 1979).

The fact that the peak ages for some criminal activities correspond to the period when school involvements for high-risk youth are diminishing and employment opportunities have not yet begun to expand may indicate a link between criminal involvement and both educational and vocational structures. Glaser (1978), for example, speculates that high rates of youth crime in the twentieth century are associated with an increased separation of youth from adults due to extended periods of education and reduced participation in the adult labor force by out of school youth. He sees these factors as tied to an absence of role definition for adolescents and the burgeoning of youth culture.

as high-risk groups grow older might seem to suggest that increasing employment is responsible, at least in part, for decreasing criminal involvement.

Yet it is also possible that employment and crime involvements are each independently related to age. If this were so, then age itself -- or various phenomena related to age (maturation, increasing commitments to conformity, diminishing adolescent rebelliousness, age-graded behavioral norms, changing family status) -- might be seen as a third factor, leading to both reductions in crime and increases in employment. (If this were true, the apparent relationship between employment and crime would be, at least in part, spurious.<sup>2</sup>)

It was also evident in earlier chapters that school, work and criminal activities varied considerably according to race/ethnicity, a factor which the neighborhood study suggests is related to community influences and local opportunity structures. It may be that race/ethnicity is largely an indicator of differential employment opportunity and that differences in criminal involvement for different race/ethnic groups result

<sup>2</sup>Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) argue that there is a direct age effect on crime that is invariant across social and cultural conditions that cannot be explained by any existing theoretical approach. They contend that:

Theories that try to explain the age effect by relying on life-course events will always sound plausible. Their plausibility stems from the fact that the age effect is confounded with the effects of its correlates. (p. 580)

They argue that, although employment, marriage and school-leaving appear to be related to crime reduction because they happen at the same stage of life, reductions in crime occur at this stage whether or not these events occur.

from, or are directly related to, differences in employment. Or, it may be that race/ethnicity is a proxy for degrees of poverty and that the residual effects of poverty status for minorities (community conditions, differences in family structure, adaptive subcultures)<sup>3</sup> have an impact on crime that is independent of employment status and characteristics.

This chapter explores relationships between employment and crime in the defendant survey and the neighborhood study. It attempts to determine the nature and strength of inverse relationships between the two among various sub-populations studied. It also attempts to determine the extent to which such relationships are a function of age and/or ethnicity and the extent to which they are independent of these factors.

The chapter also assesses the explanatory power of the Project's early model of employment and crime relationships, discussed in Chapter I. This model envisions an age-graded progression from employment and crime exploration in the mid-teen years into a variety of relatively stable early adult career patterns: (1) a predominance of employment, for most; (2) a mix of employment and crime (crime as a supplement or occasional substitute for employment; infrequent employment complementing persistent, low-level income-crime) for an intermediate group; and (3) predominant involvement in relatively low-risk illegitimate enterprises for a small subgroup.

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<sup>3</sup>Silberman (1978) attributes the disproportionate criminal involvement of American blacks to cultural influences generated by a history of slavery and generations of economic deprivation. He does not suggest that there is a cultural rejection of work-related values.

Such a model presupposes that employment and crime are not strict alternatives, but that various linkages between the two may obtain at different stages of individuals' lives. In addition to the age-related phenomenon of "maturing out" of crime into employment, the model anticipates a period of alternation between employment and crime and (for some) participation in both simultaneously.

The defendant survey provides a broad opportunity for the exploration of the nature and strength of inverse relationships between employment and crime among various subgroups of defendants. Because some individuals in the sample had intermittent periods of employment and unemployment, the survey also permits comparison of the frequency and type of arrests experienced by individuals during periods of employment and unemployment. This internal comparison helps us explore the extent to which employment and crime overlap and the alternation between employment and income crime in a defendant population.

The defendant survey also helps us explore directly that part of the Project's original model that relates to individuals who continue to get arrested over time. The survey is the Project's primary source of data on older offenders and their employment involvements.

The neighborhood study, in contrast, permits extensive exploration of the early stages of the model. It provides considerable detail on employment/crime linkages (crime preceding employment, employee theft, job loss leading to a return to income crime) and sequences of such linkages in individual



lives. It specifically illustrates the phenomenon of "maturing out" of crime into employment. The study's focus on three distinct communities broadens our perspective, permitting observation of the way in which community conditions can affect age-graded patterns of employment and crime activity and the nature and frequency of various linkages between employment and crime.

**A. Employment-Crime Relationships: The Defendant Survey**

Analysis of the quantity and quality of respondents' employment and the quantity and type of respondents' recorded arrests without controlling for age revealed strong inverse relationships. Much research, including our own, however, shows that arrest frequencies are highest among young respondents, who have relatively low levels of employment, hours worked and earnings, and lowest among older respondents, who have significantly better employment characteristics. In addition, minority defendants generally have inferior levels of employment and higher arrest frequencies than white defendants. It was important for the Project, therefore, to determine whether these relationships were independent of age and race/ethnicity and to explore the nature of employment and crime relationships among subgroups of different ages and different race/ethnic backgrounds.

This section reviews the results of analyses of employment-crime relationships within the defendant survey in a variety of ways. First, it reports findings of a multiple regression analysis of the determinants of arrest frequencies in the sample. Next, it explores ways in which age and race/ethnicity affect the relationship between employment and crime by looking at specific subgroups. Finally, it focuses on respondents who had a "mix" of working and not-working periods in the two years before the sampled arrest in an effort to determine the impact of having a job on arrest rates.

1. Multiple Regression Analysis: The Determinants of Arrest Frequency

Multiple regression analysis permits us to explore the strength of the relationship between employment and crime measures while controlling simultaneously for the effects of other variables. The analysis makes use of two different arrest measures as the dependent variables in multiple regression models: the logarithmic transformation of both the number of total arrests and of income arrests only over a three-year period including the two years prior to the initial 1979 interview and the one year period subsequent to the 1979 interview.<sup>4</sup> Other analysis (Thompson, Cataldo and Loewenstein, 1984) reveals that the variables that are strongly related to arrests preceding the sampled arrests are generally strongly related to subsequent arrests as well, and that results from the three-year arrest measure did not differ greatly from those from the two-year arrest measure.<sup>5</sup> (See Appendix for a dis-

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<sup>4</sup>We used the log of arrests rather than the number of arrests because the log increases more slowly than the raw number of arrests. Intuitively, it means that the model treats the difference between one and two arrests as more important than the difference between ten and eleven arrests. A log transformation generally results in a better model fit, and reduces distortions in results that may be caused by a few very large values of the dependent variable.

<sup>5</sup>For the vast majority of the sample, detailed information on work experiences and school attendance is available only for the past two years. Therefore, we can relate variables like work hours and job characteristics to arrests occurring during the same time interval only for this two-year prior period.

Analysis of subsequent arrests permits somewhat more powerful statements about "predictors" of future arrest. However, this analysis also has some serious limitations. Nothing is known about the individual's job history after the

cussion of analyses adjusting for different actual crime rates for different offense types.)

It is important to remember throughout this discussion that ours is a defendant sample. We are not, therefore, able to consider the way in which employment, education, age and race/ethnicity affect who does and who does not become involved with the criminal justice system. Our analysis instead focuses on differences in the extent of that involvement among those who do get so involved.

Table 5.1 compares the signs and significance levels of regression coefficients for models of total arrests and income arrests over the three-year period. Age, having earned a high school diploma, the number of hours worked in the past two years, and having a job with benefits are significantly<sup>6</sup> and negatively associated with the total number of arrests over the

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1979 interview -- if he lost his job shortly after his arrest then past job characteristics do not accurately reflect his experiences in the follow-up period. The relatively short (one year) duration of the follow-up period also allows less time to "sample" the individual's criminal activities via recorded arrests. Chances are good that low-rate offenders (or ones who were lucky, skillful, or engaging in low-risk crimes) were not arrested at all during the follow-up period.

The three-year arrest histories analyzed here give us the broadest look at an individual's criminal history, although we do not have complete work history information for the entire period. The longer time period means that the individual was less likely to escape arrest by chance. The mix of "prior" and "subsequent" arrests in the three-year arrest measure might have been a source of concern if the determinants of past and future arrests varied substantially. We found, however, that the patterns of determinants of past and future arrests were similar.

<sup>6</sup>At the .05 level or better.

Table 5.1

MULTIPLE REGRESSION: LOGARITHM OF NUMBER OF ARRESTS ANNUALLY  
 (Three Year Period)  
 Regression Coefficients (b): Standard Errors in Parentheses

	TOTAL ARRESTS	INCOME ARRESTS
Intercept	1.3273*** (.1044)	1.5172*** (.0817)
Age in years	-.0185*** (.0038)	-.0234*** (.0029)
Black	.1372** (.0557)	.1339*** (.0436)
Regular diploma	-.2036*** (.0712)	-.2028*** (.0557)
Enrolled in school	.0030 (.0735)	.0659 (.0575)
Hours worked (past two years)	-.000040** (.000015)	-.000032*** (.000012)
Out of the labor force	.1721** (.0779)	.1711*** (.0609)
Job with benefits	-.1250** (.0633)	-.1185*** (.0495)
	R <sup>2</sup> =.1355	R <sup>2</sup> =.2455
	N=674	N=674

\*\*\*p<.01; \*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: The regression on arrests over the two and three year period excludes individuals under the age of 16 1/2 at the time of the sampling arrest. (This is because the arrest histories for these people cover an insufficient amount of time to reliably extrapolate an estimated number of arrests over a two-year period.)

three-year period. Being black<sup>7</sup> and being out of the labor force at the time of arrest are significantly and positively associated with arrests over that period. Being enrolled in school<sup>8</sup> at the time of arrest had no significant association with arrests over that period. (See Appendix for a table of zero-order correlations.)

Some mention should be made of other factors that were not significant in the arrest regressions. Hourly wage rate was not significant in any of the crime regressions we tried.<sup>9</sup> This seems somewhat surprising, because, other things being equal, an individual's earnings potential in legitimate pursuits should be negatively associated with his incentive to engage in income crime. The evidence from our sample indicates that job quality (as measured by job benefits) and job stability (hours of work over the past two years) are much more strongly associated with lower criminal activity than reported wage rates.

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<sup>7</sup>The category "Hispanic" was not included in the regression equation because earlier analyses indicated that it was not significant. In these equations, race/ethnicity, diploma status, school enrollment, reasons for school-leaving, labor force status and job benefit status are all defined as binary ("dummy") variables.

<sup>8</sup>Respondents who were currently enrolled in school had consistently higher arrest frequencies than those of the same age who had left school.

<sup>9</sup>Marital status similarly showed no significance in any exploratory regression models. There were few married respondents and therefore, little variation in this variable. Marital status in the defendant sample was highly correlated with age and better employment and showed little independent impact on arrest rates.

In addition, being unemployed, but seeking work, was not significantly related to crime frequencies in the regressions we tried. Being out of the labor force, however, did show some positive association with crime. Because both measures reflect an individual's status only at a moment in time, they may not be the best indicators of labor market involvement over a longer period. However, the results do suggest that labor force dropouts or "discouraged workers" may be more prone to engage in crime than those who are unemployed but seeking work.

Except for some differences in levels of statistical significance, patterns in the signs of regression coefficients for arrests on income charges only are almost indistinguishable from the patterns for all charges. As a group, the regressions above point to significant impacts of age, ethnicity, school-related variables and employment variables on both arrest frequency in general and the frequency of arrests for income charges. Employment-related variables were found to have an independent influence, net of all other variables -- including age -- on arrest frequency.

Yet, the statistical significance of a regression coefficient may not be an accurate indication of the variable's overall explanatory power. A coefficient may be statistically significant, but still account for a relatively small proportion of the total variance in the dependent variable. Also, when two explanatory variables are highly correlated with each other (for example, age and work hours), the model may not be able to distinguish the impact of each one separately. When many

interrelated variables are included in a regression equation, the statistical significance of each one may be diluted.

To get around some of the problems of multicollinearity inherent in relying on multiple regression coefficients alone, we also report statistics on the percent of total variance explained by different variables and combinations of variables (partial r-squares, or Type I sum of squares).<sup>10</sup> These partial r-squares can be good indicators of both the absolute magnitude and the statistical significance of a variable's impact on arrest frequencies.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that, as a group, all the variables in our regression models of arrest in general explain only a small proportion of the variance in total arrest frequencies (13.6% for arrests over the past three years). The same variables, however, explain considerably more of the variance in income arrests over the same period (24.5%). Including a variable accounting for early criminal involvement (the number of arrests prior to two years ago) would increase the

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<sup>10</sup>To determine the total explanatory power of a particular variable using Type I sum of squares, that variable (age, for example) must be entered first; if a variable is entered second in a sequence of variables (for example, age first, "prior arrests" second), we can speak of how much explanatory power the second variable adds to what has already been explained by the first variable. If two variables are highly correlated with each other, then changing the sequence in which they are entered using Type I sum of squares can affect the apparent explanatory power of each of the variables. Altering the sequence in which variables are entered in order to determine their relative explanatory power can help us explore the relative strength of variables in multiple regression models, such as ours, in which there is a great deal of intercorrelation between independent variables (i.e., multicollinearity).



total variance explained in both models, but only at the expense of obscuring the relationships between criminality and other variables of interest. (For example, because race/ethnicity is associated with both the number of past arrests and the dependent variable, inclusion of the past arrest variable tends to obscure the role played by race/ethnicity in relation to both past and recent arrests.) Some of what is not explained in our models might be accounted for by information which we did not have at our disposal, such as family economic status and family structure. More sophisticated modeling procedures or more insightful use of the available data might also yield incremental improvement in the model's "fit." Even so, a large part of criminal behavior is likely to remain unexplained by any single theory or interpretation. As a practical matter, we are restricted to interpreting that part of criminal behavior that is related to the information at hand.<sup>11</sup>

Table 5.2 contrasts measures of the relative explanatory power of selected independent variables, or groups of variables, in relation to the number of arrests on all charges and on income charges over the two years before the sampled arrest. In some instances (age, race/ethnicity, employment), we report the total explanatory power ( $r^2$ ) of key variables. We do so, because we are centrally interested in assessing the relative explanatory strength of age, race/ethnicity and

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<sup>11</sup>Multiple regression analysis generally does not yield high  $R^2$ 's (explained variance) in analyses based on individual rather than aggregate data sets. It should be recognized, however, that each of the variables included here accounts for only a small proportion of the variance in arrest frequency.

Table 5.2  
**STRENGTH OF DETERMINANTS OF ARREST RATES OVER PAST TWO YEARS**  
 (Percent of variance explained)

	ALL CHARGES	INCOME CHARGES ONLY
Age . . . . .	2.9%***	14.4%***
Race/ethnicity . . . . .	1.4 ***	2.5 ***
Black . . . . .	1.1 ***	1.8 ***
Hispanica . . . . .	0.3	0.7 **
Employment . . . . .	4.4 ***	9.7 ***
Hours worked . . . . .	2.7 ***	5.6 ***
Out of the labor force . . . . .	0.3	0.5 *
Taxes and benefits . . . . .	1.3 ***	3.6 ***
Regular Diploma (controlling for age	1.3 ***	2.3 ***
Past arrests before the study period (controlling for age) . . . . .	4.7 ***	6.1 ***

\*\*\*p<.01; \*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

<sup>a</sup> Individual attributes within the categories of ethnicity, employment, and education are controlled for sequentially. For example, the variance explained by "Hispanic" is after controlling for "Black," and the variance explained by "Out of the Labor Force" is after controlling for "Hours Worked," etc.

employment -- variables which we acknowledge to have a high degree of intercorrelation. In other instances (education, past arrests) we report the partial  $r^2$ 's of variables associated with age, after first controlling for age.

In relation to arrests over the two-year period on all charges, the number of arrests before the two-year period has the greatest independent explanatory power (.056). Much of the strength of this variable remains, even after controlling for the effects of age ( $r^2=.047$ ). The set of employment variables (hours worked, labor force status at arrest, and tax/benefit status at the current/most recent job) follows closely behind, with a combined  $r^2$  of 4.4 percent. Age is the next strongest (.029), followed by race/ethnicity ( $r^2=.014$ ) and diploma status (controlled for age,  $r^2=.013$ ).

Table 5.2 also shows that age is more strongly associated with income arrests than with arrests in general, explaining 14.4 percent of the total variance by itself. The employment variables rank second in explanatory power for income arrests (9.7%), followed by past arrests (6.1%).

It is particularly interesting to note that prior arrests (controlling for age) ranks only third as a statistical predictor of recent income arrests, whereas it is the strongest predictor of arrests in general. The prior arrest variable by itself is not particularly informative; it is largely endogenous to current crime decisions, associated with the same factors as recent criminality, and at best represents an indicator of "habits," "criminal commitment," or other unmeasured individual characteristics.

Because race/ethnicity is highly associated with unfavorable labor market outcomes, we conducted an exploratory exercise to see if race/ethnicity continued to explain a significant share of variance after controlling for employment. Controlling for employment reduces the percent of variance explained by race/ethnicity by half (.8% for arrests in general; 1.3% for income charges only). Although race/ethnicity remains significantly related to arrest frequency even after such controls, race/ethnic differences apparently explain only a small part of the variation in arrests beyond that which can be explained by differences in employment. The fact that employment differences account for approximately half the explanatory strength of race/ethnicity in relation to arrest rates suggests that the variable stands to a great extent as a proxy for degrees of poverty. The residual effect of race/ethnicity on crime does not appear to be very strong among an arrested population.<sup>12</sup>

Although employment variables in themselves do not explain a great deal of the variation in the arrest frequencies of the defendant sample, they do account for a substantial proportion of the small explained variance in arrest frequency in the models detailed above. The fact that employment variables alone have more explanatory power in relation to income-oriented arrests ( $r^2=.10$ ) than in relation to arrests in

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<sup>12</sup>The fact that race/ethnicity remains significant after controlling for differences in education and employment might point partly to other aspects of poverty (differences in community structure, family and economic factors) not measured here and partly to subcultural adaptations to poverty which support criminal involvement.

general ( $r^2=.044$ ) is not surprising. Non-income 'arrest charges (assaults, drug possession) are not expected to be strongly related to employment status.

As a whole, multiple regression analysis reveals that employment stability ("hours worked") and quality ("jobs with benefits") are significantly and inversely related to both arrest frequency in general and arrests on income charges, although the extent of explained variance is not large. This relationship is independent of the effects of both age and race/ethnicity.

## 2. Employment and Crime among Specific Subgroups

Although multiple regression analysis points to the existence of a weak but significant relationship between employment and crime apart from the effects of age and race/ethnicity, it tells us little about the nature of that relationship -- for which groups it might be stronger or weaker, which groups might be more likely to be affected by efforts to improve employment. In regression models in which interaction terms for "age-hours worked" and "minority-hours worked" were introduced, we found a statistically significant interaction between age categories (18-19, 20-24, 25+) and hours worked at the .10 level. The "minority-hours worked" interaction approached significance ( $p=.116$ ).<sup>13</sup> This suggests that we can learn more about the employment-crime relationship in itself by looking at how that relationship differs for various subgroups within the sample.

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<sup>13</sup>In these equations, the small group of respondents who had "never worked" were excluded.

This section considers ways in which the relationship between employment and crime varies within the defendant sample for different subgroups, defined by age and race/ethnicity. We present a series of composite tables for each subgroup to document the nature of that relationship. These tables detail relationships between four independent variables (employment status at arrest; hours worked in the year before arrest; weekly wage in the year before arrest; and tax benefit status) and two dependent crime variables (arrest rate over a three-year period<sup>14</sup> and "income orientation" -- the proportion of respondents with more income than non-income arrests over that period<sup>15</sup>). The specific content of any individual table

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<sup>14</sup>In these analyses, the three-year arrest rate (average number of arrests per year) was used in order to extend the period in which young respondents were eligible for arrest in adult court. This rate does not include the sampled arrest. For 16-17 year olds, annual arrest rates were adjusted to reflect the period of eligibility since respondents' sixteenth birthdays. Those under 16 1/2 at the time of arrest were excluded.

Because the arrest rate covers a relatively broad three-year period, it should be recognized that the age of arrest does not perfectly coincide with the age groups with which arrest rates are associated. For example, some individuals in the 20-24 category were 18 at the time of some prior arrests; others were 25 at the time of subsequent arrests.

It should also be recognized that the measure of arrest rates is not adjusted for reduced "time at risk" related to periods of incarceration. The Project did not have adequate measures of time served in the two years prior to the sampled arrest, or of detention length and time served in the subsequent year. However, only 16 percent of the sample were incarcerated at all in the two years before the sampled arrest. Only 3 percent had been sentenced to six months or more during that period. Adjustments affecting a relatively small proportion of the sample for brief periods of time would not have significantly affected arrest rate measures.

<sup>15</sup>The variable "income orientation" will be used throughout the following discussion. It refers to a measure developed in Chapter IV in a discussion of respondents with "income only"

within these composite tables is considerably less important than their effect as a whole. The composite tables as a group illustrate the fact that the nature and strength of relationships between employment and crime vary considerably for different age and race/ethnic subgroups.

a. Age, employment and crime. For the sample as a whole, there were significant relationships between most employment variables and criminal history measures. Table 5.3, the first of our composite tables, shows that seven of eight employment-crime relationships were significant at the .05 level or better for the entire defendant group. Only the relationship between employment status at arrest and "income orientation" was not significant. Because the best employment categories (1600+ hours, \$200+, "taxes and benefits") were occupied disproportionately by older defendants, who had relatively low rates of arrest and "income orientation" as a group, strong relationships between both arrest history measures (annual arrest rate and "income orientation") and hours worked in the year before the sampled arrest, weekly wage in that year and job benefit status were expected.

To control for the effect of age, the Project staff explored the same set of relationships for defendant subgroups of different ages. This exploration revealed that significant

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and "predominantly income" arrest histories over the three-year study period. Respondents with more income arrests than non-income arrests have been classified here as "income oriented." The extent of "income orientation" in a particular subgroup is equal to the proportion of respondents in that subgroup with "income-oriented" arrest histories.

Table 5.3  
EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
(Entire Sample)

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-Oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
Employment Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	.91	(.09)	101	.69	(.05)	108
Unemployed	.73	(.06)	214	.69	(.03)	228
Employed	.60 **	(.04)	367	.59	(.02)	377
			682			713
Hours Worked (Prior year)						
0	.82 **	(.06)	183	.70 **	(.03)	195
1-799	.87	(.06)	200	.71	(.03)	216
800-1599	.61	(.08)	116	.57	(.04)	117
1600+	.36	(.06)	167	.52	(.04)	169
			668			697
Weekly Wage (Cur- rent/most recent job)						
Up to \$99	.84 **	(.07)	121	.71 **	(.04)*	142
\$100-149	.75	(.06)	218	.65	(.03)	221
\$150-199	.66	(.07)	142	.67	(.04)	142
\$200+	.37	(.07)	163	.47	(.04)	165
			644			670
Job Benefit Status "Off-the-Books"	.81 **	(.06)	180	.72 **	(.03)	193
Taxes Withheld	.77	(.06)	223	.68	(.03)	239
Taxes and Benefits	.44	(.06)	230	.50	(.03)	230
			633			662

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.



inverse relationships between employment and crime measures were most common among older defendants (25+) and least common among young defendants (16-19).

For 16-17 year-old defendants, there were few significant relationships between employment characteristics and arrest history measures. Table 5.4 shows that arrest rates for 16-17 year-old respondents did not differ significantly according to differences in employment. The only significant relationships for respondents this age were between "income orientation" and both employment status at arrest and "job benefit" status. Defendants who were out of the labor force at the time of arrest (many of whom were enrolled in school) were significantly more likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.97) than those who were employed at arrest (.76). The very small group of 16-17 year-old defendants who had jobs with benefits (N=8) were significantly less likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.50) than others ("off the books," .81; "taxes withheld," .84).

For this age group, there were relatively few respondents in the best job categories (1600+ hours, \$200+ in wages, jobs with benefits). Those who were in these categories did not differ consistently in terms of both arrest rates and the extent of income orientation from others. Being out of the labor force, however, did appear to be associated with relatively high rates (arrest rate, 1.19) of predominantly income-oriented arrest.

For 18-19 year-olds, there were few significant relation-

Table 5.4  
 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
 (16-17 year-olds)

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-Oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
<u>Employment Status at Arrest</u>						
Out of Labor Force	1.19	(.18)	27	.97	(.06)	34
Unemployed	.76	(.13)	48	.82	(.05)	62
Employed	.88	(.13)	48	.76 **	(.05)	59
			123			155
<u>Hours Worked (Prior Year)</u>						
0	.99	(.14)	39	.86	(.05)	51
1-799	.82	(.11)	62	.85	(.04)	78
800-1599	.69	(.25)	13	.64	(.10)	14
1600+	.81	(.27)	11	.77	(.10)	13
			125			156
<u>Weekly Wage (Current/most recent job)</u>						
Up to \$99	.76	(.11)	59	.80	(.04)	80
\$100-149	1.07	(.18)	24	.81	(.08)	27
\$150-199	.95	(.21)	18	.84	(.09)	19
\$200+	.53	(.33)	7	.88	(.14)	8
			108			134
<u>Job Benefit Status "Off-the-Books"</u>						
Taxes Withheld	.72	(.13)	46	.81 *	(.05)	54
Taxes and Benefits	.94	(.12)	51	.84	(.05)	67
	.88	(.34)	7	.50	(.14)	8
			104			129

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.

ships between employment characteristics and arrest history measures (Table 5.5). There was very little difference in arrest rate according to differences in employment characteristics. Differences in the extent of income orientation varied only marginally according to differences in employment and were not significant. Only the number of hours worked in the year prior to arrest was significantly related to the annual arrest rate (at the .10 level) with those working between one and 799 hours having a far higher arrest rate (1.17) than those who worked more than 1600 hours (.65).

For 20-24 year-olds, there were considerably more significant relationships between employment characteristics and arrest history measures.<sup>16</sup> Table 5.6 shows that there were significant relationships between annual arrest rates and employment status at the time of arrest, hours worked in the year prior to arrest and weekly wages of the current/most recent job. Those who were out of the labor force at the time of arrest had significantly higher arrest rates (1.07) than either those who were employed (.55) or unemployed (.60) at that time. Similarly, those who had not worked at all in the year prior to arrest had significantly higher arrest rates

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<sup>16</sup>The contrast between the youngest groups (16-17, 18-19) and older groups in the nature of employment-crime relationships is not merely a function of different sample sizes. Separate analysis of the 16-19 year-olds considered together, a group equivalent in size to the 20-24 and 25+ groups, revealed only one significant relationship (job benefit status and income-oriented arrest histories). The two youngest groups are considered separately here because their patterns differ -- 16-17 year-olds are at a unique stage of work development, heavily out of the labor force, infrequently holding "good" jobs. To combine the two groups in order to increase sample size would obscure these differences.

Table 5.5  
EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
(18-19 year-olds)

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
Employment Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	.92	(.23)	16	.63	(.11)	16
Unemployed	.99	(.13)	49	.80	(.06)	49
Employed	.93	(.12)	61	.72	(.06)	61
			126			126
Hours Worked (Prior Year)						
0	.93 *	(.20)	20	.80	(.10)	20
1-799	1.17	(.12)	60	.73	(.06)	60
800-1599	.79	(.18)	24	.75	(.09)	24
1600+	.65	(.20)	21	.67	(.10)	21
			125			125
Weekly Wage (Current/most recent job)						
Up to \$99	.99	(.17)	27	.81	(.09)	27
\$100-149	.89	(.13)	48	.71	(.06)	48
\$150-199	1.02	(.19)	22	.73	(.10)	22
\$200+	.86	(.22)	17	.65	(.11)	17
			114			114
Job Benefit Status						
"Off-the-Books"	1.08	(.16)	32	.78	(.08)	32
Taxes Withheld	.92	(.12)	57	.75	(.06)	57
Taxes and Benefits	.93	(.17)	30	.63	(.08)	30
			119			119

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.

Table 5.6  
 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
 (20-24 year-olds)

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
Employment Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	1.08 **	(.16)	17	.53	(.12)	17
Unemployed	.60 **	(.08)	67	.70	(.06)	67
Employed	.55	(.07)	98	.56	(.05)	98
			182			182
Hours Worked (Prior year)						
0	.86 *	(.11)	39	.67	(.08)	39
1-799	.61	(.10)	51	.63	(.07)	51
800-1599	.60	(.11)	40	.62	(.08)	39
1600+	.50	(.10)	49	.59	(.07)	49
			179			178
Weekly Wage (Cur- rent/most recent job)						
Up to \$99	.96 **	(.13)	24	.50 *	(.10)*	24
\$100-149	.53	(.08)	60	.63	(.06)	60
\$150-199	.64	(.10)	45	.75	(.07)	44
\$200+	.35	(.11)	33	.52	(.08)	33
			162			161
Job Benefit Status "Off-the-Books"	.74	(.09)	50	.64	(.07)	50
Taxes Withheld	.56	(.09)	52	.60	(.07)	52
Taxes and Benefits	.48	(.08)	62	.56	(.06)	61
			164			163

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.

(.86) than those who had worked more than 1600 hours (.50). Those with weekly wages at their current/most recent job of under \$99 a week had significantly higher arrest rates (.96) than those who earned over \$200 (.35). Only job benefit status was not significantly related to arrest rate for 20-24 year-olds, although relationships were in the expected direction ( $p=.12$ : off-the-books, .74; taxes and benefits, .48).

Comparisons of employment characteristics and the proportion of income-oriented arrest histories for 20-24 year-olds did not, however, demonstrate as many significant inverse relationships between employment and crime. There was a significant relationship between weekly wage at the current/most recent job and the proportion of income-oriented criminal histories, but that relationship reversed expectations; those who earned between \$150 and \$199 at that job were more likely to have predominantly income-oriented arrest histories (.75) than those who earned under \$100 a week (.50). Other relationships were not significant.

For defendants twenty-five-years-old and older, there were more apparent significant relationships between employment characteristics and arrest history measures than for other age groups.<sup>17</sup> Table 5.7 shows that arrest rates over the three-year period were significantly related to hours worked in

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<sup>17</sup>For the oldest group (25+) it is possible that age itself remains responsible for the inverse relationships between employment and crime variables. For this group alone, the age range is broad and significantly related to hours worked, employment status at arrest, arrest rates and the extent of income-oriented arrest histories. In separate analyses for this group in which a continuous age variable was introduced

the past year, weekly wages in the current/most recent job and job benefit status. The arrest rates of those who worked more than 1600 hours were significantly lower (.17) than those of respondents who did not work at all (.69) in the prior year or who worked 799 hours or less (.79). The arrest rates of those who earned over \$200 were significantly lower (.29) than those of respondents who earned under \$149 (.72). The arrest rates of those having jobs with benefits were significantly lower (.28) than those of respondents who worked off-the-books (.79). Only employment status at arrest was not related to arrest rates for this group.

Similarly, the proportion of respondents with income-oriented arrest histories was significantly lower for respondents with between 800 and 1599 hours worked (.38) or over 1600 hours worked (.43) in the prior year than for those with no hours worked (.59). Respondents with jobs offering taxes and benefits were less likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.41) than respondents with off-the-books jobs (.67). Employment status at the time of arrest and weekly wage were not significantly related to the extent of "income orientation."

Inverse relationships between employment characteristics and criminal history measures were most consistent among older sample members. Among younger respondents (16-19), differences

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along with labor market variables, there was no discernible impact on employment-crime relationships. All significant relationships for this group remained significant (with no reduction in significance levels) after controlling for the effects of age.

Table 5.7  
 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
 (25+ year-olds)

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
<u>Employment</u>						
Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	.65	(.14)	41	.56	(.08)	41
Unemployed	.61	(.13)	50	.44	(.07)	50
Employed	.42	(.07)	160	.49	(.04)	159
			251			250
<u>Hours Worked</u> (Prior Year)						
0	.69 **	(.10)	78	.59 *	(.06)	78
1-799	.79	(.14)	39	.54	(.08)	39
800-1599	.49	(.14)	39	.38	(.08)	39
1600+	.17	(.09)	90	.43	(.05)	90
			246			246
<u>Weekly Wage (Current/most recent job)</u>						
Up to \$99	.72 **	(.21)	18	.44	(.12)	18
\$100-149	.72	(.11)	68	.57	(.06)	68
\$150-199	.44	(.12)	55	.53	(.07)	55
\$200+	.29	(.09)	102	.40	(.05)	103
			243			244
<u>Job Benefit Status</u> "Off-the-books"	.79 *	(.12)	52	.67 **	(.07)	52
Taxes Withheld	.66	(.11)	63	.51	(.06)	63
Taxes and Benefits	.28	(.08)	130	.41	(.04)	131
			245			246

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.



in the quantity and quality of employment did not appear to be related to differences in the frequency or type of arrest.

The variation in employment-crime relationships within the defendant sample for different age groups may be related to the fact that employment itself has different characteristics for younger and older individuals, who approach employment with distinctive needs and expectations at different ages. For the young, employment is less likely to be associated with long-term career aspirations than it is for older people. For those 16-19 years-old, jobs provide, at best, a short-term means of generating income, generally supplementary income; most individuals are not yet entirely self-supporting. Employment is intrinsically less central in the lives of teenagers than in the lives of adults. Job quality is generally limited. Steady, lucrative jobs are generally not open to high-risk teenagers, nor would most of them qualify for such jobs. For all these reasons, it is not surprising that employment had apparently little relationship to arrest rates or the extent of "income orientation" in the criminality of 16-19 year-old defendants.

The fact that there were significant inverse relationships between employment characteristics and arrest history measures for older respondents is, perhaps, more difficult to interpret. It might be that periods of employment had a direct crime-averting effect on arrest rates. Or these relationships could stem largely from contrasts between better-employed defendants, who had only one arrest on a non-income charge (bar

fights or domestic disputes), and the worst-employed, high-rate petty income offenders. For these groups, employment and crime patterns might be strongly established, the product of personal decisions; some high-rate offenders may be so personally handicapped as to be incapable of employment; other better-employed defendants might not be at risk of criminal involvement, apart from a fluke arrest.

Inverse relationships between employment and crime may depend largely upon a contrast between those with the best and the worst employment characteristics -- those with no work in the two years before the sampled arrest and those who worked continuously during that period.

Yet, there is also a third group in the sample -- those who worked only part of the time in the two years before the sampled arrest -- a group, who had a "mix" of working and not-working periods.<sup>18</sup> In an effort to determine whether these "mixers" demonstrated a responsiveness to employment the Project staff investigated differences in arrest rates for them during both working and not-working periods.

In the group as a whole there was no apparent difference in mean annual arrest rates during working (.61) and not-

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<sup>18</sup>Those with a mix of working and not-working periods are defined as those in the sample with between 30 and 700 days of continuous employment in the two years before the sampled arrest. Respondents who were sixteen and seventeen at the time of arrest were not included because they were too young to have had two years of either employment or arrest records. There were 374 respondents over eighteen-years-old in the sample who are classified as having a mix of working and not-working periods and for whom criminal history information was available.

working (.59) periods. Yet the nature of relationships between working-period arrest rates and not-working-period arrest rates varied with age. Respondents between the ages of eighteen and nineteen at arrest were slightly more likely to be arrested during periods of employment (.99) than unemployment (.76).<sup>19</sup> For those between the ages of twenty and twenty-four at arrest there was no difference in mean annual arrest rates during working (.58) and not-working (.54) periods. For those who were twenty-five years old and older at the time of arrest, however, there was an apparent difference: during working periods, arrest rates were substantially lower (.29) than during not-working periods (.51). Again, it appears that inverse relationships between employment and crime -- here defined as the difference in arrest rates during periods of employment and non-employment -- were apparent among the oldest defendants (25+).

Similar patterns are apparent if we consider only charges of income-producing crimes over the two-year period. Overall, there was little difference in the rate of income-oriented arrest charges during working (.46) and not-working periods (.43). For 18-19 year-olds, arrest on income charges were

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<sup>19</sup>We have no clear explanation of why arrest rates in the two years before the sampled arrest were higher for 18-19 year-olds during working periods than during not-working periods. It should be remembered, however, that there was relatively little employment during that period and that some respondents were still in school (some would have been sixteen and seventeen at the time). It is likely that much employment occurred during the summer, a time when criminal activity and arrest for teenagers are relatively frequent.

somewhat more frequent during working periods (.82) than not-working periods (.59). For 20-24 year-olds, there was no difference (.39 for both periods). For those over twenty-five, arrests on income charges were less frequent (.23) during working periods than not-working periods (.35).

This type of inquiry helps elaborate our description of the employment-crime relationship for older groups. In addition to our previous finding of significant inverse relationships between employment and crime among those twenty-five and older at arrest, it appears that those in this older group with a mix of employment and unemployment during the two-year period had substantially fewer arrests during working periods than not-working periods. This points to a pattern of alternation between employment and income-producing crime for older defendants who had intermittent employment for the two years before the sampled arrest.

b. Race/ethnicity, employment and crime. Multiple regression analysis revealed that black defendants had significantly higher arrest rates over the three-year period than other defendants, and that race/ethnicity was significantly related to arrest rates even after controlling for differences in education and employment. Regression analysis also showed, however, that race/ethnicity explained only a small proportion of the variance in arrest rates and that much of the apparent explanatory power of ethnicity was related to race/ethnic differences in the quantity and quality of employment.

We know from earlier chapters that race/ethnic differences were related to differences in education, employment and

criminal histories.<sup>20</sup> We do not know, however, whether the relationship between employment and crime itself differed for different race/ethnic groups.

In this section, we review employment-crime relationships for each of the race/ethnic groups in the defendant sample. Because such a review does not control for age, and because age is strongly related to both improved employment and reduced arrest for all groups, it is not unreasonable to expect comparable employment-crime relationships for the race/ethnic subgroups -- even given the fact that whites had substantially more employment and less crime than other groups. This, however, was not the case. Significant inverse relationships between employment and crime were most prevalent among black defendants; such relationships were least apparent among white defendants.

Table 5.8 shows that for blacks there were significant relationships between all employment characteristics and arrest history measures. Black respondents who were out of the labor force at arrest had significantly higher arrest rates (1.11)

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<sup>20</sup>In terms of arrest rates over the three-year period, young Hispanics (16-19) resembled young blacks (.90 and .98, respectively) more than young whites (.66). Older Hispanics (20+), however, had arrest rates closer to those of older whites (.44 and .40, respectively) than those of older blacks (.64).

The proportion of predominantly income-oriented arrest histories was relatively high for all young groups, although young blacks (16-19) were more likely to have such histories (.83) than either young whites or young Hispanics (.72 each). Older Hispanics (20+), on the other hand, were more likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.63) than either older blacks (.55) or older whites (.42).

Table 5.0  
 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
 Blacks

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
Employment Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	1.11	(.13)	57	.79	(.06)	62
Unemployed	.77 **	(.08)	140	.68 **	(.04)	150
Employed	.70 **	(.07)	200	.62 **	(.03)	208
			397			420
Hours Worked (Prior Year)						
0-799	.94 **	(.05)	238	.72 **	(.03)	258
800+	.50	(.07)	155	.55	(.04)	157
			393			415
Weekly Wage (Current/most recent job)						
Up to \$99	.89 **	(.10)	84	.75 **	(.05)	101
\$100-149	.86	(.09)	120	.68	(.04)	122
\$150-199	.76	(.10)	86	.71	(.05)	87
\$200+	.39	(.11)	77	.41	(.05)	78
			367			388
Job Benefit Status "Off-the-Books"						
Taxes Withheld	.91 **	(.10)	93	.76 **	(.05)	98
Taxes and Benefits	.92	(.09)	125	.72	(.04)	126
	.46	(.08)	148	.49	(.04)	162
			366			386

\*\* p < .05; \* p < .10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.

than either blacks who were employed (.70) or unemployed (.77); they also were significantly more likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.79) than those who were employed (.62). Blacks who worked fewer than 800 hours in the prior year had significantly higher arrest rates (.94) and were significantly more likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.72) than other blacks (arrest rate, .50; income-orientation, .55). In addition, black defendants who earned \$200 or more per week or who had jobs offering benefits had significantly lower arrest rates (.39) than blacks earning \$99 or less (.89) or between \$100 and \$149 (.86); they were also significantly less likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.41) than all other blacks (up to \$99, .75; \$100-149, .68; \$150-199, .71). Black defendants who had current/most recent jobs offering benefits had significantly lower arrest rates over the three-year period (.46) than blacks who worked "off-the-books" (.91) or those who had taxes withheld (.92); they also were significantly less likely to have income-oriented arrest histories than those who worked "off-the-books" (.76) or had "taxes withheld" (.72).

For blacks, the two crime history measures -- frequency and income-orientation -- were linked, related in parallel ways to employment characteristics. In summary, among black defendants there were apparent associations between being out of the labor force or working less than 800 hours a year and relatively high rates of both arrest and income-orientation. Earning \$200 or more per week or having a job offering

benefits, on the other hand, were associated with relatively low income-orientation and arrest rates.

Table 5.9 shows that significant relationships between employment characteristics and arrest history measures were fewer for Hispanic respondents than for blacks, particularly in relation to the proportion of income-oriented arrest histories. Hispanic defendants who worked fewer than 800 hours in the prior year had significantly higher arrest rates (.77) than Hispanics who worked more (.38). In addition, those who earned \$99 or less weekly at their current/most recent job had significantly higher arrest rates (.96) than all other Hispanics (\$100-149, .56; \$150-199, .37; \$200+, .46). Finally, those who worked "off-the-books" had significantly higher arrest rates (.81) than either those who received benefits (.43) or those who had "taxes withheld" with no benefits (.51,  $p < .10$ ).

In addition, Hispanic defendants who were unemployed were more likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.77) than Hispanics who were employed (.61) or out of the labor force (.56,  $p < .10$ ). Those with 800 or fewer hours of work in the prior year were more likely to have income-oriented arrest histories (.72) than those with fewer hours worked (.59,  $p < .10$ ). Other employment characteristics, however, were not significantly related to income-orientation for Hispanics; there was little difference between Hispanics at the lowest and the highest income levels or in different job benefit categories in terms of the extent of income-oriented arrests.

Overall, the nature of significant relationships between employment and crime differs somewhat for Hispanics and



Table 5.9  
 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
 Hispanics

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
Employment Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	.70	(.14)	25	.56	(.09)	25
Unemployed	.69	(.10)	55	.77 *	(.06)	57
Employed	.52	(.07)	93	.61 *	(.05)	95
			173			177
Hours Worked (Prior Year)						
0-799	.77 **	(.08)	105	.72 *	(.04)	109
800+	.38	(.10)	69	.59	(.06)	69
			174			178
Weekly Wage (Cur- rent/most recent job)						
Up to \$99	.96 **	(.12)	31	.67	(.08)	33
\$100-149	.56	(.09)	63	.66	(.06)	64
\$150-199	.37	(.12)	31	.68	(.09)	31
\$200+	.46	(.11)	35	.63	(.08)	35
			160			163
Job Benefit Status "Off-the-Books" Taxes Withheld Taxes and Benefits						
	.81 **	(.09)	53	.69	(.06)	55
	.51	(.09)	54	.65	(.06)	56
	.43	(.09)	55	.65	(.06)	55
			162			166

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.

blacks. For Hispanics, those who were unemployed had higher levels of income-orientation than those who were out of the labor force; the reverse was true for blacks. Similarly, for Hispanics earning \$100 or more was associated with relatively low arrest rates, whereas, for blacks, differences in arrest rates emerged at the \$200 level. Finally, for Hispanics, working "off-the-books" was more associated with relatively high arrest rates than other job benefit statuses, in contrast to blacks, for whom "off-the-books" jobs did not differ from jobs where taxes were withheld, but no benefits provided.

Table 5.10 shows that for whites there were even fewer significant relationships between employment characteristics and arrest histories. To some extent, the absence of significant relationships is related to the small number of white defendants in the sample. Yet in some instances (hours worked and arrest rate, weekly wage and income-orientation) there was very little apparent difference in arrest characteristics in relation to different employment measures.

The relationship between weekly wage and arrest rates for white respondents, although significant, was contrary to expectations; arrest rates were lowest (.24) for those who earned \$99 per week or less and highest (.70) for those who earned between \$150-199. Although job benefit status did show significant differences in terms of the proportion of income-oriented arrest histories between those who worked "off-the-books" (.69) and those who received job benefits (.37), there were no other significant relationships among white defendants between the extent of income-oriented crime and employment.

Table 5.10  
 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CRIMINAL HISTORY MEASURES  
 Whites

	Annual Arrest Rate (3-year period)	Standard Error	N	Proportion with Income-oriented Arrest Histories	Standard Error	N
Employment Status at Arrest						
Out of Labor Force	.59	(.15)	19	.57	(.11)	21
Unemployed	.53	(.15)	19	.62	(.11)	21
Employed	.42	(.07)	74	.49	(.06)	74
			112			116
Hours Worked (Prior Year)						
0-799	.50	(.12)	45	.60	(.07)	49
800+	.47	(.11)	63	.47	(.06)	62
			108			111
Weekly Wage (Cur- rent/most recent job)						
Up to \$99	.24 **	(.16)	13	.53	(.13)	15
\$100-149	.59	(.14)	17	.47	(.12)	17
\$150-199	.70	(.12)	23	.50	(.11)	22
\$200+	.28	(.08)	48	.46	(.07)	47
			101			101
Job Benefit Status "Off-the-Books"						
Taxes Withheld	.54	(.10)	34	.69 **	(.08)	35
Taxes and Benefits	.36	(.13)	21	.41	(.10)	22
	.38	(.08)	50	.37	(.07)	48
			105			105

\*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: In these tables, F-statistics test the null hypothesis that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to the given independent variable.

The fact that for white defendants as a group there was no inverse relationship between employment and crime may be related to the fact that age was less strongly related to arrest rates for them. Arrest rates were generally low for white defendants and the difference in the mean arrest rate for young white defendants (16-19, .66) and older white defendants (20+, .40) was somewhat less dramatic than for other race/ethnic groups (.90 and .44, for Hispanics; .98 and .64, for blacks). Although older whites had significantly better employment characteristics than younger white defendants, their arrest rates -- lower to begin with -- were less affected by age than those of other groups.

Inverse relationships between employment and crime were most evident among black and Hispanic defendants. Yet to some extent, the relationship between employment and crime for these race/ethnic groups might have been tied to age effects -- specifically the high crime rates and low employment levels of younger groups. Therefore, we also examined employment-crime relationships by race/ethnic group for younger (16-19) and older respondents (20+) separately to see the extent to which these relationships persisted apart from the impact of high youth crime rates.

As was true in the age-only analysis, employment-crime relationships among younger (16-19) defendants of different race/ethnicity were generally not significant. The few significant relationships were scattered and inconsistent.

We also considered relationships between employment characteristics and annual arrest rates for older (20+) defendants

in the three race/ethnic groups. Again, significant employment-crime relationships were most apparent for older black defendants and least apparent for older white defendants.

Because a wide age range is included in these analyses (20-54) it is again possible that inverse employment-crime relationships in these tables can be largely explained by controlling for age. In separate analyses, using a continuous age control, results did not differ greatly from those discussed below, although in a few instances there was a small reduction in the significance levels of employment-crime relationships for Hispanics after controls for age were introduced.

For older black defendants (20+), almost all the employment-crime relationships in our composite table were significant at the .05 level or better. The only relationship which was not significant was that between employment status at arrest and the extent of income-orientation.

For older Hispanic defendants (20+), there were significant relationships between arrest rates over the three-year period and employment status at arrest, weekly wage and job benefit status. "Hours worked" was not significantly related to arrest rates, however. In addition, employment status at arrest was significantly related to the extent of income-orientation for older Hispanics, although other employment variables were not significantly related to income-orientation for this group.

For older white defendants (20+), there was no significant relationship between employment variables and either arrest

rates over the three-year period or the extent of income-orientation. In some instances, in fact, these relationships were contrary to expectations, with those in inferior employment categories (fewer hours worked, \$99 or under per week, unemployed) having lower levels of income-oriented criminality than those with better employment characteristics. These differences, however, were small and did not approach significance.

The nature of relationships between employment and crime varied considerably according to race/ethnic group. Overall, it appears that there were generally significant inverse relationships between employment and crime characteristics among older blacks and, to a lesser extent, Hispanics, but little difference in crime measures among white defendants of any age according to employment status.

Perhaps the major question that arises from our review of employment-crime relationships among defendants for different race/ethnic groups is why we do not see such relationships among white defendants. This lack of relationship cannot be entirely explained by the fact that the white sample is so small. The relationships are not merely "not significant"; they are intrinsically different.

There are several factors which may account for this lack of relationship. Age has less effect on crime rates for white defendants than for others, but does have a considerable effect on employment -- a fact which affects overall employment-crime relationships for whites. The fact that white defendants were

more likely to have arrests on non-income charges (i.e., arrests which were not expected to be related to employment characteristics) may also be related to the lack of relationship between arrest rates and employment for whites. It does not explain, however, why employment characteristics were not related to the extent of income-oriented arrests for them.

It was suggested in earlier chapters that white defendants differed from minority defendants. We have reported some evidence that they may be more likely to be deviant within their neighborhoods than minority defendants, for many of whom (particularly the young) criminal behavior appeared to be a widespread phenomenon. If whites who got arrested were more serious troublemakers in their neighborhoods than minority defendants in their neighborhoods, then the frequency of arrest might be more related to the extent of personal disorganization or other personal idiosyncracies than to relative economic disadvantage, collectively experienced. Crime -- even income crime -- for whites who got arrested might reflect deviant individual characteristics more than structural conditions.

White defendants also differed from others in terms of both the quantity and quality of their employment. Their opportunity structures did not appear to be "blocked," at least compared with those of minority defendants. These differences seem consistent with a view that criminal activity for high-risk minorities emerges as a widespread response to structural conditions, but that individual-level factors (for example, personal disorganization) affect criminality for high-risk whites.

Although in the defendant sample as a whole there appeared to be significant inverse relationships between employment and crime, and discernible subgroups for whom such relationships were particularly likely, there was a substantial proportion of the sample who demonstrated little relationship between employment and crime. We must remember, however, that this is a sample of defendants. It does not permit us to observe individuals for whom employment may have been an effective antidote to criminal involvement -- those who no longer get arrested. To observe such individuals we need to look at a broader community context.



**B. The Neighborhood Study: Linkages between Employment and Crime**

As in the defendant survey, age explains a great deal about the extent of employment and crime involvements in the neighborhood study, even though participants were relatively young. In the neighborhoods studied, respondents became increasingly involved with employment and decreasingly involved with street crime between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four. The neighborhood study permits us to explore specific interactions or "linkages" between employment and crime among individual respondents in different community settings and helps us consider whether different types of employment-crime relationships were more prevalent in different communities.

**1. La Barriada**

There was very little work available for young male adolescents (14-16) in La Barriada. Most study respondents became regularly involved in persistent burglaries of local factories at this age. A few had already dropped out of school, at least informally; some remained enrolled in school, but attended sporadically. The predominant pattern for La Barriada respondents at this age involved sporadic school attendance, periodic burglaries for spending money and limited prospects of employment. For the few who were occasionally able to find part-time jobs through relatives or friends, working had no impact on this pattern; for them, part-time employment overlapped with criminal involvement.

When respondents reached the ages of seventeen and eighteen, most found some work -- generally part-time and intermit-

tent, but work nevertheless. For some, having work was apparently accompanied by a slow-down in the frequency of income-oriented crime (still largely burglary; some robbery, among respondents more inclined to risk-taking activity). For a few, work had no effect on criminal involvement. For others, having a job entailed a temporary cessation of criminal involvement during the period of employment; two individuals, who stopped stealing while they were working, returned to income crime (relatively serious, frequent criminal involvement) immediately following job loss. These individuals can be seen as alternating between employment and crime at this stage, in contrast to those respondents for whom employment and crime overlapped.

Departing from the general pattern, two respondents did not work at all in this period, but engaged exclusively in crime for income. One became involved in organized auto theft, an activity which he continued for a relatively long period while also continuing his school involvement. The other became involved with auto theft on an exploratory basis but also remained regularly involved in stealing (burglary and robbery).

By the time La Barriada respondents reached the ages of nineteen and twenty most were no longer involved with crime. The majority of respondents now relied on employment for income. Although, for some, employment was still only intermittent, periods of unemployment generally did not prompt returns to crime. A few -- those who lived with women and children receiving welfare -- supplemented income from erratic work with

transfer payments. A few others continued to mix or alternate between employment and crime; in these instances, however, criminal activity was less frequent and less risky than it had been -- crime appeared to be moderated by both employment and age.

For a few individuals, criminal activity remained a primary means of support. One maintained a continuing involvement with organized auto theft rings, begun in his middle (17-18) period. Another had worked a little when he was 17-18 -- a period during which he was crime-free; after leaving his job, he returned to stealing, which ultimately led to his incarceration.

The general pattern in La Barriada involved crime preceding employment in early adolescence; a mix of occasional employment and crime (overlap and alternation) in middle adolescence; and employment apart from crime in late adolescence and early adulthood.

Yet there were several exceptions to this pattern. A few respondents remained free of criminal involvement throughout the period studied. One resisted criminal involvement primarily because of continuous involvement with school and work (behavior strongly supported by family influences). Another was never criminally active, had periods of intermittent employment from the age of fourteen on, and was periodically supported (along with his wife and five children) by welfare or unemployment insurance. Although this respondent claimed to have little interest in working and considerable interest in

being supported without work or crime, in reality he found it necessary to work, and did so with relative frequency, to support himself and his family.

Another respondent deviated from the general pattern primarily by being far more active -- at both crime and work -- than other respondents. He was a persistent, successful burglar and occasional robber between the ages of thirteen and fifteen (somewhat earlier and far more actively than others). At the age of sixteen, he lied about his age to take a full-time factory job; while working, however, he continued to "moonlight" in crime. He was arrested and incarcerated for six months between the ages of sixteen and seventeen. After release, he had a brief period of intensive involvement with robbery. He found work shortly thereafter, and has continued to work steadily since; nevertheless, throughout the study period, he has supplemented income from employment with income from crime (over time the proportion has shifted toward more work and less crime).

## 2. Projectville

In Projectville, the period of early adolescence (14-16) closely resembled that in La Barriada. There was very little early work experience; most respondents were actively engaged in early crime explorations (stealing, shoplifting, picking pockets). By the age of sixteen, a few began to have work experience, largely in summer youth employment programs. Although a few reduced or abated criminal activity during short-term employment programs, the program experience generally had

little impact on criminal activity. Only one respondent in Projectville had no criminal involvements during this period; he had a series of summer jobs while in school. This respondent did not live directly in the projects, but adjacent to them; his family was less economically disadvantaged than the families of other respondents.

During the middle period (17-18) there was still relatively little employment available to Projectville youth. Some respondents continued to rely on summer youth employment programs; others found occasional part-time or temporary work through family or friends. Nevertheless, several began to drift away from criminal involvement despite limited employment opportunities. There was an apparent split between those who sustained relatively violent, confrontational criminal activities (muggings, chain snatching) and those who resisted such involvements.

Work, however, did not appear to be a central determining influence at this age, although a few worked occasionally and stayed away from crime. Others mixed or alternated occasional employment and property crime. One respondent found illegitimate employment in a local "reefer store"; he had no involvement in predatory crime. A few other respondents began to explore marijuana sales as an income source at this stage; for one, this led, at his mother's insistence, to residential placement for two years, during which he had neither work nor crime involvement. Only one respondent engaged in criminal

activity exclusively during this period -- a respondent who never worked and subsisted on petty theft.

Once Projectville respondents reached the age of nineteen, most were able to find occasional work -- although for many employment consisted of day labor and agency jobs. In Projectville, there were more extended periods of unemployment during the early adult period than in La Barriada.

Most respondents were not regularly involved in street-crime at this stage. A few respondents, who had been active chain snatchers and/or muggers in the middle period, had been incarcerated on robbery charges, and were either still incarcerated or trying to go straight. One respondent who found a full-time clerical job, continued to steal if there was a "good opportunity"; but he was an exception to the general pattern.

Other respondents became active in organized drug sales, often in lieu of employment. After returning from a residential youth home, one respondent at the age of twenty began to work in a local reefer store. Another respondent in his early twenties alternated between selling drugs and day labor. Another sold marijuana regularly until an arrest for transporting heroin led to his incarceration.<sup>21</sup> Another -- the respondent who had had no property crime involvement in early adolescence -- began selling drugs successfully at age seventeen. Over time, he accrued little regular work experience, but built

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<sup>21</sup>This respondent had little experience with drug sales other than marijuana. He tried to take advantage of an opportunity to make some "quick and easy" money, carrying heroin, and failed in the attempt.

a relatively successful illegitimate career for himself selling drugs. Although he was arrested several times near the end of the fieldwork period, he had not as yet been convicted on any charges.

The fact that respondents in Projectville had somewhat more continuing school involvement than in the other neighborhoods was, to some extent, related to this slower process of work establishment. Respondents were more likely to stay in school or return to school in efforts to achieve some form of high school credential. It was not clear, however, whether return to school delayed the process of work establishment or whether difficulty establishing work led to a return to school. Those who did earn high school diplomas ultimately found more and better-paying jobs than their peers who did not finish school -- although many also had frequent periods of unemployment. High school graduates were as involved in quasi-organized local drug-selling operations as others.

For some Projectville respondents, regular drug selling was a transitional stage between exploratory property crime and adult employment. For others, such activity was independent of employment, a competing form of employment itself -- a pattern which contrasts sharply with that in Hamilton Park, where drug selling generally overlapped with and was supported by income from employment.

In Projectville, the dominant patterns of employment-crime relationships at different ages were similar to those in La Barriada. In early adolescence, there was little employment

and a great deal of exploratory property crime. In mid-adolescence, there was slightly more employment, generally sporadic. For some, spells of employment were mixed with increasingly confrontational property crime; for others, they were independent of criminal involvement. By the time most respondents reached the age of nineteen, however, there was little sustained predatory criminal activity and considerably more employment. Only respondents who became substantially involved in quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises (drug sales) attempted to support themselves through criminal involvement alone.

### 3. Hamilton Park

In Hamilton Park, respondents had far more opportunities for early work experience during the ages of fourteen to sixteen, at least on a part-time basis, than in other neighborhoods. Most respondents had some part-time job at this time, generally off-the-books, in supermarkets, bakeries, local factories and building maintenance. A few respondents had "jobs" with local gambling outfits, carrying numbers slips and collecting gambling debts, in addition to other legitimate part-time work.

At the same time, most respondents were experimenting with occasional property crime -- although these explorations were generally less income-oriented, less serious, and less frequent than in other neighborhoods. A few respondents engaged in exploratory criminal activity, but had no work. One respondent engaged in neither. Another had part-time work and no exploratory criminal involvement at this age.



Although respondents broke into factories at an early age in a manner similar to that in La Barriada, in Hamilton Park burglaries were less frequent, less systematic and as likely to be expressive as income-oriented. During this early period, Hamilton Park respondents differed from other young respondents both in the greater frequency of part-time employment and in the lesser frequency and income-orientation of criminal activities. Non-income crime was as frequent in Hamilton Park at this stage as in the other neighborhoods.

During the middle period (17-18) Hamilton Park respondents continued to have a great deal of part-time, off-the-books employment. In contrast to the other neighborhoods, there was very little involvement with street crime at this stage. Yet several respondents -- both working and not working -- had begun selling drugs (largely marijuana). A few other respondents were able to steal merchandise from their jobs. Two respondents (one working, one not working) engaged in rather dramatic, drug-related burglaries, breaking into jewelry stores under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs; such activity, however, seemed as much expressive as it was income-oriented. There was no systematic involvement in street crime at this stage.

By the time they reached nineteen-years-old, the majority of Hamilton Park respondents had steady full-time jobs. Of those who did not, one respondent was a full-time college student. Another was unemployed and actively seeking work. Two were not working and selling drugs actively.

For most respondents at this age working did not preclude illegitimate involvements. Many respondents sold drugs in varying amounts, using their income from employment to finance investments in drugs. A few found opportunities for steady pilfering on their jobs. Only one respondent had steady full-time work with no additional illegitimate income. For some respondents, job loss interfered with drug sales; they were unable to finance drug investments without capital from employment.

Even the drug trafficking in Hamilton Park differed from that in Projectville, where there was a comparable degree of drug involvement. Besides the fact that Hamilton Park respondents experimented with and/or dealt in a greater variety of drugs (cocaine, hallucinogens, barbiturates, and, for a few, heroin), drug trade was far less open, and concomitantly less risky, than in Projectville. Projectville respondents were likely to sell drugs openly in parks, reefer stores, and occasionally, after-hours clubs, often to strangers. In Hamilton Park, on the other hand, drug sales were generally to friends or friends of friends, and relatively private. In Hamilton Park, such activity generally provided a supplement to income from employment; only a few relied entirely upon drug sales for support. In Projectville, on the other hand, selling drugs was more likely to be a full-time job in itself.

In Hamilton Park, patterns of employment-crime relationships at different ages differed substantially from those in minority neighborhoods. During early adolescence (14-16),

there was considerably more part-time work, and considerably fewer, less intensive explorations of property crime than in other neighborhoods. In the middle period (17-18), there was far less income-oriented theft in general and considerably more employment than in the minority neighborhoods; nevertheless there was extensive involvement in drug sales as a supplement to income from employment. In the later period (19-24), there was virtually no predatory property crime, and a great deal of steady full-time employment; there was also, however, far more mixing of full-time work with involvement in quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises. On the whole, the criminal activities, of Hamilton Park respondents (largely drug sales and on-the-job theft) were far less risky, less confrontational and less likely to involve arrest and/or incarceration.

#### 4. Linkages between Employment and Crime

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

For most respondents, explorations of income-producing crime preceded employment. In all neighborhoods, there was considerable involvement in such activity between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. In Hamilton Park there was more likely

to be an overlap between part-time employment and exploratory property crime; yet early criminal explorations were likely to be less frequent and less income-oriented (more expressive) than in other neighborhoods. Even so, in all neighborhoods most respondents had some involvement with theft for income during early adolescence.

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

During this period as well, a substantial proportion of respondents in all neighborhoods ended involvement in systematic theft. In Hamilton Park, stealing during the middle period was infrequent, engaged in only by the wildest youth, and then not primarily as an income-producing activity. In other neighborhoods, there was a gradual division between those who were still stealing (working or not) and those who had stopped.

Also at this age respondents first became involved in quasi-organized illegitimate activities -- organized auto theft in La Barriada and drug selling, to a varying extent, in all neighborhoods. For some, such activity overlapped or alter-

nated with employment; for others, it was independent of employment.

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

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

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

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

Other aspects of the community differed from the minority neighborhoods as well. Although in both Hamilton Park and La Barriada, factories provided a locus for neighborhood-based industrial burglaries for early adolescents, there were strong differences in the nature of both formal and informal social control in these neighborhoods. In Hamilton Park, there were rapid reprisals for such activity by factory owners. In addition, routine police order-maintenance activities lent support to the values of older community residents, discouraging congregations of youth, rowdiness and disorder. Community ties to the criminal justice system enhanced order-maintenance and facilitated interventions with authority for neighborhood youth who did get in trouble with the police.<sup>22</sup>

All these factors -- including the opportunity for more and better employment -- worked to reduce the level of predatory income-oriented property crime in Hamilton Park. Although in Hamilton Park, employment for the very young (14-16) did not

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<sup>22</sup>In La Barriada, in contrast, residents and merchants regularly purchased stolen merchandise from local youth. Police were not responsive to neighborhood concerns and there was little effort to maintain order in the rapidly decaying neighborhood. Residents were generally dissociated from government agencies (the police, the courts).

entail the cessation of exploratory property crime, it seemed that employment, working in concert with other social, institutional and ecological influences, strongly affected the frequency and severity of early adolescent criminal activity, the duration of the period of exploratory property crime, and the prevalence of income-oriented street crime during mid-adolescence. Community conditions seemed to support relatively early movement away from such activity into less risky, income-oriented criminal involvements (drug sales, on-the-job theft).

Apparently both age and community had strong effects on the nature of relationships between employment and crime. In the neighborhood study, respondents exhibited a wide variety of these relationships, or linkages: crime preceding employment, overlap of employment and crime, alternation between employment and crime, crime in response to job loss, employment as a stake for illegitimate activities, income from such activities as a supplement to income from employment, employment without crime, and neither employment nor crime. The predominance of these linkages varied in different settings and at different ages.

For the relatively young there was no apparent inverse relationship between employment and crime among respondents within specific neighborhoods. Employment was generally infrequent and short-term. Respondents were as likely to have an overlap between the two as they were to be involved with one or the other alone. Periods of employment did not seem to have more than an occasional moderating influence on established patterns of criminal involvement (stealing and/or drug sales).

There was, however, an apparent inverse relationship between employment and crime if we consider all 14-18 year-old respondents from the three neighborhoods together. Young respondents from Hamilton Park had considerably more employment and considerably less involvement in systematic theft than respondents from the minority neighborhoods.

For older respondents there did appear to be an inverse relationship between employment and crime for respondents within individual neighborhoods. It became increasingly possible to identify respondents who were primarily involved in employment or primarily involved in crime (generally quasi-organized illegitimate enterprises). At this stage, it also became increasingly possible to consider extended criminal involvement as generating a cumulating disadvantage in terms of both the labor market and the criminal justice system.

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



Because of this prevalent "mixing," the inverse relationship between employment and crime was less apparent in Hamilton Park than in the minority neighborhoods. In Hamilton Park, some older, better employed respondents had considerable illegitimate involvement; the age effect on crime frequency was less apparent. In the minority neighborhoods, on the other hand, most respondents clearly "matured out" of criminal involvement and those that did not contrasted strongly with those that did. As in the defendant survey, inverse relationships between employment and crime -- either contrasting younger and older respondents, or contrasting older respondents with varying degrees of employment -- were strongest and most apparent in minority settings.

C. Employment-Crime Relationships: The Combined Research

Together, the two Vera studies suggest that it is not appropriate to speak of a single definitive relationship between employment and crime. There were a variety of relationships or "linkages" between the two evident in the research. The nature of the employment-crime relationship varied according to age, race/ethnicity and community.

It was apparent in both studies that employment and crime were not mutually exclusive alternatives. We saw a considerable amount of overlap between the two in both studies, particularly among the young. Young defendants who had intermittent (especially summer-only) employment during the study period were somewhat more likely to be arrested when employed than when not employed. In the neighborhood study as well, employment did not seem to greatly affect patterns of street crime among the young. In addition, some respondents, who had ended involvement in street crime, continued to steal from the job or sell drugs on the side when they were employed.

Direct effects of employment on crime were few. In the defendant survey, we located a small subsample of older defendants for whom employment was most likely to have had a direct impact on arrest frequency (the direction of causal relationships for this, as for other groups, could not be determined). In the neighborhood study, we saw a few respondents who gave up criminal involvements after finding a job, and who returned to crime after job loss, suggestive of a causal linkage. Others said that having a job led to reductions in the frequency and/

or severity of criminal involvement. Yet the proportion of either sample that demonstrated a direct impact of employment upon crime was relatively small.

There was, however, evidence in both studies of an overall inverse relationship between employment and crime and a striking degree of parallelism between the two studies in terms of which groups were most likely to demonstrate inverse relationships. These parallels were evident despite the differences in the samples -- the first, a defendant sample; the second, community-based, high-risk groups of youth.

Age in both studies had a major impact on the nature of employment and crime relationships. In both studies, among younger respondents, we found little apparent relationship between employment and crime. For them, differences in arrest rates and/or criminal activity did not seem to be associated with differences in the quantity and quality of employment. Yet, among older respondents, in both studies, there were apparent inverse relationships between employment and crime. To some extent, those relationships depended on a contrast between those who focused on employment and had little criminal activity, and those who focused on criminal activity (either quasi-organized illegitimate activities, as in the neighborhood study, or frequent, low-level income crime, as in the defendant survey) and had little employment. In addition, there was an intermediate group, evident in the defendant sample, who had a "mix" of employment and crime activities and appeared to alternate between the two.

Community differences in the neighborhood study, paralleled by differences in race/ethnicity in the defendant survey, were also strongly related to both employment and crime. There was far less available employment and far more street crime in minority neighborhoods than in Hamilton Park, the working-class white neighborhood. There were also systematic differences in the structure of educational opportunities, the extent of parental financial support, family structure, housing conditions, and both formal and informal social control. It appeared that the social and cultural structure of the neighborhood had a considerable impact on the type and frequency of the criminal activities of high-risk youth.

In both studies, we also discovered that inverse relationships between employment and crime were least evident among white respondents. It appeared that those whites who were at risk of arrest were idiosyncratic within their neighborhoods; the most criminally involved youth in Hamilton Park, for example, were the rowdiest and most heavily involved in drugs. In minority neighborhoods, however, it appeared that patterns of street crime and arrest were typical for young males. The criminal involvement of high-risk minority youth as a group seem more related to structural conditions (deprivation, limited educational opportunities, restricted employment opportunities, inadequate social control) than those of whites.

Other factors (education, family characteristics) clearly had impacts on both employment and crime involvements to varying degrees, but there was little ability in either the survey

or the fieldwork to discern whether these factors had had systematic impacts on the employment-crime relationship itself. Having a diploma was associated with both better employment outcomes and lower arrest rates in the defendant survey, but employment itself appeared to explain more about differences in criminality than did diploma status.

The detailed manner in which local community settings influenced both employment and crime behavior had not been fully specified in the Project's original model of employment and crime (see Chapter I). Although that model acknowledged and emphasized the general influence of "economic, institutional and subcultural factors" on employment and crime behavior, the model did not specify how these factors are shaped and made significant within community settings. The neighborhood study revealed that for high-risk adolescent males opportunities for schooling, employment and crime are neighborhood-specific. High-risk youth learn about what is available for them through local information networks, communication systems composed of family and friends. In this way, "economic, institutional and subcultural factors" take on concrete, specific identity within particular neighborhoods -- defined by the particular schools high-risk youth attend, the kinds of jobs they can get, and the kinds of crime they engage in.

Researchers found that the original model of employment and crime behavior generally retained descriptive validity. It was apparent, however, in the neighborhood study that criminal involvement began somewhat earlier than the Project's model

envisioned; early crime explorations generally preceded school-leaving and opportunities for employment. Respondents began to learn about crime (breaking into factories, shoplifting) before employment was an option.

Once respondents reached the age of sixteen, explorations of employment and crime went on at the same time as predicted by the model. Most respondents had already left school, although a few stayed in and earned diplomas. For many, there was relatively little employment. Nevertheless, employment and crime at this stage were relatively independent of each other.

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

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

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

Together, the two studies generally support the Project's model of employment-crime behavior. In reflecting upon the research findings, it became increasingly clear to us that the descriptive strength of that model rests partly on the fact that it does not insist upon direct tradeoffs between employment and crime or direct impacts of employment on crime. It focuses instead on age and transformations in employment and crime behavior over time.

It is essentially an experiential model, envisioning adolescence as a period of exploration and learning. High-risk adolescent males are seen as beginning to explore short-term and long-term career options -- both legitimate and illegitimate. Some escape from this period of exploration relatively unscathed; they "mature out" of criminal activity relatively quickly and come to accept the kinds of jobs that others in their communities have accepted before them. Others, however, may become trapped in a cycle of "cascading disadvantage"; youthful criminal explorations may lead to periods of incarceration, increased contact with criminally involved networks, and

reduced exploration of early employment opportunities. For this group, it becomes increasingly difficult to "catch up" with peers who have moved away from crime for family and jobs.



CHAPTER VI  
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Since the mid-seventies, when Vera's research into the nature of the relationship between employment and crime was first conceived, the conventional wisdom about that relationship has changed dramatically. At the time, it was widely believed that there was a strong direct relationship between the two. A few early aggregate studies of relationships between unemployment and crime rates were frequently cited in support of this belief. There were strong expectations of positive results from eagerly awaited research on social programs attempting to reduce crime by providing employment and/or income to various groups of offenders and high-risk youth.

Today, the conventional wisdom seems to have changed. A number of efforts, including our own literature review, have pointed to the inconclusiveness of aggregate studies of relationships between unemployment, as well as other economic indicators, and crime. Recent results from social experiments have not shown strong impacts on either employment or crime. Direct tradeoffs between crime and employment are far less pervasive than was believed ten years ago. Partly as a result of this realization, a presumption is growing that unemployment experience and criminal behavior are not related to one another in any important ways.

This shift in assumptions has not gone unnoticed. Politicians and policy advocates still argue about whether or not

there is a discernible, direct relationship between unemployment and crime. But today the argument takes on importance in the contest between those who insist on the continuance of social programs as an element of a crime control strategy and those who would limit that strategy either to enhancing the deterrent effects of the criminal justice system or to incapacitation, by selecting-out serious, frequent offenders for long-term incarceration.<sup>1</sup>

We suggest that the debate is constrained unrealistically and unnecessarily by the assumption (implicit or explicit) that only direct relationships, involving short-term tradeoffs between work and criminal activity, are of consequence for crime control policy. If unemployment were both a necessary and a sufficient cause of crime, it would be reasonable to expect that significant increases in employment among high-risk populations would produce immediate reductions, of similar magnitude, in their criminal behavior. However, unemployment is surely not a necessary cause of crime and is only rarely a sufficient cause. Therefore, the short-term results of employment programs on the criminal behavior of their participants are equivocal at best.

This is not to say that direct relationships between employment and crime do not exist. There was evidence in our

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<sup>1</sup>There are, of course, a variety of justifications, besides their potential impacts on crime, for intervention programs aimed at changing living conditions among the urban poor. In this report, however, we focus on the narrower issue of their relevance to crime control policy. In doing so, we recognize that even those who would deny that they are relevant in this regard, may support such efforts for other reasons.

research that such direct relationships were far more evident for some subgroups than for others. Specifically, tradeoffs between employment and crime were more apparent for older, minority offenders. There was little apparent employment-crime tradeoff for high-risk youth or for white offenders of any age.

This documentation of subgroup differences in the strength of the direct employment-crime relationship should help us target employment programs towards those groups for whom employment might be most immediately effective as a means of social control. For example, the fact that arrest rates did not vary for younger arrested persons (16-19) according to the extent or quality of employment helps one to understand why employment programs aimed at young offenders have generally had little impact on crime. These programs assumed that differences in employment status were related to differences in criminal involvement, but we found no evidence of that relationship among high-risk youths. It is not surprising, therefore, that current levels of participation in summer youth employment programs in both studies appeared to have little relationship to the extent of criminal involvement.

It must be recognized, however, that both subsidized program and non-program employment were sparsely scattered within high-risk adolescent groups studied; there was not enough employment to compete with and/or transform established peer group patterns of hanging out, getting high and engaging in street crime. It is possible that appreciable expansion of

employment opportunities for out-of-school, high-risk youth groups within specific neighborhoods would affect these social patterns and thereby indirectly affect their criminality. Nevertheless, we need to recognize that employment is generally less central for teenagers than for adults, and that the range of employment opportunities for youth in general is severely limited.

It is not surprising, therefore, that our research suggests that the criminality of adult minority property offenders might be more immediately responsive to employment initiatives than that of high-risk youth. We found that most adult minority defendants have already had some (often considerable) work experience. Yet many are removed by incarceration from effective job-search networks and also carry the stigma of their criminal records. For them, rigorous job placement efforts and attempts to maximize existing job networks within their families and communities seem appropriate. For this group, the quality of employment is also important. Minority defendants are experienced with, and may have access to, unstable, low-paying secondary sector jobs. Programs must be able to improve on these options. A decent wage, some employee benefits, the promise of stability and the possibility of future advancement may be necessary to break the cycle of alternation between repeated low-level property offending and short-term secondary jobs.

The recognition that direct relationships between unemployment and crime are less pervasive and less powerful than

was previously believed should lead to reformulating the targets, objectives and expectations of short-term employment services intended to impact on crime. But this finding alone should not define the proper role of employment policies in a crime control strategy. There are numerous and important indirect relationships between the quality and extent of employment and the severity and extent of income crime for specific subpopulations. Those relationships will affect the impact of any crime control strategy and pose important philosophical and political questions about how our society should deal with crime problems among economically and socially disadvantaged populations.

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

This is not a unique finding, of course. Sociologists conducting research in the tradition of the "Chicago School"

have been documenting the close association between official rates of crime and delinquency and a wide range of social and demographic indicators that describe the neighborhoods of the urban poor. This is a second tradition of aggregate research (and, in our opinion, a more provocative one) which relates employment and other economic indicators to the volume and form of reported crime.

Shaw and McKay (1931, 1942, 1969) are generally credited with starting this line of research, but it has been advanced by a number of other scholars, including Lander (1954); Bordua (1958-59); Kobrin (1959); Chilton (1964); and more recently, Bursik and Webb (1982). Studying the ecology of the City of Chicago over fifty years ago, Shaw and McKay demonstrated that the spatial distribution of delinquency was patterned and concentrated in specific lower-class neighborhoods. Moreover, they found that the concentrations persisted in Chicago despite changes in the racial and ethnic composition of those neighborhoods. This led them to suggest that the patterns resulted from "larger economic and social processes characterizing the history of and growth of the city and of the local communities which comprise it" (1942, p. 14). They saw the persistence as a product of cultural transmission processes affecting the behavior of successive groups of people moving into the neighborhoods.

The more recent research by Bursik and Webb, using more sophisticated techniques of analysis, finds that persistent association of delinquency in Chicago with ecological vari-

ables actually breaks down after 1950. However, there is a consistent association between change in delinquency rates and change in the ecological variables so that the neighborhoods which perceived the greatest change in delinquency rates were those experiencing the greatest amount of ecological change between 1950 and 1960. These rates of change then fell somewhat from 1960 to 1970 as did the pace of ecological change. They conclude with respect to the Shaw and McKay research, ". . . although the pattern has been altered, their formulations concerning the relationship between processes of community stabilization and delinquency rates still appear to be amazingly robust" (1982, p. 40).

This research tradition focuses attention on the institutional structures of the local community, their stability and their capacity to serve the interests of the people who live there. We believe that chronic unemployment affects those institutions in a variety of ways which, in turn, are productive of high crime rates.

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

These conditions of social and economic deprivation increase the likelihood of conventional street crime in a

variety of ways. Community tolerance for low-level property crime, especially when committed by teenagers, often increases. Markets for retail trafficking in stolen goods are a common symptom of such tolerance. Economic deprivation weakens family stability which, in turn, lessens the ability of families to control the behavior of the young and enhance their future employment prospects. Widespread recreational drug use creates a need for funds for some and an opportunity for earning income for others. Pervasive educational failure, while lowering the level of human capital in the community, also erodes the community's trust in conventional institutions. The inability to achieve a stable economic base and arrest the deterioration of local housing stock is often seen as evidence of the community's inability to control its own affairs, which, in turn, weakens both formal and informal control mechanisms. Weak social control mechanisms are particularly problematic in a community with a large number of youths who are exploring various forms of property crime.

In these ways, among others, chronic unemployment and underemployment indirectly contribute to the concentration of street crimes in economically deprived communities. Moreover, as Albert Reiss argues, communities themselves have "careers" in crime that are related to increased physical decay of neighborhoods, concentrations of truant or out-of-school high-risk youth, increasing incivility and fear of crime, reduced commercial property, and the outward migration of more stable residents:



Clearly, neighborhoods are dynamic places where changing crime patterns affect their future state -- from their physical state and social composition to their activity state and perceived quality of life. Neighborhoods within communities have careers in crime, shifting over time as they do from places with very low to very high crime rates, and from high back again to low. (1983, p. 50)

Reiss contends that transitions in the crime careers of neighborhoods are rapid, progressive adaptations to progressively worsening conditions.<sup>2</sup>

In such settings, the effect of unemployment and underemployment on crime is indirect, mediated by the erosion of legitimate opportunities and social control within neighborhoods. As Reiss suggests, norms and behaviors within neighborhoods adapt rapidly to such physical and economic erosion. Reiss suggests that once the downward cycle of transition to high levels of criminality within neighborhoods has begun, it is extremely difficult to reverse.

It is hard to envision a long-term crime control strategy that does not attempt to transform these social and economic conditions. Such transformation would, of course, require coordinated change in several institutional areas, including education, economic development, housing, and political organization. An employment improvement policy, in itself, would not bring about this transformation. However, meaningful change in

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<sup>2</sup>We found incontrovertible evidence of disproportionately high volumes of street crime in neighborhoods where economic deprivation was an ever-present reality. One of our study neighborhoods, in fact, demonstrated the rapid transition of which Reiss speaks; during the period in which the neighborhood was studied, the block we investigated in La Barriada disintegrated rapidly. By the end of the study period, most of the residential buildings on the block had been burned out or looted.

the conditions that breed heavy concentrations of street crime among the urban poor cannot be realized without substantial change in the employment experience of the adults and the employment prospects of the youth in inner-city neighborhoods.

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

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

increased and/or improved employment opportunities may in fact represent a real alternative to crime.

Given its direct, and especially its indirect impacts on crime, enhancing the employment experiences and prospects of the urban poor should be an important objective of our crime control strategies. But evaluation of past program efforts to reduce crime through expanded employment show ambiguous results, at best. Why should this be so if employment is so important a variable?

In the first place, the assumptions on which most of these program efforts were based represented an oversimplified understanding of employment and crime relationships. Hence, there was little effort made to coordinate employment services with the other mediating structures, such as families, peer groups, educational institutions, and neighborhood organizations that affect behavior in the community. Because it was assumed that employment could be directly traded off with criminality, programs were not organized to strengthen the various indirect links to behavior.

Secondly, the oversimplified behavioral assumptions, which produced inadequate program designs, also led to unrealistic expectations of program impact. We know now that different employment strategies are required for different age groups, and that they must be effectively tied to broader social structures and processes which often differ from one community to another. This means that even when the employment program is designed in recognition of the indirect relationships which it

is attempting to affect, its success in doing so may be constrained by factors beyond the control of the program operators. The process of transforming a cluster of interrelated social conditions in a local community is difficult and time-consuming. It is not likely to produce notable short-term changes in behavior.

Thirdly, the expectation that employment programs will reduce crime is based on the assumption that such programs will first improve the employment experiences and prospects of those who participate. But the evidence suggests that such programs were often unsuccessful in accomplishing their employment objectives and would thereby have no means of impacting on crime.

Our research indicates further that the criminality of high-risk youth, as well as their experiences with and expectations regarding legitimate work, are profoundly affected by the interaction of social and economic factors on the neighborhood level. This suggests that both employment and crime control initiatives must be tailored to affect change in specific communities or to remove large numbers of people from the neighborhoods of the urban poor.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from West's (1982) longitudinal study of delinquency in London. He tried to identify individuals who did and did not become criminally-involved and the factors that predicted criminality in a sample of urban working-class youth. West found that high-risk youth who moved out of London generally ended criminal involvement in conjunction with their move, whereas similar youths who stayed

in the same neighborhood stayed criminally-involved. Community setting emerged as strongly related to criminality in his study.<sup>3</sup>

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

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

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<sup>3</sup>Similarly, the positive impacts on crime reported in an evaluation of the Job Corps (Mallar *et al.*, 1980) may be related to the fact that the program removed participants from their communities for skills training.

In the first case, we are encouraged to expect that greater certainty and severity of punishment will lead to dramatic reductions in the volume of street crime. This expectation seems plausible in view of the fact that the risk of being apprehended for any given act of street crime, even robbery, assault and burglary, is so low. Moreover, in many jurisdictions, about 50 percent of the felony arrest cases result in non-convictions; perhaps 90 percent of those who are convicted are convicted by plea, rather than by trial; many of the pleas are to less serious charges than those in which the suspect was arrested; and a distinct minority of those convicted are given an incarcerative sentence.

These facts suggest that both the certainty and severity of the criminal apprehension and case disposition process can be significantly increased, if only because there is so much apparent room to do so. However, it is not at all clear that significant improvements can be achieved at any of these points in the disposition process.

The ability of the police to apprehend a suspect for any given crime is highly dependent on the circumstances of the offense, the timing of their arrival and the cooperation of the complainant and witnesses. Research conducted in the last decade does not point to any clear strategies that will greatly reduce response time in the kinds of cases in which it is important, or appreciably increase the willingness of complainants and witnesses to cooperate in the prosecution of the case.

Research also suggests that the high proportion of non-convictions in felony arrests is in large part a function of the evidentiary weakness of those cases, including the lack of witness cooperation (Vera Institute, 1981). Pleas, rather than trials, are considered desirable by criminal justice officials not only because they are less costly, but also because convictions are anything but certain when the parties go to trial. Charge reduction in the bargaining process is influenced by the strength of the case and by the volume of cases that must be handled in a jurisdiction. Moreover, research studies have generally found that the conviction charges resulting from the bargaining process are roughly proportionate to the seriousness of the arrest charge and the defendant's prior criminal record. Despite the fact that incarcerative sentences are meted out in only a minority of cases that end in conviction, prison and jail facilities at all levels of government are seriously overcrowded and the voting public seems reluctant to spend the enormous sums necessary to build and operate new cell space.

Implementing a strategy of selective incapacitation seems no less fraught with difficulty. While it is likely that most serious, frequent predators come within the grasp of criminal justice agencies often during their careers, the system's capacity to identify them and distinguish the anticipated careerists from those who are likely to desist is fairly limited. Moreover, the prospect of systematically sentencing people to lengthy periods of incarceration based on an

expectation that they will continue to offend frequently and seriously is likely to be challenged in the courts, especially in light of the fact that our current predictive tools falsely predict such patterns in a substantial proportion of test cases.

Finally, in a society in which so many people see imprisonment as the only preventive criminal sanction, it is not at all clear that far more extensive use of alternatives to incarceration will prove acceptable to the general public or to the criminal justice officials who would have to use them. Failure to implement such screening and alternatives would convert the policy of "selective incapacitation" into one of "extensive incapacitation." That, in turn, would drive correctional costs to previously unimagined levels.

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

Another reason for caution regarding the potential crime control impact of enhancing deterrence is that its proponents base their hope on almost the same oversimplified understanding of human behavior that led others to expect significant and immediate reductions in crime from employment programs. Both tend to see criminal activity, especially property crime, as a product of a rational economic choice in which the costs of potential punishment are weighed against the potential returns



to crime. Many of those who advocated employment incentives during the sixties and early seventies believed that crime could be reduced simply by increasing the attractiveness of law-abiding behavior. Many of those advocating a one-sided emphasis on deterrence today are simply stressing the sanctions side of the same behavioral equation. Simplistic underlying assumptions about human behavior create unrealistic expectations for whatever form of intervention they spawn.

Our research suggests that those rationalist, economic assumptions are somewhat useful in understanding the criminality of older, minority offenders, but not very illuminating when applied to youth in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods. Over time, the cumulating risk of criminal justice sanctions plays some role in the process of "maturing out" of crime. Yet, at its peak, the criminal involvement of high-risk youth is not essentially a product of rational, economic choice.

Even those who emphasize a deterrence strategy for crime control must recognize that the strategy requires that those at whom it is aimed have something to lose by getting caught in the criminal justice net. As Michael Smith indicated in testimony before Congress, the limitations of an excessive reliance on deterrence are:

. . . compounded by the lack of opportunity cost of crime for the inner-city youth who lacks a stake in the future, who is unemployed and perceives no prospect of gain through employment. Those of us who generate reasoned policies for deterring crime do our own cost/benefit analysis to find evidence that it will work. Of course we fear punishment, even if the risk of apprehension is low. But we are not likely

to risk our jobs or our income -- our stake in the legitimate life-style that is the source or supporting structure for most of our benefits. If we are to deter the street crime that so threatens us we would be foolish, in my view, not to work hard to increase the benefits of non-crime to those among the urban, poor youth who at present perceive little to lose from crime. In my view, pursuit of an effective deterrence policy leads inexorably back to the need to develop and pursue employment strategies. (1981, pp. 22-23)

An effective crime control strategy, therefore, requires that deterrence and social intervention efforts on behalf of the urban poor proceed in tandem. Moreover, future efforts to address the employment needs of the urban poor will have to cope with some labor market trends that are more threatening than promising. These include the deterioration of the manufacturing sector in the urban north; the decreasing number of jobs, especially primary sector jobs, that are accessible to the urban poor; and the increasing proportion of new jobs that are created by small, volatile business firms. These changes reflect important changes in the private economy and the efforts of the poor to cope with them will require the continued involvement of government on both the policy and program levels. Our research suggests that that involvement be guided by the following propositions:

- Both employment and deterrence policies should recognize the importance of the "maturing out of crime" phenomenon and should be planned so as to facilitate that process in economically deprived communities.
- Formal education and the school-to-work transition should be strengthened for teenagers in these neighborhoods. Thus, work opportunities should be

developed and delivered to complement and supplement, rather than compete with, educational programs for such youth.

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



APPENDIX  
METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Arrest Rates Versus Actual Crime Rates

The use of arrest records as an indicator of criminal activity raises a number of problems. Our analysis is most vulnerable with regard to the group of individuals who are criminally active but never get arrested -- thus escaping our sample entirely. However, relatively few individuals are able to engage in high-risk street crimes such as robbery, burglary, and larceny for an extended period of time without any arrests. With respect to these crimes, our sample can be considered fairly representative of the persistent offending population. Other crimes, particularly drug sales, numbers, and "victimless" crimes in general, are poorly represented in our sample. There is no completely satisfactory resolution to the sampling problem, other than to note that each method has its own advantages and shortcomings. Self-reports of criminal activity tend to be weakest where arrest records are strongest -- for example, in the commission of serious offenses such as robbery. On the other hand, self-reports provide a relatively strong representation of participation in important "victimless" crimes such as drug sales. Our study attempts to balance the findings from the defendant survey with results from extensive ethnographic work (encompassing both defendants and non-defendants) in three different Brooklyn neighborhoods.

We did attempt to make some adjustments for risk of arrest for different crimes. An arrest for a relatively "low risk"

crime, such as numbers running, is likely on average to represent a larger number of actual offenses than an arrest for a high-risk crime such as armed robbery. Using published data from a variety of sources (U.S. Department of Justice, 1981; Blumstein and Cohen, 1979), we calculated a crude probability of arrest for the different types of offenses in our sample. If the probability of arrest for robbery was, say, one in six, then an arrest for robbery was assumed to indicate an average of six actual offenses. We then repeated some of our analysis using the number of expected offenses estimated from the number of arrests.

In comparison to regressions on arrests and estimated number of crimes, there was little apparent difference. The overall measure of model fit (R-Square) is better for the arrest equation, and more individual coefficients attain statistical significance in the arrest equation as well. There are no reversals in sign for any of the coefficients. The inferior results for the model on estimated crimes could well reflect the crudeness of our adjustment procedure. However, even if our adjustment were better, the use of estimated offenses would raise further problems of interpretation. For example, is a petty larceny "worth" the same as a burglary or robbery in economic returns or social costs? The better statistical results for analysis using arrests and the further complications introduced by attempting to adjust for probability of apprehension lead us to stick to the analysis of simple arrests in this report.

INTERCORRELATIONS OF ARREST RATE PREDICTORS  
(Number of Observations in Parentheses)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. Age in years	1.0000 (885)												
2. Black	.0148 (884)	1.0000 (894)											
3. Regular diploma	.2815 (870)	.0154 (878)	1.0000 (886)										
4. Enrolled in school	-.4327 (814)	.1572 (824)	-.1941 (822)	1.0000 (831)									
5. Hours worked (past 2 years)	.2990 (811)	-.0823 (820)	.1922 (815)	-.2886 (766)	1.0000 (824)								
6. Out of the labor force	.0429 (754)	-.0009 (761)	-.0140 (756)	.1042 (712)	-.2047 (730)	1.0000 (765)							
7. Job with benefits	.3060 (754)	-.0502 (761)	.2507 (756)	-.2741 (712)	.2800 (730)	-.0804 (765)	1.0000 (765)						
8. 2-yr income arrests (log)	-.3821 (736)	.1270 (736)	-.2546 (722)	.2688 (674)	-.2358 (676)	.1156 (633)	-.2600 (633)	1.0000 (736)					
9. 1-yr subsequent income arrests (log)	-.2606 (772)	.1052 (774)	-.1953 (760)	.1960 (712)	-.1849 (710)	.0764 (660)	-.1605 (660)	.3572 (736)	1.0000 (774)				
10. 3-yr income arrests (log)	-.4100 (736)	.1244 (736)	-.2752 (722)	.2587 (674)	-.2557 (676)	.1050 (633)	-.2690 (633)	.9301 (736)	.6444 (736)	1.0000 (736)			
11. 2-yr total arrests (log)	-.1708 (736)	.1142 (738)	-.1640 (724)	.1040 (676)	-.1642 (678)	.0974 (634)	-.1551 (634)	.7259 (736)	.3126 (738)	.6924 (736)	1.0000 (738)		
12. 1-yr subsequent arrests (log)	-.2496 (772)	.0830 (774)	-.1920 (760)	.1663 (712)	-.1868 (710)	.0679 (660)	-.1591 (660)	.3307 (736)	.8419 (774)	.5652 (736)	.3458 (738)	1.0000 (774)	
13. 3-yr total arrests (log)	.2703 (736)	.1108 (738)	-.2180 (724)	.1717 (676)	-.2134 (678)	.0986 (634)	-.2068 (634)	.6923 (736)	.6281 (738)	.7925 (736)	.8665 (738)	.7224 (738)	1.0000 (738)





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