

ASSESSING PRISONER IDENTITY AND REDEFINING VICTIMLESS CRIMES: AN  
ANALYSIS OF PRISONERS AT BOONVILLE CORRECTIONS CENTER

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Sociology  
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Master of Arts

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by  
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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School have examined this thesis entitled

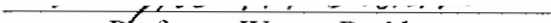
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Presented by Jennifer A. Schlosser

A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

  
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This thesis is dedicated to Mom, Dad and Christy. Thanks for hanging in there with me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Chapter One:**  
**An Introduction**

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics and Crime Facts, arrests for drug abuse offenses are the second most frequently occurring offenses nationwide. In 2003, the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) totaled drug abuse arrests at 1.7 million; the highest total number of arrests for any infraction. Likewise, the UCR reported that in 1987, 7.4% of the total arrests reported to the FBI were for drug related offenses, in 2003, drug arrest totals increased to 12.3% of all arrests. According the UCR; more drug arrests were the result of heroin and cocaine involvement from 1987 to 1995 than any other type of drug. Likewise, it was reported that "in 1996 an estimated 109,200 jail inmates were held for a drug offense, an increase from 87,400 in 1989 and 20,400 in 1983." What this means for people currently incarcerated for drug related offenses is that the likely majority of those inmates are still serving prison time for offenses conducted in the early 1990's. Also, it was reported that in 2001, 57% were under the age of 35, and in 2000, 21% of all State inmates were convicted of a drug related crime. Additionally, "thirty-one percent of jail inmates had grown up with a parent or guardian who abused alcohol or drugs, about 12 percent had lived in a foster home or institution and forty-six percent had a family member who had been incarcerated." Upon examination of these statistics, the larger contextual issues regarding the prevalence of drug related offenses in America are undeniable. Arrests for victimless crimes, specifically those related to the sale, use, possession or distribution of illegal narcotics are consistently on the rise and show no signs of slowing. Considering that in 2003 alone, 1.7 million individuals were arrested for this type of drug related victimless crime, we can see that this number is

roughly equivalent to the entire population of Nebraska (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Clearly, this trend in victimless criminal activity related to drug offenses has not gone overlooked, however, by understanding the scope and depth of this phenomenon, we can begin to break apart the elements that underlie, affect and even cause its overwhelming presence in society. In order to begin to dissect the structural apparatuses that may contribute to the prevalence of drug arrests, a closer look at the specific communities, neighborhoods, families, individuals and identities involved in these victimless crimes is necessary as well as an analysis of whether the perceived absence of a victim in these types of drug related crimes is even an accurate assumption to begin with.

### **The Problem**

Consider, for a moment, that a city community planning committee has randomly selected a subject, John, to be interviewed about the conditions of his neighborhood and the ways in which he thought they could be improved. The committee was concerned because the highest rates of arrests for drug offenses consistently came out of John's neighborhood and the members wanted to understand what they could do to remedy this problem. An interviewer was selected by the committee to go to John's house with a list of specific questions to ask and was to return to the meeting the next day with John's suggestions for community improvement. As the interviewer drove into John's neighborhood, she instinctually locked her doors; she kept her sunglasses pulled close so the people out on the street would not see her looking. Yet, as the interviewer drove

farther into John's neighborhood she began to take notice of certain things occurring around her that she'd never expected to see.

To her left, she saw a group of young men standing together in a huddle, their pants slung low on their waists and their hands shoved deep into their pockets; a cloud of smoke was rising above their heads. To her right, she saw children playing in the snow on a sofa in the front yard of a deteriorating house. The children wore no coats and seemed unaware of the men huddled across the street. A woman stepped out onto the porch of the house and the children scattered. The interviewer drove further ahead and saw a girl no older than 16 standing alone on the entrance to an alley. She wore high heels and a mini-skirt in the middle of winter and shouted something the researcher could not hear to a man walking past. Music blared from car stereos and a pit bull strained against his chain to get to her car. As the interviewer reached John's house, she became paralyzed. She parked in front of the house but remained still in the car as she watched a man in a tattered coat walk out the front door of John's house, stuffing something in his pocket when he saw her. The interviewer looked to the front door to see another man, counting a handful of money. When he looked up and into her eyes, the interviewer knew she'd be going back to the committee empty handed. John slammed the door and the interviewer sped the rest of the way out of his neighborhood.

The next day at the committee meeting the interviewer arrived in tears. She said there was nothing they could do, that the situation in John's neighborhood was a lost cause. There was too much corruption and the neighborhood had deteriorated to an irreparable landmine of crime and disorganization. The committee suggested sending more members of the local police force to regulate the dealings in John's neighborhoods,



but the interviewer was convinced that more police in the area would only be a waste of officers and resources that could be used elsewhere, to help in places of the community that still stood a chance. In John's neighborhood, the interviewer warned, they would find a way live beyond the law, no matter what the committee did to stop them.

Consider now, another neighborhood in the same city. A suburban mother waits for her 17 year old son to get home. She sits in the parlor of her three-story home and watches a man she hired to shovel her front walk pace up and down her yard. Her son pulls up in the new car she and her husband bought him last year and she can hear the bass from the radio rattle the windows as a patrol car pulls in behind him. Her son enters through the front door wearing a black t-shirt and in desperate need of a hair cut. She'd imagined he was just going through a rebellious phase, that he was just being a teen-ager so she never questioned his appearance. But, when her son stood there in the foyer and she confronted him, he no longer looked like her son. He became a stranger.

Her son had been arrested at school that day when a bag of cocaine was found in his locker. The principal called his mother and told her to expect her son later in the day; the school decided not to press charges because her son was usually such a good kid. The officer who followed her son home looked pointedly at the mother through the window, she nodded and he pulled out of the driveway and down the street. Her son looked at her with empty eyes and told his mother that she shouldn't have made him get that job in the mall. He dumped his book bag on the floor and bounded up the stairs to his room. As his mother watched him go, she decided not to tell his father. This day seemed punishment enough; and after all, she couldn't let anyone to find out that sometimes after the dinner parties they threw, she and her husband and their guests

occasionally engaged in some harmless recreational drug use. They were adults, after all, and they never let their son know what they did.

Two weeks later, as her son stood on the corner of a road by the school; he sold a large amount of cocaine to an undercover officer. This time, even the best of his parents' lawyers couldn't save him from the prison time he was sentenced to serve.

A man, living in a neighborhood so deteriorated that he became a lost cause, a boy from a good home sentenced to prison because his parents turned a blind eye; these stories, and so many others, are what paint the picture of "victimless," drug related crimes. These are the stories told from prison, the men who probably could have made different choices in their lives but who lacked the attention, guidance, options and help they needed break out of a pattern. Their identities are formed on the bases of their past experiences; and for someone who was never involved in criminal activity, it will be difficult to understand. However, by listening to their stories, by giving them a voice and by placing these men in the contexts of their own lives we can begin to uncover the moments in their histories that helped shape them into the men they are today.

### **A Preliminary Overview**

It is important to understand that, although personal responsibility and agency can often be neglected in sociological discussions of identity, it can ultimately be argued that it is, in fact, society itself that facilitates the creation of the criminal identity. This notion of societal facilitation is then often placed in juxtaposition to the idea perpetuated to the masses that drug dealers are lazy, dangerous, poor and destitute lifetime criminals in need of psychological rehabilitation who are used to living off the system and blaming others

for their questionable activities (Rieman, 1996, 1979). The structures (or lack thereof) in society which are generally designed to make citizens upwardly mobile, such as higher education and valid employment opportunities, are often denied to those individuals that make up the lower-class and live in unstructured environments, thus, stranding them in highly volatile living environments with few options for legitimate success available. Since the way capitalist societies are constructed emphasizes primarily economic success and competition, its citizens are automatically disadvantaged when that society fails to provide them with the legitimate opportunities, access and means necessary to achieve such mainstream success. Thus, understanding no other avenue of obtaining economic success, individuals from impoverished communities and environments not conducive to facilitating strong structures of support are *forced* to turn to illegitimate means in order to survive in the capitalist economy. This opposition to access of legitimate opportunity and the very real need to succeed competitively is what turns people into criminals. By relegating minorities, the poor and individuals with a clear lack of structural organization to the fringes of society, a net of safety is constructed for the mainstream as they place into typologies those individuals with “criminal” characteristics. In this way, a black, lower class man from a poor neighborhood can be avoided by members of the mainstream and thus denied access to the legitimate means for attaining economic and personal success in America such as access to higher education or legitimate job opportunities, just as a middle class youth sentenced to prison at an early age is denied the opportunities that he once may have had due to the presence of an arrest record. As denial of access to legitimacy occurs, the options left open for these individuals to acceptably succeed in society become minimal.

In this thesis, the infrequently researched topic of prisoner's perceptions of the causes and influences that lead to their own incarcerations and the creation of their criminal identities are examined; most particularly, those who committed victimless crimes. For the purposes of this study, victimless crimes are defined simply as the possession, distribution, sale or use of illegal narcotics that lead to incarceration. It is important to understand the motivations for this study are as follows. First, this thesis examines previous literature with respect to the theoretical underpinnings that build the foundation for prisoner research and emphasizes the roles society plays in the creation of victimless criminals through the denial of legitimate means of success, education and opportunity based primarily on class inequalities. Second, this study uses a specific grounded methodology including surveys and interviews to determine the subjective perceptions and attributions the prisoners allow for themselves through an embedded locus of control scale (LOC), a test designed to measure the extent of participants' internal or external attributions for their own incarcerations (Pettijohn, 1996); compared to the narratives and verbalized *identity moments*, or the significant life events that lead to incarceration, in order to determine the patterns of identity construction of these inmates. By comparing their scores on a LOC scale to the narratives they tell of their lives and environments, this study will examine the extent to which their attributions and foci of blame match their own conceptions of their social environments. Third, this work seeks to redefine the notion of "victimless crime" by illustrating through surveys and interviews with inmates at Boonville Corrections Center (BCC) how these types of criminals' very presence in prison is indicative of their own victimization by society at large. By understanding that the victim is the criminal himself, we can begin to reconsider the ways

in which we study, label and treat those prisoners incarcerated for such victimless crimes. Finally, this study works to promote a new way of understanding the place of victimless criminals in society and within the sociological literature by analyzing the individual voices and stories that comprise this group of inmates. This paper will provide a vehicle and a voice for prisoners incarcerated for victimless crimes with the hope that through their narratives, changes in the way researchers study and understand these individuals will lead to more pro-active research designs through which prison policy and social programs are better tailored to suit the needs of this unique, and often neglected, group of individuals.

In this study, I attempt to illustrate how the identities of these individuals are often the fragmented product of a cyclical and symbiotic relationship between the environments they grow up in and their own sense of autonomous individuality. I hypothesize that my findings will illustrate a framework of deviant identity construction as a result of the physical and psychological environmental agents present from birth to incarceration and into post-incarceration such as familial influences, neighborhood structure, community involvement and legitimate access to alternative opportunities. As this study is primarily exploratory, I feel that the lack of a clear research question is justifiable. However, the inherent purpose of this work is to utilize the voices of the inmates and determine from the subjective interpretations of their own life histories what specific perceptions they have regarding their own fallibility, what attributions they make regarding blame and responsibility in their lives and what explanations can be gleaned regarding motives for behaviors and future goals.

### **Preliminary Hypotheses**

What often occurs in the majority white, middle class suburbs is that children are born into privilege based on race and economic standing and are thus routed into success and upward mobility by the availability of certain resources and by the support of similar others. I expect to find comparable similarities in the lives of prison inmates with the exception that what their significant others consider upward mobility, is in reality, stagnation. In this sense, it must be understood that I do not expect to find inmates who have engaged in downward mobility any more than I expect to find them being upwardly mobile. Likewise, a horizontal change across generations and along the same life paths as family members requires that movement of some type be inherently present. It is my hypothesis that although the intentions of the inmates' significant others may be to help create a more economically stable way of life for them, in reality, the learning of similar avenues of economic success within the same physical environments leads only to a cyclical pattern of "helping" behaviors and thus produces no mobility at all. The result for these inmates, then, is that taking their only option and following in the footsteps of those around them, serves to breed physical and emotional stagnation in an environment innately conducive strictly to deadening any movement potential whatsoever. Likewise, I look for certain parallels between the experiences of middle class members and lower class prisoners such that the opportunities and resources available to middle class individuals will be replaced with non-equivalent resources in the prisoners' lives. For instance, around the age a middle class youth would be likely to receive his/her first personal computer as an educational and entertainment resource, I expect to find that many prisoners received their first drug related resource. Whether this resource was

simply an introduction to the drug or a first customer, the age at which it and subsequent other drug resources was received will likely parallel the reception of middle class youth's "legitimate" resources.

Because of this pattern of early drug related resource reception, lower class youth are often broken into a non-mobile or stagnant life cycle perpetuated by family members and friends. When an individual is born into an environment like a lower class neighborhood or an uncaring family system and grows up surrounded only by peers and adults who sell drugs and go to jail and repeat the pattern multiple times throughout their lives, he will inevitably fall into the same cycle. When he is taught from a young age how to obtain and market drugs, he will most likely become a drug dealer. The lack of mobility opportunities comes into play when, like his father or mother or siblings or friends, the individual becomes a drug dealer in the same neighborhood surrounded by the same people as the generation before him. In this way, he is neither moving up nor is he moving down; he remains stagnant in the pre-established pattern that has perhaps existed years before his own entrance into it. His opportunities for legitimate economic success are innately denied by the pattern he was born into.

The issue, then, is in determining whether the inmate charged with a drug crime sees his own life as a series of uncontrollable events due to structural inconsistencies and environmental problems, or as a pattern of choices that deserve his acknowledgement of responsibility. By using techniques like embedding locus of control questions within the surveys and interviews and pressing the participant for deeper explanations of events, the inmates' perceptions regarding the appropriate degrees of personal responsibility necessary to explain their own lives will become evident. By analyzing how the

participants interpret their own contexts both in and out of prison and investigating the levels of agency each inmate allows himself, a stronger understanding of how they negotiate their identities within the prison walls and how they maintain a sense self continuity while in larger society, is likely to emerge.

From my interviews and surveys, I anticipate that the goals each individual has set for himself and for his family will include getting a legitimate job and removing himself from the environment in which he grew up or had lived previously. I believe that because mass media and mainstream assumptions are not latent in our culture, these individuals are aware of how their immediate surroundings and influences work toward their inability to break the pattern and only serve to further perpetuate they cycle in which they have found themselves. Likewise, however, I also expect to find when in speaking of their friends and loved ones these individuals will place a high level of value on the established relationships in their lives and find it difficult to imagine existing without them. From the information I receive in the interviews, I attempt to construct a general timeline of life events in the histories of prisoners who commit victimless crimes in an attempt to show how they are a product of their environment and the patterns in which they have become entrenched. I expect that many of the major life events that routed these individuals into a criminal lifestyle will be similar across the participants and I use these to illustrate how identities become ingrained because of environmental influences.

### **Study Assumptions and Introduction to the Literature**

It may be argued, against this line of research that we are all the victims of some entity or another; whether that entity is society, another person or ourselves, it is a



possibility that must be considered. For the purposes of this study, however, I believe that the operational definitions I have in place lend themselves best to unearthing the empirical data necessary to make predictions about the nature of human behavior as a result of both agency and environment. This theoretical and methodological avenue of combining identity research with organizational and structural influence has, perhaps, been too often neglected in the study of inmate identity. By bringing together the historical research of organizational theorists with that of culture and identity theorists, in tandem with creating new research agendas designed methodologically to enhance both schools of thought, an enlightening new perspective is perhaps on the horizon.

In the early stages of corrections research the two foundational theories developed were structural-functionalism, or the concern with the operations of order in certain sociocultural arenas and the socialization of the actors within those arenas, and symbolic interactionism, the focus on the social processes that occur through individual relations with others throughout society. These two paradigms are what guide corrections research still today. However, it is argued that an integration of the two presents too large a scope and too complicated a methodology due to the fact that “the basic philosophical principles that underlie each paradigm may be too inconsistent to resolve” (Gillespie, 2003). Because structural-functionalists tend to adhere to a consensus model of society and symbolic interactionists posit that individuals are too conflicted within their daily lives to come to any consensus about society in general, the argument is that any marriage of the two is next to impossible. However complicated the task of integrating the structural functional perspective and symbolic interactionism may be, steps can (and should) be taken to attempt to bind these two seemingly conflicting

paradigms together. It is my contention that this can be done through the strengthening of methodology. By asking questions that pull from both schools of thought, and analyzing the data as a whole, neither perspective is necessarily neglected. Through the admissions of interview participants, within their stories and voices and histories, we are able to get closer to the root of their actual identities. By placing ourselves in historical moments with them as they recall to us certain life altering events, we are allowed to go where no one else can, into the contexts, the environments and the minds of these victimless criminals. Pulling, then, from what we know to be social fact about the worlds in which they live on a macro structural level, and integrating that knowledge into the actual stories that make those macro environments real, we bridge the gap between being able to understand where they're coming from and being able to *see* where they've actually been.

The majority of previous prisoner studies focus on violent crimes such as murder and rape (Parker & Auerhahn 1995, Blumstein, 1988, LeBeau, 1987). Although equally important to our greater understanding of the criminal identity, these studies often jump from discussions of environmental variables that are partially responsible for criminal behavior, directly to the commitment of the crime for which the subjects of study became incarcerated. The focus of such studies tends to lie in constructing a profile identity for all violent criminal offenders by typologizing crimes through prevalent personality traits and social background characteristics. This leap in the life histories of violent offenders often neglects other important life event considerations between the time before the individual commits the crime and the time he is incarcerated for it. This gap in the life history time line is often the period that includes the circumstances leading up to the

commitment of a violent crime. Within this gap, it is likely that a series of victimless crimes occurred to precede the commitment of a more serious violent crime. It is this time period that is, perhaps, the most telling facet of the criminal's total identity.

Although many researchers studying violent criminal identities may acknowledge this time period of victimless criminal activity, its focus should be more heavily weighted when analyzing a lifetime of illegal behavior. Likewise, because many victimless criminals often do not go on to commit violent crimes, the study of this time period in their lives should be approached differently both methodologically and analytically in the conduction of any prisoner study.

Herein lies a larger gap in the study of victimless crimes. On one hand, the literature based on general theory construction regarding the disorganization of environment (such as a theoretical map of inner city neighborhoods) exists to help us place in context the macrosociological elements influencing those individuals within such environments. These types of research allow us to better understand the factors contributed by society that make living in such environments conducive to the production of more criminal activity. On the other hand, research grounded in empirical data collection allows us to examine the microsociological elements that churn beneath the surface in the everyday struggle of individuals living in volatile environments (such as daily routines, family makeup and individual life histories) so we are provided with the social facts necessary to evidence the larger influences by society on such environments. These studies often provide a rich account of the activities located most closely to the individuals within the environments of study, but more often than not provide us only with detail. The common thread binding both types of research is often weak, if not

neglected entirely. For researchers to begin to strengthen this tie, a more critical lens must be applied to the study of prisoner research such that a more comprehensive understanding of these individuals, in tandem with a greater acknowledgement of societal influence can allow future research to carry with it a notion of commitment to improvement. Although it will be argued that the purity of research with an agenda is questionable, that the value judgments of a researcher are likely to taint the data and that bringing a bias to any study changes its nature from the onset, it should also be argued that the field of sociology needs to become more involved in the policies that govern our world for we are the ones who are aware of the issues, and we are the ones who have the means and the voice to elicit change. There is no study in sociology totally free of value or bias because, as socially conscious humans, we can not quiet the part of ourselves that responds to injustice; to represent any study as such is a disservice to individuals being researched.

#### *Identity Moments*

In order to begin to piece together the life histories of criminal offenders, which is necessary to understanding identity, instruments designed to gather personal information like surveys and interviews should lend themselves to uncovering data about the participant that may unlock more about their identities than basic demographic or environmental profiles may warrant. Such information asks the participants to situate themselves historically within their own life stories and reveal specific times and places of relevant events along with the feelings, emotions and internal dialogues pertinent to the event. These vignettes, reiterated for the researcher, lead to the construction of a more complete life story and the creation of specific incidents in the life of the participant

that were compelling and influential enough to change the direction of the life path the participant was on at the time. These *identity moments*, then, are incidents in the participant's life strong enough to remain emblazoned in their memories weeks, months or years later and influential enough to become the catalyst for a change in identity. Whether a moment is the first time the participant committed a crime, the first time he went to jail or simply the moment he realized that his life was different than others', the event itself and his subsequent reaction to it are what make up his personality, identity and behavioral pattern allowing the researcher to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the individual and his story. Then, after recognizing and flagging specific identity moments, the researcher can begin the task of piecing together the events that make up who the participant is as a person and may be able to glean from them motives, patterns of behavior and similarities among other study participants. By recording the age periods of identity moments, the places in which they occurred, the people they involved, the actions they coerced and the emotions that made them relevant, along with the background and environmental reference points for each event, researchers can compare a multitude of identity moments across the life histories of many study participants and search for patterns of similarity or dissimilarity to get a better understanding of the occurrence of common events among individuals who share a familiar fate as well as the moments that are unique in the identity construction of each individual.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

### Structural Foundations

A primary theoretical framework designed to assess prisoner identity and the internalization of prison norms is described by the “prison industrial complex.” This term is defined as “a dynamic set of relations, exchanges, and non-antagonistic conflicts between hegemonic institutions in state and civil society” (Rodriguez, 2003). Prisoner identity, as defined by the prison industrial complex, is systematically broken down in order for the institution to induce brainwashing-type techniques on the prisoners that include, physical removal, the break down of emotional ties, the segregation of potential leaders among prisoners, prohibition of group activities, the creation of a feeling in the prisoners that they are isolated and have been abandoned by the community, and the denial of access to literature which does not service the goals of the institutional initiative. Here, violence is a necessary and adaptive force implicit in state power in which “this structure of imprisonment thrives off the prisoner’s inevitable disobedience – short of severe chemical sedation, the imprisoned person necessarily fails the necessarily impossible categorical imperative to *become the inmate*” (Rodriguez, 2003, 185).

Necessary to the structural subordination of inmates is their presence in the total institution of the prison. For Goffman (1961), this type of total institution is designed to protect society from intentional dangers carried out by individuals whose immediate

welfare is not a concern. Thus, according to this definition, prisons, correctional facilities, jails and penitentiaries are not designed to serve the needs of the inmate, but rather to protect society from those inmates. Because the primary goal of prisons and similar institutions is not the well being of the incarcerated, it seems antithetical to the goals of the institution to work with and as an advocate for the inmates incarcerated therein. The ultimate purpose of prisons, then, is to marginalize and eventually remove those individuals who threaten the welfare of society so that a sense of security is created for the rest of the community.

Security, then, is the “structure of feeling that fabricates safety amidst imminent danger – necessitates pre-emptive and aggressive state violence in order to fortify civilization at the boundary of lawlessness and racialised savagery” (Rodriguez, 2003, 186). What this means, then, is that state powers must, in order to maintain ultimate authority and control over the people, permeate an air of necessary obedience and compliance, couched in terms like “security” and “the greater good.” At risk, then, are the individuals on the fringes of society. Ultimately, these people (specifically for this study, those who commit victimless crimes) are labeled, alienated and relegated into lives as career criminals in order for the structure of security for all others to be upheld. There must be an enemy and a flex in state power for the perpetuation of fear and subsequently peace, to exist as an ever-present element in larger society.

The understanding that poverty itself has become a crime in general is explained by the outward migration of working and middle class families from the inner cities coupled with rising joblessness and explains, in part, the cases of “extreme poverty” experienced by individuals in ghetto, inner city areas (Wilson, 1991-1992). Social

isolation and increasing incidents of joblessness have caused the inner city to become a population of poor, unemployed, minority residents whose denial of access to legitimate opportunities prevents their own outward migration. Likewise, a mismatch of job locations and migration to the inner city contributed heavily to trends in the growing poor community in the 1970s and 1980s. Further, “the exodus of higher-income blacks was not only a factor in the growth of ghetto poverty. It also deprived these neighborhoods of structural resources, such as social buffers to minimize the effects of growing joblessness, and cultural resources, such as conventional role models for neighborhood children, therefore further contributing to the economic marginality of the underclass” (Wilson, 1991,1992, 650). This marginality, then, is one of the most important factors for the decline of inner-city neighborhoods, the increase in the poverty of the underclass and the availability of a sense of security to the middle and upper classes. Because poverty is the source of crime, and there is nothing being done to improve the conditions that lead to poverty, the life chances of individuals from impoverished areas decrease with every passing day and the number of individuals bound for prison, likewise, increases (Reiman, 1979).

Because the criminal justice system narrows its focus on “individual wrongdoers” society at large is being lead away from the notion that it is the system itself that in fact creates the criminals. By focusing on the moral shortcomings of the individual “criminal,” the justice system is simultaneously abdicating itself of any responsibility in the creation of the criminal in the first place. Likewise, one must take issue with the notion that criminal law is said to set unto society the “minimum neutral ground rules for any social living” (Rieman, 1996, 141). The problem here is that the



only entity the criminal justice system is protecting is itself and the other of our societal institutions of social control. In doing so, the justice system imposes upon its citizenry an implicit understanding that its way of “doing justice” is the one and only way it can be done. Thus, the criminal justice system takes on for its citizens an omnipotent, overarching presumption of infallibility. The irony in this argument is that since the criminal is born out of the existing social institutions under which he lives, his very creation runs antithetical to the ideologies of the institutions that punish him for being exactly what they created him to be. Likewise, the justice system “must also fail to reduce crime so that it remains a real threat” (Reiman, 1996, 147). This means that without placing fear into the hearts of the middle-class, the justice system would have no enemy against whom to wage its constant war.

### **Explanations of Identity**

Equally important in understanding how individuals are stigmatized and labeled by society as deviant and criminal is a discussion of the individual as an actor (Goffman, 1959). The life of an individual can be understood as a performance to which all representations of the actor are derived from the forward facing and emotive exclamations that he sends forth to be evaluated by his audience. His audience, then, is the world of people within which he lives and conducts himself in his every day experiences. The individual, then, may be one of two types in regard to performances. A “sincere” actor has truly convinced him of his own performances toward others; while the “cynical” performer remains unconvinced of his own performance yet exhibits himself as a masquerader to a receptive audience. The cynical performer is aware of the false

projection, but often is unlikely to be discovered by the members of his audience. This “lack of inward belief” on the part of the cynic in fact often contributes to his desire to perform at his best. Thus, his artificial identity, as a result of his own disbelief, begins to become second nature. When an individual is regarded as possessing a stigma, he becomes an entity separate from the general population and it is the perceptions, expectations and judgments of those members of the majority that determine his social acceptance or rejection. Thus, the stigmatized individual is “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” which then becomes the creation of his “virtual identity” (Goffman, 1959, 2). It is this way with many drug dealers and deviants of similar type. As “cynical performers,” drug dealers may not often realize that what was once an identity separate from their “actual identities,” drug dealing has become (in the perceptions of distant viewers and in the actions of the deviant himself) the drug dealer’s total identity.

Similarly, the groups within which the individual becomes entangled are also important units of analysis. An individual’s “in-group,” or “the broad sense of like-situated individuals . . . since what an individual is, or could be, derives from the place of his kind in the social structure” are the close social ties with significant others the individual experiences on a daily basis (Goffman, 1959, 113). In regard to the individual’s reliance upon and faith in his “in-group,” the “individual in mixed contacts will give praise to the assumed special values and contributions of his kind. He may also flaunt some stereotypical attributes which he could easily cover . . .” (Goffman, 1959, 113). The “in-group,” then, is a collectivity of people, similar in their beliefs, traditions and values that are strongly committed to the ideologies of the group. So, for drug

dealers who live in social and physical environments conducive only to the perpetuation of illegitimate means for success, most of the individuals with whom they are surrounded are in competition for the best customers, social spaces, knowledge and merchandise. These social intimates, then, are the drug dealer's "in-group." They are the people from whom he learned the techniques of drug selling, from whom he possibly obtains drugs for resale and from whom he receives encouragement or opposition. Being a part of such an in-group serves to significantly ingrain within the deviant individual, his drug dealer identity.

Deviant motivations can also be described as non-conforming acts and the question of why an individual chooses to pursue a deviant act is often best explained by analyzing why "normals" choose to pursue non-deviant acts (Becker, 1963). When discussing the "normal," it should be understood that the main characteristics of this individual include progressively entering into inherently mainstream activities. Thus, part of the reason career deviants engage in deviant acts is due to the fact that they have usually not been ingrained with the conventional modes of attainment, commitment and means for legitimate success. Everyone in society is met with frequent deviant impulses they generally do not act on because they are so entrenched in the conventional and socially acceptable norms of society that they become hyper-aware of the consequences of such actions. The career deviant, on the other hand, has experienced no integration into the mainstream avenues of legitimacy and thus regularly acts on his deviant impulses because there seems to be nothing of social validity to stop him.

Due to the subcultural and environmental histories of many career deviants, it is argued that deviance is socially learned. Deviants, then, learn the techniques and effects

of their non-conventional act by observing their peers and being taught the required methods of the act. In this sense, we can see that an individual incarcerated for selling drugs is most likely from a neighborhood or environmental structure where his peers, friends and even family members are experienced drug dealers themselves. The deviant learned his trade from those around him and eventually it became so ingrained in him that the one time deviant act, turned into a life-long career (Becker, 1963).

Finally, “one of the most crucial steps in the process of building a stable pattern of deviant behavior is likely to be the experience of being caught and publicly labeled as a deviant” (Becker, 1963, 31). This means that many drug dealers are aware that their dealing is illegal, however, because of they are surrounded by it on a daily basis, are often unaware that they are acting in a deviant manner. Until incarceration, many drug dealers many deny or be in total ignorance of the fact that their method of making money is fundamentally different than that of the mainstream majority. Upon arrest and the serving of prison time, however, deviants are made fully aware of their deviancy and are thus labeled by themselves and society, as a criminal. What is often neglected, however, is that although deviants may be formally labeled upon arrest, they are sentenced to serve prison time in an environment of people not unlike the environment they came from. In prison, drug dealers are no more deviant than they were in their own neighborhood selling drugs. Because they are constantly surrounded by people of similar means and stature, career deviants may be aptly labeled, but they are not always made the pariahs Becker imagined.

It is often argued that aspects of authority, legitimacy and power can not be discussed without a similar and simultaneous discussion of identity. Identity may be

defined as centering “upon images, knowledge and assessment of positions, performance, and attributes of social objects” (Holtzner & Robertson, 1979, p. 7). Thus, in such a setting as a prison, where authority is omnipresent, the topic of identity is unavoidable. Prisoner identity is shaped and reconstructed (or deconstructed) by the symbols, figures, actions and realities of the authority and power structures around them. In order to determine whether the restructuring of prisoner identity is positively or negatively correlated to their experiences in total authoritative institutions, in depth prisoner analyses, evaluations and histories must be researched. Understanding the link between personal identity and structures of authority is often contingent on the understanding that the only individual capable of deciding upon the authority of one’s oppressor is the individual to whom the authority is addressed (Baum, 1979). Likewise, that “authority exists only where those expected to obey meet four conditions: (1) understanding the order; (2) believing, *at the time the order is issued*, in its compatibility with the purposes of the organization, as well as (3) its compatibility with the personal interests of the recipients and (4) their capacity to comply” (Baum, 1979, 62; ed. Robertson and Holtzner). In applying this framework to the identities of prisoners, we can see that their identities *as prisoners* are wholly created out of their acknowledgement of the prison authorities and their unconditional acceptance of this authority. Without prisoner recognition and personal subjugation, the authority of officials would, in effect, cease to be a reality. When inmates are incarcerated and given orders by guards and institutional officials, they primarily must understand the orders being given in conjunction with their understanding that the order is within the interests of the institution. Further, prisoners are also aware that the order is in *their own best interests* and that they are fully capable

of complying with the order. These final conditions are, perhaps the most difficult for inmates to conceptualize, however, despite the common rhetoric that inmates and deviants in general are somehow outside the realm of understanding and being affected by the larger societal conceptions of obedience and compliance with norms, rules and authority; it is evident in the infrequent occurrence of inmate riots and disobedience that they do have a working understanding of structures of authority and that their identities are subsequently shaped (just like everyone else's) by these structures.

Although inmates may not be consciously aware that orders and rules established and handed down by prison officials are truly in their best interests, they are aware that *compliance* with these mandates will aid them in the long run. Thus, the experience of being in an institution that requires cooperation for the survival of its members causes changes in those members' identities. Instances in which these individuals would normally refuse to comply with authority characterize the terms of their identities when out of prison. However, immersion in the institution and their basic desire to survive and eventually be released changes their actions and behaviors. The change in these actions, then, over time, contributes to a marked change in the identities of the prisoners. Thus, upon release, in many ways, individuals identify themselves, society and others in ways fundamentally different than they had previously.

When engaged in intellectual dialogue about the nature of social action, two specific and seemingly contradictory schools of thought emerge. One, the sociological standpoint (that of Rieman, Goffman and Becker) that individuals are governed by the norms, socializing strategies, values and rules of the society in which they live and two, the economists position that individual goal setting and the self-interests of actors arrive

at an independent principle of action. In order to reconcile the debate it has been proposed that a combination of both schools is what lays the ground work for the conception of “social capital” (Coleman, 1986, 1988)

Social capital means that different entities “consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors. . .within the structure” (Coleman, 1988, 98). In other words, social capital exists for individuals’ specific use to elevate a position only within the environment and culture of their immediate surroundings. Social capital is the result of changes in relationships among persons that cause a need for action. Likewise, however, the concept of human capital parallels the idea of social capital in that it allows for such changes in order for the creation of new resources, such as skills or capabilities that give individuals new avenues in which to act. Just as social capital exists in relations among individuals, human capital rests in the knowledge and skills acquired by the actors.

Because norms are what serve to govern the everyday lives of actors in a community, social capital comes into play when those norms are ingrained within an environment that is largely closed to outside influence. In a closed social structure (such as a prison), social capital and reputation are allowed to rise unaffected. Thus, in order for any study to attempt to categorize measure or observe the effects of social capital in a community, it must first be distinguished whether the social structure in question is open or closed. Coleman supported his theory of the closure of social networks, similar to Goffman’s conception of an actor’s “in-group,” by explaining that “there exists a high degree of closure among peers who see each other daily, have expectations toward each other, and develop norms about each other’s behavior” (p. 106). For the purposes of this

study, it can be said that the relationships facilitated among young adults in lower class, urban neighborhoods are indicative of a closed social structure; in that, these members are engaged in daily interactions through which social ties are formed and bound.

### **Background of Empirical Research**

Also important to understanding criminal identity, labeling and stigmatization are the ways in which citizens of larger society feel appropriate punishments, sanctions and terms of incarceration should be incurred. It is argued that there are two ways in which society can organize its regulations for criminal punishment (Thomas, Cage & Foster, 1976). The “consensus model” requires that the majority of the members of society agree upon what constitutes a criminal act and upon the proper sanctions for committing such an act. The “conflict model,” on the other hand, refers to a state of society in which the primary emphasis is placed on the political processes involved in the defining and sanctioning of criminal acts. The “conflict model” occurs between “vested interest groups which seek to have their particular values legitimated and supported by the coercive powers of the state. Thus, the conflict model asserts that criminal law is an oppressive entity because it supports the values of the powerful to the detriment . . . of those without power” (Thomas, Cage & Foster, 1976, 110). Survey’s designed to determine which of the two primary models of social control United States citizens living in a southeastern metropolitan area believe the nation adheres to reveal little evidence to support the conflict model. Respondents were asked to determine an appropriate sentence for seventeen categories of crime. The researchers performed correlations on the data collected to determine among what cohorts and demographic groups, attitudes



remained similar and where they differed. Across all cohorts and demographics sampled, “crimes against persons are perceived to be quite serious and that victimless crimes are viewed as relatively minor offenses” (Thomas, Cage & Foster, 1976, 114). These results indicate, then, that the conflict model is an inaccurate representation of how respondents feel that crimes should be punished. Because the findings were consistent across all social groups, there seems to be a significant amount of support for the consensus model of social control.

In a similar study conducted two years earlier (Rossi, Waite, Bose and Berk, 1974), the consensus vs. conflict models were also tested and assessed. The researchers interviewed 200 adult residents in the Baltimore area concerning the “seriousness” of certain crimes. Interviewees were given 80 cards on which the names and descriptions of differing crimes were written. The interviewees then were asked to place each card in a box containing nine slots. They were to place cards containing the most serious offenses in the 9<sup>th</sup> slot and the cards with the least serious offenses in the 1<sup>st</sup> slot. Cards on which respondents were ambiguous about crime seriousness were to be placed in graduating slots 2-8 at the respondent’s discretion. The researchers found that, as expected, “white collar crimes (e.g. embezzlement and price gouging) and crimes without victims (e.g. homosexuality) are not regarded as particularly serious offenses.” Interestingly, however, “using heroin” ranked in the 26<sup>th</sup> most serious place on a scale of 140 categories. Likewise, “selling marijuana” ranked as the 49<sup>th</sup> most serious offense (directly after “beating up a policeman”) and “using LSD” ranked as the 65<sup>th</sup> most serious crime (directly after “beating up a stranger”). The researchers also found that “females and blacks have a lower threshold of seriousness respectively than do males or whites”

(Rossi, Waite, Bose and Berk, 1974, 233). The results, then, concluded that the consensus model of social control seems to be the best paradigm to describe the attitudes of American citizens regarding the seriousness of crimes. Because of the small amount of variation observed among all racial, educational, class, gender and occupational strata, it is evident that the perceptions of a society's citizens are implicit in the ways in which criminal individuals are regarded.

What this means for individuals who commit victimless crimes, then, is that although society may not judge their actions as harshly as they would crimes against persons, society is still largely in agreement about the severity and consistency of punishments for those who commit victimless crimes. Due to this fact, inmates incarcerated for victimless crimes may be labeled consistently across the whole of society, criminalized and punished in similar ways and stigmatized on a moral level. With the consensus model, it is understood that everyone, regardless of social class, educational level, occupational prestige or race is aware what acts are considered criminal and are aware of the sanctions imposed for committing such acts. Therefore, the real sentence for criminals is in the hands of the people who all largely agree that individuals *do not* commit crimes because of a lack of opportunity or access to legitimate means, because of a detrimental living environment, because of race, age or sex; but because they chose to commit the act and are personally responsible for their actions. This poses much more of a problem for inmates due to the fact that from these findings, we can deduce that the majority of larger society is unaware of the situational and

contextual issues surrounding many of the victimless crimes that occur. This ignorance, then, is likely to lead to harsher stigmatization of deviant individuals and less leniency and tolerance upon their release.

In juxtaposition to the sentiment that society adheres to a consensus about deviant individuals across race, class and status groups, it is hypothesized that within prison culture, clear conflicts emerge among prisoners *because* of race, class and status differences (Jacobs, 1976). Increasingly, American inmates are becoming more “race aware” and are using that awareness to form solid groups within prison designed to protect and simultaneously alienate. Largely, ethnic minorities form primary groups within prison which, in turn, serves to make a marked category out of being white. Thus, Caucasians feel threatened, solidify their own racial group, and conflicts inevitably erupt. Often, prisons are so segregated that even prison officials make no attempt to ameliorate the tension. To counteract the aggression of a black majority, white inmate groups will often solidify around Neo-Nazi, Aryan and other white supremacist organizations. Attempts on behalf of the white “gang” to recruit majority Caucasian staff and guards are also not uncommon.

What racial segregation means for inmates, then, is that because many individuals (Caucasians in particular) did not necessarily identify around a racial category before entering prison, the experience of being incarcerated contributes significantly to a re-organization of oneself in the larger, racial and cultural contexts. It is likely that the grouping patterns that emerge for individuals in prison will follow them and remain consistent upon their release from prison and into their subsequent lives in larger society. Although race is not an issue addressed in this particular study, it should be understood

that “within the prison, conflicts have consequences which may resound beyond the prison walls. Prison should thus be understood as an arena in which [solidarity] groups may emerge, recruit membership, organize for the future, and promote their ideologies” (Jacobs, 1976, 481).

Perhaps most importantly, however, are not the theoretical verbiages common in sociological literature that underlie more macro conceptualizations of society; but the true life experiences of the prisoners themselves and how their words help place them in society. Terry (2003) conducted 20 interviews with inmates incarcerated for drug addictions that subsequently lead to other illegal acts. As an ex-con himself, Terry intertwined his narrative with pieces from his own life story and subsequently adopted the term “prisonization” to refer to the internalization of prison culture that settled so deeply within his own identity and the identities of his interviewees. Terry wrote “my perspective had become a reflection of the overregulated, upside-down, violence-prone, hypermasculine and extraordinarily routinized lifestyle common to such institutions” (2003, 3). Because Terry was raised in a middle-class home and was not subject to the early introduction of familial drug influences, he utilized Matza’s drift theory, which posits that certain members of society are prone to drifting into drug dealing, despite any original exposure to illegal behaviors, to orient himself in the drug subculture. Further, Terry’s methodology constructed life-history analyses grounded in symbolic interactionism, labeling theory and the idea of the looking-glass self.

Terry made the distinction about the idea of self-concept by stating “negative and demonizing public attitudes about drug use affect the self-concepts and behaviors of people who have been or are addicted to opiates. This is not the same as saying ideas

about drug use cause individuals to see themselves or act in certain ways” (p. 19). In effect, this is illustrative of a differentiation between identity and motivation. The way an individual is perceived by society influences and *changes* his perception of himself, however, this societal perception does not drive the individual to become addicted to drugs. The motivation for using drugs is certainly related to the individual’s position in the social hierarchy; however, public perception does not necessitate motivation.

In this study three typologies were created, the “regulars,” were the inmates who grew up in situations that nurtured their early drug use and delinquency. They were generally from lower class economic situations and often followed in the footsteps of older family members. The “wannabees” constituted interviewees who came from primarily middle-class backgrounds and aspired to be “regulars.” These individuals learned drug use at an early age from friends and peers with the goal of rejecting their middle-class lifestyle to be more highly regarded by classmates and peers. The “drifters,” on the other hand, were individuals who also grew up in middle-class backgrounds but were slowly introduced to drug use by peers and drifted for years in between deviant and “clean” lifestyles. All individuals in each of these groups eventually became physically addicted to drugs and ended up in and out of prison for the majority of their lives. Their addiction generally lead them to commit crimes such as burglary, drug selling and robbery to support their habits, which were the crimes that eventually, sent them to jail.

A further differentiation was made among inmate types by assessing the notable identity changes as a result of prison time different types underwent. “Chippers,” were different from “regulars” in that they were not savvy to the “ways of the street” and often

were able to hold down steady jobs and families while getting high only occasionally. It was noted, however, that “chippers” were more prone to drastic changes that usually occurred quickly and without warning. Because of their time spent in prison, “chippers” often transformed from generally upstanding citizens to full-blown heroin addicts known as the “radical transformation of identity that many non-street-oriented drug users go through by spending time behind bars” (Terry, 2003, 63). This implication is serious because it makes the statement that something about being in prison significantly contributes to a change in inmates’ conceptions of identity, ability, future and self-perception. This process of internal change contributing to external actions is as termed the effect of “prisonization.” Thus, what happens to inmates behind bars, aids in transforming their identities upon release.

Also discussed were the various ways in which prisonization was informally internalized within the prison system. Terry narrated a story from his own history in which he became a clerk (while incarcerated) because of his good reading and typing skills in the prison’s “receiving and release” office. Terry’s position in the office gave him access to information regarding specific inmates who would be arriving at the prison. As per tradition, Terry secretly recorded the name, race, country of origin and crime of each incoming inmate. He then distributed copies “to a black, brown and white prisoner” and was “rewarded with something tangible, such as cigarettes or a small amount of marijuana and social status” (p. 64). The various racial groups then determined, based on the reputation of the incoming inmate, whether the new arrival would stay or go. This meant that if the new inmate had a reputation for being an informant, his respective racial group was in charge of physically abusing him to the point that he would seek the

protection of the guards or require transfer. In this way, the mainline prison population maintained strict control over the racial categories that were dominant and over who was allowed to penetrate pre-formed solidarity groups. The implication, here, is that this type of personal and group screening became so ingrained in the ideologies and identities of the prisoners that many, if not all of them, carried it with them during the remainder of their sentence and upon release. Thus, it can be said that what is learned in prison is significantly attached and carried within the identity structures of inmates for years to come.

The idea of “prisonization” or the social process that occurs when inmates begin to acclimate to and take on the norms of a certain prison subculture, often becomes an integral facet to the growth of the inmates’ identities within the prison. The behaviors that prisonization often elicits within the inmates are generally indicative of “antisocial or maladaptive” patterns which eventually become normalized (Gillespie, 2003). Thus, the effects of prisonization are roadblocks in the search for the inmate’s true identity. Although the inmate may internalize prison subculture, his expression of it early on through daily routine may likely be the easiest way for him to adapt to his new environment and not necessarily an indication that his identity has changed in any significant manner. However, as the effects of prisonization are often far reaching, extended lengths of time spent within the culture and the repeated expression of those effects will likely lead to major changes in the way the inmate views himself and his surroundings upon release. Thus, asking the inmate to situate himself historically within his own life story and likewise asking him to explain his identity situation at present allows for identity moments and changes across his identity pattern to be revealed.

The relevance of this type of research involving prisoner interviews was discussed early on in its inception (Newman, 1958). It is noted that such research can only be valuable through the intensive work of researchers involved in prisoner interviews and observation. To provide accurate data and measurements, researchers can not avoid the necessity of entering the prison complex and working to provide the most in-depth and intensive analyses possible. Because the prison population is such a difficult one to gain access to and to glean reliable data from, extensive amounts of time and energy from the researcher are required for good research to be produced.

To counteract some of the potentially discouraging aspects of non-compliance from prison personnel, the researcher makes certain accommodations to aid in his/her data gathering processes. Primarily, arranging the interview setting in a neutral or favorable area of the prison to reduce interviewee anxiety and to aid in building a good rapport is recommended. Rapport, must often be established very early on in the interview process and, since there will likely be an underlying emotion of resentment of the researcher by the inmate, a minimal amount of research goals should be disclosed at the start of the interview in order to set the inmate at ease with the study. Inmate reluctance to answer questions or comply with researcher requests can be quelled by the researcher's honesty and frankness as well as the inclusion of a clause for interviewee anonymity and protection. Prisoner interviews are often suspect in terms of reliability and validity, thus, all efforts should be made to access prisoner files and that well designed instruments take much of the possibility for dishonesty out of the research.

Regarding the ethics involved in doing prisoner research, it is warned that "in dealing with inmates, a researcher is in a position where, inadvertently perhaps, he might



be informed of unsolved crimes, of plans to disturb prison routine or to break jail, of corruption among guards, or of vice within the walls” (Newman, 1959, 131). When encountered with this type of situation, the researcher has three options. He/she may ignore what he/she has been told, choose to inform prison officials or discourage the inmate from further participating in or discussing potentially damaging material. Should such a situation occur, it is the ultimate responsibility of the researcher to decide within the particular context, whether he/she should become an active participant in the situation. Every instance in which damaging information is revealed is different and the researcher’s actions should be judged based on his/her own ethical and moral strong holdings as well as those of the law. Although prisoner research, data collection, methodology and analysis have come a long way since the Newman’s article in 1958, the general principles and commitment to ethics remain grounded in contemporary research and are reflected throughout this study.

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **Methodology**

Goffman (1963) and others studied the stigmatization of deviant individuals, however often restricted their research to studying non-criminal victims of stigmatization such as those with physical deformities and “secret stigma.” Further research directed toward understanding the identities of individuals in prison will prove a useful addition to our understanding of how such individuals can be better socialized back into society once their sentences are complete and how our current judicial system’s categorization of such individuals impacts the structural definitions that shape our society’s moral threshold.

This study used Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to obtain and analyze data as I feel that my findings do not necessarily reflect the bases of previous theories due to the absence of equivalent research in the literature. However, some strong methodological techniques were used to gather and analyze the data presented. With the extended help of the Missouri Department of Corrections (MODOC), and the completion of a rigorous qualification process conducted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri, the ideas behind this study were brought finally to fruition.

#### **The Missouri Department of Corrections and Boonville Corrections Center**

In order to better place in context the narrative voices of the inmates, a description of the prison where the study was conducted is necessary. Boonville Corrections Center

(BCC) is located in small town in Missouri. It is a medium security men's facility which houses generally short term inmates, most of whom are incarcerated for drug related offenses. According to a Classifications Assistant at BCC, the maximum population at the prison at any given time is 1,316 inmates. Because BCC is a short term facility, the turn over rate is extremely high. Every Tuesday and Thursday a bus load of new inmates comes into the prison and inmates being transferred are taken off the premises. The prison receives approximately 35 new inmates per bus load, twice a week. The majority of the inmates at BCC are generally between the ages of 21 and 35 and must have no less than a year and generally no more than 5 years of time to serve.

According to the Missouri Department of Correction's (MODOC) Annual Reports in 2004 and 2005, as of June 30, 2005, there were currently more than 31,000 adult felons confined in Missouri's 20 correctional facilities and two Community Release Centers. Of these 31,000 individuals, 32% were incarcerated in maximum security facilities, 17% were incarcerated in high security institutions, 15% were incarcerated in medium security prisons and 36% were incarcerated in minimum security institutions. Each facility is assigned a security level ranging from C1 (institutions requiring the least security) and C5 (institutions requiring maximum security); BCC is classified as a C3 facility.

All adult institutions, including BCC, are under the administration of MODOC's Division of Adult Institutions; "by Missouri law, a felon must be 17 years of age or older, or certified as an adult by the Circuit Court and have a sentence of no less than one year to be committed to the Division. Each inmate assigned to the Division of Adult Institutions is required to work, attend school or participate in court- or parole board-

ordered treatment on a full-time basis throughout the period of confinement” (MODOC, Annual Report, 2004). According to a Classifications Assistant at BCC, inmates at any age are allowed to participate in the GED program at their own will and inmates no older than 35 may attend college courses offered by a local community college. Work release programs pay minimum wage and generally include cemetery maintenance and highway trash pick up. Individuals eligible for the work release program must request to participate and receive approval from the parole board, they can not have committed a violent crime, they must be held at a low custody level and they must have their high school diploma or GED. Thus, many inmates convicted for victimless crimes are eligible for work release.

According to MODOC’s Annual Report in 2004, of the top 3 crimes committed in Missouri resulting in convictions and the sentence of prison time, for those in violation of probation and parole as of 2004, 12, 662 were included in the number one most frequently occurring offense for possession of a controlled substance, 5,803 inmates fell under the second most frequently occurring offense for the distribution/delivery/manufacture of a controlled substance and 4,227 inmates were under the third most frequently occurring offense for DWI (driving while intoxicated)/alcohol violations. Of the total crimes committed in Missouri resulting in a conviction with the exclusion of parole and probation violations in 2004, 2,759 individuals were convicted of the most frequently occurring offense for the distribution, delivery/manufacture of a controlled substance (8.3 years average sentence), 2,465 individuals were convicted at the second most frequently occurring offense for first degree robbery at (17.8 years average sentence) and 2,260 individuals were placed in the third most frequently occurring

offense for the possession of a controlled substance at (5.1 years average sentence).

Thus, we can see that the majority of the inmates incarcerated in adult institutions in Missouri were convicted of drug related offenses due to the violation of probation or parole. This means that most of the inmates in these facilities are not in prison for the first time.

### **Research Qualification and Approval**

In June, 2005 the first of many materials were constructed for this project and so began the process of approval from the IRB. Written consent forms for both the survey and interview instruments, supporting documents including a proposal and literature review, official documentation of approval to conduct research from MODOC, outlines of both the survey and interview, MODOC research policies, a certificate indicating the completion of Human Subjects training and an online application form were completed and sent for approval to the IRB on September 19, 2005. A member of the IRB reviewed the submitted application materials and my thesis advisor and I were invited to sit before a full board meeting on September 28, 2005.

At the meeting of approximately 20 board members, my advisor and I fielded questions about the nature, purpose, scope, risks and benefits of the study. Many of the members were concerned that conducting prisoner research would incur breaches in confidentiality, possible assumptions of involuntary participation, psychological damage to the participants, direct admissions of guilt, inadequate researcher protection and failure to meet the requirements of random selection. After addressing each of these issues, the board asked that the original application be withdrawn and a new application submitted

including specific revisions. Following multiple revisions of the research instruments including clauses for confidentiality (such as omitted inmate numbers and names, the absence of recording equipment and personnel during interviews, the necessity for a lockbox in which the participants were to deposit the completed surveys, the requirement to obtain a post office box and provide the participants with stamped envelopes for questions after the completion of the interview), voluntary participation clauses, consent forms written at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, assurance from MODOC of random selection, provisions for researcher protection (such as the requirement for a “panic button” device during interviews and a guard outside the door), and the addition of a clause indicating that should the participant state someone is harming him or that he is planning to harm himself or someone else a prison official must be informed; the application and supporting materials were resubmitted to the IRB and approved on October 18, 2005.

After receiving IRB approval, MODOC was contacted multiple times and after the course of several months I was sent a list of 10 participants randomly selected from a population currently incarcerated for the sale, possession, distribution or use of illegal narcotics and a list of 100 participants randomly selected from the entire prison population at Boonville Corrections Center (BCC) in December, 2005. Following my reception of the participant lists, I contacted the head of the research department at BCC and requested to set up interview dates and times. After approximately one month I received word that I was to interview two inmates consecutively every Tuesday and Thursday for two weeks. Likewise, I was informed that of the 10 participants selected for interview, one was out to court and one had been transferred to Boonville Treatment Center (BTC) for drug rehabilitation, and of the 100 survey participants, 10 had either

been transferred to other facilities or released. Thus, due to time and budget constraints, I chose not to select additional participants and began interviewing the 8 remaining subjects and distributed relevant materials to the 90 remaining survey participants. Interviews began on January 24, and the surveys were distributed on January 26, 2005.

## **Research Instruments**

### *Survey*

In order to adequately combine structural, demographic and environmental elements with identity and personally historical variables to determine the inmates' subjective perceptions about their reasons for incarceration, the survey, which was used as a guide for conducting the interviews included 73 total questions addressing various aspects of the inmate's identity and background (see Appendix A). Questions included the race, age, level of education, preferred gender orientation and socio-economic status of the participant. Likewise, the instrument included multiple choice and short answer questions allowing for selections about the participant's home life growing up, the location of their hometown, the perceived rate of criminal activity that occurred in individual neighborhoods, an estimate of the racial and socio-economic makeup of neighborhoods, the types of crimes generally thought to be committed in the participant's neighborhood environment, the presence or absence of biological parents, the education levels of both parents, and the number, age and gender of siblings. Additionally, questions regarding friendship and drug use, the age at which the participant had his first experience with drugs, the number and type of drugs the participant has used and sold throughout the course of his life, whether his parents or caregivers have ever used drugs

or gone to prison and the perceived reasons why a person of similar stature may be compelled to commit the crime for which the participant is currently serving time.

In order to supplement, in a less invasive way, the motivations and attributions each participant allows for the various turns the course of his life has taken, a locus of control scale (LOC) (Appendix B) was used as a series of true/false answers were provided to benign questions interwoven throughout the entire instrument (Pettijohn, 1992, orig. Rotter, 1966). This method was implemented to determine to what degree the participant exhibits a strong or weak external or internal locus of control. A strong external locus of control indicates that the participant believes the events in his life are relatively controlled by forces beyond his own capacity for change such as luck, fate or a higher power. A strong internal locus of control indicates the participant is more likely to take personal responsibility for his own decisions and attributes little to the societal or structural forces that influence his life. The range on the LOC scale is from one to one hundred where a low score indicates a strong *external* LOC and a high score represents a strong *internal* LOC.

Further, short answer questions included on the instrument allowed the participant to dispense advice to individuals who may be on the path to prison and to explain how the experience of being in prison has changed or influenced his personality. Questions regarding his plans upon release were also included in order to determine the types of short and long term goals the inmate has or has not set for himself.



*Interview*

All of the questions appearing on the survey were asked of the interview participants as the survey guided me through the interviews. The 73 questions on the survey instrument were asked first while elaboration was requested on many of the items. I asked the participants to tell me stories in conjunction with particularly relevant moments in their lives in order to construct a timeline rich with narrative data. As instructed by the head of the Research Department at BCC, I was allowed only to wear non-descript, plain clothing, no jewelry, little makeup, my hair pulled back and flat shoes. According to regulations as mandated by the IRB, only myself (as the primary researcher), and the interviewee were allowed to be in the interview room. After arriving at the prison for the first set of interviews I received a ‘rip cord’ device to be used as a panic button should an emergency arise and I was assigned to Classification Assistant (CA), Mr. Anderson, who walked me through the prison grounds to the interview room located in the basement of an office building across the hall from his personal office. Mr. Anderson was required to “keep watch” through the window in the door of the interview room, however, he could not overhear the interviews in progress. Mr. Anderson called a Corrections Officer (CO) at the various housing units and requested when each interviewee was to be sent over. The interviewees were allowed to walk, unassisted, from the housing unit across the prison grounds to the basement of the office building. Between the two interviews conducted per day, fell the time when the prison officials did “checks.” During this period of approximately 45 minutes all inmates were to be in their respective housing units in order to be counted. After “checks” were complete, Mr.

Anderson called to have the second interviewee sent over. This was the protocol for all four days and eight interviews completed.

During the interview process, I sat across from the interviewee at a table and first explained that I was not affiliated with BCC, MODOC or the government and that I was an independent researcher from the University of Missouri. I used a pseudonym for my own protection and outlined the basic goals of the study, went through the consent forms word for word and asked each interviewee to sign and date the form giving their permission to be interviewed. I began each interview by asking the multiple choice and true/false questions on the survey and circling the appropriate answers myself. Then, I asked the short and long answer questions and prompted the interviewee to elaborate as much as possible while I wrote down their answers. I asked each interviewee to put himself back in the respective period of his life being discussed and to tell me stories with as much detail as he could remember from specific experiences in his life such as the first time he experienced drug use or the first time he was arrested. I was allowed 1.5 hours per interview and generally finished within this time period, however, often strayed from the survey instrument in order to supplement my interviews with relevant experiences not addressed on the survey. Thus, all interview participants were asked the locus of control and all other survey questions as well as elaboration on many issues discussed both from the instrument and independently as I saw fit.

#### *Informed Consent*

Signed, written consent forms (Appendices C & D) were required of each interviewee and survey participant. The consent forms were written at a sixth grade

reading level and expressed the confidentiality of the inmates' names and other identifying information. The consent form established that there were neither punishments nor incentives and that the inmates' participation was strictly voluntary. The consent form also stated that were the participant to divulge information that they were being harmed, they were harming someone else or they intended to harm themselves, that prison officials must be notified. Aside from the clause for physical mistreatment, the consent form stated that all other information would be kept in the strictest of confidence. The inmates were required to sign and return the consent form in an envelope and were also provided a self addressed, stamped envelope with which they could communicate with the researcher should they feel uncomfortable after the study.

#### *Study Limitations*

The primary limitations of this study involved the high turn-over rate at BCC and the lack of participation by approximately eighty percent of the inmates to whom the survey was distributed. After being approved to interview ten inmates and survey one hundred, I was informed that two of the selected interviewees were either transferred or out to court. Due to time limitations, I was unable to select two alternate interviewees and decided to spend that time interviewing the remaining eight. Likewise, a few of the survey participants were unavailable but the vast majority of those who were given the survey, decided not to participate. Thus, I only received twenty surveys out of one hundred distributed.

Because of the extremely low return rate, I decided to forego a quantitative analysis of the surveys and focus, instead, on extracting as much relevant information as

possible from the interviews. After analyzing the interview data, I came to the preliminary conclusion that the addition of the proposed quantitative correlations from the surveys would simply further confirm my findings from the interview data and would likely not produce any new or independently significant material. Likewise, due to the large amount variation from victimless to violent crimes found among survey participants it was decided that the data was too varied to warrant an independent analysis of strictly victimless crimes.

It is my expectation that the low return rate on the surveys was likely due to their length. At five pages and seventy three questions including short answer, I suspect that many of the inmates selected for the interview seemed overwhelmed by the instrument. In future studies, survey materials will be limited by a considerable degree to ensure a more desirable return rate.

Despite these limitations, however, I feel that the data I was able to extract from the interviews yield significant results for this study. After analyzing the interview data, the patterns, quite literally, emerged without coercion. The findings in these data are undeniable and serve to provide a complete outline of the identities of these inmates as well as their attributions for incarceration.

## Chapter 4:

### “Street Pharmacists:” Identity Moments Explained Through Narrative

The following is a presentation of the interviews conducted at BCC. Each story is told as a timeline history of the individual interviewee with specifically relevant *identity moments* highlighted and emphasized in order for the continuity of the story and the grounded patterns within it to emerge honestly and accurately. The narrative voice is used to set up each individual and his story through emphasizing the background, demographic and environmental aspects relevant to each participant and to purely represent the life histories of each individual the way they were told to me. The pseudonym of the interviewee and their score on the locus of control scale are presented at the beginning of each narrative. The accuracy of the interviews is contingent upon the honesty of the participant and all admissions are believed to be true, unless otherwise noted. All direct quotes from the interviewees are denoted with quotation marks. These narratives represent the time line of events that occurred as identity moments in these prisoners' lives. After collecting the data, patterns regarding the narratives of these men and their scores on the LOC scale, emerged. Following the interview, an analysis of these patterns and what they mean for the inmates' identity constructions, is provided. Completing these interviews was an emotional and often arduous task for both the participant and myself, and I do my best to accurately represent the stories of these men by using their voices and their words whenever possible.

*Andy (score =50, both ext. and int.)*

Andy is a thirty year old African American man who grew up in a small town in Southeast Missouri. Andy's parents have been married for thirty two years and still reside in the town where Andy was born. Neither of his parents graduated from high school because his mother became pregnant when she was eighteen and his father dropped out after the sixth grade; Andy has three brothers and two sisters. Andy's father worked in janitorial services and his mother was a house wife. Andy now has four children of his own, two boys, eight and eleven years old and two girls, five and seven years old. All four of Andy's children share the same mother and currently reside in Arkansas with her. Andy completed some high school but did not graduate, however, his goal is to continue his education and receive his GED. Before Andy was arrested, he was a trash collector for seven years and plans to get his job back upon his release; however he said he has always classified himself as poor. Andy said that his brother and sister have both been arrested due to a failure to pay fines and that his father was arrested before he was born on a domestic assault charge. To date, Andy has served twenty one months in prison and will serve another year before he is eligible for parole on the charge of manufacturing to produce with the intent to deliver large amounts of cocaine.

When Andy was seventeen years old he and five of his older friends found an old abandoned house and often went there after school to hang out. In the house, Andy said they found a gun and often took turns carrying it to school. Andy used to get into fights at school and he used the gun to scare away his enemies. Eventually, Andy was caught in possession of the loaded gun at school and was subsequently arrested. Three of his friends were expelled yet Andy served time in the county jail. Andy received seven

felony charges because he filed a bullet down, scratched off the serial number, removed the safety from the gun and because he was a minor in possession. Andy plead his charges down to one misdemeanor and was sentenced to two years, unsupervised probation. Following his release, Andy did not return to high school to graduate and he strongly believes if he was not around that particular group of friends, he would never have been arrested and his life would have turned out differently.

When Andy was eighteen, his parents began to have marital problems. He is convinced that the problems were not related to money or because of their children. During this time Andy had his first experience with drugs when he smoked marijuana with friends. Andy said the first time he tried marijuana it was out of curiosity and because a friend approached him with a joint. Around this time in his life, Andy said the neighborhood where he lived with his parents began to deteriorate: “it was all white at first, then it flipped.” Andy believes this is one of the reasons why he began to use drugs. Also during this time period, Andy met the future mother of his children; he was eighteen and she was fourteen and they quickly began dating.

When Andy was nineteen years old he met a thirty year old man through a friend and was introduced to crack. Andy began smoking crack with the man and eventually, he was propositioned to become the “middle-man” selling crack. The man told Andy that after he received the crack, Andy was to cut it into twenty dollar sized rocks, fill old Tic Tac containers and deliver them to individuals who were interested in purchase. Andy was told that all profits would be split equally and eventually Andy began to make approximately seven thousand dollars a day. Andy said that he never sold drugs in his own neighborhood or around his family but instead traveled to a neighborhood within

walking distance of his house. At this time, Andy defined his only occupation as a “street pharmacist” and wasn’t aware that what he was doing was entirely illegal until the man he sold crack for continually got searched by the police. Andy says that at nineteen he was invincible and never thought he would get caught. And, although he quickly became aware that his dealings were against the law, “the money was too good to quit.”

When Andy turned twenty, he tried “wet sticks,” cigarettes laced with PCP and LSD dipped in embalming fluid. He said he didn’t like getting high on “wet sticks” because they slowed down his reactions and he was unable to live normally. At twenty, Andy tried methamphetamines for the first time said it was “a waste of a high” because it kept him up for three days. Between the ages of twenty two and twenty eight, Andy used powder cocaine and continued to sell crack. During this time his four children were born and although Andy never married their mother, they stayed together for seven years until Andy felt that she was no longer helping him raise the children.

When he was twenty nine, Andy left his house one day and got into the car of a potential customer, at the time, Andy was under the influence of cocaine and marijuana. The customer was Andy’s friend and was interested in buying a large amount of cocaine. The two drove around the block and Andy exchanged the cocaine for the money and returned home. A few days later, police officers came to Andy’s door and arrested him for the manufacture to produce with the intent to deliver. Andy believes the friend in the car was a police informant and that he had a video camera in his car that captured the entire exchange; Andy is now serving out a two year sentence at BCC.

During this interview, Andy was very candid. He said that although he made some bad choices in his life, he has since made the decision to take responsibility for his



actions and has stopped using drugs and vows never to sell them again. However, when asked if he ever thought he'd be arrested again, Andy said, "You never know. You can be straight as an arrow and still go in for something. In the area you go back to, there's dope everywhere, even if you're not using." Andy feels that he has no choice but to go back to prison and that there is relatively little he can do to prevent it. When asked how prison has changed his life, Andy said that he can see things clearly now and he's learned to think before he acts. Yet, Andy also stated that he feels the experience of being in prison had made him a more angry and aggressive person.

When asked if he thought he had the same opportunities growing up as everyone else, Andy answered that unlike most people, he never felt he had the option to go to college. Likewise, Andy indicated that if he could accomplish one thing in his life it would be moving his family to a different neighborhood and starting over. Andy also stated that despite all the problems he had growing up and into adulthood, his close family and friends encourage him to do better, want to help him get on a better path and support him, no matter what. These reasons are also why the most important people in his life are his parents and children. Andy said that if he could change one thing about his life it would be "hanging out with those guys from high school and finding that gun." He believes that the first arrest set the stage for the rest of his life.

Finally, when asked what type of advice he would give others on the path to prison, Andy said he would talk to the eighteen year olds in the prison dorms and tell them that there are better things to do with their lives and that they are going down the wrong path. He said he would talk to them until they cried because if it will open their eyes, then it's worth it. Andy said that "they can take everything from you but your

character” and that “you have to learn from your mistakes. I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy.”

***William (score = 70, internal)***

William is a thirty year old high school drop out from a central Missouri. His mother is white, his father is black and William classifies himself as mixed race. William held various factory jobs before he was arrested on the current charge but was mainly unemployed and categorizes himself as working class. William’s father was an Army veteran and died when William was ten years old although his parents separated before that time. His mother remained unemployed and lived off of her husband’s veteran checks. Growing up, William lived with his mother, four sisters, one brother and his mother’s various boyfriends in the inner city of a small college town. William’s brother and a cousin were convicted for selling drugs and one of his sisters was arrested for stealing a gun. Currently, William has two cousins, one best friend and an uncle in prison for selling drugs. William has currently served three years on a seven year sentence for selling crack to a police informant and will be released in two months.

William’s first experience with drugs occurred when he was eight years old. He witnessed one of his mother’s boyfriends doing “wet sticks” (cigarettes laced with PCP, LSD and dipped in embalming fluid). At the time, William says he had no desire to try drugs; however, they were something that always surrounded him from an early age. Approximately between the ages of eight and ten, William and his siblings were taken away from their mother and sent to a various foster homes in Oklahoma for approximately one and a half years. William believes that they were sent away because

his mother did cocaine, drank alcohol excessively and was often abused by her boyfriend. At twelve years old, William tried marijuana for the first time with three friends from school at a friend's house. William seemed indifferent about the experience and stated that he had no reason not to smoke pot. During this time, William said he was expelled from school "too many times to count" due to fighting and truancy. At sixteen, William dropped out of high school because he didn't feel like he fit in. Then, at seventeen, William learned how to drive from his friends, stole and wrecked a car he later discovered belonged to a local judge. William served three years in prison for auto theft. At twenty, William began selling marijuana because he didn't want to get a job, however he held employment at a fast food restaurant long enough to earn the \$1,500 it took to buy his first three pounds of marijuana from an acquaintance for intended sale. After he was able to make the original money back he spent to begin selling in approximately a week, William quit his job at the fast food restaurant and began selling marijuana full time. William learned the nuances of selling drugs from friends and claimed to make approximately \$4,000 per week at the time. William stated that he knew selling marijuana was illegal but he never thought he would get caught. Likewise, William's believes that his mother was well aware that he sold drugs but never did anything about it.

During the time William was employed at the fast food restaurant, he met a Caucasian and Native American girl, five years older than himself, and they began dating. After a short courtship, William married her and took on the role of a father figure to her three children. After moving in together, William felt that he needed to make more money in order to provide for his step children and to buy the house he

wanted because “ten dollars an hour is just not enough.” Therefore, at twenty five, William began to sell harder drugs such as ecstasy, crack and embalming fluid to supplement his income and because it made him feel important.

Between the ages of twenty five and twenty seven, William separated from his wife and met a new girlfriend. During this time, William received a call from a friend who wanted to purchase a large amount of crack cocaine. William made the “routine” sale only to find out later that the friend he sold to was a police informant. At twenty seven, William’s girlfriend filed domestic assault charges against him and when he went to court for the assault charges, he was arrested for selling drugs to a police informant. William is currently in prison for violation of probation and the charge of distributing narcotics to a police informant.

In prison, William says he became a Muslim convert. His nickname among the inmates is “The Muslim” and although William displays a limited knowledge of the religion, he says he converted because he didn’t like “some things that go on in the Christian Church” although he would not elaborate. William is still in contact with the people from his neighborhood and although he says he will try not to, he believes he will continue to sell drugs upon his release. However, his ultimate goal is to get a job and go to Oklahoma to live with his sister and start over. William feels that he is “too old to keep doing it.” William’s main concerns at this time are his three step children who are currently eighteen, fifteen and twelve. He worries that his step daughters will especially fall into the wrong crowd because the neighborhood where they are living (and where he grew up) is filled with people selling drugs, fighting and prostitution. He worries about his daughters being raped and does not allow them to wear make up. William feels

strongly that no one under the age of eighteen should even be allowed to purchase make up. William says he still tries to act as the father figure for his step children despite the fact that he and his wife are separated.

When asked what advice William would give someone who was on the path to prison he responded that “coke and ecstasy will eventually ruin a person’s life,” however he believes that “there is nothing wrong with weed.” William would try to talk a person on the path to prison into changing his life whether through religion or by using himself as an example. When asked what could be done, if anything, to improve his neighborhood, William feels that things might be better if children were not allowed to see adults doing drugs. William says prison has changed his personality by making him more clam and focused and more motivated to stay out. William does not feel that he has had the same opportunities in his life as everyone else because he dropped out of high school and committed a felony at an early age. However, he feels that someday he may try to go to college for art and sculpting if he can get his life back on track. Upon release, William says he wants to “go on a week’s vacation and soak in Epsom salt.” He made it clear that although it is an easy thing to fall back into and he is unsure of his ability not to, that selling drugs is not what he wants to do with the rest of his life because “losing family and freedom, isn’t worth it.”

***Marcus (score= 45, both ext. and int.)***

Marcus is a nineteen year old black man from a small town in Missouri. His mother and father were never married and Marcus lived with his mother, who he classifies as poor, in a rural area while she worked in a nursing home. Marcus is an only

child and rarely sees his father who works in janitorial services at a hospital and lives in St. Louis, Missouri. Marcus never finished high school but plans to continue his education upon his release from prison; he has two children, a three year old daughter and a five month old son. This is Marcus's first time in prison but his third time being incarcerated. He currently has five close friends and family members serving time in prison because of drug related convictions. Marcus is serving a twenty one month sentence for selling crack to an undercover police officer and faces five years of parole upon his release.

For most of his life, Marcus lived with his mother in a rented house on the outskirts of a small town in Missouri and he says his early dream was to become a professional basketball player. Marcus said it was hard living with his mother because, working at the nursing home, she only made approximately \$350 every two weeks and that was barely enough to pay the rent. Thus, occasionally, Marcus would live with his grandmother in the same town in order for his mother to get her affairs in order. Marcus noted that he always knew his mother smoked marijuana and drank alcohol; however, it was never an issue between them. Marcus's mother never graduated from high school and he sees his father, who did graduate from high school, on holidays and special occasions. Marcus said he was often expelled from high school for truancy and profanity and eventually he dropped out because he didn't like it anymore.

When Marcus was thirteen years old he had his first memorable experience with drugs when he watched his cousins smoke marijuana. It was not until he was nineteen years old; however, that Marcus tried marijuana for the first time because he was curious. He claims that marijuana is the only drug he has ever tried. Around the age of thirteen,

Marcus witnessed his older cousin bagging up a large amount of crack cocaine for sale. Marcus asked his cousin about the crack and began to learn what it was and how to sell it. During this time, Marcus claims he found a bag of crack cocaine at his high school and brought it home to his cousin. His cousin showed him how to cut it into twenty dollar rocks, bag it, and sell it. After Marcus found the crack he broke it down into thirty bags worth twenty dollars a piece. He then stood on the corner near his school and sold the bags individually to people he knew were looking for crack. After he sold the entire amount of the original drug, Marcus said he had acquired approximately \$300 and immediately went to buy more for sale. During this time, Marcus said he was aware that selling drugs was illegal; however, he felt that he was invincible and would never get caught. Between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, Marcus said he sold crack and never needed to get a legitimate job because he made all the money he needed from selling drugs.

At approximately fifteen years old, Marcus met a girl three years older than himself and they started a relationship; when he was sixteen, his daughter was born. At seventeen, Marcus was arrested for selling drugs by the high school and went to the county jail for approximately one month. At eighteen, Marcus's son was born and Marcus was arrested for a second time for selling drugs which sentenced him to spend another month in the county jail. After his second arrest, Marcus rented a house and moved in with his girlfriend. He stopped going to the school to sell drugs and sold directly out of his house because he felt it was safer. Marcus says he went back to selling drugs because he needed money and he was used to it. During this time period, Marcus claimed to make around \$2,500 per week. He says his mother was always aware that he

sold drugs, but because he was able to begin to help his mother financially, she had the attitude that Marcus has “got to do what he’s gotta do.” At nineteen, Marcus says he was approached by a person at his home that he did not know. The person wanted to buy a large amount of crack and so Marcus sold it because the individual mentioned the name of a friend. A month later, Marcus was arrested for selling crack to an undercover officer. Marcus has served seven months on a twenty one month sentence at BCC.

When asked why he went back to selling drugs after his first arrests, Marcus said: “I was addicted to the streets.” When prompted for more specificity, Marcus said he liked the “fast money and living like I want to live.” Currently, Marcus classifies himself as upper middle class, although this self classification appears to be an exaggeration.

When asked what he would change about his life, Marcus said he would have graduated from high school and sometimes he wishes he never started selling drugs but he claims it is “worth the money” and he’d “rather have money and go to jail than have no money at all.” Marcus believes that crime can not be controlled and that there is nothing that can be done to improve his neighborhood so people there would stop selling drugs. Marcus says he has had no other role model but himself although he doesn’t think people in prison respect him because he doesn’t want to get to know them and he doesn’t talk to them. Marcus says the main reason he is in prison is because he made some bad decisions in his life and although he claims prison has not changed his personality he now feels more angry, more aggressive, more calm and focused and more motivated to stay out.

Marcus says when he is released from prison; he will likely go to St. Louis to live with his father for a few months and looks most forward to taking care of his children.



When asked if he thinks he'll ever be arrested again, Marcus replied, "anything is possible."

***Joseph (score= 75, internal)***

Joseph is a twenty nine year old white man who was born in Florida and moved with his mother at six years of age to a small town in Missouri after his parents divorced. His father and mother both graduated from high school, although Joseph dropped out at sixteen. Joseph's father still lives in Florida and his mother was the primary caregiver to him and his two brothers and one sister (all of whom have been to jail for various drug charges). Joseph's mother (who he classifies as poor) worked in restaurants as a waitress all her life and his father works construction. Joseph is the father of three boys, aged eight, fourteen and thirteen and one girl who is twelve. His three eldest children live with their mother in another small Missouri town and his youngest child lives with his mother, Joseph's current wife, from whom he is now separated. Joseph has served seventeen months on a twenty one month sentence for the violation of probation on a previous drug charge.

Joseph had his first experience with drugs when he was fourteen years old. He often spent time at a friend's house whose parents regularly smoked marijuana. During this time, Joseph and his friend stole some of his friend's parents' marijuana and tried it because they were curious. Joseph said his friend knew how to smoke it because he watched his parents do it so often. When he was sixteen, met a girl, dropped out of high school and shortly fathered his first child. During this time, Joseph began to sell marijuana because he needed money to provide for his girlfriend and their baby. He also

needed to support his own habit that developed. Joseph said he needed to sell marijuana to pay for the eighth of an ounce that he became accustomed to smoking every day.

At seventeen, Joseph's second child was born and he and his children's mother separated. Joseph said he was awarded full custody of the children when he turned eighteen because their mother couldn't take care of them due to the fact that she used crystal meth and couldn't find a job. Between the time he and his girlfriend separated and Joseph met his future wife, he fathered his third child with the same woman. At this time, Joseph was nineteen years old and sold marijuana for a living. This was also the time period when Joseph first tried harder drugs such as acid. Joseph said he tried acid because the people he was with were doing it, although he had reservations because of the stories he heard about people who did acid. He was afraid he would become addicted or have a "bad trip." Although Joseph experienced none of the side effects he worried about, he stopped using acid because he didn't like how it made him feel. Subsequently, Joseph went on to try crystal meth and also didn't like how it made him feel. At eighteen, Joseph was arrested for burglary and sentenced to serve seventeen months in prison and seven years probation although he would not elaborate on the details of the charge. Between the ages of twenty and twenty nine, Joseph was charged six times for driving while intoxicated and for driving with a revoked license. Thus, he was on probation for multiple offenses.

At twenty, Joseph met another woman, fathered his fourth child with her and they married approximately a year later. When Joseph was twenty seven, his ex girlfriend and his current wife got into an argument and this ex girlfriend took the three eldest children away to live with her. At twenty eight, Joseph continued to sell marijuana from the house

he rented and often sold to the same people. Unwittingly, however, one of Joseph's regular customers become a police informant as a condition of his plea bargain and told the police where to find Joseph. After selling a large, but usual, amount of marijuana to the friend, seventy two hours later the police were at Joseph's door with a search warrant. The police found an ounce of marijuana and multiple bags measured into twenty dollar amounts for intended sale. Because Joseph's wife was aware he sold marijuana, she was sentenced to eighteen months probation and Joseph was arrested and sentenced to twenty one months in prison.

Joseph and his wife are currently separated because of her infidelity although Joseph says he would like to reconcile their differences and go back to the way things were. The first thing he wants to do when he is released from prison is try to work things out with his wife, get his driver's license back, see his children and get a new job. Although Joseph now defines himself as middle class, he knows he will be poor once he gets out of prison. Joseph, however, wants to continue his education and is currently enrolled in the GED program at the prison. Joseph said that although there could be nothing done to improve the conditions where he grew up or lives now on his own, he feels that the reason he is in prison is because he made some bad decisions in his life but also because the justice system is unfair. Likewise, Joseph thinks being in prison helped change his personality because he now feels more motivated to stay out as well as more angry. Joseph says prison has helped him by allowing him to think about his relationship and focus on others. Joseph is adamant about the fact that he intends never to smoke or sell marijuana again; he says he lost everything (money, marriage and time) by going to prison and he says he doesn't want to go through it again.

*Lenny (score = 80, internal)*

Lenny is a thirty three year old white man from the inner city of St. Louis, Missouri. His parents were separated when he was five years old and he lived with his mother and brother in a St. Louis apartment for the majority of his childhood. Lenny's parents separated because his father did drugs and continually promised to stop but never actually did. Lenny says his father was drunk most of the time and would abuse his mother. Lenny's mother is a high school graduate but both he and his father never graduated. His parents finally divorced when Lenny was sixteen and he now rarely sees his father. Lenny's mother was a waitress and his father worked in construction until he developed epilepsy. Lenny has three children, two boys, fourteen and seven and a girl, who is fourteen months old. All three children have different mothers and Lenny has custody of the eldest boy and is currently married to the mother of his youngest child. Lenny is currently serving twenty one months of a seven year sentence for possession of a controlled substance with the intent to distribute. He will be released in six months.

Lenny's first experiences with drugs started from birth. Lenny says his father used heroin and alcohol consistently throughout most of his life. Because of his father's drug use, Lenny's mother separated from him and moved her children to the inner city of St. Louis. Lenny describes his life growing up as "very poor" because his father never paid child support. When Lenny was fourteen years old he was expelled from high school for causing disturbances in class and never went back. He held various jobs from that time on. Lenny says the first time he used drugs he was fourteen years old and he tried marijuana and acid with some friends of the same age. Lenny said he tried it because he was curious but when his mother found out she sent him to live with his father to remove

him from the neighborhood. Lenny said that in his neighborhood, there was “non-stop drug dealing, non-stop crime, murders, the list goes on.” Lenny said “it was a horrible place to live.” However, because his father also did drugs, Lenny was never expected to stop and was never forced to go to school. At sixteen, Lenny moved back to St. Louis and rented an apartment with his brother. Both worked doing home repairs and made money on the side stealing tractors and selling them for parts. Lenny described how he and his brother would go to various individuals who advertised tractors for sale examine the merchandise and pretend to be interested in buying them. Then, later that night they would come back with their trailer and simply load the tractors up and sell them to other people. Lenny said they could steal up to twenty five tractors at a time and sell them for \$3,000 a piece. Eventually, Lenny’s brother got caught and was charged with “stealing by deceit.” He served six years on a ten year sentence. At nineteen, Lenny had a “one night stand” with a girl and she became pregnant.

Between the ages of twenty and twenty five, Lenny began to sell marijuana full time because he needed money to pay child support and because he was starting his own auto detailing business. His business got off the ground and Lenny says he continued to sell drugs because he could make \$3,000- \$4,000 a week and, because “it was a rush.” The first time Lenny was arrested he was twenty five years old and an informant told the police that Lenny sold drugs from his auto shop and they came to search his business. Lenny claims he hid \$290,000 in the garage under an air compressor and the police found the money because the drug dogs smelled marijuana on the money. The police did the calculations to determine how much marijuana Lenny would have had to sell in order to get such a large amount of money and arrested him on the charge of “conspiracy to

distribute marijuana.” Lenny was released on probation and shortly thereafter, had another “one night stand” with a woman he met and fathered his second child. Although Lenny says he stopped using marijuana after his first arrest, he continued to sell until he met his current wife at twenty nine. Lenny’s wife is currently in the military and he feels “lucky to have her.”

After his wife got pregnant with his third child, Lenny stopped selling drugs and his auto business began to become more successful. Shortly thereafter, he discovered that his first child was not biologically his but he continued to remain a father figure and eventually won custody. His second child lives with Lenny’s mother and he and his wife both have custody of his third child. As Lenny’s business took off, he was able to purchase the house where he and his wife live and another which he rented out to a friend. After Lenny was arrested for the intent to distribute a controlled substance, he says the police conducted routine searches of his properties. After searching the house he was renting to a friend, the police found 3.5 ounces of marijuana and arrested Lenny for possession because he owned the house and was aware that the marijuana was there. Lenny has been in BCC for fourteen months of a seven year sentence. He will only serve twenty one months total.

Lenny says he is thankful for prison because “it changed who I was.” He believes that he is a better person since going to prison and it helped open his eyes. When Lenny gets out of prison, he all he wants to do is move on. Lenny says he will no longer associate with the friends he had before because he believes they are the reason he is in prison today. Lenny says he feels that people respect him because he’s easy to get along with and he keeps to himself. Prison has made Lenny more calm and focused and more

motivated to stay out. Lenny believes he will never be arrested again because he will not put himself in similar situations again. Lenny is most looking forward to spending time with his children, his wife and getting a new job. Lenny has since sold his auto shop and plans to move to another part of the state after he serves four months of house arrest. For Lenny, the experience of being arrested was a significant event in his life. He feels that the neighborhood he grew up in contributed to his subsequent arrests, yet takes responsibility for most of his own actions; for Lenny, “it was such a relief to get caught and put away.”

***Robert (score = 60, both ext. and int.)***

Robert is a twenty nine year old white high school graduate from a small town in southern rural Missouri. He has never been married and is the father to a ten year old daughter and two year old son. Robert’s parents are currently married; both graduated from high school and reside in Robert’s hometown. Robert has two younger siblings, a brother and a sister, and his brother has been arrested for driving while intoxicated and possession of a controlled substance. Robert’s mother is a waitress and his father works in a lumber yard; Robert classifies himself and his parents as middle class. Before he was arrested for the current charge, Robert worked in farm supply and at a feed mill. He is currently serving eighteen months at BCC for violating his probation on a previous drug and assault charge.

Robert had his first encounter with drugs when he was fourteen and tried marijuana with friends. At sixteen, Robert first tried methamphetamines because he was curious and it was offered to him. Robert says the experience made him energetic and

then very tired, but he liked it enough to do again. Robert began to do meth by himself approximately two times per month for two to three days at a time. During this time, Robert also tried LSD but said he did not enjoy the high. Robert claims the main reason he started doing drugs was because there was nothing else to do in his small rural community and most of his friends were doing meth to pass the time.

At eighteen, Robert graduated from high school and began dating a girl. She became pregnant and when Robert was nineteen years old his first child was born. Robert says that he and his daughter's mother never got along and she wanted nothing to do with her child. Robert gained full custody of his daughter and she lived primarily with his parents. At twenty one years old, Robert attended a party his uncle threw and there he drank excessive amounts of alcohol and did meth. Robert was pulled over by the police officers on his way home that night for driving while intoxicated and was arrested. At the police station, Robert says a quarter of a gram of meth was found in his pocket and he was too intoxicated to remember it was there. Robert was placed on probation. Although Robert claims he stopped taking drugs after his first arrest, he was unable to stop drinking alcohol. At twenty four years old, Robert was arrested for violating his probation when he failed to complete a required drug course and continued drinking. Robert served thirteen months in prison for violating his probation. At twenty six, Robert went fishing with his uncle and "had a few beers." When they returned later in the afternoon, Robert needed to use a pay phone and assaulted a man who refused to get off the phone. Robert said he knew he was in trouble as soon as he hit the man so he ran down the block to his uncle's house. The police took a statement from the man Robert assaulted and because it was such a small town, the officers knew who Robert was and arrested him for violating



his probation; he spent another thirteen months in prison. When he was twenty seven, Robert met another girl and she became pregnant. The two began a relationship despite the fact that Robert does not believe she is a good mother. One night, Robert and his girlfriend had been drinking and got into a fight. Robert tried to choke her and a neighbor called the police. He was arrested for attempted assault and violating his probation. Robert has currently served fifteen months of an eighteen month sentence at BCC.

While in prison, Robert (who was never religious) converted to Christianity. He believes he has been aware of God's presence his whole life, but after his previous times in prison, Robert feels that he needed God's help. Robert says having God in his life gives him "peace, hope and the desire to change." Robert says he wants to stop drinking, that he has stopped swearing and he will no longer watch "sinful" women on television. Although Robert believes that he is an alcoholic, he hopes God will help him overcome his addiction. Robert often feels that people do not respect him because they see him as a hypocrite for being in prison and believing in God. He does not seem bothered by the fact that others don't respect him and feels that he is doing what is right for him. Robert is anxious to see his daughter when he is released because he says "she gives me a reason to change." His ultimate goal is to get his Associates Degree and become an electrician. When asked if there was any thing that could be done to improve his home neighborhood, Robert suggested that the problem is that there is nothing to do. He is unsure if more community activities would help the drug problem in small towns, but he said "it sure as hell couldn't hurt." When asked if he was going to drink when he gets out of prison, Robert answered: "I ask myself that every day." Robert is adamant about

changing his lifestyle and keeping God in his life. He says he does not believe he will ever be arrested again because, "I've learned to accept the laws as they are."

***John (score = 70, internal)***

John is a twenty four year old working class white man from a small town in Iowa. John never graduated from high school, but received his GED out of prison. His ultimate goal is to get his Ph.D. in psychology or criminal justice. John's parents both graduated from high school and are currently married and living in Iowa. John has a brother, 21, and a sister, 18. John's mother worked in the Iowa school system teaching mentally challenged children and his father is a carpenter. John is currently serving out the last four and a half weeks of his three year sentence at BCC for possession of methamphetamines.

When John was eleven years old he had his first experience with drugs when he and a friend tried marijuana out of curiosity. When he was thirteen, John tried meth and LSD for the first time because the group of friends he surrounded himself with did drugs on a regular basis. During this time, John began selling meth and marijuana for his cousin's boyfriend who would pay him in money or drugs for dropping off merchandise to customers. John was able to hide his drug dealings from his parents until he was fifteen. At sixteen, John was expelled from high school for being absent too many times.

At sixteen, John also began to manufacture ("cook") his own meth and began selling on his own. John said he created a makeshift laboratory in the back of his truck and often went to secluded fields and manufactured his own meth. He said he learned how to do this by watching his friends. John said at this time he was letting his addiction

control him and although he knew it was illegal, he needed to support his habit. Until three years ago when he was arrested, John claimed to make approximately \$3,500 per day selling meth.. John made potential customers aware that he sold drugs because; “I put myself out on front street and sold through word of mouth.” During this time, John used many other drugs including, marijuana, LSD, meth, peyote, alcohol and prescription drugs like oxycotin and morphine.

At eighteen years old, John moved into his own apartment and began making more money selling meth because he acquired a reputation and potential customers began to come to him. During this time, John said he made enough money to buy his parents a house and pay off their cars, and although they knew where the money came from, they often pretended that they didn't. At eighteen, John was cooking and selling meth from the apartment he shared with two other friends. One afternoon while John was out, the police received a tip from a customer who owed John money. The police came to his apartment to search it and because John was gone at the time, one of his room mates signed a form authorizing the police to search the apartment. Although John said the officers did not find most of the drugs in the apartment, a gun and many supplies used to make meth, they did find some used filters designed to manufacture drugs with traces of methamphetamines on them and John was arrested. He was sentenced to one year on probation.

However, John says because his meth habit was so bad, he often failed to meet his parole officer for drug testing. A warrant went out for his arrest for violating his probation and John fled to Missouri. Staying with various friends throughout the state, John continued to manufacture meth for another year. At nineteen years old, John was

apprehended in Missouri, extradited back to Iowa, served time in the county jail for violating probation and then extradited back to Missouri to serve time for possession. John spent three years and has approximately five weeks left at BCC before he is released. John says he's been clean and drug free for three years and plans on staying that way.

When asked what could be done to improve his neighborhood, John said there should be more things to do. Small towns in rural areas have little resources and often, doing drugs passes the time. John does not feel that he's had the same opportunities as everyone else because; "you're born into a certain class and different classes have different opportunities." Although John does not feel that people make a difference in controlling crime, he wants to pursue a career in criminal justice. John says that being in prison has made him a better person because he now realizes that he made some bad decisions in his life and wants to stay more calm and focused in order to stay out. However, John says selling drugs was not worth the risk, only because he didn't save any money. Had he saved more money from selling, John thinks it would be worth it. John believes that people in prison respect him because "I don't give them a chance to disrespect me," both verbally and physically. Immediately upon his release, John will return to his parents' house and try to find a job.

When asked if he is worried about his younger siblings ever doing drugs, John replied; "I was able to keep them out of that." Now, he wants to use his story to deter other young people from making the same mistakes. John says of drug dealing: "it was my whole identity; now it's not my identity." Because he's been clean for three years, John strongly believes that he will not go back to doing drugs and therefore, never be

arrested again. When asked what advice he would give to others on the same path, John said “go to school and don’t use drugs. Sounds cliché, but it’s true.” Ultimately, John says he wants to make a difference in the world by using his experiences as examples. He feels strongly that “telling my story is important.”

***Mark (score = 45, both ext. and int.)***

Mark is a thirty four year old, self-classified middle class white man from a small town in southwest Missouri. Although both of his parents graduated from high school, Mark did not. His parents are currently married and taking care of Mark’s three sons who are fourteen, thirteen and eight years old. Mark’s mother works in a flour plant and his father is a truck driver. Mark is divorced from his wife who is living in another small Missouri town. Mark is currently serving twenty one months at BCC for violating his probation on a previous drug charge.

Mark’s first experience with drugs was when he was fifteen years old and witnessed his uncle smoking marijuana. At seventeen, Mark tried marijuana for the first time himself with friends because he was curious. During this time, Mark quit school and moved out of his parents’ house. His sixteen year old girlfriend became pregnant and they married and moved in together. Both Mark and his wife smoked marijuana and between the ages of eighteen and twenty six, Mark’s two other sons were born. At twenty six years old, Mark and his wife tried meth for the first time together because they were curious and their friends did it. Mark said after a week of doing meth, he became addicted. Mark said he and his wife began having financial problems and when he was twenty eight years old and after being approached by a friend who told him he could

make extra money selling drugs, Mark began making \$2,000 to \$5,000 per week selling marijuana from his home. Mark said both his wife and parents knew that he sold drugs, however, no one ever asked him to stop.

At thirty one years of age, Mark smoked marijuana and did meth on a daily basis and began to manufacture his own meth to support his habit. He learned how to cook methamphetamines from a friend and generally did this out of the back of his truck on the banks of a secluded river. Eventually, Mark's marijuana customers began to buy meth from him and he was able to make enough money to buy his house, pay off his car and "spoil" his kids. At thirty one, Mark came back home from cooking meth at the river found the police waiting for him. Apparently, one of his customers became a police informant as part of a plea bargain and they searched Mark's truck. The police found chemicals used to manufacture meth and Mark was arrested and sentenced to five years probation and court ordered drug rehabilitation at a local treatment center.

Mark began going to rehab three times per week and soon was able to quit doing drugs altogether. His wife, however, continued to smoke marijuana and do meth despite Mark's attempts to persuade her to quit. Ninety days into Mark's rehabilitation, the police did a routine search of his home as a condition of his probation and found baggies containing meth residue in his wife's purse. Because the house was in Mark's name, he was arrested for violating his probation and received a sentence of twenty one months at BCC.

While in prison, Mark filed for divorce from his wife because he feels that she'll never quit doing drugs. He is upset by this development because his sixteenth wedding anniversary is this month but he knows it's for the best. Mark told his children the whole

story and is most afraid that they are disappointed with him. His parents have temporary custody of all Mark's children because his wife moved to another town. Both his parents and his children come to visit Mark in prison often. Mark said he hopes his experiences will help his children stay away from drugs because he now understands that "it's not worth it."

Mark said he will never do drugs again because he won't hang out with the same people. He has no desire to reconcile with his wife and he wants to become a truck driver. Mark says being in prison, he has "changed into a completely different person." He wants to turn his life around and take care of his children. Ultimately, Mark's goal is to own a mobile home business and make money legitimately. When asked what advice he would give to someone on the path to prison, Mark would tell them to "throw it away and go to church." Recently having come to religion in prison, Mark says it gave him a new outlook on life and he wishes he'd found religion earlier. Mark feels that people can certainly make a difference in controlling crime by controlling their own actions.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Analysis of the Data**

The eight stories of the previous chapter are a simple description of the lives of the interviewees. It is impossible to understand the depth or the scope of their lives in an hour and a half long interview, let alone to describe it on a few pages. Thus, the preceding chapter does not do justice to the complicated and meaningful lives these men are leading; however, it can provide us with a glimpse into a world many of us will never know. Through reading and understanding their stories and their life histories, the disconnection between these men's perceptions of their own identities and the perceptions of the environments in which they live, will become evident.

After calculating their scores on the locus of control scale (0 = very strong external and 100 = very strong internal) used as a measure to determine how strongly one feels personally responsible for their life events or how strongly one feels that the events of their life are beyond their control, none of the eight interviewees displayed an external locus of control (LOC). A high score on the LOC scale indicates that the individual feels personally responsible for his or her own actions and that the consequences of his/her actions are the result of choice. A low score on the LOC scale indicates the individual feels little to no personal responsibility for the consequence of his/her life path and attributes such consequences to luck, chance or fate. Four of the participants displayed a mixture of both internal and external LOC, and four displayed strictly internal LOC. Interestingly, all the participants, despite their scores on the LOC scale mentioned in their



interviews the hardships of their living environments or the troubles associated with family relations. Below, an analysis of two inmates who displayed strictly internal LOC and two who showed both an internal and external LOC will provide evidence of the contradictory nature of these men's identities and will illustrate the problems associated with this type of attribution divergence.

### **Subjective Interpretations**

Lenny scored an 80 on the scale representing the highest internal LOC of all interviewees, yet discussed in his interview the troubles he had growing up when his mother divorced his alcoholic father and he was forced to move to the inner city of St. Louis. Of all the interviewees, Lenny was the most descriptive in discussing his neighborhood growing up. Lenny said of his environment, there was "non-stop drug dealing, non-stop crime, murders, the list goes on"... "it was a horrible place to live." It is evident that Lenny was well aware of the volatile living conditions in which he grew up and stated that "it was such a relief to get caught and put away," indicating that his exit from the cycle of drug dealing and poor living conditions was necessary for his healthy survival. However, with the strongest internal locus of control, despite the acknowledgement of the poor conditions he lived in, Lenny displays a strong sense of personal responsibility, autonomy and individuality. He believes that he is in prison today because of choices he made in his life.

William, who scored a 70 on the scale, also displayed an internal locus of control. Like Lenny, William came from a neighborhood and a family environment filled with drugs and violence. William discussed in his interview how he and his siblings were

moved into foster care because his single mother used cocaine, excessive amounts of alcohol and was often abused by her boyfriends. This statement indicates that William was aware that his living environment was so bad that he had to be taken out of it and placed into protective custody. In describing his return to the neighborhood as an adult, William stated that he fears for the lives of his step-daughters who now live there because the neighborhood is still filled with drugs, prostitution and violence. William constantly worries that his step-daughters will be raped or abused, yet lacks the means necessary to improve their condition. Still, however, William displayed the second highest internal LOC of all interviewees yet contradictorily stated that he'll likely go back to selling drugs upon his release because "ten dollars an hour [working a legitimate job] is just not enough." William did not indicate any awareness of the fact that because even more than minimum wage is not enough to support a family, it is the government in charge of these conditions and his forced entrance into a lifestyle of drug dealing. William indicated that he must find alternative sources of income to support his family, but did not blame any external sources for this situation and, in fact, feels personally responsible for his entrance into prison.

Robert, who displayed both an internal and external LOC with a score of 60, came from a small rural town. Robert stated that he began using methamphetamines to pass the time in his small, rural community. Robert acknowledged that most of his friends used meth and because he was surrounded by it on a daily basis, began using himself. Robert attended parties where meth was prevalent and eventually became an alcoholic. These statements indicate that Robert may have felt the pressure to conform in a community where doing meth and drinking were commonplace. Likewise, however, Robert stated

that while in prison, he found God and religion. Now, he feels responsible to God for his own actions, indicating that before he found God, there was little in his life to which he felt obligated. Robert indicated that one of the reasons why he and many of his friends began using drugs was because there was nothing to do in the small town where they grew up. This is indicative of a lack of community structure and Robert's own acknowledgement of the effects of his environment upon him. Robert, however, stated that since entering prison, he has learned to "accept the laws as they are," indicating that prior to his incarceration he was aware of the laws but was not able to fully internalize them. This indicates a move toward the understanding of external agents required in society, yet his new found responsibility toward God, indicates Robert's internalization of his own shortcomings and his undeniable need for structure. Robert's mixed LOC allows for him to more objectively experience the reality of his environment, yet contradicts his strong internalization of responsibility to God and his seemingly subconscious need for real structure.

For Andy, who also displayed a mixed LOC with a score of 50, his personal feelings of responsibility for his entrance into prison are strong. Andy stated that prison has changed his life because he is now able to see clearly and think before he acts. These statements display Andy's strong internal attributions for his current situation. However, Andy's subsequent statements regarding the fact that he will likely go back to prison because there is relatively little he can do to prevent it, strictly contradict his internal LOC. When asked what he would change about his life, Andy stated that he wished he'd never hung out with the people he did in high school. He also indicated that his neighborhood deteriorated because "it was all white at first, then it flipped," showing that

Andy attributes much of his experiences to the conditions of his environment. When Andy began selling crack, he acknowledged that what he was doing was illegal but that “the money was too good to quit.” This statement reveals his internalization of the law yet his own decision to violate it, however, Andy said that his ultimate goal is to move his family to a different neighborhood and start over. The contradictions in Andy’s statements are undeniable. He is well aware of the lack of structure and the need to escape from the norms of his neighborhood in order to avoid going back to prison, yet he feels that as the perpetrator, he must take responsibility for his own actions, despite his acknowledgement that it may not matter. Andy wants to leave his neighborhood, yet he lacks the means to do so; because of this, Andy is certain that he will be arrested again.

### **Objective Analysis and Evidence of Divergence**

It seems contradictory that Lenny would have the highest internal LOC and yet be the most aware of the volatile environment he came from. Likewise, it is contradictory that William fears for his step-daughters’ lives in their neighborhood and can not support his family working a legitimate job, yet feels that he is serving time because he made some bad decisions in his life. For Robert, the acknowledgement of the laws and the pressure to conform in a small, homogenous community, offset by his new found faith and responsibility to God and structure likewise creates a contradiction. Similarly for Andy, the conditions of his environment are not foreign to him, yet despite his desire to change because he feels responsible for his own actions, he knows that if he doesn’t leave his neighborhood nothing for him will ever be different.

These men, perhaps more aware of what it takes to survive in American society today than the majority of the population, seem unaware or at least unconvinced, of the fact that they were arrested because they were encouraged to make certain decisions based on where they came from because of a marked lack of social support and initiative for improvement. Their self-blame is most likely a result of the permeation of the middle class agenda (Rieman, 1996) designed to place individual responsibility on the perpetrator such that those more privileged may feel safer by demonizing and labeling the criminal. Clearly, this tactic of blaming the victim is an adequate way to abdicate responsibility for the deplorable environments into which the lower classes are relegated, whether they are inner city ghettos or poor, small rural towns. The stigmatization of these men as “drug dealers” and “criminals” allows them to be minimized in the minds of the mainstream and eventually leads to the perpetuation of their own belief that they are “sincere actors” (Goffman, 1963). The issue then is in determining what type of identity these individuals have if they display strong internal feelings of responsibility and loci of control while simultaneously (and consciously) acknowledging the difficult environments they came from and the effects of that environment upon them.

The strong senses of autonomous individuality and the desire to take personal responsibility for one’s actions is not a novel notion. In a society as individualistic as ours, the pressure to remain responsible for the consequences of our actions is built into the social structure. In prison, the mandatory programs these men go through stress taking personal responsibility for their actions and making the effort to change their lives. What is not adequately addressed, however, are the undeniably difficult environments and family structures these men are from and will return to. Making enough money to

support a family of four on minimum wage will not be any easier upon their release than it was when they were arrested. The system makes no realistic attempt to remedy this problem, despite work release programs and family counseling. By sending these men incarcerated for victimless crimes back into the volatile environments they came from with nothing more than a renewed sense of autonomy and personal responsibility, society is simply perpetuating a cycle of helplessness. The poor living conditions and lack of structural support, coupled with a heightened sense of internal responsibility results in a symbiotic cycle within which the inmates are destined to fail. As these individuals renew their sense of faulted agency, their newly autonomous identity structures feed off of a highly unstructured environment and serve only to further propel them into failure, for what they're told they *should* do and what they're *able* to do in reality are two strictly opposing notions and only serves to increase the likelihood of recidivism.

These inmates' identities, then, become fragmented and unstable which leads to a heightened sense of failure when they do slip back into patterns of drug dealing and use. Thus, these *divergent identities*, as a result of high internal loci of control and an opposing recognition of a lack of environmental structure, encourage the inmates to become further entrenched in a cycle of both objective and subjective patterns of failure. When individuals are confused and their subjective interpretations of their own life histories become fragmented based on what they know about their environment and what they think of themselves, the result is the sustenance of an identity most difficult to manage and even more difficult to reconstruct. Because these prisoners all exhibited either mixed or strictly internal loci of control despite region of birth, race or self-specified social class, and because they all told stories of unstructured environments and

the denial of access to legitimate means of success (whether directly or indirectly), the result becomes a highly inequitable system of blame and identity construction. Their *divergent identities*, then, are the polarization of their awareness of environmental agents acting upon them and their own internal attributions for their presumed failure in life. What they are not entirely consciously aware of is just how much environmental agents matter in the formation of identities, nor the strength of their interactions with prison officials in the contexts of their daily lives and the powerful suggestion of personal responsibility. Their mismatched identity attributions cause them to become confused and easily controlled within the prison system. Granted, this avenue of personal attribution works well for the system, but the systematic reconstruction of these men's identities from whatever they were upon entrance into prison toward strengthening the internalization of personal agency facilitates the creation of an inequitable distribution of responsibility and the awareness of their environmental reality. These prisoners' internal attributions and loci of control make a marked divergence from what they experience in their everyday lives and in the contexts of their living environments thus further fostering the polarization of what they *think* they feel and what they *know* to be reality.

Divergent identities, as unstable and fragmented constructions of responsibility and the acknowledgement of environment can serve only to confuse and further limit the life chances of these inmates. By creating an imbalance in the way they construct identity, the inmates are left with nothing but empty motivation in a society structured to quell their success from the outset. It is then likely that because such patterns of failure are built into both the social structure and the identities of the inmates, the repetition of past behavior serves only to further fragment their ideas about themselves and further

entrenches them in a cyclical pattern of self blame where their personal attributions and awareness of their environments diverge exponentially until they finally become irreparable.



## **Chapter 6:**

### **Concluding Statements**

This exploratory study was designed to illustrate primarily how prisoners' perceptions of the reasons for their own incarcerations are matched to their attributions for blame, loci of control and an understanding of their environments. Those incarcerated for "victimless crimes" are produced within the contexts of their own environments on larger structural levels, through personally relevant and subjective expectations of themselves and through the institutional motives and policies of correctional facilities. The victimless criminals in this study are incarcerated for the sale, use, possession or distribution of illegal narcotics and explained through interviews the contexts of their living environments and received scores on a locus of control scale to more objectively determine their attributions for blame and responsibility.

Based on information from existing literature about the ways in which society criminalizes minorities and the poor and aids in the creation of their identities, (Reiman, 1996, Goffman, 1963) I was able to view my data through a different lens and extract from it the natural patterns that emerged using Grounded Theory. These patterns showed that the inmates' identities are fragmented and unstable due to conflicting information they receive from the contexts of their unstructured living environments and from the prison institution and society as a whole. Although the institution often encourages inmates to become solely responsible for their own actions, the fault also lies in society's denial of access to legitimate means of success for these individuals. The poor living

conditions, the lack of structure in home and community environments, the limited access to high paying jobs and education along with prevalent stereotypes regarding ethnic minorities, the poor and persons with criminal records contribute to the situations in which these inmates find themselves.

### **Class, Status and Mobility: Preliminary Hypotheses Revisited**

Despite many of the inmates' self-reported class statuses, by analyzing the contexts of the environments and living situations many of them described it can be said that the majority of the interviewees are from the lower and under classes. Likewise, most reported that the individuals they surrounded themselves with growing up such as parents, siblings and friends introduced them to drugs as a means to achieving the desired end of making "good" money. Thus, it is confirmed from these interviews that the "helping behaviors" of many of the inmates' relationships with friends and family members resulted in strictly limiting their chances for upward mobility and contributed to a symbiotic cycle of negative helping behavior. However, it can not be confirmed that these inmates did not engage in downward mobility because many reported that they do not make more money than their parents. Thus, the expectation that the inmates will become stagnant in regard to their mobility chances was not found, but rather that many did, in fact, become downwardly mobile across family generations both financially and in social status.

It was confirmed, however, that the age at which these inmates had their first encounter with drugs generally matches the age at which middle-class youth receive their first resource for education and entertainment. For instance, most of the interviewees

reported that their first experience with drugs of any type occurred between the ages of eight and thirteen. It is likely that this age range is also the period when most middle class children experience a first encounter with resources to help them become upwardly mobile such as a personal computer. Thus, it can be said that the resources children from varied class statuses receive are vastly different and important to the type of mobility expected of them, but are relatively similar in regard to the ages at which such resources are provided. Understanding this can be important to designers of prevention programs that aim to limit lower class youths' reception of illegitimate resources and replace them, instead, with similar resources found in the upper and middle classes.

### **Divergent Identities**

The conflict between personal attributions of responsibility and the acknowledgement of the socio-environmental structures that contradict those attributions creates a strong sense of cognitive dissonance. Not only are these inmates struggling with it on an abstract level, but they are able to be convinced that the reason for their dissonance is through their own faulted "styles" of life. As these men experience such cognitive dissonance, it become something more than a feeling and evolves into a larger and more damaging construction of the divergent identity. As they live their lives in neighborhoods, family structures or lifestyles that provide little structure and are easily denied the resources to change legitimately, these inmates become hyper-aware of what it takes to survive in order to support themselves and their families.

Upon entering prison, they are then inundated with the social expectation to take responsibility for the "bad" decisions they made in their lives and they begin to attribute

the responsibility internally in order to help structure and stabilize themselves within prison. Despite the fact that they are well aware that their chances for legitimate success in society are minimal due to the lack of education, money and labor they are provided, these men want to succeed in any way they can and begin to internalize the blame as a way of complying with the system.

These inmates display a keen desire for structure, something that is generally absent from their lives. Prison offers that structure but only if the inmates are willing to accept all of the blame for their own lives. The inmates accept this responsibility and learn how to be “good citizens” but are released back into a society that facilitates their failure. The personal responsibility the prison teaches then becomes internalized and allows for the inmates to experience greater failures when they are released back into environments that are not conducive to their success. Then, their identities diverge and fragment into personal attributions for failure despite the contradictory nature of the lives they experience outside of prison. Unable to negotiate and properly manage these divergent identities, the inmates become further entrenched in the unrealistic expectations of society and their own desire to be responsible for themselves. This type of divergence, then, begins a cycle of recidivism that can only be broken if the blame becomes properly allocated. Thus, to reduce the amount of recidivism experienced by those who commit victimless crimes, it is necessary that a balance exist between the social institutions that negate success and the internal attributions the inmates are encouraged to allow for themselves. Within this balance, it is my hypothesis, that the rate of recidivism will decrease and the inmates will leave the prison with a better understanding of how to help themselves, *despite* the odds against them.

### **Pro-Active Designs and Policy Reform**

Given the divergent identity as displayed by the eight interviewees, it should be understood that the ways in which these prisoners negotiate identity is strongly shaped by the way they are treated and addressed within the prison walls. In order to remedy the fragmentation of their identities, prison programs and policy should be better tailored to promote the inmates' understanding of the environmental conditions they come from while additionally providing them with the knowledge of what it takes to remove themselves from those conditions. Prison programs should not be designed to ignore the environments of these individuals, nor should they be designed to abdicate agency all together. By acknowledging to these inmates that their environments are not conducive to mobility and that they perpetuate a cycle of drug related activities, prison officials can design programs better suited to providing them with the tools, knowledge and ambition necessary to be able to remove themselves from those volatile environments upon their release, rather than simply sending them back in with only the ability to point the finger at themselves. By acknowledging the conditions these men come from, the system does not put itself in danger. These men know what the "real world" is like and perhaps, all they need is for someone else to recognize it as well. By combining a healthy mixture of personal responsibility and the acknowledgement of unstable living conditions and environments, these inmates will be able to construct a more stable identity and more accurately attribute responsibility to both themselves and to their environment. Striking a balance between the attributions these men tend to make based on institutionalized expectations and their acknowledgement of the environments they come from can serve

only to validate the strengthening of their identities. By validating the environmental and cultural variables that help lead to incarceration through programs that help explain what to do next, the prison system will facilitate the convergence of the inmates' attributions and their real life experiences. Then, the stabilization of identity and the feeling of shared responsibility may help keep some of these inmates from recidivating.

### **Future Research on Victimless Criminals**

A more critical lens must be applied to the study of prisoner research such that a more comprehensive understanding of these individuals, in tandem with a greater acknowledgement of societal influence can allow future research to carry with it a notion of commitment to improvement. As researchers and theorists with the capabilities to make a change, we must understand that the real victim in these "victimless" crimes is the inmate himself, we can work to redefine that term so that the brunt of the responsibility may be appropriately allocated back to society.

Using qualitative methods of data collection allows researcher to gather subjective information about where victimless criminals come from on a both a macro and micro level and likewise allows for a better understanding of the symbolic meanings they attach to their incarcerations and their own life histories. In addition, integrating methods such as locus of control scales to be used as a comparison to the environmental information we receive can allow for a more complete interpretation of the balances or imbalances present in the inmates' identity constructions. In this way, we can see where and how patterns of attribution and acknowledgements of environmental variables contribute to the growth or fragmentation of individual identities. Using identity moments to construct

timelines of individual histories gives researchers a more complete picture of the significant events that contributed to inmates' incarcerations; then, we can begin to piece together the structural and symbolic interpretations and attributions that exist as a result of those self-specified identity moments.

The term "victimless crime" is misleading and inaccurate in defining the types of offenses for which these men are incarcerated. They are the victims of their environments, of the system, of their own attributions, of poorly constructed prison programs, and most of all, they are victims of the social structures that label, criminalize and ultimately discount them. As researchers with a commitment to change, we are responsible for publicizing this information and for proposing alternatives. Perhaps on a macro-sociological level, the challenges are more difficult, but if we start from the bottom up and work to change the ways these men are regarded and the information they receive about themselves in prison, we can put an end to the inequitable system of blame and work toward a system that can share the burden these men carry.

"Our opposition makes us feel that we are not completely victims of the circumstances. It allows us to prove our strength consciously and only thus gives vitality and reciprocity to conditions from which, without such corrective, we would withdraw at any cost."

-Georg Simmel

## Survey Instrument and Interview Guide

Please **READ CAREFULLY** and be **HONEST** (answers are kept **SECRET**). **USE THE BACK FOR MORE ROOM!**

1. What is your highest year of education completed?
  - a. 6<sup>th</sup> grade
  - b. Some high school
  - c. Graduated high school
  - d. Vocational school
  - e. Some college
  - f. Graduated college (bachelor's degree)
  - g. Master's degree
  - h. Ph.D.
  - i. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Do you plan on continuing your education?
 

Yes	No
-----	----

 If yes, how far do you want to go?
  - a. High school/GED
  - b. Associates Degree
  - c. Bachelors Degree
  - d. Masters Degree
  - e. Ph.D.
  
3. When you were in school, did you get in trouble a lot? Yes                      No
 

If yes, why did you usually get in trouble? _____	
---	--
  
4. You never know where you stand with other people: True                      False
  
5. Did your friends usually get into trouble? Yes                      No
 

Why? _____	
------------	--
  
- Do you think you got in trouble because of the crowd you hung out with? Yes  
No
  
6. It is difficult to know who your real friends are: True                      False
  
7. What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. What is your race/ethnic origin?



- a. \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ Asia/Pacific Islander
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ Black/African American
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ White/Caucasian
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ Mixed Race (check all that apply)
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your gender? Male                  Female

10. You earn the respect and honors you get: True                  False

11. How old were you when you had your FIRST encounter with drugs of any type?  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Who else was there when you had your first encounter with drugs?  
(relationship only, ex. friend, brother,  
cousin)\_\_\_\_\_

13. Other people usually control your life:                  True                  False

14. You do not really believe in luck or chance: True                  False

15. Where were you raised? (please list city and state)  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. You need to be informed of news events                  True                  False

17. Did you live in the city, in a suburb or in the country/rural area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Were both parents present while you were growing up? Yes                  No

If no, please specify your relationship to your primary caregiver (ex. mother,  
father, grandmother, aunt,                  uncle, etc.).  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Persistence and hard work usually lead to success: True                  False

20. Your PARENTS are:

- a. Divorced
- b. Separated
- c. Never Married
- d. Currently Married

21. What are your parent's highest education levels?

Mom: \_\_\_\_\_

Dad: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Was anyone else in your family (including aunts, uncles, parents, siblings, grandparents, spouse) ever arrested?      Yes                      No

If yes, please specify your relationship and the crime they were convicted of.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. What jobs did your parents have when you were growing up?

Mother:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Father:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

24. Who was the most important person in your life when you were growing up?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why?

Who is the most important person in your life  
NOW? \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

25. Leaders are successful when they work hard:    True                      False

26. You are currently:

- a. Married
- b. Divorced
- c. Separated
- d. Never married

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

27. In your neighborhood, do you think people are afraid of you?      Yes                      No

Why?

28. How many times have you moved in the past 5 years?
- a. none
  - b. 1-2
  - c. 2-3
  - d. 3-4
  - e. 5 or more

29. Do you make more money now than your parents did?    Yes            No

30. You think that you could easily win the lottery    True            False

31. Do you prefer to do things on your own or in a group?    In a Group            On  
your own

32. If you do not easily succeed on a task, you tend to give up:    True            False

33. Do you have any children?    Yes            No

If yes, please specify the gender and age of each.

---

34. Do you feel that your friends and family members respect you?    Yes            No  
Why?:

35. How many of your close friends or family members are currently in  
prison? \_\_\_\_\_

36. People must be the master of their own fate:    True            False

37. When you were a teenager, what did you want to be when you grew up?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

38. When you were growing up, did you live in a rough neighborhood?    Yes  
No

39. You never try anything you are not sure of:    True            False

40. It is not important for you to vote:    True            False

41. When you were growing up, do you feel that you had enough food, clothing,  
entertainment and    education?            Yes            No

42. Marriage is a gamble for most people: True False

43. What was the crime for which you are currently serving time?

---

44. Were you under the influence of drugs or alcohol when you were arrested for the crime that you were convicted of? Yes No  
If yes, please specify which type of drug or alcohol.

---

45. A person can get rich by taking risks: True False

46. Is this your first time in prison? Yes No  
If no, please specify the other crimes that you were convicted of.

---

47. Have you ever used drugs? Yes No

If yes, please state what type (list ALL)

---

48. If you have used drugs, why did you first try it?

- a. Curious
- b. Everyone else was
- c. Family/friends asked you to
- d. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

49. How did you learn how to use drugs at first?

- a. On your own
- b. Older family member taught you
- c. Figured it out with friends
- d. Saw others doing it and picked it up
- e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

50. What is a reason someone might commit the same crime for which YOU are currently in prison? (please circle ALL that apply)

- a. Couldn't get a job
- b. Out of anger
- c. Provoked
- d. Didn't think they'd get caught



55. Why do you think you are in prison right now? (please circle only ONE)
- Because you were in the wrong place at the wrong time
  - Because the justice system is unfair
  - Because of your race
  - Because you hung out with the wrong crowd
  - Because you made some bad decisions in your life
  - Because living in your neighborhood is hard
56. Has being in prison changed your personality?    Yes            No  
If yes, please specify how. \_\_\_\_\_
57. Do you think being in prison has made you:
- A more angry person
  - More aggressive
  - More calm and focused
  - More motivated to stay out
  - Other, (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
58. How would you describe your current money status?
- Poor
  - Working class
  - Middle class
  - Upper-middle class
  - Rich
59. Do you think people in prison respect you?    Yes            No  
Why?
60. What do you plan to do once you get out of prison? Please circle ALL that apply.
- Get a job
  - Go back to school
  - Move to another part of the state/country
  - Go back to your neighborhood/family
  - Hang out with your friends
  - Other, (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
61. If a friend asked you to help them with something that you did not feel comfortable with, you would:
- Tell them no
  - Help them because they are your friend
  - Help them because you have nothing to lose
  - Ask questions about what they are doing and decide after finding out the details

e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

62. Do you think you will ever be arrested again?    Yes            No  
If yes, please state WHY:

63. What was your job before you were arrested?  
\_\_\_\_\_

64. You usually convince other to do things your way    True    False

65. People make a difference in controlling crime            True    False

66. If you had the chance to do any ONE of these things with your life, which you MOST want to do?  
a. Graduate from college  
b. Live closely with family and friends  
c. Buy a nice house  
d. Get a good job  
e. Move your family to a different neighborhood and start over  
f. None of these

67. Do you think you have the same opportunities as everyone else?    Yes  
No  
Why or why not?

68. If you could change ONE thing about your life, what would it be and why?  
(continue on back)

69. The success you have is usually because of chance:    True            False

70. Your close family and friends usually: (circle ALL that apply)

- a. Get you into trouble
- b. Encourage you to do better
- c. Don't really care what happens to you
- d. Want to help you get on a better path
- e. Support you no matter what
- f. Always seem to mess up your life

71. What advice would you give someone who is on the path to prison? (continue on back)

72. Your life seems like a series of random events:    True            False

73. You usually get what you want in life            True                    False



Locus of Control Scale

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I usually get what I want in life.                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 2. I need to be kept informed about news events.     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 3. I never know where I stand with other people.     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 4. I do not really believe in luck or chance.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 5. I think that I could easily win a lottery.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 6. If I do not succeed on a task, I tend to give up. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 7. I usually convince others to do things my way.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 8. People make a difference in controlling crime.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 9. The success I have is largely a matter of chance. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 10. Marriage is largely a gamble for most people.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 11. People must be the master of their own fate.     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 12. It is not important for me to vote.              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 13. My life seems like a series of random events.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 14. I never try anything that I am not sure of.      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 15. I earn the respect and honors I receive.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 16. A person can get rich by taking risks.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |
| 17. Leaders are successful when they work hard.      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | True                     | False                    |

18. Persistence and hard work usually lead to success.

True False

19. It is difficult to know who my real friends are.

True False

20. Other people usually control my life.

True False

0-15 Very strong external locus of control

20-35 External locus of control

40-60 Both external and internal locus of control

65-80 Internal locus of control

85-100 Very strong internal locus of control

Interview Consent Form

- You were chosen to talk about prisoner identity for a project.
- The title of the project is “Assessing Prisoner Identity and Redefining Victimless Crimes: An Analysis of Prisoners at Boonville Corrections Center”
- The reason for the project is to find out about you and how you feel about your environment.
- There is 1 face-to-face interview for an hour and a half.
- A researcher will ask you questions, write your answers down and they will be kept secret.
- Your name and inmate number will NOT be on the form.
- You do not have to participate.
- If something makes you uncomfortable, you don’t have to talk about it.
- There is NO reward and NO punishment.
- You can tell your story, talk about being in prison and give advice to other people.
- If you say:
  - you will hurt someone else
  - you will hurt yourself
  - someone is hurting you

a staff member must be told. Anything else you say can not be told to anyone.

- Send questions in the stamped, addressed envelope to: P.O. Box 329  
Columbia, MO 65205
- You can contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri-Columbia by using the blank envelope provided. Their address is:  
483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211
- Your answers will be held in a locked box until needed and then locked up again until they are destroyed.

- When you sign this sheet you give permission to have your answers read and recorded by the researcher in charge, and you state that you read and understand the above information. Keep one copy for your records.

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Survey Consent Form

- You were chosen to fill out a survey for a project about identity
  - The title of the project is “Assessing Prisoner Identity and Redefining Victimless Crimes: An Analysis of Prisoners at Boonville Corrections Center”
  - The reason for the project is to find out about you and how you feel about your environment.
  - The survey is 73 questions long and you must circle your answers and/or write a short response. Please use the back if you need more room.
  - This survey does not show your name or inmate number and prison staff can not know your answers.
  - Filling out this survey does not matter to your parole. There is no reward and no punishment.
  - You do not have to fill out the survey and nothing you say can be told to anyone else.
  - If you do the survey, you can tell us what is good and bad about prison and how you feel about your life.
  - If you don't do the survey, nothing will happen to you.
  - If you say:
    - you will hurt someone else
    - you will hurt yourself
    - someone is hurting you
- a staff member must be told. Anything else you say can not be told to anyone.
- When you sign this form, a staff member will give you the survey, two blank envelopes and a stamped, addressed envelope. Your questions will be answered in a letter.
  - Send any questions in the stamped, addressed envelope to: P. O. Box 329  
Columbia, MO 65205
  - You can contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri-Columbia using the other blank envelope. Their address is:

483 McReynolds,  
University of Missouri,  
Columbia, MO 65211

- **When you finish, put the survey AND this signed form in the last blank envelope, and put it in the box in the canteen or give it to a staff member.**
- Your survey will be held in a locked box until it is needed and then locked up again until it is destroyed.
- When you sign this sheet you give permission to have your answers read and recorded by the researcher in charge, and you state that you read and understand the above information.

**Sign:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Keep one copy of this form for your records.

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