Varieties of Criminal Behavior

Summary and Policy Implications

Jan M. Chaiken and Marcia R. Chaiken, with Joyce E. Peterson
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Jan M. Chaiken and Marcia R. Chaiken, with Joyce E. Peterson

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The study summarized here is part of a series of Rand publications that document Rand's second inmate survey, a project funded by the National Institute of Justice under its Research Agreements Program. In this project, Rand researchers developed, fielded, and analyzed data from a survey instrument administered to nearly 2200 jail and prison inmates in three states. The following annotated list of publications indicates the purposes and scope of the project and this study's place in it.

  Describes the purposes of the survey, its design and administration, the data collected, and response patterns. Appendix contains a copy of the full survey instrument.

  Analyzes the reliability of the survey's self-reported arrest and conviction data, using both the retest method and a comparison with official records.

  Determines the proportion of prison inmates who have demonstrated a need for specific treatments while incarcerated, the proportion who actually receive such treatment, and the differences in these two aspects (controlling for inmate characteristics). Also describes inmates' assessments of various programs and analyzes which inmates are disproportionately involved in prison violence.

- Chaiken, Jan, and Marcia Chaiken, with Joyce Peterson, *Varieties of Criminal Behavior: Summary and Policy Im-
lications, The Rand Corporation, R-2814/1-NIJ, August 1982 (the present report).

Gives conclusions from analysis of the survey and official record data concerning identification of serious criminal offenders and the implications of their characteristics for public policy.


Documents the concepts, methods, and findings that underlie this summary report. Appendices describe (a) an analysis of the internal consistency of survey responses and their correspondence with official record data, and (b) the construction of scaled predictor variables.


Uses the predictor and outcome variables constructed by Chaiken and Chaiken to produce a 7-item scale and draw conclusions about selective incapacitation. Also summarizes the entire research effort under Rand's Research Agreements Program.

This summary report emphasizes the policy-relevant results of the study. It is intended for criminal justice practitioners and others concerned with public policy on criminals and crime control. It should, however, also provide criminal justice researchers with a useful overview for reading the report Varieties of Criminal Behavior (R-2814-NIJ), which contains references to related research, explanations of the analytical methods, and comprehensive data tables.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Richard T. Barnes, former Director of the Center for the Study of Crime Correlates and Criminal Behavior, the National Institute of Justice, supported the inclusion of this project in the Research Agreements Program. Patrick Langan, our project monitor at the National Institute of Justice, provided insightful comments and advice at each stage of data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings. Peter Greenwood, the former manager of Rand’s Criminal Justice Program, oversaw all the work that was conducted under the Research Agreements Program. Several reviewers of earlier drafts of reports on Rand’s second inmate survey made insightful suggestions concerning our terminology, presentation, and conclusions. We especially wish to thank the reviewers Alfred Blumstein, Phillip Cook, Don Gibbons, Daniel Glaser, James Kahan, Michael Maltz, Albert Reiss, Wesley Skogan, Sorrel Wildhorn, and Barbara Williams.

Without the cooperation of many people in county and state corrections agencies, temporary Rand employees who administered the survey, and the staff who coded information from prisoners’ inmate folders, we would have had no data to analyze. Their names are listed in the acknowledgments of the companion publication, Survey of Prison and Jail Inmates: Background and Method, N-1635-NIJ. In addition, the thousands of inmates who filled out survey questionnaires were vital to our research.

Mark Peterson provided leadership for this project in its initial stages. Mark was the person primarily responsible for the site selection, survey design and administration, official record data collection, and preparation of the data for analysis. He planned the overall scope of the study and directed the first analyses.

Pat Ebener helped plan the survey instrument. She supervised the administration of the survey in prisons and jails and painstakingly ensured the confidentiality of the data from the moment the questionnaires were completed through transportation, coding, cleaning, and keyboarding. Pat also assisted Kent Marquis in the construction of the difference variables relating self-reports to official record data of conviction crimes and arrests, which we used in our validity study.

Sue Polich organized and operated the information retrieval system that permitted use of data from multiple sources. She did the programming and documentation for the majority of the variables re-
ported in this study and gave ongoing advice about the statistical packages we used.

Paul Honig designed and supervised the data collection methods for the information collected from inmate folders. He also designed and organized the code book for the official record data. Paul constructed indicators of validity and carried out extensive computer programming. One of the most difficult aspects of his work was the construction of analysis variables that captured comparable information from data files of three different states.

Leola Cutler performed the computer programming related to the indicators of internal quality of the data; she also helped with multiple regression analyses. Allan Abrahamse gave valuable statistical advice in the planning of the multivariate analysis. Peter Greenwood assisted in the response rate analysis.

David Lyon, David Kanouse, Gene Fisher, and Barbara Williams provided impetus for documenting this study and the administrative support that made it possible.
CONTENTS

PREFACE ................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................. v

Section

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY ............................... 1
II. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY ......................... 6

III. IDENTIFYING THE SERIOUS CRIMINAL .................... 10
    Categories of Criminal Behavior .......................... 10
    Crime Commission Rates ..................................... 12
    The Violent Predators ....................................... 15

IV. POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS ....................... 23
    Limitations of Official Criminal Records ................ 24
    Criminal Drug Use and Drug Control ....................... 25
    Incapacitation Effects ....................................... 26
    Rehabilitation Efforts ....................................... 27
    Effects of the Environment .................................. 28

REFERENCES ........................................................... 31
I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Faced with rising crime rates, fiscal limitations, and a conservative political movement, public officials increasingly long for a simple, encompassing policy that would permit them to deal quickly and effectively with criminals. They have also deemphasized rehabilitation in favor of longer prison sentences as a means of reducing crime. Unfortunately, an important truth has almost disappeared during these developments: There are many kinds of criminals, and to fix on any single punitive solution to the problem of crime is simplistic, unjust, and inefficient.

Increasing the lengths of determinate prison sentences exacerbates the problems of overcrowded prisons without necessarily reducing crime rates efficiently. Consider the following example. Of two men convicted for burglary, one may commit fewer than four burglaries a year and limit his other criminal activities to a range of crimes society considers relatively less serious. The other may commit 60 burglaries a year and a range of robberies, assaults, and other serious crimes, also at very high rates. Assuming that these criminal patterns are characteristic, imprisoning the first for three years will affect the crime rate far less than imprisoning the second for the same period. If reducing crime is at least one purpose of longer prison sentences, these longer sentences should be consistently imposed on the most serious, active offenders. But how are criminal justice authorities to distinguish between the two criminals in our example?

This report describes the diversity of criminal behavior in a way that can help the criminal justice system distinguish among and develop appropriate policy for handling various subgroups of offenders. It presents the results of our analysis of a survey of adult male prison and jail inmates in three states. The study, which builds on previous Rand studies of criminal careers (Petersilia, Greenwood, and Lavin, 1977; Peterson and Braiker, 1981), utilized a survey instrument that was designed and administered by Peterson et al. (1982). This report concentrates on the most policy-relevant findings and implications of the study. A separate publication (Chaiken and Chaiken, 1982) contains more complete descriptions of our methods, models, and findings.

The study aimed at discovering whether official records and characteristics that the records might or might not contain would permit identification of serious criminals. The models we developed rely on
information about criminals that is currently or potentially available to the criminal justice system: prior record adjusted for age, a history of frequent juvenile violence starting before age 16, specific forms of drug use and alcohol abuse, employment record, and marital status. The study data came both from the self-reports of the surveyed inmates and from their official records. We realize that use of self-reports immediately raises questions about their veracity. However, by exploiting redundant questions built into the questionnaire and cross-comparisons with the respondents' official records, we were able to show that our main findings are not sensitive to respondent error that may be present. (Section II contains a brief description of the questionnaire used and the data's validity and reliability.)

Using the survey data, the study established a framework for classifying criminal offenders that counters two major objections to the construction of typologies: (1) that criminals do not specialize and (2) that their criminal behavior is too unstable to permit meaningful classification. The survey results indicate that criminals can be categorized according to the combinations of crimes they commit, and that the resulting typology may be quite useful for prosecution, incapacitation, and rehabilitation policy. The inmates in our sample who committed specific combinations of crimes were distinguishable from other inmates by their crime commission rates, their persistence in committing crime, and their personal characteristics.

One important result of the study is our ability to identify and characterize the most serious category of offenders. Criminals in this category reported committing robbery, assault, and drug deals during the one- to two-year measurement period covered by the survey. We found that these criminals, whom we have called "violent predators," usually committed the three defining crimes at high rates, and they often committed burglaries, thefts, and other property crimes at high rates too—sometimes at higher rates than any other type of criminal, including those who specialized in those crimes. Typically, the violent predators also began persistently using hard drugs as juveniles and committing violent crimes before they were 16. In short, these "omni-felons," deeply entrenched in a life of multiple drug use and violence, constitute an important criminal threat to society.

Table 1 shows the ten types of offenders discussed in this study, defined in terms of the crimes they do or do not report committing. The offender types are arranged hierarchically, the lower ones relatively less serious than the higher ones. We found that with the excep-

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1The measurement period began on January 1 of the year preceding the inmate's arrest for the crime that led to his incarceration. The amount of unincarcerated time a respondent had during the period could have varied from 1 month to 24 months.
Table 1

DEFINITION OF HIERARCHICAL SUBGROUPS OF OFFENDERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>Assault</th>
<th>Burglary</th>
<th>Theft, Fraud, Forger, Credit Card Crimes</th>
<th>Drug Deals</th>
<th>Percent of Study Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent predators</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(robber-assaulter-dealers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robber-assaulters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robber-dealers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level robbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mere assaulted</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglar-dealers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level burglars</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property &amp; drug offenders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level property offenders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug dealers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE:  + = Group member commits this crime, by definition.  
      0 = Group member does not commit this crime, by definition.  
      ? = Group member may or may not commit this crime. Analysis shows that nearly all members of the group do.  
      ?? = Group member may or may not commit this crime. Most don't.  

Assault includes homicide arising out of assault or robbery.  
Theft includes auto theft.  

Percentages add to 87%. The remaining 13% did not report committing any of the crimes studied. Some serious crimes (e.g., rape, kidnap) were not included in the self-report survey. Respondents with missing data (150 out of 2190) were excluded in calculation of percentages.

...tion of those who commit assault only ("mere assaulting"), offenders in the lower categories not only committed fewer serious crimes and at lower rates, but their patterns of employment, drug use, and juvenile behavior were more socially acceptable than those of other offenders. However, even among the "lesser" offenders, those who used particular forms of hard drugs and had employment problems were likely to commit crime more frequently than their counterparts.²

²The categories of offenders do not constitute a comprehensive "criminal typology" as that term is usually defined by criminologists. The hierarchical arrangement of
Unfortunately, as we discuss below, our analysis showed that information currently available from such sources as official arrest and conviction records does not allow criminal justice officials to distinguish meaningfully between the violent predator and other types of offenders. However, significant (though imperfect) distinctions can be made on the basis of information potentially available on such factors as specific forms of drug use, employment, and juvenile drug use and violence. Properly interpreted, this information could give prosecutors and judges clearer understanding of the type of criminal they are confronting in any particular case.

Although certain questions and issues raised by this study deserve further research, we believe our findings have important implications for present criminal justice policy and practice. Our study methods specifically searched for patterns that are common across three states, and the results do, to some extent, reconceptualize the findings of much previous research. Consequently, we anticipate that they can be generalized.

Because the characteristics we found associated with the violent predators have been associated with high probability of recidivism in many earlier studies, we infer that until effective means are found to prevent criminals from repeating serious crimes, the violent predators are better candidates for incapacitation and worse candidates for conventional rehabilitation efforts than any other criminal types. By focusing on the less serious (but still highly active) offenders, existing rehabilitation programs may prove more effective than they currently appear. Many offenders who belong to the subgroups we have identified as less serious typically have the kinds of drug- and employment-related problems that seem amenable to rehabilitation efforts.

Because the violent predators commit a disproportionate amount of crime, it seems prudent to devote a commensurate proportion of criminal justice resources to dealing with them. At present, the only effective method available for curtailing their criminal behavior is incarceration. In the short run, other than increasing the apprehension, conviction, and confinement of violent predators, we know of no policies that are likely to reduce their crime rates. However, in the long run, it would be preferable to develop effective ways of dealing with the young juveniles who are most likely to become violent predators—those under 16 who are committing serious crimes. Finally, in our

categories by seriousness is based solely on the current public perception of the relative seriousness of the specific criminal acts that in combination define the categories. The fact that offenders in the most serious categories were also the most serious in terms of the rates at which they committed crimes and in terms of factors such as drug use is a finding of the research rather than part of the definition of the categories.
view, selective incapacitation policies should always allow for broad exercise of judicial discretion. In every identification exercise we performed, there were individuals who neither fit the category nor committed crimes at the rate typically associated with their particular characteristics.

The remainder of this report develops at greater length the issues and conclusions discussed above. In Section II we describe the purpose, conceptual basis, and methodology of the study. Section III presents our general findings concerning criminal categories and then provides detailed conclusions concerning characteristics, effects, and identification of the most serious category. In Section IV we discuss the study's implications for policy and research.
II. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The concept that qualitatively different types of offenders who commit the same criminal act should be dealt with in different ways is thousands of years old. Attempts to classify criminals according to quantitative criteria, although not quite as ancient, have been made for decades. However, early criminological interest in typologies of criminal behavior was mostly abandoned in the 1970s. The search for typology was considered unsuccessful primarily because a number of studies had demonstrated a lack of consistency in criminal behavior over time. These findings suggested that it was extremely difficult to predict the nature of future criminal behavior, if any, from an individual’s current activities.

The search for typology was considered unsuccessful also because the typologies developed as theoretical constructs resisted translation into discrete, empirically verifiable categories. Other typologies were based on small or possibly idiosyncratic samples of offenders. Overall, the categories proposed in most typologies could not be used effectively by officials in the criminal justice system.

Although we did not attempt to develop a comprehensive typology of criminal offenders, our study indicates strongly that stable, empirically based classifications of offenders can be constructed. The main distinctions between our work and typological research of earlier years are, first, that we defined our subgroups (in Table 1) based on self-reported behavior over one- to two-year periods instead of either sequences of officially recorded criminal acts or anecdotal reports, and second, that our sample contained hundreds of offenders from each of three states. An offender who, in our data, appears to have a stable pattern of committing, for example, robbery, burglary, assault, forgery, and auto theft might appear, in official record data, to be switching unpredictably from one type of crime to another. To call such an offender “stable in versatility” is not mere sophistry, because he can be clearly distinguished from other offenders who consistently engage in different combinations of crimes. Moreover, certain stable combinations of criminal activity are substantially more serious than other combinations.

To the extent that criminal behavior is not stable within the classifications we developed, the transitions appear as progressions from less serious to more serious forms of behavior (which is to be expected
in an incarcerated sample) or as temporary interruptions in criminal activity.\textsuperscript{1}

Two previous Rand projects laid the methodological and substantive bases for our study of criminal categories. In interviews with 49 robbers, Petersilia, Greenwood, and Lavin (1977) showed that among apparently similar robbers, some were highly active criminals and others "intermittent" offenders. Rand's first inmate survey using written questionnaires established the quantitative differences in crime commission rates between "highly active" and "less active" criminals, and indicated that distinction's potential implications for selective incapacitation policies (Peterson and Braiker, 1981). Based on self-reported data, the study showed that a small minority had committed a disproportionate number of crimes, while the vast majority of respondents had very low crime commission rates.\textsuperscript{2} Indeed, the findings indicated that incapacitating the most active 8 percent could prevent three times as much crime as incapacitating the least active half of the respondents for the same length of time. It also showed that high commission rates were typically associated with certain psychological and childhood factors: juvenile involvement in serious crime, criminal self-identities, and hedonistic motives. Using less subjective information about criminal offenders, which was known to people other than the respondent and was potentially available to the criminal justice system, generated weaker associations with crime rates—only about two-thirds as strong.

Peterson and Braiker (1981) considered their findings tentative: The crime rate data were imprecise, the self-reported data were not validated, the sample came from only one state (California), and the researchers did not know whether the data that presumably represented information available to criminal justice officials could actually be found in official records. Moreover, they noted that any implication to be drawn about selective incapacitation from their results would be based on the assumption that offenders will continuously maintain their activity patterns into the future. Rand's second inmate survey (on which this study is based) improved on the first survey in ways that help resolve many of these issues. However, it did not verify the assumption that activity is maintained into the future.

The second survey included nearly 2200 offenders from three states (California, Michigan, and Texas); its construction enabled internal and external validation of the self-report data; and the format of its questions permitted more accurate determination of the crimes com-

\textsuperscript{1}Although the data we analyzed were cross-sectional in nature, they included a limited amount of information about criminal behavior of respondents in earlier periods.

\textsuperscript{2}A "crime commission rate" (for a particular type of crime) is the number of crimes (of that type) that the person commits in a year, if free to do so for the entire year.
mitted by respondents and the rates at which they committed them. (See Peterson et al., 1982, for details of the survey design and pre-tests, including a copy of the survey instrument.)

The survey questionnaire elicited self-reported information about the following aspects of the inmates' background and activities:

- Juvenile criminal behavior, use of illegal drugs and alcohol, and incarceration in juvenile facilities.
- Criminal behavior and arrests during a one- to two-year period just prior to the present conviction.
- Other behavior during the same period prior to conviction, including use of alcohol and illegal drugs, employment, and change in residence.
- Types of crimes committed in two earlier reference periods.
- Sociodemographic information.

For prisoner respondents (but not those in county jails), the following additional information was collected from their official records (inmate folders):

- Rap-sheet arrests for the same one- to two-year period covered by the self-reports.
- Details of the current conviction offense(s).
- Prior history of adult convictions.
- Juvenile probation and commitments to juvenile facilities.
- (For California only) details of up to ten juvenile arrests: date, charge, whether convicted, and disposition if convicted.
- Sociodemographic data.

The structure and administration of the survey and associated data collection efforts were intended to provide multiple means for exploring the integrity of the inmates' responses. The questionnaire included pairs of questions, widely separated, that asked for essentially the same information about crimes the respondents had committed and about other topics. This made it possible to check for internal quality (inconsistency, omission, and confusion). Over 83 percent of the respondents filled out the questionnaire very accurately, completely, and consistently. Over 95 percent were able to follow the fairly complicated skip patterns in the survey booklet and to fill out the calendar that showed the time period being studied. For prisoners, the official records showed that 85 percent of them filled out their calendars correctly to the month. (Chaiken and Chaiken, 1982, Appendix B.)

Access to official records made possible an external check of the self-reports' validity for prisoner respondents. Although the external comparison of validity of their responses did not yield as favorable
results as the check of their internal quality, 59 percent of the prisoner respondents had an external error rate of less than 20 percent. (Nearly half of the respondents had two or fewer disparities out of 14 categories checked, less than 7 percent had between six and nine disparities, and none had more than nine.) However, for most disparities, the records' validity and completeness are as suspect as the respondents' veracity: Records are often missing or incomplete through no fault of the prisoners. Our findings in regard to validity reinforce those of Marquis and Ebener (1981), who, working with the same data, showed that estimates of the numbers of arrests and convictions obtained from self-reports are unbiased or, in a few instances, higher than the official record estimate.

Taking a very conservative approach, we constructed scales of predictor variables, and we carried out the key analyses in two ways. The first involved all respondents; the second excluded the 42 percent whose truthfulness we had even the slightest reason to doubt. (Even the prisoners with missing or incomplete official records were in the excluded group.) We found that estimates of overall crime commission rates were not significantly or consistently affected by excluding the suspect group. We also found that the strength of the equations used to predict crime commission rates from personal characteristics was only slightly lessened by excluding that group.

To anticipate the suspicion that some groups or types of individuals might be less truthful in self-reports than others, we compared a variety of self-reported characteristics with indicators of quality of the self-report data. With minor exceptions, such individual characteristics as conviction crime, self-image, activity in fraud or "illegal cons," and sociodemographic characteristics were unrelated to the quality and validity of the individual's response. We also found that self-reported rates of criminal activity were not significantly correlated with the self-reports' internal or external reliability.

In sum, we believe that the data from the self-reports, coupled with official record data and handled conservatively, are sufficiently valid and reliable to serve as a credible basis for our findings.

3Juvenile records suffer notably in this regard. In nearly all cases of disparity between the self-report and juvenile records, the respondent admitted to juvenile crimes or incarceration, but the record showed none.
4These scales were initially constructed using Guttman techniques with data from one state. They were tested for reproducibility and scalability with data from the other two states. See Chaiken and Chaiken (1982), Appendix C.
5For the exceptions, see Chaiken and Chaiken (1982), Appendix B.
III. IDENTIFYING THE SERIOUS CRIMINAL

Without a definition of "the serious criminal," it is difficult to develop an appropriate way of identifying and dealing with him. Many criminological researchers avoid the issue because they realize that a precise, one-dimensional definition is impossible to construct: Judgments of seriousness differ with perceivers and contexts. Consequently, criminological research has tended to describe offenses but not offenders in terms of seriousness, using categories such as "index" or "nonindex," "violent offenses" and "nonviolent offenses," or public perceptions of seriousness. Comprehensive typologies have described offenders according to concepts other than seriousness—for example, ethnographic terms, policy-related dimensions, career types, or psychological profiles. Our study synthesizes these approaches, discussing the varieties of criminal behavior represented in the survey in their order of publicly perceived seriousness.

CATEGORIES OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Most research concluding that criminals do not specialize focuses on known offenses. Even when offenses are categorized into broad groups, an individual's arrest history usually shows nearly random shifts from one category of offense to another. Moreover, in self-reports, few criminals say that they commit just one kind of offense. The self-reports used in this study are no exception. However, we examined the stability over time of the entire complex of crimes committed by an offender. In this way, we found indications of substantial stability in varieties of criminal behavior or very clear and understandable transitions from one variety to another. While it is true that the first group—the most criminally active offenders—commit a broad range of types of crimes, other offenders commit only specific, limited combinations of crimes.

When the combinations of crimes are arrayed hierarchically, as in Table 1, offenders whose behavior puts them in high-level (serious) complexes are very likely to commit one or more of the crimes that define lower-level complexes. For example, 81 percent of the offenders in our survey sample who rob and assault and deal drugs

\footnote{Individuals who commit only assault are (by definition) an exception.}
also commit burglary, and 71 percent of them commit theft. The situation is analogous to any profession in which an individual advances through ranks based on cumulative knowledge and adequate performance of tasks at each level. The most highly trained individuals have some facility in performing tasks usually handled by lower-level personnel. For example, an army sergeant cleans his weapons and achieves passing grades in target practice—skills that are common to combat soldiers. But the sergeant can be distinguished from the private by the unique higher-level managerial and administrative tasks he performs in conjunction with lower-level tasks.

This observation guided our derivation of the ten categories in Table 1 from the inmate survey data. The questionnaire asked about a number of different types of crimes that we summarized into eight: assault, robbery, burglary, drug deals, theft, auto theft, fraud, and forgery or credit card swindles. Counting each respondent as "yes" or "no" according to whether he did or did not report committing each of these eight crime types, there could have been 256 different combinations. However, examination revealed 19 combinations of crimes reported so frequently that they described the behavior of more than half of the respondents in all three states. Moreover, 99 combinations occurred extremely infrequently (either no respondent or one respondent reported the combination). Examination of the remaining 138 categories showed that many of them differed from the major 19 categories by "uninteresting" distinctions among four crimes: auto theft, other theft, forgery, and fraud. (For example, a person who commits robbery, assault, burglary, and auto theft does not seem meaningfully different from a person who commits robbery, assault, burglary, and other theft.)

When these four crime types were joined together, the 19 combinations became 11. Finally, we expanded the 11 combinations so that they encompassed less common similar combinations (as shown by "?" or "??" in Table 1), obtaining ten categories plus a default category ("didn't do any of these").

Because of the crimes that define them, we can arrange the ten categories in approximate order of publicly perceived seriousness. The most serious category consists of offenders who concurrently rob, assault, and deal drugs. The least serious category consists of those who commit only drug deals. We must note that some offenders may be misclassified according to seriousness if they committed serious crimes that were not among the eight in the questionnaire. For example, rape and kidnapping were not included, and homicide was not distinguished from assault in defining the complexes.

These complexes would have little interest for criminological re-
search or criminal justice policy if they were unstable over time. If most criminals switched from complex to complex during a year, knowing that they belonged to a particular complex at a particular time would not help prosecutors or judges anticipate what kinds of crimes these offenders would later commit or how often. Moreover, personal characteristics would not imply membership in a particular category. A given individual, with fixed characteristics, would belong to different complexes depending largely on when he happened to be arrested. However, the survey data strongly suggest that criminals do belong to single categories or naturally related pairs of categories over extended periods of time. Further, the data give some indication that if they make transitions, offenders usually move to a more serious complex (or else they stop committing crimes altogether). These conclusions are tentative because the survey sample is not well suited for studying upward transitions in seriousness. One would naturally expect that offenders display some of their most serious criminal behavior just prior to their incarceration.

CRIME COMMISSION RATES

The survey data reveal that the rate at which criminals commit crimes is related to the seriousness of the crimes that define their category. The more serious the category, the more likely the offender to commit crimes in that category at a high rate—and to commit less serious crimes at high rates, too.

Most criminals commit crimes at low rates. In any subgroup of offenders, defined in any way that does not make reference to crime rates, crime commission rates are highly skewed: Most members will commit none or a small number of each particular crime, but a small number will commit the crime at very high rates (Fig. 1). Even among the subgroup that we call violent predators, there are offenders who commit crimes at low rates. However, this group of robber-assaulter-dealers is much more likely than any other group of offenders to have very high rates for all crimes. Table 2 shows the "high end" of the crime rate distribution (worst 10 percent) for each complex of criminals. Since violent predators are defined by the fact that they commit robbery, assault, and drug dealing, it is not surprising that the worst of them have very high crime rates for these three crimes. But the table also shows that these robber-assaulter-dealers are more likely to be high-rate burglars than are offenders who just commit burglary. Only 10 percent of burglars who do not commit robbery commit over 150 burglaries a year, while 20 percent of the robber-assaulter-dealers commit at least that many burglaries per year.
Previous studies have only hinted at how serious the violent predators' criminal behavior is. Even if we allow for the possibility that respondents overestimated their commission rates by factors of three or four—and the validity studies associated with this study give no reason to believe the errors were so large—the most active violent predators commit hundreds of serious crimes a year. And they commit five or more distinct types of crimes. For example, the sample's 10 percent of violent predators who have the highest robbery rates commit over 135 robberies a year. The 10 percent with the highest bur-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Forged</td>
<td>Fraud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violent predators</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(robber-assaulter-dealers)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robber-assaulters</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>293</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robber-dealers</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-level robbers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>811</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mere assaulters</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>507</td>
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<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level burglars</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>Property &amp; drug offenders</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>947</td>
<td>221</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-level property offenders</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>1160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug dealers</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3035</td>
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**NOTE:** The 90th percentile is crime-specific, not group-specific. For example, 10 percent of robber-dealers commit robbery at a rate exceeding 41 per year. A different (but overlapping) group, consisting of 10 percent of the robber-dealers who commit burglary, has a burglary rate exceeding 377 per year. The annualized crime rate is defined to be the number of crimes committed in a year, if the offender is free from incarceration for the entire year.
glary rates commit over 500 burglaries a year. The 10 percent with the highest drug-dealing rates make over 4000 drug deals a year.

The survey's data indicate that the relative representation of the ten categories of offenders (shown in the tables) will determine crime rates in any naturally occurring subpopulation of inmates (e.g., all the offenders imprisoned from a given county in a given year). The greater the fraction of offenders in the more serious categories, the higher the crime commission rates will be. Comparison of data from the three states illustrates this hypothesis. Prisoner respondents in Texas had substantially lower crime commission rates than their counterparts in Michigan and California. For example, the California prisoners had average robbery rates five times greater than Texas prisoners, burglary rates three times greater, and rates for almost all other crimes two times greater. The relative numbers of prisoners by category almost entirely explain these differences—especially the fraction of prisoners who are violent predators. Texas had relatively few of them in prison.

THE VIOLENT PREDATORS

The discussion to this point indicates that the robber-assaulter-dealers commit serious crimes, often at high rates, and typically have done so persistently for a number of years. This combination of traits earns them the label "violent predator." However, if, as we explain below, criminal records do not provide enough information for the criminal justice system to identify these offenders, how can they be identified? We can hardly expect criminals to put themselves in jeopardy by volunteering the kinds of information that the self-reports supply. In establishing and addressing this dilemma, the study makes its potentially most important finding and contribution to criminal justice policy.

As the description of the survey questionnaire (Sec. II) indicates, we collected background information on the inmates that included more than their criminal activities, arrests, and convictions. The questionnaire also asked about juvenile history, drug and alcohol use, employment, and demographic characteristics—information that is currently or potentially available to the criminal justice system. The inmates' responses clearly establish that certain personal characteristics correlate strongly with the various criminal categories. These characteristics make it possible to identify the most serious criminals and distinguish them from less serious criminals. Thus, even though criminal records, as now constituted, do not permit identification of
violent predators, our results show what kinds of information could improve records to make such identification possible in the future.

**Characteristics of the Violent Predator**

Considering their effect on crime rates—especially for serious crimes—the violent predators are extremely young. In the survey, they averaged less than 23 years of age when coming into jail or prison. Yet, they also averaged considerably more total arrests than any other respondents, including those substantially older, and they had been committing the more serious crimes for at least six years.

The length of their criminal activity is implicit in their juvenile history. The predators typically begin committing crimes, especially violent crimes, well before age 16. They are likely to commit both violent and property crimes frequently before they are 18. They are more likely than other types of criminals to have received and had parole revoked and to have spent considerable time in juvenile facilities. Yet some of those who report the highest juvenile crime rates have no official records of juvenile criminal behavior.

They are also more socially unstable than other types of criminals. Few of them are married or have any other kind of family obligation. They are employed less regularly and have more trouble holding jobs. The more they are unemployed, the more crime they tend to commit. (This correlation between unemployment and higher crime rates holds true for other categories of offenders as well. However, employment problems are more chronic for the violent predators.)

The violent predators also have characteristic histories of drug use. Most of them begin using several types of "hard" drugs, and using them heavily, as juveniles. Indeed, their use of drugs and their criminal careers usually begin at about the same time. However, this does not indicate that drug use caused them to become criminals. Rather, drug use appears to be just another element of the criminal life-style they have adopted. Actually, the violent predators' characteristic relationship with drugs deserves some elaboration here because the survey revealed some new (or not widely recognized) facts about the nature of drug use and criminal activity.

In addition to dealing drugs, 85 percent of the violent predators in our survey also used drugs during the measurement period. As other studies have indicated, dealing drugs is often synonymous with using drugs. Further, heroin addiction has long been seen as part of the criminal subculture, often as the economic cause of crime. However, the survey revealed that certain types of drug use are even more characteristic of the violent predators than heroin addiction. Although
they are more likely than other offenders to have high-quantity, high-cost heroin addictions, their more distinctive characteristic is multiple drug use: heroin with barbiturates, heroin with amphetamines, barbiturates with alcohol, barbiturates with amphetamines, amphetamines with alcohol, or multiple combinations of these.

When their drug use is costly and intense, the violent predators are more likely to commit most kinds of crimes and at much higher rates. However, the nature of the drug use seems related to the kind of crime that the user will commit. Addictive use of heroin is more associated with property crimes than with violent crime, and there is some indication that cost, rather than the drug's physiological effect, provides the impetus here. As a matter of fact, heavy but relatively inexpensive heroin use is not associated with high crime rates. If the user has a cheap source of supply or can trade other services for his drugs, the heroin habit apparently has no effect on his rate of criminal activity.

In contrast, multiple drug use, especially use of barbiturates and intermittent, "recreational," use of heroin, is associated with assault; and extremely heavy use of nonopiate psychotropic drugs is strongly related to high rates for all crimes except the nonviolent crimes of burglary and auto theft. This association helps explain an otherwise puzzling finding that white respondents committed assault at much higher rates than black respondents did. The whites used barbiturates more commonly.

In addition to shedding light on the relationship between heavy drug use and high crime rates, the survey also clarified some other aspects of serious criminals and their backgrounds:

- Juvenile drug use is strongly associated with rates of robbery and assault in our study, but we found no association between crime rates and juvenile use of marijuana or experimentation with hard drugs.
- Among people who wind up in jail or prison, there are very few full-time criminals. Not even most violent predators use crime as their sole source of income. Their employment is less stable than other offenders', but the inverse relationship between level of employment and crime rates indicates that they use crime, at least in part, to supplement their "straight" incomes.
Why Violent Predators Cannot Be Identified from Official Records

The violence of these offenders makes them a phenomenon of growing public concern. Criminal studies prior to the 1970s showed that violent crime then, especially homicide, tended to occur among acquaintances and to result from various kinds of personal disputes. But for the predators, violence seems to be an integral part of a deviant pattern rather than a response provoked by particular situations and individuals.

Compared with criminals in other complexes, violent predators seem to be different in kind. Then why are the violent predators so hard to identify from official records? An immediate problem is their youth: Because most of them are so young, their adult criminal records do not usually reveal extensive prior criminal activity. And juvenile records offer little more enlightenment. Many of the violent predators' self-reports describe such heavy juvenile drug use and frequent, violent criminal activity that they must have been highly visible to teachers, neighbors, and schoolmates. Yet, some appear to have no official juvenile criminal records. (This lack of records is confirmed by their self-reports of having no contacts with police or incarcerations as juveniles.) Even when the violent predators have juvenile records, they rarely indicate the rate or seriousness of their criminal activities. Indeed, where self-reports and juvenile records disagree, the self-reports usually report more crimes and incarcerations than the records do.

When violent predators do have prior adult records, those records do not readily distinguish them from other (lesser) offenders. It might seem that checking an inmate's prior record to see whether he had ever been convicted of the defining crimes—robbery, assault, and drug dealing—would provide an easy method of identifying violent predators. However, this method does not work: Some offenders with convictions for these three crimes in their records are not committing them concurrently at the present time and consequently do not match the definition of violent predator. For example, in our sample of California prisoners, 5 percent of inmates who are not violent predators had been convicted of these three crimes at some time in the past. More important, the vast majority of those who do commit all these crimes have not been convicted of them. For example, in our California sample, 91 percent of violent predators did not have conviction records—juvenile or adult—for all three crimes: robbery, assault, and drug dealing.

Quite apart from whether they are or are not violent predators according to our definition, the inmates whose conviction records in-
clude assault, robbery, and drug dealing are not predominantly high-rate offenders. In fact, they are not significantly different from other offenders in their crime commission rates. In order to effectively and efficiently reduce crime, it is crucial to be able to differentiate the violent predators—who are disproportionately high-rate offenders—from others.

Sometimes official records show that a criminal has been arrested or convicted of robbery and assault and also has a history of drug use or addiction (usually an indication that he also deals drugs). But this information is not pragmatically useful for identifying the violent predator. Although violent predators are significantly more likely than other inmates to have this kind of history, we found a large number of "false positives"—inmates who use drugs but are not drug dealers. In the California sample, 35 percent of violent predators had official records of drug use and convictions for robbery and assault, but so did 18 percent of the inmates who were not violent predators.

Various other potential definitions of violent predators derived from their official records were tested. To sum up, there is no simple, straightforward way to identify robber-assaulter-dealers from the data in their official records—as those data are currently collected. A number of factors explain the records' limitations: plea bargaining, imprecise definition of drug use, and the fact that some offenders successfully evade arrest and conviction for crimes they commit frequently.

The Value of Information Not in Official Records

We carried out regression analyses to determine what personal characteristics are most associated with a high robbery commission rate. (Although not all violent predators are high-rate robbers, the two groups overlap substantially.) The following characteristics, only three of which can be reliably obtained from inmates' official records, proved to be the most important in explaining the robbery commission rates of incoming inmates:

- Frequent violent juvenile crime (committing violent crime frequently before age 18).  
- Early onset of juvenile crime (especially violent crime before age 16).  
- Number of prior adult robbery convictions.

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2This also implies commission of property crimes as a juvenile.

3Different coefficients for violent crime and for property crime in the absence of violent crime.
• Being young.
• Being unmarried.
• Persistent unemployment or unstable employment.
• General drug use.
• High-cost heroin use (more than $50 daily).
• Use of both heroin and barbiturates.
• Use of both barbiturates and alcohol.

With minor exceptions, the same variables explained robbery rates in each of the three study states.⁴

Offenders in the survey sample whose characteristics indicated their robbery rate "should," according to the regression analysis, be in the highest 20 percent actually had, on the average:

• Robbery rates 65 times as high as those predicted to be in the lowest 20 percent;
• Burglary rates 66 times as high;
• Auto theft rates 346 times as high;
• Other theft rates 10 times as high; and
• Drug dealing rates 5 times as high.

These relationships were found by fitting regression equations using a randomly chosen half of the survey sample. The resulting estimated regression coefficients were then applied to the other half of the sample to "predict" which offenders "should" be in the highest and lowest 20 percent.⁵

We also carried out staged multiple regressions to provide comparisons between the strength of official record information and the strength of other personal information in associations with robbery commission rates.⁶ In the first stage, only the inmate's age and officially recorded adult conviction data were considered, with the result that his age and number of robbery convictions entered the regression and accounted for 13 percent of the variance in robbery commission rates. Using just this information, an incarcerated robbery convict predicted to be in the highest 20 percent would have, on the average, only 10 times the robbery rate of one predicted to be

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⁴Commission of property crime, but not violent crime, as a juvenile was relevant only in Texas. Use of both heroin and barbiturates was relevant only in Michigan.
⁵We also carried out regression analyses for crimes other than robbery. Naturally, when we developed an equation specifically for, say, burglary, the disparity in the burglary rate between those who "should" be high and those who "should" be low was larger than the factor of 66 shown above. High-cost, high-quantity drug use figured prominently in the equations for assault, theft other than auto, forgery, fraud, and drug dealing.
⁶The staged regressions described here were carried out for inmates convicted of robbery.
in the lowest 20 percent, not nearly as high as the 65-to-1 ratio described above.

In the second stage we considered all other adult official record items, including what some might consider inappropriate official record information about recent robbery arrest rates. The results showed that robbery arrest rates and adult incarcerations (together with the previously entered age-adjusted robbery convictions) explained 21 percent of the variance, and the ratio in robbery commission rates from predicted-high to predicted-low rate increased to nearly 20.

The following information in official records of inmates was specifically not predictive of high robbery commission rates:

- Any details of the current conviction crime, such as multiple conviction offenses in conjunction with robbery, use of a weapon, or injury to victim.
- Prior adult convictions for any other types of crime.
- Annualized arrest rates for any other types of crime.
- Information about incidents of probation or parole and/or their outcome (revocation or successful completion).

Next we considered all official record information about juvenile criminal activity, none of which explained any additional variance in robbery commission rates, and finally we added all the self-report items mentioned earlier, yielding 32 percent of variance explained. This means that currently collected official juvenile record data cannot be substituted for self-reported juvenile criminal activity in predicting the robbery rate of convicted robbers. The officially recorded juvenile data do not explain any variance above that explained by adult criminal record information, even though the self-reported amount of juvenile criminal activity is the strongest predictor of robbery rates among convicted robbers.

To briefly summarize, we can draw a portrait of the high-rate robber, whose characteristics overlap significantly with those of the violent predator. He is a relatively young man who committed violent crimes, and committed them frequently, before he was 16; a long-term user of psychotropic drugs or addictive doses of heroin who has supported his drug habits with property crimes, which he also began committing before 16; a relatively unstable person who does not work very much or assume family obligations and has spent a lot of time in juvenile institutions and/or prison in the recent past. Unfortunately, most of this information that distinguishes high-rate robbers from other incarcerated criminals cannot be found in records the criminal justice system currently has readily available.
Importance of Distinguishing Between Violent Predators and Other High-Rate Offenders

Violent predators commit so many crimes at high rates that their data overwhelm information about other types of offenders who may also commit some crimes at high rates. For example, analysis shows that the characteristics associated with those committing burglary at high rates are essentially identical to those of violent predators—because violent predators are often also high-rate burglars. Nevertheless, it is interesting to know what kinds of offenders, other than violent predators, commit crimes at high rates. To find out, we removed the data for the violent predators from the rest of the sample and examined factors associated with high crime commission rates for these other categories of offenders.

In this way, we were able to establish how the high-rate (nonrob-bing) burglars differed from the violent predators. The high-rate burglars were characterized by employment instability but not steady unemployment, by general drug use but not high-rate multiple drug use, and by commission of property crime before age 16 but not violent crime. Similarly, we were able to show that, among offenders who commit forgery and fraud (but not more serious crimes), the high-rate offenders had high education and were more likely to be married than other offenders. In addition, the fraud rate was associated with sudden loss of employment.

We believe that the high crime rate of violent predators has overwhelmed official record data and led some researchers to draw conclusions about criminals in general that actually apply only to the predators or that are distorted by their activities. For example, many researchers conclude from arrest records that all offenders switch from committing one type of crime to another in random fashion. If they could identify and exclude the violent predators, as we did, they would probably find distinctly different patterns that reflect the activities of other offenders.
IV. POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Much of the information that helps to distinguish the violent predator or other high-rate offender convicted of a crime is currently or potentially available from various sources. But even assuming that our findings prove to be generalizable, serious questions remain about whether and how that information should be used, especially for purposes of criminal sanctions.

As we have indicated throughout the report, there are always some offenders who do not commit the crimes at the rates that their characteristics would suggest. For example, our regression analysis separates high-rate from low-rate robbers with reasonable effectiveness. On the low end, the separation can be considered highly successful: 86 percent of respondents that the regression identified as low-rate offenders reported committing no robberies during the measurement period, and only 3 percent committed more than ten robberies a year. Even so, a 3 percent false-negative rate could be considered a failing of any formula intended for sentencing purposes. At the high end, the false prediction problem is more serious: Although the regression also captured the bulk of high-rate offenders, some respondents identified as high-rate robbers reported having committed no robberies. Ten percent of those it identified as probable high-rate robbers committed over 63 robberies per street year during the measurement period, but 30 percent reported no robberies. Without recourse to disinterested self-reports, this margin of error allows for considerable false identification of some offenders as high-rate robbers—which is more than just a research problem if the criminal justice system acts upon such identifications.

Even if the models were foolproof, the legal and ethical ramifications of their use by the criminal justice system would be a matter of dispute. Sentencing offenders for past crimes that have never been adjudicated runs counter to principles of just deserts, while sentencing them for predicted future crimes runs counter to tenets of free will and justice. Therefore, we suggest that our findings should not be used simplistically as criteria for passing judgment on specific individuals.

However, the findings do have important implications for criminal justice policy and criminological research, especially concerning these issues:
- Limitations of official criminal records.
- Criminal drug use and drug control.
- Incapacitation effects.
- Rehabilitation efforts.
- Effects of the environment.

LIMITATIONS OF OFFICIAL CRIMINAL RECORDS

As we have seen, official records provide a very limited and usually misleading picture of the seriousness of any given offender's criminal behavior. They make some very serious criminals look relatively inoffensive and other, less serious criminals look relatively vicious. Inability to distinguish the violent predators from other offenders may cause the justice system to focus resources on the wrong targets. For example, burglars who are not robbers have fewer antisocial characteristics than the violent predators, as the contrast we have already drawn shows. However, on the basis of their adult criminal records only, these older, less serious offenders seem more dangerous to society than the violent predators. This study suggests that certain other characteristics of offenders could give prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice officials a clearer sense of seriousness than the nature of the current conviction crime or officially recorded prior offenses. Information on significant juvenile behavior and drug-use history could help identify the violent predator and distinguish him from less serious offenders. It would be possible to collect this information.

Juveniles with long histories of violent crime and heavy drug use can hardly have gone unnoticed by schools, police juvenile officers, probation officers, and juvenile courts. Consequently, when dealing with young adult offenders, prosecutors might be able to distinguish between predators and others if they had access to school records and other appropriate information about juvenile activities. We believe that a study is warranted to determine the feasibility of collecting such information and its potential for discriminating violent predators from other offenders. Moreover, we recommend a study to find out how accurately police officers, probation officers, and prosecutors already make these distinctions, despite the limitations of official juvenile records.

CRIMINAL DRUG USE AND DRUG CONTROL

As Section III indicated, information about a criminal's drug history can tell more about the seriousness of his criminal activity than the
kinds of crimes he is arrested for. If offenders were routinely tested for
drug use when arrested, the tests would, in the long run, help to dis-
tinguish between more and less serious offenders. We are not suggest-
ing that the drug test would necessarily be relevant for prosecuting
the offender on his current arrest, but rather that the history of drug
tests would eventually be highly informative.

Use of heroin and multiple drugs can now be accurately and inex-
pensively determined from electronic urine tests. These technological
advancements make possible the specific drug tests needed to make
the distinctions described in our study. Such drug testing could, in our
view, even be required by juvenile courts, which are supposed to know
and treat the "whole child," not just the one incident under consider-
ation. We recommend that such a procedure be explored to determine
the total cost of carrying out a large number of tests and providing the
apparatus for recording and retrieving the test results. A 1978 feas-
bility study of a similar drug abuse surveillance system, sponsored by
the National Institute on Drug Abuse, could serve as a basis for this
exploration.

Drug use and drug-use patterns can not only tell criminal justice
officials a great deal about the kinds and rates of crime a criminal
probably commits, they also have important implications for drug con-
trol efforts. Drug use is one of the major factors associated with virtu-
ally every type of crime we studied, and specific forms of drug use
 correlate strongly with crime types and rates. Offenders who have to
support $50-a-day heroin addictions or who use both alcohol and
barbiturates heavily and frequently are especially likely to be
 persistent, serious, high-rate criminals. However, those who use the
alcohol-barbiturate combination commit violent crimes at high rates,
while those addicted to heroin usually commit property crimes at high
rates. As we noted in Sec. III, if the habit doesn't cost much, heroin
addiction is unlikely to increase an offender's commission rates.

Although violent predators often have expensive heroin addictions,
they more characteristically use combinations of drugs, particularly
the alcohol-barbiturate combination. Considering the violent predato-
ers' contribution to very high rates of serious crime, these emerging
forms of drug abuse could possibly contribute as much to crime as
heroin addiction does. Prosecutors and judges should be wary of lean-
ing toward short sentences for offenders convicted of major, violent
crimes who appear to have been acting uncharacteristically because
they were "high" on these drugs at the time. The drug use should, in

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1It should be noted that the study sample contained a small but significant number
of inmates (16 percent) who had relatively long criminal careers but had never used
drugs.
fact, be viewed as possibly indicating that the behavior for which the offender was convicted is characteristic of his deviant life-style. Equally important, drug control agencies should not invest resources so heavily in controlling heroin (and marijuana) traffic that they unduly limit their resources for controlling traffic in these other drugs.

Despite the high correlation between drug-use patterns and criminal behavior patterns, simply preventing adults from beginning use of hard drugs does not appear to be a sensible approach to reducing crime. Relatively few inmates reported simultaneously beginning both crime and drug use as adults. Further, inmates who began using drugs as adults were just as likely to have engaged in crime before using drugs as after. These findings suggest that the relationship between drug use and criminal behavior is chronic rather than acute. In our sample, the vast majority of those who had long-term histories of drug use, usually beginning as juveniles, also had relatively long criminal careers. Thus, efforts to reduce crime by reducing drug use should focus primarily on juveniles.

Recent ethnographic studies have suggested that drug use and crime cannot be discussed in one-dimensional or simplistic terms. They exist as part of various complex life-styles, and the relationship between them may have less to do with the direct effect of drugs than with biological, psychological, and social factors that increase proclivity for both drug use and criminal behavior. Ideal intervention must address those factors. But until research can isolate the deeper causes of serious criminal behavior, the criminal justice system must rely on incapacitation effects and rehabilitation efforts to reduce the rate of serious crime.

INCAPACITATION EFFECTS

Our findings suggest that violent predators are the most appropriate candidates for incapacitation strategies and the least appropriate for currently used rehabilitation methods. The seriousness of their crimes, the rates at which they commit all crimes, and their violence have an inordinate effect on crime in our society. Their characteristics and consistent behavior imply that extended imprisonment is the only currently understood policy likely to substantially reduce crime rates for all the crimes they commit—not just the crimes for which they are convicted. The other side of the coin is that most offenders coming into prison in the three study states are not violent predators. Collectively, they commit less serious crimes than the violent predators do and they contribute far less to crime rates. Thus, imprisoning them is much more costly per crime averted than imprisoning the predators.
Nevertheless, we cannot now recommend basing sentencing policy on these conclusions. Giving less serious criminals lighter sentences would probably be cost-effective (on the basis of incarceration cost per crime averted), and any errors in identification result only in unwarranted leniency (which happens also at presentencing stages of the criminal justice system). However, using the models to identify violent predators—even if limited to those convicted of serious crimes—can potentially result in real injustice. In our opinion, the models would make too many false identifications. Further, while we have been careful not to report findings that appear to be applicable in only one or two of the three study states, our results do reflect only the study sample.

One other fact makes us reluctant to approve lengthened incapacitation for the violent predators: They are not common among older prison populations. Research has not yet explained this fact. It may be that, left on the streets, they die young or spontaneously go straight as they get older. It would be well to understand these phenomena before deciding that selective incapacitation for violent predators is a good way to reduce the amount of crime in our society.

REHABILITATION EFFORTS

Our findings suggest that the apparent failure of many rehabilitation programs may be due less to their content than to the nature of offenders in the programs. Standard programs of vocational training and drug rehabilitation are better aimed at criminals who engage only in income-producing rather than in violent crimes. Most of them use crime as a substitute for legitimate sources of income, and we found that their crime commission rates go up when they are out of a job. They could probably benefit from vocational training programs, especially training in the fundamental skill of working steadily at a job. Those nonviolent, income-producing criminals who use or sell drugs appear to be good candidates for drug rehabilitation programs. In contrast with serious, high-rate offenders, who have been using drugs heavily and frequently for years, these less serious offenders appear capable of abstaining from drug use.

Superficially, violent predators seem to be the best candidates for rehabilitation. Most are relatively young drug users with unstable employment who have been convicted of their first adult offense. However, their patterns of criminal behavior were established at such young ages, persisted for so long, and reached such a degree of seri-
ousness that conventional programs of rehabilitation can probably have little, if any, significant effect on their lives.

If our conclusions about the relationship between drugs and criminal life-styles are correct, trying to rehabilitate adult violent predators through drug intervention may be tantamount to "curing" tubercular patients by suppressing their coughs. In our sample, drug use alone was not a major reason for becoming involved in a criminal life-style. This suggests that breaking the drug-crime connection will require more than just drug-use prevention or intervention for adult criminals; any effective program will have to alter not just criminal users' drug patterns but their entire behavioral patterns.

For violent predators, the most effective program might have to focus on preventing those patterns from developing. Their juvenile predilection for violence and drug use indicates that the conditions that foster the development of their serious criminal behavior operate when they are very young. Identifying them at a very early age and attempting to control the factors that enhance the chances of their becoming violent predators—whether social, psychological, or physiological—might be more sensible and effective than trying to "fix" them after they enter the adult criminal system, or even after they enter high school. Investigating the possibilities for prevention may present a more challenging but fruitful line of research than trying to discover ways to make standard rehabilitation programs reach the violent predators.

EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

We have said very little about the differences among states in our study, but the findings in Texas indicate that there may be environments and criminal justice practices that inhibit development of the patterns through which juveniles become and continue as violent predators.\(^2\) Especially in comparison with the California cohort, the Texas cohort had much lower commission rates for most crimes, lower incidence of serious crime, and a much lower percentage of violent predators. At the same time, the Texas sample reported much less serious drug use and much higher employment rates.

Clearly, Texas sentences to prison less serious offenders than California and Michigan send to either jail or prison. But even after the study accounted for personal factors, including drug use, Texas inmates still appear to have significantly lower rates of robbery than

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\(^2\)The reader will find considerable material on the similarities and differences among states in Chaiken and Chaiken, 1982.
those in the comparison states. Reasons for these lower rates may be implied by the inmates' responses to this question: "Do you think you could do the same crime(s) again without getting caught?" The California inmates as a whole had committed more serious crimes than inmates in Michigan and Texas, but they were the most likely to answer "Yes." The Texas inmates, who had as a whole committed the least serious crimes, were the most likely to answer "No."

These findings seem to suggest that some environments tolerate life-styles comprising frequent criminal acts and hard-drug use while others condemn them, that these disparate attitudes manifest themselves in different criminal justice policies and practices, and that the differences in those policies and practices explain why some environments have a more serious criminal problem than others. That is a highly conjectural interpretation, but its possible implications for criminal justice policy make it a worthwhile topic for research.
REFERENCES


