

The Theory of Criminality

A study on the cycle of
crime, recidivism,
and their origins.

Table of Contents



Forward3

Part One - *The Criminal*

The Criminal That Is5
The Criminal Mind Revisited6
The Multi-Faceted Criminal8
The Discovery and Escalation of Crime11
Criminal Thinking Barriers & Criminal Make Up12
Criminal Persuasiveness & The Fearless Criminal13
Born Bad14
Deterrents of Crime15

Part Two - *The System*

Prison, the Breeding Ground of Crime18
The Tragedy of Rehabilitation19
Inmate-on-Inmate Crime20
Detecting the Repeat Offender21
The Insane in Prison22
Chemical Dependency, the New Institutionalization23
What Is a Life Sentence?24
The Business of Crime25

Part Three - *The Survey*

Data Collection27
The Questionnaire28
Data Analysis30

Part Four - *The Possibilities*

Self-Awareness51
The Relearning Process52
In Conclusion53

Forward

The contents of this study have been a result of thirty years of a continuous observation of prison inmates. Some of the inmates knew they were part of the research, most did not. No individual inmates are mentioned but their lives, crimes and criminal mindsets are in every word.

The intent of this undertaking was two fold. The first was to shed new light on the very troubling problem of crime, and the various reasons for recidivism. The second was to create a program that is written for inmates, by an inmate, that is not only "real world" in its approach, but easy to follow by the average incarcerated person. That program is called "The Criminal I Am."

Crime has been a part of the human condition throughout mankind's recorded history. Attempts to control crime have ranged from probation, to capital punishment, with little or no true effect on altering the criminal mindset, which is the true root cause of all crime. Lobotomies, castration, and other forms of mutilations have been used as attempts to stop the forward momentum of the uncontrollable criminal. These crude methods speak volumes about the desperate attempts of State and Federal officials, doctors, psychologists, etc. When the oath of "Do No Harm" has been ignored to such a point that doctors will conduct procedures that forever ruin the bodies or minds of their patients it leads me to conclude that mankind is to the point of stark desperation when it comes to controlling crime; where any means is justified by a possible ends.

Long-term incarceration is the current method of dealing with the problem. The warehousing of inmates in America, over 2 million at this time, has helped to financially cripple several states and is eating more than its share of the tax payers' dollars.

The media, with its unending need to keep its viewers loyal to individual sponsors, and political aspirants with the popular stance of "tough on crime," have thrown unneeded fuel on the fire and have saturated the airwaves with stories of such mayhem that the average voter will agree to nearly any type of legislative amendment or tax hike so long as it keeps the monsters on TV behind bars.

Since the focus is on incarceration as "the cure" for crime it's obvious that no real need to approach the problem from another angle will be taken seriously. After all, as far as most people are concerned, it's all been tried before...

Today's prisons, true perpetrators of crime, which are breeding grounds of criminality are, unfortunately, necessary tools in any attempts to control crime. Unfortunately, with today's prisons, this is only effective as long as you never turn anyone loose.

Locking up murderers with drug users is testament to a system that has given up on its wards. In essence they have mixed up the inmate population so thoroughly that nearly every incarcerated person has at least some working knowledge on how to commit any crime imaginable. This "cross training" has also led to a new shared criminal consciousness that has produced a huge number of super criminals. Just as some bacteria have become resistant to certain antibiotics due to an overuse of the antibiotics, the justice system has used the tool of incarceration excessively and has created a breed of criminal that has no fear of incarceration. For many, prison is no more than a right of passage.

Another issue to be considered is the first time offenders who have been condemned to huge sentences with little or no hope of release. It is my experience that many of these people are pawns of the judicial system. With stiffer and stiffer sentences being issued in an attempt to deter crime it eventually eroded the human element of our obligation to judge each case on its own merits. With life sentences being issued for such crimes as "carjacking," as a result of mandatory sentencing guidelines, it has created an explosion of first time offenders who are never going to be released from prison. Second chances are seldom part of the equation. Much like treating a cancer patient with radiation that kills both cancerous and healthy cells in an attempt to stop the disease's progression, the truly lost cause criminals are being sentenced with the same yardstick as the unfortunate teenager with a first time brush with the authorities.

In spite of our attempts to ignore it, these are human lives that are being ruined due to the problem being so large, with no easy solution. The time for a new look into how we deal with the inmate population, the human lives locked within its broken framework, is long overdue. Years and years overdue.

The theory of criminality is a look into the problem from the perspective that gives credibility to the possibility of the "self-healing criminal." It is my experience, with many subjects who have been under my personal observation for many years, that people can and do change if given the proper tools, motivation and time.

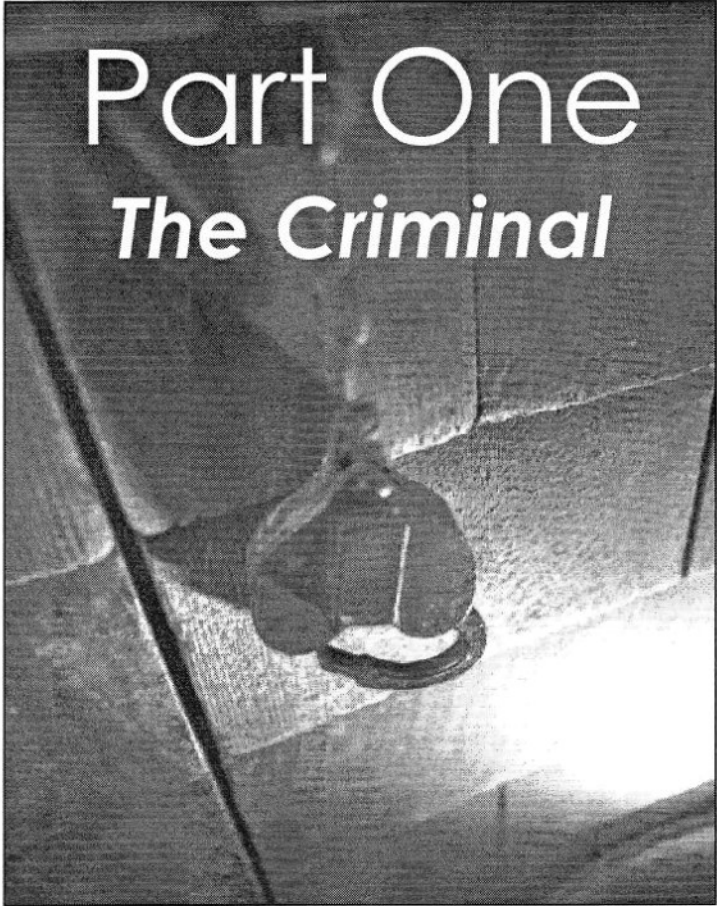
The lost cause criminal exists. The highly resistant to change criminal exists. But more importantly, the salvageable criminal exists – in huge numbers.





Part One

The Criminal



The Criminal That Is

The term "addiction": "A recurrent failure to control a specific behavior despite harmful consequences, such as job loss, relationship destruction, or even arrest," in my opinion, could be used to describe the average criminal. Except with the criminal, the catalyst that leads to their destructive behavior can be difficult to pinpoint. Obviously, you can have a criminal who commits crimes while under the influence of drugs, but many criminals need no thought altering-substances introduced into their circulatory system in order to break a law. Nearly every criminal wants to commit their crimes. The reasons vary from crime to crime and person to person, but unless the criminal is being coerced into the act, they are acting out in order to obtain something they want. Be it for monetary gain or to inflict harm on those around them or to sexually abuse someone, they are compelled to do so by their wants – they want to commit those acts. Unfortunately for everyone, no one takes these people aside and explains it to them.

It would seem that a person who perpetrates a crime would be quite aware of the act – just not necessarily have an understanding of how they, as humans, got on the path they are on, or what steps would be necessary to get off the path once it is taken.

Once these people find themselves incarcerated, it would seem that the incarceration itself would be all the indicator necessary for the criminal to realize that they need to change their ways. In some cases it occurs. For the habitual criminal, the focus is never upon themselves, which allows no chance of escaping a cycle of crime that may last a life time. For this criminal, it is like the alcoholic who has never given a second thought to beating their addiction; they simply do not analyze themselves, or their condition, to a point that could inspire change. If it isn't broken, or at least not perceived to be broken, why fix it?

Like many law-abiding citizens, the average criminal does not have the deductive reasoning required to analyze their own behavior for significant defects. To expect many of these people to simply come to the coherent conclusion that living a life of crime is wrong is about as reasonable of an expectation as having the average mental patient to cure themselves. Because, like it or not, crime is a result of a "thought" to commit the crime, and is thus, a mental condition. If the brain isn't working properly and you expect that same brain to repair itself with no more than its own faulty abilities to do so, your expectations are unreasonable.

Most criminals are going to require a helping hand in understanding that their actions are the cause of the problems in their lives. Not bad luck, not a failed Judicial System, but themselves and their criminal acts. Today's prisons, more times than not, are not going to be a sufficient catalyst of change.

In order to reach the average criminal, it is going to take direct one-on-one involvement. I hate to use the term brain-washing here, but it is not far from the mark. What is required is brain "cleaning." A detoxification of criminal thoughts, concepts, and lifestyle. They must be shown that another way to live exists. For many this will obviously not be a new concept but the helping hand that is extended to them just may be.



The Criminal Mind Revisited

It is my belief that each person is an individual, with individual issues that can lead to criminal behavior. But some of these behavioral problems stem from physiological issues, while others are either psychological in nature or are learned behavior. The criminal with physiological development issues have no choice but to process the information with faulty results and are probably doomed to a life of recommitment – whereas the individual with psychological issues, or simply correctable behavioral issues, can be taught the error of their ways. I have determined that the average criminal falls into one of the following categories:

Group 1: Those who cannot change due to physiological brain development issues.

Group 2: Those with psychological or learned behavioral issues who can change but choose not to.

Group 3: Those with psychological or learned behavioral issues who can change and embrace the process once it becomes apparent that change is needed.

Group 1 [Debilitating Physiological Brain Development Issues]

This group is comprised of people with learning disabilities, those who have suffered physical mental trauma, those who possess sub-standard IQ's, and other physiological developments that prohibit the individual from understanding the ramifications of their actions.

This group, the most unfortunate group, may require a never-ending institutionalization throughout their lives since their continued criminal behavior is insured due to the individual being unable to partake in their own development.

Without medical breakthroughs in this area these people stand very little chance of leading a normal life crime free.

Group 2 [Hostile Psychological or Learned Behavioral Issues]

This group is essentially made up of people who have normally functioning minds, but due to their life's experiences, or psychological issues, have developed a lifestyle without morals, nor have a respect for laws, society, or themselves.

For many of these people it is a collective and cohesive mindset that is shared with those who they interact with. This sub-culture is often referred to as the "criminal element."

These self-proclaimed criminals embrace a life that is known to have pitfalls for those who live it. Prison, injury, or even death are constant parts of the equation for this group but these possibilities pose no deterrents to those who choose this path. Much like a tight rope walker which knows that he may fall, the show must go on.

Due to many factors, the glamorization in movies, books, and songs for instance, the people in this group shun change and see a "legal life" as a life not worth living. There would simply be too much to give up.

Another factor is that those who would choose to abort this lifestyle would be faced with the daunting task of relearning a lifestyle, removing themselves from the environment in which they learned the criminal thinking, and overcoming their pasts, which in many cases, are fraught with criminal convictions, gang affiliations, enemies or worse. For most, the obstacles are far too great to overcome and a relapse usually occurs, only to further reinforce that they were "meant" to live a life of crime.



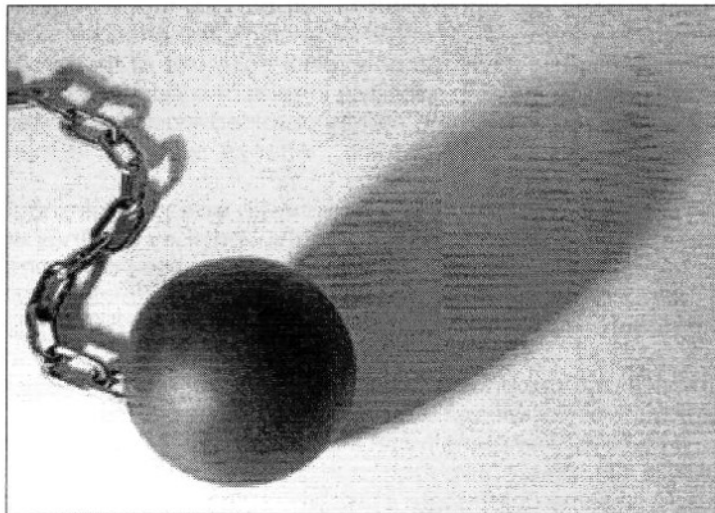
Group 3 [Redeemable Psychological or Learned Behavioral Issues]

This group obviously holds the most promise for living a normal life if intervention is taken on their behalf.

Many of these people were victims of too much free and unsupervised time on their hands as youths. Without guidance and moral direction many of these people found themselves leading a life filled with the task of becoming an adult without help.

Many of the members of this group possess the ability to learn from their mistakes. In some cases the mistakes were so great that laws were violated and prison was a result.

Now, once incarcerated, two things can happen; the first is they can continue down the path of poor decision making and insight, or they can receive help and make the changes in their lives necessary to live a normal and productive life.



The Multi-Faceted Criminal

Just as no human is made up of a single trait. The criminal usually possesses many, and in some rare cases, all possible attributes of criminality.

For instance, what I refer to as an Urge Driven criminal may also have no marketable skills and may need to sell drugs or commit robberies in order to support themselves, so now also falls into the realm of what I call the Survival Based criminal.

If you look at the criminality of an individual as a whole it is easier to see how much of the criminal's makeup is of a redeemable nature, and thus, have a better understanding of how to approach the task of "abilitating" the criminal in question.

For instance, if a person possesses only one individual criminal trait, it is apparent that treating, or in some way removing, that trait from the person's makeup can result in a healthy functioning person who no longer practices criminal activities.

But if a person possesses several criminal traits it should be obvious that removing only a single trait from the equation would still leave us with a practicing criminal through their remaining traits.

It is the criminal mindset as a whole that must be confronted if a person is going to have a chance of breaking their cycle of criminal activities.

To leave the job partially done is the equivalent of removing the alcoholic's urge to drink beer, while the urge to drink all other alcohol remains intact.

So the first step would be to identify the individual criminal traits possessed by the person in question. This step, like all steps in this process is critical. A missed criminal trait would obviously result in an untreated trait or traits, and would entice regression.

This part of the process can again be compared to the recovering alcoholic. Once the alcoholic has indeed sworn off drinking the person usually takes steps to remove themselves from the temptation by changing their lifestyle. They will avoid bars, picnics, or other places known to have alcohol present.

The criminal who has one single criminal trait, let's say that of robbery to obtain money in order to support himself, could very well find himself living crime free once employment was obtained. But a more hardened criminal with a multitude of criminal traits, one of them robbery for money to support himself, would still be leading a criminal lifestyle in spite of a paying job. And thus, the temptation to continue the robberies, even though the money obtained would no longer be necessary for survival, but a fringe benefit, would eventually resume. After all, what's one more crime to the practicing criminal?

I have no serious expectations for a person with extensive criminal traits to give up all of their criminal activities. After all, they are a criminal – that's what they do. They would have to change their friends, their entertainment, perhaps discontinue drug use and probably have to change neighborhoods. A tall order for someone who may know no other way of life. But without such changes, the temptations would remain. These are the extreme criminals that some refer to as career criminals.

Means, motive and opportunity are the holy trinity of investigative procedures, and with good reason – especially motive. For without motive, why would any crime exist?

A motive is essentially what motivates us to do what we do. Every motive is usually discernable on close inspection but in some cases, such as the "senseless" crimes, the motive can elude everyone except the criminals. In some unfortunate cases even the person perpetrating the crimes is clueless as to why. But the truth of the matter is that if a crime is intentional, it has a motive. Sometimes many.

The following are descriptions of the individual traits, or facets, of criminality. Obviously every single trait cannot be covered in a work of this nature, but the more relative components of criminal thinking make an appearance.





Urge-Driven Criminals

Some criminals are at the mercy of their own urges. The murders, rapes and acts of violence are rooted within the very framework of the person committing the crimes. Since all humans are capable of carrying out these crimes, but fail to do so, show that two factors are in effect for humans functioning within the guidelines of society. The first being that the degree of urgency, if it exists, is not sufficient to act upon. The second, the fear of repercussion is a sufficient deterrent. For the "active" criminal the urges outweigh the fear of detection and/or punishment.

For many Urge-Driven Criminals their own acts become shameful and unbelievable the moment the urge is fulfilled. The fear of punishment also jumps to the forefront of this criminal's mind. Unfortunately, as long as strong urges manifest themselves, this criminal will more than likely remain powerless to control them.

With everything in life there are degrees. The intensity of an urge will vary from person to person. Each person will also experience varying types of urges depending on many factors.

Some urges are triggered by visual responses, while others may be put into motion through some external catalysts such as drugs, alcohol, etc. This being the case the criminal does possess the ability to remove the catalyst to the stimulus if the criminal is aware of the process.

For many of these criminals there is no removing the urge to commit crime without medical intervention. The aging process is no guarantee, but in many cases, it can, and does, reduce the urge to commit many of the crimes that the younger self would have acted upon.

Due to the uncontrollable nature of the crimes these people commit, and the spontaneous aspect of the act, it regularly leads to a high arrest rate. This is attributed to little or no prior planning of the crime itself. Exceptions to this can be seen in extreme cases where serial criminals embrace their uncontrollable criminal activity. These criminals are able to anticipate their next episode, plan for it, act on it, and cover their tracks with calculated precision. A controlled meltdown if you will. These criminals are obviously the most dangerous on the planet.

Survival Based Criminals & Crimes of Financial Survival

Many criminals, due to economic conditions, no marketable abilities, poor education, etc.; resort to crime in order to sustain themselves. These "criminals of necessity" would in many instances cease their criminal actions if their needs were met. This can be seen in the many prison inmates that have impeccable prison records but high recommitment rates. While in prison no need for crime presented itself since their needs were provided for. But upon release the cycle continued since no other method for survival presented itself with the exception of crime.

These criminals are the obvious culprits of drug trafficking, burglaries, robberies and any other crime that could result in a profit that would insure survival.

Opportunistic Criminals

Many people who find themselves in trouble with the authorities had very little warning that they were about to break a law. An instance of this would be someone who kept a bag of money after it accidentally fell out of the back of an armored car.

For these criminals a lifetime may pass with no indication of any criminal intent being displayed. Chance plays a huge role in whether this person will become an active criminal.

This criminal is not to be confused with Survival-Based criminals. Opportunistic Criminals may be in true dire straits – homeless, without food, etc. – and still not commit a crime. That is, unless it falls in their laps as sure things.

Unfortunately some of these criminals misjudge just how good their chances are of getting caught and find themselves incarcerated. At this point prison will either open their eyes to the dangers of acting on such an impulse, or they could be corrupted by the prison experience and develop other criminal traits to be acted on after their release.

Age at the time of the first acted upon impulse plays a huge factor in the path these people may take in life. A successful crime in the life of the younger Opportunistic Criminal may very well send the message that these types of acts are good ideas and a strong possibility exists that another facet will be added to the makeup of the criminal. Usually older people who commit this type of crime will realize just how lucky they were and count their blessings and continue life as they knew it before the incident, more or less crime free.

System-Resentment Criminals

Many people develop deep-rooted resentment for the judicial system or even a government they see as their oppressor. In many cases this mindset is developed throughout a lifetime, and thus, is a deep-rooted development which is nearly impossible to reverse; especially when the criminal continues to see daily instances of further transgression by parties deemed as "The System."

This resentment regularly creates a criminal with a mission. The mission being to continually resist the will of an "unjust system." These people are very vocal in their opinion of this "broken" system, and their views on the matter are often reinforced by those around them.

The development of our judicial system occurred one court ruling at a time over a period of hundreds of years. As with any system with many moving parts it is easy, if not outright preordained, to develop problems within the system. It is not news that the American judicial system, the largest and most unwieldy on the planet, is an imperfect system, a complex system, and for many, an unfathomable one. It should come as no surprise that someone who finds themselves being indiscriminately chewed up by the gears of such a system as resentful; especially when the process, in their eyes, may have started with their great grandparents.

With all of this said it becomes apparent that a System-Resentment criminality will be a difficult mindset to overcome, because, in many cases, the points the people make to justify their actions are indeed valid points.



The Discovery and Escalation of Crime

Since all humans are born with no plan of action except for the DNA map that dictates our makeup, it is by chance that many criminals develop a mode of operations. An example would be a Criminal of Necessity perpetrating a robbery in which the criminal notices the effect a gun has upon the victim. Eventually, the act of brandishing the gun now becomes "Urge-Driven." In order to sustain the criminal's new found desire to strike fear in those around him, it usually leads to an escalated rate of weapons dependency by the criminal. It becomes normal to carry a weapon at all times and the criminal feels that an elemental aspect of them is missing when they are unarmed.

You now have a human who felt they needed to pay the bills through criminal activities that is now an "Urge-Driven" criminal on an accelerating course that may very well lead to the eventual death of someone he encounters; a mode of operations he developed by chance.

It is not uncommon to hear laments from the family and friends of those arrested for atrocious crimes which claim that the criminal was such a "good boy," or that he was a "good father," which very well may have been true. He unfortunately chose to become a criminal as well.

In nearly every case the criminal escalation goes unnoticed by the criminal. Just as many people look up one day and realize they need a haircut, many criminals look up to discover themselves incarcerated.

Though it may seem preposterous that someone could not realize they are the bad guy, it is nearly without exception. In one study I conducted, using several classes of students from the "Unbound" program I teach, I posed the question on a survey: Do you consider yourself a good person? Of the approximately sixty inmates who took the survey, only one answered "No". Though this particular survey group was relatively small, this is reflective of the prison population as a whole. (The truly unsettling aspect about the person who answered "No" is that I had known the respondent for a period of roughly twenty-eight years. I easily considered this one person as the most upstanding individual in the group. To realize why this person viewed himself as bad only took a moment to come into perspective: He was the only one in the group who had figured it out. He had committed bad acts in his past, and to him, the only remorseful one in the group, he still considered himself as a bad person because of it. Though he obviously still needed to work some things out, he was on the right path. His blinders had lifted.)

For many criminals, and their escalating criminal activity, the continued immersion into a criminal lifestyle bolsters the criminals' confidence. For some, years will pass before they have a brush with the authorities. This firmly establishes a "crime does pay" mindset that perpetuates the escalation.

Each successful crime conducted builds the criminal's confidence and leads them to believe they are sufficiently good enough in carrying out a crime without detection. It also reduces any respect for the abilities of the authorities to apprehend them.

In many instances even a conviction will be minimized by the criminal as nothing more than an unlucky break. Instead of coming to the conclusion that a life of crime should be avoided because it could result in a life behind bars, the average escalating criminal will see the incarceration as proof positive that they must be more proficient the next time around.

With an inflated sense of criminal proficiency, a lack of respect for the authorities' ability to catch them, and a criminal conviction behind them to verify their credentials with other convicted felons, a continued life of crime seems to be a logical choice.

Now, with a criminal record, the Criminal of Necessity, for instance, has compounded his problems by further reducing his chances of employment. It is only a matter of time before a resentment of the system sets in and a new justification for his actions almost guarantees a continued life of crime and escalation.



Criminal Thinking Barriers

Almost all criminals use shielding techniques when interacting with potential crime victims or authorities. But in prison, for the most part, when these same criminals are around what they feel are kindred spirits they tend to let their guard down and expose their true inner thoughts. I feel this has obviously given me a unique advantage over many trained professionals. The most obvious advantage being that, in nearly every single case, I can almost guarantee that the trained professionals were being fed only the information the criminals wished to reveal.

Of course, the professionals use methods to detect when a subject is lying, or is defensive, or in denial. But, unfortunately for these same professionals, an incredible amount of criminals also know these same methods of detection. After all, the identical manual the professionals use are available on-line and can be sent to a prisoner whenever requested. I know inmates that receive subscriptions to psychology magazines, who held degrees in the field of psychiatric care, and who were police detectives before their incarceration. There are no techniques used by the authorities or mental health professionals that are unknown to the convicted criminal of at least average intellect. Some of the criminals with lesser intellectual capacity obviously are unable to shield the fact that they are lying, but most are also aware of it and simply try to avoid interaction with staff whenever possible. But some of these inmates are indeed an open book.

Criminal Make-Up

Since most criminals possess more than one criminal trait, some inherited, some learned, it would only stand to reason that some of these combinations would pose more dangers than others.

Another aspect of this which must be taken into consideration is the non-criminal traits they may have that can impact their criminal traits. For instance, though a criminal may have a propensity to rob houses when in need of money, and the criminal's needs are humble, it would mean that the time between crimes would be longer. Whereas the criminal desiring a lavish lifestyle may need to commit several crimes a night to support it. With this said, no two criminals will ever be alike. Just as each person is unique, so is the criminal.

A high IQ is one factor that radically tips the scale when it is possessed by certain criminals. The reason is obvious: if you have a serial killer or serial rapist in possession of a 170 IQ there are going to be problems apprehending this criminal. This is indeed the worst case scenario. Think Ted Bundy.

Earlier I described three groups of criminal mindsets. Also I covered the various facets of criminality. These two categories of criminal indicators work together and will allow us, with a large degree of accuracy, to predict the course in life that many criminals will take if they continue to follow their current paths.

For instance, if a "Group 1" criminal, with their physiological brain development issues, is exposed to a complex embezzlement scheme there is a good chance this criminal will choose to avoid getting involved due to their inability to understand the concept behind the crime.



Criminal Persuasiveness

Many criminals spend time honing their skills for future criminal conquests. The number one skill worked upon would undoubtedly be the power of persuasion. For with this ability, all else falls into place.

This is without a doubt one of the most regularly used weapons of choice among the prison inmate upon their peers. This is also the area in which criminals exposes just how irrational their thought processes are, because when a sociopath wants something, and it requires them to convince someone of the merits of giving it to them, or doing it for them, there is no limit to where this encounter can go.

A common ploy to use is the ability to know, without question, the outcome of a criminal endeavor they want another criminal to help them with. I have witnessed inmates trying to coerce others into getting involved with one scheme or another by using such phrases as "we won't get caught" in spite of the fact that these inmates are being monitored by correctional officers.

The truly proficient are able to "con" those around them out of just about anything they set their sights upon. Like anything in life you will have some people who are better at this than others. By better I refer to their ability to hide their true intent from those being taken advantage of. At least until it is too late.

The Fearless Criminal

I have encountered a number of cases in which the criminal completely lacked any form of fear. There was no fear of prosecution of crimes committed, no fear of injury or death to themselves, and what is obviously the largest concern for society, no fear of destroying the lives of those around them.

These people are not simply remorseless; they appear to completely lack the component necessary to feel the emotional impulse of fear. If this is a result of a chemical imbalance or perhaps a condition induced through trauma or some other event in their life I couldn't say. But, the fact remains, that these people exist. Fortunately their numbers are low because this group of criminal can be extremely dangerous.

These people tend to live a complete and total life of crime. Their very makeup allows them to ignore any rule or law with impunity that society puts into place. After all, they don't care.

The only saving grace with this brand of criminal is the frequency in which they are apprehended for their crimes. These are very predictable people. Usually they develop a "crime spree" mentality when living their lives: drug use, fighting, rape, robbery, killing, battery, etc. It is all just a matter of doing it, and why not? No laws, no God, no heaven or hell, no form of punishment or repercussion plays a part in their thinking process, and perhaps never did. And let's face it. For those with no moral compass in place, fear is the only true deterrent most people have.

Many criminals experience improper levels of fear from one extreme to the other. Some may kill out of fear, while others kill due to its absence. Either way, many criminals experience very distorted levels of fear. This condition is not to be mistaken for the denial of dangerous conditions. These criminals may be completely aware of all of the elements of which they are encountering, but simply fail to produce the proper levels of fear that should result from the event.

These criminals are usually spotted by nearly everyone for what they are: Truly dangerous people that should be avoided at all cost. The average person who falls victim to this criminal is in many instances overwhelmed with fear themselves. Not only to find themselves as victim of a crime, but by the obvious lack of remorse they detect in their attacker.

These criminals are not the worst case scenarios due to the lack of shielding they employ, but they are truly menaces to society; unchangeable, uncontrollable, and unredeemable criminals who usually make no efforts at introspection. And, without introspection, change will never occur. Other than some medical intervention I can't imagine how these people could ever become a functioning member of society.



Born Bad

This concept is rooted in the "nurture vs. nature" debate. And, though I'll not solve that debate within these pages, to me it's obvious that each of us are born with some traits and others are developed as we live. So, I see how it could be confusing. But I know, without one shred of doubt, that some people are born bad.

Before coming to prison I encountered a family with approximately six children in it, ranging from four to around ten years of age. This was a single mother family in a low income housing complex.

All of the children appeared to be normal, happy, and well adjusted except for one, the youngest. The four year old was something else all together.

This child appeared to love and obey his mother and siblings. They appeared to view this child with the same regards they held for one another, with one exception: they knew he was different. This child seemed to have the same mindset of a 40 year old career criminal; a truly ruthless, beyond hope criminal.

This child could bring other children to tears, children twelve or thirteen years old, simply by standing too close to them and staring at them. It would require a brother or sister to pull the child away in order to defuse the situation.

This child would hurt other children, or adults, if the situation warranted it. Animals and property were safe, people were another issue. If you found yourself on this child's radar you had problems.

To this day I have not encountered another situation like this one. I can only imagine what became of this child, but I would not be surprised to discover that he had killed someone before becoming an adult.

The question is this: How do you develop the skills necessary to strike terror into someone three times your age and twice your height at only four years old? The answer is you don't. You are born with it. Somehow this child arrived on the scene with all of the necessary skills to conduct himself in a way that could reduce people to tears simply by proximity. It's seldom you will encounter an adult with this ability, it's probably unheard of in a four year old.

Many criminals I have encountered have possessed traits or aspects that I have decided are inherited at birth. I have yet to encounter a criminal entirely made up of criminal traits that can be attributed to a condition of their birth. On the other hand, I have encountered criminals that possess only learned criminal traits.

To me this is fundamental. It has led me to believe, through years of observation, that though a criminal may have both inherited and learned criminal traits, it is the inherited trait that will continue to plague the criminal for life.

I've heard a term used to describe someone incapable of controlling their drug abuse as having the "junkie gene." This is a very common expression among criminals. It is also an admission by all that use it that the drug abuse problem of the person in question is an inherited trait. The person in question usually fights a protracted battle with drugs their entire life. I cannot be convinced that something like the "criminal gene" does not exist. And, like the so called "junkie gene," is a life long affliction. Manageable, but never eliminated.



Deterrents of Crime

Deterrents are only as valid as the criminal deems them to be. For instance, a locked front door is supposedly a deterrent to a potential burglar. Though in reality it only creates a deterrent that rates a place in a level of difficulty for the criminal. The object of desire behind the locked door also impacts the true level rating of the intended deterrent. Where a TV set may not be sufficient motivation, a suitcase full of money might. With all factors weighed, the would-be criminal makes a decision on whether it would be worth the risk of the punishment for such a crime if caught. In many cases the criminal is dealing with such development issues that they might not even notice some intended deterrents, such as cameras, etc.

The average criminal credits themselves with far too much ability to avoid detection by the authorities – usually developed after a multitude of criminal successes.

The only true deterrent is absolute, guaranteed apprehension, conviction and long-term loss of freedom, or death. However, this will never be achievable, because there will always be crimes that go unsolved, unprosecuted, undetected and thus unpunished. These gaps in the system are always going to be seen for what they are: the inability of the authorities to truly police every square inch of their territory. As long as these gaps remain, so will the criminal's convictions of being able to slip into these gaps undetected. So, in spite of a life sentence being issued to any person convicted of a certain crime, the criminal has no intention of being caught for the crime. Since no real chance of being caught exists in the mind of the criminal, neither does the punishment. And thus, a continuing cycle of crime, in spite of intended deterrents.

A true deterrent must make the criminal not want to commit the crime. The key to this is to make the criminal see the crime as wrong – not something he may be punished for, but wrong.

There are many criminals who spend lifetimes breaking laws and destroying lives as they see fit. But these same criminals may love their mothers, or their children, and would never intentionally hurt them. This proves that there are lines of propriety in the mind of some criminals. There are things in their minds that they deem as wrong things that they will not do, lines that they will not cross, even if their lives depended on it. The prison system may have its share of informants behind bars, yet, it also holds the silent owner of the life sentence who could have made a deal by informing on a friend, but chose prison instead. What do you know? A moral code, a sense of right and wrong, however misguided, exists after all.

Reaching the necessary aspect of the criminal required to appeal to their sense of right and wrong seems like a truly daunting task, and for some of the more hardened criminals it is. But, it is my experience that many criminals did not have total control in the courses their lives took, and a chance at redemption would often be greeted with open arms. No one likes to be scorned or excluded from society.

Now, for many people, even as children, these conditions are a way of life. If no one will give me a fair chance, I'll do whatever I see fit in order to obtain my rightful place as a member of the human race, to whatever it is I'm being excluded from. It's the way of the excluded, the scorned and the headstrong. Locking someone up to compound the issue definitely creates more of a riff between the members of society and the misfits of society, but it is still a riff that can be repaired.

No criminal is going to be happy with a judicial system that indiscriminately issues life sentences to first time offenders. No criminal is going to trust a system that makes no effort to hide its scorn of the criminal within its grasp. The hate becomes mutual.

With the current system, and the mindset of society as a whole, there is no forgiveness, no closure, no redemption, and no chance for a convicted criminal to become a true equal member of society ever again. So why not continue with a life of crime, they'll never get a fair shot ever again anyway?

I'm not suggesting a group hug. However, if a convicted criminal is ever going to be expected to become a functioning member of society, they are going to have to be allowed to become a member of society; a full fledged member with a stake in the race, not a second rate ex-con that can never be equal, but part of the community that will see the obvious wrong in harming that community. As stated before, a true deterrent must make the criminal not want to commit the crime. Why harm your own interests?

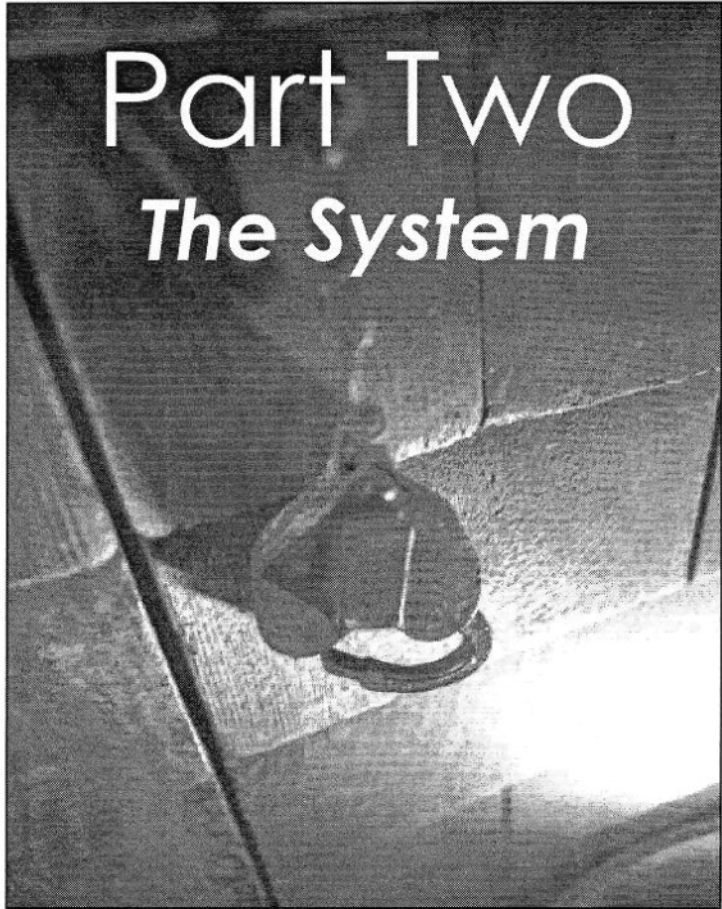


Deterrents of Crime (Cont.)

There will always be extreme criminals that can never be reached. No amount of effort on the part of society, or the judicial system will make a change in the thinking processes of these individuals. But as a whole, these extreme criminals are the exception, not the rule. The average person convicted of a crime will not be beyond reach, though they may be beyond how far society is willing to reach.

If the judicial system put in place to protect the inhabitants of society does not extend the olive branch of peace and take responsibility for all of its habitants, even the broken ones, no deterrent to crime will ever exist. As long as the war rages between these two factions, no chance of a true and lasting decrease in the crime rate will occur. There will always be a need to repay the last blow landed. This is truly a tragic situation.





Prison, the Breeding Ground of Crime

The subculture of prison is often glamorized, though in reality, as everyone knows, there is no glamour in being an inmate.

No one environment could be more counter productive to a positive change in a person's life. To take steps to avoid a confrontation is seen as an act of fear, which will quickly be capitalized upon by fellow inmates. To obey the rules of the institution, or orders issued by an officer, is also something that could put you in jeopardy with those around you. In fact, it is a badge of honor to fight, to victimize those around you, or to disrespect staff members or officers. To turn the other cheek can be catastrophic. In effect, if you act as a normal law abiding citizen you are doomed.

For many the introduction of the prison experience into their lives almost guarantees a continued life of crime. For instance, if you spend five years acting a certain way to avoid being murdered, raped or in some way attacked, then find yourself back in society, just how fast can you re-acclimate yourself to an environment that you failed at in the first place?

As the prison population of this country grew the tax dollars were eventually unable to support such a burden. With time, programs were cut if it was not essential to the security of the institution. Where there was once an emphasis on getting the inmate prepared for a return to society, now the focus is on keeping him in prison, for just as long as possible. In the place of healthy meals there is now barely sufficient food to sustain life. In the place of proper medical care there is now a complete and total apathy that is only held in check by continued law suits to obtain care. In essence we now have two million people in prison we can't afford to take care of in a manner that is conducive to conditioning a person for release.

None of this is a revelation, but the evolution of the prison system to its current state plays an elemental role in the process of turning out career criminals. And it all boils down to this: *Each inmate experiences, each and every day, the evidence of a system that scorns them.* They experience their country starving them, disabling them, chemically minimizing them as human, and they will never be able to forget it.

Between their fellow inmates, staff, officers and the unseen and misunderstood judicial system, the average inmate leaves prison in worse condition than they entered. Usually forever stamped with the "look" of prison upon them. Of course they return.

Since being sent to prison will never be a good experience there is only one way to approach the problem of the "ruined human," and that is by addressing the true issues with the inmate.

Though it may happen in some prisons, with some inmates, not once in my 30 years of incarceration have I ever heard of a staff member sit an inmate down and asks them if they were sorry they committed their crime. There are several reasons for this, but the core reason is because no one cares what the answer is. The crime has been committed, and now, so has the inmate. Case closed. But to overlook the fact that most of these inmates will one day be released is just asking for trouble.

Not only does each inmate need to be confronted with their past actions, they also need to be made to look at those actions, acknowledge the wrongness of those actions and take the necessary steps to restructure how they are to act in the future. To avoid a repeat performance of those actions, they also need to be recognized as a human of worth. At least potential worth. If their own country sees them as having no worth, how are they to view themselves?

If I view myself as a criminal, a criminal I will be. I have observed a phenomenon over and over again where people in prison act just as is expected of them. I have personally witnessed people being treated above their station and that person rising to the occasion. Unfortunately, I have also seen someone take advantage of acts of kindness. This brings us full circle, if I view myself as a criminal...

Most criminals spend their entire prison existence alone. Surrounded by thousands, yet alone. Many remain in denial about their own involvement in the process of destroying their own lives and the lives of others. Only one aspect is shared by all: *They are still humans.* They haven't forgotten, but they notice when it's overlooked by others, and act accordingly. An apathetic prison environment can ruin, and usually does.



The Tragedy of Rehabilitation

The term *rehabilitation* is no longer in vogue for several reasons. Many people working within the judicial system feel that either any attempts to rehabilitate the average criminal will be a waste of time or seen as coddling the criminal, and, in this political climate, no state employee wants that stigma attached to them.

There are two types of criminals when it comes to this issue. The ones who knew better and chose the path they traveled, and those who had no guidance in life and were forced to live and learn. To say that either group of criminals needs to be rehabilitated is a clear example of oversimplifying the situation.

First of all, "re"—habilitate implies that the person in question was at one time in possession of the necessary facilities required to conduct themselves in a law-abiding manner.

In actuality, I find this rarely to be the case. The average prison inmate does not possess the basic understanding of human interactions necessary to conduct an argument-free conversation, let alone live a crime-free life. These people were never properly "abilitated" in the first place. To expect the average criminal to act like a law-abiding citizen, without detailed instructions on how to do so, is delusional. It is the equivalent of asking someone to remember how to say a word in a foreign language. You must first teach that person the word before you can expect them to "remember" it.

The average human, with a properly working moral compass, an education, a trade, and a childhood filled with learning lessons delivered by a loving relative is going to view the world differently from a person lacking these things from their life.

This being the case, the average state employee, or for that matter, the average voter, is going to have a hard time conceptualizing the mindset of the average criminal. Thus, when programs are created with the intention of rehabilitating the criminal, the mark is almost universally missed. The bar is either set too high because of unrealistic expectations put in place by people with no real understanding of the target group, or the wrong issues are addressed.

Of course, the term "rehabilitation" is scorned; any system that should have been focused on morals but instead chose woodworking is bound to create doubt in the merit of the concept. Yet, instead of revamping the concept of rehabilitation by refocusing on core moral beliefs, the concept was seen as a failure, and it, along with the inmate population, were written off – the baby was thrown out with the bathwater.

Lately, there has been a resurgence of programs that tout the benefits of developing and living by morals as a means to break the cycle of crime. Though for the most part, these programs are not sponsored by the individual prisons in which they are sparsely conducted, but by outside organizations that are allowed to come into the institutions for the sole purpose of conducting these programs. Unfortunately, many of these organizations are seen as little more than something to be tolerated by the administration since these programs are seldom sanctioned, or mandated, by the State in which they are conducted in. The inmates, ever alert to futile causes in their world, rapidly pick up on the indifference in which the institutions regard these programs and ultimately assign a similar worth to the programs. After all, if the system that controls your fate sees no worth in you participating in a certain program, indeed, why bother.

The cold hard truth of the matter is that even when some inmates, the career criminals, do participate in a class, even if the class is offering life-altering insight on how to stay out of prison, it is seldom that the inmate is reached on such a level that it inspires true and lasting change. It's like dieting, or kicking an addiction...it requires work. This is, in spite of what the true criminal may profess, more than they are willing to do, even when the cost of not doing so is a return to a prison life they claim to hate. It is my guess, that nearly half of the prison population is reachable – a huge number to overlook.



Inmate-on-Inmate Crime

Though there may still be some honor among thieves, there is quite a bit of infighting as well. I have no idea how many fights I have witnessed during my incarceration, but the number is staggering. I have had friends raped, murdered, extorted, burned, stabbed, thrown off upper tiers, and robbed. The point is this: criminals do not necessarily require law-abiding citizens to prey on, they are just easier targets.

Most inmate-on-inmate crimes go unpunished. This is usually due to one of three factors: the first being that to report the crime constitutes "snitching," and contrary to popular belief, many criminals refuse to inform on a fellow criminal. Second, is that to report the crime is an admission of fear, which every criminal wants to avoid. And the final reason is because in doing so, more times than not, results in some form of reprisal from either the inmate being informed on, or friends thereof.

When an inmate actually targets another inmate it's usually for the purpose of robbery, rape, or simply dominance. But for the most part the majority of inmate-on-inmate crimes are results of confrontations over minor issues, usually that of an imagined or real disrespect. Which, in prison, does not constitute a minor issue.

All of this infighting is bad news for the criminals participating in it, and the hapless members of society that will bear the brunt of the released criminals that have been hardened by the experience.

Depending on the amount of abuse an inmate receives at the hands of those around them it can completely change the course of the inmate's life, during their incarceration and beyond. I have encountered prison rape victims that now harbor so much hatred for society, for its supposed role in the attack or apathy thereof, that I have no doubt this inmate will horrendously victimize someone upon their release. I have also encountered other victims of the same crime who saw the encounter as just punishment for their own crimes against humanity...*that's what I get.*

One criminal victimizing another criminal is nearly mandated in prison since the only victims to choose from are either staff, officers, or other inmates. Of the three, the inmates are the lesser protected of the group, and also, the most accessible. After all, many prison cells are designed to hold two inmates. Seldom are the two evenly matched in ruthlessness, size, aggression, or intellect. It can be a very difficult life for the passive criminal, to say the least.

The control of inmate-on-inmate crime is nearly an impossible task. Since the crimes are seldom reported, except in extreme cases, how do prison officials even know of its existence? Usually they don't. It's hard to control something you can't see. This fact is known to all inmates and is exploited by many.

The impact of crimes against inmates cannot be overstated. Think about it. You already have people who are damaged goods. These people have already shown that they do not respect the other members of society, nor the authorities in place to protect them. So just how many more incidents need to occur to these individuals before their criminal acts are escalated by rage or the sense of injustice that comes from being seen as something less than worthy of protection from crimes being committed against them?

In spite of the fact that the criminal victimized someone to find them self in prison, they see the very fact of their own incarceration as an indication that society reached out to protect the victim of that crime. When the same society fails to reach out and save the criminal in his time of need it sends a very obvious message...you don't count. Anyone who fails to see the significance of the impact of this on the criminal is in denial about how the human mind works.

The average criminal has a very warped sense of justice. But, an eye-for-an-eye comes pretty close when it comes to righting wrongs against them. And that is, in part, what we have now: an army of criminals looking for revenge against a system who failed them. This problem is real and is just one more instigator in the role of recidivism.



Detecting the Repeat Offender

In spite of the technology available today, there is still no test available to determine if a released inmate will recommit. In many instances the average criminal will shield their criminal behavior when in the presence of the authorities to avoid having the depth of their true criminality disclosed. With this being the case it's seldom that the people making the decisions on who is to be released make the correct choice. It has deteriorated to the point which has resulted in most states shunning parole or other systems that rely upon the behavior of the inmate. Perhaps a little more interaction is the answer.

Prison dormitories are usually divided into either quads, wings, pods, or blocks. This allows for a degree of isolation to exist between large groups of inmates and creates manageable segments of the inmate population for easier control by staff.

The inmates in these housing areas are in constant contact with one another, 365 days a year. You eat together, watch TV together, play cards together, etc. Eventually you learn who is who.

Over time the average inmate develops a keen sense for danger. Usually this is in the form of another inmate. This ability to detect the bad apple of the bunch is usually perfected over time.

I have questioned numerous inmates on the subject of picking out the true criminals amongst us. Invariably everyone concurs on who these people are. Many of the people I have questioned may not have been able to put their fingers upon just exactly what it was that caused the judgment to be passed, but there was never one moment of doubt on their certainty.

I myself, with a considerable amount of time devoted to the pastime of studying those around me, am able to spot the truly dangerous among us within seconds of coming into contact with them. I know several other long-term inmates that can do the same thing.

The human mind is usually capable of making calculations much faster than can be tracked by the owner of that mind. This accounts for many feelings of intuition that we may experience, and just because we can't put our finger on exactly why we feel a certain way is no reason to discount the feeling. Often the contrary is true – sometimes we need to trust a gut feeling.

Due to this line of reasoning I strongly advocate more prolonged interaction between the inmates and the staff responsible for making the critical decisions concerning early release. With prolonged interaction it is much harder for the true criminal to avoid exposing himself to those around them. Granted, the truly persistent criminal may be able to shield his criminal nature for prolonged periods of time, but not forever. And not under intentionally created situations designed to draw that nature out.

By removing the human element from the equation we have in effect removed the most effective tool at our disposal for detecting the repeat offender – the human mind.

Years ago, human interaction played a larger role in determining who was released and who needed more time. It eventually fell out of favor because it was believed that many of the staff responsible for making these decisions were being manipulated by the inmates they were monitoring. This may very well have been taking place. But a look at the recommitment rates during those times and the recommitment rate now tells a different story.

I have met a person who has been recommitted to prison sixteen times. This is a mind boggling number, and is also, I'll admit, an extreme example. But I know literally thousands of inmates who have been in and out of prison five or more times. Nearly all of these recommitments have occurred during the last twenty years. The same span of time where the truly "tough on crime" stance has been taken. This can be looked at in several ways. One is to assume that more laws create more criminals. Another is to place the blame solely on the criminal. I'm sure the answer lies somewhere in between. But allow me to leave you with a question: Did a larger percentage of the population of the United States suddenly embrace criminal behavior? Or is the justice system doing something wrong?



The Insane in Prison

Over the years it has become common practice to house criminals with serious mental conditions alongside those with no known mental instabilities. Not only is this dangerous to both groups of inmates, it almost insures that each group will impact the other in several ways.

First of all, this is also a form of "cross training" in criminal behavior. Except in this instance some inmates will be exposed to the criminally insane for such prolonged periods of time, sometimes many years, that the criminal with no mental issues will lose touch with the exact concept of "normal" behavior. An example of this in the public sector is a parent who stays at home with a house full of children all day, for years on end. Before too long social skills start to erode and in some cases the parent finds themselves talking to everyone as if they were children. Except there is no escape for the inmate. It's already almost impossible not to let the prison experience change you on profound levels simply by not having your freedom. But when you are perpetually exposed, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a weeks, to people with considerable mental conditions, just how long is it before your own sanity starts to erode? From what I have seen it can be as little as a few weeks depending upon the intellectual capacity of the individual in question.

Danger is already one aspect of prison that every inmate must contend with. For the most part there is a set pattern that remains consistent within the ebb and flow of a prison. The dangers are usually motive-based and somewhat predictable. That is, unless you are locked in a two-man cell with another inmate and that inmate decides you are plotting to kill him because you didn't eat your apple sauce several days before.

Before anyone is expected to work with the criminally insane they would receive specialty training that would allow them to have some idea of how to deal with these inmates. Unfortunately for many inmates with no mental health issues there is no training available for the day they are assigned to a cell with another inmate who has no firm grasp on reality. If there are size differences, and sometimes when there is not, it can and does result in injury or death.

The other side of the coin is that, in here, the insane are often preyed upon by the predators of the prison system. Again, there will be an inmate ill equipped to protect themselves against a threat beyond their comprehension. And in spite of the prison, or the layout of the dorm, or the amount of times an officer is supposed to make their rounds, two-man cells are death traps. Once the violence starts, with a true intention to harm someone, there is no way to intercede on the fray in a timely manner. If it is truly someone's intention to kill someone in a two-man cell, dead they will be.

The obvious reason for housing the insane with the general prison population is money. It requires a considerable amount of resources to meet the needs of those with true mental illnesses. It appears that one way to avoid such an expense is to simply sweep the problem under the rug and into the nearest prison. Unfortunately, this solution was irresponsible and shortsighted on more levels than I'll ever know. But, one thing that is obvious to every person housed with these individuals: it was a truly bad idea that will change the landscape of the criminal thinking process forever.



Chemical Dependency, the New Institutionalization

Since the early '90's, there has been a huge increase in the amount of psychotropic medications prescribed to prison inmates. This trend, an obvious attempt to control certain criminal behavior, has completely changed the prison system.

In many states, certain institutions have been designated as "psych" camps. These facilities are equipped with the necessary staff to administer the needs of inmates receiving medications which are designed to correct chemical imbalances, etc.

In order to continue the daily operations of these facilities, it is necessary to maintain a certain percentage of the inmate population that do not require psychotropic medications. Usually these inmates are housed together and are expected to coexist with those inmates who do receive medication.

This creates several dilemmas. One of those is an inmate's ability to avoid certain types of institutional disciplinary actions by falling back on their individual psychological backgrounds. This is commonly referred to as "going psych" by the inmate population. This is the equivalent of the inmate being able to claim temporary insanity.

Another form of manipulation that presents itself to the inmate is the ability to gain transfers from one institution to the other by simply requesting to be prescribed these medications. Since these medications can only be prescribed to inmates who display certain psychological disorders, the inmates share amongst each other the required actions and stories necessary to convince a staff member that the inmate in question does indeed require to be medicated.

Unfortunately for the malingering inmate, inappropriately prescribed psychotropic medications can result in a wide variety of problems that can drastically alter the ability of the inmate to function properly. I have seen this development in many instances. Some of the inmates realize their mistake early after they have transferred to the psych camp and request to have the medications discontinued. Other inmates, who also realize that the decision to use this ruse to obtain a transfer was a mistake, choose to remain on the books as a medicated inmate, though, whenever possible, avoid actually taking the medication. A third and unfortunate result of this is the inmate who starts to receive the unneeded medications and then loses the ability to detect just how badly the medications are impairing their mental faculties. And thus, you end up with an inmate who, for all intents and purposes, is destroyed as a human if some intervention is not taken. In many instances, these inmates are never the same. Though I hold no degree in psychology or psychiatry, it doesn't require one to realize that a person you have known for decades has been altered on a profound level.

These "prison zombies," or "bugs," are recognized instantly by the other inmates and, for the most part, allowances are made for their lack of prison manners. Yet, in some occurrences, these inmates are victimized on many levels.

I can not, for even an instant, imagine these people ever being able to maintain their freedom if it is obtained. If a person is unable to realize that maintaining their personal hygiene is still a requirement, I have very little hope of that person coping with society on more complex levels. The true shame is that this practice gains popularity every day. I truly fear that we are creating a new breed of long-term recommitment inmate, one that doesn't stand a chance.



What Is a Life Sentence?

A considerable number of crimes are punishable by life in prison. Most of them are crimes that do not involve the loss of life. This is compounded by the fact that many states have moved away from the parole system. With no possibility of parole, a life sentence is truly that, the rest of your life in prison. For the person who came to prison at sixteen it can be quite a long time.

This development obviously occurred as a result of several factors. One was the war on drugs. Another was the political cry for a "tough on crime" approach to deal with escalating crime rates. Another started in the '70's due to so many people only doing a small fraction of the time they were sentenced to; as a result the sentencing guidelines came into effect. Then there were "memorial" laws that were passed after several notable crimes were committed against women, the elderly, and children. Once you throw in crimes against tourists, revolving-door prison policies, and habitual criminals you are left with a public that will back any politician that insures no criminals will be living next door to them. One thing no one considered is the true composition of a life sentence.

The criminal who finds themselves the recipient of a life sentence goes through several stages. The first is the inability to comprehend just what it means for them. These are usually individuals who can't accept the reality of having to wait seven days for a paycheck, let alone face the fact that their very life no longer belongs to them.

Then there is the hope of appeal, a motion for ineffective assistance of counsel, or perhaps even the dream of a change in the laws that allow a life sentence to be issued. This grasping of straws lasts several years and usually leaves the inmate bitter and hopeless.

During this same period of time any family they have will often drift out of their life with the exception of a parent or some brothers and sisters or children. But for many even these will barely be held together over time.

As time moves along, the inmate ages, and with it comes change. For most people the aging process guarantees it. With this change it is common to find an inmate who comes to the realization that they were on the wrong path in life. Here is the fork in the road. Will they step on to the correct path in spite of their life sentence? Or will they continue down the same path they have traveled up to that point since it gains them nothing by changing now?

It is my experience that both courses are commonly taken, and many factors contribute to their choices: age at the time of incarceration, number of previous convictions, prison experiences, etc. But one thing is certain; whichever path is chosen, it is usually a permanent choice.

It can be within the first few seconds after the gavel descends, to around the twenty-year mark. But if the change is going to take place it will occur within that span of time. It usually happens in increments, but with some people it is an epiphany. I realize that this is a huge span of time, but it is considerably less than the life sentence being served. But, if no introspection has forced the criminal to rethink the wisdom of their actions within that time, it probably isn't going to happen.

From what I have seen, many people are swayed. If they are placed with the right cellmate for a long enough period it can have a huge impact on the direction the criminal will take. The same goes for the wrong cellmate. What many of these people need is a mentor. Someone who has walked the path they are now on and has changed the direction of their own life. I can not stress that issue enough. It's critical.

One final factor that must be addressed is this; any parent that disciplines their child would be wise to have had that same form of discipline applied to them first. I say this for obvious reasons. The main one being that without experiencing this punishment firsthand, there is no true way to know just how much of this discipline is required to be effective, or how much is too much.

With that in mind, no judge, jury, prosecutor, lawyer, politician, legislator, senator or lawmaker has ever been sentenced to, and served out, a life sentence before they got involved with the process of administering them out to criminals.

A life sentence is used to remove a criminal from society for the remainder of that criminal's life. I get it. What I don't get is the system that allows thousands upon thousands of these sentences to be handed out based upon something called a sentencing guideline. Autopilot is for an airplane, not a courtroom. We have judges for that.



The Business of Crime

Prisons, criminals, and their requirements, have created a unique market niche. You now have over two million potential customers and a whole country-wide network of state and federal agencies that require specialty services.

One aspect of this market that should be taken into consideration is the ability to sell their services or products at a highly inflated price. This is due to two factors. One, the inmates are truly a captive audience. If an inmate is shocked by the price of an item offered in the prison canteen, it's either pay the price, or do without the item. No recourse, such as going down the street to another outlet, exists. And who hasn't heard of the \$200.00 toilet seat supposedly purchased by the U.S. government? Though safeguards are in place to control excessive government spending, not much can be done about the fact that it costs a lot of money to house, feed, clothe, and keep up with the general needs of the largest incarceration project on the planet.

Another aspect of this is the amount of jobs created in order to support such an endeavor. In many instances these jobs are in rural communities since many prisons are located in lowly populated areas. The jobs created by prisons are, in many cases, the only serious places of employment and are coveted positions.

The final point I would like to touch on before I get to the heart of the matter is this: if two million people are in prison, that's two million people out of the job market.

Now, what if someone came up with a pill that cured criminal thinking and crime? The need for crime prevention, or the punishment for crimes committed would no longer be necessary. In fact, with the removal of the concept of crime the entire landscape of our planet would reshape itself into something quite different from what we have now.

With no need for our judicial system, nor the lawyers, judges, police officers, secretaries, or other support personnel needed to operate it, along with the businesses that create products meant to deter crime, such as car alarms, home security systems, tasers, surveillance cameras, etc., we would be looking at job losses in the high millions.

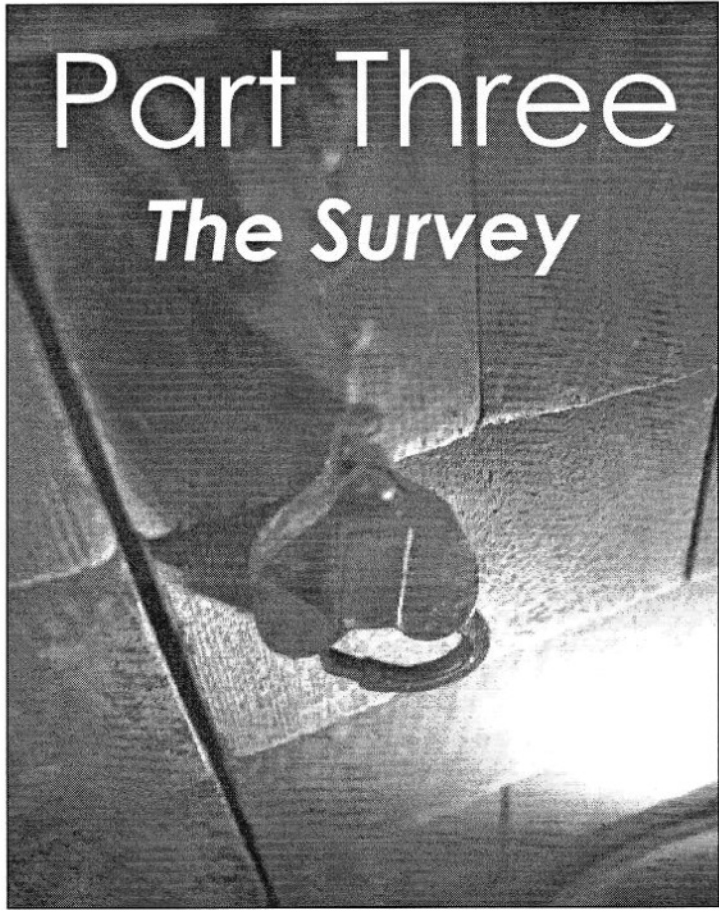
With numbers such as this it is tough to imagine the impact this would have on the American economy, and as a result, the global market. We would no doubt see more people harmed financially than ever recorded for one single event.

Now, the human mind is designed to protect itself. Our survival, and the survival of those we love, is our number one priority. We are designed to survive. This being the case, our jobs are obvious tools of survival. Without our jobs there is no ability to purchase food, clothing, medical necessities, shelter, etc. So, in essence, we see our jobs as the key components necessary to keep our lives, and thus, our very existence intact. So, just how hard could the people entrusted with the responsibility of stopping crime be trying? I mean, to succeed ensures the potential end of all they love, perhaps even their own lives.

From this perspective it should come as no surprise that a large number of people are happy with the status quo. If the lives of two million people is the price of survival for ten million people, then it only makes sense. Just not to the two million people whose lives are the price for a continuation of the way things stand now. I fully understand that no one has the ability to set this scenario into motion. And, I acknowledge that many people would opt for the end of crime regardless of the price.

I also realize that the people profiting from the existence of crime are simply normal human beings with the noble aspirations of protecting society from those who would abuse it. But the fact remains: crime, punishment, and its prevention is one of the largest industries imaginable, one that many people would hate to see the end of. Due to this factor alone, many core issues are ignored.





Part Three
The Survey

Data Collection

It is common knowledge that no accurate test exists to determine if an inmate would re-offend if released from prison. It is my belief that the information gathering process used to construct the tests used today, in conjunction with the testing process applied to the inmates themselves, is to blame.

Throughout my thirty years of continuous incarceration I have been required to fill out a considerable amount of tests, surveys, studies and questionnaires. On each of these I was always required to identify myself by name and commitment number. Which, in effect, assures that the results will be skewed to the point of worthlessness. This is obviously due to an inmate's inherent need to withhold information from their captors since this information could be used to hurt them in the future. So, in spite of the efforts of some pretty sharp minds, no real strides have been made in answering the single question of: Will he or she recommit? Using faulty information will never solve a problem. Garbage in, garbage out.

Universally the most effective studies employ "double blind" testing. This allows for no bias to color the results. By using a double blind method, I conducted my own studies of the Potential for Recombitment, through a method that allowed, to my belief, no bias to color the results.

I created a questionnaire that consists of 100 questions. These questionnaires were filled out by inmates, anonymously, with no names or numbers on the forms. Next, I allowed groups of inmates to fill the forms out, unobserved, and to then have them slide their forms into a completed stack of similarly completed forms and shuffle them. This process was explained to the inmate beforehand and the stack of completed forms was shown to them before the survey began. These steps were to eliminate the inmate's need to hide their true answers since no chance of potential repercussion existed for telling the "truth."

With little or no evasive tactics being employed by the inmates filling out the questionnaires this only left gaps in memory or denial to contend with when compiling the accumulated data.

The gaps in memory are not a factor that can be controlled, but are a universal condition that does not involve deception. Denial on the other hand is going to exist in most, if not all, test subjects but it can be factored in, and in many cases, detected.

Many of the questions posed to the subjects relied on conjecture; "Do you believe," "Do you feel" and "Do you consider" start many of the questions. This induces the subject's "perception" of events or concepts. Since an individual's perception is indeed their reality, it is critical to determine what the test subject deems as real. For instance, if I "believe" a person has wronged me, I feel wronged; thus, in my mind, I have been wronged; whether the event actually occurred or not.

Since no action can occur without a thought to control it, this survey attempts to gather information that could later yield new insight into the true thinking process of the criminal. By not using data which was intentionally fed to surveyors, which usually contains false answers, I feel I have accumulated fairly accurate data – which may be a first.

Once the data had been collected it was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. There are several questions asked on the forms that are used as "qualifiers" in the research process. The first of these is an inmate's number of convictions. The actual question is this: "How many times have you been sent to prison or sentenced to probation?" There are ninety-nine other questions.

Once the data was collected I sorted the data using an inmate's number of convictions, in descending order, from most to least. By doing this I was able to find patterns in the remaining answers which only exist in the group of inmates with the highest number of commitments. This allowed me to get a handle on the mindset of the career criminal, or what is often referred to as the habitual offender. My thinking on this is that if someone can't stay out of prison it is obvious that this person can't control themselves, and thus, their thinking differs from those that can remain free.

By following this line of reasoning I made the effort to determine what the test subjects with the highest recommitment rate "believe" to be the proper way to respond to the supplied questions.

I also asked several staff members and volunteers who work at the institution to supply completed questionnaires as well. These were used as a "control group." It is obvious that if a person can avoid coming to prison for forty or more years, then they must be making proper decisions, and thus, possess clear perceptions of reality.

The results of this survey are published on the following pages, along with what I consider as new insight on the criminal thinking process.

As I mentioned before, I used a double blind method – neither the people filling out the questionnaires, nor myself, knew what to expect.



The Questionnaire

The following is the information from the survey as it was presented to the respondents.

This survey is designed to collect information that could help determine a first time offender's chances of recommitment. Your answers will be put into a computer program to determine indicators of criminal behavior that may lead to recommitting after release. Your answers to these questions are only helpful if you are being truthful. Please answer all of the questions, they all serve a purpose. It is hoped that the information collected from this survey can be used to reduce the population of the prison system. Thank you for your help in this cause; you may be saving someone from a life behind bars.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME OR DOC # ON THIS PAPER!

Instructions: Fill in the blanks on questions 1 through 7. Check the appropriate boxes on questions 8 through 100.

1. How many times have you been sent to prison or sentenced to probation? ____
(If you do not answer the above question do not continue.)
2. How old were you the first time you got in trouble with the authorities? ____
3. How many years have you served total in jails or prisons? ____
4. How many DR's have you had? ____
5. How old are you now? ____
6. If you have been locked up more than once, how long is the longest time you stayed out of prison? ____
7. Finish this sentence: rules are made to be _____.
8. Did you graduate High School? , or obtain a GED? In prison?
9. What is your race?: Black White Hispanic Other
10. How would you rate your childhood?: Bad Fair Good
11. When filling out a questionnaire being given by the Department of Corrections do you...
 - a. Always answer truthfully
 - b. Lie when necessary to avoid trouble
 - c. Never answer truthfully
12. Did "The System" fail you? Did you fail "The System"? Both.
13. Do you have brothers or sisters? Yes No
14. Have you ever been married? Yes No
15. Do you consider music important in your life? Yes No
16. Do you feel that police are a necessary part of society? Yes No
17. Have you ever owned a pet? Yes No
18. Have you ever held a job? Yes No
19. Have you ever owned a car? Yes No
20. Have you ever rented an apartment? Yes No
21. Do you have any tattoos? Yes No
22. If you bump into someone do you say, "Excuse me"? Yes No
23. Have you ever played on any football, baseball, soccer, etc. teams in school? Yes No
24. Do you feel that lack of money contributed to you ever committing a crime? Yes No
25. Have you been in any branch of the military? Yes No
26. Have you ever been in trouble as a result of doing drugs? Yes No
27. Have you ever been in trouble as a result of drinking alcohol? Yes No
28. Have you ever been in a fight? Yes No
29. Do you consider education important? Yes No
30. Have you ever collected stamps, coins, baseball cards, etc.? Yes No
31. Do you believe in God? Yes No
32. Have you ever owned a gun? Yes No
33. Do you feel family is important? Yes No
34. Do you feel that reading is important? Yes No
35. Have you ever had what you considered a friend? Yes No
36. Were you ever bullied in school? Yes No
37. Do you feel that your physical appearance impacted the course your life took? Yes No
38. Have you ever gambled on sports? Yes No
39. Have you ever smoked tobacco? Yes No
40. Do you feel prisons are necessary? Yes No
41. Have you ever been in what you would describe as a serious relationship? Yes No

The Questionnaire (Cont.)

42. Do you feel the justice system is broken? Yes No
43. Do you believe in the concept of fairness? Yes No
44. Do you feel that all of your incarcerations were a direct result of your actions? Yes No
45. Were you raised in a home with both parents? Yes No
46. Would you be willing to work for minimum wage? Yes No
47. Was your family ever on welfare while you were a child? Yes No
48. Have you learned a vocational trade while in prison? Yes No
49. Do you feel suffering is a necessary part of life? Yes No
50. Do you feel that you are smarter than the average person you meet? Yes No
51. Were you ever spanked as a child? Yes No
52. Have you ever hit a woman? Yes No
53. Were you ever wrongly accused of something as a child? Yes No
54. Do you feel that nearly every problem can be resolved through communication? Yes No
55. If released, would you ever drink alcohol? Yes No
56. Have you ever punched a wall? Yes No
57. Are most laws unnecessary? Yes No
58. Have you ever broken a law? Yes No
59. Is it ok to cheat on board games? Yes No
60. Do you celebrate birthdays, holidays, etc? Yes No
61. Do you believe in heaven and hell? Yes No
62. Has bad luck been responsible for any of your convictions? Yes No
63. Is it ok to break a law if no one gets hurt? Yes No
64. Is it ok to lie? Yes No
65. As a child, were you left home alone often? Yes No
66. If you do tell a lie, will the average person be able to detect it? Yes No
67. If you do break a law, is there a very good chance you'll get away with it? Yes No
68. Have you ever been convicted of the same type of crime more than once? Yes No
69. If someone disrespects you, is it mandatory that you right that wrong? Yes No
70. If you smash an object in anger, do you imagine that object as the person you are mad at? Yes No
71. Is there anyone on earth you hate? Yes No
72. Do you consider your childhood as normal? Yes No
73. Do you feel you had a positive role model in your life as you were growing up? Yes No
74. Do you have any regrets? Yes No
75. Have you ever lived in what you consider a large city? Yes No
76. Have you ever set something on fire you shouldn't have? Yes No
77. Do you believe in "an eye for an eye" justice? Yes No
78. Do you feel you experience the proper level of fear when faced with dangerous situations? Yes No
79. If a bee lands on your arm do you try to kill it? Yes No
80. Do you believe humans have a soul? Yes No
81. Do you believe that what is right for you is right for everyone? Yes No
82. Do you believe truth is different for different people? Yes No
83. Do you imagine committing illegal actions? Yes No
84. When things go wrong, do you think about how it affects you first? Yes No
85. Is there ever a benefit to not obtaining what you want? Yes No
86. Do the ends justify the means? Yes No
87. Is what you want more important than what others want? Yes No
88. Have you ever lived in a foster home? Yes No
89. Have you ever been adopted? Yes No
90. If released today do you feel you would return to prison? Yes No
91. Does someone love you? Yes No
92. Is happiness possible? Yes No
93. Do you believe you are being punished by God? Yes No
94. Could anything have kept you from the path you chose in life? Yes No
95. Have you ever been 100% completely innocent of any crime you were convicted of? Yes No
96. Does coming to prison make you a better person? Yes No
97. Do you feel most of the people in prison belong there? Yes No
98. Would you want someone like you living next door to your family? Yes No
99. Have you been wronged more than you have wronged others? Yes No
100. Have you been more truthful on this questionnaire since it was anonymous? Yes No

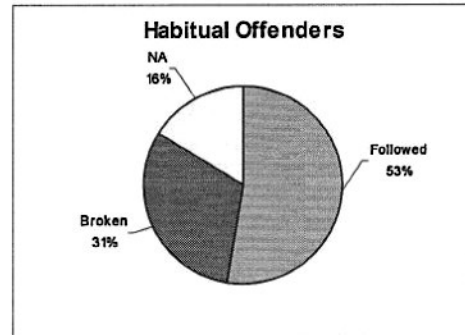
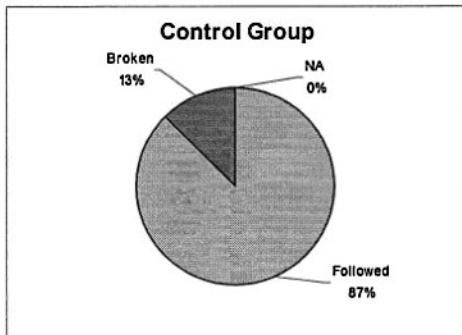
Data Analysis

Though the questionnaire used to collect the data for this survey was made up of 100 questions, I only selected the questions with the most significance for study here. The complete results are provided on page 46.

In order to conduct this study, I had to have a frame of reference so I also requested the help of a "control group." This was made up of people who have never been in prison. These were housewives, secretaries, institutional volunteers, correctional officers, classification officials, psychologists, and even a retired rocket scientist. It is my belief that these people possess thinking patterns that have allowed them to live crime free lives.

The following charts will help you to gauge the results of each question.

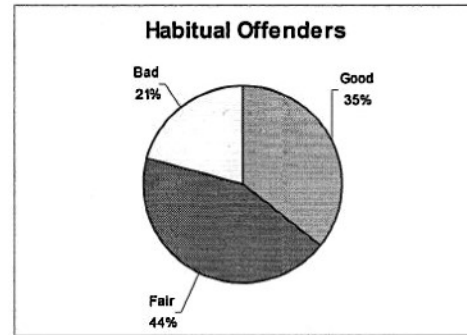
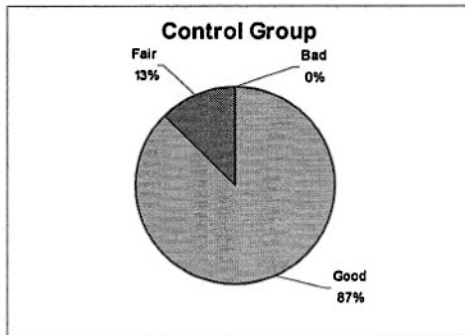
Question #7: Finish this sentence: Rules are made to be _____



Even though not all of the habitual offenders stated that rules are made to be broken, it was clear that a very high percentage did, at least compared to the control group.

This question was different from the rest of the questions on the survey. It required a sentence to be completed with the respondent's own thought on the matter. In some cases, the answers were a conditioned reflex. I mean, how is a person going to have nine convictions and profess that rules are made to be followed? He's only saying what he feels is expected of him, not expressing his true beliefs. His past actions have already spoken for him on this matter. Others answered the question with no shielding, manipulation, or denial and admitted that they felt rules were meant to be broken.

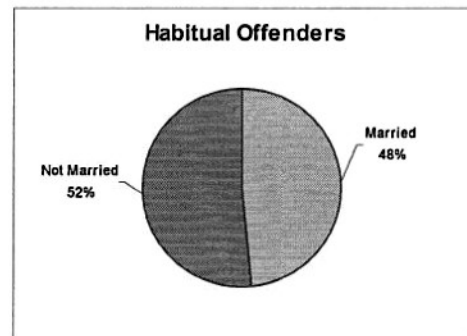
Question #10: How would you rate your childhood?: Bad • Fair • Good •



At first glance it would be easy to assume that the control group could thank a good childhood for their crime-free life. The problem with that line of thought is that over ¼ of the habitual offenders claim a fair to good childhood. If childhood conditions were truly an all-encompassing indicator of adult criminal behavior we would have a prison population ¼ the size it is now. At least according to these numbers.

So, to fly in the face of conventional thinking, I must conclude that it is not the upbringing that creates the habitual criminal, though without a doubt in my mind, the respondents who answered "bad" on the survey have, at one time or another in their lives, blamed that childhood for their current situation.

Question #14: Have you ever been married?



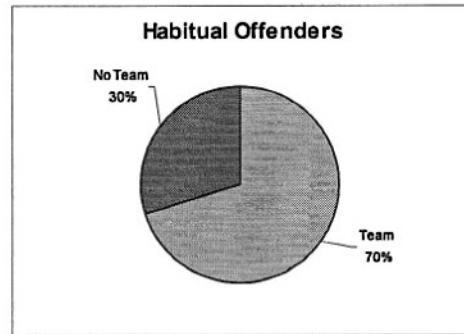
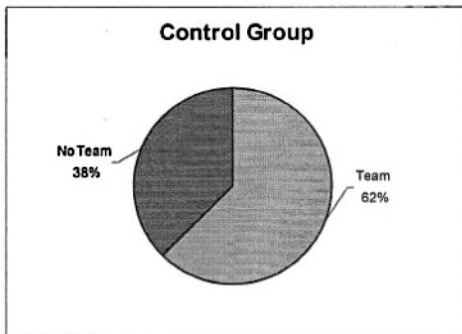
This question, or at least the response to it, has to be looked at from various perspectives. First of all, it's obvious that the habitual offenders were far out-paced by the control group. But why?

One issue that must be considered is the habitual offender's disregard for laws, and after all, marriage is a commitment between two people that is also a legal contract. If I'm a criminal, it's obvious that legal contracts will not appeal to me, and thus, I may have an aversion to marriage.

Another issue that could have impacted these results is the actual incarcerations of the criminal. If someone keeps going to prison they are not exactly marriage material for the average woman. Also, if I went to prison at 16 and only remained free for very short periods of time between incarcerations after that, I probably never had enough stability to maintain a serious relationship, let alone get married. Also, I may simply not be mature enough for marriage.

The next consideration is the act of being married itself. Does being married decrease one's odds of coming to prison? Probably. The very structure of a marriage requires you to be responsible to, and for, the person you are married to. This in itself forces each party of the marriage to factor in two people into every decision. In many cases, we care for others more than we care for ourselves, enough so to listen to their advice before making a decision that may ruin the lives of both people. The stabilizing hand of marriage cannot be discounted.

Question #23: Have you ever played on any football, baseball, soccer, etc. teams in school?



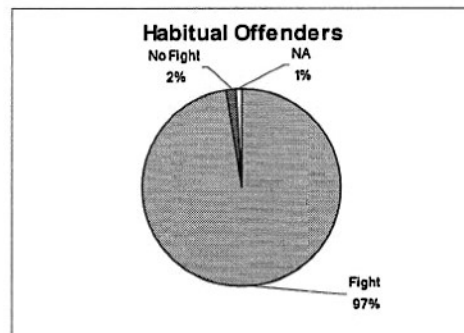
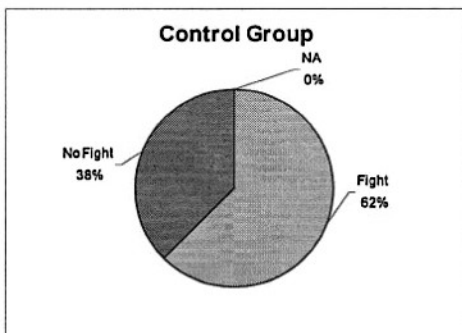
The response to this question seems to defy the conventional outlook regarding team activities and criminality. Not only did a higher percentage of the habitual offenders participate in team activities than the control group, nearly three quarters of every habitual offender participated in team sports.

I feel the truly significant aspect of this involves the aggressiveness involved with the average team sport. After all, a defeat of the opposing team is the ultimate goal. That, more times than not, requires the members of each team to wage individual battles against the members of the opposing team; to dominate; to confront; to defeat. Just the thing the average criminal excels at.

This is not to say that team activities are bad, but these activities are obviously strong draws for the more aggressive members of society. There is no doubt in my mind that the lessons learned by participating in team activities have saved many would-be criminals from a life of crime. But, it still appears that the criminally minded are drawn to the confrontational aspects of team sports.

Though team activities may be the saving grace for many, it cannot be overlooked as a potential indicator of criminal thinking patterns.

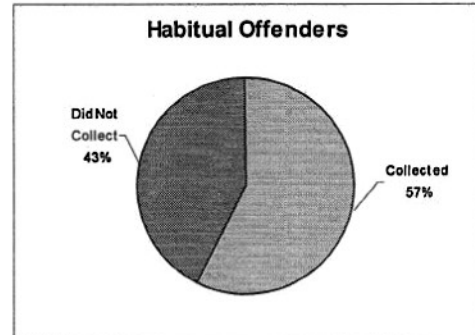
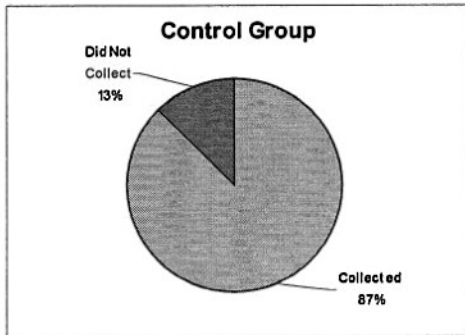
Question #28: Have you ever been in a fight?



It appears that fighting is in the cards for both groups. What cannot be determined from these statistics are the number of fights each respondent participated in, or the reasons for the fights.

Again, as with question 23, many criminals have a propensity for aggression and confrontation. Though it comes as no surprise that more habitual offenders participated in fights than the control group, it does prove that indicators of criminal behavior do exist and can be used to pinpoint the potential habitual offender.

Question #30: Have you ever collected stamps, coins, baseball cards, etc.?



I see two possible reasons for the disparities between the two groups.

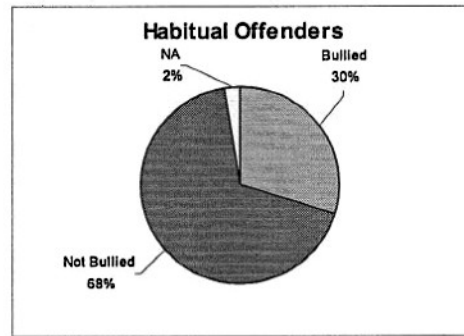
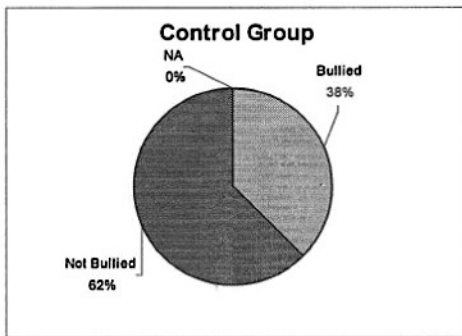
The first involves cultural and/or social economical differences. For instance, for some responds, it simply may have not been reasonable for them to participate in the collection of something that has monetary worth. When there is no money for food just how realistic is it to hoard something that may be able to put food on the table? Also, in such an environment, just how safe would such a collection be?

The second possible cause could very well reside in the habitual offenders' views on material possessions. If a person holds no real regards for material possessions, just how likely is it that this person will be able to justify his theft of such possessions from others? After all, they are just "things."

Obviously, not everyone is cutout for the pastime of collecting various objects. But these numbers cannot be ignored. The habitual offender, in many instances, has led a life which has exposed him to many hardships. Hardships that can cultivate the criminal mindset.

Chances are that a survival-based criminal cannot afford such luxuries as collecting, nor pass up the opportunity to steal the collections of others when the opportunity presents itself.

Question #36: Were you ever bullied in school?



Here is one more example of unexpected results. Since it is a common belief that the victims of bullying in school can develop deep emotional scarring from these events, it is not impossible to imagine these victims becoming antisocial to the point it could result in a life of crime.

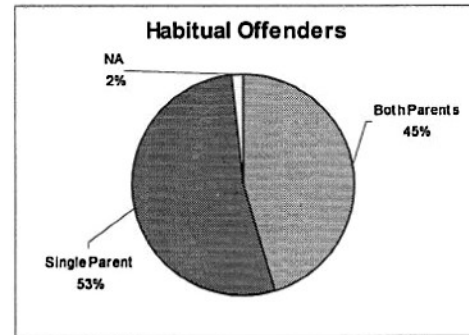
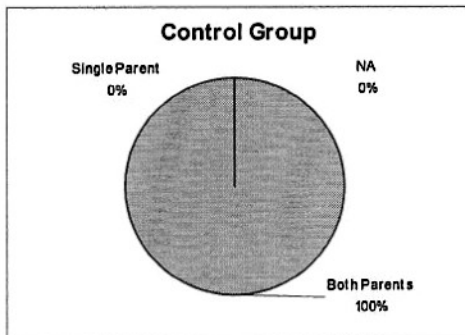
The charts above show that the control group had more respondents bullied than the habitual offenders. This is no way points to the conventional beliefs as mentioned above. It appears that just the opposite is true, in spite of bullying the control group endured, they were able to lead normal crime-free lives. This is not to say that traumatic emotional issues do not exist in the control group, it simply indicates that a life of crime does not necessarily result from it.

The habitual offenders, on the other hand, probably tell a much different story.

Though only less than a third of the habitual offenders claim to be victims of bullying in school, there is no way to know if those events did indeed damage these individuals on a fundamental level which could have resulted in a life of crime. In some cases these individuals may have already been fundamentally flawed by the time they entered school and increased their odds of being targeted by the bullies they encountered. After all, the prison system is full of people who lead a life of torment at the hands of those around them. This could easily account for the 30% indicated in the survey.

Though a much higher percentage of prison inmates can be considered to be social misfits, the reason more of them have not been bullied is obvious...many of them were the bullies.

Question #45: Were you raised in a home with both parents?



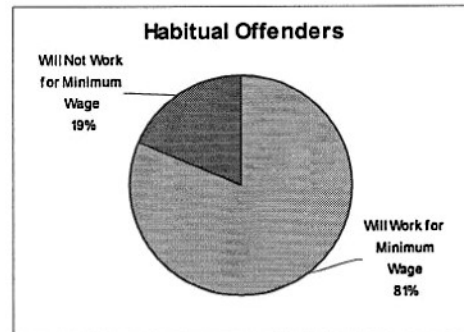
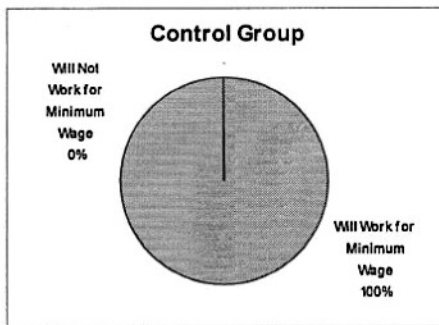
It appears that another conventional rule may be in question, that of the single parent home having a negative impact on us later in life. It's obvious by these statistics that a single parent home does not *mandate* a trip to prison or a life of crime since the habitual offenders from the two parent home are very close in number to that of the single parent home, but it probably increases the odds.

I believe each home has its problems, regardless of the number of parents. Perhaps the questions should have been reworded to something like, "Were the parents in your home effective parents?" Perhaps this would have addressed the issue more accurately. But the fact remains that though the control group far out paced the habitual offenders it does not explain why nearly fifty percent of the habitual offenders come from a two parent home.

If a two parent home is the holy grail of child rearing, why do any children from those homes come to prison? The answer may be unpalatable, but some people are going to become criminals regardless of external factors and there is absolutely nothing that can be done about it.

The control group is a shining example of how normally functioning humans from a two family home can turn out. The habitual offenders are testimony to the nature of the criminal, regardless of their upbringing.

Question #46: Would you be willing to work for minimum wage?



These numbers are very telling, though I already knew that quite a few habitual offenders would refuse to work for minimum wage, it still speaks volumes to see it here.

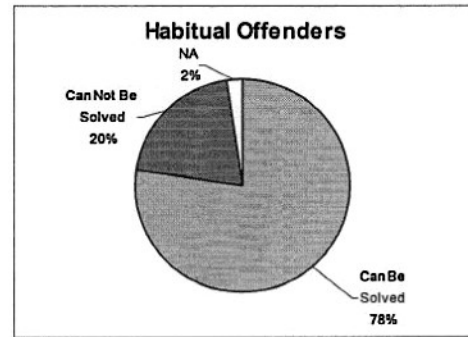
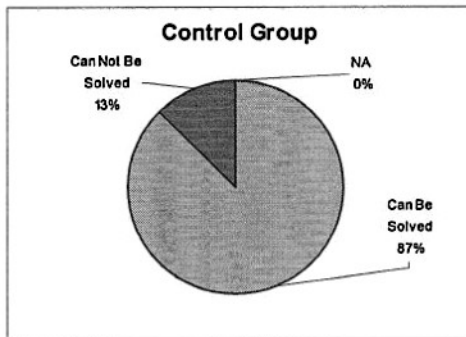
By these statistics one out of every five habitual offenders will almost assuredly find themselves back in prison soon after release. I say this for several reasons. The first is because of the limited job skills the average habitual offender possess; skills that simply warrant no more than minimum wage. This, in conjunction with their ex-com status upon release, makes the chances of obtaining a job that pays more than minimum wage very unlikely. So, in essence, these people are taking a direct path to survival-based criminality.

Chances are that these individuals possessed this mindset before their incarceration, and now, with the stigma of their incarceration upon them, they have very little chance of a crime-free life.

The only reason for someone without marketable skills to feel themselves above the demeaning implication of minimum wage employment is an inflated sense of self-worth. These are your core group of career criminals who spend their entire life sabotaging themselves.

With these criminals there is the aversion to minimum wage employment but no desire to learn a trade that would guarantee higher wages. Here are the individuals who would rather risk incarceration than endure something they see as "beneath" them. Here is that small percentage of criminals, that 19%, who will probably never see the light.

Question #54: Do you feel that nearly every problem can be resolved through communication?



These results speak volumes if you take the time to pick them apart. Both groups responded in ways that surprised me. I expected the control group would be somewhere closer to 100%, and I expected the habitual offenders to be around 50%. Should I rejoice? Not just yet.

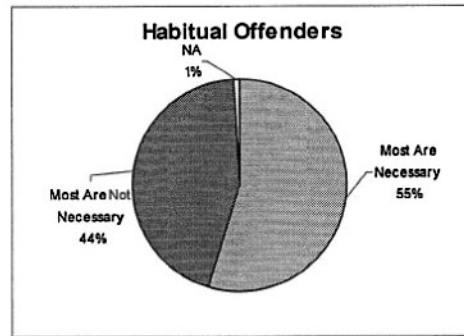
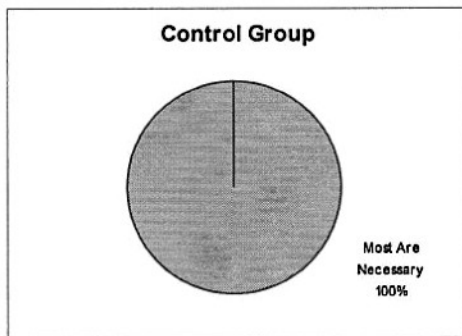
With this question, I must take into consideration the self-deception that many habitual offenders employ. Many bad people consider themselves to be great guys – in spite of what everyone else thinks. With that said, it is my experience that many habitual offenders have serious communication issues. Many of them become easily overwhelmed with anger whenever a disagreement takes place. What should be no more than a debate for many people can turn into a shouting match or worse for many habitual offenders. So why would these same people tout the benefits of effective communication? For me, it adds up to the misconception many of these people have about their own communication skills. They probably feel that if they could encounter someone who themselves could communicate properly then most problems could be resolved. This means, someone who agrees with them.

Not every habitual offender finds themselves in prison as a result of poor communication skills. In fact, it's not a crime to be completely dysfunctional. It just so happens that many dysfunctional people break laws.

Another possibility that must be considered with this issue is the interpretation of the question itself. The respondents may simply be acknowledging their beliefs that nearly every problem can be resolved through communication. They didn't necessarily claim top notch communication skills themselves. They just may be agreeing with the working theory of the question.

What does give me hope here, is the possibility that nearly 80% of the habitual offenders may be willing to talk things out if someone would ask the right questions.

Question #57: Are most laws unnecessary?



This one seems to speak for itself at first glance. The control group, which is made up of law-abiding citizens, feel most laws are necessary. The habitual offenders, who are lawbreakers, didn't do so well. But, if we focus only on the habitual offenders, it becomes obvious that the majority of these criminals acknowledge that most laws are indeed necessary. A very strange response from a group of people who have all been sentenced to prison a minimum of three times each.

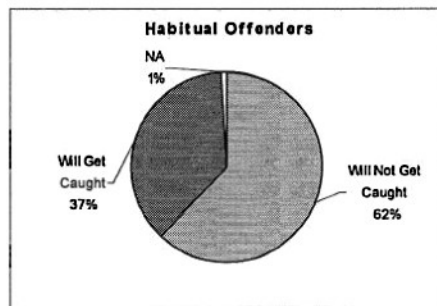
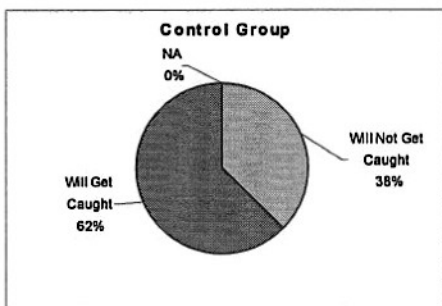
What we have here, in essence, are law breakers admitting that they were in the wrong for committing their acts which brought them to prison. This admission is in no way an indication of a lesson learned, but it is an admission of an understanding of right and wrong, and a need for order. Which, in turn, leads me to believe a moral code of conduct may exist in their minds.

In my experience, nearly everyone knows that it is wrong to break a law, but they may break a law nonetheless. Some of these use the excuse of the law being flawed in the first place, and by making this claim attempt to absolve themselves of some or all of the guilt that goes along with breaking the law. This is nothing more than tortured logic and denial. But this too is an admission by the person who is breaking the law that they know that breaking the law is wrong. If this wasn't the case, there would be no reason to evade their culpability by demeaning the law being broken.

By this line of reasoning we now have nearly all of the habitual offenders, with the exception of the 1% who did not respond, responding in such a way that leads me to believe they do know the difference between right and wrong.

With everything there are degrees, or levels. What I focused on here is the habitual offender. Many people consider them the lost causes. In some cases, I am forced to agree. Still, with these individuals, there are different levels of development to contend with. This was demonstrated by the results of Question 57. Some of the habitual offenders openly admitted most laws are necessary, others attempted to belittle the laws by claiming they were unnecessary. The first half were beyond the denial stage, the second half was not. Two levels of development. One closer to redemption than the other – perhaps close enough to reach.

Question #67: If you do break a law, is there a very good chance you'll get away with it?

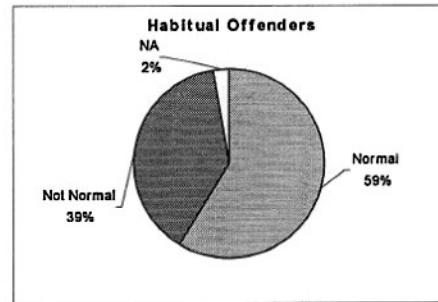
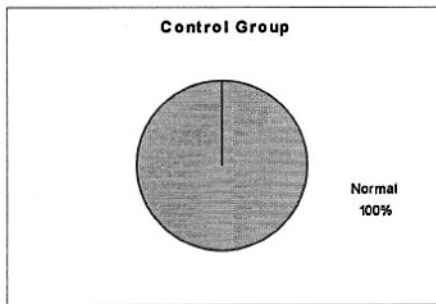


This is an excellent representation of the over confidence the average habitual offender possesses. But, one other factor can be determined from these numbers as well, and that is the relatively high number of control group respondents who feel they possess the ability to evade detection when committing a crime but still choose not to.

With the control group, some form of working deterrents exists that keeps them from breaking a law, in spite of their belief in a successful outcome.

With the habitual offenders, well over half of the respondents feel they can break a law and get away with it, in spite of being convicted three or more times in the past. This mindset is probably based upon the number of times they have gotten away with breaking a law versus how many times they were caught. If they only get caught for 1% of the crimes they commit, then their logic can't be disputed. They probably *will* get away with it. Unfortunately, a 1% capture rate still ruins their lives. That is the problem, they like the odds.

Question #72: Do you consider your childhood as normal?



"Normal" tends to be a relative term. This question relies heavily on the world view of the respondent. Due to this, several issues must be considered.

First is the possibility that the respondents are accurate in their assessment of their childhood, and, if it is, we have the same situation we had with question 10 which ask if the respondent's childhood was "good," "fair," or "bad." Both questions have revealed that the majority of the habitual offenders look favorably upon their childhood. A direct slap in the face of conventional thought regarding root causes of criminality.

The second scenario requires us to consider the possibility of the respondents not being reliable sources for determining just what constitutes a "normal" childhood. After all, few of them fit the text book description of a "normal" adult.

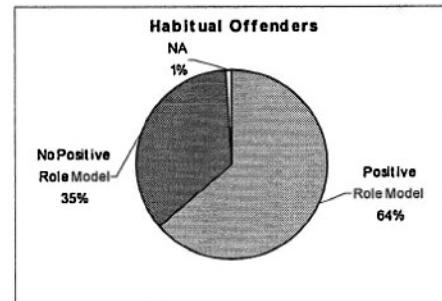
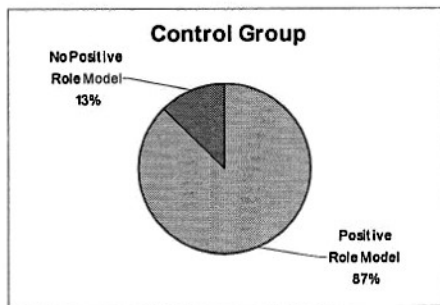
The important thing to keep in mind here is what the respondents *believe* to be the truth. If I feel my childhood was "normal," then, to me, "normal" it was.

Now, when the product of an abnormal childhood walks among the products of normal childhoods, it will probably be noticed by one, if not both, parties. For instance, if it is normal for me to do something that is socially unacceptable in my childhood home and I continue that practice into adulthood, it will be noticed.

This is the "un-abilitated" criminal I refer to in "the tragedy of rehabilitation" on page twenty-one. A product of an environment that was far from "normal," or "good" which failed to receive the life skills necessary to thrive in society. But, due to a number of factors, these habitual criminals may never be able to bridge the gap that was left by this development.

This second scenario carries the most weight in my mind for a majority of habitual offenders. But the habitual offender from the "normal" and "good" childhood exists as well, in large numbers. So it is obvious that the "un-abilitated" habitual offenders stand the strongest chance of changing his or her life in the long run with proper intervention. After all, if I am indeed from a good home, possess a strong education, have a marketable trade, acceptable social skills, and have been fully equipped to start my journey into a crime-free life, and I still become a criminal, a criminal I must be. But if someone is simply thrown into society without the proper survival skills to thrive, and they find themselves in prison, maybe this one can be saved.

Question #73: Do you feel you had a positive role model in your life as you were growing up?



I feel this is one more example of a conventional belief being challenged. Though the control group obviously had a higher percentage of respondents who feel they had a positive role model in their life, the habitual offenders had a high percentage of respondents who claim the same thing.

I have no doubt that a positive role model in a person's life is a critical aspect of human development, but I must again question the habitual offender's ability to determine certain factors.

I asked if they had a "positive" role model in their life. The question must be asked: Are they truly able to define "positive" with any degree of accuracy? If so, and their assessment is correct, and they did have a positive role model, why are so many of them in prison? More of them than those without a positive role model? To look at these statistics it would have us believe that a positive role model causes habitual offenders. Which, of course, is impossible.

There is no doubt in my mind that there were people who were destined to come to prison but a positive role model stepped in and saved the day, and these people were not here to participate in this survey.

I must also consider the possibility that some of these "positive" role models may have been ill equipped to deal with the particular child before them, or that these "positive" role models could have been making all the right moves, but their best efforts fell on deaf ears. Because, let's face it, these particular habitual offenders are still not being reached. We can't blame the role model.

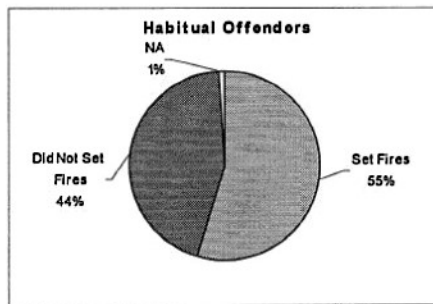
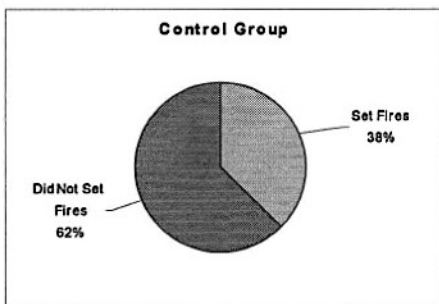
Now, for the cold hard facts, unless we are dealing with a "Group 1" criminal with physiological brain development issues, everyone can be reached, just obviously not by the methods employed by our criminal justice system today.

Every human being processes information every second of their lives. If this powerful processor indeed works properly, the problem must reside with the information being fed into it or the method employed to do so. Either way, we have a living breathing human being who is incapable of correcting their own condition, and a system that rarely attempts to do so.

Let's not forget the 1/3 of our respondents who claim no positive role model in their lives. Are there reachable individuals within this group? Are these the correctable criminals who simply need to be abilitated?

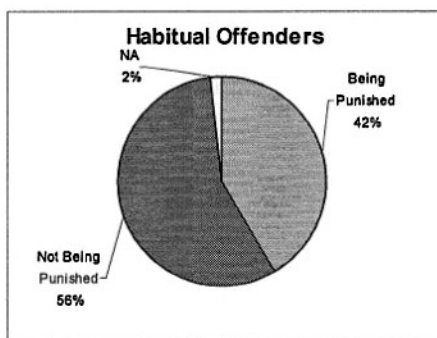
No matter how you look at it, this is a statistic worthy of a closer look.

Question #76: Have you ever set something on fire you shouldn't have?



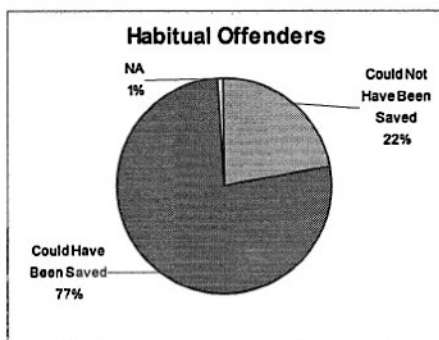
Well, here is another result that requires a rethinking of the way we look at habitual offenders. First of all, we must take into consideration the wording of the question itself. Should I have used the word "intentionally" somewhere in there? It couldn't have hurt, but the words "shouldn't have" hopefully got the point across. Another admonishment on myself here may be in order for leaving out the word "repeatedly." Either way, I think we have workable data here. Obviously the setting of fires is not the nail in the coffin I considered it to be. If it was, it looks like we have quite a few extreme cases on our hands...from both groups. To play devil's advocate here for a moment, I guess I'll admit that the very nature of fire itself makes it difficult to contain, and thus, something which may have been no more than a momentary lapse of judgment could have turned into an out-of-control situation. But, still, it appears to me that a lot of people have found themselves looking at the smoldering results of their actions. The only issue of note here is the higher percentage within the habitual offender's group. Since there was a high rate in the control group, I'll concede the role of accident or innocent infatuation within both groups. But, it's my guess that this higher number of incidents within the habitual offender's group is revealing the nature of the criminal mindset itself more than that of the "firebug." In other words, I believe the higher incident rate is simply a by-product of the criminal mindset. Criminals tend to overlook the ramifications of their actions. The self-acting nature of fire, once it is set, is simply beyond many habitual offender's ability to conceptualize, and thus, more fires than the control group.

Question #93: Do you believe you are being punished by God?



In this instance, I have to believe that those who feel they are being punished by God are allowing introspection to color their response. I say this due to the obvious connection between doing wrong and being punished for it. So, nearly half of the respondents have shown here a sense of right and wrong as well as their own culpability. Again, a group of people who may be worth a second look if a helping hand were ever extended.

Question #94: Could anything have kept you from the path you chose in life?

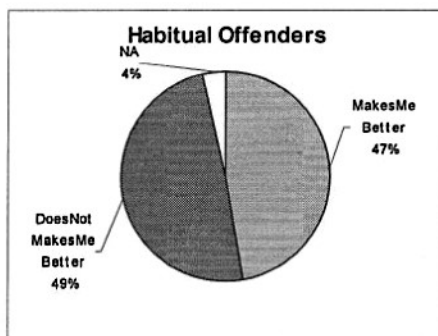


This chart demonstrates a mindset that was created through each respondent's life experiences, though I'm sure that some of them are mistaken on the actual predestination implications of the answers they supplied. It's the "mindset" that is critical here.

Earlier, I gave group definitions for three major criminal thinking groups. For the "Group 2" criminal, a mindset that builds over time is one that reinforces their belief that they were meant for a life of crime. It appears that 22% of our habitual offenders think just that.

There is no way to tell which of these respondents feel their unsaveable situation was a result of urge-driven criminality, but I have no doubt that it played a part.

Question #96: Does coming to prison make you a better person?

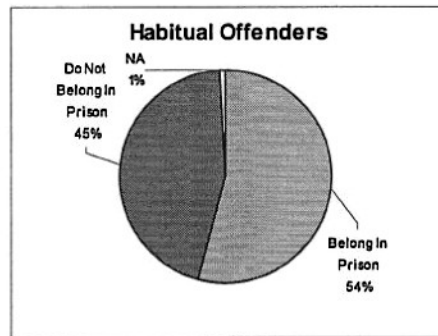


Asking a prison inmate about the benefits of prison is a slippery slope. There will always be that small nagging voice in the back of their minds that inclines them to answer in such a way that improves their chances of eventual release. I mean, if I'm being asked a question about the very existence of prison, and my response is being written down somewhere, and I feel, no matter how remotely, that my answer could indeed help tip the scales in my favor, I just may allow this to taint my response. With that being said, I still feel that chart above says a lot.

This one is almost right down the middle. But what makes me take notice are the respondents who feel the prison experience makes them a better person. Keep in mind this survey was anonymous; with no individual incentive for claiming prison made them a better person. An answer that could theoretically cause the powers that make the decisions about prisons to make more prisons. I feel this is the voice of the truly introspective human.

The concept of "better" is obviously a relative term. Just because someone feels they are making improvements does not indicate the degree of the perceived improvement nor if the changes themselves even constitute improvement in the conventional sense. The important thing to consider here is that nearly half of the respondents can still possibly be saved. By saved, I refer to their belief that prison has not ruined them. Because, once that chasm has been crossed, there is very little chance of returning.

Question #97: Do you feel most of the people in prison belong there?



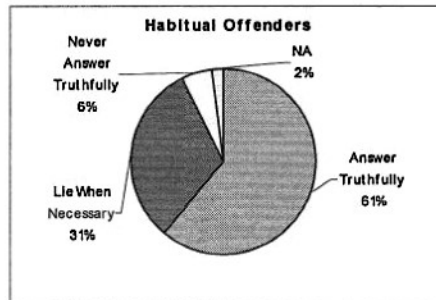
I focused here on what the habitual offenders had to say. I was only interested on the insider's view. After all, these are the people who get to see the unshielded actions of their fellow criminals.

I didn't ask whether most "habitual offender" belong in prison, I used the word "people." This was no accident. I was after the opinion of habitual offenders about prison inmates in general.

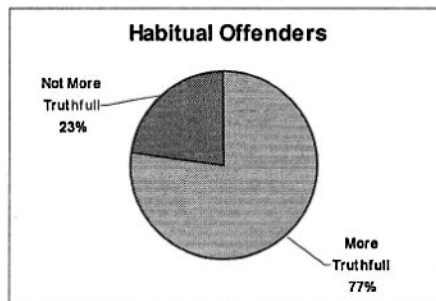
What I feel this chart represents is the "professional" opinion of a true criminal on the chances of the average inmate redeeming themselves. I use the term "professional" here somewhat tongue-in-cheek but the truth remains that it takes one to know one.

If the numbers above are to be believed, it could very well indicate that nearly half of the prison population may be at a redeemable state in their lives. At the time of this study, that would mean approximately one million people could possibly be saved from a life of incarceration if the proper intervention were to take place.

- Question #11: When filling out a questionnaire being given by the Department of Corrections do you...**
- a. Always answer truthfully
 - b. Lie when necessary to avoid trouble
 - c. Never answer truthfully



- Question #100: Have you been more truthful on this questionnaire since it was anonymous?**



These charts reveal two issues for consideration. The first deals with the validity of the data collected for this study. The second emphasizes just how important the method of data collection is when the respondents are incarcerated.

Question 11 asks whether the respondents answer truthfully when taking surveys administered by the Department of Corrections. 61% claim that they always answer truthfully on Department of Corrections surveys. Yet when Question 100 asks whether the respondents were more truthful on this survey 77% claimed that they were.

Since these numbers do not match up, it is obvious some of the inmates responding to these questions supplied false data on one question or the other. I feel this is due to a conditioned reflex employed by the inmates. The mere mention of the Department of Corrections on Question 11 probably caused many inmates to answer defensively in order to protect themselves from potential backlash, in spite of their anonymity.

Question 100 covers the same ground as Question 11 but does not mention Department of Corrections in the wording. It is my belief that some inmates still made efforts to protect themselves from some form of imagined reprisal by claiming they were equally honest in both cases, but the numbers speak for themselves; I feel the data in this survey contains more merit than most.

Final Statistics

The following data is a complete listing of the results from the survey.

Total Respondents:	340
Average Times in prison:	2.6
Average first time age:	19.5
Combined years on survey:	4763.9
Number of DRs:	3213
Average age now:	43.9
Average time out:	6.2
In 1 time only:	143
In 2 times:	65
In 3 times or more:	124
Has not graduated:	34
Black:	132
White:	142
Hispanic:	49
Other:	16
The System failed me:	77
I failed the System:	36
Both:	158

13	Brothers or sisters		
	Yes	321	
	No	17	
	N/A	2	
14	Ever Married		
	Yes	165	
	No	174	
	N/A	1	
15	Is music important		
	Yes	250	
	No	90	
	N/A	0	
16	Are police necessary		
	Yes	311	
	No	26	
	N/A	3	
17	Ever owned a pet		
	Yes	312	
	No	28	
	N/A	0	
18	Ever held a job		
	Yes	317	
	No	23	
	N/A	0	
19	Ever owned a car		
	Yes	290	
	No	50	
	N/A	0	
20	Ever rented an apt.		
	Yes	273	
	No	62	
	N/A	5	

21	Any tattoos		
	Yes	238	
	No	100	
	N/A	2	
22	Do you say Excuse me		
	Yes	334	
	No	5	
	N/A	1	
23	Team in school		
	Yes	246	
	No	94	
	N/A	0	
24	Lack of money = crime		
	Yes	188	
	No	141	
	N/A	11	
25	Military		
	Yes	83	
	No	255	
	N/A	2	
26	Trouble for drugs		
	Yes	174	
	No	162	
	N/A	4	
27	Trouble for alcohol		
	Yes	143	
	No	196	
	N/A	1	
28	Been in a fight		
	Yes	318	
	No	21	
	N/A	1	
29	Education important		
	Yes	333	
	No	0	
	N/A	7	
30	Ever collected		
	Yes	212	
	No	126	
	N/A	2	
31	Do you believe in God		
	Yes	313	
	No	15	
	N/A	12	
32	Ever owned a gun		
	Yes	210	
	No	129	
	N/A	1	
33	Is family important		
	Yes	333	
	No	5	
	N/A	2	

34	Is reading important	
	Yes	333
	No	2
	N/A	5
35	Ever had a friend	
	Yes	310
	No	27
	N/A	3
36	Bullied in school	
	Yes	121
	No	215
	N/A	4
37	Physical appearance	
	Yes	122
	No	209
	N/A	9
38	Gambled on sports	
	Yes	221
	No	117
	N/A	2
39	Smoked tobacco	
	Yes	289
	No	50
	N/A	1
40	Are prisons necessary	
	Yes	296
	No	39
	N/A	5
41	Serious relationship	
	Yes	306
	No	32
	N/A	2
42	Justice system broken	
	Yes	291
	No	45
	N/A	4
43	Concept of fairness	
	Yes	312
	No	23
	N/A	5
44	Result of your actions	
	Yes	256
	No	71
	N/A	13
45	Both parents	
	Yes	171
	No	162
	N/A	7
46	Minimum wage	
	Yes	276
	No	61
	N/A	3

47	On welfare as a child	
	Yes	153
	No	186
	N/A	1
48	Trade while in prison	
	Yes	140
	No	193
	N/A	7
49	Is suffering necessary	
	Yes	235
	No	100
	N/A	5
50	Smarter than average	
	Yes	177
	No	159
	N/A	4
51	Spanked as a child	
	Yes	311
	No	28
	N/A	1
52	Hit a woman	
	Yes	163
	No	173
	N/A	2
53	Wrongly accused child	
	Yes	263
	No	77
	N/A	0
54	Communication	
	Yes	281
	No	48
	N/A	11
55	Would you drink	
	Yes	190
	No	145
	N/A	5
56	Punched a wall	
	Yes	221
	No	118
	N/A	1
57	Most laws unnecessary	
	Yes	147
	No	188
	N/A	5
58	Ever broken a law	
	Yes	327
	No	12
	N/A	1
59	Ok to cheat on games	
	Yes	40
	No	297
	N/A	3

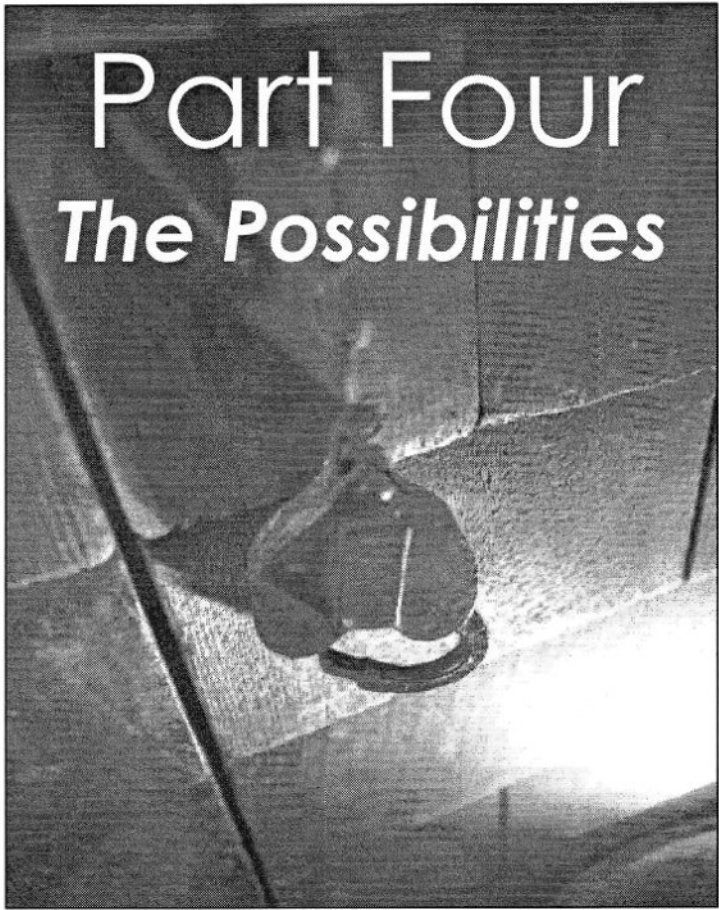
60	Do you celebrate		
	Yes	283	
	No	55	
	N/A	2	
61	Heaven and hell		
	Yes	274	
	No	58	
	N/A	8	
62	convictions = bad luck		
	Yes	116	
	No	217	
	N/A	7	
63	If no one gets hurt		
	Yes	64	
	No	272	
	N/A	4	
64	Is it ok to lie		
	Yes	58	
	No	273	
	N/A	9	
65	Left home alone often		
	Yes	142	
	No	197	
	N/A	1	
66	Is lie detected		
	Yes	124	
	No	210	
	N/A	6	
67	Will get away		
	Yes	183	
	No	151	
	N/A	6	
68	Same crime over & over		
	Yes	168	
	No	166	
	N/A	6	
69	Straighten disrespect		
	Yes	109	
	No	226	
	N/A	5	
70	See person in object		
	Yes	87	
	No	247	
	N/A	6	
71	Do you hate		
	Yes	124	
	No	212	
	N/A	4	
72	Normal Childhood		
	Yes	218	
	No	117	
	N/A	5	

73	Positive role model		
	Yes	228	
	No	110	
	N/A	2	
74	Do you have any regrets		
	Yes	276	
	No	60	
	N/A	4	
75	Large city		
	Yes	276	
	No	63	
	N/A	1	
76	Set fire		
	Yes	181	
	No	156	
	N/A	3	
77	Eye for an Eye		
	Yes	144	
	No	188	
	N/A	8	
78	Feel proper fear		
	Yes	276	
	No	58	
	N/A	6	
79	Kill bee		
	Yes	143	
	No	193	
	N/A	4	
80	Have a soul		
	Yes	315	
	No	21	
	N/A	4	
81	Right for all		
	Yes	94	
	No	244	
	N/A	2	
82	Is truth different		
	Yes	221	
	No	113	
	N/A	6	
83	Imagine crime		
	Yes	136	
	No	201	
	N/A	3	
84	Me first		
	Yes	226	
	No	108	
	N/A	6	
85	Is there benefit		
	Yes	247	
	No	90	
	N/A	3	

86	Ends vs means	
	Yes	116
	No	207
	N/A	17
87	What I want	
	Yes	105
	No	224
	N/A	11
88	Foster Home	
	Yes	52
	No	284
	N/A	4
89	Adopted	
	Yes	29
	No	308
	N/A	3
90	Would you return	
	Yes	16
	No	264
	N/A	6
91	Loved	
	Yes	264
	No	19
	N/A	3
92	Is happiness possible	
	Yes	271
	No	8
	N/A	7
93	Punished by God	
	Yes	115
	No	165
	N/A	6
94	Could be saved	
	Yes	225
	No	59
	N/A	2
95	Innocent	
	Yes	126
	No	155
	N/A	5
96	Prison make better	
	Yes	139
	No	133
	N/A	14
97	Belong in prison	
	Yes	160
	No	121
	N/A	5
98	Neighbor	
	Yes	244
	No	39
	N/A	3

99	Wronged	
	Yes	146
	No	132
	N/A	8
100	Truthful	
	Yes	205
	No	77
	N/A	4





Self-Awareness

A person with a condition needs to be aware of that condition before they can have any hope of taking steps to confront it. For instance, if I am an alcoholic I must recognize the condition, and its destructive aspects, before I can take the necessary steps to become alcohol-free. I must go through all of the stages; I must be an alcoholic; accept the fact that I am an alcoholic; acknowledge that being an alcoholic is something I do not want to be; then start the fight of removing myself from the clutches of alcohol. The same goes for the criminal.

The term *addiction*: (A recurrent failure to control a specific behavior despite harmful consequences, such as job loss, relationship destruction, or even arrest,) in my opinion could be used to describe the average criminal. Except with the criminal, the catalyst that leads to their destructive behavior can be difficult to pinpoint. Obviously you can have a criminal who commits crimes while under the influence of drugs, but many criminals need no thought-altering substance introduced into their circulatory system in order to break a law. Nearly every criminal wants to commit their crimes. The reasons vary from crime to crime and person to person, but unless the criminal is being coerced into the act they are acting out in order to obtain something they want. Be it for monetary gain, or to inflict harm on those around them, or to sexually abuse someone, they are compelled to do so by their wants – they want to commit those acts. Unfortunately for everyone no one takes these people aside and explains it to them.

It would seem that a person who perpetrates a crime would be quite aware of the act. Just not necessarily have an understanding of how they, as humans, got on the path they are on, or what steps would be necessary to get off the path once it is taken.

Once these people find themselves incarcerated it would seem that the incarceration itself would be all the indicator necessary for the criminal to realize that they need to change their ways. In some cases, it occurs. For the habitual criminal the focus is never upon themselves, which allows no chance of escaping a cycle of crime that may last a life time. For this criminal it is like the alcoholic who has never given a second thought to beating their addiction, they simply do not analyze themselves, or their condition, to a point that could inspire change. If it isn't broke – or at least not perceived to be broke – why fix it?

Like many law-abiding citizens, the average criminal does not have the deductive reasoning required to analyze their own behavior for significant defects. To expect many of these people to simply come to the coherent conclusion that living a life of crime is wrong is about as reasonable of an expectation as having the average mental patient to cure themselves. Because, like it or not, crime is a result of a "thought" to commit the crime, and is thus, a mental condition. If the brain isn't working properly, and you expect that same brain to repair itself with no more than its own faulty abilities to do so, your expectations are unreasonable.

Most criminals are going to require a helping hand in understanding that their actions are the cause of the problems in their lives. Not bad luck, not a failed judicial system, but themselves and their criminal acts. Prison, more times than not, is not going to be a sufficient catalyst of change.

In order to reach the average criminal it is going to take direct one-on-one involvement. I hate to use the term brainwashing here but it is not far from the mark. What is required is brain "cleaning." A detoxification of criminal thoughts, concepts and lifestyle. They must be shown that another way to live exists. For many, this will obviously not be a new concept but the helping hand that is extended to them just may be.

Going straight requires the determination to do so, and in most cases, some external source of influence and help. It is my experience that it is seldom these factors take place at the same time in the life of a practicing criminal. It is a situation, once again, akin to the alcoholic. A full-time lifeline needs to be in place for the day the criminal comes to the realization that a change in their life is needed. Locking a person up, and using that incarceration as proof of a needed change, works for some, but not many. Telling a drunk he has a problem usually falls on deaf ears. The same goes for the criminal. But with the self-destructive nature of both lifestyles, a day will come when the toll of living such a life will become too great – that's the day society needs to extend their collective hands. Failing to do so will lead to obvious results.

The Relearning Process

Many people live their entire lives without knowing even the smallest percentage of what there is to know in the world. This is because there is obviously far too much to learn in the few years of life we are granted. From birth, the learning process begins, and, if we allow it, it will continue until our death. So, the problem is often this: What to learn? In a world such as ours is today, where information is available as never before in history, it can create information overload. Add the introduction of video games, smart phones, computers, etc., and it is not surprising to find someone who not only spends too much time learning the wrong things, but someone who spends too much time learning nothing at all.

With this being the case, the average criminal is deficient in his or her relevant knowledge. They either tends to have huge gaps in their formal education or are lacking in the basic skills required to exist in society. The good news is that, for many people who have been convicted of a crime, there is a way to correct this condition.

When we enter school, there is a lesson plan that is used by the teachers to insure that each student learns what is required in a timely fashion. Life does not come with a lesson plan. For those raised in a home without the proper guidance, it is almost guaranteed that some very important skills, knowledge, and life lessons will be missing. In many cases, this information needed to be passed on to the child during their more impressionable years. That's not to say the same information can't be absorbed at a later time in life, but it will be much more difficult to unlearn a way of life that may have been in place for fifty years or more.

The goal is to bring this fact to the attention of the criminal and start them on the path of relearning the necessary skills and knowledge required to live a crime-free life.

Many people spend their lives obtaining knowledge in small pieces as they live. That is the process of living and learning. For change to take place, it requires us to rethink our current philosophies. For many people, seeing the errors of their ways requires them to age; over time, sometimes many, many years, they eventually admit to themselves that they were on the wrong path or made the wrong decisions. This slow realization is usually because they were alone in the process. No lesson plan, no teacher, no role models; only their "one piece at a time" life experiences. These criminals, if they ever hope to live a normal productive life, need to speed up the process when it comes to avoiding criminal behavior.

If a person is in prison, they need to rethink how they approach life, because the truth of the matter is that they have probably been doing things terribly wrong. This process is going to require them to give up an entire way of life. They will not be able to concern themselves with issues such as how it will look to others if they suddenly start living a crime-free life. If they attempt to do so, they will fail, period. No alcoholic can kick his habit if he continues to take a sip of alcohol every few days. The same goes for the criminal. Either they are going to go straight, or they aren't. Only breaking the occasional law still makes them a criminal. Adhering to the law twenty-four hours a day will only mean that the criminal is not breaking any laws, but, unfortunately, all this amounts to is that they are "non active" criminals. They are only clean for as long as it takes them to break the next law.



In Conclusion

In order for an undertaking such as this to have credibility it requires certain components to be in place. Unfortunately, many of those components are missing from the equation – the main one being my own credibility.

This survey, the resulting statistics, and my own theories on those outcomes will no doubt be negated by my own lack of formal training, my status of "inmate," and the unsupervised condition of the survey. This being the case it compels me to challenge the reader to disprove the contents of what is contained within these pages. Not by referencing existing works by noted professionals, but by having this study duplicated under strict guidelines, by those with the necessary credibility to give substance to the results. I issue this challenge with a mindset of total self-assurance. I say this because I made it my business to either supervise, or personally perform, every task involved with this project. Like it or not, these statistics are real, the inmates who took part in this study are real, and the process to obtain this data was sound. I have included the exact survey questions, the method for conducting the survey, and explained the nature of the facility the survey was conducted in. Feel free to conduct your own survey. Society calls. 2,000,000 incarcerated Americans call. The taxpayers call. A brighter future, one without the shame of ignoring the plight of millions of souls who cannot rid themselves of their own self-destructive behavior, without help, calls.

It is my belief that everything changes with time. Though crime is as old as history itself and the heart of mankind seems to have kept its touch of darkness throughout that history. The way we deal with crime has an ever-shifting nature. There shifts tend to have relatively long spans between one to the next, but once the decision to change the approach has been made it can be a drastic, rapid and sweeping change.

With the introduction of the age of technology, society has many new tools to employ in the war against crime. Unfortunately, most of that effort has been directed towards either the apprehension, tracking, or a more secure incarceration often criminal. But no real strides have been made in deterring the criminal from actually wanting to commit a crime.

If society is ever going to curb crime, it must curb the criminal. To curb the criminal it requires a change of that criminal's mindset. To change the mindset it requires interaction with the criminal.

Prison will, and does, reach the core of some criminals and convinces them to get their act together. But many are ruined in the process.

We send our children to schools for nearly their entire childhood. Very little, if any, of that education involves anything more than monitoring the disruptive pupil. More times than not these disruptive students find themselves being left behind and on a path that usually includes dropping out of school and dropping in prison. This would be a great place to start, during the formative years.

Without a doubt it would require a completely new way of looking how we education our children, but perhaps its long overdue. At one time Latin was a prerequisite of an education, but it became apparent that our children didn't need to waste their time with such matters.

Ney McCain