

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

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the task of assessing prisoner identity and redefining “victimless crimes” in the sociological literature. This paper will report on the results of 8, 1.5 hour interviews conducted at Boonville Corrections Center (BCC) in Missouri. The interviews were conducted with inmates currently incarcerated for committing victimless crimes. A timeline was constructed for each of the participants and individual “identity moments” were extracted from the data and compared for patterns through narratives. By asking questions associated with the inmates’ previous living environments and through calculating their scores on a locus of control scale, (Pettijohn, 1992) I found that the inmates’ identities become fragmented which leads to a heightened sense of failure when they resort to 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 patterns of failure.