

TARGET SELECTION IN ROBBERY: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION

by

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Target Selection in Robbery: An Exploratory  
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## ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of victim/target selection to the understanding of how criminals operate and to the development of crime prevention strategies, very few studies have attempted to analyze the selection process and the criteria used for the selection. The present study is an attempt to identify, analyze and assess the importance of the criteria robbers use in selecting targets. The research was undertaken to test general hypotheses related to the crime of robbery itself and the targets chosen. The hypotheses were formulated in advance inspired by an extensive literature review on robbery. It was hypothesized that robbers have distinct preferences for specific types of robbery and specific categories of targets. It was also hypothesized that robbers do not pick targets at random but follow a long or short selection process and use well defined criteria. The hypotheses dictated that the study be a qualitative one based on information obtained directly from robbers in personal interviews. The interviews were conducted with seventy-four robbers incarcerated in federal institutions, using a semi-structured interview schedule. The data analysis lends support to the initial hypotheses. Although the sample was not representative of the whole universe of robbers and although it did lose some of its randomness through attrition, it is clear that robbers, at least those who are convicted and sentenced to a federal penitentiary, have a distinct preference for commercial over residential and personal robbery. They prefer financial institutions over other types of targets and are able to articulate and rank the reasons for their preferences. Among the criteria they use for target selection, pay-off, location, number of people, and security seem the most important.

A rudimentary analysis of robbers' decision-making process suggests they approach their task with a certain amount of consideration bordering on rationality.

Both decision-making and target selection processes seem to involve a subjective consideration and weighing of a relatively small number of positive and negative features of potential targets. The thesis ends with a brief discussion of the practical implications of the findings. In light of the findings, some approaches to robbery prevention seem more promising than others.

## DEDICATION

To my wife, Pamela, whose love and support  
made this thesis possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**PART A**  
**ROBBERY --- A GENERAL OVERVIEW**

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Victimization surveys, conducted with increasing frequency in recent years, have clearly shown that the risks of victimization are not evenly distributed within the general population and that victims of crime do not constitute an unbiased cross-section of the populace. This finding lends empirical support to what victimologists have claimed for some time, namely that victims of crime are not chosen at random but are often selected according to certain criteria that empirical research can help reveal. That victims are not randomly chosen is, of course, understandable since many offenders are rational operators who approach their task with a certain amount of consideration bordering on rationality. Discussing victim selection, Wilkins (1964) gives the following example:

Let any (non-criminal) reader try to imagine himself in the position of being required to commit a crime --- say one of the most common crimes like larceny or breaking and entering --- within the next twelve hours. Few readers would select the victim completely at random, unskilled at victim selection though they might be. There will be something approaching rationality in the selection of the victim (Wilkins, 1964, p. 75).

Despite the importance of victim selection to the understanding of how criminals operate and to the development of crime prevention strategies, until a few years ago research in this area was conspicuous by its absence. Regarding the specific offence of robbery, where an extremely wide array of potential targets is available, one might ask "how do robbers pick and choose from among this almost unlimited number of possible targets?" The few studies which have examined robbery targets revealed statistically significant associations between specific types and the likelihood of victimization (Normandeau, 1968; Conklin, 1972; Dunn, 1976). The problem, however, is that, by and large, these studies have not gone beyond the

simple description of these associations. Little attention has been given as to "why" certain sociodemographic groups or certain targets are victimized more frequently than others. In other words, there has been little or no examination of "how" and "why" a robber selects a particular victim or target.

The purpose of the present study is to take a deep look into the process of victim selection. The study will examine all facets of victim selection in order to get a better grasp of the process of decision making by the robbery offender. First, though, it is necessary to review the existing body of literature on robbery, while paying special attention to the research relating to victim or target selection.

Contrary to some other offences, criminological definitions of robbery do not substantially differ from the legal ones. For the purpose of this study, therefore, "robbery" will be defined according to section 302 of the Criminal Code of Canada:

Everyone commits robbery who: a) steals, and for the purpose of extorting whatever is stolen or to prevent or overcome resistance to the stealing, uses violence or threats of violence to a person or property; b) steals from any person and, at the time he steals or immediately before or immediately thereafter, wounds, beats, strikes or uses any personal violence to that person; c) assaults any person with intent to steal from him; or d) steals from any person while armed with an offensive weapon or imitation thereof (Criminal Code of Canada, R.S.C., 1980, p. 124).

As much of the data and information for this literature review were obtained from American sources, a definition of robbery from the United States would also be appropriate. According to the Uniform Crime Reports, robbery is defined as:

The taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or putting the victim in fear (Dunn, 1976, p. 321).

For the purpose of the present study, the term "victim" will refer to those persons who are the direct object of a crime of robbery (e.g., bank teller, convenience store clerk, individual who is mugged). In other words, this study will strictly focus on those who have been termed "primary victims". There will be no



discussion of "secondary victims" (e.g., the owners of the bank, the owner of the convenience store).

## CHAPTER II

### RATES AND TYPES OF ROBBERY

#### Canadian and U.S. Rates

According to the statistics compiled by the United Nations, North America has a rate of violent crime five to ten times higher than that of European countries (Normandeau, 1981, p. 1). However, in the case of robbery, not all of North America is affected to the same degree and there are sometimes marked differences.

Generally, the evolution of robbery in Canada and the United States has been fairly similar. In Canada, the rate of robbery per 100,000 inhabitants quadrupled from 26.6 in 1962 (the year the U.C.R. reporting system was introduced) to 102.7 in 1980 (Normandeau and Elie, 1985, p. 36). Since 1980, however, the rate of robbery has declined. In 1984, there were 23,310 robbery offences reported to the police in Canada. This number translates into an overall robbery rate of 93 offences per 100,000 population, a 5.1% decrease over the previous year, and is 1.1% lower than the 1975 rate of 94. The 1984 decrease in the robbery rate is the second drop recorded nationally since 1978 (Statistics Canada, 1984, p. 42). In British Columbia, the robbery rate has consistently been higher than the national average. And in line with the national trend, the rate has slightly declined in recent years reaching 108.6 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1985 (Ministry of Attorney-General, 1985).

In the United States, the rate of robbery per 100,000 inhabitants has also quadrupled, going from 59.4 in 1962 to 243.5 in 1980 (Normandeau and Elie, 1985, p. 36). Since 1980, though, the robbery rate has steadily declined. In 1984, the rate stood at 205.4 per 100,000 inhabitants (Uniform Crime Reports (U.C.R.), 1984, p. 16). Thus, it appears that the upward and downward trends in robbery

in both Canada and the United States have been similar. The fact remains, however, that the American rate is consistently two and one half times the Canadian one. A similar trend can be observed when the rates for major cities in the two countries are compared.

With respect to Canadian cities, Montreal, which for many years has had the highest annual rate of robbery in Canada, went from 108.9 robberies per 100,000 inhabitants in 1962 to 459.6 in 1980. Vancouver went from a rate of 50.9 to 214.2 during the same period, whereas Edmonton climbed from 44.3 to 200.6, Calgary went from 32.9 to 99.5, and Toronto increased from 34.5 to 96.8 robberies per 100,000 inhabitants (Normandeau and Elie, 1985, p. 37). In 1985, the robbery rate for the city of Vancouver was 249.0 robberies per 100,000 inhabitants, which was slightly higher than the 1980 figure (Ministry of Attorney-General, 1985).

Major American cities show similar increases in their rates of robbery. The rates, however, are consistently much higher than those of Canadian cities. In general, with the exception of Philadelphia, where the annual rate for the past several years has been relatively low by American standards (close to 500), the rate for other American cities has been more than 1,000 robberies per 100,000 inhabitants (Normandeau and Elie, 1985, p. 37).

The above noted robbery statistics should be examined cautiously. There are several factors, unrelated to the incidence of robbery, which may account for the rising rates. First, these increases may be due in part to improvements in the detection, reporting, or recording of robbery offences, rather than being reflective of an actual change in the incidence of crime. Police forces, for some time, have been attempting to enhance their efficiency in combatting and recording crime. At the same time, government agencies involved in gathering criminal justice statistics

have been trying to improve the quality of data they publish. They have geared their efforts toward increasing efficiency, more complete recording, and universal coverage. A second factor which may be responsible, at least in part, for this increase in the rate of robbery is the demographic changes which have taken place over the past twenty years. The children of the post war "baby boom" reached the delinquency prone years (15-25) during the 1960's and 1970's. This increase in the age group fifteen to twenty-five has undoubtedly led to an increase in the rates of crime. Consequently, it is difficult to determine what percentage of the increase in the rate of robbery is real and what is due to improvements in data gathering and processing or changes in the age composition of the population.

#### Rates For Robbery Types

Robberies can be classified according to the type of target into three main categories: commercial, residential, and personal (street). As one would expect, the frequencies or rates are not the same across the three categories. According to the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports, 54.5% of all robberies occurred on the street, 21.7% occurred in a commercial establishment, 11.0% occurred in a residence, and 12.8% were classified as miscellaneous robberies (Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), 1984, p. 18).

McClintock and Gibson (1961), in their analysis of robbery in London, England, developed a typology which categorized robberies on the basis of the circumstances in which they occurred. McClintock and Gibson identified five robbery types or groups. Group I was robbery of persons who, as part of their employment, were in charge of money or goods (commercial robbery). This group accounted for 40.8% of the robberies in London. Group II was robbery in the open following

sudden attack (street robbery). This group accounted for 32.6% of the robberies in the sample. Group III was robbery on private premises (residential robbery). In their sample, 10.8% of the cases fell into this group. Group IV was robbery after preliminary association of short duration between victim and offender. This group accounted for 11.8% of the robberies. Finally, Group V was robbery in cases of previous association of some duration between victim and offender. This group accounted for 4.0% of the robberies. Thus, McClintock and Gibson found Group I (commercial) type robberies to be the most prevalent, followed by Group II (street) type robberies (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 16).

Several years after the study in London, Normandeau (1969) replicated the work of McClintock and Gibson in Philadelphia. His findings, however, differed from those of the London study. Normandeau (1969) found that 25.8% of the robberies in his sample fell into Group I, 52.2% fell into Group II, 7.3% fell into Group III, 10.2% fell into Group IV, and 4.5% fell into Group V (Normandeau, 1969, p. 74). In Normandeau's study, the percentages of the last three groups are comparable to those of the London study. However, percentages for Groups I and II differ considerably in the two studies. Philadelphia has a higher percentage of street (Group II) robbery than commercial (Group I) robbery, whereas the reverse is true for London. McClintock and Gibson (1961) explained the prevalence of commercial over street robbery in London by referring to the lucrative and carefully planned operations of a relatively small group of seasonal professional criminals who seemed to be growing increasingly active and who have been particularly successful in escaping the grip of the law. As Normandeau (1969) pointed out, no such situation existed in Philadelphia, and this may have accounted for some or all of the differences in the findings (Normandeau, 1969, p. 72).

In addition to the general overview of robbery locations, McClintock and Gibson (1961), as well as Normandeau (1969), examined each of the robbery groups separately. With respect to Group I (commercial), McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that 36.1% of these robberies were committed on shops and banks during working hours, 26.8% on business premises after illegal entry, and 22.7% in transit (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 16). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1969) found that nearly 30% were committed on shops and banks during working hours, 30% on business premises after illegal entry, and 20% in transit (Normandeau, 1969, p. 73). With respect to Group II (street) robberies, McClintock and Gibson (1961) reported that 60.2% were committed against males, 30.7% against females, and 9.1% against children (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 16). The percentages in the Philadelphia study were 50, 40, and 10 respectively (Normandeau, 1969, p. 73). With respect to Group III (residential) robberies, Normandeau (1969) found that 55% were committed by offenders who forcibly entered upon the door being opened by a member of the household, whereas 45% were by housebreakers who were disturbed by members of the household (Normandeau, 1969, p. 73). In London, the percentages were 45 and 55 respectively (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 17). With respect to Group IV, Normandeau (1968) found that this type of robbery was committed primarily on victims in the vicinity of a public house after drinking together (50%) or on victims in the street or in open spaces following preliminary association (25%) (Normandeau, 1969, p. 78). The opposite was true in London, but the raw numbers for this group were so small that the differences could only be regarded as a general indication (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 17). There were so few robberies in Group V that no subgroupings were attempted for London or Philadelphia.

The prevalence of street over commercial robberies, which Normandeau (1969) observed in Philadelphia, seems to find support in other U.S. studies of robbery. Conklin (1972), in his analysis of robbery in Boston, reported that 49% occurred on the street, 23.7% in a commercial establishment, 16.1% in a vehicle, and 7.4% in a residence (Conklin, 1972, p. 41). In Westchester County, New York, Dunn (1976) found that 49.1% of the cases were street robberies, 27.4% were commercial robberies, 6.3% were vehicular robberies, and 8.9% were residential robberies (Dunn, 1976, p. 14). Thus, it appears that roughly half of all robberies in the U.S. occur on the street, 25% occur in commercial establishments, and 10% in residential premises.

Studies have also examined the frequency with which specific types of robbery targets are victimized. With regard to commercial robbery, the 1979 National Crime Survey (U.S.) revealed that slightly more than half, 53.3%, were committed against commercial houses, 26.5% were committed against convenience stores, 14% against gas stations, and 6.2% against banks (Cook, 1983, p. 13). In Oakland, Weir (1973) found that gas stations (17.4%), fast food restaurants (10.8%), liquor stores (10.0%), grocery stores (9.1%), and bars/restaurants (9.1%) were the most frequently victimized commercial targets (Weir, 1973, p. 51). The findings of Wilcox (1973) for Oakland were very similar.

With respect to noncommercial robbery, the N.C.S. (1979) found that 53.1% occurred on the street, 11.6% in a non-residential building, 11.4% inside homes, 9.8% near homes, and 12.4% occurred elsewhere (Cook, 1983, p. 13). In their separate studies of robbery in Oakland, both Weir (1973) and Wilcox (1973) discovered that almost three out of every four personal robberies take place on the street or sidewalk (Weir, 1973, p. 54; Wilcox, 1973, p. 48). In his study of mugging in London, Pratt (1980) found that a minority took place in parks (10%) or other types of open

space (10%). Muggings primarily occurred in the street (80%) (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). In his study of residential robbery in Boston, Reppetto (1974) reported that only one third of such robberies took place inside a dwelling unit, while the remainder occurred in such public areas as hallways and elevators. Of those which did occur inside the dwelling, only 8% were in single family homes and the rest were divided between apartment buildings and public housing units. In 90% of the cases, the robber entered by the door and in 60% of these, he obtained entry by ruse or threat. Of those robberies which occurred outside the dwelling unit but still on residential premises, 65% were on the grounds of housing projects, 34% were in apartment buildings and 1% were on the property of single family homes (Reppetto, 1974, p. 28).

A somewhat different picture of robbery occurrences emerges when the frequencies are related to environmental opportunities. That is, one is likely to get a better idea of the different frequencies when the number of business and commercial establishments is used as the base for calculating the rates of commercial robberies, the number of households is used as the base for residential robberies, and when the total resident population is used as the base for street robbery. Using this method, Normandeau (1969) calculated the robbery rates per 10,000 specific opportunities by the place of occurrence for Philadelphia. He found that while street robberies had a rate more than twice that of commercial robberies when both rates were based on total population, commercial robberies had a rate 16 times greater than street robberies when specific environmental opportunities were used. In a given year, the probability of robbery victimization on the streets of Philadelphia was 1 in every 1,118 persons, whereas the likelihood that a business establishment would be robbed was 1 in every 64 establishments. In addition, the likelihood of a household being robbed was 1 in every 4,244 households (Normandeau, 1968, p. 10).



Thus, it appears that while the largest "number" of robberies occur on the street, commercial establishments run a greater risk of victimization.

## CHAPTER III

### TEMPORAL ASPECTS OF ROBBERY

#### Time of Day

As may be expected, the crime of robbery is primarily committed during the evening hours. In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that 38% of the robberies occurred between 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. (Normandeau, 1968, p. 221). In Block's (1977) study of robbery in Chicago, he found that 58% of the incidents occurred at night (Block, 1977, p. 72). In Cleveland, Pyle (1976) reported that 57% of the cases occurred between 4:00 p.m. and midnight (Pyle, 1976, p. 176). Syvrud (1967), in his study of robbery in the U.S. northwest, found that 39.4% took place between 6:01 p.m. and midnight, 27.5% between 12:01 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., 17.9% between 6:01 a.m. and noon, and 14.7% took place between 12:01 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. (Syvrud, 1967, p. 57). In their study of armed robbery in Ottawa, Ciale and Leroux (1984), found that most robbers preferred to perpetrate their crimes between 7:00 p.m. and midnight (55.8%), with the number of robberies falling abruptly after 1:00 a.m. (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 27).

The time of the event does seem to differ according to the type of robbery and the type of target. In Oakland, Wilcox (1973) found that 68% of noncommercial robberies occurred in the evening hours between 6:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.. While the peak periods for armed and unarmed noncommercial robberies differed, both increased greatly at 8:00 p.m. and continued to increase until 1:00 a.m. (Wilcox, 1973, p. 57). In addition, Wilcox (1973) looked at the time of robberies in relation to the months of the year. In Oakland, dusk arrived in August around 9:00 p.m. and in December around 6:00 p.m. In both months, a sharp increase in

robbery occurred between the hour before sunset and the hour of sunset. The change between August and December strongly suggested, as Wilcox points out, a connection between dusk and noncommercial robbery, rather than with the end of the working day. However, the duration of the period of frequent robberies seemed to be connected to an evening recreation cycle, as the period ended approximately the same hour of the day for both months. Finally, Wilcox (1973) reported that the early darkness hours had a much higher rate of armed robbery than unarmed robbery, while the period after midnight had a higher rate of unarmed than of armed robbery (Wilcox, 1973, p. 58).

In their study of bank robbery in West Germany, Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) found that just after opening and just before closing were the favored times for robbery (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 152). In the U.S., Bratter (1963) found that the largest percentage (39%) of bank robberies took place between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). Letkemann (1973), however, found that morning was the preferred time by bank robbers. The offenders, in his study, indicated that bank employees and customers are dull and still half asleep in the morning. It is easier to get the "jump" on them (Letkemann, 1973, p. 108).

Studying convenience store robberies in Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that evenings were the most popular hours for the attack. Over 45% occurred between 8:00 p.m. and midnight. They also discovered that the early morning hours (1:00 - 6:00 a.m.) accounted for less than 10% of the robberies (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 50).

In his study of mugging, Pratt (1980) found that a majority of the incidents took place at night, particularly between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and midnight (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). In his biographical look at a young street robber, Shaw (1930)

observed a similar trend. "Jack-rolling" was always done at night and would never be attempted during the day (Shaw, 1930, p. 144).

In Reppetto's (1974) study of residential robbery, the offences tended to be clustered in the late afternoon (when residents would be returning from work or other daily activities). In his sample, 42.1% of robberies occurred between noon and 6:00 p.m., 29.8% between 6:01 p.m. and midnight, 12.5% between midnight and 6:00 a.m., and 15.7% between 6:01 a.m. and noon (Reppetto, 1974, p. 30).

From the offender's point of view, there are several reasons why the dark hours are ideal. First, darkness helps shield the offender's acts from potential witnesses or those who might possibly intervene. Second, there are likely to be fewer possible witnesses out on the streets at night. Third, darkness hinders the victim's ability to identify the offender and, therefore, reduces the likelihood of apprehension. Finally, the evening is the end of the business day when the amount of money accumulated is likely to be the greatest.

### Day of the Week

Research on the temporal patterns of robbery suggests that robberies tend to disproportionately fall on Fridays and Saturdays. In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that robberies mainly occurred on Fridays and Saturdays (Normandeau, 1968, p. 9). Block (1977) reported that the proportion of robberies occurring in Chicago on the weekend (Friday-Sunday) was greater than the proportion of hours that the weekend is to the rest of the week (Block, 1977, p.72).

Ciale and Leroux (1984), in their study of armed robbery in Ottawa, found that robberies most frequently occurred on Friday (22%) and least frequently on

Sunday (1.0%) (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 26). In his study of armed robbery in Montreal, Normandeau (1981) found that Saturday was the most dangerous day. Where banking establishments were concerned, however, the robberies were mostly committed on Thursday or Friday when the banks were open late (Normandeau, 1981, p. 4). In West Germany, Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) also found that Thursday and Friday were most often chosen by bank robbers (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 152). Bratter (1963), on the other hand, reports that Mondays and Fridays were the days of the week most preferred by bank robbers (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). Letkemann (1973) similarly found that Mondays and Fridays were the preferred days for bank robbery. On Fridays, the banks have more money in the tills because of the expected high number of withdrawals by customers for the weekend. As one robber notes: "...if a bank is near factories, you can be sure it will carry a lot of cash on paydays, which as a rule are on Friday" (Letkemann, 1973, p. 96). Monday is also considered favorable because businesses generally deposit their weekend receipts on that day. Furthermore, night deposits which have been made by businesses on the weekend are normally counted by the bank on Monday morning (Letkemann, 1973, 95). In addition, offenders feel that bank employees and customers are not as alert on Mondays. Consequently, they are easier to surprise (Letkemann, 1973, p. 108).

In their study of convenience store robberies in Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that Fridays and Saturdays were the most popular days. They accounted for almost 35% of the robberies. Wednesday followed closely as the third most popular day for robberies (17.1%) (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 49).

In London, Pratt (1980) reported that 40% of all mugging incidents took place on Fridays and Saturdays (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). Reppetto (1974), in Boston, found that residential robberies tended to fall on the weekend (Reppetto, 1974, p. 29).

The above findings are certainly not surprising. The weekend is the time when both individuals and businesses are likely to have the most money on hand. Individuals have just been paid or have taken money out of the bank to spend over the weekend. Commercial establishments have more money on hand in anticipation of more customers. In addition, they are likely to acquire more money throughout the weekend as a result of heavier business. The weekend, therefore, is the most lucrative period for the robbery offender. Moreover, the weekend is the time when the offender may need more money in order to enjoy himself and may turn to robbery as a means of obtaining that money.

### Month of the Year

Research analyzing seasonal variations in robbery suggests that it is primarily a winter activity. According to the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports, the highest robbery counts (in the U.S.) were recorded during the month of December, while the lowest occurred in June (F.B.I., 1984, p. 17). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that robbery occurs most frequently in the winter months, particularly in December (Normandeau, 1968, p. 9). Ciale and Leroux (1984) discovered that armed robberies in Ottawa were more frequently committed during the winter months, with most robberies occurring in November (15.5%) (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 26). In Montreal, Normandeau (1981) observed that armed robberies were fairly evenly distributed during the first nine months of the year, but increased markedly in October, November and December (Normandeau, 1981, p. 4). Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) found that the highest incidence of bank robberies in West Germany were in the winter months, especially January and February (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 152). In the U.S., Bratter (1963) reported that the highest percentage of bank robberies occurred in December (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). In

Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that the winter months (November - January) were the most prevalent months of the year for convenience store robberies. This three month period accounted for over 35% of the annual robberies (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 50).

There are three possible explanations for these findings. First, during the month of December, individuals and businesses are likely to have more money in their possession because of the upcoming Christmas season (lucrative targets). Second, there may be a greater motivation for the offenders to rob during these months in order to have the money necessary for the additional Christmas expenditures (motivation). Third, hours of darkness are longer during the winter months and many offenders prefer to commit their robberies under a cloak of darkness.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPATIAL ASPECTS OF ROBBERY

#### Population Density and Robbery

Robbery is not evenly distributed throughout the country. Robbery tends to increase in proportion to the density of the population (MacDonald, 1975, p. 40). Spatial patterns for robbery reveal significant differences between urban and rural areas, between large and small cities. According to the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports, U.S. cities with populations over one million have a collective robbery rate ( 958 per 100,000 inhabitants) which is 64 times greater than in rural areas ( 15 per 100,000 inhabitants) (F.B.I., 1984, p. 17). The 57 cities in the United States with populations exceeding 250,000 contained only 19% of the population, but reported 61% of all robberies. The six largest cities, with 8% of the United States population, had 33% of the robberies. Cook (1983) concluded that robbery is more highly concentrated in large cities than any other crime and by a wide margin (Cook, 1983, p. 11). Among the United States largest cities, it appears that population size may be a less important correlate of robbery than population density. In a multivariate regression analysis of robbery rates in 50 large cities, Cook (1979) found that the principal explanatory variables were population density and the proportion of the city population that were youthful black males (Cook, 1983, p. 12).



## Location of the Robbery

As one might expect, robberies are not evenly distributed throughout the urban environment. Some locations have a higher incidence of robbery than others.

A number of studies have examined the distribution of crime within the core areas of the city. Curtis (1974), in his study of violent crime in the U.S., found that rates of crime peaked in the central business district and then gradually declined with distance (Curtis, 1974, p. 148). In Indianapolis, White (1932) found that the rates for felonies decreased as one went farther away from the center of the city (White, 1932, p. 498). Schmid (1960) reported that the central area of Seattle had the highest concentrations of crime with contrasting low rates in the peripheral residential sections. The central segment of the city had 67% of all street robbery, 79% of all residential robbery, and 88% of miscellaneous robbery (Schmid, 1960, p. 660). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) reported that robberies were primarily concentrated in the central police districts or census tracts of the city (Normandeau, 1968, p. 10). Reppetto (1974) found that the outlying areas of Boston reported no residential robberies. Four of the five areas reporting significant robbery rates were core areas of Boston (Reppetto, 1974, p. 35). From the above, it appears that robberies are more frequently committed in the central areas of the city. This finding is not surprising, given the fact that the greatest number of crime opportunities are located in the core areas of the city.

In Oakland, Wilcox (1973) examined various types of robbery in relation to geographic location and type of land use. In general, she found that robberies were heavily concentrated on a few major streets of the city. Thirty-six major arteries, covering just over 6% of the total street distance of the city, accounted for approximately 50% of the robberies. Concentration on major streets was greater for

armed robbery (59%) than it was for strongarm robbery (43%) or for pursesnatches (37%). When the neighboring areas of these few streets were considered and robberies within half a block on either side of these streets were included, the amount of robbery accounted for increased to 67% (Wilcox, 1973, p. 17). With respect to land use Wilcox (1973) found that 31% of all robberies occurred in areas of the city classified as commercial land use, and this was more than double the percentage of any other land use classification (Wilcox, 1973, p. 21).

Commercial robbery, Wilcox (1973) reported, was even more concentrated than robbery as a whole. All of Oakland's commercial robberies occurred in only 12% of the census grid squares for the city and were also highly concentrated along the major thoroughfare streets. Over 65% of the commercial robberies occurred on one of the major streets of the city. An additional 9% of the commercial robberies occurred within a half block of these major streets, adding to a total of over 75% which occurred on or within half block of a major street (Wilcox, 1973, p. 27). Wilcox (1973) also reported that the center of the city did not account for a particularly high proportion of commercial robberies. The outlying commercial and thoroughfare streets attracted much greater amounts of commercial robbery than the central business district itself. Only 35.1% of commercial robberies occurred within a commercial landuse area, slightly less than the 37% which occurred in residential landuse areas (Wilcox, 1973, p. 30). This high percentage of commercial robberies in residential areas was undoubtedly due, as Wilcox pointed out, to victimization of stand alone establishments which are the only commercial establishment on a block or one of a small cluster of establishments. The establishments which tended to have the highest commercial robbery rates were those which tended to locate independently of other businesses (e.g., convenience stores) (Wilcox, 1973, p. 34). However, the low percentage of commercial robberies within commercial land

use areas and the corresponding higher proportion within residential land use areas were due to the fact that over half the city of Oakland was classified as residential land use. Consequently, when Wilcox (1973) examined the number of commercial robberies within each land use area in relation to the number of census grid squares for that kind of land use, she found that commercial robberies were nearly six times as frequent in commercial land use areas as within residential land use areas (Wilcox, 1973, p. 34). Overall, then, Wilcox (1973) found that the two strongest features of commercial robbery distribution were the concentration of robberies on major streets of the city and the concentration of robberies within commercial land use areas.

Noncommercial robberies, Wilcox (1973) reported, were far less concentrated than commercial robberies. They occurred in over 27% of the city's occupied grid squares as compared with only 12% for commercial robbery. The distribution of noncommercial robberies in the city did, however, follow the pattern of commercial robbery: along the major thoroughfare streets (Wilcox, 1973, p. 40). With respect to noncommercial male (victim) robbery, Wilcox (1973) found that almost 75% of these cases occurred on an open city street or sidewalk, and that this proportion held for each land use type. Furthermore, over 35% of noncommercial male-victim robberies occurred in commercial land use areas. This was far more than for any other land use type (Wilcox, 1973, p. 49). Thus, the author concluded that a relationship between commercial areas and the incidence of noncommercial male-victim robberies was evident. However, Wilcox (1973) noted that this focus seems to be more dependent upon the nature of the commercial area than its mere existence. Fringe-type night life and skid row type areas tended to have the best correspondence with the occurrence of noncommercial male-victim robberies (Wilcox, 1973, p. 49).

While noncommercial male-victim robberies occurred only in 15% of the city's grid squares, Wilcox (1973) found that noncommercial female (victim) robberies spread over 20%. Furthermore, noncommercial male-victim robberies were clustered around the major thoroughfare streets more than noncommercial female-victim robberies. Only 36% of female-victim robberies occurred on the major streets, as compared to 51% of male-victim robberies and 68% of the commercial robberies. In addition, only 56% of the female-victim robberies occurred within a half block of the major streets, while over 70% of the male-victim robberies were this close to the major streets (Wilcox, 1973, p. 67). This spread of noncommercial female-victim robberies away from major streets and over more territory was also reflected in the landuse of the robbery sites. Wilcox (1973) reported that female-victim robberies occurred in residential landuse areas more often than either male or commercial robberies. With respect to the specific location, noncommercial female robberies most frequently took place on the fringes of major shopping areas and neighborhood shopping districts, rather than directly in them (Wilcox, 1973, p. 67). Finally, non-commercial female-victim victims in the sample were most frequently victimized on the street (location) between 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. (time) (Wilcox, 1973, p. 68). Based upon the above findings, Wilcox (1973) suggested that a strong connection exists between the journey from work or from shopping in core areas to parking or exiting from the fringes of these areas and possible victimization (Wilcox, 1973, p. 69).

Wilcox's (1973) study suggests two general findings in regard to the spatial distribution of robbery. First, robbery tends to be clustered around the major thoroughfares of the city. Second, robbery most frequently occurs in commercial land use areas. These findings are not surprising, given the fact that the largest number of personal and commercial opportunities are probably found in these locations.

In Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) examined the relationship between robbery frequency and location. They found that convenience stores located in sectors of the city characterized by major commercial strip development, having a high mix of residential and industrial landuse, having major transportation arteries, and a diverse mix of cultures, had the highest robbery rates (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286).

In a similar study in Florida, Duffala (1976) hypothesized that a convenience store would be more vulnerable to armed robbery when: 1) located within two blocks of a major transportation route; 2) located on a street(s) with only a light amount of vehicular traffic; 3) in a residential and/or vacant land use area, and; 4) located in an area of fewer surrounding commercial activities (Duffala, 1976, p. 228). With respect to the first hypothesis, Duffala (1976) found no significant relationship between the variables. Even when the distance variable was increased or reduced to different proximities from a major route, no statistically significant relationships emerged (Duffala, 1976, p. 237). There was, however, a significant relationship between the variables of the second hypothesis. The data revealed that 55% of the stores located on streets with a light traffic flow (less than 10,000 vehicles in 24 hours) had been robbed three or more times. Of those stores robbed three or more times, 91.6% were located on a street with a light amount of vehicular traffic (Duffala, 1976, p. 238). The analysis of the data relating to the third hypothesis indicated no significant relationship between residential and vacant land uses and vulnerability. For those stores robbed never, once, or twice, 63% were located in a predominantly commercial surrounding, while 37% were located in a predominantly residential or vacant surrounding. Of those stores robbed three or more times, 66.6% were located in residential and or vacant landuse areas (Duffala, 1976, p. 239). In relation to the fourth hypothesis, no statistically significant

relationship was observed for these two variables when the information was computed in a 2x2 chi-square table. When a 3x3 chi-square table was used, however, a significant relationship was obtained supporting the hypothesis (Duffala, 1976, p. 240). Finally, Duffala (1976) found that when all four hypotheses were examined in relation to the convenience stores which were robbed three or more times, support for each hypothesis emerged. Of the twelve stores which were robbed a total of 61 times over the time span of the study: nine were located within two blocks of a major transportation route; ten were located on a street with only light amount of traffic; eight were located in a residential and/or vacant land use area; and twelve had fewer than two surrounding commercial activities (Duffala, 1976, p. 243).

From the above, then, it seems fair to conclude that robberies are not evenly distributed, geographically, throughout the urban environment. It also appears that they are not evenly distributed among the social areas of the city. Messner and South (1986), in their analysis of National Crime Survey data, examined the relationship between social areas and robbery. First, they found that the percentage of the population which is black was negatively and significantly related to the rate at which both whites and blacks were robbed by whites, and positively and significantly related to the rate at which both whites and blacks were robbed by blacks. In other words, the higher the percent black in an area, the greater the likelihood of contact with potential black offenders and the smaller the likelihood of contact with potential white offenders in the city. Hence, irrespective of the victims' race, a high percentage of blacks in the city increases the probability of being robbed by a black and decreases the probability of being robbed by a white (Messner and South, 1986, p. 984). Second, with respect to residential segregation, all four coefficients were in the anticipated direction --- positive for intraracial victimization and

negative for interracial victimization. Racial residential segregation was negatively and significantly related to the rate at which whites were robbed by blacks, and positively and significantly related to the rate at which blacks were robbed by other blacks (Messner and South, 1986, p. 985). In Westchester County, New York, Dunn (1976) examined the relationship between robbery and the characteristics of social areas. The race composition of robbery incidents was related to race composition of the social areas, particularly for intraracial robberies. White offender/white victim robberies tended to occur in social areas with high proportions of white population. Non-white offender/non-white victim robberies tended to occur in predominantly non-white social areas. However, both of the two interracial robbery offender/victim dyads (white/nonwhite, non-white/white) tended to be concentrated in predominantly non-white areas (Dunn, 1974, p. 398). From this, Dunn (1974) concluded that most robberies take place in non-white neighborhoods. In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) looked at the five leading police districts in the central segment of the city, which had a combined population of 300,000 blacks and 150,000 whites. He found that although this population represented 22.5% of the total Philadelphia population, 55% of the blacks and 15% of the whites in the city lived in these five districts which accounted for 52.5% of all robberies committed in Philadelphia (Normandeau, 1972, p. 34). Reppetto (1974) is another researcher who examined the areas of robbery occurrence. With respect to race, he found that four of the five areas reporting significant residential robbery rates were mixed, and the fifth was predominantly black. In relation to income, all five areas with significant robbery rates were low income areas. Finally, with regard to housing type, four of the five areas with significant robbery rates were ones in public housing projects (Reppetto, 1974, p. 38).

From the preceding review, several conclusions may be drawn. First, robbery is committed more often in the core areas of the city. Second, it tends to be concentrated along major thoroughfares and areas classified as commercial land use. Finally, robbery in the U.S. occurs more frequently in the areas of the city which are predominantly non-white.

### Offender Mobility and Robbery

Normandeau (1968) found that robbers in Philadelphia resided primarily in the central districts of the city (Normandeau, 1968, p. 10). Schmid (1960), in his study of crime in Seattle, reported that 48% of offenders lived in the skid row area and 37% lived in the central business district of the city (Schmid, 1960, p. 660).

The fact that offenders reside, and offenses occur, in the core of the city does not mean that offenders do not travel to commit robbery. Turner (1969) observed that the mean distance travelled by a delinquent was .4 of a mile. Three-quarters of the offences took place within one mile of the delinquent's residence, and the range was from zero to 23 miles. Turner (1969) discovered that delinquents tended to commit offenses nearer to their residence, and that this tendency waned as distance increased. However, very close to their residence, the delinquents were less likely to commit as many offenses (Turner, 1969, p. 17). Robbers, however, appear to travel longer distances to commit their offences. White (1932) found that the average distance between the residence of the robber and the location of the offence was 2.14 miles, which was farther than for any other crime except embezzlement and auto theft (White, 1932, p. 502). Similar findings are reported by Curtis (1974) based on his analysis of violent crime. Robbery showed the least degree of localization of the crimes studied. In addition, he found that armed robbers



travelled proportionately longer distances to their targets than unarmed robbers. Furthermore, interracial robberies had longer offender-crime, victim-crime, and offender-victim distances than intraracial ones (Curtis, 1974, p. 148). In Cleveland, Pyle (1976) reported that the average distance between the residence of the offender and the location of the offence for "crimes against the person" was 1.93 miles. In addition, 61% of those arrested for crimes against the person resided within the same census tract as the crime location (Pyle, 1976, p. 188). In crimes against property (robbery included), Pyle (1976) found that offenders travelled an average of 2.3 miles, and only 48% of those arrested came from the same census tract where the crime was committed (Pyle, p. 1976, p. 188).

In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) examined the relationship between the place of the offence, the place of residence of the offender, and the place of residence of the victim. Using a map measure of distance, Normandeau (1968) found that the median distance between the offender's residence and the place of offence was 1.07 miles; between the victim's residence and the offender's residence was 1.61 miles; and between the victim's residence and the place of the offence was 1.88 miles. Normandeau (1968) also discovered that the proportions of offenses, in these different relationships between offence, offender and victim, distinctively and progressively waned with distance (Normandeau, 1968, p. 10). In comparing these results with those for other crimes (rape, assault, homicide), Normandeau (1968) discovered that the robber travels farther than other offenders in crimes of violence in order to find a victim (Normandeau, 1968, p. 11). The fact that victims lived farther from the scene than the offender was also reflected in Normandeau's data on census tracts which showed that fewer victims and robbers lived in the same census tract than in the places of the crime occurrences. Robber and victim were living in the same census tract in 26% of the cases; place of offence and residence

of offender were in the same tract in 33% of the cases; and place of offence and residence of victim were in the same tract in 32% of the cases (Normandeau, 1968, p. 11). It seems, therefore, that the greatest percentage of robberies occur when the offender and/or the victim are not in their own census tracts (neighborhoods). It cannot be inferred from these findings, however, that the victim is usually unfamiliar with the area in which he/she is robbed. Syvrud (1967), in his study of robbery victims, found that 91.7% of the victims were familiar with the immediate surroundings in which the robbery took place. In fact, 83.0% were at their regular job, or going to or coming from their regular job, when they were attacked (Syvrud, 1967, p. 58).

Another study which examined offender mobility was conducted by Capone and Nichols (1976) in Miami. They looked at the relationship between urban structure and mobility with respect to robbery. Capone and Nichols (1976) found that the distribution of robbery trip frequencies by distance bands for metropolitan Miami confirmed the results of earlier studies. Trip frequency declined sharply with distance, with 33% of all robbery trips occurring within one mile of the offender's residence, over half within two miles, and almost two-thirds within three miles of the original point. Capone and Nichols (1976) suggest that the reason for this finding is offenders' preference to commit crimes in areas with which they are familiar (Capone and Nichols, 1976, p. 203). For unarmed and open space robberies, Capone and Nichols (1976) reported that trip frequencies were even more heavily concentrated in the first three distance bands; over 36% of the trips were less than one mile, and just over 60% were less than two miles, with trips of less than three miles making up almost three quarters of the total. Armed robberies and occurrences involving fixed premises, on the other hand, showed a more gradual decline in trip frequency with distance. For fixed premises, only 23% of the trips were less

than one mile, while for armed robberies the figure was 26%. Trips of less than two miles made up 41% of the total for fixed premises and 45% of the total for armed robberies. Finally, trips of less than three miles accounted for less than 59% of the total. In each case, it was necessary to include trips up to five miles before a frequency of three quarters of the total was reached (Capone and Nichols, 1976, p. 206). The authors conclude that armed robbers travel significantly farther to commit their crimes than unarmed robbers. Armed and unarmed trip distances differ because of the spontaneous nature and predominance of foot travel in unarmed robbery, and the more planned nature and common use of a vehicle in armed robbery (Capone and Nichols, 1976, p. 203). They also conclude that a longer distance is travelled by the offender in robberies of fixed premises than robberies in open spaces. The explanation for the difference, as Capone and Nichols point out, lies largely in the characteristics of urban landscape. Open space areas are relatively ubiquitous in the urban environment, and there would appear to be little difference between specific locations as potential robbery sites. It appears that the choice of a particular site in the open space for the commission of a robbery is as much a matter of propinquity and convenience as it is of design. There is little incentive to attract the offender over any great distance (Capone and Nichols, 1976, p. 207). On the other hand, fixed premises attractive to robbery offenders are not ubiquitous, they are more evenly distributed throughout the urban landscape. For example, every type of business exhibits a unique distribution in the urban structure in response to its particular locational imperatives. Within this spatial structure of fixed premises, some are perceived by robbery offenders as more attractive than others. The attractiveness of a potential target may include the level of expected reward, likelihood of apprehension, etc. It is the attractiveness of the potential target, Capone and Nichols suggest, which overcomes, in part, the inhibiting effect of distance and generates longer crime trips. Furthermore, the number of fixed

premises, as opposed to open space opportunities, is simply smaller within a short distance of the offender's residence (Capone and Nichols, 1976, p. 209).

From the above discussion, several relationships emerge with respect to robbery and mobility. First, robbery trip frequency declines with distance from the offender's residence. Second, robbery offenders travel longer distances to commit their crimes than most other types of violent offenders. Third, robbers who are armed travel greater distances than those who are unarmed. Fourth, a longer distance is travelled by offenders in robberies of fixed premises than robberies in open spaces. Finally, victims travel longer distances than offenders between their place of residence and the site where they are robbed.

## CHAPTER V

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OFFENDER AND VICTIM

#### Sex

Empirical research on robbery clearly indicates that it is a male dominated crime. According to Canadian Crime Statistics, 92.3% of the offenders arrested for robbery in Canada in 1984 were male (Statistics Canada, 1984, p. 55). In British Columbia, 93.5% of the robbers arrested in 1985 were male. In the city of Vancouver, 91.4% of the robbers arrested were male (Ministry of Attorney-General, 1985). In the United States, the Uniform Crime Reports reveal that 92.8% of robbery incidents officially recorded in 1984 involved male offenders (F.B.I., 1984, p. 179). According to the National Crime Survey (1976), 96% of all robbery incidents in the U.S. involved male offenders (Cook, 1976, p. 175). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that males represented 95% of the offenders, whereas they represented only 48% of the population (Normandeau, 1968, p. 6). In Oakland, 93.5% of Weir's (1973) sample were male robbers (Weir, 1973, p. 218). In Ottawa, Ciale and Leroux (1984) found that 94.4% of the armed robbers were male (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 35). In New York, Haran and Martin (1985) found that 96% of the bank robbers in their study were male (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 47). In London, Pratt (1980) reported that in 98% of the muggings the attacker was male (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). In Boston, 97% of the residential robberies were committed by males (Repetto, 1974, p. 27). Similarly high percentages of male offenders have been found by McClintock and Gibson (1961) in London, Block (1977) in Chicago, and Syvrud (1967) in the U.S. Northwest.

While females account for less than one tenth of all robbers, roughly one out of every four robbery victims is a woman. In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) reported that 71% of the victims in their sample were male (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 18). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) reported that 75% of the victims in his sample were male (Normandeau, 1968, p. 154). In London, Pratt (1980) found that 80% of the muggings were against males (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). In Boston, Reppetto (1974) found that 74% of residential robbery victims were male (Reppetto, 1974, p. 28).

In 1979, the National Crime Survey calculated the victimization rates for the two sexes. They found that males had a robbery victimization rate (8.8) more than twice that of females (4.0) (Cook, 1983, p. 19). Robbery, therefore, is predominantly a male/male crime. This is more pronounced in armed robberies than it is in unarmed robberies. Curtis (1974) reports that 84.5% of armed robberies occurred between a male offender and male victim, and 10.2% occurred between a male offender and female victim. With respect to unarmed robbery, 68.9% took place between a male offender and male victim, and 26.2% took place between a male offender and a female victim (Curtis, 1974, p. 32). Normandeau (1968) found that males rob other males significantly more often in the street, whereas they rob females more often in commercial establishments and residences (Normandeau, 1968, p. 10).

### Age

Offenders and victims of robbery are not distributed evenly across all age categories. Most robbers are fairly young. According to the Uniform Crime Reports (1984), in 25.6% of the cases the offender was under 18 years, in 46.6% he was under 21 years, and in 66.9% the robber was under 25 years (F.B.I., 1984, p.

178). The same pattern emerges from the National Crime Survey (1979) where 56.1% of the robbers were reportedly under the age of twenty-one (Cook, 1983, p. 19). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) discovered that 50.7% of the robbers were under 21 years of age, and 88.9% were under 30 years of age (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 47). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups predominated among offenders. The median age for offenders was 26.8 years (Normandeau, 1968, p. 8). Block (1977), in his study of violent crime in Chicago, found that the mean age for robbery offenders was 20.5 years (Block, 1977, p. 30).

Researchers have also examined the relationship between the age of the offender and the type of robbery. In London, McClintock and Gibson found that offenders over 21 years (64.9%) were more likely to commit commercial robberies than those under 21 years (35.1%). They also reported that offenders under 21 years (56.2%) were more likely to commit street robberies than those over 21 years (43.8%). Finally, those under 21 years (57.9%) had a greater likelihood of committing a residential robbery than those over 21 years (42.1%) (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 49). These findings are supported by those of Conklin (1972) in Boston. Conklin (1972) found that youthful offenders tended to commit noncommercial robberies while adult offenders tended to commit commercial robberies (Conklin, 1972, p. 81). In California, the mean age of offenders in "planned" armed robberies was 25.4 years whereas, the mean age of offenders in "spur of the moment" robberies was 24.1 years (Wolcott, 1968, p. 17). In West Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that seventy percent of bank robbers were under thirty years of age (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 181). This is corroborated by Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) who found that most bank robbers in the same country were under twenty-five years of age (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 153). In New York,

Haran and Martin (1985) examined the age composition of bank robbers over the years 1964 to 1976 and uncovered a dramatic change. In the years 1964-1966, 37% of the robbers fell in the 16-25 year old group, with 63% in the over 26 year age bracket. By 1973-1976, however, the share of the younger 16-25 year old group had risen to 58% of the robbers, while the 26 year and older group had fallen to 42% (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 48). They concluded that banks were becoming the targets of younger and younger offenders. Camp (1968) found that the American bank robber is typically in his mid-twenties (Camp, 1968, p. 79). While in Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) observed that the robbers of convenience stores tended to be between 18 and 23 years of age (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286). In Boston, 64% of the residential robbers were under 21 years and 91% were under 25 years of age (Repetto, 1974, p. 27). Similar findings were reported by Pratt (1980) with respect to muggers in London.

Victims of robbery seem to be slightly older than their attackers. In 1979, the National Crime Survey revealed that robbery victimization rates were highest for the 20-24 (12.1 per 1,000), the 16-19 (10.4 per 1,000), and the 12-15 (9.4 per 1,000) age groups. These rates were 50-100% higher than for any other age group (Cook, 1983, p. 19). Equally in the U.S., Cohen, Cantor, and Kluegel (1981) found that the 16-29 age group had the greatest likelihood of robbery victimization and that the risk decreased with increasing age (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 653). McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that 9.4% of the victims in London were under the age of 21 and 77.9% were under the age of 50 (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 19). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that the highest victimization rates were in the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups. The median age for victims was 36.1 years (Normandeau, 1968, p. 8). Block (1977), in Chicago, reported that while the mean age of robbery offenders was 20.5 years, the mean age of robbery victims was 29.6



years (Block, 1977, p. 30). In Oakland, Weir (1973) discovered that 32% of robbery victims were under the age of 25 and 85% were under the age of 55 years (Weir, 1973, p. 21). Syvrud (1967), in his look at robbery in the U.S. Northwest, observed that 29% of the victims were under 29 years of age, 35% were 30-50 years of age, and 28% were over 50 years of age (Syvrud, 1967, p. 46). In London, Pratt (1980) reported that while the muggers tended to be under 21 years, their victims tended to be over 21 years (Pratt, 1980, p. 96).

Curtis (1974) examined the relationship between the age of the offender and victim with respect to armed and unarmed robbery. In relation to armed robbery, he found that in 30.5% of the cases the offender and the victim were 25 years and under, in 44.9% the offender was 25 years and under and the victim was 26 years and over, and in 18.4% both the offender and the victim were 26 years and over. With regard to unarmed robbery, in 44.2% the offender and the victim were 25 years and under, in 44.2% of the cases the offender was 25 years and under and the victim was 26 years and over, and in 9.6% both the offender and the victim were 26 years and over (Curtis, 1974, p. 35).

### Race

As the majority of studies on robbery were conducted in the United States, the black/white racial division figures prominently in the statistics they report. According to the Uniform Crime Reports (1984), 61.5% of all robbery cases involve black offenders and 37.5% white offenders (F.B.I., 1984, p. 180). However, of those offenders who were under 18 years of age, 68.5% were black and 30.3% were white. According to the National Crime Survey (1979), 57.1% of the robberies were reportedly committed by black offenders and 37.9% were committed by white

offenders (Cook, 1983, p. 18). In Chicago, Block (1977) found that robbery offenders were predominantly black (Block, 1977, p. 30). And in Oakland, Weir (1973) reported that almost 80% of the robbery incidents in the sample involved black offenders (Weir, 1973, p. 37). These findings are even more significant when one considers the fact that the percentage of blacks in the U.S. population is much lower than the percentage of black offenders cited in these studies. In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) calculated specific robbery rates per 10,000 inhabitants by race of the offender. He discovered that the black rate was approximately 16 times greater than the white rate (Normandeau, 1968, p. 6).

In relation to the type of robbery, Weir (1973) reported that black offenders were most likely to be involved in strongarm (street) robberies, while white offenders were most likely to be involved in commercial robberies (Weir, 1973, p. 37). Similar findings have been reported by Normandeau (1968). In Philadelphia, he found that white offenders were more likely to victimize persons in a business rather than a street setting, while blacks were more likely to victimize in a street setting (Normandeau, 1968, p. 10). In California, Wolcott (1968) examined the relationship between the race of the offender and the type of armed robbery. In "planned" armed robberies, the offenders were 54% white, 36% black, 7% mexican, and 3% other. In "spur of the moment" armed robberies, the offenders were 52% white, 32% black, 13% mexican, and 3% other (Wolcott, 1968, p. 17). In their study of bank robbers, Haran and Martin (1985) found that 56% were black, 43% were white, and 1% were Puerto Rican. Haran and Martin (1985) also examined the race composition of the bank robbers lineally over the years 1964 to 1976. In 1964-1966, 61% of the robbers were white and mostly in the over 26 year age bracket. By the period 1973-1976, however, 62% of the robbers were black and 52% were under the 26 year old age bracket. This was almost a complete reversal of

the racial and age composition of bank robbers over a 12 year period (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 48). Camp (1968) found that 15% of the bank robbers were non-white, while 12% of the population nationally (U.S.) were non-white (Camp, 1968, p.78). In London, Pratt (1980) reported that a majority of mugging offenders were black (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). Similar findings were reported by Reppetto (1974) for residential robbers in Boston (Reppetto, 1974, p. 27).

From the above, it seems clear that in the U.S. blacks are overrepresented among robbery offenders. The evidence with respect to robbery victims, however, is not as clear cut. Some studies have found that the largest percentage of robbery victims are white. In his examination of the offender/victim race dyad, Dunn (1976) found that 69% of the cases involved black offender/white victim, 15% involved a white offender/white victim, 14% involved a black offender/black victim, and 3% involved a white offender/black victim dyad (Dunn, 1976, p. 16). Curtis (1974), in his analysis of violent crime in seventeen American cities, found that 45.3% of the robberies involved a black offender/white victim, 37.8% involved a black offender/black victim, 15.5% involved a white offender/white victim, and 1.4% involved a white offender/black victim dyad (Curtis, 1974, p. 21). In Oakland, both Weir (1973) and Wilcox (1973) found that over 75% of the robbery incidents involved victims who were white and 25% who were black (Weir, 1973, p. 24; Wilcox, 1973, p. 58). In London, Pratt (1980) reported that in a majority of cases the victims were white (Pratt, 1980, p.96). This is similar to what Reppetto (1974) found in Boston where 83% of the victims were white and only 11% were black (Reppetto, 1974, p. 28).

There is some evidence, on the other hand, suggesting that blacks form a higher percentage of robbery victims in the United States. In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) examined the offender/victim race dyad. He found that 63% of the

cases involved a black offender/black victim, 23% involved a black offender/white victim, 13% involved a white offender/ white victim, and 1% involved a white offender/black victim dyad (Normandeau, 1968, p. 168). Therefore, 64% all the victims in the sample were black and 36% were white. As blacks represent no more than 30% of the population in Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) concluded that they have more than twice their share of victims (Normandeau, 1968, p. 6).

From the above review, there seems to be no standard frequencies with which blacks and whites are victimized in robbery. I would suggest, however, that the findings of Curtis (1974) are the most representative of all the studies. He used a survey of seventeen American cities, whereas other studies only collected data from single cities. According to Curtis' findings, then, approximately 61% of robbery victims are white and 39% are black. Therefore, it may be concluded that a larger number of whites are victimized than blacks. However, this finding means relatively little in light of the fact that a majority of the U.S. population is white. A more meaningful statistic is the actual risk of robbery victimization by race. In 1979, the National Crime Survey reported that blacks had a robbery victimization rate (12.5 per 1,000) more than twice that for whites (5.5 per 1,000) (Cook, 1983, p. 19). Using National Crime Survey data (1977), Cohen, Cantor and Kleugal (1981) equally found that blacks had almost twice the risk of robbery victimization in comparison to whites (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 653). This confirms what Normandeau (1968) observed in Philadelphia some years earlier when he examined the rates of victimization for each race. He found that the black rate for robbery victims was approximately six times greater than the white rate (Normandeau, 1968, p. 175). Thus, although a larger "number" of whites are victimized than blacks, blacks have a higher "risk" of victimization.

## Marital Status

Since the majority of robbers are under twenty-five years of age, this is likely to be reflected in their marital status. McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that the majority of offenders in their sample were single men, and that the percentage of married or divorced offenders was relatively small. In addition, the proportion of married men was very much lower than for the general population, and the proportion of divorced very much higher. Finally, they reported that broken marriages were more common among robbery offenders than among the general population, and the proportion who had never been married was much higher (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 52). Haran and Martin (1985), in their look at bank robbers in New York, reported that 80% of the robbers were either single, separated, or divorced. Only 20% were married at the time of the robbery (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 49). Similarly, Camp (1968) found that the bank robbers in his sample were predominantly single. Only 34.1% were married at the time of the offense (Camp, 1968, p. 79).

As to the marital status of victims, Syvrud (1967) found 62% of the victims in his study were married, 19% were single, 11% were divorced, 7% were widowed, and 2% were separated (Syvrud, 1967, p. 47). In their analysis of National Crime Survey data, Cohen, Cantor and Kluegal (1981) examined the risk of victimization in relation to household size. They found that individuals living alone had a risk of robbery victimization almost two and one half times higher than those who were living with others (Cohen et al. 1981, p. 653). It is fair to assume that those individuals living alone were either single, separated, divorced, or widowed.

## Employment Status

In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) examined the employment records of robbery offenders and found that few offenders held white-collar positions. Occupations varied, but approximately 50% were labourers and casual workers. Impermanent or unsettled occupations predominated among offenders (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 55). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) examined the social characteristics of offenders and victims. He found that victims were much higher on the occupational scale than offenders, who were at the bottom of the scale. Robbers, like other criminals, were found to be poorly trained, poorly educated, and had poor employment records (Normandeau, 1968, p. 8). In their study of bank robbers in New York, Haran and Martin (1985) reported that 71% were unskilled in any trade (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 48). Similarly, Camp (1968) found that 52.7% of the bank robbers were unskilled, 25.3% were skilled, 12.0% were labourers, and 9.9% were in sales (Camp, 1968, p. 79).

As to employment, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found 32% of the offenders in their London, England sample were unemployed at the time of the offence (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 56). In Oakland, Feeney (1986) found that none of the juveniles and only 20% of the adult robbers in his sample had jobs at the time of the robbery, most of which were low-paying or part-time jobs (Feeney, 1986, p. 62). In the same city, Weir (1973) reported that just over half (56%) of the robbers were unemployed (Weir, 1973, p. 28). Servay and Rehm (1986) found that over fifty percent of the bank robbers in their West German study were unemployed (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 181). Another study (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 48), in the U.S., reports still a higher percentage: 66%. The latter percentage is even more significant when one considers that it was calculated for the

1962-1976 period, when the unemployment rate in the U.S. was significantly lower than it is at present.

In relation to the employment status of robbery victims, Cohen, Cantor and Kluegal (1981) found that unemployed individuals had a risk of robbery victimization more than twice that of employed individuals, and over three times higher than home centered individuals (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 653).

### Socioeconomic Status

As one might expect, robbery offenders typically come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In his analysis of the National Crime Survey data, Cook (1976) found that robbers in the sample generally came from groups with low socioeconomic status and few legitimate opportunities to make money (Cook, 1976, p. 175). MacDonald (1975), in his analysis of the Uniform Crime Reports, also found that offenders normally came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (MacDonald, 1975, p. 132). In his study of bank robbers, Camp (1968) found that 76.5% were from the lowest social class and 18.2% were from the second lowest social class (Camp, 1968, p. 77).

With respect to the socioeconomic status of victims, Syvrud (1967) found that 54.6% of the victims in his study were from the lower or lower middle classes, 28.9% from the middle class, and 16.1% from the upper class (Syvrud, 1967, p.48). Cohen, Cantor and Kluegal (1981) examined the risk of robbery victimization for various income groups. They found that low income (0 - \$7,999.) individuals had a significantly greater risk of robbery victimization than either medium income (\$8,000. - \$19,999.) or high income (\$20,000.+ ) individuals (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 653). In other words, the risk of robbery victimization was found to decrease with

increasing income.

### Education Status

From the data available, it appears that robbery offenders are less educated than their victims. In California, Wolcott (1968) found that armed robbers had, on the average, 10.4 years of formal schooling (Wolcott, 1968, p. 17). In West Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) discovered that the education level for bank robbers was less than average for their ages (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 181). In New York, Haran and Martin (1985) found that 17.8% of the bank robbers had eighth grade or less, 49.2% were high school dropouts, 18.2% were high school graduates, 8.4% had a high school equivalency diploma, 5.8% had some college, .4% were college graduates, and .2% had done graduate work (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 48).

With respect to robbery victims, Syvrud (1967) found that 8.3% of the victims had attended grade school (0-8yrs.), 19.7% had attended high school, 32.1% had completed high school, 29.4% had attended college, 6.4% had completed college, and 4.1% had done graduate work (Syvrud, 1967, p. 49).



## CHAPTER VI

### THE ROBBERY EVENT

#### Types of Offenders

The way in which a robbery will evolve or develop, is largely determined by the type or types of offenders involved. Therefore, before discussing the robbery process in detail, it is important to present a general overview of various offender types.

Conklin (1972) developed a general typology of robbery offenders comprising four types: the professional, the opportunistic, the addict, and the alcoholic.

The professional robber is the type who corresponds to the image of the robber in the public's mind. He is the bandit who carefully plans his robbery, executes the crime with a group of accomplices, and steals large sums of money which are used to support a hedonistic lifestyle (Conklin, 1972, p. 63).

The professional robber exhibits a long-term, deep-seated commitment to robbery as a means of getting money. As is the case with the professional thief, the professional robber makes a regular business out of stealing (Sutherland, 1937, p. 3). The professional commits robbery almost exclusively, although he may have committed other crimes in his past. Moreover, such an offender rarely holds a full-time job other than committing robberies. He is committed to the crime of robbery because it is direct, fast and very profitable. In the course of a year, the professional robber may achieve four or five "big scores". He usually gains more than \$500 in a robbery, sometimes stealing up to \$10,000, although the latter amount is quite rare (Conklin, 1972, p. 64).

With respect to technique, the neutralization of security measures protecting the target, investigation of escape routes, and sophisticated planning are the key elements of robbery. The professional robber, like the professional thief (Sutherland, 1937, p. 3), exhibits considerably more skill and planning than other types of robbery offenders. This is due in part to the fact that he usually steals from commercial establishments holding large sums of money which require them to take greater precautions against theft than do private citizens. This type of robber usually, but not in all cases, operates with accomplices. The professional is rarely a member of a well-organized gang which maintains its structure over a long period of time. Membership is frequently temporary and fluid, often only for a particular robbery. Because of the involvement of more than one individual, the professional gang usually assign roles to particular members of the group. The professional robber usually carries a weapon, most commonly a loaded firearm. Most are skilled in the use of pistols and may fire the weapon in order to obtain the money or facilitate escape (Conklin, 1982, p. 65).

The second type in Conklin's typology, and probably the most common, is the opportunistic robber. The opportunistic robber rarely manifests a long term commitment to robbery. He may commit other forms of theft such as larceny and shoplifting, but he robs infrequently (Conklin, 1972, p. 68).

The opportunist does not usually make elaborate plans for the robbery. Robberies seem to happen in a more or less spontaneous fashion. A vague idea of how to get some money exists in the offender's mind, but the robbery sometimes just happens, even from the robber's perspective. Still, there is a pattern to this offender's robberies which usually involves a vulnerable lone victim who is carrying a small sum of money (Conklin, 1972, p. 70). Targets are chosen for their accessibility and vulnerability, rather than the "booty" they can provide. The victim is

often an individual, rather than a commercial establishment. Favored victims of the opportunist include: elderly ladies, drunks, and people walking alone on dark streets (Conklin, 1972, p. 68).

In addition to the lack of careful planning, there is no strict assignment of roles to the members of the robbery group. Although most of the time opportunist robberies involve more than one offender, there is little differentiation or role allocation between the members of the gang. Such gangs rarely use a getaway car or plan escape routes in advance. Since they do not usually know when or where they will come across a good opportunity for robbery, it is impossible to plan their getaway before hand. Furthermore, these offenders rarely carry weapons. In a sense, the group itself becomes a weapon, for three or four offenders are as threatening to a victim as one offender with a knife (Conklin, 1972, p. 70).

In contrast to professionals, the opportunists do not seek large sums of money, do not carefully plan their robberies, and have no long-term commitment to robbery as a way of life. Conklin (1972) found that professional robbers tended to be white, in their mid-twenties, and from middle or working class backgrounds. Opportunistic robbers, on the other hand, tended to be black, in their teens or early twenties, and from lower class backgrounds (Conklin, 1972, p. 69).

The third type of robber described by Conklin is the addict robber. For the addict robber, the level of commitment to robbery is quite low, although the commitment to theft is high. Robbery is viewed by the addict as more dangerous than other forms of larceny, and is therefore seen as a last resort when money is badly needed. If channels other than robbery are open, addicts prefer to use them, since robbery may involve violence as well as face to face confrontation, thus increasing the risk of being identified and arrested (Conklin, 1972, p. 71).

Drug-using robbery offenders engage in less planning than professionals prior to their crimes, but plan more than opportunists. The addict robber knows well before he robs that he must maintain a steady flow of funds with which to buy drugs. He chooses a target in such a way as to minimize risk, but his desperate need for funds may lead him to rob often, thus resulting in carelessness in the selection of a target or the execution of the robbery. Since the addict rarely takes the time to plan the crime as the professional does, he is more apt to be apprehended. However, the fact that the addict is less likely than the professional to select a target which will net a large "booty" tends to reduce his risks (Conklin, 1972, p. 72). The addict rarely thinks in terms of a big score, wanting only enough to buy drugs.

While the professional robber usually carries a weapon and the opportunist carries no weapon at all, the addict robber may or may not employ a firearm. The relatively infrequent use of loaded firearms by addicts is related to their normal desire to steal without having to use force. The problem, however, is that the absence of a firearm tends to increase the likelihood that the addict robber will be forced to use physical force to intimidate the victim (Conklin, 1972, p. 74).

The final type of robber, in Conklin's typology, is the alcoholic robber. The alcoholic robber has no commitment to robbery as a way of life, nor has he any commitment to theft as a way to get money. The alcoholic robber does not plan his crime in advance. As with the opportunist, the crime seems to happen more or less spontaneously. Alcoholics do not even seek a vulnerable victim, as other robbers do. Instead, they typically get involved in a situation which leads to an assault, followed by theft as an afterthought. Because their crimes are not planned, alcoholic robbers usually do not employ a weapon, unless they are in the habit of carrying one. The alcoholic is less likely to take precautions, and is therefore

probably caught with greater frequency than other types of robbery offenders (Conklin, 1972, p. 76).

### Victim Selection

As may be seen from the earlier discussion, robberies disproportionately occur at certain times, at certain locations, and to certain groups in the population. Consequently, it appears that robbery is not a random event against a totally random target, but one in which offenders select their victims according to certain explicit or implicit criteria. The robber either creates the opportunity or takes advantage of one that presents itself. In doing so, he evaluates certain characteristics of the victim and certain aspects of the situation in order to reach a decision whether to victimize or not. Once the decision to go ahead is made, he must select, from a wide array of potential targets, the target to be victimized.

#### *Characteristics of the Victim/Target*

There are several characteristics of a potential victim or target which may be assessed by an offender contemplating a robbery.

From the earlier discussion of the demographic characteristics of the victim, one is tempted to conclude that they play a crucial role in the selection process. It seems, however, that even though certain groups are disproportionately victimized by robbery, personal attributes are not terribly important from the offender's point of view. In a survey of convicted robbers, Blazicek (1985) found that, in general, the various personal attributes of the victim were of little importance in its selection as a victim. Accordingly, 64.1% of the offenders declared that age was not important, 89.1% said race was unimportant, 71.9% said gender was not important,

70.3% ascribed no importance to the body build of the victim, and 48.4% of the respondents indicated that the physical condition of the victim had no bearing on its choice as target (Blazicek, 1985, p. 4). Blazicek (1985) reported that of those offenders who ascribed importance to the personal characteristics of victims, most identified the negative aspects of a particular target. In other words, rather than identifying who makes a "good victim", offenders tended to identify the "poor" ones and to exclude them from the potential pool of targets (Blazicek, 1985, p. 6). For example, the young and old were singled out as not very suitable candidates for victimization. Gender of the victim proved to be unimportant to the majority of those interviewed. Of those who indicated gender was an important selection criterion, 61% indicated a preference for male victims and 39% indicated a preference for female victims. Those offenders who preferred male targets expressed an unwillingness to attack females because they are too easily frightened and cannot defend themselves. Furthermore, women were believed to become easily hysterical or to scream. Those indicating a preference for female targets viewed the fright and lack of self-defense as good reasons to rob women because there was little chance of physical resistance or confrontation (Blazicek, 1985, p. 6). In his study of mugging, Lejeune (1977) also found that some offenders had predispositions which guided them in the selection of victims. These included a variety of personal inclinations, prejudices and antipathies, as well as group held attitudes and values. For example, his respondents had predispositions for or against mugging women (generally against); for or against mugging old people (generally against); for or against mugging whites rather than blacks (generally for); and for or against mugging the rich rather than the poor (always the rich). Lejeune (1977) concluded that while such predispositions were not unimportant, they appeared to play only a secondary role in the selection process when compared to more vital concerns of reducing personal risks and of locating a victim within a favorable temporal and

spatial environment (Lejeune, 1977, p. 135). In their biographies, Williamson (1965) and Debaun (1959) also noted a tendency to avoid female victims because of robbers' perceptions regarding their instability and unpredictability during the robbery event.

Blazicek (1985) also found that other personal attributes (race, body build, physical condition) of the victim were perceptually unimportant to the robbers. From the offender's perspective, body build was unimportant since the instrumental use of a weapon could effectively neutralize any adverse response. Similarly, race was deemed unimportant by the respondents. The only attribute which seemed to be important to the robbers was that of physical condition. Those so reporting stated that they would not consider robbing a handicapped individual (Blazicek, 1985, p. 7). There are offenders, though, who would prey on individuals who are in poor physical condition. Stanley, the central character in Clifford Shaw's The Jack-Roller, made a regular practice of clubbing or strong-arming drunks and relieving them of their money (Shaw, 1930, p. 85). Henry Williamson, a noted robber, also made a practice of robbing individuals who were drunk. Henry would become friendly with the person, get him drunk, and then rob him of all his possessions when they left the bar (Williamson, 1965, p. 41).

While personal attributes do not seem to play a significant role in the selection process, the vulnerability of the victim does. This perceived vulnerability is largely dependent upon whether the potential victim is alone or with others. A lone victim is deemed much more vulnerable than one in company; and the data on robbery appears to support this assumption. According to the National Crime Survey (1979), in 92% of all robbery incidents the victim was alone at the time of the offence (Cook, 1983, p. 18). In Boston, Conklin (1972) found that the vast majority of robberies (over 90%) involved a solitary victim (Conklin, 1972, p. 90).

Block (1977), in Chicago, reported that 76% of robbery attacks were against lone victims (Block, 1977, p. 69). Syvrud (1967) discovered that in 46.8% of the robberies the victim was alone, in 12.8% there were two victims, in 11.5% there were three victims, in 7.3% there were four victims, and in 19.7% there were five or more victims (Syvrud, 1967, p. 58). The lower percentage of lone victims and the relatively high percentage of cases with five or more victims is understandable as the sample included a large number of commercial robberies.

With respect to robbery type, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that 80% of commercial robberies (Group I) and 90% of street robberies were attacks against single victims (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 24). In Oakland, Weir (1973) reported that 74.7% of the commercial robberies and 90.4% of the noncommercial robberies involved the victimization of a single person (Weir, 1973, p. 14). In addition, she found that victims were somewhat more likely to be alone in unarmed than armed robberies (Weir, 1973, p. 18). This finding is probably accounted for by the large proportion of armed robberies committed against commercial establishments. In Montreal, Normandeau (1981) reported that the victim is often alone when robbery takes place in a business premise (Normandeau, 1981, p. 4). In his study of armed robberies in California, Wolcott (1968) found that in 38% of the "planned" robberies and in 65% of the "spur of the moment" robberies there was a solitary victim. Wolcott (1968) believes that the high rate of lone victims in "cruising/spur of the moment" robberies, is probably due to the fact that the robber who cruises an area in search of a victim, often late at night, is likely to come upon the lone service station attendant, or lone pedestrian. While the robber who plans his crime tends to avoid those targets because the proceeds are not likely to be very substantial. Furthermore, the robbery which is committed on the spur of the moment, may have germinated in the mind of the perpetrator when he



happened to come upon a lone individual who appeared to be an easy target (Wolcott, 1968, p. 31). In their study of convenience store robberies in Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) reported that the robberies were usually committed when the store was empty of patrons and the employee was alone (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286). All these findings point to a distinct preference for lone victims among robbers. This is true whether the target is of the commercial or noncommercial type. Consequently, one might assume that the number of victims is one of the criteria used in target selection. From the robber's point of view, the lone victim is more vulnerable to attack, less likely to resist, and allows him greater control over the robbery situation.

Since robbery is a crime committed for personal gain, the potential pay-off is bound to be a prime consideration in the robber's scheme. If that is the case, one might safely expect the perceived affluence of the victim to be among the standard target selection criteria both in commercial and noncommercial robberies. In his survey of robbers in Oakland, Feeney (1986) found that apparent affluence was a primary determinant of target choice (Feeney, 1986, p. 62). In Blazicek's (1985) survey of incarcerated robbery offenders, 67.2% of the respondents indicated that the amount of the potential "take" was an extremely important factor in the selection of the target. An additional 25% declared that it was an important or strongly important factor in their decision (Blazicek, 1985, p.8). Lejeune (1977), in his study of muggers, found that one of the main principles which governed victim selection was the assessment of pay-off. As two muggers explained:

I was looking for a person that looked like they had money, and a person that I knew I wouldn't have too much trouble with (Lejeune, 1977, p. 134).

Usually I look for somebody I know I can take, who got money, and uh chance of me getting busted are very low (Lejeune, 1977, p. 134).

In his look at armed robbery, Debaun (1959) also noted that the probable cash

return from the victim was a key factor in assessing "marks" (Debaun, 1959, p. 355). This assessment, by the offender, may be done in several ways. In the case of a commercial establishment, the offender may systematically calculate potential cash return by "casing" the size of the business, the type of business, the number of employees, or the number of customers. In the case of a noncommercial robbery, the assessment may be based upon indicators such as dress, demeanor, age (older persons perceived as more affluent), or race (whites perceived as more lucrative targets). In addition, temporal factors may also influence the robber's assessment (individuals and businesses carry more money on weekends and around Christmas).

In selecting the target, the offender may not only assess the potential monetary return, but also the likelihood of resistance on the part of the victim. The robber, as anyone else, is concerned with danger or possible physical injury to himself as well as the chance of success or failure. In evaluating a potential victim, the offender may look at the possibility of resistance as well as his own capability of effectively neutralizing or overcoming any resistance. Lejeune (1977) found that the likelihood of resistance was one of the key principles of victim selection. As two muggers remarked:

We take our time, you know, but not looking too conspicuous. And just take our time until we see somebody that we think that wouldn't give us no trouble... (Lejeune, 1977, p.134).

I was always looking for somebody who looked scared of me when I looked at them. You know, people give off vibes. You feel this guy looks scared. He'll give it to you in a minute (Lejeune, 1977, p. 134).

To predict the likelihood of resistance, the offender might examine the robbery from the victim's point of view. In doing so, resistance will be related to the relative importance of the money to the victim, rather than to the absolute amount of money under consideration (Letkemann, 1973, p. 152). The corner grocery store is a case in point. Corner grocery stores may be avoided because the generally low profit

yield is not worth the risk. The grocer cannot afford to lose a day's income to robbery and thus may be desperate and dangerous. Assessments of the likelihood of resistance may also be based on whether the property belongs to the victim, or has been entrusted to him by others. Offenders feel that individuals who handle money which is not their own are less likely to resist than those who are forced to part with their own money (Conklin, 1972, p. 92). If the victim is merely an employee in a large commercial establishment which is being robbed, he is perceived as being less inclined to resist. Willie Sutton, a notorious bank robber, expected that employees would not resist the robbery since the money was not their own and was insured.

The ordinary bank employee doesn't feel any great loyalty to the bank that hires him. If the bank is robbed, he knows no one individual really suffers. He knows a dozen insurance companies as impersonal as the bank divide the loss among them (Reynolds, 1954, p. 221).

Another factor which may be taken into account by the offender in selecting a victim is the likelihood of the latter reporting the crime to the police. Robbers are aware that certain groups in society, if robbed, would not seek the help of the law. These include drug dealers, homosexuals, criminals, and clients of prostitutes. Because of their involvement in illegal or socially disapproved behavior, these groups are unlikely to notify the police if victimized. Drug dealers and criminals may not report victimizations to the police out of fear that their own illegal activities might become known. Henry Williamson, a noted robber, and his partner regularly robbed dope dealers of their money and drugs because they knew the dealers would not go to the police (Williamson, 1965, p. 102). Homosexuals and clients of prostitutes may not seek out the police because of possible embarrassment and/or the detrimental effect it could have on their family life (MacDonald, 1975, p. 176). In Clifford Shaw's The Jack-Roller, the central character, Stanley, made a regular practice of robbing homosexuals who had tried to coax him into having sexual

relations with them (Shaw, 1930, p. 85). Stanley knew that these victims were unlikely to contact the police. When these types of victims do notify the police, their account of the robbery often includes false information regarding the circumstances of the offence in order to conceal their own behavior. Persons who give false information to the police are seldom effective witnesses for the prosecution. Furthermore, these victims often have second thoughts about the wisdom of reporting the robbery to the police. They suddenly lose interest in aiding the criminal investigation and, subsequently, refuse to testify in court (MacDonald, 1975, p. 176). Even when these victims give a true account of the robbery at the time of the original complaint, cooperate with the police and agree to testify in court, the Crown may be unwilling to file charges because the "victim's hands are not clean" (MacDonald, 1975, p. 177). All these factors make drug dealers, homosexuals, criminals, and customers of prostitutes ideal victims from the point of view of the robber. The robber can victimize these individuals with little fear of facing any subsequent penalty for his actions.

### *Characteristics of the Environment*

There are several characteristics of the environment which the offender may assess in the process of selecting a victim.

In selecting a victim or target, the offender is likely to assess the environmental factors which might influence the chance of apprehension. From the offender's point of view, avoiding the "long arm of the law" is of prime importance in any robbery. One such factor is the security features of the potential target. The robber may examine the type of security devices (guards, alarms, cameras) designed to foil his plans. If the target is perceived as too "hard", then another may be selected. Paradoxically, the most secure targets are usually the most "attractive"

and potentially most lucrative. Servay and Rehm (1986), in their study of bank robbery in West Germany, found that while "amateur" robbers were generally unconcerned with security, "professional" robbers often considered security features in the selection of a bank (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 182). In the U.S., Camp (1968) observed, however, a general lack of concern among bank robbers regarding the internal security of the bank. Whether or not the bank had an alarm, a camera, or used marked money was of relatively little concern to the bank robber. In 55% of the robberies, the bank robber did not know prior to the robbery if the bank had an alarm, in 59% if the bank had a camera, and in 82% if the bank used marked money (Camp, 1968, p. 114). Although most robbers did not care to learn if the bank used these security measures, the majority did take time to determine whether or not the bank had a guard, since only 23% did not know if the bank had a guard (Camp, 1968, p. 114). For those who rob convenience stores, however, security measures seem to be of more importance. Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that convenience stores having few security devices (mirrors, cameras, and/or alarms) were the most likely to be robbed (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286).

Not only is the security of the target itself assessed by the offender, but so is the security surrounding the target. A major risk faced by the robber is the policeman on the street or in a patrol car, the latter having greater mobility and more opportunity to surprise the offender while committing his crime. Most robbers seem to select their victims so as to minimize the chance that an officer will be nearby when they rob. The robber may take note of how the police make the rounds of the target he is casing (Letkemann, 1973, p. 154), as well as the distance to the nearest police station. A target at a great distance from a police station will have fewer police patrols and a slower police response time after the robbery. In West

Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that the distance of the bank to the nearest police station was of prime importance to "professional" robbers in their choice of targets (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 182). In the U.S., Camp (1968) found that the banks victimized were, in general, further from the nearest police station than was usual for most banks. While only 25% of the robbed banks were located within one half mile of the nearest police station, 55% of the sample of nationwide bank offices were that close. Forty-two percent (42%) of the banks hit were three or more miles away from the nearest police station, while only 24% of the nationwide sample were that far away (Camp, 1968, p. 113).

Reducing the likelihood of apprehension is one reason why offenders tend to commit their robberies at night. Darkness helps shield or cloak the robbery from the police and potential witnesses, and reduces the likelihood of identification by the victim. In addition, there is lighter pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the evening hours, which reduces the chances of bystander intervention.

Another feature of the environment which may be carefully assessed by the offender is the number of "effective guardians" in or around the potential target. Effective guardians may be persons who are potentially able to thwart the successful completion of the crime, either by their physical presence (witnesses) or by some form of direct action (interveners) (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 647). Guardianship is a condition in which specific individuals, be they law enforcement agents or the common citizenry, are actual or potential protectors of the offender's target. Examples of guardianship range from formal organizations specifically designed for protective purposes (police) to mere proximity of individuals to persons or property (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 645). Cohen, Cantor and Kluegal (1981) contend that if motivated robbers are present, the interplay between target suitability (attractiveness) and guardianship largely determines the risk of robbery victimization. They argue

that the probability that a robbery will occur at any specific time and place may be taken as a function of the presence of likely offenders and suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians (Cohen et al., 1981, p. 645). The data on robbery victimization appears to support this position with respect to "guardians" or witnesses. As mentioned earlier, a very high percentage (up to 90% or more) of robbery victims were alone at the time of victimization. This finding holds true for both noncommercial and commercial robberies. It may be inferred from these figures that most of these cases involved no witnesses. In Boston, Conklin (1972) found that a high percentage of the robberies involved no witnesses (Conklin, 1972, p. 44). In Oakland, Weir (1973) reported that over 80% of the robberies had no apparent witnesses (Weir, 1973, p. 53). Wilcox (1973) discovered that 77.3% of the commercial robberies occurred in areas of sporadic pedestrian traffic and 18.2% occurred in areas of no pedestrian traffic. There were no robberies which occurred in very busy or busy pedestrian traffic areas (Wilcox, 1973, p. 94). Blazicek (1985) reports that, with respect to commercial robberies, only 12.5% of the incarcerated robbers he surveyed declared that the number of people in the establishment was not a factor in the selection of a target. On the other hand, over sixty-two percent declared it to be an extremely important factor in the selection process (Blazicek, 1985, p. 9). Hence, it seems that the robber may want to prevent geometric increases in interactions which could occur as more people are involved. From the offender's point of view, bystanders only complicate the robbery event; they threaten his control over the situation and enhance the risk of identification and apprehension. Consequently, he is likely to prefer the evening hours when there is lighter pedestrian traffic on the streets and fewer customers in the stores. This may be one of the reasons why robberies disproportionately occur after dark.

Blazicek (1985) examined a number of other environmental factors which may influence the selection of targets. With respect to the "size" of the commercial establishment, almost one third (32.8%) indicated that it was a very important consideration and another quarter (25%) considered it an important factor. Of those considering it important, over one half (53.1%) indicated a preference for small or medium sized establishments as opposed to large commercial targets (Blazicek, 1985, p. 10). Servay and Rehm (1986) found that size was an important factor in the selection of banks, especially to "amateur" robbers (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 182). The "type" of business was reported by Blazicek (1985) as an important selection factor by 43.7% of the robbers. The type of business selected appeared consistent with the total event (i.e., quickness, liquid assets, and smallness of size). Blazicek (1985) observed a diversity of types ranging from banks and large commercial establishments to smaller businesses such as convenience stores, restaurants and jewelry stores. Small or medium sized establishments were preferred targets by most respondents (Blazicek, 1985, p. 11). Again, this is consistent with the nature of robbery, whereby the offender can better control the situation in smaller establishments. The "physical characteristics" of the target may also be a factor in the selection process. In West Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that the layout was an important criterion for "professional" robbers in the selection of a bank, but did not enter into the decision of "amateur" robbers (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 182). Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that convenience stores characterized by limited interior viewing, cash registers located toward the back of the store, and a disorganized and dirty appearance were the most likely targets (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286).

As to location, 50.8% of Blazicek's (1985) respondents indicated it was a very important factor and an additional 30.2% said it was an important factor in the



selection of a target. Location, in this context, referred to perceived vulnerability (i.e., located in secluded spots), rather than being located in any particular area or region of the city. Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that convenience stores located on street corners were the most likely to be robbed (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286). In Blazicek's study, a large percentage (61.9%) of the sample declared that escape routes were also very important in the selection process. Only 9.5% of the sample stated that escape routes were not a factor in selecting a target (Blazicek, 1985, p. 11). Similarly, Feeney (1986) found that robbers in his sample preferred targets which allow a fast getaway from the scene (Feeney, 1986, p. 62). Letkemann (1973), in his survey of convicted robbers, also reported that escape routes were a major consideration (Letkemann, 1973, p. 155). Using a bank to illustrate the point, Letkemann (1973) remarks:

A good bank must have a good "out", implying that the robbers will be able to leave the bank and go in a number of different directions. Although it is unlikely they will alter their prearranged getaway route, the alternatives are intended to mislead or disperse the police. I was told some bank robbers inform one another as to when and where they plan to work. By synchronizing their efforts, each group gains the advantage of police dispersal (Letkemann, 1973, p. 156).

One of Letkemann's informants describes a bank which was seen as having a good "out".

So we drove to that place, and the bank was nicely situated, whereby we had four roads we could get away --- four roads, and the police would likely come to two roads, because by their patrolling, you know --- they patrol certain areas. And I've watched their way of patrolling that area, a certain area, and I knew that at a certain hour they would be in that area, and the two immediately available roads connecting to that bank would be situated in the way, I felt --- you know. So I decided that our getaway would be in the direction of opposite them, and which we done --- and we went through successfully (Letkemann, 1973, p. 156).

The importance of escape routes in target selection may explain why most commercial robberies occur on major thoroughfares of the city.

Blazicek (1985) discovered two environmental characteristics which were not particularly important to the robbers. The distance one had to travel to the robbery site was rated "not important" by almost one half (49.2%) of the offenders (Blazicek, 1985, p. 11). This finds support in other studies which report that robbery offenders travel farther to commit their crimes than most other offenders. In addition, Blazicek (1985) reported that alternate escape routes were not considered as a factor in the selection of a target by 33.3% of the respondents, although an almost equal number (28.6%) rated them as very important (Blazicek, 1985, p. 11).

After interviewing incarcerated bank robbers, Camp (1968)<sup>1</sup> came to the conclusion that: "Bank robbers do not indiscriminantly select their victims, they make choices according to certain factors" (Camp, 1968, p. 110). Camp (1968) noted that, with the exception of a lack of guard, bank robbers emphasized those physical characteristics over which the bank has relatively little control once the office is in operation (Table 1). That is, the location, the size, and the structure of the bank are all predetermined. Surprisingly, the absence of conventional protective measures such as alarms and cameras was considered of little importance (Camp, 1968, p. 111).

#### *Characteristics of the Offender*

Robbers do not simply consider the personal attributes of the victim and the environmental characteristics of the target, they have to evaluate their own resources. For example, the robber may consider whether he is going to do the robbery by himself or whether he can recruit one or more partners to aid him. The number of accomplices can have a direct bearing on which targets are perceived as feasible. A robber without accomplices may view large commercial establishments

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<sup>1</sup> Data gathered from interviews with 150 bank robbers confined in five U.S. federal prisons.

Table 1  
Selection Criteria in Bank Robberies

Criteria	Percentage
location	77
no guard	28
size -- small	25
no police	14
physical structure	14
prior robbery publicity in press	10
no alarm	5
no camera	5
ineffective appearing employees	5
large amount of money on hand	5

Source: Camp, 1968, p. 110

as too difficult to rob single-handed.

In selecting the target, the robber is likely to look at whatever tools he may have available. The presence or absence of a weapon as well as the type of weapon may have a significant bearing on the target selected. An unarmed offender is unlikely to choose a large commercial target; he will likely confine himself to street robberies. On the other hand, the offender with a firearm has much greater flexibility in target selection. The threat of a firearm makes it possible to control several victims at one time, thus allowing the robber to choose almost any type of target. A second factor is the offender's mobility and his means of escaping from the scene of the robbery. If the offender is without a vehicle, he may be less inclined to select commercial targets and, therefore, may focus on street victims. The risk of apprehension in a commercial robbery may be perceived as too great if the offender is forced to make his getaway on foot.

## Victim/Offender Relationship

The relationship between victim and offender in robbery seems to be more tenuous than in other crimes of violence (Block, 1977, p. 78). Robbery is predominantly a stranger-to-stranger crime. Typically, the robber and his victim are strangers who meet for the first time at the scene of the crime (MacDonald, 1975, p. 67). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that in 82% of the cases there had been no preliminary encounter between the offender and the victim (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 22). In Normandeau's (1968) Philadelphia study, more than 85% of all the robberies were committed against complete strangers (Normandeau, 1968, p. 5). Syvrud (1967) found that 89% of the victims were not acquainted with and did not know the offender prior to the robbery. Only 2.8% of the victims knew the offender well (Syvrud, 1967, p. 49). Similar findings have been reported by Conklin (1972), Dunn (1974), and Curtis (1974).

In their analysis of victimization survey data in the United States, Hindelang, Garofalo and Gottfredson (1978) found that for 93% of the "one-time" victims and 80% of the "repetitive" victims, the offender was a stranger (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 148).

The stranger-to-stranger pattern does not apply equally to all types of robbery. In her 1973 study in Oakland, Weir found that for 80.1% of "personal male", 95% of "personal female", 90.5% of "commercial", and 100% of "transportation" robberies, the offender and victim were apparent strangers. Only half of the "residential" robberies, however, were between strangers (Weir, 1973, p. 47). Similarly, Cook (1983) found that 54% of all residential robberies were committed between acquaintances (Cook, 1983, p. 13).

## The Number of Offenders

Research suggests that robbery is not typically a lone activity. Offenders tend to be in the company of others when they commit robbery. Cook (1983) found that robbers typically work in teams of two or more. His analysis of National Crime Survey Data revealed that one third of all robbery incidents involve three or more robbers, and an additional third involved two robbers (Cook, 1983, p. 175). In Westchester County, New York, Dunn (1976) found that two or more offenders were involved in robberies 59% of the time (Dunn, 1976, p. 18). Syvrud (1967) found that in 37.6% of the cases there was only one offender, in 32.1% there were two, in 12.4% there were three, in 5.6% there were four, and in 11.5% the number of offenders was unknown (Syvrud, 1967, p. 58).

Researchers have also examined the number of offenders in relation to the type of robbery. In Oakland, Weir (1973) found that 64.5% of all robbery incidents in her sample involved offenders who were in pairs or groups. Robbers were least likely to be alone in personal male-victim robberies --- only 20.2% worked alone. They were much more likely to be alone in commercial (43.2%) or personal female-victim (42.7%) incidents (Weir, 1973, p. 29). Not surprisingly, Weir (1973) also found that strongarm robberies involved lone robbers less often than did armed robberies or purse-snatches (Weir, 1973, p. 31). In California, Wolcott (1968) reported that 79% of armed robbers committed their crimes with the aid of an accomplice. But a higher percentage of "planned" robberies (83%) had more than one participant than was the case in "spur of the moment" robberies (71%) (Wolcott, 1968, p. 27). These findings are not surprising given the fact that a robber who plans his crime, and who carefully provides for contingencies, is likely to enhance his chances of success by enlisting the help of one or more accomplices. Haran and

Martin (1985) found that 22.3% of bank robberies involved one offender, 15.9% involved two, 23.3% involved three, 13.9% involved four, 11.3% involved five, and 13.2% involved more than five offenders (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 50). With respect to residential robberies, Reppetto (1974) found that 76% of the offences involved two or more perpetrators (Reppetto, 1974, p. 30).

Some studies, however, have found high percentages of lone robbers. In Ottawa, Ciale and Leroux (1984) found that 54.1% of the armed robberies were committed by lone offenders, 37.3% in pairs, and 8.7% in groups of three or four (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 27). Bratter (1963) discovered that in 73.1% of the bank robberies he studied there was one offender, in 20.4% there were two, in 5.9% there were three, and in .6% there were four offenders (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that convenience store robberies were usually committed by lone offenders (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 286).

Studies have also compared the number of offenders to that of victims. For example, in London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that 39.6% of robberies involved two or more males against one male, 19.3% involved one male against one female, 16.2% involved one male against one male, and 11.9% involved two or more offenders against two or more victims (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 24). Weir's study (1973) in Oakland examined the number of offenders and victims in relation to the type of robbery. She found that in personal male-victim robberies, 74% of the incidents involved more offenders than victims. In commercial robberies, however, 44.4% of the incidents involved an equal number of offenders and victims, while 43% involved more offenders than victims. Commercial robberies also had the greatest likelihood (12.4%) of the victims outnumbering the offenders (Weir, 1973, p. 42). Relating the number of offenders to the use of weapons, Weir (1973) found that in half (50.2%) of the armed robberies the offenders outnumbered their

victims. In fact, less than one in ten (8.1%) of the armed robberies involved fewer offenders than victims. Purse-snatch incidents involved more offenders than victims in over half (54.2%) of the incidents. Finally, strongarm robberies, not surprisingly, involved more offenders than victims in over two-thirds (68.9%) of the incidents (Weir, 1973, p. 45).

From the above, it appears that offenders usually outnumber their victims in robbery incidents. Normandeau (1968) found, however, in his study of robbery in Philadelphia, that the number of offenders and victims tended to be equal. He discovered that 43% of all robberies involve one male against another male, 23% two or more males against one male, 18% one male against one female, 8% two or more males against one female, 5% one female against one female or male, and 3% two or more offenders against two or more victims (Normandeau, 1968, p.7).

### Planning the Robbery

Once the robber(s) has decided to commit a particular robbery or series of robberies, there appears to be no specific or uniform pattern of planning the event (Einstadter, 1969, p. 73). Planning may vary from a single drive around the neighborhood to have a quick look at the target, to months of meticulous observation to learn every detail about the target. The particular strategy employed by a given robber seems to be a function of two factors. The first is the type of target or victim. Obviously, more planning will be involved in robbing a major financial institution than in mugging a lone pedestrian. The second factor is the type of offender. As mentioned above, the professional robber spends much more time planning his crime than does the opportunistic robber (Conklin, 1972). The purpose of planning, on the part of the robber, is to maximize the amount of money he is likely

to get, to maximize the vulnerability of the victim, and to minimize his own risks (Conklin, 1972, p. 97). Everett Debaun, a notorious armed robber, noted that detailed planning and preparation constitute one of the most important parts of robbery (Debaun, 1959, p. 360).

In his study of incarcerated robbers in Oakland, Feeney (1986) discovered that few do any substantial planning. Over half of the sample declared they had done no planning at all. Another third reported only minor planning such as finding a partner, thinking about where to leave a getaway car, and whether to use a weapon. This generally took place the same day as the robbery and frequently within a few hours of it. Fewer than 15% of the respondents had any kind of planned approach. The largest number of these (9%) simply followed an existing pattern. They did little new planning for their current offences because they already had an approach they preferred. Fewer than 5% of the robbers planned in any detail. These robbers --- all adults and all involved in commercial robberies --- stole getaway cars, planned escape routes, detailed each partner's actions, evaluated contingencies, and observed the layout of the potential targets. Furthermore, commercial robberies (60%) were planned more often than those of individuals (30%)(Feeney, 1986, p. 59). In contrast, Walsh (1986) discovered that 52% of the robbers he surveyed had planned their robberies and, of these, 25% had planned for months or years, with days or weeks being the most common planning time (Walsh, 1986, p. 48). In Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that three quarters of the bank robbers they studied planned their criminal act. Most, however, restricted themselves to planning single steps of the execution. There was only minimal effort in terms of time and practical preparations. The preparations consisted mainly of acquiring equipment (weapons, masks), planning the escape, and "casing" the target (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 182).



One of the major components of planning, when it occurs, is the process of "casing" the target or victim. Casing involves the gathering of information, through observation, on all aspects of the target (Letkemann, 1973, p. 138). Casing is generally done from a car or a window of a building, so as not to arouse suspicion (Debaun, 1959, p. 361), and is normally conducted by the individual who initiates the robbery. In cases of transient, two- or three-man groups, casing may be done by all members of the group as they drive leisurely down the streets (Letkemann, 1973, p. 93). Camp (1968) reported that 43% of bank robbers had cased the bank prior to the offence (Camp, 1968, p. 112). And almost two-thirds (62%) of Blazicek's (1985) incarcerated robbers felt that casing the target was an "extremely important" part of the robbery (Blazicek, 1985, p. 13).

Using a bank as an example, one can see various elements of the robbery environment which may be cased by the offender. Willie Sutton, a noted bank robber, explains the process of casing as follows:

I studied a bank carefully before I robbed it; I studied the habits of the employees and the guards and the cops on the beat. I learned the complete layout of the bank before I did anything else, and drew a plan of it showing every possible means of entrance and escape. I learned the location of every burglar alarm and safeguard the bank had installed....I never left anything to chance (Reynolds, 1954, p. 19).

It appears that the "physical layout" of the building (bank) is one of the elements cased by the potential robber. In so doing, the robber will make note of the floor plan, the arrangement of furniture, and the placement of doors and windows (Debaun, 1959, p. 360). Bank robbers seem to rely heavily on the architectural uniformity of banks. Uniform architecture, undoubtedly an economic consideration for banks, is of great advantage to the robber because it renders him familiar with the layout of any bank (Letkemann, 1973, p. 102). A bank robber in New York is quite likely to find the same type of target in Arizona. Because he can rely on the uniform layout of his target, he need not acquire additional information about each

target in order to carry out the robbery (Camp, 1968, p. 76). Camp (1968) found that in slightly more than half the incidents, the robber had never been inside the bank prior to the robbery (Camp, 1968, p. 112).

A second element which may be explored by the casing robber is the amount of money to be expected from the robbery. For a bank, this can generally be calculated by examining the quarterly statement at the local library or the Chamber of Commerce (Debaun, 1959, p. 360). Alternatively, the amount of money can be roughly calculated by observing the volume of business of the bank.

A third element of the environment is the security of the bank. The presence of mechanical alarm systems is assumed by the robber. The use of hidden television cameras and other devices is not likely to deter the experienced bank robber because he will be "covered" (mask), and thus cares little whether he is seen by bank personnel on the scene or by others via television. Alarm systems are not usually cased nor given any special attention, since their presence is taken for granted (Letkemann, 1973, p. 94). The robber assumes they are in working order and that they will go off the moment he enters the bank. (Debaun, 1959, p. 361). Security personnel, however, are a different matter. Armed guards are usually cased with great care, though unless ensconced in a protective cage or turret they represent a threat more apparent than real, since they cannot go around with cocked pistols (Debaun, 1959, p. 316). The robber must only ensure that he can get the "drop" on the guard.

Another element of the offense environment which may be cased by the robber is the bank personnel and customers. On the theory that it helps to know where trouble is likely to come from, some robbers like to get an advance look at the individuals on the inside of the bank (Debaun, 1959, p. 361). The robber may case

the manager of the bank to determine what he can expect from him. The disposition of the manager is generally inferred from his age (Letkemann, 1973, p. 95). The robber may also try to see if there are any "heroes" in the bank. These are impressionable young men who have seen too many movies or an old "towser" who has had his job for thirty years. These individuals may, if not closely watched, come to the defence of the bank, especially if women or bosses are present (Debaun, 1959, p. 361). On a more general level, robbers who prefer to deal with as few employees as possible, may make daily observations to ascertain the most opportune time. "Bank employees are slaves of the time clock, and you can chart their daily activities to a mathematical certainty" (Reynolds, 1954, p. 220). The robber relies heavily on the routine business arrangements as the basis for the predictions he must make. Like legitimate customers, he expects to see certain persons doing certain things in expected places and at expected times (Letkemann, 1973, p. 149). This predictability is very helpful to the robber in that he can choose the time when the fewest employees are in the bank. Willie Sutton, for example, never liked to rob a bank which had a large number of employees in it at the time of the robbery (Reynolds, 1954, p. 116). From the offender's point of view, no attention is generally paid to the number of customers of a bank, except insofar as this indicates the probable number who may enter the bank during the robbery. Persons about to enter at this time are much more of a risk to the robber than those already inside. The danger lies in the customer noting that something is wrong before he or she has completely entered. Such customers cannot be prevented from leaving at that point, and they become the first "alarm" (Letkemann, 1973, p. 95).

A major component of planning, in the robbery process, is the assignment of roles to members of the robbery team. In terms of organization, robbery may

involve a highly organized group of individuals working as a team, a loose, temporary liaison between several persons, or it may take the form of a lone gunman doing a "stick-up" (Letkemann, 1973, p.92). The degree of organization and role differentiation largely depends on the type of offender (Conklin, 1972) and the type of target which has been selected. For example, the robbery of a financial institution will require a higher degree of role allocation than will a mugging.

Prior to any robbery, however, no matter how complex, assignments are made as to the role of each partner in the event (Einstadter, 1969, p. 73). Since most roles are not especially difficult to perform and are therefore highly interchangeable among the members of the gang, role allocation primarily serves the function of making sure that a particular job gets done (Conklin, 1972, p. 99). One of the common roles in the robbery is the "wheelman" or driver. The "wheelman" has several responsibilities. The procurement of a getaway car, usually stolen, is one of his duties. Once a vehicle is procured, he must then find licence plates which have not been stolen. The "wheelman's" second major responsibility is the mapping of an escape route, with which he must be completely familiar (Debaun, 1959, p. 362). Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that approximately two thirds of the bank robbers in their study had worked out a special plan for escape (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 183). Camp (1968) found that in 63% of bank robberies specific plans were made with respect to the escape route or get-away (Camp, 1968, p. 112). The "wheelman's" final responsibility is to drive the offenders from the scene of the robbery. This latter function is an important one, since the success of a robbery often rests on a quick escape. The "wheelman" may also act as a "peekman" or lookout for the robbery gang. More often, though, robbery gangs employ one of their other members to keep a lookout and warn them of possible interruptions of the robbery (Conklin, 1972, p. 100). In less structured robberies, all members of the

gang may watch for intrusions, rather than assigning one person to do it. The second role is that of the "gunman and money grabber". This individual is expected to scoop up the money from the cashier or teller, leaping over the counter if necessary. Many of the robbers wear sneakers to make vaulting easier. The final role in the robbery gang is the "floorman". This individual assumes the more aggressive role, by openly brandishing his weapon and shouting commands to the victims and to other members of his robbery gang (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 50). Since most hold-ups involve the close control of a number of people during the course of the robbery, most robbery gangs have two or more of these gun bearing members (Debaun, 1959, p. 358).

The final component of the pre-event planning is to determine whether disguises will be used during the robbery. The robber may attempt to alter his physical appearance at the time of the robbery or afterwards in order to avoid detection and arrest by the police or identification by the victim in a police lineup. The use of a disguise makes it more difficult for the victim to identify the offender, but has the disadvantage of alerting passer-bys that a crime may be in progress (MacDonald, 1975, p. 57). For example, a ski mask in winter attracts little attention, but one would expect a stocking mask in a supermarket to arouse suspicion.

In Ottawa, Ciale and Leroux (1985) report that in 44.6% of the armed robberies in Ottawa the offender used some type of disguise (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 28). While in Montreal, Normandeau (1981) found that armed robbers wore a disguise in 25% of the cases. The percentage was higher in bank robbery where 40% of the offender(s) wore a disguise (Normandeau, 1981, p. 3). In West Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that approximately seventy-two percent of the bank robbers in their study wore a disguise (Servay and Rehm, 1986, p. 183). Camp (1968) discovered that in only one half of the bank robberies he studied did

the robbers attempt to disguise themselves (Camp, 1968, p. 114). This is in sharp contrast to Bratter (1963) who found that only 17.1% of the bank robbers wore some type of disguise during the offense (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). Although a disguise seems to be an item bank robbers would use more often, it does have its drawbacks. If the robber hopes to blend into the crowd, he does not wish to call attention to himself with an elaborate disguise. Furthermore, by appearing to be just another customer, he may, in fact, be as difficult to remember and identify. This is probably why employee identification of bank robbers is known to be notoriously misleading and inaccurate (Camp, 1968, p. 115).

### The Use of Weapons

The use of a weapon in robbery serves several purposes, all of which are instrumental in nature. The first function of a weapon is to create a "buffer zone" between the offender and the victim. A firearm is the most effective because it instills the greatest amount of fear in the victim. The use of a knife or blunt instrument may not serve this function as well as a firearm because the buffer they create is smaller and the likelihood of victim resistance is greater. A firearm is more dangerous and covers a greater area, since harm can be inflicted from a distance (Conklin, 1972, p. 110). The second function of the weapon, intimidation of the victim, is related to the creation of a buffer zone, in that if the offender can frighten the victim sufficiently, the latter will be less likely to resist and more willing to give up the money, thus minimizing the chance of struggle and injury. The intimidation and the ultimate cooperation of the victim are essential ingredients of a successful robbery (MacDonald, 1975, p. 135). If the presence of a weapon does not intimidate the victim enough to induce cooperation, the offender may increase the level of intimidation by cocking the trigger on the firearm, aiming the firearm

at the victim, or using profane language (Conklin, 1972, p.110). If the victim continues to resist, the offender may use the weapon to "make good the threat" which the presence of a weapon implies. The offender may stab or shoot the victim to complete a robbery, but a more common response is to use the firearm as a blunt instrument. Striking the victim is a signal that "he means business" (Conklin, 1972, p.111). Another function of a weapon, especially a firearm, is to facilitate escape from the scene of robbery. Offenders know that if they can get away from the scene rapidly, their chances of being apprehended are significantly reduced. A weapon may be used to stop others from blocking the robber's escape. Guns are more often fired to insure escape than they are to overcome victim resistance. Robbers face incarceration if apprehended but can find other victims to rob if they encounter an uncooperative one. They have more at stake in escaping from the scene than in completing the robbery of a particular victim (Conklin, 1972, p. 112).

National data from Statistics Canada for 1984 indicate that 29.5% of all robberies were committed with firearms, 25% were committed with other offensive weapons, and the remaining 45.5% were termed "other robberies" (Statistics Canada, 1984, p. 55). In British Columbia, in 1985, the percentage of robberies with a firearm was lower than the national average with 20%, while 27.1% were committed with other offensive weapons, and 52.9% were termed "other robberies". In Vancouver, the percentages for these three categories were 18.1, 26.1, and 55.8 respectively (Ministry of Attorney-General, 1986). In the United States, the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports show that 35.8% of all robberies were committed with a firearm, 41.5% were committed unarmed, 13.4% were committed with a knife, and 9.4% were committed with other weapons (F.B.I., 1984, p. 18). The percentage of firearm robberies reported by the F.B.I. for 1984 is higher than that reported by the National Crime Survey for 1979 where a firearm was used in 23%, a knife in

15%, other weapons in 12%, and no weapons in 45% of all robberies for that year (Cook, 1983, p. 9). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that the proportion of robberies committed by offenders carrying firearms or other offensive instruments was 33% in 1950 and 39% in 1957 (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 24). Normandeau's study (1968) in Philadelphia found that 32.4% of that city's robberies were committed with firearms, 18.4% were committed with other offensive weapons, and 49.2% were committed with no weapons (Normandeau, 1968, p. 199). Dunn (1976), in his study of robbery in Westchester County, New York, reported that a firearm was used in 22.5%, a knife in 19.4%, no weapon in 41.1%, and multiple means of force were used in 17% of all robberies (Dunn, 1976, p. 13).

Weapon use varies according to the type of target. Research suggests that commercial targets are most frequently robbed using firearms while noncommercial targets are most often robbed without weapons. For example, in 1979 the National Crime Survey (U.S.) reported that 52% of commercial robberies were committed with firearms, 35% were committed with no weapons, 7% were committed with a knife, and 6% were committed with other weapons. This contrasts sharply with noncommercial robberies where only 15% were committed with firearms, 47% with no weapons, 17% with a knife, and 13% with other weapons (Cook, 1983, p.9). Dunn's (1976) study in Westchester County, New York, found that 51.8% of commercial robberies involved a firearm as opposed to only 13.5% for noncommercial robberies. Furthermore, he found that only 23.6% of commercial robberies involved no weapons as compared to 47.5% for noncommercial robberies (Dunn, 1976, p. 24). Similar findings regarding weapon use and type of target have also been reported in London by McClintock and Gibson (1961, p. 25) and in Oakland by Weir (1973, p. 60). Thus, as Block (1977) states, "it is clear that a robber attacking a business is more likely to use a gun (69%) than a robber attacking an individual (43%)"



(Block, 1977, p. 70). The need to control potential "crowds" probably accounts in part for the high incidence of weapon use in commercial robberies. In 1974, the National Crime Panel reported that only 15.8% of commercial robberies involved only one victim while 91.9% of all personal robberies involved lone victims (Skogan, 1978, p.66).

Researchers have also examined the specific types of weapons used in armed robbery. In Ottawa, Ciale and Leroux (1984) found that armed robbers used handguns in 43.3% of the robberies, sharp and cutting instruments in 25.6%, long guns in 12.7%, simulated guns in 4.3%, automatic weapons in 1.8%, and other weapons in 7.1% of the robberies (Ciale and Leroux, 1984, p. 31). Wolcott (1968) found that 75% of the robberies in California involved the use of pistols, 13% the use of knives, 6% the use of shotguns, and 6% the use of other weapons. The overriding reasons given by the robbers for the selection of a pistol was the availability of the weapon and the ability to conceal the pistol until it is used (Wolcott, 1968, p. 36). As to the type of weapon used in "planned" and "spur of the moment" robberies, Wolcott (1968) found that the frequency of pistol use was slightly higher in the former, while the use of knives was slightly higher in the latter. From this, Wolcott (1968) concludes:

...it seems likely the motivation behind spur of the moment robber's selection of weapons such as clubs or knives more often than the robber who plans his crime, is the availability of these weapons on short notice, while it is more difficult to obtain more sophisticated weapons (handguns) in a limited period of time (Wolcott, 1968, p. 36).

In Germany, Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) reported that most of the armed bank robbers in their study (88.4%) used handguns (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p.153). Haran and Martin (1985) found that 76% of the bank robbers used firearms: 65% handguns, 9% shotguns, and 2% automatic weapons (Haran and Martin, 1985, p. 49). Bratter (1963) reported similar findings with a firearm being

used in 71.7% of the bank robberies, a simulated gun in 6.6%, and no weapon in 21.7% (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). In Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that knives (39%) and firearms (38%) were the types of weapons most frequently employed by convenience store robbers (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 62). Mugging presents a very different picture. Pratt (1980), for example, found that in almost three of every four cases no weapon was used. Where weapons were used, sharp instruments were far more common than blunt ones, and the use of firearms was rare (Pratt, 1980, p. 96). Residential robberies occupy a middle ground between commercial and personal robberies when it comes to the use of weapons. Almost half (47%) of the residential robberies in Boston studied by Reppetto (1974) were committed with no weapon, 30% with a knife, 20% with a gun, and 3% with a blunt object (Reppetto, 1974, p. 30). Dunn (1976) found that in 48.3% of residential robberies no weapon was used, in 17.2% a knife was used, in 13.8% a gun was used, and in 20.7% multiple weapons were used (Dunn, 1976, p. 24). Similar findings were reported for residential robbery in the study conducted by Weir in Oakland (Weir, 1973, p. 60).

Weapon use varies not only in relation to the type of target, but also according to the demographic characteristics of the offender and victim. Propensity to use weapons seems to vary according to age, sex and race. Thus, Cook (1976) found that use of firearms in robbery was more frequent among black, adult male offenders (Cook, 1976, p. 179). Conklin (1972) discovered, on the other hand, that firearms were most commonly associated with white, adult, male offenders (Conklin, 1972, p. 106). He reports that juveniles were much more likely to rob without any weapon than were adults, and that adults were more apt than juveniles to use firearms. In addition, black offenders were more apt to commit unarmed robberies than whites. Whites were more likely to employ weapons, especially firearms when they

robbed. Conklin (1972) suggests this difference is due in part to the fact that black robbers were generally younger than white ones, with younger offenders more apt to rob while unarmed (Conklin, 1972, p. 107). However, even when age was held constant, a difference in the use of weapons remained, which is largely attributable to the type of offenders and the type of robberies they committed. Blacks are more apt than whites to be opportunists and therefore to commit robberies which net small sums of money and involve little planning. Because their victims take fewer precautions to protect their money and are quite vulnerable, these offenders do not usually need a weapon to neutralize resistance. Furthermore, the unplanned nature of the robberies means that the offender does not have time to secure a weapon with which to rob. If he has a weapon, it is more likely to be a knife than a firearm. Older offenders and white offenders, on the other hand, are more likely to be professionals, with their crimes involving larger sums of money. Consequently, Conklin (1972) reports, they are often faced with obstacles which must be neutralized in order to successfully complete the robbery. A firearm is therefore used to intimidate the victims and make escape from the scene more certain (Conklin, 1972, p. 107). The difference in the findings of Cook (1976) and Conklin (1972), regarding the race of the robber, may be explained by the data used in the two studies: the first was based on a national victimization survey and the second was a local analysis of official police data. The demographic make-up of the city of Boston might also have affected Conklin's findings with respect to the race of the offender.

Weapon use also differs according to the demographic characteristics of the victim. For example, in his study of robbery in Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) reports that male victims are more often subdued by firearms whereas female victims are intimidated by physical tactics (Normandeau, 1968, P. 8). Cook (1976) found that for each category of offenders (defined by age, sex and number of accomplices),

those robbing adult males were the most likely to carry guns (Cook, 1976, p. 186). Similar findings were reported by Weir (1973) in her study of robbery in Oakland (Weir, 1973, p. 56). Regarding the race of the victims, Block (1977) found that, in Chicago, whites seem less likely to be attacked with a gun in a robbery than blacks. Blacks were victims of gun attacks in 55% of the robberies as opposed to 39% for whites (Block, 1977, p. 73).

The use of firearms in robbery also varies in relation to the number of offenders. Cook (1976) reports that guns are less likely to be used by single robbers than by multiple offenders and that this pattern holds for age, sex, race subgroups. Cook (1976) states that "while it is plausible that a team of offenders has less need of a gun than a single offender for a certain type of victim (mugging), the data suggest that teams of offenders tend to choose stronger victims" (Cook, 1976, p. 180). Again, the findings of Conklin (1972) are at odds with those of Cook (1976). Conklin (1972) reports that robbers who commit crime in groups of two or more are somewhat less likely to use a weapon than are robbers who operate alone. Lone offenders are more likely to use firearms or other weapons than are groups of offenders, for "solo" robbers feel vulnerable to victim resistance and sense a greater need for protection than if they had an accomplice on whom they could rely for help. Robbing with accomplices, Conklin (1972) suggests, reduces the need to carry a weapon for self-protection, since the group itself acts as a functional equivalent to a weapon (Conklin, 1972, p. 108). The differences in the findings of Cook (1976) and Conklin (1972) may be due to two factors. First, the data source and methodology were different in the two studies. Second, Cook (1976) discusses the use of "guns", while Conklin (1972) talks about weapons in general.

On the basis of the various studies reviewed above, some general conclusions may be made regarding the use of weapons in robbery. First, approximately half of

all robberies are committed with weapons. Second, the majority of commercial robberies are committed with a weapon while the majority of noncommercial robberies are committed without one. Third, adult robbers have a higher tendency to use firearms than younger robbers. Fourth, findings regarding the association of race and the use of firearms are inconclusive. Fifth, male victims are more often intimidated by firearms whereas female victims are more often intimidated by physical tactics. Finally, the findings pertaining to the number of offenders and weapon use are inconclusive.

### The Use of Force

Robbery is generally classified as a crime of violence because the threat or the use of force is an integral component of the robbery event. Research, however, suggests that actual force is not used in a high percentage of robberies.

In Conklin's study (1972) in Boston, in 47.3% of the robberies no force was used against the victim, in 27.3% the victim was shoved, pushed or knocked to the ground, in 14% the victim was beaten, punched or hit with a weapon, in 6.6% the victim was removed from the robbery scene, and in only 4.7% of the robberies was the victim cut, stabbed, or shot with a weapon (Conklin, 1972, p. 113). Weir (1973), in Oakland, found that no actual force was used in 43.6% of the cases, the victim was grabbed, pushed or shoved in 30.1%, was beaten, clubbed or hit with a weapon in 11.3%, and was cut, stabbed or shot in 2.8% of the cases (Weir, 1973, p. 65). In California, Wolcott (1968) discovered that force was used in only 18% of the "planned" and in 23% of the "spur of the moment" armed robberies he studied (Wolcott, 1968, p. 21). In West Germany, Servay and Rehm (1986) report that force was seldom used by the bank robbers in their study (Servay and Rehm, 1986,

p. 183). It appears, therefore, that the use of physical force is neither a constant nor an essential requirement for the completion of a robbery.

The offender's choice to employ or not to employ force, however, depends upon a number of circumstances surrounding the robbery.

For the robber, success or failure depends, to a large extent, on his control over the robbery situation. He must establish and maintain authority over the victim at all times (Letkemann, 1973, p. 114). The victim's response to the offender's position of authority is central in this interaction. Resistance on the part of the victim is likely to be met with violence on the part of the offender. Therefore, one major determinant of whether force will be employed during the robbery is victim's resistance. In Texas, Luckenbill (1981) reports that one third of all victims resisted the offender either verbally or physically (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 34). In West Germany, Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) report that 49.2% of bank personnel passively resisted in that they attempted to delay or refused to give the money to the robber (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 152).

There are several factors which determine whether or not the victim will resist the robbery attempt. The first factor is the presence or absence of a weapon in the hand of the robber. The victim's decision to resist or not to resist is no doubt influenced by his/her assessment of the offender's capacity to inflict death or serious injury. The offender is considered capable when he appears to possess lethal weapons and to be in a position to use them, and when the victim cannot mobilize resources for opposition (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 34) In other words, the more lethal the weapon carried by the offender, the less the likelihood of victim resistance. The National Crime Panel reports that the more lethal the weapon, the less likely victims were to undertake either threatening or nonthreatening tactics, and the more

likely they were to acquiesce to the demands of the robber. In addition, it found that firearms were especially effective in forestalling precipitous victim reactions to robbery. Incidents involving guns were dramatically less likely than others to lead to any positive action on the part of the targets (Skogan, 1978, p. 65). Cook (1986), in his analysis of N.C.S. data, found that only about one in four victims attempt any sort of resistance where the offender has a gun (Cook, 1986, p. 412). In Chicago, Block (1977) found that few victims resisted the threat of a gun attack (18%), while victims who were attacked with other weapons or with no weapons were more likely to resist (32%) (Block, 1977, p. 80). Conklin (1972), however, discovered no significant difference in the likelihood of victim resistance in relation to the presence or absence of a weapon. The same percentage of resistance was observed in all three weapon situations --- no weapon, knife and firearm (Conklin, 1972, p. 113). In spite of Conklin's findings, there is some evidence to suggest a relationship between victim resistance and the lethality of the offender's weapons. That is, when the offender appears incapable of inflicting serious injury, the victim resists (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 35).

A second factor which may determine the likelihood of resistance is the victim's evaluation of the offender's intent to use force. If the victim believes the offender will only use force to counter opposition, then he/she is likely to comply. If, on the other hand, the victim believes the offender intends to use force regardless of his/her response, the victim will resist (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 35).

Another determinant of resistance is the role of the victim. Employees of large commercial establishments are often instructed by their employers not to resist robbery attempts, but to give up the money, and make every effort to ensure the safety of all persons present. For example, bank tellers may be told to give up money without resistance, turning over the smallest bills they have and taking as

much time as possible. Camp (1968) reports that 83% of the bank robbers in his study anticipated that the employees would cooperate with them. Their expectations were confirmed since in 89% of the robberies they encountered no resistance from the employees (Camp, 1968, p. 116). In Chicago, Block (1977) found that victim resistance was less frequent in commercial than in personal robbery (Block, 1977, p. 71). Because of this, some offenders may prefer to rob large establishments where the victim is unlikely to offer resistance (Conklin, 1972, p. 114).

The frequency with which physical force is used seems to depend to a certain extent on victim's resistance. In Texas, Luckenbill (1981) found that force was used in 34% of the robberies where victims resisted (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 35). Conklin (1972), in Boston, observed that offenders used physical violence in 58.8% of the cases where victims resisted (Conklin, 1972, p. 115). In Chicago, Block (1977) also found that force is much more likely to be employed against victims who resist than against victims who do not. In 70% of the cases where the victim resisted in a manner that could hurt the robber, the offender used force, as compared to 37% of the cases where the victim offered no resistance (Block, 1977, p. 80).

Based on these studies, one may ask: does victim's resistance stem from the offender's use of force or is the offender's use of force a reaction to victim's resistance? In general, Block (1977) suggests that resistance by robbery victims often occurs before the offender uses physical force. Of the victims who resisted, two-thirds did before the robber employed force (Block, 1977, p. 81). However, victims who forcibly resisted were likely reacting to the offender's actual use of force (68%), while victims who responded with flight or cries for help were likely to resist before the offender's initial use of force (70%) (Block, 1977, p. 82). It seems, therefore, that victims of robbery who resist before force is employed against them



are attempting to reduce the likelihood of the robbery being completed, while victims who resist with force are trying to protect themselves from the robber's forceful attack.

Occasionally, victim's resistance results in the offender's flight. Block (1977) found that this was more likely to occur if the victim resists with force (23%) than if the victim does not physically threaten the offender (Block, 1977, p. 82). Luckenbill (1981) found that resistance on the part of the victim resulted in the forfeiture of the robbery in 31% of the cases (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 35).

Although the data demonstrate that the use of force against victims increases when they resist, a large proportion of non-resisting victims nevertheless have force used against them (Conklin, 1972, p. 116). In his analysis of National Crime Survey data, Cook (1986) found that over two thirds of those victims who were physically attacked and/or seriously injured did not resist the robber's demands at any time (Cook, 1986, p. 412). In Chicago, Block (1977) found that a majority of the offenders who used force employed it against victims who offered no resistance (Block, 1977, p. 81). Consequently, factors other than just victim resistance seem to be responsible for the use of physical force by the robber. One such factor is the presence of a weapon. As Conklin (1972) found in Boston, if the robber has a weapon, he is much less likely to use physical violence against the victim than if he is unarmed. In 75% of the unarmed robberies, some type of force was used by the offender. If the offender was carrying a knife, however, he used physical force approximately 40% of the time; and if he had a firearm, the percentage was down to 20% of the time (Conklin, 1972, p. 116). The National Crime Panel reports that the use of force increased steadily as the lethality of weapons employed in robbery declined. When weapons were employed in an incident, force was used in 66% of all robberies. The proportion declined to 25% in crimes involving guns (Skogan, 1978,

p. 65). In Chicago, Block (1977) found that robbers who used a gun were less likely to use force. In his sample, 26% of the offenders with firearms used force, as compared to 65% who were without a firearm. Similar findings have been reported by Normandeau (1981) in Montreal and Weir (1973) in Oakland.

One might wonder why a negative relationship exists between the lethality of weapons and the use of force. When the offender has what he considers a deadly instrument, be it a knife or a firearm, he feels confident that a command backed with a threat will sufficiently intimidate the victim into immediate compliance. He, therefore, feels no need to resort to actual use of violence (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 32). From the standpoint of the victim, the threat of a weapon, particularly if it is a firearm, is usually enough to convince him/her of the dangers of resistance (Block, 1977, p. 80). When the offender is not armed with a lethal weapon and is simply using a club or his bare hands, he is likely to feel that his threat is not sufficiently intimidating. Anticipating that the victim may resist, the offender is more likely to use force (Luckenbill, 1981, p. 32).

The frequency with which robbers use force varies in situations which involve various combinations of victim resistance and weapon use. In Boston, Conklin (1972) found that if the offender carries no weapon, his use of force depends little on whether or not the victim resists --- he will use force regardless. In contrast, the use of force in armed robbery was more heavily dependent on victim's resistance. If the offender has a knife, he is almost twice as likely to use force if the victim resists as if he does not resist. If the offender has a firearm, he is three times as likely to employ force when the victim resists (Conklin, 1972, p. 117). This means that if the offender is unarmed, he often uses some force to intimidate the victim and to complete the robbery. If he has a weapon, he is more likely to use force only when the weapon proves to be insufficient to secure compliance.

In every robbery there is an implicit and explicit threat to the victim. Some robbers may use sharp commands and dirty language to render the victims nervous and unable to think (Letkemann, 1973, p. 102). Such threats are usually sufficient (especially if the offender has a firearm), and the robbery is completed without victim resistance and without actual use of force. Resistance may take various forms: flight, vocal outcry or some other means of sounding an alarm which will reduce the probability of the robbery being completed. Active, forcible resistance by the victim is usually a response to the actual use of force by the offender. The robber's reaction to victim's resistance is predictable as well. If the victim fails to respond properly to his threat, he must make the threat a reality or forfeit the robbery. The most frequent reaction of the robber, therefore, is the actual application of force and this may result in some type of injury to the victim.

Given the evidence that victim resistance increases the use of force, one may question the wisdom of resisting the robber. Indeed, available research offers some evidence that victim resistance significantly increases the likelihood that force will be used by the robber. As Hindelang et al. (1978) remark:

There is no longer much doubt that victimizations are dynamic events with outcomes often dependent upon the manner in which...the victimization is instigated and also dependent on the interpersonal interaction that occurs between the victim and the offender as the event unfolds. Studies of violent personal victimization...have indicated that...what the victim does during the event may have important implications for the outcome of the victimization.

Based on their analysis of victimization survey data, Hindelang et al. (1978) went on to conclude:

Those victims taking some form of self-protective measure were slightly more likely to be injured than those not taking self-protective measures (29 percent versus 21 percent)...The injury rate suffered by victims who used physical force in resistance was more than twice as great as the overall injury rate (53 percent versus 25 percent) (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 44).

Analyzing National Crime Survey data, Cook (1986), however, concluded that the

data on robbery were insufficient to establish the most prudent course of action to be taken.

I do not believe that the data strongly suggest anything about the likely effects of resistance. Since we cannot distinguish (from the data) between the influence of the robber's actions on the victim's response and the influence of the victim's actions on the robber's response, we are left not knowing how to interpret the statistical patterns of association between resistance and injury (Cook, 1986, p. 414).

### Injury to the Victim

Since robbery is termed a "crime of violence", one might expect the number of injuries resulting from it to be high. The opposite, however, appears to be true. In the majority of cases, no injury at all is suffered by victims of robbery (Weir, 1973, p. 73). According to the Uniform Crime Reports, 71% of all robberies occur without physical harm to the victim (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 41). In Philadelphia, Normandeau (1968) found that 44% of the victims in his sample received no injuries, 26% received minor injuries, and 30% received medical or hospital treatment (Normandeau, 1968, p. 116). In Block's study of robbery in Chicago, there were no injuries to the victim in 75% of the cases (Block, 1977, p. 82). Also in Chicago, Zimring and Zuehl (1986) found that 71.4% of the victims reported no injury, 18.3% complained of minor injury (no hospital), 8.3% sought aid at the hospital, and 1.9% were admitted to the hospital (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986, p. 21). In the U.S. Northwest, Syvrud (1967) found that in 80% of the cases there was no injury to the victim, in 8% there were minor injuries, in 7% there was medical attention by a doctor, and in only 4% of the cases was hospitalization required (Syvrud, 1967, p. 60). In West Germany, Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) found that the number of persons injured or killed during bank robberies was limited to a handful (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 153).

In those cases where victims are injured, the injuries tend to be relatively minor in nature. According to the Uniform Crime Reports, 76.9% of robbery injuries are bruises, cuts or scratches, 8.2% are internal injuries, 8.2% are broken bones or teeth, and 6.6% are knife or gunshot wounds (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 41). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that 42.4% of the cases involved bruises and abrasions, 19.3% involved shock and nominal injuries, 18% involved cuts and gashes, and in 17.7% there was no injury at all (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 26).

Some victims, albeit a small percentage, are killed during the course of a robbery. In his analysis of robbery-murder trends in the U.S. since 1968, Cook (1985) found that robbery murders as a percentage of both total homicides and total robberies were increasing until 1973 when they reached 5.4 homicides per 1,000 robberies, but not thereafter. Indeed, a substantial reduction in the robbery murder--robbery ratio occurred in 1980, and there has been a steady decline in the robbery murder rate since then (Cook, 1985, p. 489). Cook (1985), however, has some reservations regarding these trends:

These statistics suggest that the propensity of robbers to kill their victims increased in the early 1970's and declined in the early 1980's. The accuracy of this conclusion is subject to challenge due to homicide classification problems and doubts about the consistency with which victims report robberies to the police...There is reason to believe that the FBI's robbery count grew faster than the "true" robbery count during the 1970's, in which case the trend in the robbery murder--robbery ratio reported above is misleading (Cook, 1985, p. 488).

Zimring and Zuehl (1986) examined the issue of robbery homicide in Chicago, and discovered an overall death rate of 4.9 homicides per 1,000 robberies (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986, p. 3). Using Uniform Crime Reports, Maltz (1976) estimated the risk of death during a robbery to be 7.7 per 1,000 robberies (Maltz, 1976, p. 154). Zimring (1977), in a time series study of robbery in Detroit, found the death rate to be 7.6 per 1,000 robberies (Zimring, 1977, p. 318)

As mentioned previously, resistance by the victim enhances the chances of the use of force by the offender. It follows, then, that victim resistance will also increase the likelihood of injury.

In Chicago, Block (1977) found that if the victim resists, he is much more likely to be injured or killed (50%) than if he does not resist (15%) (Block, 1977, p. 83). However, as Block (1977) notes, the relationship between resistance and injury is different for individuals and businesses. In his sample, about half as many people were injured as resisted in commercial attacks, but slightly more people were injured than resisted in personal attacks (Block, 1977, p. 71). In Oakland, Weir (1973) also found that the chances of injury increased with victim resistance. In addition, resistance in strongarm robberies was more likely to result in injury than was resistance in armed robberies (Weir, 1973, p. 84). Some of this difference, as Weir (1973) points out, may be accounted for by the somewhat greater likelihood that victims in strongarm robberies resist actively while armed robbery victims are somewhat less likely to offer active resistance. Furthermore, the options open to an armed robber make it less necessary for him to respond in ways causing more injury. For example, the armed robber could perhaps cock his pistol or raise his knife, and thereby persuade his victim to cooperate. The unarmed robber, on the other hand, has only two options: leave the scene or use force (Weir, 1973, p. 85). In Chicago, Zimring and Zuehl (1986) found that victims actively resisted in only 8% of all robberies. This 8%, however, accounted for 55% of all robbery homicides (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986, p. 18). In other words, victim resistance significantly increased the likelihood of death.

A number of studies have found that the likelihood of victim injury is inversely related to the lethality of the offender's weapon. For example, Conklin (1972) reported that of those robberies where victims were injured, 9.3% were

injured with a firearm, 25.4% were injured with a knife, and 42% were injured in the absence of a weapon (Conklin, 1972, p. 120). In Chicago, Block (1977) found that of the cases in which the robbery victim was injured, 75% were attacks without a weapon or with a weapon other than a gun (Block, 1977, p. 84). Dunn (1976) found in Westchester County, New York, that 92.7% of victims' injuries were caused without a weapon and 7.3% were caused by knives or firearms (Dunn, 1976, p. 13). Similar findings have been reported by Skogan (1978), Cook (1976) and Curtis (1974). The above relationship can be explained by the fact that weapons generally provide sufficient intimidation to permit the successful completion of a robbery without resorting to force, whereas unarmed robberies are more often initiated with some sort of force to offset the lack of armed persuasion (Weir, 1973, p. 78).

The presence of a weapon, especially a lethal one, reduces the likelihood of victim resistance and, consequently, the use of force. It seems atypical for the victim to be physically attacked in armed robbery, while most unarmed robberies involve such an attack. If there is an actual use of force, however, the likelihood of serious injury or death increases with the lethality of the weapon (Cook, 1983, p. 10). In Detroit, Zimring (1977) reports that firearms were 2.1 times more deadly than knives when used in an armed robbery. Furthermore, he found firearm robberies to be 2.76 times as deadly as "other weapons" robberies and 11.06 times as deadly as strongarm robberies (Zimring, 1977, p. 325). Zimring (1977) also reports that the correlation between the percentage of total robberies involving a firearm and robbery death rates was .68 (Zimring, 1977, p. 326). Using victimization data from eight cities, Cook (1980) estimated that the fatality rate in robberies ranges from 9.0 per 1,000 for firearm robberies, 1.7 per 1,000 for other armed robberies, to .8 per 1,000 for unarmed robberies (Cook, 1980, p. 9). Maltz (1976) estimates the risk of death during an armed robbery to be 11.6 per 1,000 armed robberies, a rate

which is 50% higher than for robbery in general (Maltz, 1976, p. 154). Zimring and Zuehl (1986) also examined the relationship between weapon use and robbery homicide. They found that whether or not a weapon is used in a robbery is a major influence on the death rate. However, if a weapon is used, the choice of which one (gun, knife, other) had no further influence on the risk of fatality (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986, p. 15). In other words, the likelihood of death did not increase significantly with the lethality of the weapon.

Another set of factors which relate to the differential likelihood of injury to the victim are the demographic characteristics of the victim and the offender. The probability of injury seems to increase the older the victim is and the younger the robber is. With respect to the age of the victim, Curtis (1974) found that older victims were more frequently injured in robbery than younger ones (Curtis, 1974, p. 146). Block (1977), in his study of robbery-homicide in Chicago, reported that the average offender was between twelve and twenty-seven years younger than his victim. He found the median age of robbery homicide victims to be 30.1 years (Block, 1977, p. 48). Conklin (1972) found, in Boston, that juvenile offenders were much more likely to use force than adults, and their victims were much more likely to require hospitalization (Conklin, 1972, p. 120).

With respect to the relationship between sex and injury in robbery, Normandeau (1968) reports that female victims are significantly less often injured than male victims (Normandeau, 1968, p. 9). Block (1977) also found that robberies resulting in injury to the victim have a higher percentage of male offenders and male victims (Block, 1977, p. 51). One explanation why males tend to be injured more often than females is that they resist more frequently, or are at least perceived as more likely to resist.



With regard to the relationship between race and injury in robbery, Normandeau (1969) found that whites generally suffered less harm than blacks (Normandeau, 1968, p. 154). This is confirmed by Block (1977) who found the rate of robbery homicide for whites to be only 14% of that for blacks (Block, 1977, p. 50). Conklin (1972) found that robbery victims were more likely to require hospital care if the offender was black than if he was white (Conklin, 1972, p. 120). In the robbery homicides studied by Block (1977), 90% of the offenders were black (Block, 1977, p. 49). Thus, it appears that black robbers have a much greater tendency to hurt or kill their victims.

Another factor which relates to the likelihood of injury in robbery is the number of offenders and victims involved. With respect to victims, Conklin (1972) found in Boston that lone victims were injured with greater frequency than victims held up in the presence of others (Conklin, 1972, p. 121). Offenders, however, tended not to be alone when they injured victims. Conklin (1972) found robbery victims were more likely to require hospital care if more than one offender was involved in the incident (Conklin, 1972, p. 120). In Oakland, Weir (1973) discovered that a victim was more likely to be injured when there were two or more offenders involved in the robbery. No one was hurt in 75% of the cases which involved only one offender, while the percentage dropped to 65% in cases involving two or more offenders (Weir, 1973, p. 34). Similarly, in Chicago, Block (1977) found that two-thirds of the robbery-homicides in his sample involved multiple offenders (Block, 1977, p. 51). One explanation for this pattern is that offenders in groups tend not to be armed and, therefore, need to resort to physical violence to back up their threats.

Another factor related to the likelihood of injury is the type of robbery. In Boston, Conklin (1972) observed that victims who were robbed while performing noncommercial functions were more likely to be injured than victims working in

commercial establishments (Conklin, 1972, p. 121). In Oakland, Weir (1973) found that personal robberies (54.1%), as opposed to commercial ones (18.2%), were more likely to result in injury to the victims (Weir, 1973, p. 73). Bratter (1963) reported that in only 11.8% of the bank robberies in his study were victims injured (Bratter, 1963, p. 78). Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that victims were injured in less than 3% of all convenience store robberies (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 62). Both Pratt (1980), in his study of mugging, and Reppetto (1974), in his study of residential robbery, found that injury to the victim was a distinct possibility. When one considers the "rates" for various types of robbery, a much different picture emerges. In Chicago, Zimring and Zuehl (1986) found the death rate for commercial robberies (15.2 per 1,000 robberies) to be over ten times higher than for street robberies (1.4 per 1,000 robberies) (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986, p. 13). With regard to sex of the victim and robbery type, they reported that commercial robberies with female victims result in death at less than an eighth the rate of commercial robberies with male victims. In addition, female street robbery was six times less deadly than male street robbery, and "other location" robberies involving female victims were also about one sixth as deadly as those with male victims (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986, p. 17).

To summarize, there seems to be some evidence to suggest that injury does not frequently occur to robbery victims. However, when injury does occur, it tends to vary a great deal according to the circumstances surrounding the event. Injury is most likely to occur in noncommercial robberies where the offender is male, black, young, and unarmed (opportunistic) and the victim is male, black, slightly older, and offering some resistance.

## Loss to the Victim

Robbery is a crime committed to expropriate something from the victim and, in a high percentage of cases, this goal is achieved.

According to the Uniform Crime Reports (1972), loss to the victim occurs in 62% of all robberies (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 77). Similarly, the National Crime Panel (1974) reveals that in 62% of robberies there is some property loss by the victim (Cook, 1976, p. 181). In his study of robbery in the U.S. Northwest, Syvrud (1967) found that some loss of money or property occurred in 90% of the cases (Syvrud, 1967, p. 60). Bratter (1963) reported that money was obtained in 88.2% of the bank robberies he studied (Bratter, 1963, p. 78).

With respect to the type of property stolen, money appears to be the main objective of most robbers. In London, money was stolen in 33.3% of the cases, money and personal belongings in 30.1% of the cases, and nothing was stolen in 23.6% of the cases (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 27).

Property loss, in most cases, is usually not very high. According to the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports, the value of property taken in robberies in the United States averaged \$609.00 per incident (F.B.I., 1984, p. 18). In an earlier study, the National Crime Panel (1974) reported that over a third of robbery victims (38%) lost no property, and half lost less than ten dollars. At the other end of the spectrum, one-sixth (16%) of all victims lost more than one hundred dollars, and a small fraction (1.6%) lost more than one thousand dollars (Cook, 1976, p. 182). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that in 23.6% of the cases no property was lost, in 36.8% from zero to ten pounds was lost, and in 13% of the cases more than one hundred pounds was lost (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 28).

As one might expect, the amount of loss varies significantly depending on the type of robbery. According to the National Crime Survey (1979), 65% of noncommercial robberies were successful in the sense that something was taken from the victim. The value of the items was less than \$50.00 in 37% of successful robberies and exceeded \$250.00 in only 16.5% of such cases. Commercial robbery losses were naturally somewhat larger. The survey estimated that 74% of commercial robberies were successful. Of these, only 14% resulted in a "loot" of less than \$50.00, and 36% in a "loot" of more than \$250.00 (Cook, 1983, p. 8). The National Crime Panel (1974) reveals that the average loss in commercial robberies was \$540.00, whereas the average loss in personal robberies was \$177.00 (Skogan, 1978, p. 67). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that incidents involving larger sums of money were commercial rather than personal in nature (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 28). In Ottawa, Ciale and Leroux (1984) found that in more than half the armed robberies (58%) less than \$1,000.00 was stolen. In addition, in nearly one third of the incidents (31.2%), the amount of money stolen was \$200.00 or less (Ciale and Leroux, 1984), p. 35). The value of property stolen also varies depending on the type of target. According to the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports, the average loss per incident was \$430.00 for street robberies, \$991.00 for commercial houses, \$387.00 for gas stations, \$429.00 for convenience stores, \$887.00 for residences, \$2690.00 for banks, and \$690.00 for miscellaneous robberies (U.C.R., 1984, p. 18). In West Germany, Buchler and Leneweiber (1986) found that the average bank holdup yielded approximately \$21,000 (Buchler and Leneweiber, 1986, p. 153). In their study of convenience store robberies in Vancouver, Roesch and Winterdyk (1985) found that the average loss per incident was \$99.62 (Roesch and Winterdyk, 1985, p. 61).

As mentioned above, victim resistance increases the likelihood of the use of force and injury. Victim resistance, however, also influences the likelihood of property loss by the victim. Hindelang, Garofalo and Gottfredson (1978) found that resisting the robbery attempt reduced the likelihood of property loss significantly. Property loss occurred in 42% of those cases where the victim resisted, as opposed to 86% where the victim did not resist. The most successful forms of resistance were the use of weapons, evasive action, and holding onto the property (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 87). In Chicago, Block (1977) discovered that if the victim resisted, the robbery was less likely to be completed: 75% as compared to 98% (Block, 1977, p. 83). In Oakland, Weir (1973) found that resistance by the victim helped to minimize property loss in approximately 25% of the robberies (Weir, 1973, p. 86).

The use of weapons is also a major determinant to property loss in robbery. Hindelang, Garofalo, and Gottfredson (1978) found that firearms were more successful (77%) when measured by property loss, than were knives (59%) or other weapons (54%) (Hindelang et al., 1978, p. 86). With regard to the amount of loss, Cook (1976) observed a positive relationship between the deadliness of the offender's weapon and the amount of property loss. Offenders carrying firearms were much more successful than others, with an average "loot" of \$164. Unarmed offenders, on the other hand, were unsuccessful in nearly half (46%) of their robberies, and those who were successful tended to be only modestly rewarded (mean of \$75). Finally, armed robberies involving a knife or other weapon occupied a middle position between firearm and unarmed robberies in terms of success and the amount of the "loot".(Cook, 1976, p. 184). In Chicago, Block (1977) found a strong relationship between firearm use and the amount of property loss. Most robberies in his sample involved relatively small amounts of money (less than \$50) and most of these did not involve firearm use (40% firearm use). However, of the small percentage of

robberies in which more than \$500 was stolen, 82% were firearm attacks (Block, 1977, p. 70). In Oakland, Weir (1973) also found that armed robberies generally netted higher losses than unarmed robberies (Weir, 1973, p. 90). This relationship between weapon use and amount of loss is to be expected, since firearms are more frequently employed against commercial targets and robberies against such targets tend to yield a higher return.

### Apprehension of the Offender

As mentioned above, the robber and his victim are usually strangers. Consequently, detection is difficult unless the offender is caught and detained immediately. Even so, the proportion of robbery offences cleared up is much higher than it is for other theft-related crimes which are typically committed without any witnesses. By its very nature, robbery involves a face-to-face encounter with a victim. Even when the victim is unable to detain the offender, he/she may be able to describe him, and he/she can raise an immediate alarm once the offender escapes (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 30).

According to Canadian Crime Statistics, 31.1% of the robberies committed in Canada in 1984 were cleared (Statistics Canada, 1984, p. 36). In British Columbia, 28.6% of robbery offences for 1985 were cleared by the police. In Vancouver, 23.2% of robbery offences for 1985 were cleared (Ministry of Attorney-General, 1986). In the United States, the 1984 Uniform Crime Reports reveal that 26% of robbery offences reported to law enforcement agencies were cleared. Rural law enforcement agencies registered the highest robbery clearance rate (40%), followed by suburban county agencies (30%), and finally the urban agencies (25%) (F.B.I., 1984, p. 20). The clearance percentages were 44.8% in London (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p.

30), 40% in Philadelphia (Normandeau, 1968, p. 5), and 30% in Oakland (Weir, 1973, p. 25).

Both McClintock and Gibson (1961) and Normandeau (1968) report that detection/apprehension was considerably more difficult for "impersonal" types of robbery than for those in which there was some prior association between offender and victim (Normandeau, 1968, p. 5). For example, Normandeau (1968) found that as many as seven or eight out of every ten offenders escaped in commercial robberies; the chances were only six in ten in personal robberies; and fifty-fifty in residential robberies. However, if there had been some previous association between the offender and victim, then the offender's chances of escape were only one or two in ten (Normandeau, 1968, p. 5). In London, McClintock and Gibson (1961) found that if the offender escaped the scene of the crime, his chances of subsequently avoiding arrest were nearly seven in ten for commercial, personal and residential robberies (McClintock and Gibson, 1961, p. 35).

**PART B**  
**TARGET SELECTION IN ROBBERY: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY**  
**INVESTIGATION**



## CHAPTER I

### METHODOLOGY

The preceding review of the literature focussed on past research relating to the crime of robbery. As was evident from the discussion, robberies are not evenly distributed across all temporal, spatial, and demographic dimensions. Indeed, robberies disproportionately occur at certain times, at certain locations, and to certain groups in the population. Therefore, robbery victimization does not appear to be a random event, but one in which the offender deliberately selects his victim/target according to certain situational criteria. The selection of a victim or target may be seen as the end result of a decision making process which involves the perceptual evaluation of a complex crime opportunity situation by the offender. The robber considers whatever aspects he deems important. Some factors are balanced against others, and some are given priority over others. The decision is then made whether to victimize the target. This process ranges from a relatively spontaneous consideration of the situation to a carefully weighed and planned action. It is an assessment process in which the crime environment is evaluated. Variations in the length and complexity of this assessment can perhaps best be explained, I would argue, by the type of robber involved.

#### Purpose of the Study

With the exception of Blazicek's (1985) study, little substantive work has been conducted in the area of victim selection. Since this important aspect of criminal behavior has been neglected, it was felt that there is a need for a study which closely examines the issue of victim selection in the case of robbery. The purpose of this study is to gather and analyze information regarding the methods employed by

robbers in locating and selecting their victims (targets), as well as the criteria they use for such selection. The study will try to establish whether robbers hold stereotypes of potential victims, whether they make distinctions between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" or "easy" and "hard" targets, and whether certain individuals or commercial establishments are more prone to victimization by robbers than others. It is hoped the present study will add to our knowledge regarding patterns of robbery and the selection of robbery victims. A better understanding of the victim selection process, as well as the criteria employed in that process, may result from the findings of this study. These findings will make a modest contribution to the discipline of criminology and to the subdiscipline of victimology, as there has been no extensive work done in this area to date.

### Hypotheses of the Study

The first hypothesis to be tested in this study is that offenders have preferences for certain types of robbery (commercial, residential, personal). That is, some offenders will only commit commercial robberies whereas others will only commit personal robberies or residential robberies. The second hypothesis to be tested is that robbery offenders have preferences for specific types of targets (e.g., banks, supermarkets, taxicabs). In choosing a specific target, robbers make distinctions between "easy" or "hard", "accessible" or "inaccessible", "good" or "bad", and "appropriate" or "inappropriate" targets. The third hypothesis to be tested is that victims/targets of robbery are not chosen at random, but are selected by the offender according to certain well defined criteria. In addition, the geographical locations where the victims or targets are attacked are also not randomly selected, but are carefully chosen. If these hypotheses are confirmed, then the victims/targets of robbers will be found to share common characteristics, and will not constitute an

unbiased cross-section of the population. The fourth hypothesis to be tested is that the selection of a robbery target is the end result of an assessment by the robber of what he considers to be the positive and negative features of the target. Furthermore, the length and complexity of the assessment process will vary according to the type of offender and the type of target. It is believed that through the investigation of these hypotheses, a much clearer understanding of the victim selection process in robbery will be achieved.

### Data Collection Procedures

In order to test the hypotheses of the study, detailed information was required on the target preferences and target selection techniques of robbers. It was felt from the beginning that only a qualitative type study could shed light on the specific aspects of robbery the author wanted to explore. After examining various possible methodologies, the method of personal interviews, using a semi-structured questionnaire, was chosen as the one most apt to yield the type of information required to test the above mentioned hypotheses. Other methods, such as self-administered questionnaires or file reviews, were seen as inadequate given the nature and purpose of the study. As Walsh (1986) explains, interviewing offenders is a very useful technique for this type of study:

Because offenders are the source of the crime it would seem absurd not to avail oneself of their versions of what they are doing and why. Linked with this, other methods of data collection, valuable as they may be, would seem to both skirt the issue and generally be impractical for crimes characterized by great secrecy and brief commission time (Walsh, 1986, p. 49).

Since the most readily available group of robbers can be found in our prison system, it was decided to use this group for the study. The sample was limited, however, to robbers serving sentences in federal penitentiaries. This restriction was

imposed for two reasons. First, as robbery is a serious offence, it was felt the highest concentration of convicted robbery offenders would be found in federal penitentiaries. Second, all federal institutions in the Pacific Region, with the exception of one, are centrally located in the Fraser Valley area, whereas the provincial institutions are spread throughout the province. It would not have been feasible for the author to travel to all the provincial institutions. Another limitation was that only male offenders were included. As there are no federal institutions for females in the province, it was impossible to include them in the sample. However, this was not seen as detrimental to the study as less than ten percent of all robberies involve female offenders.

Although this was considered the best approach, there are some methodological problems associated with interviewing captive offenders. One problem is "social desirability". Subjects may tell an interviewer what they think they "should" say. When asked about their values or opinions, they may report culturally acceptable ones, even when they do not hold them. A second problem is "evaluation apprehension". Sometimes subjects believe the interviewer is somehow judging their personal adequacy or mental health. As a result, they may say what they perceive a mentally healthy or "ordinary" person would say in the situation being studied. A third problem is "demand characteristics". Subjects may try to please the researcher by saying what they think he or she wants them to say. Alternatively, the subjects may deliberately try to make themselves look bad to the interviewer (Stern, 1979, p. 65). Another problem is when questioned about past events, there may be selectivity and distortion on the part of subjects. People have theories about the relationships between events, and what they judge as unimportant tends to be forgotten. Memories may be distorted to fit the view that makes the person most comfortable at present (Stern, 1979, p. 75). A final methodological problem is the

potential unrepresentativeness of the subjects. Robbers in prison may not be representative of robbers in general (Stern, 1979, p. 77). The possible distortions implied by such problems, however, were seen as being far outweighed by the general gain accruing from letting robbers tell their own story. At any rate, any contradictions or discrepancies can be checked against findings from the studies reviewed in the first part of the thesis.

Once the base population had been determined, application was made to the Correctional Service of Canada requesting permission to interview inmates serving sentences for robbery. Permission was granted and, upon request, a computer printout was received listing all offenders in the Pacific Region whose current major offense was robbery. From this list of 448 names, every second name was chosen which yielded a sample of 224 robbery offenders. The sample was then divided according to the institution in which the offender was serving his sentence. A sample of over 200 offenders was needed as it was anticipated that only 25-30% of the robbers would agree to the interview. Such a response rate would result in the completion of approximately 60-75 interviews, a number deemed reasonable for the purpose of the study.

Once the sample was drawn, the author then began visiting the federal institutions. At each institution, the prison administration and the unit supervisors were briefed on the details of the study. In addition, the author met with the head of the inmate committee to explain the details of the research. At these meetings, the author was very forthright regarding the purpose of the study, the content of the interview schedule, and the procedures which were being followed. It was hoped that having these discussions, prior to approaching individual subjects, would eliminate any confusion or misgivings on the part of the staff or inmates. In addition, it was hoped that this approach would ensure maximum cooperation and the

most positive response from the inmates.

Having met with the prison administration and the head of the inmate committee, the author then obtained a copy of the current nominal role of the institution, in order to compare it to the sample list for the penitentiary. All inmates from the sample list who were released, transferred, unlawfully at large, or in segregation were dropped from the list. Inmates who were released or transferred were eliminated because it would have been too difficult and/or time-consuming to locate them. Those inmates in segregation were excluded because the author was not permitted, for safety reasons, to be alone with them for the interview. As the confidentiality of the interview would have been compromised had a correctional officer been present, the inmates in segregation were simply not included. Thus, the actual sample was composed of all inmates on the sample list who were still in the institution, except those in segregation. Due to the deletions of many potential subjects from the sample, the sample did lose much of its randomness. In view of the qualitative nature of the study, this was not considered a major shortcoming.

In order to initially meet with the inmates from the sample list, the author obtained a private room in one of the units of the institution and then had the inmates report to the room one at a time. With each inmate, the author introduced himself, stated the nature and purpose of the study, the procedures of the study, and then requested the participation of the inmate in the research. The inmates were assured that the interviews would be confidential and their anonymity would be maintained. The author attempted to address any concerns or reservations the inmates may have had with respect to the author or the study. In addition, the author tried at all times to maintain an open, honest attitude, and to create a friendly atmosphere in order to gain the confidence of the inmates.

Table 2 provides a breakdown, by institution, of the inmates' responses regarding participation in the study. As may be seen from the table, out of an initial 224 inmates on the list, seventy-four (33.0%) agreed to take part, eighty-one (36.2%) declined to participate, forty-five (20.1%) had been transferred from the institution, twelve (5.4%) were released, three (1.3%) were unlawfully at large, and nine (4.0%) were in segregation.

If an inmate did not wish to participate, his name was simply deleted from the list. A common reason for nonparticipation, especially with native offenders, appeared to be their general mistrust of the interviewer and the purpose of the interview. Many inmates were concerned that the interview results might be seen by prison administration and somehow adversely affect them or their chances of parole.

Once an inmate agreed to participate in the study, an appointment was made to conduct the interview. Since the interview generally took from two to three hours to complete, the author attempted to schedule two per day. Due to a number of factors (e.g., inmate sickness, work, etc.), however, appointments often had to be rescheduled. Consequently, it took just over three months (June 2 - September 5, 1986) to complete the seventy-four interviews.

The interviews took place in a private room in a unit of each institution. It was felt that having the interviews in the unit, rather than in the administration area, would help the inmates feel more at ease and, therefore, would enhance the quality of the responses. Prior to the commencement of the interview, each inmate was asked to read and sign a consent form (Appendix A). Once the form was signed, the author began the interview following the prepared schedule (Appendix B). In the first section of the interview, the offenders were asked to give full

Table 2

Inmate Participation in the Study

Outcome	Institution								Total	%
	Kent	Matsqui	Mission	Mountain	William Head	Ferndale	Elbow Lake	R.P.C.*		
Agreed	21	15	17	7	7	4	0	3	74	33.0
Declined	14	31	12	2	10	3	4	5	81	36.2
Transferred	5	18	3	0	13	1	2	3	45	20.1
Released	0	1	3	5	2	0	1	0	12	5.4
U.A.L.**	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	1.3
Segregation	4	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	9	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* R.P.C.: Regional Psychiatric Centre (Abbotsford)

\*\* U.A.L.: Unlawfully at large



details of their personal as well as their offence history. This included a complete description of all robberies committed by the offender. To complete the section, the offenders were questioned as to why they committed a robbery, or robberies, rather than some other type of crime. In the second section of the interview, the offenders were asked if they had preferences for one type (commercial, residential, personal) of robbery over another and, if so, for what reasons. After noting the offender's reasons, the author referred to Key 1 and asked the offender if any of the factors listed in Key 1, but not already mentioned, were determinative of his preference. To complete the section, the offenders were asked to score, in order of importance, the reasons for their preference, using a scale from one (very unimportant) to five (very important). The reasons were scored so that their importance to the offenders could be determined. In the third section of the interview, the offenders were asked if they had preferences for specific types of robbery targets over others and, if so, the targets preferred. The offenders were then given a list of robbery targets, depending upon their robbery preference (commercial, residential, personal), and asked to score each of the targets according to their relative attractiveness on a scale from one (very unattractive) to five (very attractive). The offenders were then asked to fully explain the scores given to each target. After noting the reasons, the author referred to the appropriate Key (2,3,4) and asked the offender if any of these factors, not already mentioned, were determinative of target attractiveness. In the fourth section of the interview, the offenders were asked if the targets they had robbed were chosen at random or selected according to certain identifiable criteria. If selected nonrandomly, the offenders were asked to fully explain the criteria which the decision(s) was based upon. After noting the criteria, the author referred to the appropriate Key (5,6,7) and asked the offender if any of these other criteria, not already mentioned, were determinative in the selection of the target(s). The offenders were asked to score, in order of importance, the selection criteria using a

scale from one (very unimportant) to five (very important). The criteria were scored so that their importance to the offenders could be determined. Finally, the offenders were asked to describe the target selection process from the conception of the idea of robbery to the actual commission of the crime.

Extensive notes were taken during the interview and some additional notes were made upon completion of the interview. A tape recorder was not used, as it was felt that it would inhibit many of the inmates. In conducting the interviews, the author tried to create a very relaxed, and non-threatening atmosphere in which the inmates could feel comfortable. It is the author's impression that this approach proved successful, as inmates' responses during the interviews seemed very candid and insightful.

A deliberate decision was made not to use institutional files to supplement or corroborate the information given by the inmates in the interviews because of the negative and/or hostile attitude manifested by a number of inmates to this practice during the initial encounter. Had these files been consulted, it seems certain that fewer inmates would have participated in the study. The use of these files was not crucial as the only useful information they contained was that relating to the inmate's offense history. Since cooperative subjects are not likely to lie about the robberies of which they were convicted, sacrificing the files as a source of data to secure a larger sample was seen as a positive rather than negative move.

After completing the seventy-four interviews, the interview notes were manually coded, and the findings were analyzed.

In order to test the accuracy of some of the information given by the subjects, it was felt that comparative data should be obtained from police officers experienced in the field of robbery. As a result, the Vancouver City Police Department

was approached and, with their consent, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten detectives in the robbery section. The interviews were conducted with each officer in private and were approximately thirty minutes in length. Each detective was asked if he felt the selection of robbery targets was random and, if not, what criteria robbers used in choosing particular victims/targets. Extensive notes were taken during the interview and some additional notes were made upon the completion of the interview.

## Operational Definitions

### *General Categories of Targets*

Guided by the literature review, robbery was divided, according to the type of target, into three general categories: commercial, residential, and personal. "Commercial" robbery is one that is committed against a business establishment of some kind, be it retail or service oriented. "Residential" robbery takes place in premises where one or more persons reside. This includes the areas in and around the residence. "Personal" robbery is one that is committed against persons in an open space. It includes the "mugging" type robberies where the individual(s) is accosted in a park, an alley, a parking lot, or on the street.

### *Specific Types of Targets*

Within each of the three general categories of targets is a number of specific types.

Included in the general category of commercial robbery, are the targets listed in Appendix B. For the purpose of the study, "financial institutions" are banks, trust companies, and credit unions such as Royal Bank, Canada Trust, and

Vancouver City Savings Credit Union. "Department stores" refer to the large retail chain operated stores such as Eaton's, The Bay, Woodward's and Woolco. "Supermarkets" refer to the large retail chain operated grocery stores such as Safeway, Save-On Foods, and Super-Valu. "Small retail stores" include the small independent and chain operated stores which deal in sporting goods, shoes, and mens and womens clothing. "Jewelry stores" consist of both independent and chain operated retail jewelry stores such as Birk's, Grassie's and Spence. "Liquor Stores" are the government owned and operated liquor outlets. "Drug stores" cover both the independent, as well as chain operated retail drug stores such as London Drugs, Pharmasave, and I.D.A. "Corner grocery stores" refer to the small independently-owned neighborhood grocery stores. "Convenience stores", on the other hand, are the small chain-operated grocery stores such as 7-Eleven, Mac's, and Hasty Market. "Gas stations" include both the independent and chain-operated service stations such as Petro-Canada, Chevron, and Pay-N-Save. "Restaurants, taverns and bars" is a large subcategory with all types of eating and/or drinking establishments from fast food restaurants to the finest gourmet restaurants, and from a bar or pub to the most exclusive nightclubs. "Theaters" designate motion picture as well as live production theatres. "Commercial trucks" are those transporting merchandise or freight. "Buses" refer to local transit as well as inter-city buses such as B.C. Transit and Greyhound. "Taxicabs" include all types of taxicabs. "Armoured cars" are armoured motor vehicles operated by companies such as Loomis, Brink's, and Wells Fargo. Finally, "trains" are either passenger or freight-carrying trains such as Via Rail and Canadian Pacific.

Included in the general category of residential robbery are the targets listed in Appendix B. For the purposes of the study, "houses" refer to single family, fully detached living units. "Duplexes/fourplexes" consist of multiple family, fully

attached living units. "Townhouses/condominiums" refer to multiple family, semi-detached living units while "low-rise apartments" are multiple family, fully attached living units of three floors or less. "High-rise apartments are multiple family, fully attached living units of more than three floors.

Included in the general category of personal robbery are the targets listed in Appendix B. Compared to the previous subtypes, personal ones are relatively self explanatory. The first categorization of targets is based upon the sex and age of the victim. There are young males and females under twenty-five years of age, middle-aged males and females from twenty-five to fifty-five years in age, and males and females over fifty-five years of age. The second categorization of targets is based upon the race of the victim. "Caucasian" refers to fair-skinned individuals of European descent. "Black" describes dark-skinned individuals of African descent. "Asian" designates individuals of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese descent. "Native Indian" refers to any of the native peoples of North America. "East Indian" are individuals of Indian or Pakistani descent.

#### *Target Preference Determinants*

It was hypothesized that robbers would not only have preferences for specific targets, but that these preferences would be based upon certain identifiable criteria. One of the purposes of the study was to shed light on the factors determining or influencing target preference.

Factors influencing offenders' preferences for one target category over another are listed in Key 1 of the interview schedule. The most important of these factors include the potential pay-off, physical accessibility, temporal accessibility, mechanical security, human security, number of victims, persons other than victims, likelihood of resistance, escape routes from the scene, likelihood of the victim being

armed, and the availability to the offender of weapons, transportation and partners (see Appendix B). For the purposes of the study, "potential pay-off" refers to the amount of financial reward an offender can expect to get by robbing a target. A commercial target promises a higher potential pay-off and is likely to be much more profitable to rob than a residential or personal target. "Accessibility" (physical) is the difficulty or ease with which the offender can enter and exit the scene of the robbery and the physical restrictions placed in his way. As business establishments are designed for dealing with the public, the robber can generally have free access to such targets. A residential target, on the other hand, has restricted access and the offender, therefore, must gain entry by ruse, threat, or force.

"Accessibility" (temporal) refers to the times at which the offender can gain access to the robbery target. For example, an offender can rob a personal target anytime the victim is available. He can attack a residential target whenever an occupant is home, whereas he can rob a commercial target only when it is open for business (i.e., limited temporal access). "Security" (mechanical) includes the mechanical security devices, such as alarms and cameras, which are installed to protect the target. For example, residential and personal targets generally have few, if any mechanical security devices, while commercial targets are often better equipped. "Security" (human) is the security personnel, such as armed guards, who may be present at the time of the robbery. For example, residential and personal targets are unlikely to have security guards, while certain commercial targets such as banks or jewelry stores are more likely to have guards present. The "number of potential victims" is likely to influence the robber's choice as well. A robber who wants to attack a lone victim is likely to choose a person as a target. Large commercial establishments (banks, department stores, supermarkets), on the other hand, are likely to have several persons present at any given time. "Persons other than victims" relates to the potential number of bystanders or witnesses to the robbery.

For example, if an offender hopes to encounter as few witnesses as possible, he may choose a residential rather than a commercial target. "Likelihood of resistance" is the chance of the victim(s) attempting to physically resist the robbery offender(s). For example, an employee in a commercial establishment may be much less likely to resist a robbery than a person in his/her house or on the street because the money is not his/her own and he/she may have been instructed to cooperate in the event of a robbery. "Escape routes from the scene" refer to the ease with which an offender can leave the scene of the robbery. For example, escaping from a commercial target may be relatively easy and swift, whereas escaping from a residential target may be time-consuming and difficult. "Likelihood of victim being armed" is self-explanatory. For example, employees in banks or department stores and individuals on the street rarely carry weapons, whereas individuals in their homes may have some type of protection.

The final three factors relate to the offenders themselves. "Weapons" relate to the availability of suitable weapons for the offender to commit the robbery. For example, if armed, the offender may feel confident in selecting commercial, residential, or personal targets, whereas if he is unarmed, he may feel only persons are feasible. "Transportation" refers to the availability of appropriate transportation to commit the robbery. For example, if the offender is "on foot", he may prefer to rob a person. If he has transportation, though, he may feel confident robbing commercial or residential targets. "Partners/accomplices" relate to the availability of suitable partners to commit the robbery. For example, the offender with a partner(s) may feel assured in selecting commercial, residential, or personal targets. The lone offender, on the other hand, may prefer to rob a person.

With respect to specific types of targets, the variables which may be determinative of the offenders' preferences for one "commercial" target over another are

listed in Key 2 of the interview schedule (Appendix B). Many of these variables are found in Key 1 and, consequently, have already been defined. Therefore, only those variables not previously described will be examined. "Physical layout" is the manner in which the interior floorplan as well as the architecture of the building have been designed. For example, supermarkets generally have more than one exit, which may facilitate the robber's escape. Jewelry stores, on the other hand, often have only one exit, thus making it more difficult to get away. "Size of the establishment": commercial establishments vary greatly in size from quite small to very large or huge. The size may be a factor influencing the choice of the potential robber. Small establishments such as jewelry stores may be preferred by some over department stores because they are smaller in size and, therefore, easier to control. "Adjacent commercial establishments" refers to the presence or absence of businesses adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of the target establishment. For example, convenience or corner grocery stores, often without adjacent businesses, may be preferred by some robbers because of their isolation, over department stores which, in most instances, are located in shopping malls. "Characteristics of establishment employees" are the demographic (age, sex, race) characteristics of the commercial target's employees. For example, banks may be preferred by offenders over gas stations because the employees are female rather than male, and females may be less likely to actively resist the robbery.

The factors which may determine or influence the offenders' preference for one "residential" target over another are listed in Key 3 of the interview schedule (Appendix B). As all of these variables are found in Key 1 and Key 2 and, therefore, have already been defined, they will not be described again.

The factors which may be determinative of the offenders' preferences for one "personal" target over another are listed in Key 4 of the interview schedule



(Appendix B). Many of these factors are found in Key 1 and Key 2 and, consequently, have already been defined. Therefore, only those variables not previously described will be examined. "Likelihood of reporting robbery" is the risk of the victim informing the law enforcement authorities of their robbery victimization. For example, individuals involved in illegal behavior (e.g., drug dealers) may be apprehensive about reporting a robbery to the police for fear of their own activities becoming known. As a result, these types of individuals may be preferred by robbers over others. "Physical and mental condition" relate to the apparent physical and mental status of the victim. That is, whether the victim has any visible or perceived impairments. For example, a drunk or mentally handicapped individual may be preferred over individuals with no impairment because they may be seen as "easier prey". "Physical strength" refers to the apparent physical strength or body build of the victim. For example, a frail, old woman may be preferred by offenders as a target over a strong young man.

The factors or criteria which may have influenced the offender's selection of one commercial, residential, or personal target over another are listed in Keys 5, 6 and 7 respectively. As many of these factors have been described above, only those not previously defined will be examined. "Familiarity with the area" is the offender's knowledge of the area in which the target is situated. For example, one bank may have been chosen over another by the robber because it was in an area of the city with which he was familiar. "Familiarity with the target" relates to the offender's knowledge of a particular target. For example, the robber may have chosen one residence over another because he was completely familiar with it and knew exactly what to expect. "Location of the target" is self-explanatory. In this case, the offender may have chosen one target over another because there were certain aspects of the target's location which he found attractive.

## CHAPTER II

### A DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Why would a qualitative study of robbery victims/targets and their selection commence with a presentation of quantitative data on the characteristics of the offenders and offences? The present research is a study of offender choices, of decision-making by a particular group of offenders: why do they commit robbery instead of, or in preference to, some other property offence? Why do they select a particular target instead of, or in preference to, another? The inferences to be drawn from the declarations made by the members of the sample, the conclusions made on the basis of interviews with a relatively small number of robbers and the generalizability of these conclusions depend largely on the characteristics of the group studied, on the extent to which they resemble or differ from the larger universe of robbers. Hence, it is deemed important not only to accurately describe the study sample but also to relate later on the different characteristics to the specific focus of the study: choice of target.

#### Characteristics of the Offender

##### *Age and Race*

The abundant literature on robbery suggests that the typical robber starts his career at quite an early age. Findings from the present study tend to confirm this seemingly general trend. As may be seen from Table 3, twenty-nine (39.2%) of the offenders in the sample committed their first robbery before the age of twenty and an additional thirty-six (48.6%) committed their first robbery before the age of thirty. Only seven (9.5%) were between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine at the time of their first robbery. The age range at first robbery, was rather large. Four

offenders first robbed when they were only thirteen. One offender, however, did not commit any robbery until he was forty-nine. For the sample group as a whole, the median age at first robbery was twenty-one years.

As may be expected, the members of the sample were somewhat older at the time of their current robbery (see Table 3). Only nine (12.2%) were under twenty years of age when their current robbery took place, compared to forty-three (58.1%) who were between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine, and thirteen (17.6%) who were between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine. The age range with regard to the current robbery, was equally large. Two subjects committed their current robbery when they were only eighteen years of age. There was one offender, though, who was sixty-three years of age when his current robbery occurred. For the group as a whole, however, the median age at current robbery was twenty-five and a half years. These findings on the age of the offender are certainly supported by the literature on robbery. The Uniform Crime Reports (1984), McClintock and Gibson (1961), and Normandeau (1968) have all found that robbery offenders are typically in their early twenties.

Since the age at first robbery and the age at current robbery have been collected for each offender, it was possible to calculate the length of robbery activity for the whole group. As can be seen from Table 3, thirty of the seventy-four offenders (40.5%) have robbery "careers" of less than one year, ten (13.5%) of one to three years, nine (12.2%) of four to six years, eight (10.8%) of seven to ten years, eight (10.8%) of eleven to fourteen years, and nine (12.2%) have "careers" exceeding fifteen years. The length of robbery activity across the sample group covered a wide range. There were twenty-one offenders who had no robbery "career" at all. In other words, the current robbery offence was their first. At the other end of the scale, there was one whose robbery career had spanned over fifty years. For the

Table 3

## Age of the Offenders

n = 74

		Age at First Robbery						Total
		under 17	17-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40+	Total
Offenders	#	12	17	18	18	7	2	74
	%	16.2	23.0	24.3	24.3	9.5	2.7	100

  

		Age at Current Robbery						Total
		17-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Offenders	#	9	20	23	13	6	3	74
	%	12.2	27.0	31.1	17.6	8.1	4.0	100

  

		Length of Robbery Activity (years)						Total
		under 1	1-3	4-6	7-10	11-14	15+	Total
Offenders	#	30	10	9	8	8	9	74
	%	40.5	13.5	12.2	10.8	10.8	4.0	100

sample as a whole. though, the median length of robbery activity was two years.

With respect to race, the sample was overwhelmingly caucasian. Seventy-two (97.2%) were caucasian, one (1.4%) was black, and one (1.4%) was native Indian. The percentages of caucasian and black offenders in the sample roughly correspond to the percentages those two races comprise in the incarcerated robbery population in Canada. The native group, however, was slightly underrepresented. The reluctance of several native offenders to participate in the study is the reason for this underrepresentation. No asian or east indian offenders appear in the sample as

there were none incarcerated for robbery in the federal penitentiaries of the Pacific Region at the time the study was carried out.

Comparing the racial composition of this sample to the findings of other studies is difficult since most previous research on the race of robbery offenders has been conducted in the United States. The United States has a significant portion of blacks in its population. No such situation exists in Canada. This demographic difference between the two countries precludes any data comparisons on the basis of race.

#### *Marital And Employment Status*

From the data, it appears that a high percentage of offenders are not maritally attached (Table 4). Of the seventy-four robbers, in the sample, forty-three (58.1%) were single, fifteen (20.3%) were living common law, eight (10.8%) were married, four (5.4%) were separated, and four (5.4%) were divorced when the current robbery took place. These findings are in line with those of other researchers. McClintock and Gibson (1961), Haran and Martin (1985), and Camp (1968) found only a small percentage of robbery offenders were married at the time of the offence. The findings of the present study, as well as the others just mentioned, are not surprising given the age composition of the sample. Members of the sample as a whole were a very young group. Hence, it is understandable that the majority were not married.

Not only were the majority unmarried at the time of the offence, but they were unemployed as well. As may be seen from Table 4, of the seventy-four offenders in the sample, one quarter (24.3%) were employed while three quarters (75.7%) were unemployed at the time of the offense. This finding is also congruent with the general literature on robbery. McClintock and Gibson (1961), Weir (1973), and

Table 4  
Marital and Employment Status

n = 74

Marital Status	Offenders	
	#	%
Single	43	58.1
Common Law	15	20.3
Married	8	10.8
Separated	4	5.4
Divorced	4	5.4
Total	74	100.0

  

Employment Status	Offenders	
	#	%
Employed	18	24.3
Unemployed	56	75.7
Total	74	100.0

Haran and Martin (1985) have all found high rates of unemployment among robbery offenders.

*Alcohol Use*

The subjects were questioned regarding their alcohol use. On the basis of their personal declarations, it appears, as may be seen from Table 5, that the majority were not heavy users of alcohol. In fact, one fifth (20.3%) claim to have never or very seldom drank. Forty-four (59.4%) may be qualified as social or occasional

Table 5  
Alcohol Use

n = 74

General History	Offenders	
	#	%
never or very seldom	15	20.3
social or occasional drinker	44	59.4
problem drinker	15	20.3
Total	74	100.0

At Offense	Offenders	
	#	%
no alcohol	55	74.3
some alcohol, but not impaired	7	9.5
impaired	12	16.2
Total	74	100.0

drinkers, and fifteen (20.3%) were "problem drinkers"<sup>2</sup>. With respect to alcohol use at the time of the offence, it appears, if one is to rely on the subjects' claims, that most were sober when they committed the crime. Three quarters (74.3%) declared they had consumed no alcohol, seven (9.5%) admitted they had consumed some alcohol (1 or 2 drinks) but were not impaired, and twelve (16.2%) offenders claimed they were impaired<sup>3</sup> when the robbery occurred.

<sup>2</sup> "Problem drinker" refers to an individual with a dependency and/or who engages in heavy, regular usage of alcohol.

<sup>3</sup> "Impaired" refers to a diminished mental and/or physical capacity resulting from the consumption of alcohol.

In sum, then, it seems that a majority of the sample, like the general population, were social or occasional drinkers who did not consume any alcohol prior to the commission of the robbery. The same, however, could not be said regarding the use of drugs.

### *Drug Use*

As may be seen from Table 6, use of drugs is a serious problem among the members of the sample. Twenty-one (28.4%) never or very seldom used drugs, twenty-three (31.1%) used drugs on a social or occasional basis, and thirty (40.5%) were problem drug users<sup>4</sup>. Of those who engaged in the use of drugs (n=53), twenty-six (49.1%) used marihuana and/or hashish, sixteen (30.2%) used pharmaceutical (chemical/manufactured) drugs, and thirty (56.6%) used heroin and/or cocaine. As might be expected, marihuana and hashish were generally the drugs of choice of the social or occasional user group whereas heroin, cocaine and pharmaceutical drugs were those preferred by problem users.

The use of drugs at the time of robbery was also examined. Of the seventy-four offenders, forty-seven (63.5%) consumed no drugs immediately prior to committing the robbery, one (1.3%) consumed some drugs but was not impaired, and twenty-six (35.2%) were "impaired" when the robbery took place. Of those who were "impaired", nearly all had taken heroin, cocaine, and/or pharmaceutical drugs. Marihuana and hashish were not reported as major contributors to impairment<sup>5</sup> at the time of the offence.

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<sup>4</sup> "Problem user" refers to individuals with a dependency and/or who engage in heavy, regular substance use.

<sup>5</sup> "Impairment" refers to a diminished mental and/or physical capacity resulting from the consumption of drugs.



Table 6  
Drug Use

n = 74

General History	Offenders	
	#	%
never or very seldom	21	28.4
social or occasional user	23	31.1
problem user	30	40.5
Total	74	100.0

  

At Offense	Offenders	
	#	%
no drugs	47	63.5
some drugs, but not impaired	1	1.4
impaired	26	35.1
Total	74	100.0

On the basis of the above, two observations may be made. First, most of the offenders (79.7%) in the sample were not problem drinkers and were not impaired (83.8%) when their robbery occurred. Second, more than half of the sample group (59.5%) were not problem drug users and were not impaired (64.9%) at the time of the offence. There was, however, a rather unexpectedly large percentage (40.5%) of problem drug users in the sample; most of whom were impaired when the robbery took place.

## Characteristics of the Offence

### *Offence History*

One of the first variables examined in relation to the robbers' career history was the number of current robberies committed by the offender (Table 7). Of the seventy-four subjects in the sample, thirty-nine (52.7%) were in the penitentiary for having committed a single robbery, seventeen (22.9%) were in for two to three robberies, eight (10.8%) for four to six robberies, five (6.8%) for seven to ten robberies, and five (6.8%) for more than ten robberies. The range of robberies across the group was great. Although thirty-nine offenders had been convicted for one robbery, there was one offender in the group who had fifty-eight current robberies to his credit. The total number of current robberies for the whole group was 291. The median was one robbery and the average was 3.9 robberies.

The second variable examined was the number of previous robberies committed by the sample. Of the seventy-four offenders, thirty-nine (52.7%) had no previous robberies, eighteen (24.3%) had one to two robberies, twelve (16.2%) had three to four robberies, three (4.1%) had five to six robberies, and two (2.7%) had more than six previous robberies. Again the range across the group was large. While half the group had no previous robberies, one offender had thirty-three previous robberies. For the group as a whole, there was a total of 134 previous robberies committed. The average was 1.8 robberies.

Using the number of current and previous robberies, it was possible to calculate the total number of robberies for the sample group. Of the seventy-four subjects in the study, eighteen (24.3%) admitted to only one robbery, twenty-one (28.4%) to two or three robberies, fifteen (20.2%) to four or five robberies, ten (13.5%) to six or seven robberies, four (5.4%) to between eight and fifteen robberies,

Table 7  
Offense History

n = 74

		Number of Current Robberies					Total
		1	2-3	4-6	7-10	11+	
Offenders	#	39	17	8	5	5	74
	%	52.7	23.0	10.8	6.7	6.7	100.0

  

		Number of Previous Robberies					Total
		0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7+	
Offenders	#	39	18	12	3	2	74
	%	52.7	24.3	16.2	4.1	2.7	100.0

  

		Total Number of Robberies						
		1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-15	16+	Total
Offenders	#	18	21	15	10	4	6	74
	%	24.3	28.4	20.3	13.5	5.4	8.1	100.0

and six (8.2%) to more than fifteen robberies in total. Again, the frequency of robberies committed by members of the sample varied greatly. While one quarter of the robbers were just "one-timers", there were two offenders with more than thirty (33,34) robberies and one particular offender with sixty-four robberies to his credit. In all, the total number of robberies committed by the sample was 425<sup>6</sup>. The median for the group was three and the average was 5.7.

<sup>6</sup>The large number of current and past robberies committed by the members of the group compensates for the relatively small size of the sample and greatly enhances the reliability of the findings. A few hundred incidents means a few hundred targets and the focus of the present study is on robbery targets.

The time intervals between the robberies of each offender (where applicable) were also calculated. A typology of offenders, based upon the frequency of robbery activity, was then created. According to the typology, one type of robbery offender was the first timer. Included in this type were all those offenders who have committed only one robbery or who have committed two robberies in a very short time span. One third (33.8%) of the robbers in the sample were classified as "first timers". A second type was the serial robber. These were offenders who had committed a group of three or more robberies over a short period of time (i.e., less than a month). Serial robbers victimized in "sprees". Of the seventy-four offenders in the sample, only nine (12.2%) were "serial" robbers. The third type of offender was the occasional robber. These were offenders who had committed two or more robberies over the course of their careers, but only one at a time with long intervals (i.e., at least one year) between each robbery. There were sixteen (21.6%) offenders who were "occasional" robbers. The final type of robbery offender was the professional robber. These were offenders who had committed many robberies (i.e., minimum of four) on a regular basis (i.e., short time period between each) over the course of several years. Twenty-four (32.4%) offenders in the sample fit this operational definition of "professional or "career" robbers. Thus, the sample used for the present study may be seen as a fairly diverse group of robbers. One third of the sample ("first timer") had very little robbery experience, another third ("serial", "occasional") had a moderate amount of robbery experience, and the final third ("professional") had a good deal of experience in the commission of robberies.

The final aspect of the career history examined was the type of offenses, other than robbery, committed by the sample. A large majority of the robbers have engaged in other forms of property crime<sup>7</sup>. Out of seventy-four, sixty-two (83.8%)

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<sup>7</sup>Property crime includes breaking and entering, theft, possession of stolen property, fraud, forgery, and false pretences.

Table 8  
Typology of Robbers

n = 74

Types	Number	Percentage
First timer	25	33.8
Serial	9	12.2
Occasional	16	21.6
Professional	24	32.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100.0</b>

had committed property offences in the past. Of these sixty-two offenders, thirty-one (50.0%) had committed only property offences, fifteen (24.2%) had committed property and drug offences<sup>8</sup>, twelve (19.4%) had committed property offences and offences against the person<sup>9</sup>, two (3.2%) had committed property and sexual offences, and two (3.2%) had committed property, drug and offences against the person.

Offences against the person were the second most frequent type of crime, other than robbery, committed by the offenders. Of the seventy-four offenders in the sample, twenty one (28.4%) had previously committed some violent offence against the person. Of those twenty-one, just six (28.6%) had committed only crimes against the person, twelve (57.1%) had committed both violent and property crimes, one (4.8%) had committed crimes against the person and drug offences, and two (9.5%) had committed crimes against the person, property and drug offences.

<sup>8</sup>Drug offences refer to all drug possession and trafficking crimes in violation of the Narcotic Control and Food and Drug Acts.

<sup>9</sup>Offences against the person refer to assault, wounding, and attempted murder.

Drug offences were the third most frequent type of crime, other than robbery, committed by the sample. Of the seventy-four offenders in the sample, twenty (27.0%) had committed drug offences. Of these twenty offenders, only two (10.0%) had committed only drug offences. The majority (75.0%) of these offenders had property crimes in addition to their drug offences.

Sexual offences were the least frequent type of crime other than robbery committed by the offenders in the sample. Only two (2.7%) admitted having committed sexual offences, and both of these offenders had committed property crimes as well.

On the basis of the sample, which, it is hoped, is fairly representative of robbers in general, it may be said that the pure, exclusive robber (i.e., a person who commits nothing but robbery from the beginning to the end of his criminal career) is very rare. Indeed, only four (5.4%) of the entire sample had committed only robberies. Many, it appears, get their "start" in other types of crimes, primarily property, before they "graduate" to robbery. In his study of robbers, Feeney (1986) reported similar findings. Most offenders in his sample progressed from shoplifting to burglary to robbery over the years. Some highly active robbers, however, went much more directly into robbery and at a very early age (Feeney, 1986, p. 65). Conklin (1972) also found that robbers progressed from other forms of crime into robbery. As he notes with respect to "professional" robbers:

Most did not begin by snatching purses or mugging old men on the street. Some began as car thieves hired by professional gangs as "wheelmen", later becoming part of the gang as full members. Others began by committing burglaries, later giving up this type of crime because of a distaste for its "sneakiness" and the risk of being trapped in a house by the police or an armed occupant. Professionals are recruited from relatively heavy crimes such as burglary rather than from more trivial forms of robbery such as purse-snatches and rolling drunks (Conklin, 1972, p. 85).

## *Types of Targets*

One component of the "modus operandi", or means of operation, examined in the study is the type of target robbed. From Table 9, it appears that an overwhelming majority of the offenders in the sample engaged in commercial, as opposed to residential or personal, robberies. The rates of victimization did vary, however, depending upon the specific type of target. With respect to commercial targets, financial institutions were the most frequently victimized. Twenty-seven (36.5%) offenders robbed one hundred and thirty-three (45.7%) financial institutions in the current offence and seventeen (23.0%) offenders victimized eighty-five (63.4%) financial institutions in past offences. Large businesses were robbed by only a handful of subjects in the sample. Five (6.8%) offenders robbed these businesses for a total of twenty-five (8.6%) victimizations in the current offences. Eight (10.8%) offenders for a total of eight (6.0%) victimizations in past offences. Of the two types of large businesses, supermarkets were victimized the greatest number of times. Small businesses, on the other hand, were victimized by more offenders. Thirty-four (45.9%) of the offenders accounted for eighty-five (29.2%) robberies in the current offences and seventeen (23.0%) offenders accounted for nineteen (14.2%) robberies in the previous offences. Drug stores, jewelry stores, and corner grocery stores were the small businesses robbed most frequently by the offenders in the sample. With regard to the entertainment businesses, seventeen (23.0%) of the offenders robbed twenty-one (7.2%) of these establishments in the current offences and seven (9.5%) offenders robbed eleven (8.2%) of these establishments in the previous offences. Of the entertainment businesses, hotels and motels were the ones most frequently victimized by the offenders. The final type of commercial robbery is transportation robbery. Four (5.4%) of the offenders in the sample committed four (1.4%) transportation robberies in the current offences and one (1.4%) offender committed one (.7%)

Table 9

Popularity of Different Types of Targets  
Among Convicted Robbers

	Current Offenses			Previous Offenses		
	Offenders #	Offenses #	%	Offenders #	Offenses #	%
1. COMMERCIAL	88	271	93.1	52	126	94.0
a) financial institutions	27	133	45.7	17	85	63.4
b) large business	5	25	8.6	8	8	6.0
dept. stores	0	0		3	3	
supermarkets	5	25		5	5	
c) small business	34	85	29.2	17	19	14.2
small retail	2	3		1	1	
jewelry	8	9		3	3	
liquor	2	2		0	0	
drug	9	16		3	3	
corner grocery	4	44		7	7	
convenience	4	5		1	3	
gas station	5	6		2	2	
d) entertainment	17	21	7.2	7	11	8.2
restaurant, bars	6	6		2	3	
hotels, motels	10	14		5	8	
theaters	1	1		0	0	
e) transportation	4	4	1.4	1	1	.7
buses	1	1		0	0	
taxicabs	1	1		0	0	
armoured cars	2	2		1	1	
f) other	1	3	1.0	2	2	1.5
2. RESIDENTIAL	5	12	4.1	2	2	1.5
a) house	4	11	3.8	2	2	1.5
b) apartment	1	1	.3	0	0	0
3. PERSONAL	7	8	2.8	4	6	4.5
a) male	4	4	1.4	3	4	3.0
b) female	3	4	1.4	1	2	1.5
Total	100*	291	100	58	134	100

\*The number of offenders does not total seventy-four because offenders were coded for each type of offense committed.



transportation robbery in the previous offences. Although only a small number of transportation robberies were committed by the sample group, armoured cars were the most frequently victimized of the three subtypes. Trains and commercial trucks were originally included as transportation robbery subtypes. However, as none of the offenders in the sample attacked any of these targets, they were deleted from the table.

With respect to residential robbery targets, single family dwelling units were the ones most often robbed by the offenders in the sample. Four (5.4%) of the offenders victimized eleven (3.8%) of these units in current offences and two (2.7%) offenders victimized two (1.5%) of the single family dwelling units in previous offences. There was only one (1.4%) offender in the sample group who had committed an apartment robbery, and he did this just once.

The final type of target victimized by offenders in the sample were individuals (i.e., personal robberies). Four (5.4%) subjects in the sample group robbed four (1.4%) male victims in current offences and three (4.1%) offenders robbed a total of four (3.0%) male victims in previous offences. Three (4.1%) offenders robbed four (1.4%) female victims in current offences and one (1.4%) offender robbed two (1.5%) female victims in previous offences. Although there were only a handful of these personal robberies, males were not more frequently victimized than females.

From the above, it is evident that the vast majority of offenders in the study perpetrated commercial, rather than residential or personal robberies. Indeed, 93.1% of the offenders' current robberies and 94.0% of their previous robberies were committed against commercial establishments. Residential and personal robberies each account for only three to four percent of the total. These percentages are very different from what is reported in the literature. According to the literature reviewed,

approximately 50% of all robberies occur on the street and 10% in residential premises. There are several possible explanations for the difference between the present study and previous ones. First, most published studies used data from police files or from victimization surveys. In the present study, only robbers who were apprehended, charged, convicted and sentenced to a federal institution were included in the sample. Although many personal and residential robberies may have been reported to the police, it is possible that only a few of the offenders responsible were apprehended, convicted, and sent to federal institutions. From discussions with detectives of the Vancouver City Police Department, this explanation appears to be a plausible one. Although personal robberies form a large percentage of all "reported" robberies, the clearance rate for this type of robbery is quite low. That is, muggers or strongarm robbers are not apprehended in a majority of cases. A second plausible explanation is the possibility that most offenders convicted of personal or residential robberies are sentenced to provincial institutions and thus were not included in the study. A third explanation might be that among robbers there is a certain stigma attached to residential and, especially, personal robberies. It is possible, therefore, that most subjects in the sample were only willing to admit robberies of commercial establishments.

The preceding discussion of the frequencies with which various types of targets were victimized by the subjects should conclude with one final question: were the offenders consistent in the type of target they victimized? In other words, did they only rob one type of target and nothing else? On the basis of the data, the question must be answered in the negative. Of the fifty-six offenders who had committed more than one robbery, forty-one (73.2%) had robbed more than one type of target. Only fifteen (26.8%) offenders were consistent and victimized just one type. Of these fifteen the majority were bank robbers.

### *Presence or Absence of Partners*

The second component of the "modus operandi" examined was the presence or absence of partners in the robberies. Of the seventy-four offenders in the sample, nineteen (25.7%) committed all their robberies without any accomplices, thirty-six (48.6%) were always with accomplices, and nineteen (25.7%) committed some robberies with and some robberies without accomplices. Of the fifty-five robbers who did have partners, forty-three (76.8%) had one partner, twenty-one (37.5%) had two partners, and only three (5.4%) had committed their robberies with three partners<sup>10</sup>.

Consistency in the presence or absence of partners and the number of partners was something which applied to just over half of the sample group. Of the fifty-six offenders who had committed more than one robbery, thirty (53.6%) were consistent in the number of accomplices they robbed with. The remaining twenty-six (46.4%) did not always rob with the same number of partners.

There were some important differences in the modus operandi of robbers who had and those who did not have partners. Robbers with partners nearly always had weapons (92.7%), almost always had some means of transportation (96.4%), and in most cases used a disguise (66.6%). Offenders without accomplices, on the other hand, were much less likely to be armed (76.3%), less likely to have a car (55.3%) and, in most cases, without a disguise (44.7%). They were, in general, less equipped for the crime.

In sum, then, a good percentage of the subjects did not go about their robberies alone and the dominant pattern was to have just one partner.

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<sup>10</sup>The number of offenders who had partners does not total fifty-five because offenders who, for example, committed some robberies with one partner and some with two partners were coded twice.

### *Presence or Absence of Weapons*

The third component of the "modus operandi" examined was the presence or absence of weapons in the robberies perpetrated by the subjects. Of the seventy-four offenders in the sample, nine (12.2%) committed all their robberies unarmed, fifty-six (75.6%) committed all their robberies armed, and nine (12.2%) of offenders committed some robberies armed and some unarmed. Of the offenders in the last category, most committed their unarmed robberies when they were younger.

As to the types of weapons employed in the robberies, there appears to be distinct preferences among the offenders. As may be seen from Table 10, the pistol or handgun is by far the most widely used weapon. Of the sixty-five offenders who used weapons, forty-four (67.6%) used a pistol. Of the forty-four who used pistols, eighteen (40.9%) employed these exclusively, nine (20.5%) employed pistols and shotguns, five (11.4%) alternated between pistols and knives, while the remaining twelve (27.3%) used pistols at times and a number of different weapons at other times. The second most frequently used weapon by the subjects is the knife. Twenty-one (32.3%) of the sixty-five armed robbers perpetrated their robberies with knives or other cutting instruments. Of these twenty-one, eight (38.1%) used only a knife. The balance of thirteen (61.9%) used the knife in conjunction with some type of firearm (pistol, shotgun, rifle). The third most frequently employed weapon is the shotgun. Twenty (30.8%) of the sixty-five offenders committed their offences using this weapon. However, none of the twenty offenders used only a shotgun. Most used it in combination with a pistol or a knife. The fourth most frequently used weapon were toy pistols. Twelve (18.5%) of the sixty-five offenders in the sample group robbed with toy guns. Of the twelve, only four (33.3%) committed robberies using nothing but toy pistols. The remaining eight (66.7%) used the toy weapons

Table 10

Popularity of Different Types of Weapons  
Among Convicted Robbers

n = 65

Weapon	Offenders	
	#	%
pistol	44	67.6
shotgun	20	30.8
rifle	7	10.8
automatic weapons	2	3.1
toy, pellet, starter pistol	12	18.5
knife, cutting instruments	21	32.3
blunt instruments	3	4.6
Total	109*	100.0

\*The number of offenders does not total sixty-five because offenders were coded for each type of weapon they had used.

in conjunction with real firearms (pistol, shotgun, rifle). Only a handful of offenders employed the three remaining types of weapons: rifles, blunt instruments, and automatic weapons (machine guns). In general, the use of these weapons was accompanied by a knife or other firearm.

Robbers, at least the ones in the present sample, do not exhibit a great deal of consistency in the weapons they use. They often employ different weapons for different robberies. Of the fifty-six subjects who had committed more than one robbery, only twenty-four (42.9%) consistently employed the same type of weapon for each robbery. A higher number, thirty-two (57.1%) used different weapons for each robbery and/or committed robberies both with and without arms.

Distinct differences were found between the modus operandi of armed and unarmed robbers. Of those who were armed, most had a partner (73.8%), transportation (92.3%), and some type of disguise (60.0%). The unarmed, on the other hand, were less likely to have a partner (50.0%), transportation (33.3%), and a disguise (22.2%).

The findings in relation to the use of weapons may be summarized as follows: First, the vast majority of robbers were armed, and the weapon most frequently used is the pistol. Second, the offenders were not consistent, in that they used different types and combinations of weapons for different robberies. Finally, there were distinct differences between the modus operandi of armed and unarmed robbers.

#### *Presence or Absence of a Means of Transportation*

The fourth component of "modus operandi" examined was the presence or absence of a means of transportation in the robberies. Of the seventy-four subjects, eleven (14.9%) committed all their robberies without the use of any transportation (i.e., on foot), forty-seven (63.5%) committed all their robberies with some means of transportation, and sixteen (21.6%) committed some robberies with and some without the use of transportation. Of the offenders in the last category, most committed the robberies without the use of transportation (i.e., on foot) early in their robbery careers.

The use of transportation was usually consistent from robbery to robbery. Of the fifty-six offenders who had committed more than one robbery, thirty-nine (69.6%) consistently used the same means of transportation. The remaining seventeen (30.4%) were not consistent in that they committed some robberies "on foot" and some with a vehicle.

Not only did offenders with weapons and partners differ from those without, but robbers using transportation differed from those on foot. Those using transportation were more likely to have partners (74.6%), weapons (92.1%), and some type of disguise (60.3%). Those with no means of transportation were much less likely to have partners (29.6%), weapons (51.9%), and a disguise (29.6%).

#### *Presence or Absence of a Means of Disguise*

The fifth component of "modus operandi" examined was the presence or absence of disguises in the robberies. Of the seventy-four robbers interviewed, twenty-eight (37.8%) committed all their robberies without any disguise, twenty-eight (37.8%) committed all their robberies with some type of disguise, and eighteen (24.4%) committed some robberies with and some robberies without a disguise. Most of those in the final category committed their robberies without disguises early in their robbery careers.

The face mask or covering is the most popular disguise. Twenty-nine (63.0%) of the forty-six offenders who wore disguises used some type of face mask. These face masks included balaclavas (ski mask), bandannas, nylons, and rubber masks. Nineteen (41.3%) offenders wore a cap or hat, eighteen (39.1%) wore bulky clothing or an overcoat, eighteen (39.1%) wore glasses or sunglasses, thirteen (28.3%) wore a wig or colored their hair, eleven (23.9%) wore a false moustache or beard, ten (21.7%) applied make-up to their face, and seven (15.2%) wore gloves during the robberies. From this list, it is apparent that most of the offenders, as one might guess, sought to somehow alter their appearance or to hide their face or head. All but two (overcoat, gloves) of the disguises listed were for that purpose.

The subjects appear to be fairly consistent in their use of disguises. Of the fifty-six who had committed more than one robbery, thirty (53.6%) wore the same

Table 11

Popularity of Different Types of Disguises  
Among Convicted Robbers

n = 46

Type of Disguise	Offenders	
	#	%
face mask, covering	29	63.0
cap, hat	19	41.3
bulky clothing, overcoat	18	39.1
sunglasses, glasses	18	39.1
wig, colored hair	13	28.3
false moustache, beard	11	23.9
make-up	10	21.7
gloves	7	15.2
Total	125*	100.0

\*The number of robbers does not total forty-six because offenders were coded for every type of disguise they had used.

type of disguise, or no disguise at all, from robbery to robbery. Twenty-six (46.4%) wore different disguises for each robbery, or wore a disguise for one robbery and not for another.

The "modus operandi" of offenders who used disguises and those who did not varied somewhat. Robbers who wore a disguise were more likely to have partners (76.1%), weapons (93.5%), and some means of transportation (91.3%). Undisguised robbers, on the other hand, were less likely to have partners (50.0%), weapons (71.7%), and transportation (71.7%). Thus, the differences in the modus operandi of robbers, based upon the presence or absence of disguises, was not as marked as it was with partners, weapons, and transportation.



### *Time of the Robbery*

The final component of the "modus operandi" examined was the time of occurrence of the robberies. However, due to the poor recall of several offenders of the times of their robberies, it was felt that this information is unreliable.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SELECTION OF ROBBERY AS A CRIME

The primary purpose of the thesis is to examine the process by which robbers select their victims or targets. In other words, the central question is: why do robbery offenders choose one victim or target over another? Before examining this question, however, it is necessary to step back and look at a more general question: why do offenders choose robbery rather than some other property crime? The subjects offered a number of reasons to explain their choice.

#### Profitability

One reason cited for choosing robbery over other forms of property crime is the high potential pay-off. Many had accumulated large debts, had pressing drug habits, or had lifestyles beyond their legitimate means.

I had exhausted everything else. I needed money badly and I didn't want anyone to know I was in debt. (no.68)

I always needed a lot of money fast. I had to support an \$800 per day heroin addiction. (no.54)

I needed a lot of money to drink and live. Robbery was a fast way to get a lot of cash. (no. 55)

Pressed by legitimate or illegitimate economic demands, many subjects saw robbery as their best option to obtain cash. For them, other types of crime did not match robbery as a way of obtaining immediate relief to their cash shortage.

I learned at a very early age that robbery was a fast way to accumulate a lot of cash. There was money to be made at it. (no.19)

In his study of robbers, Feeney (1986) cites pressing debts or drug habits as reasons for the choice of robbery.

I needed the money for food. I tried welfare. I tried to borrow from all the people that I could borrow from...I didn't have any sources of money. I was just flat broke. I was getting it out of savings and borrowing money from my mother, but I was getting kind of run out because she was starting to need more. I didn't even think about how much I wanted to get. I just felt that anything I got would help. It was better than nothing (Feeney, 1986, p. 57).

But see, I would have been able to support my family if I wouldn't have had to pay for heroin...if it wasn't for the heroin I wouldn't have had debts to make money for. Well, I had a family to take care of and the heroin got to the point that I didn't keep food in the refrigerator and the rent paid and the bills paid...that's when I got into robberies (Feeney, 1986, p. 55).

Two reasons were given to explain why robbery was considered more profitable than theft or breaking and entering. First, in burglary or theft where merchandise is stolen and fenced, the thief receives only twenty to thirty percent of the actual value of what he has stolen. In a robbery, however, the offender receives the full booty. Second, the burglar can never be assured that he will find anything of value on the premises. As one offender noted: "You might break into a house and find nothing" (no.36). In robbery, on the other hand, the offender is generally guaranteed that he will receive at least some reward for his effort. Feeney (1986) expresses a similar opinion about burglary:

Most of those who considered burglary preferred robbery. Some did so because there was more money and no need to fence the loot... (Feeney, 1986, p. 61).

### Degree of Risk

Another reason cited by the subjects for choosing robbery over other forms of property crime is its nature as a very fast and easy way to obtain money. As one robber stated: "...in the eyes of the robber, it's the quickest way to procure money" (no. 27). The robbers were keenly aware of the fact that they could walk into a commercial establishment, demand money, leave quickly, and run a relatively low

risk of being apprehended. As one robber explained:

It's an easy crime...it takes only a couple of minutes at the most. There are no hassles, the people have been told to cooperate. They aren't gonna play hero...if you can initially get away, then you are pretty well rest assured you're not gonna get caught. (no. 32)

Thus, if they committed a robbery, most felt they were likely to have free access to most targets, little or no resistance from the victims, a very short time at the scene of the crime, and a poor chance of apprehension. As one offender noted: "...it is convenient as hell" (no. 1). Break and entry, on the other hand, was seen as too troublesome and risky. First, the burglar is forced to break into the target. This requires certain skills and equipment whereas in a robbery, the offender need only walk through the entrance. Second, in a burglary the offender must search for and locate the valuables, whereas in a robbery he is typically aware of their location prior to the crime and, if not, he can force the victim to find them for him. Third, breaking into the target and searching for valuables increases the amount of time spent at the scene of the crime which, as a result, increases the chance of apprehension. Similar opinions with respect to theft and burglary were voiced by the robbers in Conklin's (1972) sample:

...larceny from a store will often involve merchandise worth little money. Sometimes the goods are stolen for personal use, but more often they are sold to a fence at about one-fourth of their retail value. Most persons who rob do so in part because they would rather steal cash than property which has to be converted to cash. The process is time-consuming, inconvenient and sometimes risky. Robbery has the advantage over burglary and larceny of providing the offender with liquid assets. Also, a number of robbery inmates who had done burglaries claimed that it was a "hassle" or "too much trouble" to break into a house, search out valuable goods, carry them out of the house, and exchange them for cash with a fence (Conklin, 1972, p. 87).

Not only is robbery faster and easier than break and entry, it is also more direct. Many seemed to dislike the surreptitious entry involved in burglary and the fact that they could be surprised by the owners of the household. One robber stated it quite bluntly when he said: "I don't like sneaking around other people's

houses; there are too many surprises!" (no. 10).

You know exactly what's going on and what you're up against. There are no surprises and you have more control over the situation. (no. 11)

Robbers seem to prefer being able to walk directly into a target, put the victims on notice that a robbery is in progress, and then take control of the situation. The brash and confrontational nature of robbery seemed to have a particular appeal to many of the subjects. They enjoyed the temporary power they experienced from being in control of the crime situation. Roebuck and Cadwallader (1967) also found that many offenders chose robbery because they preferred confrontation to stealth.

They scoffed at their criminal acquaintances who were non-violent property offenders...They represented themselves as brave daring men who took what they wanted in a straight-forward way. They took real pride in their criminal style --- the taking of property by force or threat of force... (Roebuck and Cadwallader, 1967, p. 360).

Robbery appealed to the subjects in another sense as well. It is "the most direct route to money" (no. 7). One robber echoed the sentiments of many when he said: "I don't like handling and dealing with merchandise" (no. 32). One major problem in stealing objects, as in burglary or theft, is the need to deal with a "fence". The fear, on the part of robbers, is that "other people know your business and there's always some rat in the crowd" (no. 26). Fencing merchandise means that the fence, his associates, and even prospective buyers might know the identity of who perpetrated the crime. Having so many third parties involved increases the chances of apprehension because "there are so many stool pigeons out there today" (no. 32). Robbery was considered less risky because there is no merchandise involved (in most cases), no fences or middlemen, and therefore, a reduced chance of anyone "ratting" to the law enforcement agencies.

In a B and E, you steal goods, and then you have to fence them, whereas in a robbery you steal money and the job is done. (no. 18)

## Appropriateness

Some robbers prefer robbery because of a perception that it is a more "honorable" type of crime than breaking and entering. Just as banditry was perceived in the old days, robbery seemed less sneaky and less furtive than other property crimes. True or not, many voiced a certain reluctance to invade another man's household with the intent of stealing.

I don't feel right about going into someone's house. It's a double standard, but I think it's reprehensible to take someone's personal belongings. (no. 62)

I didn't believe in takin' it from guys who didn't have it. I don't condone guys robbing a house. (no. 55)

I just can't see breaking into another guy's house. I can't see robbing somebody that's got no more than I got. (no. 65)

Robbery, it seems, is perceived as less reprehensible than break and entry. Taking money from a commercial establishment seems to evoke less scruples than taking personal belongings out of a home. In most cases, they were not stealing something that belonged to the victim, but money or goods that had been entrusted to the victim by others. Furthermore, as the loot was covered by insurance, there was no loss to the owner. This "denial of injury", as a technique of neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957), seemed to reduce the robber's sense of culpability as well as post-aggression dissonance.

## Environmental Determinants

While some preferred robbery over other property crime to solve their financial difficulties or to ease their conscience, others robbed because of their affiliations at the time.

It was the people I was involved with, that's what they were into at the time. (no. 6)

I was just trying to keep up with the guys I was hanging around with at the time. You know, you do something you're not really interested in, but you go along with it at the time. (no.8)

Me and my friends kind of worked our way up through all the types of crime. Robbery was and has a higher status than the other crimes we done...The guy I was with had already done some. He was really pushing to do a robbery. He said it was fast, easy money... so we went for it. (no. 66)

Feeney (1986) reports that many of the subjects in his sample got involved in robbery because of friends. As two of his respondents noted:

Because he asked me to help him out. He done a favor for me before. I didn't really want the money. It was an emotional thing more than anything else. Like the guy did me a hell of a favor (Feeney, 1986, p. 58).

...I was either going to take part in the robbery then or, you know, stay there and be a part of it already as far as my mind was going then...I felt a part of it, you know, when he (partner) committed the act, right then. I know it sounds silly, but that's the way my mind was going then (Feeney, 1986, p. 58).

The above statements, if true, show the importance of associations in the choice of robbery, rather than some other type of crime. There were some, though, who believed their environment played a role in their choice of crime.

It was institutionalized in the lifestyle that I grew up in. In the drug dealer/addict environment where I lived, robbing pushers and addicts was a daily occurrence...everyone had guns. (no. 25)

### Psychological Determinants

The thrill or excitement of robbery is another reason why the subjects chose it over other property crimes. For many offenders, committing a robbery was "a lot more excitement than a B and E" (no. 67).

Robbery gives you a real adrenalin push. That becomes more addicting than the money after awhile. (no. 18)

One subject, a heroin addict, expressed similar sentiments:

The adrenalin rush becomes as addictive as the drugs themselves. The rush and excitement are tremendous. After awhile, you think you're Jesse James. (no. 54)

Despite or because of the excitement, the thrill, robbery can be quite a draining experience. Many offenders discussed how draining robberies were for them. Robbing took a lot out of them, both physically and mentally. Still, during the actual commission of the robberies they felt "high" and "pumped up". This exhilarated feeling is what led them to continue in robbery, rather than another type of crime. In his study of muggers, Lejeune (1977) found as well that for some, the act of mugging was motivated by the desire for thrills:

When engaged in this type of deviance the actor will seek out risks as an intrinsic source of pleasure. But at the same time he will attempt to structure the situation so as to limit the risks to a manageable level (Lejeune, 1977, p. 125).

The thrill experienced by robbers does not appear exclusive to this type of crime. Maguire and Bennett (1982) found that burglars experience feelings of excitement some time during their careers. The surreptitious nature of burglary gives the offender a psychological "high".

It can be very exciting being on the premises when you know it is breaking the law. In fact I think, as crazy as it sounds, people do get almost addicted to the buzz you get from the adrenalin pumping through your veins (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 85).

According to Sutherland (1937), however, what the professional thief mostly seeks is money, not thrills.

There's no thrill in stealing. It is a business pure and simple, and the thief after a hard day's work could qualify as a tired business man (Sutherland, 1937, p. 141).

It's only the writers for the Detective Story Magazine who think the professional thief seeks thrills. Once I was asked what the cause of crime was and answered: Shortage of bucks. It is certainly the money and not the thrills...(Sutherland, 1937, p. 141).

On the other hand, Sutherland (1937) did find some thieves who experienced a thrill when stealing. As two confidence men noted:



I liked the excitement of the racket, the politics and the fixing --- the successes and the failures...You see there was a good deal of excitement and interest and skill involved in the racket (Sutherland, 1937, p. 142).

I get an awful wallop out of seeing someone clipped, and the humorous side of the thing appeals to me. I like to beat a sucker (Sutherland, 1937, p. 142).

A few subjects not only enjoyed the "high" of committing robberies, but also the sense of power they had over the victims. "You have a feeling of power when you have a gun in your hand" (no. 63). Another offender confided similar thoughts:

It's the power. The power was in my hand. I told the people they do what I tell them or I'd blow their fuckin' heads off! (no. 2)

This sense of power is lacking in theft and burglary, as there are normally no victims present at the time of the offence.

## CHAPTER IV

### TARGET PREFERENCE: GENERAL ROBBERY CATEGORIES

Of the seventy-four robbers in the sample, sixty-two (83.8%) had a general target preference and twelve (16.2%) had no preference at all. All of the sixty-two with a preference, preferred commercial over residential and personal robberies. This is not surprising given the fact that nearly all members of the sample had committed robberies against commercial targets at one time or another. For those with no target preference, one target was considered as good as another. As long as the target had money, it was an appropriate and acceptable one.

A number of reasons were cited by the offenders to explain why they preferred commercial targets over residential and personal targets.

#### Profitability

##### *Potential Pay-Off*

One reason for preference was the better "pay-off". This is understandable given the fact that the primary objective of robbery is the acquisition of money. Fifty-four (87.1%) of the sixty-two subjects preferred commercial robberies because they are more profitable than residential or personal ones. As several offenders noted:

I'm out to get as much money as I can when I commit a crime. Businesses simply have the most money. (no.57)

Unless you know a guy has a lot of money in his house, the money is always better in a business. (no. 59)

Seven out of ten times you're going to get serious money. The money is good and it's guaranteed. (no. 1)

Not only do commercial robberies yield a higher return than other robberies, they

generally guarantee some financial reward. The robber, especially if he attacks a large establishment, is unlikely to walk away empty handed. In discussing businesses, one offender stated:

They exist, they do monetary trade, they are fixed and observable, and they are predictable in the amount of money they have. There are no surprises. (no. 24)

Residential and personal robberies were viewed as too unpredictable in that "you could end up getting fuck all" (no. 1). The pay-off is low and it is by no means guaranteed.

How much are you going to get off some poor stiff on the street? (no. 6)

The amount of money you get is marginal at best. (no. 26)

What am I going to get, a couple hundred dollars. Big deal! (no. 65)

Why should I risk the same amount of time (prison) for \$200 when I can get \$200,000? Why should I rob for peanuts? (no. 32)

Not only was the amount of pay-off mentioned as being important, but so was the location of the loot. Commercial targets were preferred because the money is usually centrally located and can be easily found. This allows for a fast, efficient, and profitable robbery. In residential robberies, however, the money and/or valuables may not be centrally located and not easily found without the cooperation of the victims. This results in a longer robbery, and consequently increases the likelihood of apprehension.

The robbers also liked the fact that the pay-off in commercial robberies, in most cases, involves strictly cash. Residential and personal robberies, on the other hand, usually involve the theft of both cash and merchandise. Most subjects preferred to steal cash rather than merchandise. Others, however, had no choice in the matter.

We were heroin addicts and our pushers didn't want T.V.'s or stereos, they only took cash. (no. 54)

Stealing merchandise and personal possessions was disliked for several reasons. First, merchandise is more easily traceable by the police than money. Second, stealing merchandise involves the use of a fence, which means that several third parties might become aware of who committed the crime. As any of these people could be, or might become an informant, the offender's chances of apprehension are dramatically increased. Third, the fence only gives the robber a small percentage of the actual value of the merchandise. As a result, the robber may end up getting little money for his crime.

In addition to being cited by over eighty percent of the robbers as a reason for their commercial target preference, "pay-off" was also scored very highly by those offenders. In rating the importance of "pay-off" on a scale from one (not important) to five (very important), the average score by the robbers was 4.4. Hence, "pay-off" seems to be a major determinant of the offenders' target preference.

### Accessibility

#### *Physical Accessibility*

A second attractive feature of commercial targets is "accessibility". Twenty-nine (46.7%) of the sixty-two offenders preferred commercial robberies because of the ease with which they can enter and exit the premises.

That has a great deal to do with it. Businesses are open spaces. You can walk in the door without anyone suspecting a thing. (no. 35)

They are convenient as hell. You can walk in and out of the place without a problem. (no. 1)

That's true, you know. They are there, they are open and they are available. (no. 22)

Having relatively free access to the target allows the robber to be fast and efficient. Furthermore, it makes it possible to thoroughly "case" the target prior to

the robbery without suspicion.

That's part of it because you can go in and out of the business fast. You don't have to spend as much time in the place and you can check it out faster as far as casing goes. (no. 7)

With a business, you can walk right in, check out the place, and see if you want to do it. (no. 43)

Casing enables the robber to become completely familiar with the commercial target. There are fewer surprises because "you know exactly what you're up against" (no. 5). These features of commercial targets are viewed favorably by offenders because "the closer you can get to your mark, the better" (no. 71).

In contrast, residential targets were viewed negatively because of their restricted access. In a residential robbery, the offender must find a method or means of gaining access, he cannot simply walk in. Furthermore, restricted access makes the task of casing the target difficult and, in some cases, impossible.

You can case the business out better, so you are familiar with everything about the place. You just can't do it with a house. (no. 48)

The limited access of residential targets results in slower, less efficient robberies, with the potential for surprises.

Although cited by almost half the offenders as a reason for their commercial target preference, "accessibility" was only scored moderately high by those offenders. In rating the importance of "accessibility" on a scale from one to five, the average score was 3.7.

### *Location*

A third reason cited for preferring commercial targets was "location". Fourteen (22.6%) of the sixty-two subjects mentioned this reason. Escape is easier in commercial robberies because business establishments are generally located on major streets or thoroughfares thus allowing the offender to quickly leave the area

after the commission of a robbery. Residential targets, on the other hand, are normally located on narrower, smaller streets in the suburbs. Consequently, leaving the area of the robbery is slower, thus increasing the chance of apprehension.

With businesses being located downtown and on major thoroughfares, the offender can easily blend into the crowd after the commission of a commercial robbery.

People aren't inclined to notice you in a public place. You are just another face in the crowd of customers. (no. 32)

When you're downtown, no one thinks anything of you walking or driving around. (no. 17)

You're usually in an open area when you do a business. It's easy to escape from that situation. You're a lot less conspicuous in a downtown crowd than you are on a residential street. (no. 35)

The large number of people in business areas was seen as helpful to the robber in escaping from the scene unnoticed, in mingling with the crowd.

In terms of escape, residential areas were rated much less favorably. The subjects felt there was too great a chance of being spotted escaping from the scene of a residential robbery.

You stick out like a sore thumb! All the neighbors notice if you are a stranger in the neighborhood. (no. 17)

Some old lady might get a bead on you and phone the cops... if a cop sees one person running or dodging people, he knows he's found his man. (no. 19)

The streets are always dead. A stranger or a couple of strangers walking around a neighborhood will be noticed by the neighbors. (no. 13)

In addition to being cited by almost a quarter of the offenders as a reason for their commercial target preference, "location" was scored fairly high by those offenders. In rating the importance of "location" on a scale from one to five, the average score by the offenders was 4.0. Hence, "location" appears to be an

important factor, to the offenders who mentioned it, in their preference for commercial targets.

### Manageability

#### *Number of People*

A fourth reason cited by the offenders for their preference of commercial targets was the "number of people". Five (8.1%) of the sixty-two offenders felt the number of people was more predictable in a commercial, as opposed to residential or personal robbery.

It's predictable in business robberies. You know what you have to deal with. There are too many intangibles in the residential situation. (no. 24)

The robbers felt they could case a commercial the target in advance and then choose the time when there were the fewest number of victims. In other words, the offender has some "control" over the number of victims he will have to deal with. Residential targets, in contrast, were seen as too unpredictable. For the robber, it is difficult to "control" the residential robbery situation because "you never know what you're up against as far as the number of people" (no. 20).

In addition to being cited by less than ten percent of the subjects as a reason for their commercial target preference, the "number of people" was scored only moderately high by those who mentioned it. In rating the importance of the "number of people" on a scale from one to five, the average score was 3.6. Therefore, the "number of people" appears to be a moderately important factor, to those who mentioned it, in their preference for commercial targets.

## *Likelihood of Resistance*

Another reason cited for preferring commercial targets was a low "likelihood of resistance". Fifty-one (82.2%) of the sixty-two subjects who preferred commercial robberies did so because there was a much smaller chance of resistance by the victim, and a lower risk of potential violence. The general consensus was that employees in commercial establishments would not try to foil a robbery attempt. The robbers were aware that employees in many businesses are told to cooperate in case of a robbery.

They don't argue with you. Very seldom will you get a hero that won't give you the money. (no. 23)

You know exactly how they are going to react. They click in about the robbery right away and hand over the money. (no. 17)

Business people are more professional. They have been told to cooperate. All they want is for you to be out of the place without violence. (no. 20)

The offenders felt employees were unlikely to resist because the money they have to give up is not their own, it is only entrusted to them.

It's not their money. They're not going to put up any kind of fight. (no. 33)

They don't care about giving you the money, it's not theirs. These people are easy to deal with. (no. 14)

The robbers also believed employees were unlikely to resist a robbery because the money they are forced to part with is insured. There is no real loss to the business because of the robbery.

The employees are going to cooperate instantly because they are not going to worry about money which is insured anyway. (no. 11)

I know that they are told to cooperate. I have seen it on T.V.. Besides, they aren't going to resist, the money is insured. (no. 38)

In contrast to commercial robberies, many offenders viewed residential and personal robberies with a great deal of trepidation. They felt there was a much greater likelihood of resistance and potential for violence in these types of robbery.



They are a lot more likely to resist because you're taking what it took a lifetime for them to buildup. It's a personal loss. (no. 37)

There's always violence. You're busting into a man's home. They will try to give you a shot in the head as soon as you turn your head. It's their bread and butter, and they're not going to give it up easy. They will put up a fight. (no. 33)

You're taking everything that the guy has worked for the past fifty years. He's more likely to give you a beef. (no. 20)

Similar feelings were expressed regarding personal victims.

People will not give you the money. People will fight to the end for forty dollars. (no. 23)

You never know what they might do. It's their cash and belongings. It's a personal robbery and they're gonna flip out on you. (no. 17)

It's his own personal money...you never know what this guy will do. He will fight! (no. 11)

Most robbers shied away from residential and personal robberies because they are too unpredictable and because of the higher chance the victim might resist and become violent. Commercial robberies, on the other hand, were viewed as less threatening and more predictable.

Although it was cited by over eighty percent of the robbers as a reason for their commercial target preference, "likelihood of resistance" was scored only moderately high by those offenders. In rating the importance of "likelihood of resistance" on a scale from one to five, the average score was 3.8.

### Degree of Risk

#### *Likelihood of the Victim Being Armed*

A sixth reason cited for preferring commercial targets, over residential and personal targets, was the "likelihood of the victim being armed". Ten (16.1%) of the sixty-two offenders preferred commercial robberies because "most employees do not

carry weapons" (no. 53).

In a business situation, it is taken for granted that the employees are not armed. (no. 24)

With a business, everything is out in the open. You know the person isn't armed. (no. 17)

The commercial target is relatively safe and predictable because the victim(s) is unlikely to have a weapon. Residential and personal robberies, on the other hand, were seen by the offenders as unpredictable and potentially violent.

It's a definite cause for concern. The guy could easily have a gun in the house. (no. 71)

They're so unpredictable. You never know if people are armed or how many people there are in the house. (no. 32)

The guy on the street, you never know who you're robbing...he could be packing a piece (gun). In a house, you might meet up with a guy with a baseball bat. It's just not worth it at all. (no. 53)

In addition to being cited by only one sixth of the offenders as a reason for their commercial target preference, "likelihood of the victim being armed" was scored lower than the previous factors by those offenders. In rating the importance of "likelihood of the victim being armed" on a scale from one to five, the average score by the subjects was 3.4.

#### *Perception of Potential Sanctions*

Another reason cited by some offenders for their preference of commercial targets was "less prison time". Six (9.7%) of the sixty-two offenders believed they would receive a lighter sentence if apprehended and convicted of commercial robbery than they would for a residential or personal robbery.

You get less time in the pen if you get caught for robbing a business. If you rob a house or a guy on the street you might get ten to fourteen years out of it...especially if there's injury. (no. 21)

Some robbers felt the justice system frowned more upon residential and personal

robberies because the system views these crimes as being more "personal" in nature. The offender is robbing a "human being" rather than just an "establishment", which is faceless and impersonal. In the case of residential robberies, the "sanctity" of the home is being violated.

Although cited by less than ten percent of the offenders as a reason for their commercial target preference, "less prison time" was scored fairly high by those subjects. In rating the importance of "less prison time" on a scale from one to five, the average score by the offenders was 4.2. Hence, "less prison time" appears to be an important factor, to the offenders who mentioned it, in their preference for commercial targets.

#### *Likelihood of Apprehension*

The "likelihood of apprehension" is another reason cited by some robbers for their commercial target preference. Five (8.1%) of the sixty-two subjects felt that "the risk of getting caught is lower with a business" (no. 39). Some felt the risk was lower because the victims are unlikely to identify the offender in commercial robbery.

There is less chance of identification because in a business the people are looking at a different face all day long. They aren't likely to remember my face. (no. 21)

Victims were seen as more likely to remember the robber's face in a residential or personal robbery because the robber may have been the only stranger the victim came into contact with that day.

Others believed the risk of apprehension to be lower in commercial robberies because of poor police response.

Police are slower to respond to business robberies because they don't want to see any violence or hostage taking situations. They will let you getaway before they come after you. (no. 33)

This, it is felt, gives them an added advantage in eluding law enforcement authorities.

Although cited by less than ten percent of the offenders as a reason for their commercial target preference, "likelihood of apprehension" was scored quite highly by those offenders. In rating the importance of "likelihood of apprehension" on a scale from one to five, the average score was 4.2. Consequently, "likelihood of apprehension" seems to be an important factor, to the subjects who mentioned it, in their preference for commercial targets.

### Appropriateness

#### *Denial of Injury*

Yet another reason cited for preferring commercial targets was the fact that, in most cases, the "money is insured". Thirty-three (53.2%) of the subjects believed insurance companies cover any financial losses resulting from a commercial robbery. As the money will be recovered, no real harm or injury is suffered by the business. Consequently, commercial establishments were seen as more acceptable or appropriate targets for victimization.

If you have to be an asshole and do a robbery, it might as well be a business. It's no loss to them. The insurance company is the only loser. (no. 64)

The money is insured so it's not going to affect any one person. It's not really a loss to the business. (no. 18)

You're not really hurting them because the money is insured. There's an emotional shock, but no financial loss. (no. 61)

In addition, some robbers rationalized their acts by going as far as to say that they were doing the owner a favor by robbing his business.

The business is insured, so it's nothing personal. You're actually helping him out because they often say they lost more than they did. They come

out ahead! (no. 44)

The denial of injury or loss to the victim is a common technique of neutralization. Cressey (1953), in his study of trust violations, found similar attitudes among embezzlers. The delinquent and injurious characteristics of the criminal act were denied by the embezzlers, as they succeeded in convincing themselves that they were not "stealing", but merely "borrowing" the money.

In most instances, the rationalization that the conversion of deposits would merely amount to "borrowing" the deposits for a short time was an easy and logical step to make, since the ordinary practice of business interviewed was similar to such borrowing (Cressey, 1953, p. 103).

Thus, "embezzling" came to be defined as "borrowing" by the trust violators. Since "borrowing" was morally and legally acceptable, no one could condemn them for their behavior. Furthermore, as the money was only being borrowed, no one would be hurt by their actions. In the present study, commercial robberies were viewed as morally acceptable because the money is insured. As there is no "perceived" loss to the victim, the robber is less open to condemnation from others.

The robbery of residential or personal targets, on the other hand, was viewed in a more negative light. It was difficult to rationalize it since the money is typically not insured against robbery.

I don't believe in robbing an individual...it's not my bag. It's his own personal loss. (no. 18)

A business can afford to be robbed more than a person on the street. If I rob a guy on the street, he loses the money forever. I don't want to take the guy's food money. (no. 22)

It's more detrimental to a person than it is to a business because it's their own money they lose. (no. 49)

Thus, the victimization of residential or personal targets was seen as unethical by some because the victim cannot afford the loss. A similar attitude was held by professional thieves studied by Sutherland (1937).

Many thieves object to the cannon grift<sup>11</sup>, so far as they are personally concerned. It is too much for them to take the pocketbooks of people who may have four or five children depending on the money (Sutherland, 1937, p. 47).

Although it was cited by over half the subjects as a reason for their commercial target preference, "money is insured" was only scored moderately high by those offenders. In rating the importance of "money is insured" on a scale from one to five, the average score was 3.7. This factor, however, seems to be more of a rationalization for their behavior than an actual reason for their preference.

### *Blaming the Victim*

Another reason cited for preferring commercial targets, over residential and personal targets, related to "ethics". Sixteen (25.8%) of the sixty-two subjects preferred commercial targets because victimizing a business was seen as less blameworthy. They felt a business could afford the loss from a robbery more than a private individual.

Businesses can afford to lose a few thousand dollars. They don't suffer very much. (no. 6)

I would much rather hurt the system than the individual. They make so much money, it won't hurt them as much. (no. 26)

Not only could businesses afford the loss, some offenders felt they deserved the loss.

The Royal Bank can afford the loss. In fact, I think they deserve it. For me, it's a moral question. (no. 12)

Banks can afford it and, in a lot of cases, deserve it because of what these banks do to the public. The fuckin' banks have done a lot of rotten things. They have fucked a lot of people around over the years. (no. 20)

Thus, robbers seem to evade moral culpability for their actions by rationalizing their behavior in two ways. First, the offenders deny that anyone is injured by their actions by reasoning that businesses are so rich, they can afford the loss.

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<sup>11</sup>Cannon grift: the pickpocket racket.

Second, they deny the existence of the victim. By transforming commercial establishments into wrongdoers, the robber moves himself into the position of the avenger. Businesses are discredited or devalued so that they may be perceived as legitimate and deserving targets. The robbery is, therefore, not a criminal act, but a rightful retaliation or punishment (Sykes and Matza, 1957, p. 668). The same kind of rationalization was observed by Sutherland (1937) in his study of professional thieves. The confidence man, like the robber, transforms his victim into the wrongdoer.

...the con mob generally has a good deal of contempt for their suckers. They believe that if a person is going to steal, let him steal from the same point of view that the thief does: do not profess honesty and steal at the same time. In confidence games, the principle is the same --- beat a man who is trying to do something dishonest. It is impossible to beat an honest man in a confidence game (Sutherland, 1937, p. 178).

By defining the future victim as a "dishonest" person who deserves to be victimized, the illegal act is redefined as an act of moral indignation. The repugnance toward the victim overcomes any thoughts of his rights (Fattah, 1976, p.41).

Robbing residential or personal targets, on the other hand, was viewed as heinous, and condemnable. Many robbers seem to have compunctions about robbing a person, a human being like themselves. They simply "don't believe in robbing working stiff" (no. 16) because the average person cannot afford the loss from robbery. Several offenders volunteered their thoughts with respect to these robberies:

It's a matter of professional ethics. I have worked all my life and I would not rob an individual. I don't want to take someone else's bread and butter. (no. 24)

...because the person on the street, it would scare the shit out of them. It would really fuck them up. Besides, they couldn't afford it. (no. 28)

Some poor stiff works hard for what little he has and he can't afford to lose it. (no. 6)

Residential robberies were viewed as blameworthy not only because the person cannot afford the loss, but because the offender must invade another man's home to

commit the robbery.

It bothers me to steal from these people. To break into another man's home is pretty low. (no. 68)

It's a big insult. Attacking a man and his family in their house is not too cool. (no. 37)

I wouldn't want to walk into someone's house and terrorize them. I have a house and family of my own. (no. 74)

The robbers viewed these types of people as average "Joes" like themselves. They were, therefore, defined not as "wrongdoers", but rather as "victims" who would suffer if robbed. Consequently, an implicit code of ethics precluded these robbers from considering residences and people on the street as appropriate targets for robbery.

In addition to being cited by over a quarter of the subjects as a reason for their commercial target preference, "ethics" was scored highly by those offenders. In rating the importance of "ethics" on a scale from one to five, the average score by the robbers was 4.4. Therefore, "ethics" appears to be an important factor, to the offenders who mentioned it, in their preference for commercial targets. This factor, however, like the previous one, seems to be more a rationalization of their behavior than an actual reason for their preference.

#### Other Reasons for Preference

A number of other reasons were cited by the subjects for their preference of commercial targets. Each of these reasons was mentioned by only one or two robbers and included the following: the degree of planning involved, the type of people involved (only adults), the power over the victim, getting even with the "establishment", and no partners required. In addition to being cited by only one or two offenders, these reasons were scored fairly low (2.0-3.0). Consequently, they do not



appear to be very important factors, even to those who mentioned them.

There were some variables which were not mentioned by the subjects when asked to explain their preference for commercial targets over residential and personal targets. "Security", whether mechanical or human, was not cited by the offenders. However, this was to be expected since the security of business establishments is generally higher than for the other two categories of targets. Presence or absence of "weapons" and "transportation" were also not cited by the robbers. In addition, presence or absence of "partners" was only cited by one offender. Consequently, it appears that variables relating to the offender himself (i.e., partners, weapons, transportation) are not important factors in the preference of commercial targets.

## CHAPTER V

### TARGET PREFERENCE: SPECIFIC TYPES OF TARGETS

Several questions will be addressed in this chapter with respect to the robbers' preferences for specific types of commercial targets. First, whether or not the offenders in the sample had preferences for specific types of commercial targets over others. Second, for those with preferences, which type or types of target were preferred. Third, whether or not certain types of targets were considered more "attractive" than others.

#### Target Preference

Of the sixty-two robbers with a commercial target preference, all but three (4.8%) had predilections for specific types of commercial establishments. Those who professed no target preference stated that, for them, one commercial establishment was as good as another. Of those with a stated target preference, twelve (20.3%) had a distinct preference for one type while forty-seven (79.7%) preferred more than one type. Nearly all those with an exclusive preference chose financial institutions. For the others, several types of commercial establishments were popular. Financial institutions were the targets preferred by most robbers (61.7%). Following a close second and third were supermarkets (53.2%) and armoured cars (44.7%). Jewelry stores (40.4%), department stores (36.2%), and drug stores (31.9%) took fourth, fifth and sixth spots. Liquor stores (21.3%), hotels and motels (17.0%), and small retail stores (12.8%) were seventh, eighth and ninth among popular targets. A number of commercial targets were preferred by only a few offenders each. These included corner grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, commercial trucks, theatres, restaurants, taverns and bars. None of the robbers expressed a preference

for buses, taxicabs, or trains.

It was clear from the robbers' declarations that certain commercial establishments are perceived as more "attractive" than others. There were definite opinions as to which ones are the most "attractive" and which are the least "attractive"<sup>12</sup>. For most robbers, target "attractiveness" was determined by balancing the positive versus the negative characteristics of the target.

### Profitability

#### *Potential Pay-Off*

One characteristic of commercial establishments determinative of target attractiveness was the potential "pay-off". Several targets were considered appealing in terms of monetary rewards, but the most attractive, as one might expect, were armoured cars. The general consensus among the subjects was that if they were successful, they would be "set for life".

The money is dynamite. You wouldn't have to do another thing for the rest of your life. (no. 28)

The money is deadly. You could easily get \$100,000 if you pick the right car. (no. 7)

Although armoured cars were seen as the ideal target, financial institutions were also considered by many as very profitable ones.

You have sixty seconds to grab as much as you can. You can usually expect good money if you know what you're doing. (no. 5)

You're doing it (robbery) for a purpose, to get money. That's where the money is! (no. 11)

The robbers liked not only the fact that financial institutions have a good pay-off, but also that the money is accessible.

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<sup>12</sup>"Attractiveness" refers to the amount of appeal that a robbery target has for an offender and the reasons for that appeal.

In a bank the money is right up front and you know where it is. (no. 59)

From the robber's point of view, then, the pay-off in a bank is ideal. He can simply enter the bank, move directly to the teller, and leave again quickly. No time is wasted gaining access to where the money is.

For some, however, financial institutions were gradually losing their appeal as potential targets.

I can judge almost exactly how much money I can get out of these places. The money is just not that great anymore. You have to do a lot of them to make money. (no. 7)

Some lamented the fact that bank tellers no longer have large amounts of cash in their tills.

The money's not very good. Unless you get the main vault, you will only get \$1500 out of the teller. You haven't got time to go to all the tellers. (no. 16)

It has the prospect of being really good. If you don't get into the vault, though, you're not getting anything out of it. (no. 54)

Over the years, financial institutions have reduced their attractiveness as potential targets by lowering the large volume of cash each teller keeps. It is too risky for the robber to go around and get the money from all the tills. The most coveted prize is the vault, but access to it is difficult and time-consuming. Since time is a crucial factor in any robbery, all robbers want to be on the scene for as short a time as possible.

Large retail establishments, such as supermarkets and department stores, were regarded as lucrative targets as well.

They have serious bread. A couple hundred thousand if you hit them at the right time. (no. 60)

There's lots of predictable money and you know when it's gonna be there --- welfare day. Everyone grocery shops on the day of the cheque. Every broad in the Lower Mainland with two kids is shopping on welfare day. So hit them the day after welfare day. (no. 9)

The money is excellent because they accumulate it over a period of time. The money doesn't go to the bank every day. (no. 32)

Some, though, did not share this opinion.

The money is not really good. You only get what's in the tills and they are emptied all the time. (no. 21)

Department stores, in particular, were considered poor because customers pay for their purchases primarily with cheques and credit cards. An added negative feature, especially for those who were thinking of robbing the cashiers, is that the money is not centrally located.

Bank tellers are all together, but in department stores the cashiers are spread out all over the store. It's more difficult to get all the money fast. (no. 22)

It's good money, but there are too many tills. You couldn't get them all before someone was alerted. (no. 13)

Collecting the money in a department store robbery was viewed as too time-consuming and, therefore, too risky. Unlike department stores, the pay-off in supermarkets is centrally located. Certain precautionary measures taken by chain supermarkets, however, render the money less accessible than in other targets.

They take the money to the counting room and from the counting room the money is put directly in the safe. Only Brink's can open the safe and you can't get into the counting room. The only place this procedure is different is in the independent stores. The chain stores are no good. (no. 55)

For many, large service-oriented businesses, such as hotels, motels and restaurants, taverns and bars, are potentially rewarding targets.

The money is all centrally located in these big hotels. They put their money in one office and the money is good...\$30-40,000. (no. 17)

The pay-off can be really good in a good hotel. You will get a lot of expensive personal possessions out of the safe. (no. 65)

Bars, in particular, turn over a lot of cash. It could be a very good pay-off. (no. 73)

Because of the extensive use of credit cards and cheques, some robbers felt hotels, motels and restaurants, taverns and bars would prove very unprofitable if robbed.

There's no money in them...everyone pays with plastic or a cheque. Only hotels that cash welfare cheques have any money. (no. 2)

The money isn't there, especially in the low class places...and in high class places, everyone pays with plastic. (no. 15)

Similar sentiments were expressed by some about gas stations.

The money's no good. Most people pay for their gas with plastic these days. (no. 18)

I don't even look at them. Robbery is a business to me and there's nothing in these places. (no. 20)

Not only is the pay-off poor, it is also inaccessible because in many self-serve gas stations the cashier is fully enclosed in a booth. This setting makes it more difficult to force the cashier to give up the money and the success of the robber is totally dependent on the cooperation of the latter.

Nowadays the cashier is inside a locked booth. It's pretty difficult to get at the money when you're on the outside. (no. 59)

You would have to kick or punch out the glass to get at the person who has the money. (no. 33)

A further deterring factor is that a large portion of the money is usually kept in a safe.

Most of the money is dropped in the safe as it comes in. You can't get the money at all...only the manager has the combination to the safe. (no. 18)

Most of them don't have any money, unless you get into the safe. If the attendant doesn't have the combination, then you're S.O.L.. (no. 16)

Although not large in terms of size, liquor stores handle large volumes of cash.

Consequently, they appealed to many robbers.

There is excellent money in liquor stores because everyone is buying booze and they have to pay in cash. (no. 45)

You'll get an honest and good pay-off out of it...maybe \$30-50,000. (no. 32)

Liquor stores were considered by some, though, as poor prospects.

There's no money there. As soon as a certain amount of cash is there, \$10,000, they have Brink's pick it up. They just don't keep money in the store anymore. (no. 57)

Others felt the pay-off was inaccessible as it is kept in a locked safe.

They got floor safes and it takes too much time for them to open it up. (no. 9)

The money is usually in a safe and you have to be able to get them to open it up. (no. 1)

Having the employees open the safe is generally a slow process and time is always of essence to the robber.

If an offender were to rob any of the above mentioned targets, he would be stealing strictly money. Still, some targets were considered attractive even though, if robbed, they could yield merchandise. The most appealing of these targets were jewelry stores and drug stores.

The pay-off in merchandise is great, plus you're getting the cash in the safe as well. (no. 13)

Nowadays drugs are the same as money. You can walk in, rob the druggist, and get out with a \$100,000. (no. 22)

The pay-off is really good. You have to know the drugs you're after, though, or you could end up with a bag of garbage. (no. 58)

Another type of target yielding goods rather than cash is commercial trucks. Several subjects found them attractive due to a potentially rewarding pay-off.

If you're lucky or if you know what's in the back of the truck, you could get good money out of it. (no. 21)

The money would be great. If you got a trailer full of cigarettes, you would get at least \$100,000 out of it. (no. 65)

To be rewarded, the robber must be able to dispose of the goods to realize his profits. In the case of jewelry stores, this was seen by many as unproblematic.

Jewelry is easy to unload. Everyone is always looking for cheap jewelry because it's not as expensive as the stores. (no. 63)

Jewelry is in demand and easy to get rid of. It's already priced so you know what you can get for it. (no. 30)

Disposing of drugs after a robbery was considered equally unproblematic.

If you get the poison box, you've got it made. You don't have to worry about floggin' that stuff. It's nontraceable and easy to sell. (no. 9)

Everybody buys and sells pharmaceutical drugs. They are easy to get rid of. (no. 63)

The drugs are there and they are easy to get rid of. You get a good percentage of what the drugs are worth. (no. 1)

Similar sentiments were voiced by those discussing commercial trucks.

There's a lot of money in the back of one of them fuckers...a lot of merchandise. It's easy to get rid of if it's the right kind of stuff. (no. 9)

Jewelry stores, drug stores and commercial trucks were considered by many, however, as unattractive in terms of pay-off. Several did not like the fact that they had to somehow dispose on their own of the stolen merchandise, something that can be very risky. For example, if the robber stole drugs, he would have to sell them to "dope fiends" on the street. His chances of apprehension are greatly enhanced because any of these customers could turn informant.

There's no money there and I wouldn't want to have to sell the drugs. You have to deal with a lot of unnecessary people. There's too much hassle and too much chance of getting caught. (no. 12)

I'm not into pharmaceutical drugs, so I would have to unload them. There are too many stool pigeons in the drug environment. Also, I might get myself robbed or killed for the drugs. It's not worth it. (no. 32)

There's no money and I wouldn't want to sell the drugs. To get rid of the drugs you have to sell them to a bunch of low lifes. They would stab you in the back or rat out on you in a minute. (no. 17)

An added risk is the everpresent possibility of coming into contact with undercover police.

All you get is drugs and you have to worry about peddling them. There's too good a chance of getting caught. (no. 6)

You get a bit of money and a lot of drugs...but if you try to sell the drugs on the street, the cops will be on to you in a minute. (no. 16)

Furthermore, if the offender is apprehended while selling drugs, he will not only be charged with robbery, but with trafficking as well.



It's big money, but you have to sell the drugs to get the money. It's too much hassle, plus it's more charges involved besides robbery if you have to traffic drugs. (no. 5)

They don't keep much money on hand and I'm not interested in the drugs. Trafficking is too risky and it carries too much time. (no. 66)

Thus, attempting to sell the loot himself can be a very perilous enterprise for the robber. The alternative, however, is to sell the goods to a fence. Many subjects did not like the prospect of dealing with a fence. In discussing jewelry store and commercial truck robberies they stated:

I wouldn't do it for the fact that you get jewelry out of it and not money. You have to worry about fencing jewelry. (no. 33)

There's not much in there in cash. It's all in rocks and you have to get rid of the shit. There's too much hassle fencing it. (no. 16)

I don't like merchandise. It's not worth the time and hassle involved in fencing the stuff. (no. 32)

One problem robbers associated with fencing merchandise was that "you have to trust somebody you don't know" (no. 66). The fence and his associates would all become aware of who committed the robbery. Any one of these individuals could turn informant and go to the police.

Jewelry stores would be good to do if you had a proper fence. Fencing the stuff is too much hassle. You have to trust a second or even third party. They might rat out on you. (no. 43)

There's no cash and I don't like to deal with merchandise. You have to start going through other people which means you're taking a lot more chances. Too many people know your business. Never know when someone might turnover. You can never trust another crook anyway. (no. 57)

You have to worry about getting rid of the truck and the merchandise. You have to worry about fencing the stuff. There are too many people involved...the risk is too high. (no. 38)

Trucks only have goods. I like cash! I don't want to have to fence the goods. It increases the chances of getting caught because someone else knows about the robbery. I don't want anyone else to know when I do a job! (no. 5)

By dealing with a fence, the robber not only risks apprehension, but is rewarded poorly as well. The fence only pays the offender a small percentage of the actual

worth of the merchandise.

The jewelry is very good, but it's a pain in the ass to fence. Too many people know what you have done, the jewelry is traceable, and you only get twenty-five to thirty percent of the value of the jewelry. (no. 10)

Jewelry is tough to get rid of and it puts a lot of heat on you. Also, you only get a small percentage from the fence. I knew of a half million dollar jewelry heist and the guy only got \$30,000 out of it. (no. 54)

Even if you have a good connection, you only get five percent of the true value of the goods. You just make the middleman rich. (no. 60)

You have to have a fence to rob a truck and I don't believe in fences. They only give you a fraction of what the merchandise is worth. (no. 67)

Although commercial targets were generally considered attractive and potentially rewarding, some were not seen as appealing in this respect. Of those, taxis and buses were by far the most unattractive and offered little temptation to the potential robber. A robber who knows that every time he attacks one of these targets he risks a prison or penitentiary term can hardly be tempted by the poor pay-off typically obtained from robbing a taxicab or bus.

I never made more than twenty bucks a night when I drove a cab. (no. 55)

You're risking an awful lot of time (prison) for very little money. You might as well rob a bank. (no. 11)

There's no money with the driver and the people riding the bus are riding it because they are broke. There's no money in it. (no. 63)

Who in their right mind would hold up a bus. It would be a lot of work for what people had in their pockets. (no. 48)

Not only is the potential pay-off low, but on the local transit buses, the pay-off is inaccessible.

You ain't gonna get into that box and that box ain't going nowhere. What's the use of trying for something you ain't gonna get. (no. 21)

The pay-off would be lousy. How could you get that metal box open...It's too much hassle, too much time. (no. 46)

If the robbers' declarations are true, and nothing suggests they are not, then one would think that only a desperate or totally unimaginative robber would attack

these types of targets.

Despite the relative frequency with which they are robbed, corner grocery stores and convenience stores were also ranked very low in terms of pay-off. Nearly all the offenders felt that robbing these targets would be unrewarding. Again, given the length of sentence they could receive from such a robbery, the potential reward was perceived as particularly meagre.

What are you gonna get out of them, a hundred dollars. You might get nothing out of it and end up with five or ten years in jail. (no. 31)

Definitely not going to get much out of corner grocery stores... they are easy to do, but if you get busted, you get the same sentence as if you did a bank. (no. 53)

What can you hope to get? Employees get fired if they have more than a hundred dollars in the till. (no. 38)

That stuff is just for kids...all you are going to get is a hundred dollars. (no. 55)

In convenience stores, not only is there little money in the till, but the safe, where all the money is kept, is usually inaccessible.

They never have any money in the till and it's too difficult to get the money out of those stupid vaults. You would need an explosive to get it open. (no. 2)

All the money is in those security boxes...so you can't even get at it. (no. 31)

There may be money there, but you have to get through three feet of steel to get at it. It's a joke, there's no money. (no. 35)

There's absolutely no money. They put the money in the safe and it don't open for nothing. The safe only opens every fifteen minutes. (no. 21)

As with corner grocery and convenience stores, the subjects were in full agreement that small retail stores would not yield a large amount of money if robbed.

There's no money in those stores. They are just staying above water themselves. (no. 58)

There's not enough money in it. It's probably one of the easiest things to do, but there's no money. (no. 7)

The offenders believed there was a high risk factor involved in this type of robbery.

The money is usually in the safe, so you have to be able to get him to open it up. It's time consuming and there's not much money in there anyway. (no. 67)

The amount of time it takes to rob one of these places is just as long as supermarkets or department stores, but the pay-off is a lot less. (no. 38)

The robbers also believed that the prison sentence they are likely to get if caught is in total disproportion to the amount of money they may pull off from a small retail store. In essence, then, they were "deterred" by the prospect of a low reward combined with the prospect of a stiff penalty.

You're stealing from a square. You get too much time (prison) for the amount of money you get out of it. (no. 25)

You get more time in prison because the courts look at it as a personal robbery, rather than a business. (no. 22)

Theatres were also unpopular due to their potential poor pay-off.

They are the easiest thing in the world to do, but there's just no money. (no. 65)

You can calculate exactly what the theatre brings in, and it's just not worth it to stick a gun in a manager's face. (no. 20)

There's no money. There's nothing attractive about it! (no. 25)

In addition to being low, the pay-off was considered inaccessible. Like self-serve gas station employees, the cashier in a movie theatre is enclosed in a plexiglass booth.

The robber, consequently, does not have direct access to the money.

It's difficult to get at the money. If the girl in the booth doesn't want to give it up, what can you do. It's too much hassle. (no. 16)

It's harder to get the money out of them, because you can't get at the person you're robbing. (no. 43)

A handful of robbers, however, saw theatres as potentially lucrative targets.

One would think there would be a lot of money if the movie was full. (no. 23)

And rather than stressing the inaccessibility of the money, they emphasized the

fact that the cashier is typically located on the street or just inside the doors to the building. In such a setting, the cashier can be easily approached from the street. The robber can demand the money, and escape quickly without, in many cases, ever entering the building.

Trains were generally regarded as poor targets in terms of the financial outcome of the robbery as well. Many offenders felt the pay-off from robbing a train was simply too unpredictable.

You don't have a goddamn clue what you are getting into...or even what you will get out of it. (no. 9)

For such a robbery to be successful, the offender needs inside information on when and where the money will be on the train. Obtaining this information is both difficult and risky unless the robber has trustworthy contacts.

They probably carry large amounts of money sometimes, but you would need inside information from a treasury or train supervisor. (no. 57)

You need inside information on the whole job...and if you don't know someone, how can you do it. (no. 13)

Unless you have inside information, you don't know how much you will get, if anything. (no. 7)

## Accessibility

### *Physical Accessibility*

A second determinant of target attractiveness is "physical accessibility". Several commercial establishments were considered having good physical accessibility. One such target was financial institutions. The robbers liked the ease with which they could enter and exit these establishments.

They are easy to walk in and out of without any problems. You can do it quietly and quite inconspicuously. (no. 35)

Supermarkets, department stores, hotels and motels were also seen as very

accessible. The multitude of entrances and exits, the open spaces, and the wide aisles or hallways typically found in these targets allow the robber free movement in and out of the building. There are few restrictions on his comings and goings.

Other businesses considered accessible by the robbers included jewelry stores, drug stores, liquor stores, and gas stations.

From the robber's standpoint, good physical accessibility is advantageous in two ways. First, it allows him to thoroughly case the target prior to the robbery without arousing suspicion.

You can walk in and case these places without drawing any heat. (no. 30)

Nobody thinks anything of it. You can walk in and around the place and completely check it out. (no. 17)

You can blend in the crowd and watch the business as long as you want without anyone taking notice. (no. 80)

Good accessibility also permits the offender to enter and exit the target quickly during the robbery. This is of prime importance to the robber as the less time he spends inside, the less his chance of being apprehended. In discussing financial institutions, one robber noted:

They are very fast to do. You can do them in two minutes. You can get the most amount of money in the least amount of time. (no. 39)

Referring to drug stores, another said:

It doesn't take a lot of time to check them out and they are fast to rob. (no. 1)

One target, however, was considered by many as having very restricted accessibility: trains. Passengers can only board the train and can only get off at designated locations. This imposes severe limitations on the robber's getaway plans.

There's no way to escape once you're on a moving train...you're trapped! (no. 44)

After the robbery, how and where do you get off the train...out in the middle of nowhere? (no. 11)

Where are you going to get off? You're stuck on the train... there's no quick escape. (no. 1)

What do you do?...Stop the train to jump off? I'd probably kill myself if I jumped off the train while it's moving. (no. 60)

### *Temporal Accessibility*

A third determinant of commercial establishments' attractiveness is "temporal accessibility". Of the businesses considered temporally accessible, convenience stores, hotels and motels were by far the most appealing. They have long hours of operation and some are open twenty-four hours. This allows the robber great flexibility in choosing the time for the robbery. He can do it when he feels the "time is right".

The door is open twenty-four hours a day, so you can do it when you want. (no. 9)

Though not generally open twenty-four hours, restaurants, taverns and bars, gas stations, and supermarkets were also considered very accessible. For example, several robbers noted:

They are open all day and most of the night, so you can pick your time. (no. 22)

Supermarkets are open late these days. If you rob them at night, there are fewer people around. You're less likely to be seen when you're getting away. (no. 1)

They're open late now. You can go in right at closing time. There will be no one around except a few employees. No customers to have to deal with. (no. 10)

Similar sentiments were expressed with respect to department stores, liquor stores and drug stores:

They are open late hours. It's better to do things in the evening. There are fewer people out and less traffic. You're less likely to be spotted or identified, and you can getaway faster. (no. 22)

They are open long hours, so you can go any time of the day you want.  
(no. 54)

Of all the different types of commercial establishments, financial institutions were the ones viewed as having poor temporal accessibility. Several robbers disliked the fact that banks, in general, still close in the afternoon. The short business hours of these targets restrict the offender to committing the robbery during daylight hours.

They're not open late. I prefer to work at night because it's easier to escape in the dark. (no. 50)

### *Physical Layout*

A fourth feature of commercial establishments determinative of target attractiveness is the "physical layout." One aspect of the physical layout found appealing is large plate glass windows. These windows allow the offender to case the target from the exterior of the building. The procedure is informative and inconspicuous. As one robber noted in discussing supermarkets:

They have these large windows, so you can watch their routines easily from outside. (no. 66)

For some, though, large windows are more of a problem than an asset as they make the actions of the robber more visible and less concealed. Any passerby, including a police officer, could spot the robbery from the street and the robber could be quickly apprehended. Financial institutions, supermarkets, liquor stores, and convenience stores all have this unattractive feature.

There's too many windows and it's too wide open. Anybody walkin' down the street's gonna know what's going on. You're too visible. (no. 73)

The windows have no curtains and the tills are up front, so everyone is going to see what's going on. (no. 7)

Other subjects did not view this as problematic in that, many times, the windows of these targets are covered with curtains, posters or advertisements. Consequently,



it is difficult for passers-by to notice the robbery from the street. Drug stores, convenience stores, and supermarkets were most noted for covering their windows:

They are very well lit with big windows. It's easy for someone to see inside from the street, which is bad. Lots of stores cover their windows with posters, though, which is great. (no. 58)

They usually have sales posters all over the windows. It conceals the robbery. (no. 54)

They have signs over their windows advertising sales. This makes it more difficult for people to spot the robbery from outside. (no. 14)

Financial institutions sometimes did this as well.

In banks, they often have curtains over the windows, so no one on the street knows what's going on. (no. 92)

A second aspect of the physical layout found attractive is the number of exits from the building. Large commercial establishments, such as supermarkets and department stores, typically have numerous entrances and exits. This is advantageous to the robber in that he is not limited to one avenue of escape should something go amiss during the robbery. Other smaller businesses, such as jewelry stores, drug stores, liquor stores and restaurants, taverns and bars, were also viewed as attractive because they typically offer at least two exits.

There is always a side or rear exit out of the store. This is good for getting in or escaping from the store. (no. 35)

A third aspect of the physical layout found attractive by the robbers is the location of the money. Targets, such as liquor stores, convenience stores and restaurants, appealed to some because the tills or the safe are directly adjacent or in close proximity to the front doors of the building. This allows the offender swift access to the money during the robbery and reduces the risk of apprehension.

As soon as you walk in the door, the money is right there. It's easy to get the money and leave quickly before any alarm sounds. (no. 46)

The manager's office is right up front, so you can get to it quickly. (no. 54)

Most of the money is in the tills and they are close to the door. It's easy to get in and out of the store fast. (no. 66)

The location of the money at the front of the building was problematic for some in that there was a greater risk of a passerby spotting the offender during the robbery. These robbers preferred targets where the cash is in an isolated location. For example, drug stores appealed to some because the pharmacist is usually situated at the back of the store. It is difficult for a passerby, or even someone in the store, to notice the crime. Those who found supermarkets appealing voiced similar sentiments:

The manager's office is usually situated at the back or the front of the store. The people are not likely to notice the robbery. (no. 2)

The safe is in the manager's office and that is out of the way. So you have privacy during the robbery. No one will see you. (no. 9)

A few robbers, however, looked negatively upon the rear location of the manager's office. One problem is that the "manager's office can usually be seen from the cashier's position" (no. 61). A cashier may spot the offender entering or exiting the office and sound the alarm. A second problem is that "in nine out of ten supermarkets, the office is on the main floor" (no. 36). Consequently, the offender "has to shut down the whole store to rob the place" (no. 36). This tactic was viewed as too difficult, "too much of a hassle" (no. 36).

Many robbers considered department stores unattractive simply because the money is kept in an isolated location. Since the financial office of a department store is usually located on the top floor of the building, it is too difficult to escape swiftly after the robbery.

The money is the farthest thing away from the entrance. It's always on the top floor of the store. You would never get out of the store...it would take too much time. You would have to fight your way out. (no. 9)

The money is usually in an upper floor of the building. It's in an inaccessible location. It takes too much time to get where the money is and get out. (no. 2)

The financial department is never on the ground floor. It takes too long to get out of the building. (no. 66)

It's all up on the third floor. It's too far out of the way and too difficult to get out fast. You have to get through three floors to the store. You can get out of a bank easier than you can from a department store. (no. 73)

A handful of offenders, though, found the location of the financial office appealing. Being in an isolated area of the store meant fewer victims to control and fewer potential witnesses to the robbery.

A fourth aspect of physical layout found attractive is an open area design. Several robbers found banks appealing because they generally have few, if any, visual obstructions to contend with.

You can see the whole place from standing just inside the front door. No one makes a move without you knowing about it. (no. 10)

There are no obstructions. Everything is in full view, so there are no surprises. It's a standard layout for most banks. (no. 9)

Being able to see the entire interior of the bank from one position gives the offender more control over the robbery situation because nothing can happen without him taking notice of it.

One feature of the physical layout considered unattractive is a large parking lot. With a large parking lot, typical for supermarkets and department stores, the robber cannot park his vehicle out of sight. Consequently, when escaping, many will be able to see the vehicle and perhaps even take the licence number. In addition, as the lot is so large, and often congested with traffic, it is difficult to leave the parking lot quickly, which further increases the risk of apprehension.

A second, and final, aspect of the physical layout found unattractive is poor lighting. A handful of subjects did not like the dim lighting which is often used inside restaurants, taverns and bars.

There's not enough light to see the whole place at any one time. (no. 13)

It's often dark in those places...it's just too difficult to see around. (no. 20)

The people can't always see you. The key to a successful robbery is that everyone knows what's going on...because you don't want surprises. (no. 15)

With visibility reduced, the robber's control over the situation is equally reduced and this significantly increases the risk of resistance and apprehension.

### *Location*

A fifth characteristic of commercial establishments considered attractive is "location". Many robbers preferred targets located in shopping malls or major thoroughfares of the city, such as financial institutions, liquor stores, drug stores, theatres and small retail stores. The heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic characteristic of these locations was seen as advantageous for escape. If the robber is escaping on foot, he can easily get lost in the crowd. If he is getting away in a vehicle, he can leave the area quickly via a major arterial route. In either case, the risk of apprehension is reduced.

They are always in the busiest part of town. After hitting the place, you can get lost in the crowd quickly. (no. 46)

Banks are usually located downtown where there's lots of traffic. It's easy to give the cops the slip. (no. 63)

Being in commercial districts not only allows the offender to blend into the crowd, but also provides him with several options with respect to escape routes.

Because they have to be accessible to the public, they are normally centrally located with lots of alternative escape routes. (no. 48)

Many robbers, however, did not like the fact that financial institutions, liquor stores, drug stores, theatres and small retail stores are frequently situated on major thoroughfares of the city. For them, these locations were unattractive because the chances of a passerby spotting the robbery are high, the situation is more difficult to control, and escaping from the scene can be slower.

These stores are in very conspicuous locations. They are usually located in the middle of a block or in a mall. This is bad for getting away...you can easily be seen. (no. 9)

Most of them are in malls or in complexes. There's too many people coming and going out of too many directions. You never know how many will walk through the door. (no. 17)

They are usually on a main street or in a mall and there are always people on the outside of the store. This makes it more difficult to get away and you might be identified. (no. 46)

In terms of location, gas stations were also viewed as unattractive. Gas stations are typically well lit, stand alone establishments located on major thoroughfares or highways. Consequently, the visibility of these targets is very high. Several subjects did not like this because the risk of being spotted by police or a passerby during the robbery is too great.

They are usually highly exposed, well lit, and right out in the open. It's too easy for someone to spot you. (no. 54)

One subject, however, viewed the visibility of gas stations as an asset. The good visibility allows the robber to see whoever may be approaching well in advance.

Commercial establishments situated in residential areas were viewed as attractive by many. In discussing supermarkets and corner grocery stores, several robbers noted that there are fewer police patrols in residential areas.

You can find them in residential and more secluded areas. It's less likely that a police patrol will spot you because they don't patrol these areas as often as downtown stores. (no. 7)

They are in residential neighborhoods. Police don't patrol there as often, so it takes them longer to get there after the robbery. (no. 66)

With fewer police patrols, response time would be longer, and the chances of a successful escape are enhanced. Some felt the chances of escape were better because there is lighter pedestrian and vehicular traffic in residential areas. Consequently, it is "easier to make a smooth getaway without tripping or running over people" (no. 53). Others believed the chance of escape is better because they can get out of

sight of any pursuers by winding their way through back streets or alleys, especially if they are on foot.

### *Mobility*

A sixth characteristic of some commercial targets determinative of attractiveness is their "mobility". Several robbers found mobile targets, such as armoured cars and commercial trucks, appealing because they can select the time and location for the robbery. They can choose the site which gives them the best advantage over the victim and the best chance of a successful escape.

They are more predictable than the fuckin' tide! They have the same routes at the same time, so you pick your own time, place and circumstances for the hit. (no. 19)

Because they are mobile, you can pick the place where you want to do the job. (no. 2)

You can watch the route and then choose exactly where you want to rob them. (no. 14)

Some robbers, however, did not like the mobility of commercial trucks. Since they are not stationary targets, the offender must be able to stop the vehicle, or wait until it stops, in order to rob it. For some this was too difficult and reduced their control over the situation.

How could you stop them! It would be difficult to get them to pull over...then what do you do? I can't drive that kind of truck. (no. 1)

### Manageability

#### *Number of People*

A seventh determinant of attractiveness of commercial establishments as targets is the "number of people". In general, robbers prefer businesses with few people. There are times in the day when financial institutions have only a few

customers in them. The fewer the victims, the greater control the robber has over the situation and the lesser the likelihood of identification.

There are many times when there is no one in there or very few people. There is less chance of someone who wants to be a hero being around. Also, it's less likely you'll be identified. (no. 53)

You're only dealing with a half dozen people. It's easier to control than a lot of other robberies. (no. 72)

While there are usually large crowds in the main store areas, there are typically few people in the manager's office of a supermarket or the financial office of a department store. Again, this was viewed as appealing, in terms of control.

In a supermarket, you're usually dealing with an overweight store executive who just wants to go home. (no. 35)

Sure there are more people in the store, but there are less people where the robbery actually takes place. (no. 38)

You're only dealing with a few people up in the office. (no. 5)

If robbed late in the evening, the offender would not have to deal with a large number of people in a hotel or motel either.

If you rob them late at night, you're only dealing with one or two desk clerks. (no. 30)

There aren't too many people hanging around who could give you problems. Most are either in their rooms or in the restaurant. (no. 9)

There's only one night clerk and he's easy to take care of. (no. 60)

In general, most of the smaller commercial establishments were viewed as appealing due to the number of people. The robbers suggested that there are many times during the day when there are few, if any, customers in these businesses. In robbing a jewelry, drug, or small retail store, the offender has only to contend with a handful of individuals.

There's usually not a lot of people in them at any one time. It's easy to take care of those few people. (no. 49)

There's usually only the cashier and the druggist at the end of the day. There's no problem. (no. 21)

There are only two or three people working in them. It's easy to control the robbery...there are no surprises. (no. 46)

There would only be two or three people in the store. You can control two or three people and there's less chance of hurting anyone. (no. 49)

It would be easy to pull off. There's usually not too many people around, so there are no hassles. (no. 53)

Similar sentiments were voiced about corner grocery stores, convenience stores and gas stations.

There is usually only one or two working...so you can take over the whole store. (no. 66)

They are perfect because there are only one or two people working. You won't have any problems. (no. 46)

The attendant is usually alone. The guy won't feel like a hero if he is alone. (no. 30)

The lone cashier at the movie theatre and the solitary driver of a commercial truck were also seen, by some, as attractive targets.

It would be easy because during the movie, the girl is alone in the booth and there are no people around. (no. 49)

You're only dealing with one driver. They're easy enough to take care of. (no. 58)

Though many robbers preferred to attack uncrowded establishments, some viewed the presence of large numbers of people as a positive point. Following the robbery, they could easily blend into the crowd. The robber would be difficult to follow and, therefore, less likely to be apprehended. Department stores were seen as attractive in this respect.

With a lot of people around, it's easy to blend in without being noticed. (no. 1)

All you have to do is get into the main building and get lost in the crowd. After the job, you blend into the crowd and escape out of the building. (no. 48)

Similar remarks were made by those discussing restaurants, taverns, bars and theatres.



With a lot of people coming and going all the time, it's easy to blend in with the crowd. (no. 17)

Some robbers viewed the large number of customers often present in financial institutions as advantageous as well. One note-passing bank robber commented:

There is a constant flow of people in and out of the bank all day. So you just blend in with the crowd. It works to your advantage. (no. 21)

A gun-brandishing bank robber, on the other hand, used the crowds for a different purpose:

There are lots of people usually. So you can create a lot of confusion inside the bank during the robbery. In the confusion, they are less likely to identify you. (no. 19)

In a supermarket robbery, the crowds can serve yet another purpose. If the offender is robbing the manager in his office, "the noise and movement of the people takes the notice away from what I am doing" (no. 35). Consequently, there is less need to worry about the robbery being spotted or interrupted. Once the robbery is completed, the offender can mingle with the crowd and inconspicuously leave the supermarket.

Most robbers, though, disliked the prospect of having to deal with a large number of people. There are too many intangibles, possible surprises, and potential "heroes". In discussing financial institutions, some offenders remarked:

There are too many people. People are unpredictable, especially if you get a whole bunch of them together. It's hard to watch everybody at one time. Someone might try to be brave or be a hero. (no. 49)

You can't predict what thirty people will do. There could be a hero in the crowd. (no. 25)

Not only is the situation unpredictable and difficult to control, but there is also the increased chance of identification.

There are too many people in banks. I get nervous because that means there's a lot of witnesses. (no. 50)

The pay-off is nice, but with a lot of people there is a greater chance of getting caught because someone would be able to identify you. (no. 46)

Similar sentiments were voiced regarding other large commercial establishments, such as supermarkets and department stores. Robbers seem to fear and want to avoid situations with large crowds.

The money is good, but you would have to shoot one or two people trying to get out of the place. There are too many people. Someone might try to be superman. (no. 37)

You have to do them when the most people are in there because that's when the most money is there. It's difficult for crowd control. (no. 14)

They're a little harder to do than banks because you got more people. It's tougher to keep tabs on everybody. (no. 43)

There are too many people...always a chance of somebody trying to be a hero. Too many things can go wrong. (no. 44)

The high number of employees in department stores was another concern for some.

There are too many employees around to spot you and know that you're not supposed to be in that part (financial office) of the store. (no. 36)

You never know how many you are dealing with and what they are all doing. There are too many variables to deal with. (no. 7)

The subjects also found the usually large number of customers in entertainment establishments such as theatres, hotels, motels, restaurants, taverns and bars unattractive. With regard to theatres, some remarked:

You can't keep an eye on everyone. There's too much confusion...someone might try to be a hero. (no. 30)

There are too many people around the outside of the theatre...people make me nervous. You have too good a chance of being spotted or followed. (no. 46)

There is always someone around to I.D. you or to see the robbery. I don't like it. (no. 58)

What the robbers feared most about attacking a hotel or motel is the unpredictability of the situation:

Nobody wants to be surprised. In these places, you never know when someone will come or go. It's not as easy to control as a bank. (no. 59)

It's too unpredictable. You never know who's going to walk in and at what time. (no. 32)

Someone could walk into the robbery from the street, the elevator or anywhere. You don't know what you will have to deal with. You can't contain it. (no. 33)

Restaurants, taverns and bars, on the other hand, were seen as difficult to control because of the large number of customers who are there consuming alcohol.

There's way too many people. You're gonna get some asshole playing the hero because he's smashed. (no. 46)

I won't touch anything where liquor is served. There's too many unpredictable people. (no. 32)

Small commercial establishments did not appeal to some due to the number of people. As jewelry, liquor and small retail stores are frequently located in shopping malls, people are typically coming in and out of the store all the time. This situation is potentially dangerous for the robber:

There are usually a lot of people coming in and going out of liquor stores. It's too much hassle. (no. 22)

There are all kinds of people in there. It's too difficult to control the situation. (no. 31)

You might have to deal with quite a few people. It's just too unpredictable. (no. 32)

Gas stations and convenience stores were believed to be too unpredictable as well. While only one or two employees may work in these establishments, there is always the possibility of customers driving in and surprising the robber. In these circumstances, the offender must rely upon his luck.

People are coming in and out all the time. You might get caught right in the act. (no. 61)

You're taking the chance that no one else will come in while you are there. I don't like it. (no. 13)

Equally unattractive is the large number of people commonly travelling on trains and buses. Again, crowd control was viewed as problematic.

You have a large crowd in a confined space. It's too tough to control them all. (no. 73)

There's too many people to deal with. I won't walk into something unless I know I can control it. (no. 33)

A crowd of people and not much room to move in...it's very hard to control. (no. 73)

Because you're in such a confined space, it would be tough to keep a lid on things. (no. 6)

### *Likelihood of Resistance*

An eighth determinant of commercial target attractiveness is the "likelihood of resistance". Of all the commercial establishments, none were as attractive as financial institutions in terms of this variable. The subjects were convinced that bank employees would in no way resist a robbery attempt.

The tellers are usually cooperative. They may try to stall you, but they have been robbed a lot of times, they know what to do. (no. 14)

The employees know exactly what to do. No one is going to get hurt because they are cooperative and professional. If there are no customers in the bank you have nothing to fear. You can go in and out without any hassles. (no. 20)

I know for a fact that they don't refuse you the money...You know you're gonna get the money without a hassle. (no. 42)

In terms of resistance, supermarkets were almost as attractive as financial institutions. Both employees and customers were viewed as cooperative.

Seventy percent of the employees are women and the other thirty percent are just high school kids. They aren't going to give you any trouble. (no. 17)

It would be easy. They are usually told to give the money to you and not to resist. (no. 49)

They have their instructions not to resist --- just sound the alarm when the robbers leave. (no. 67)

Supermarket employees were stereotyped as "women and kids", the kind of people least likely to offer resistance. The offenders felt the same way about supermarket customers:

It's all kids and housewives. They're easy to intimidate and confuse. They're a different breed of cat than in a bank, where you have all business people. The people in supermarkets are more cooperative. (no. 19)

The types of people in supermarkets are unlikely to be heroes...it's just wives and kids. (no. 58)

While most robbers anticipated little resistance in supermarkets, there were a few who did not share this perception. They felt employees would resist a robbery attempt.

One of those young box boys might try to play hero. There's a chance of someone getting hurt. (no. 63)

Opinions were generally more divided in relation to smaller commercial establishments. For example, drug store employees were generally viewed as unlikely to resist, since they are usually alone at the time of the attack.

You're normally dealing with people who aren't going to resist. (no. 35)

You're more likely to get resistance from a jeweller, than you ever will from a pharmacist. (no. 54)

There were a couple of offenders, however, who expressed concern about possible resistance from the pharmacist.

You may have to get the pharmacist to open the poison box and you may run into some resistance. (no. 16)

The money can be good sometimes from the till. Forget about the drugs, they're always in a safe and the prescription guy will put up a fight. (no. 21)

Opinions were also split with respect to liquor stores. Some believed employees and customers are unlikely to resist a robbery attempt, as the money stolen does not belong to them.

I have never had any problems in these places. (no. 14)

The people in the store offer no resistance. (no. 58)

Others saw the potential for resistance as high, since some customers might have consumed alcohol prior to entering the liquor store.

You never know about the people in these places. You might come across some stupid drunk hero. (no. 7)

Half the guys in there are smashed up on liquor. There's a good chance someone might try to be a hero. (no. 18)

There was also disagreement among the subjects in relation to the likelihood of resistance in jewelry and small retail stores. Some robbers believed that the victim(s) would cooperate since they are only salaried employees and are typically in small numbers.

You won't get any hassles. The guy is concerned with his life, more than the money. (no. 53)

There's no resistance because they are more or less alone in the store. What are they gonna try? (no. 60)

They are generally cooperative, as long as you get the drop on them. (no. 15)

There's not a big resistance factor. Mostly middle age women work in them and they are cooperative. (no. 68)

Others felt there would be resistance, especially if the store is self-owned and operated because any loss suffered will be the victim's own.

You're dealing with the owner in a lot of these places. There's a high chance of violence because he will try to defend his store and money. (no. 2)

There tends to be more resistance because the guy owns the jewelry himself. Even if he is insured, he won't give it up. (no. 50)

Usually you're dealing with the owner. There's a good chance of him trying something because it's his own money. (no. 1)

They don't like to give the fuckin' goods up. They're resistant, especially the immigrants. (no. 15)

Corner grocery stores are usually family operated as well. Since the money is their own, the victims were viewed as much more likely to confront the offender and try to foil his attempt by any and every means.

Those Chinamen are crazy...heavy resistance there. I had one that took a machete and went after me. (no. 21)

Eighty percent of them are owned by Chinese and all of them think they are Bruce Lee. It's too unpredictable and dangerous. (no. 32)

Nine times out of ten they are owned by Chinese...and they never give up the money. (no. 23)

You never know what these Chinamen will do. They might chase you with a meat cleaver. You have to be prepared to shoot. (no. 11)

Gas station employees were also seen by many offenders as likely to resist a robbery attempt. This is somewhat surprising, though, given the fact that the money is not their own and they are usually alone at the time of the attack.

The employees in these places think they are macho and not afraid of guns. They are more likely to try something. (no. 2)

You got some hot punk in there who might take a monkey wrench to you. (no. 28)

Anybody who works in a gas station past midnight has got to be nuts! They are not going to cooperate. (no. 60)

In contrast, a few believed gas station employees would offer little resistance in case of robbery.

It's usually just a young kid working. He's easy to control...he doesn't have the smarts to know what to do. (no. 38)

It's an easy place to rob. You're only dealing with one person and they're cooperative. (no. 11)

Commercial establishments geared toward entertainment were also considered unattractive, in terms of resistance. For example, several robbers believed theatre employees would resist because there is no direct physical access to the victim.

The employee is enclosed, so you can't get at them. They are more likely to resist. They have a back door...they could just leave you standing there. (no. 48)

The cashier is in a booth...they feel more protected in there. There is a lack of control over the situation. If they say no, what do you do? (no. 66)

The potential for confrontation was seen as very high for hotels and motels as well.

These people don't come off the money, and it's not worth pulling your piece for it. (no. 1)

You never know what you're walking into or what the reactions of these people will be. They could try anything. (no. 44)

You have to get through a lot of people to get to the clerk. Someone will try to be a hero...either the customers or the employees. (no. 60)

Hotels and motels with bars or lounges were viewed as even more volatile because more often than not patrons have consumed alcohol.

There may be some heroes sitting in the lounge who are going to chase you. (no. 7)

Customers can be liquored up and you might become a target yourself. (no. 18)

A handful of offenders, however, viewed the likelihood of resistance as fairly low. They felt the employees of a hotel/motel, like other salaried employees, would be cooperative and would not risk their lives to foil the robbery.

The employees just fork it over...no questions asked. (no. 13)

Alcohol is typically consumed by the patrons of restaurants, taverns and bars as well. Consequently, many robbers saw this as a potentially explosive situation.

They are the worst places to rob. You always get a guy in there who thinks he's superman. Guys who are drinking tend to get a little braver. (no. 26)

There are a lot of drunk people there...and people aren't too smart when they got booze in them. (no. 18)

Because the likelihood of resistance is very high, so are the chances of violence.

I don't like to deal with drunks. The chances of you having to hurt someone is almost tripled. (no. 66)

There are too many people who want to play hero...you'd end up shooting someone. (no. 16)

You've got a bunch of drunks. You're dealing with people who aren't using their senses. It's more dangerous than robbing a bank...there's a greater chance of violence. (no. 22)

There were some robbers, though, who believed employees and customers in eating and drinking establishments are largely the non-resisting type.



They're usually drunk, the people in there, and they don't give a fuck what you're doing. (no. 1)

There's usually a lot of people in there...which means less chance of resistance from the employees because they don't want to see customers get hurt. (no. 43)

Transportation-type commercial targets were generally considered unattractive in terms of resistance. Commercial truck drivers were viewed by many subjects as targets to be avoided.

Truckers will put up a fight. They are a different breed. They don't give anything up easy. (no. 11)

A couple of robbers, though, saw no reason why the truck driver should resist, unless the merchandise on the truck was his own.

They're easy to rob. These guys won't give you any problems. Sometimes they don't even call the bulls. (no. 15)

You won't find any major resistance, unless it's his own vehicle. (no. 21)

Many robbers also believed it was wise to stay clear from taxicab drivers. Since any money lost is partly their own, drivers were expected to actively struggle and to try to prevent the robbery from being completed.

It's the guy's livelihood. They're very protective and there is a big potential for violence. (no. 68)

It's their own car and money...they will fight you for it. (no. 58)

There's too much chance for violence. Drivers will chase you until they catch you. (no. 9)

With a large number of victims in a very confined space, buses were seen as potentially explosive.

You're dealing with too many unpredictable people directly...square johns...you never know who might try to be a hero. (no. 32)

You have a whole bunch of cantankerous, cranky people. You never know what they might try. (no. 9)

Resistance from the victim or others often results in violence, which is to be avoided at any price. The best tactic is to avoid potentially violent victims.

There are simply too many people. There's always a hero in the crowd and most heroes end up dead. (no. 55)

But of all the commercial targets, armoured cars were considered the most volatile.

The likelihood of resistance and potential violence are at a maximum.

The risk is much too high. You have to go in with the idea of shooting someone. (no. 43)

These people are armed and they know how to use them. These people are trained for violence. (no. 19)

You have the makings of a shootout. They are not going to give it up easy if they are armed. (no. 49)

When you're ready to die or commit suicide, you rob an armoured car. These guys are paid to shoot you. In fact, they get a bonus if they kill you! (no. 55)

This perception, however, was not shared by all subjects. A few believed the likelihood of resistance and violence is relatively low.

Sure these guys are packing a piece, but they are pros so they cooperate. Heads are generally a little calmer. We both know we are armed and he wants to get home to his kids. (no. 32)

From what I've seen and heard, there usually isn't too much resistance. (no. 59)

Some felt armoured car guards are not paid enough to die for someone else's money. Their priority is to stay alive, so they can go home at the end of the day. They would rather lose their jobs than their lives.

## Degree of Risk

### *Security*

A ninth determinant of commercial target attractiveness is "security". While financial institutions were considered attractive in many other respects, they were viewed as very unattractive in terms of security (alarms, cameras, marked bills, armed guards). Although the security features of these targets were seen negatively

by many robbers, few were actually deterred by their presence. Except for the presence of an armed guard, most offenders simply accommodated, or even ignored, the security of the financial institution. Security was expected by the offenders, and they dealt with it accordingly. For example, if the bank had an alarm, the robbers made sure that they would have escaped from the bank by the time the police arrived at the scene. If the bank had a camera, the robbers would wear a disguise and/or keep their backs to the camera during the robbery. This would reduce the likelihood of identification.

Opinions were generally divided regarding other large commercial establishments, such as supermarkets and department stores. The security in supermarkets was seen by many subjects as lax.

There is really nothing. They don't even have trained robbery personnel, only floorwalkers. (no. 58)

There's essentially no security...no cameras or marked bills. (no. 10)

The security people are only experienced in dealing with shoplifters, not robbers. They are told not to get in the way of a robbery. (no. 38)

The only security feature they may eventually have to deal with is an alarm, something not found in all stores. A few subjects, however, found the security features of supermarkets unattractive. In addition to alarms, they disliked the fact that there may be floorwalkers in the store. Although floorwalkers are unlikely to intervene, they may notice the robbery and sound the first alarm. Many subjects found the floorwalkers and other security features of department stores unattractive as well. The security in and around the financial office of the store is typically quite heavy. This increases the risk of apprehension and/or the potential for violence.

A lot of stores have super security. The number of floorwalkers is incredible. (no. 9)

The security in these places is just phenomenal. They have security people and surveillance cameras everywhere. They see you as soon as you get in the store. (no. 46)

Never know what kind of security precautions they have. They have floorwalkers and you don't know who or where they are. (no. 66)

They are better protected than a lot of banks with security. There are store detectives around all the time and they have an alarm at each till in the store. (no. 21)

They have better security in their counting office than a bank. So you have to take it from the Brink's guards when they come to pick it up. (no. 55)

The problem with taking the money from the armoured car guards is the great potential for violence.

The money is picked up by Brink's two or three times a day. I don't like to deal with these guys, they are all cowboys and you have to shoot them to get it off them. You have to hurt somebody to get the money and that's not my bag. (no. 57)

The only time the money is out (of the vault) is when Brink's is there and there are two or three guards with guns standing around. There is a very definite chance of violence. (no. 33)

The perception of a high level of security was not shared by some subjects. For them, the store's security, including the floorwalkers, was not problematic.

They (floorwalkers) will usually see you, but they are not armed. They generally don't play hero. There are too many innocent bystanders around, so they won't try anything because they don't want the customers to get hurt. In fact, they may help out by getting the customers out of the way. (no. 32)

They (the stores) are too big to have any good security...security that can't be overcome anyway. They can't be on guard at all places, at all times. (no. 37)

The store security is only experienced in dealing with shoplifters not robbers. Besides, they are told not to get in the way of a robbery. (no. 38)

Robbers were also divided on the security of smaller commercial establishments. For example, according to many, security in jewelry stores is minimal, something which dramatically enhances their chances of success.

It's no big deal. You're usually only dealing with an alarm. (no. 7)

They usually only have a panic button in jewelry stores. (no. 16)

It's a bare minimum...only an alarm most of the time. (no. 58)

The presence of an alarm in a jewelry store was seen by some as having little deterrent value. It simply means that they have to shorten the time spent inside the store. For many offenders, however, the security of jewelry stores was seen as quite high and, therefore, quite risky.

Jewellers are a paranoid bunch. The security in their stores is better than average. (no. 54)

They can be way tougher than some of the banks you deal with. (no. 32)

These places are heavily bugged...both with cameras and alarms. (no. 55)

Security can be a problem. It depends on the size of the store and its location. The ones in big malls have the best security. (no. 46)

Security features of drug stores were considered by many as minimal at best.

The only security they thought they might run up against is an alarm. In contrast, several others thought drug stores do have fairly good security equipment, such as cameras and alarms.

Because of all the drug store robberies lately, the security is getting much better in these stores. (no. 54)

Not only is the internal security improving, but the external security of drug stores was seen as improving as well.

They are a hot spot for the cops. The cops keep a close eye on these places. (no. 38)

Every drug store in Vancouver has been robbed. There's just too much heat on these places. (no. 6)

Some of them are under surveillance by the cops now. (no. 54)

According to some, security inside liquor stores is fairly heavy, and something which definitely increases the risk of apprehension.

These places have alarms and their safes are of the highest quality. (no. 54)

They have the same security as a bank...alarms, cameras, etc. (no. 6)

They have some sophisticated security in there...they have cameras hidden behind the mirrors in the store. (no. 21)

These offenders were not only concerned about the security inside liquor stores, but the security outside as well.

Police surveillance is heavy. They are always keeping an eye on these places. (no. 46)

They are frequently patrolled by the cops, which means a greater chance of getting caught. (no. 48)

A handful, however, did not feel liquor stores had particularly heavy security or were much better protected than other establishments.

There is essentially nothing. They only have alarms and they aren't a problem. (no. 58)

There's generally no security...maybe an alarm, if that. (no. 1)

Small retail stores were believed to have limited protection against robbers. The subjects felt there would be little, if any, security in these targets. As a result, the risk of apprehension was seen as minimal.

There's generally no security. You can get anything you want and it won't be hard to get. (no. 37)

They'd be easy enough to rob, there's no security in those stores. (no. 57)

The subjects were in general agreement that small retail stores had little security. There were a few offenders, however, who voiced some concern about the possibility that the proprietor may be armed.

You never know what kind of nut bar you are dealing with... he might be carrying a gun. (no. 35)

They are privately owned and have more to lose by a robbery. Many of them are armed. (no. 67)

There could be people living in the back of the store. Someone could come out with a shotgun and blow you away. (no. 61)

Corner grocery store owners and operators were also feared because of the possibility that they might be armed. As this tends to enhance the potential for violence, it was something most robbers wanted to avoid.

Some of them Chinamen have been known to pull out guns and shoot.  
(no. 37)

Some storeowners are taking it upon themselves to get guns. You could run into real trouble. (no. 22)

Even though the employees are usually not armed, some robbers did not like the fact that convenience stores frequently have silent alarms and cameras, both of which increase the risk of apprehension. Furthermore, the subjects believed that convenience stores are heavily patrolled by the police, which increases the risk of apprehension even more.

The cops are always hanging around these twenty-four hour places. It's too risky. (no. 21)

They are always watched by the cops...because they get robbed so much.  
(no. 12)

Gas stations, on the other hand, were not considered problematic in terms of police patrols.

There are too many of them to be a hot spot. The police can't watch all of them at once. (no. 38)

Furthermore, the general security of gas stations was seen as minimal at best.

They aren't a problem. They usually don't have cameras or very good alarm systems. (no. 46)

The opinions of the subjects were generally mixed regarding the security of entertainment-type commercial establishments. With respect to theatres, some robbers found the security alarms unattractive, while others did not like the possibility of the manager being armed.

The manager is usually armed and you could get yourself killed. (no. 55)

They might have a piece. The chances of violence are just too great. (no. 2)

There were a couple of offenders, however, who felt the security in theatres was minimal at best and the chances of making a successful escape subsequent to the robbery were good.

The opinion of most was that there was little, if any, security in hotels and motels. A safe, and perhaps an alarm in some cases, was all that can be anticipated.

There's none there. It's like taking candy from a baby! (no. 12)

There's no security, except for the safe. (no. 21)

The subjects were also of the opinion that security in restaurants, taverns and bars was minimal at best. However, police surveillance of these targets, especially taverns and bars, was considered heavy. This increases the chances of getting caught.

There is low security of the place itself, but cops frequently patrol these places and go inside to check I.D.. (no. 73)

Transportation-type commercial targets were generally considered unattractive, in terms of security. With respect to commercial trucks, a handful of robbers did not like the fact that they are equipped with two-way radios and the driver may be armed. The risk of apprehension and/or of violence was seen as too high.

They all have C.B.'s today and scheduled routes. The head office knows quickly if something is wrong. (no. 13)

Similar sentiments were voiced by subjects in relation to taxicabs. With a two-way radio and an emergency light often found on top of the vehicle, many perceived the risk of apprehension as simply too high in this type of robbery.

With the radios, there is too much heat. They are on you in a minute after the robbery. (no. 56)

They have a switch which flashes a "help" light on top of the cab. Everyone would see it. (no. 46)



They have radios in their cabs and when one's in trouble, they all come runnin'. (no. 23)

The risks of getting caught are very high. They are too interconnected with each other. A swarm of taxi's comes instantly when one needs help. (no. 48)

An added negative feature is the possibility that the driver of the taxicab may be armed.

Most of the drivers are carrying pieces now. There's just too much chance for violence. (no. 2)

The drivers are always packing these days. There's too much violence involved most of the time. (no. 33)

The fact that the guards are armed, is the primary reason for armoured cars being unpopular as targets. The situation is too risky and too volatile for most robbers.

The heavy security makes me real nervous. We both have guns. The only question is who is going to shoot first. (no. 21)

It's hard to get at the money and the money is guarded by armed guards. It's too difficult to pull it off without hurting anyone. (no. 7)

Because these guys are armed, you have a good chance of getting your tail shot off. (no. 6)

I'm not into shooting people. The guards are armed and the chances of violence are just too high. (no. 11)

For many, to rob an armoured car is an invitation to violence. The weapon-carrying guards are trained to protect the money against potential robbers.

### Appropriateness

#### *Denial of Injury*

For some robbers, target attractiveness largely turned on the issue of whether or not the victim(s) would be injured or harmed by the criminal act. The preference for large financial institutions over small personal businesses was often

explained in reference to the victim and the potential harm the robber may cause to that victim. For example, several subjects considered financial institutions appropriate targets because "the money is insured, it's no loss to them" (no. 42). They believed banks would not be greatly harmed, and would certainly not go out of business, as a result of a robbery. Financial institutions are cold, faceless entities which could not suffer injury.

It's not going to be any emotional or financial trauma for the bank. (no. 62)

They're insured for the loss, so no one person loses. There's nothing personal about it. (no. 44)

Similar sentiments were voiced with respect to jewelry stores. The merchandise is invariably insured and, therefore, the store would suffer no real financial loss because of a robbery.

You're getting close to what a bank is with a jewelry store...an anonymous type of robbery. Nobody gets hurt. It's all insured. (no. 68)

Some robbers thus deny the injury or loss the victim suffers as a result of the criminal act. This rationalization is similar to the one observed by Cressy (1953) in his study of embezzlers. He often heard from the trust violators he interviewed, "well, at least I didn't hurt anybody" (Cressey, 1953, p. 101). Embezzlers did not perceive themselves as such, but often thought they were a special kind of "borrower". As the money was only "borrowed", it would eventually be returned and no one would be harmed. The deviant act was, therefore, defined as acceptable not condemnable behavior.

In the present study, several commercial establishments lost their attractiveness because of the potential suffering the victim would endure. The robbers' "code of ethics" dictates that poor, hard-working individuals who are from the same social class as the robbers themselves, are inappropriate targets for victimization. As several subjects noted with respect to taxicab drivers:

The guy that's driving the cab would suffer the loss. He doesn't make enough as it is. Anyway, the money has much more meaning to him. (no. 49)

There's not a cab driver around that's making any money. Why terrorize the poor guy for no money. (no. 12)

You got some poor stiff working his butt off all day to make a few bucks...it just wouldn't be right. (no. 6)

I always looked on taxi drivers as my friends. They helped me out a lot of times, I wouldn't think of robbing them. (no. 1)

The robbers had similar attitudes towards bus passengers.

There's nothing to rob on a bus except individual people. I wouldn't rob them, they work too hard for their money. (no. 31)

I don't like to rob working stiff...They're just scratching to make a living. (no. 15)

These people can't afford to lose what they got. They aren't insured for it. (no. 36)

Many frowned upon the thought of robbing a corner grocery store because of the harm it would cause to the hard-working people who operated these establishments.

You're hurting a guy who's just trying to make ends meet. (no. 73)

You're ripping off a person who's trying to grind out a couple hundred dollars a week. It's a big loss for them and they may not be insured. (no. 26)

They're just grubbing to make a buck like everyone else. The guy usually lives in the back of the store and is trying to make a living. (no. 61)

You don't know who you are dealing with, they may be a good person. I wouldn't want to hurt anyone that doesn't deserve it. (no. 3)

Similarly, several subjects entertained certain compunctions regarding small retail stores. The idea of robbing from "some poor sucker who's just trying to make a living" (no. 65) did not seem too appealing.

You're only hurting a guy who's trying to support a family. He's just trying to make a buck. (no. 55)

I class that along with robbing individuals. He's a poor guy just trying to make a living. (no. 73)

A lot of these stores are family oriented and it's their livelihood. It would be a personal loss to them. (no. 68)

Restaurants, taverns and bars were also considered inappropriate targets because of the harm a robbery would cause to the victims.

They are just trying to make a living...it's going to be a personal loss for them. (no. 12)

The people that are running these places are just trying to bring in the money to pay all the bills. The money is probably insured, but it's more of a personal insult to the owners. (no. 11)

These places are owned by individual people and they are just grubbing to make a living...the loss would be their own. I guess it would be like the Robin Hood syndrome...I will only steal from the rich. (no. 6)

From the above, it is evident that some robbers make distinctions between those who can and those who cannot afford to be victimized. They see some targets as more appropriate and more acceptable than others. In his study of professional thieves, Sutherland (1937) found that thieves have their own "code of ethics", and that they usually follow certain moral rules in the choice of their victims.

Thieves make some distinctions among suckers, and also make some attempt to justify the distinctions. Persons who are personal or business associates are safe from thieves of all professional types...Cannons<sup>13</sup>...do not approve or have any part in the slave gift<sup>14</sup>, feeling that, if the money of a poor man is taken, his family will be distressed. They do not like the cannon gift, because you may be robbing a poor man who really needs the money for his family...(Sutherland, 1937, p. 175).

### *Blaming the Victim*

Target attractiveness for others turned on the issue of whether or not the victim(s) could be truly defined as a "victim(s)". Some subjects, for instance, denied the existence of a victim by transforming certain large commercial establishments

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<sup>13</sup>Cannon: the pickpocket racket.

<sup>14</sup>Slave gift: theft from a workingman, a wage-earner.

into "wrongdoers"; as entities deserving victimization. Robbery of these targets was not, therefore, defined as an injury, but as a form of rightful retaliation or punishment. Financial institutions were considered by some as deserving targets because of the way they have treated the public in the past.

The banks, especially the Bank of Montreal, deserve to be robbed because they treat people so shitty. They are not socially responsible at all. They have no conscience about treating you like dirt. They are arrogant and unfeeling. The banks have too much power. They are out to make money and they don't care who they have to step on to make it. (no. 12)

As they are operated by the government, liquor stores were also seen as targets deserving of robbery.

It's a good way to get back at the government. (no. 44)

You're just taking it off the government, like they take it off everyone else. (no. 61)

I don't give a damn about them. They deserve what they get. (no. 65)

Hence, victimization of large impersonal organizations, such as financial institutions or the government, is rationalized as a form of retaliation or punishment. On the other hand, small businesses or personal enterprises, such as corner grocery stores, small retail stores, and taxicabs, are perceived quite differently. The individuals who operate these businesses are viewed by the robbers as average "Joes" or "working stiffs" like themselves. Therefore, they are not defined as "wrongdoers", but as "victims" who would suffer if robbed. Consequently, their code of ethics precluded the robbers from considering these personal businesses as appropriate targets for robbery.

It is important to recognize the purpose that "denial of injury" and "blaming the victim" serve for the robber. By claiming that no one is hurt by his actions or that the victim deserves to be robbed, the offender is able to justify his deviance. These justifications or rationalizations protect the robber from self-blame and the

blame of others. As Fattah (1976) notes:

What is important to emphasize is that the process of justification is not just a purely manipulative gesture to appease those in authority, nor is it merely an ex post facto maneuver to rid oneself from guilt feelings and feelings of shame. It is, rather, a process that takes place before the delinquent act is committed, and which makes the act possible in the first place (Fattah, 1976, p. 38).

In other words, these rationalizations or "techniques or neutralization" precede the criminal behavior and make the commission of robberies possible. The disapproval flowing from internalized norms and conforming others in the social environment is neutralized, turned back, or deflected in advance. Social controls that serve to check or inhibit deviant motivational patterns are rendered inoperative, and the offender is free to engage in criminal activity without serious damage to his self-image (Sykes and Matza, 1957, p. 666). As Sykes and Matza (1957) note, this situation is ideal for the offender:

In this sense, the delinquent both has his cake and eats it too, for he remains committed to the dominant normative system and yet so qualifies its imperatives that violations are 'acceptable' if not 'right' (Sykes and Matza, 1957, p. 666).

Thus, by employing "denial of injury" and/or by "blaming the victim", the robber is able to ease his conscience and continue the victimization of certain commercial establishments.

In his study of muggers, Lejeune (1977) also found that certain types of individuals were denied the status of "victim". As he noted:

...any visible or imagined characteristics of potential victims toward which the mugger is predisposed to feel contempt is likely to create a situation of opportunity, as well as facilitate the mugger's neutralization through denial. Thus, for example, homosexuals and drunks, either sought out or happened upon by chance, are both favorite and frequent targets, and most likely to be seen as deserving of victimization (Lejeune, 1977, p. 136).

Similar attitudes were displayed by some of the professional thieves studied by Sutherland (1937):

Heels and boosters confine their efforts mostly to the larger stores...if a thief were asked why he beats Marshall Fields or Maceys, he would answer, "They have plenty and can stand it", or "The cheap bastards are paying girls only \$8 a week to be on their feet all day, and they ought to be beat." This is not just an excuse, but is actually the way the thief feels about it. He would probably pick out the bigger stores to beat even if they paid the girls \$100 a week, but it eases his conscience a little to have this justification (Sutherland, 1937, p. 175).

In their study of rape, Chappell and James (1986) reported that certain "types" of women were perceived by rapists as "wrongdoers", as deserving victimization. Among those perceived as "asking for it" were women who accept rides, walking in secluded places at late hours, going out with strangers, hanging out in bars, dancing close, dressing invitingly, using body language to ask for sex, changing their minds at the last minute, and teasing (Chappell and James, 1986, p. 72).

#### *Concern for Victims*

Several subjects had compunctions regarding the robbery of certain commercial establishments because of the type of customers or employees in these stores. For example, concern for the welfare of the customer made supermarkets inappropriate targets for a handful of offenders.

There are a lot of women and children around. I wouldn't want children to be around anything to do with violence. (no. 18)

There are family and kids around these places. It would be too much of a shock to them. (no. 13)

There are too many kids around. If something goes wrong, they could get hurt and I wouldn't want that to happen. (no. 20)

Similar declarations were made by the robbers with respect to department stores.

In the midst of the robbery, there might be kids around, and if there's a shootout, then kids could get hurt...It's the kind of place I go to with my family. I don't want guys coming in there pointing guns at me and my family. I wouldn't want it to happen to me, so I wouldn't do it myself. (no. 11)

There are too many people...liable to be kids running around. I wouldn't want them to get hurt or frightened. (no. 49)

Too many people. They are mostly housewives and kids, and I wouldn't want to put them in any kind of risk. (no. 68)

The fact that the elderly and children ride on buses made some offenders regard them as inappropriate targets.

Too many kids and old people ride the buses...I wouldn't want to traumatize them. (no. 56)

There's old people and kids on the bus. I don't like to subject them to robbery. (no. 1)

The subjects also had certain compunctions with respect to convenience stores. In this case, though, their concern was for the employees, not the customers.

It's only kids working in there. It's not worth it to scare the Christ out of the kid. (no. 65)

It's just kids working in there and I wouldn't want to fuck them up mentally. (no. 58)

## Summary

From the above discussion, it is evident that robbers prefer certain types of commercial targets over others and that certain targets are considered more "attractive" than others. Judgments regarding attractiveness were primarily based upon various characteristics or features of the target. Of the features cited, "pay-off" was by far the most determinative of target attractiveness. The informants evaluated each of the targets in terms of profitability. A target might be perceived as an "easy" one, but if the pay-off is poor, it is considered unappealing. The pay-off, however, was not the sole factor responsible for determining attractiveness. Other important characteristics included anticipated little or no resistance, a small number of people, good accessibility, little or no security, and good escape routes. The more positive features a commercial target has, the more attractive it becomes. As



a result, banks, supermarkets and jewelry stores were viewed as very attractive targets, while trains, taxicabs and buses were seen as very unappealing robbery targets.

Certain commercial targets were also favored over others because they were seen as more predictable and easier to command. Commercial establishments in which there were few intangibles and potential surprises were the most appealing, while unpredictable situations where it is difficult to maintain control were the least attractive.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SELECTION OF ROBBERY TARGETS

In this chapter, several questions about the selection of robbery targets will be addressed. First, whether specific targets are chosen at random or selected according to certain identifiable criteria. For example, why did an offender choose one particular bank over another bank just down the street? Second, if the selection is not random, what are the criteria on which the decision is based?

In contrast to earlier chapters, based on the subjects' answers to general questions about various robbery targets, the present chapter is based on the informants actual robbery experiences. Consequently, only those types of targets victimized by the sample are discussed.

#### Selection Criteria

Table 12 strongly suggests that specific robbery targets, be they commercial, residential or personal, are not typically chosen at random. Indeed, of the seventy-four subjects in the sample, only six (8.1%) had chosen all their targets at random. As one might expect, this group was primarily composed of offenders with short robbery careers. The targets they victimized included financial institutions, drug stores, buses, and taxicabs. An additional thirteen (17.6%) of the offenders had chosen some of their robbery targets in a random and some in a nonrandom fashion. Generally, the targets chosen randomly were robbed when the offenders were young, and included such targets as financial institutions, supermarkets, hotels and motels, corner grocery stores, gas stations, and individuals on the street. The targets were chosen nonrandomly when the robbers were older, and included

Table 12

## The Selection of Robbery Targets\*

	non- random		random		total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. COMMERCIAL						
a) financial institutions	33	86.8	5	13.2	38	100.0
b) large commercial	10	83.3	2	16.7	12	100.0
dept. stores	3		0		3	
supermarkets	7		2		9	
c) small commercial	40	80.0	10	20.0	50	100.0
small retail	3		0		3	
jewelry	11		1		12	
liquor	2		0		2	
drug	9		2		11	
corner grocery	6		5		11	
convenience	4		0		4	
gas stations	5		2		7	
d) entertainment	20	87.0	3	13.0	23	100.0
rest., bars	7		0		7	
hotels, motels	12		3		15	
theatres	1		0		1	
e) transportation	3	60.0	2	40.0	5	100.0
buses	0		1		1	
taxicabs	0		1		1	
armoured cars	3		0		3	
2. RESIDENTIAL	6	100.0	0	0	6	100.0
3. PERSONAL	6	75.0	2	25.0	8	100.0

\* The numbers in Table 12 refer to robbers not robbery incidents.

such targets as banks, jewelry stores, drug stores and supermarkets. The remaining

fifty-five (73.4%) subjects chose all their targets in a nonrandom fashion. In other words, they selected their targets according to certain identifiable criteria.

Detectives from the Vancouver City Police Department were of the opinion that, in general, robbers do not choose their targets at random.

I doubt if many are random...There is definitely some reason why they will choose a particular place.

I don't think they do it at random...Certainly some guys do, but the majority do not.

You have your hit and miss robbers of course, but most rob a certain target for reasons...We had this one guy we called "longnote"...because he wrote long notes for his bank robberies. He actually rated each bank on a scale from one to ten, based upon a number of factors.

The finding that targets of robbery are not chosen at random is supported by the literature (Blazicek, 1985; Lejeune, 1977; Letkemann, 1973; Camp, 1968). As Camp (1968) concludes:

...robbers do not indiscriminantly select their victims, they make choices according to certain factors (Camp, 1968, p. 110).

Studies on burglary (Bennett and Wright, 1984; Maguire and Bennett, 1982; Walsh, 1980; Reppetto, 1974) and rape (Chappell and James, 1986) have come to similar conclusions. As Chappell and James (1986) remark:

...although showing a marked preference for attacking women who were strangers to them, the rapists in the group did not, in the main, select their targets at random. It was obvious that most of the subjects had some notion of the "type of woman" they wished to rape as well as a reasonably firm idea about the most suitable location at which to identify and apprehend such a person (Chappell and James, 1986, p. 64).

## Profitability

### *Pay-off*

One criterion influential in the selection of one target over another is "pay-off". As may be seen from Table 13, many robbers chose a particular target because they believed the loot would be particularly lucrative. The calculation of the anticipated pay-off, though, varied from robber to robber. Some arrived at it by counting the number of tellers or cashiers. As several bank robbers noted:

They all had good money in them. We could calculate it by the number of tellers working. (no. 55)

We tried to pick banks with the most tellers open. They usually had the most money. (no. 7)

These places looked like they would have more money because of the number of tellers. (no. 4)

Similar remarks were made by two subjects who victimized a supermarket and a liquor store.

There were lots of tills and it was very busy. We knew there would be good money in there. (no. 65)

This store had six tills and they were always busy. We knew they would have a lot of cash on hand. (no. 60)

Many subjects selected a specific establishment because of the large volume of transactions it conducted. For example, several robbers reasoned that financial institutions which were very busy would be more rewarding, in terms of pay-off, as there would be more money on hand to cover large numbers of withdrawals.

I knew the payroll money would be coming in on that day. I saw that there were a lot of people cashing cheques there. They (customers) were all cashing, none were depositing. I knew there would be a big pay-off. (no. 36)

These banks had a lot of money. We looked at how much business they did and saw how many times the tellers went to the vault. The more customers, the more money which was flowing. (no. 15)

Table 13

## Criteria Robbers Use For Selecting a Specific Target

Criteria	Number of Offenders	Average Score
<b>PROFITABILITY</b>		
pay-off	68	4.6
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>		
physical accessibility	17	4.4
physical layout	31	4.0
location	68	4.4
ease of escape	23	4.3
<b>MANAGEABILITY</b>		
number of people	66	4.3
demographic characteristics of the victim	11	3.9
physical characteristics of the victim	4	4.3
size of the target	4	3.9
<b>DEGREE OF RISK</b>		
security	22	4.4
familiar with target	13	4.7
familiar with area	9	4.8

We picked ones that had lots of customers and were very busy. It stands to reason they would have more money. (no. 7)

Other large commercial establishments such as supermarkets and department stores, were also chosen because of the volume of business.

It was a new mall with booming business, so I figured it would be good money. There was nothing else which compared to it. (no. 32)

The store was really busy. We thought there was going to be a lot of money in the tills. (no. 21)

The volume of business was a determinant for those who selected restaurants, taverns and bars as well.

I had the place cased ahead of time. From the amount of business they did, I knew there would be serious money. (no. 1)

We knew this place was having a Mardi Gras weekend and that they would be very busy. We thought there would be a lot of cash on hand. (no. 5)

We cased the alcohol consumption of the customers. We figured there would be at least \$15,000 there...pretty good money. (no. 17)

The subjects who victimized corner grocery and convenience stores made similar remarks.

This was an all night store and it was incredibly busy. People were walking out with bags and bags of groceries. We knew there had to be a lot of money. (no. 63)

There were apartments above the store. One guy ran both the apartments and the store. It was the end of the month, so I figured he would have a lot of rent receipts in the store. (no. 58)

We knew there would be good money in the till. It was about an hour before closing, and this place was going nuts...it was really busy. (no. 46)

Finally, the selection of a particular armoured car was also based upon the volume of business.

It was payday weekend and this bank went crazy every Friday there was a payday. We knew they would be taking a lot of money into the bank...so we hit them when they got out of the truck and were going in. (no. 32)

While some robbers calculated the anticipated pay-off from the "number" of customers, others based it upon the "type" of customers. As several bank robbers explained:

We would look at the type of customers. There won't be much money there if only blue collar workers bank there because these people are only living from paycheck to paycheck. They don't withdraw much money. (no. 19)

For us, the pay-off was determined by the type of clientele, the number of businesses which deposit their money there, the number of business payrolls they deal with, the number of armoured car deliveries per week, and the number of customers... we could get a pretty accurate estimate from this. (no. 12)

I was in the place five days before the robbery and saw this. It was the bank where all the welfare recipients cashed their cheques. I thought there would have to be a lot of money there to cash all those cheques. (no. 3)

An offender who robbed supermarkets made similar remarks:

The supermarkets we did seemed to do more business than others. We judged by the number and types of customers going in the store. You look at their clothes, the types of cars they're driving, and the amount of food coming out of the store. You can tell how much money people are spending. (no. 19)

Other subjects assessed the potential pay-off by examining the area in which the target was situated. For example, several bank robbers reasoned that the type of district reflected the probable "take".

The type of district they were in was important. We tried to find ones in the most ritzy neighborhoods, rather than the blue collar neighborhoods. We thought the money would be better. (no. 19)

I like them to be in busy commercial and industrial districts because more business means more money. The current accounts teller will have a lot of money if the bank is located in these types of areas. In a residential area, there's not as much money because people are only bringing in small amounts of money. (no. 26)

I went for banks which were in small business districts. They have more money in their tills because they have to deal with these businesses on a daily basis. (no. 67)

An offender who robbed a drug store used similar reasoning in the selection of his target.

This store was away from the downtown area, in the suburbs. It was right beside a medical building and a lot of people in the neighborhood used it. I knew there would have to be a lot of drugs in this place to keep up with the demand. (no. 31)

Target choice was also determined using this method by an offender who robbed a gas station.

There were several other businesses next to this gas station. It was really a busy part of town. I thought there would be more money on hand than normal for a gas station. (no. 51)

This method of assessing the potential loot is employed by burglars as well. In



their study of burglary, Maguire and Bennett (1982) found that offenders calculation of pay-off was based on the type of area or neighborhood. For example, if the burglar wanted cash and does not have a fence, then he went to middle class neighborhoods to select his target. As one burglar noted:

Working-class houses are O.K. because there's more money in them. People keep money in all sorts of little tins and pots about the house, one for rent, one for the meter, one for this and that (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 82).

Those who had a fence and could steal merchandise, on the other hand, went to better off or wealthier areas (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 83).

Some subjects assessed the potential pay-off from the appearance of the target. As three robbers who attacked hotels explained:

They were all higher class hotels. We figured there would be more money in those places. (no. 13)

It was a fancy hotel, so I figured there would be good money there. My co-accused worked there and he said there would be good money. (no. 63)

They were always the more expensive and respectable, high class hotels. It makes sense they would have more money because they charge higher rates. (no. 17)

Target appearance was also a determining factor in selection of jewelry stores. As two robbers remarked:

It was a good size store with lots of merchandise. We knew there had a to be a \$100,000 in there easy. (no. 7)

This store had some expensive merchandise on hand. There had to be a \$100,000 in the window alone. We knew this was the place right away. (no. 65)

In his survey of robbers, Conklin (1972) found that offenders assessed the pay-off of jewelry stores by examining the appearance of the store and its merchandise.

The amount of money that an offender expects to get from a particular victim is usually known to him before he does a robbery, though occasionally he will systematically calculate the amount of money he expects to get from a given victim. One gang which specialized in jewelry store robberies always sent in its "straightest-looking" member into the store to examine the store's most expensive jewelry. If the scout determined

that the stock of jewelry in the store was worth the effort and the risk of robbing the establishment, the gang would return a week later for the holdup. As a result of casing the store, the gang had a good idea of how much it could expect to steal... (Conklin, 1972, p. 88).

For those who attacked personal targets, appearance was an important selection criterion as well. The robbers examined the dress and demeanor of potential victims.

I sat in bars and watched for a person that looked like he had money...you can usually tell by the way he was dressed or by the way he spent his money. (no. 23)

This guy was driving a nice car and was well dressed. I figured he must have some good money. So when he went to get into his car, I jumped him. (no. 45)

I needed money quickly and I had been led to believe that this couple had a considerable amount of money on them...so I decided to do it. (no. 41)

Conklin (1972) reports that opportunistic robbers chose victims by observing how expensively they dressed or by watching to see if they flashed a large wad of bills (Conklin, 1972, p. 89).

Robbers who attacked residences also stated the importance of appearance. Examining target appearance was considered the best method of assessing potential pay-off.

The houses that were well kept and looked like they were more expensive. We went for those types because they usually had the most money in them. (no. 66)

The appearance of the target, as a method of calculating the potential "take", is not only used by residential robbers in the selection of a residence, but by burglars as well. Scarr (1973) found that offenders assessed pay-off from the appearance of the residence (Scarr, 1973, p. 71). Bennett and Wright (1984) report that burglars made assumptions relating to reward on the basis of the appearance of the household. For some, the apparent size of the target was important.

That's all right. It looks prosperous, might be a five-bedroom house. They might have money (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 67).

For others, the condition of the property, was the main focus. The assumption, on the part of burglars, was that if occupants took pride in the outside of their property, they probably took a similar pride in the interior and adorned their home with all the usual symbols of affluence and comfort (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 67).

It looks a bit scruffy. I think they've let the home go a bit. There's nothing in that house but cockroaches. It just isn't the sort to do. You are not likely to find anything worth having to make it worth your while for the risk you are taking (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 67).

Repetto (1974) found appearance of the residence to be of importance. Forty-one percent of the burglars in his sample selected a particular residence because it "appeared" affluent (Repetto, 1974, p. 16). Thus, it appears that robbers and burglars share at least some target selection criteria.

In the present study, some robbers selected a particular target not because it appeared affluent, but because they received a "tip" from a third party. As a supermarket and jewelry store robber explained:

We got a tip that there would be lots of cash in there...maybe \$50-150,000. We looked at the number of people going in and out of this store and it looked pretty good. (no. 59)

We got some information that the owner would open the safe first thing in the morning and that there would be \$50-60,000 in jewels in there. We checked it out and then went for it. (no. 11)

Similar remarks were made by two offenders who attacked a restaurant and a bar.

We knew this place cashed cheques every Friday and that Brink's drops off money every Friday morning. We got information from the employees where the money was and how much would be there...that's what took me to this place. (no. 33)

I received information that the owner would be dropping the week's receipts that night. It looked like it would be a good pay-off. (no. 51)

It was "tips" from third parties that led some residential robbers to their targets

as well.

This guy was supposed to be taking money home from the hotel he owned. We figured he would have at least \$30-40,000. (no. 60)

We knew the owner took the jewelry home from the store every night and that he kept it in the bedroom of his house. We knew it was all of his best merchandise, so we knew the pay-off would be excellent. (no. 39)

Conklin (1972) found that occasionally a robber may receive a "tip" from someone who knows of a lucrative target. He pointed out, though, that the use of tipsters is relatively uncommon in robberies; they are more commonly used by burglars who have more difficulty locating big scores (Conklin, 1972, p. 89).

Detectives from the Vancouver Police Department were of the opinion that potential pay-off played an important part in the selection of robbery targets. Their experience suggests that commercial establishments known to have good pay-offs are victimized more often.

Some banks are known to have a better pay-off than others, so they get hit more frequently because the word gets around.

If they do well (pay-off) at one place, they will come back again and again. We see it all the time.

From the above, it seems clear that potential "pay-off" is an important factor in the selection of a specific robbery target. These declarations were substantiated by the offenders' rating of this criterion. On a scale from one (very unimportant) to five (very important), "pay-off" was given an average score of 4.6. These findings are further supported by the literature on robbery. The perceived affluence of the victim or target was cited by both Blazicek (1985) and Debaun (1959) as being of significance in the selection process.

## Accessibility

### *Physical Accessibility*

A second criterion used in the selection of a specific target over another is "physical accessibility". Several subjects chose a particular target because they could enter and exit swiftly. As one particular bank robber noted:

You could get in and out of this bank quickly and safely. (no. 43)

Similar sentiments were voiced by a couple of supermarket robbers:

These two supermarkets were places where you could get in and out of very fast. You were in one door and out the other. (no. 6)

I knew I could get into the money counting room of this store quickly and without arousing any suspicions. It was ideal. (no. 25)

Offenders who victimized hotels and motels, theatres, and convenience stores also mentioned this as a factor in their selection. As one robber who attacked a theatre remarked:

It was so convenient. I could just walk up and walk away. The cashier was right on the sidewalk. I could do the job and then escape in any direction. (no. 27)

As one might expect, physical accessibility was of the utmost importance to residential robbers. For them, it was a prerequisite to gain entrance to the residence with relative ease.

It had to be a place that was easy to get into...an open window or windows that were easy to get open. If they were too hard, we just didn't bother. (no. 66)

Ease of access, as one might guess, is also important for burglars in the selection of targets. In interviewing burglars, Repetto (1974) found "ease of access" to be the most influential criterion. Forty-four percent of the subjects cited it as the reason for their choice of targets (Repetto, 1974, p. 16). Maguire and Bennett (1982) and Scarr (1973) report similar findings regarding accessibility. Access to the

household was typically assessed in terms of the quality of the locks on the doors and the size of the windows. For example, deadbolt locks and aluminum frame, rather than wood frame, windows were considered more deterring (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 85). In a later study, Bennett and Wright (1984) also found "ease of entry" to be a determining factor in target selection. Among the burglars they interviewed, accessibility was generally gauged in terms of the nature and condition of the doors and windows. Doors were examined in relation to the strength and quality of locks, and windows were assessed by how easy they are to open. Furthermore, smaller windows were preferred over larger ones because they are easier to break open (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 68). This point is illustrated by a remark a subject made while examining a picture of a house.

Yes, easy to do. It's got small windows, just smash one open (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 67).

Hence, it seems that physical accessibility is a target selection criterion employed by both robbers and burglars.

The subjects' statements about ease of access are further supported by their rating of this criterion. On a scale from one to five, "physical accessibility" was given an average score of 4.4. As the literature on robbery fails to discuss "accessibility" in relation to target selection, it was impossible to compare the present findings with those of other studies.

### *Physical Layout*

A third criterion in the selection of a particular target over another is "physical layout". Many subjects chose a particular target to rob because there was something about its layout which appealed to them. Having two or more exits is one feature deemed important. As a couple of bank robbers explained:

We went for banks that had more than one entrance...preferably one in the front and the back. This gives you more than one option as far as escape. (no. 7)

These ones all had a front and rear exit...that way, we could come in the front and leave by the back exit. There was less chance of being spotted by someone. (no. 54)

One robber not only expressed preference for banks with more than one exit, he also favored banks with only one set of doors entering the establishment. Banks which required the robber to go through two sets of doors to enter were avoided.

This place was easier to get into and out of than other banks because it only had one set of doors to open. There were no double doors before you got inside. Double doors slow you up too much when you are trying to escape. (no. 53)

A front and rear exit to the building give the robber flexibility and options regarding his movements during the robbery. The offender feels he has more control over the situation and, for a robber, control is everything. A rear exit is also advantageous in that the offender can leave the scene inconspicuously after the robbery. A drug store robber and a jewelry store robber explain:

The stores we picked always had a rear exit...so you can leave by a different door than you came in. You are very conspicuous when you leave the store, so its better that you leave by the back door. (no. 14)

The store was on the ground floor of a mall and it had a back door. I could just slip out the back door after the robbery without being seen. (no. 37)

Similar remarks were made by a robber who attacked a hotel.

There was a rear entrance to this hotel. We could enter and leave by it and no one would even see us. (no. 63)

The number of exits was mentioned by several Vancouver Police detectives as a selection criterion as well.

A lot of the banks in the outlying areas which get hit have side or rear exits to a lane or a parking lot. The robber doesn't have to escape by going back onto the main street. He can slip out the other exit.

Some will choose a bank if it has two exits. It gives them alternatives. They can escape through a rear door to a parking lot or alley where

their car is waiting.

That's one of the big things...a big consideration. These guys aren't going to be limited to one door if they can help it. They will see if there are two sets of doors. These guys want to have a couple of outs.

A second aspect of layout which played a role in the selection of specific targets is limited visibility. Robbers looked favorably upon objects which obscured or obstructed the view of the interior of the target from the outside. For example, one of the subjects selected a certain jewelry store to rob because the store had tinted windows. Passers-by could not see the interior of the store and, as a result, the robber felt the risk of apprehension was minimal. Two drug store robbers gave similar reasons for their choice of targets.

The stores we went to always had posters and displays in the windows. This made it more difficult for anyone to see in. (no. 14)

Customers in the store could not see the cashier and people on the street couldn't see the cashier because there was so much junk blocking everything. (no. 60)

Robbers of financial institutions also sought targets where visibility from the outside was reduced, either by the placement of the front door or by window coverings.

This bank was on a corner. The front door of the bank was on a diagonal angle to the two streets facing the corner. Also, all the curtains were drawn in the place. People couldn't see in from the street. They were just begging for a robbery. (no. 65)

I like it so that pedestrians cannot see inside the bank. There has to be limited visibility from the street. Either the curtains must be drawn or the windows must be small. (no. 26)

All the banks were one's that had the blinds drawn or had a lot of posters on the windows. People walking by couldn't see inside the bank. (no. 54)

Some Vancouver Police detectives felt an obstructed view of the interior of the target from the outside is attractive to robbers.



That would certainly be a factor. I have quite frequently seen banks with posters on the windows or the curtains drawn get hit.

The location of the money was also a factor which drew some robbers to certain targets over others. For example, one robber chose a particular corner grocery store because the cashier's till was located directly adjacent to the door of the store. He felt there was little chance of him being apprehended as he would only need to spend a few seconds inside the store to complete the robbery. In another case, the subject was also attracted to the target because the money was kept adjacent to an exit.

It was easy to get at where the money was in this nightclub. It was all centrally located in an office at the rear of the club...and the back door was right beside the office. We just went in the front entrance, went to the office and did the job, and then left by the back door without anyone the wiser... the layout was perfect. (no. 5)

Those who had attacked gas stations sought different layout features. One subject robbed only gas stations where the employees or attendants were accessible.

I only went to ones where I had free access to the person running the station. You could end up with a lot of hassles if the person is in one of those bubbles or glass enclosures. (no. 18)

Another offender selected only gas stations where the employees were all centrally located in one area of the station. Robbing a gas station where the employees are in more than one part was seen as too difficult to control. The actions of all employees cannot be monitored, which increases the risk of apprehension.

Layout thus seems to be an important criterion, to several subjects, in the selection of their targets. Statements asserting the importance of the layout are further substantiated by the offenders' rating of this factor. On a scale from one to five, "physical layout" was given an average score of 4.0. In addition, these findings are supported by the literature on robbery. The physical characteristics or layout of the target was cited by several studies (Servay and Rehm, 1986; Roesch and

Winterdyk, 1985; Camp, 1968) as being of significance in the selection process.

### *Location*

A fourth criterion in the selection of robbery targets is "location". Many subjects chose one particular target over another because for them it was attractively located. For instance, some offenders sought targets in close proximity to an underground parking lot. By leaving the getaway vehicle underground, bystanders or witnesses cannot see the type of vehicle the robbers escape in. As a couple of bank robbers explained:

They all had underground parking...you just get out of the bank, go down the stairs, and you're gone. (no. 39)

We always looked for a place where we can park the car right in front of the front door or a place that is very close to underground parking...so we can run to the car and getaway without anyone seeing what type of car we have. (no. 10)

Detectives from Vancouver Police Department believed that some robbers preferred targets in close proximity to underground parking or shopping malls.

For the guy on foot, these underground malls are great. They do the robbery, run underground, and get lost into the crowds...we can't block off all the exits. They just disappear.

These malls, like Pacific Centre, are frequently used for escape. These guys go underground, disappear into the crowds, and surface a few blocks away.

We had a group of guys that really liked that set-up. They would park their car underground, rob the bank, return to their car and then drive away unnoticed...We just can't check vehicles in underground parking.

Others chose specific targets because they were located adjacent to alleys. A jewelry store robber described why he chose this particular store:

I could park the car in an alleyway close this jewelry store. After the job, I could run around the corner to the car and no one would see me or what type of car I was driving. It was a good setup. (no. 21)

A supermarket robber and several bank robbers also cited this as one of the

reasons for their target selection. They felt the ability to park their vehicle "out of sight" during the robbery significantly reduced the risk of apprehension.

They had to have access to an alley...so I could drive down the alley, make a sharp turn, and no one would see the make of the car. (no. 24)

I like to have an alley nearby to park the car in, so I can run a couple hundred yards and then get in the car. This way, I can see if anyone is following me out of the bank. (no. 26)

They all had a back alley where I could park the car out of sight...this made it less likely someone would spot the car when I left the bank. (no. 59)

These back alleys in Vancouver are ideal for bank robberies. You can hide the car in the alley. After the robbery, you run out of the bank, around the corner, into the alley and take-off. This makes it look like you left the scene on foot. They don't see any car, so the cops aren't looking for any particular make of car. (no. 7)

Vancouver Police detectives felt robbers favored commercial establishments with an alley or parking lot in the rear.

They know there's less chance someone will spot their car when they escape. Also, it takes a lot more patrol cars to block off an area if there are alleys running behind all the streets. There's less chance of them hitting a roadblock.

Most of these banks have an alley or parking lot at the rear. The robbers can be around the back, into their car, and gone in seconds...even before we get the call.

Not only robbers, but burglars appear to seek targets with alleys nearby as well. Maguire and Bennett (1982) found that residences with alleys at the side or back were favored by burglars because they offered at least three routes of escape (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 85). Walsh (1980) reports that 44% of the victimized houses in his study had passages, alleyways or footpaths abutting or adjoining the property. These passages make it easier for the offender to observe the house, gain access to the rear of it, and escape quickly (Walsh, 1980, p. 81). Thus, while they used the alleyway for different purposes, both robbers and burglars chose certain targets for this reason.

Some subjects sought targets which were situated on corners. This type of location was seen as advantageous in that it offers the robber a number of alternative escape routes. A hotel, a cabaret, and several banks were chosen for this reason. As the bank robbers remarked:

Corners are better than in the middle of a block. You can get around the corner and you're gone. (no. 7)

It was on the corner...when you're on a corner you can go in any direction, but if you're in the middle of the block, there are only two directions you can go in. It's easier for someone to see which way you went. (no. 53)

One offender, however, strictly avoided banks situated on corners.

They were never on corners. Someone sitting at the traffic light might glance over and spot something. It's too risky! (no. 65)

Targets located on corners appealed to burglars as well. Maguire and Bennett (1982), in their study of burglary, found that corner properties were favored because they offered at least three escape routes (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 85). Again, robbers and burglars appear to use similar criteria in selecting targets.

A few offenders selected particular targets because they were close to their homes. One subject who robbed a cabaret stated that this allowed him "to get out of sight fast after the robbery" (no. 17). Similar sentiments were voiced by a liquor store robber:

This liquor store looked really good. We could park the car close to the store and out of sight. The place was not very well lit. There wasn't much chance of anybody seeing us...It was close to where we were living so we could get off the streets fast after the robbery. (no. 58)

Although not close to his own home, a supermarket robber selected a certain target because it was close to a friend's home.

It was close to where people I knew were living...so I could do the robbery and then get off the streets quickly...so I wouldn't be driving around and get spotted. (no. 6)

Vancouver Police detectives found some offenders robbed certain targets because of their close proximity to where they lived.

There's some guys who rob places within walking distance of where they live. They can do the robbery and then shoot back up to their hotel room. They are off the street fast...which makes them more difficult to apprehend.

Some offenders chose targets on the border of two municipalities, in the hope of capitalizing on a lack of communication between the police forces in the two areas and successfully escaping. This ploy was used by several bank and drug store robbers.

They (the banks) were on the border of two municipalities... so you are dealing with two police forces. They usually don't compare notes. The police in the other municipality wouldn't have heard about it right away. You can go through their district without any problems at all. (no. 22)

We looked for stores that were on the border of a municipality so when we were escaping, we could go into the next municipality and the police would not be looking for us there. (no. 39)

Detectives from Vancouver cited several targets located on the border of the city which are frequently victimized.

There's one bank on the Grandview Highway that gets hit all the time. Robbery gangs use it as a training bank for new members. They rob the bank and quickly escape up to the Lougheed and into Burnaby. It gives them that couple of extra minutes of confusion to getaway.

One offender victimized a convenience store located adjacent to a correctional facility because he felt the response time by the police would be slow.

This store was right beside a provincial correctional facility. We thought they would never suspect a robbery and would be less likely to patrol the store...We did the job when the cops were on a shift change because we thought the cops would be even slower getting there. (no. 48)

Other robbers chose targets as far from the nearest police station as possible, in the hope that police response time would be longer. As several bank robbers explained:

This bank was out of the way...it was on Annacis Island. The cops had to come from either New West or Delta. It took them a while to get there. (no. 11)

They were all branch banks which serviced the residential areas because the police response time is slower for these areas. (no. 25)

They were as far away from the nearest detachment as possible. They couldn't be too close to the cop shop or we wouldn't do it. (no. 10)

A supermarket and a drug store robber selected their targets with this factor in mind as well. In their studies of bank robbery, Servay and Rehm (1986) and Camp (1968) found that distance to the nearest police station was of prime importance to robbers in their choice of targets. Research on burglary has revealed similar concerns. Bennett and Wright (1984) report that residences which were some distance from the nearest police detachment were favored by the burglars (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 67).

As one might expect, a majority of robbers sought targets which were in isolated locations or areas. One advantage of an isolated location is that police response time is usually slower. As two offenders who robbed small town banks explained:

There was no police station in town. This gives me enough time to get into the vault and getaway before the cops arrive. I need at least ten minutes to do the job. (no. 57)

I would pick a small town in the country that had no police or police detachment, so once they hit the alarm in the bank it would take twenty minutes for a cop to get there...and there would only be one car. (no. 65)

Detectives from Vancouver Police Department were of the opinion that some robbers preferred targets in outlying or isolated areas. As one officer stated, there are some advantages to robbing targets in these areas:

There are fewer police cars in the outlying areas of the city. Also, there are more parking lots and back alleys where the robbers can leave their "safe" car during the robbery.

A second advantage to victimizing targets in isolated locations is that there is a reduced likelihood of a passerby spotting or possibly interrupting the robbery. Consequently, targets situated in shopping malls or in busy areas of the city did not appeal to these offenders. Two bank robbers illustrated the point:

We stayed away from the banks in malls. There are too many people who could spot the robbery. (no. 14)

They were never in malls. They were usually in semi-industrial business areas because there are fewer people on the street. There's less chance of running into someone when you're escaping. (no. 59)

The targets tended to be located in areas with very light pedestrian and vehicular traffic. As a drug store and liquor store robber noted:

This store was in a little corner of an open mall in a quiet neighborhood. It was very dark and very isolated. There was hardly anyone walking around the mall who might see the robbery. (no. 25)

The store was downtown. It was the only thing open in the area at the time. The area was deserted...it would be easy to see if anyone was following you after the robbery. (no. 60)

Those who attacked jewelry stores were attracted to their targets for the same reason.

The store was isolated and set far back from the main street. You couldn't see it from the main street. You had to go through a walkway and up a flight of stairs. There was no way anyone would spot the robbery. (no. 11)

This place was in the corner of a very old and small shopping centre. There was hardly anybody walking around in front of the store. It wasn't very likely that someone would walk by or in during the robbery. (no. 24)

This jewelry store was on one of the main streets in Vancouver, but there was very few people walking by the store. Also, the traffic was the kind that kept moving at a good pace past the store. It was very unlikely that someone would spot you from the car or walk past during the robbery. (no. 25)

The store was not on a main street...it was out of the way. There were very few pedestrians around...no one could see what I was doing during the robbery. (no. 2)

Similar remarks were made by robbers who victimized other small retail stores.

The store was in the middle of the block and set back from the street. There was no way anyone was going to see the robbery. (no. 60)

It was in a quiet neighborhood. There were few pedestrians and little traffic. There was little chance of anybody identifying me or chasing me down the street. (no. 27)

Those who robbed convenience and corner grocery stores also sought targets in isolated locations.

This place was way, way off the beaten track. There were very few people around...I thought the chances were pretty low of anybody coming into the store. (no. 58)

The six corner groceries I did were all out of the way...none were on main streets. There was very little traffic, so it wasn't likely anyone would spot me going or coming out of this place. (no. 22)

The offenders who had robbed entertainment-type targets were attracted to isolated targets as well. A hotel robber describes the targets he selected:

These hotels were out of the way, not right downtown Vancouver. They were secluded, stand alone type places with very few businesses around. We didn't have to worry about people walking in or people seeing what was going on. (no. 13)

With respect to transportation-type targets, an armoured car robber chose a particular car because the "quiet" location appealed to him.

It was behind a mall. The armoured car loaded the money from the rear of the stores. We figured there would be little chance of anyone spotting the robbery. (no. 26)

Another armoured car robber, though, was less specific in describing the locations he selected.

They are slaves to their own routines. We would watch the cars and then pick one which stopped at a location where we could get the drop on them. You have to be able to get the jump on them when they are alone and in the open...not in a crowd of people. When you do the job, you get them when they are bringing the money in or out of the bank...whichever is the most profitable...it's like any other job, you just look for the security lapse in the routine. When there's a routine, people become lazy and that's when they become vulnerable. There's always a breakdown in the system...and you just have to look for it. (no. 20)

A similar remark was made by one of the armoured car robbers in Walsh's (1986)



study of economic criminals:

Knew what I was going for. Securicor van...carry a maximum of 15,000 in one bag...by deduction...weigh the factors. Watch different supermarkets in turn, availability of transport, access, number of people. Where the weak link is, one bag travelling at a time, shop floor or just before they come out of the shop. Right circumstances occur two or three times a week... (Walsh, 1986, p. 40).

As one might expect, a couple of subjects chose certain personal targets because the location seemed attractive at the time. Generally, the victims were in dark or isolated areas when the robberies occurred.

There was only one street light down the street, so the sidewalk was dark. I knew no one would see what was happening. (no. 45)

They parked in the rest area off by themselves. I knew other people couldn't hear or see what was going on over there. (no. 41)

Like personal robbers, rapists also favored victims in isolated locations. As Chappell and James (1986) noted:

It became very apparent from the interviews with the rapists that the location and the circumstances of initial contact with the victim frequently determined not only the course of the rape but whether the rape occurred at all. Those subjects who professed to undertake some form of planning of the rape were most likely to devote primary attention to the selection of an initial contact location maximizing the vulnerability of the victim and minimizing the risk of apprehension... (Chappell and James, 1986, p. 67).

Residential robbers sought targets in isolated locations as well. As two of them explained:

The house was way back from the street and it was very poorly lit. There was no way anyone could see or hear the robbery. (no. 60)

The street had to be tree lined or there had to be lots of shrubs around the house. There had to be places to hide if a car came by while we were trying to break in. We didn't want to be spotted. (no. 66)

Burglars, like residential robbers, seek targets in isolated locations. Bennett and Wright (1984) point out that in assessing the relative isolation of a residence, the burglar may examine three features or characteristics of the household. One

feature is "cover". Cover includes all physical objects at the front or side of the building which could obscure the offender, such as trees, hedges, walls and fences. The comments of two burglars illustrate the importance they place on "cover":

This porch, see that little porch there. You got the porch at your back and you've got a little bit of cover (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 62).

They have the glass panels in the front door there. If the wall is coming out slightly, you've got somewhere to stand in while you are looking around (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 62).

Similarly, Walsh (1980) found that houses with cover in the property, such as trees, bushes and hedges, were preferred over those without (Walsh, 1980, p. 80). Reppetto (1974) reports that most of the areas with many dwelling portals made unobservable by vacant lots, alley ways, shrubs or other obstructions displayed medium to high burglary rates, while most of the areas where portals could be easily seen displayed low rates (Reppetto, 1974, p. 50).

A second feature sought by burglars is the distance of other houses to the potential target. Bennett and Wright (1984) found that their subjects did not like houses which were too close together. Neighbors know a stranger to the area, or to the occupants of the house, and are more likely than a passerby to do something about it. As two burglars put it:

I wouldn't do that, too close, they'd know one another notice strangers (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 63).

Too near the other property. It's the sort of property where you've got people nearby. They are probably nosey neighbors any way (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 63).

A final feature of potential targets considered by burglars is the distance of the house from the road. Houses set back from the street were seen as more desirable than those which were not.

It's too close to the road. Anybody walking past could watch you (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 64).

Furthermore, houses on streets with light vehicular traffic were preferred over busy

streets, as the risk of being spotted was seen as lower. Thus, it once again appears that robbers and burglars share some target selection criteria.

From the above, it is clear that "location" is an important factor in the selection of targets for robbery. Robbers' declarations were further substantiated by their rating of this criterion. On a scale from one to five, "location" was given an average score of 4.4. The literature on robbery lends further support to this finding. The location of the target was cited by Blazicek (1986), Roesch and Winterdyk (1985), and Camp (1968), as being of significance in the selection process.

### *Ease of Escape*

A fifth criterion used in the selection of robbery targets is the "ease of escape". Several subjects chose one particular target over another because the target had a variety of escape routes. Targets which limited the offender to one avenue of escape were avoided. As several bank robbers noted:

This bank was right on the corner of two main streets. There were lots of getaway routes away from the place...that's one of the things you're looking for. (no. 36)

One's where there was at least one good escape route of of the place and a couple out of the district. That's what we went for. (no. 12)

The escape routes for this bank were excellent. There were three or four different escape routes out of the area. (no. 11)

One robber felt that banks in residential areas were best in terms of escape because potential pursuers could be evaded on the back streets of these neighborhoods.

They generally had good escape routes. They were in residential areas so it was easier to get lost after the robbery and to see if anyone was following me. (no. 14)

Offenders who robbed supermarkets, liquor stores, restaurants, taverns and bars, and armoured cars also selected their specific targets because of the

alternative escape routes which they offered. The armoured car robber voiced the sentiments of many when he stated:

Getting away from this place was good...there were lots of alternative routes to getaway. We weren't restricted to any one route or road. (no. 26)

Escape routes were also seen as an important selection criterion by the detectives in the Vancouver Police Department.

Most robbers want several good avenues of escape...For example, I don't think there has been a robbery in Port Moody in six or seven years because it's too easy for the police to block off the city. There are only a few roads out of the area.

They usually want several routes or a major thoroughfare to get them out of the area fast. Robbers tend to avoid one horse town situations where there is only one route out of town. It's too easy for the police to cut them off.

Robbers generally choose places with good escape routes...where they can put a lot of distance between themselves and the scene before the police get the call. For example, there's an increasing number of robberies close to the Skytrain. Nobody takes notice of a person running for the train...and they are long gone by the time we get there.

Burglars, as well, seem to favor targets with additional exits at the side or the rear of the property. Bennett and Wright (1984) found that burglars preferred households with several exits because they offered alternative means of getting away if anything went wrong. Targets where the burglar could not escape quickly were considered unattractive. As two of the burglars commented:

Yeh, I'd take that one. It's set at the back of the trees and there are plenty of ways to get out (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 65).

There's plenty of ways out if you had to get out quick, you know (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 65).

From the above, it appears that "ease of escape" is an important factor, to the subjects who mentioned it, in the selection of robbery targets. The importance was confirmed by the robbers' rating of this criterion. On a scale from one to five, "ease of escape" was given an average score of 4.3. The finding that "escape

routes" is a significant factor in the selection process is supported by the work of both Blazicek (1985) and Letkemann (1973). Blazicek (1985), though, found that while "escape routes" were important to robbers, "alternative escape routes" were not that important in the selection of robbery targets. The declarations of the subjects in the present study seem to be at odds with Blazicek's finding, as they appeared very concerned with having several avenues of escape when leaving the scene of the crime.

### Manageability

#### *Number of People*

A sixth criterion influential in the selection of robbery targets was the "number of people". Many subjects chose one particular target over another because there were few victims and/or bystanders. With less people, the situation was viewed as easier to control. As several bank robbers explained:

The bank was always empty...as far as customers goes. I wouldn't go in if there was more than one customer. (no. 68)

They are really uniform. They're like Mac's Milk stores. The only thing to set them apart is the number of people. I only went for ones with few or no people around. (no. 3)

There was never too many people in the bank. The less people, the less you have to worry about one of them playing hero. (no. 53)

I like as few people in the bank as possible. It's easier to control and there's less chance of violence. (no. 26)

They were all small branch banks with not too many customers. You get fewer hassles in these places. (no. 24)

While a small number of people inside the bank was judged by many as particularly favorable, only one offender selected banks which had a small number of people outside the bank.

We avoided ones where there were a lot of people outside because someone could get in the way when we were escaping or someone could look in the bank while the robbery was taking place. (no. 25)

Several subjects, however, deliberately chose banks with heavy pedestrian traffic outside. They believed it worked to their advantage when escaping.

Very few people on the inside and lots on the outside. That's what works the best. It's good for control and then easy to get lost in the crowd after the job. They can't see where you went. (no. 67)

There were mega people outside this place all the time. It was easy to get lost in the crowd really fast. (no. 36)

The only thing I was looking for was that it was in a busy area with lots of people and traffic...so I could get lost in the crowd after the robbery. (no. 18)

Those who attacked smaller commercial establishments were also attracted by a small number of victims. Liquor, drug, and jewelry store robbers all cited this as one of the reasons for their selection. As a couple of jewelry store robbers commented:

There were only two employees in the store. This situation could be easily contained. (no. 24)

We did the job when the store first opened. We knew that no one would be in there except the owner at that time of the morning. (no. 11)

The offenders favored robbing establishments with fewer employees because the likelihood of resistance was reduced.

There were only two women who worked in this store. We figured we would get little or no resistance from them. (no. 21)

There was an old lady and an old man who ran the store. We looked over these two, and we knew there would be no problems. (no. 71)

There was just one old man who owned the store. We knew he wouldn't give us a hassle. (no. 2)

Similar declarations were made by those who had victimized small retail stores.

There were only two people inside the store...and it was pretty quiet around there. There wasn't much chance of someone trying to be a hero. (no. 27)

The guy was alone in his sporting goods store. There were two of us, I knew he wouldn't give us any trouble. (no. 66)

Corner grocery, convenience store and gas station robbers sought targets with few victims as well. In their opinion, maintaining control over the robbery, under these circumstances, was easier. There was less potential for resistance or violence.

I tried to find stores where there were no customers in them. With only one or two employees, there are fewer hassles. (no. 22)

There was only two girls working in the store. We figured they wouldn't give us any trouble...and they didn't. (no. 63)

Robbers of entertainment-type establishments also selected their targets taking into account the small number of victims or bystanders. The subject who robbed a theatre was tempted by the idea that he only had to deal with one cashier. Those who victimized restaurants, taverns and bars were careful to do it when the manager was alone or with a couple of employees:

It was around closing time. We thought there wouldn't be any customers inside...only a few employees. We figured we wouldn't get any hassles. (no. 1)

I was really desperate, I needed money really badly. I saw the manager counting the receipts from the night. I thought this was the best chance of getting money without violence. I thought he wouldn't try anything because he was alone. (no. 52)

Similar remarks were made by hotel and motel robbers:

I knew I would only have to deal with two or three people. It was late at night, so I knew there would be very few people around. The lobby would be very quiet...no check-ins or check-outs... no one in the restrooms...and the employees had their own separate entrance. There was no reason for anyone to be around. (no. 35)

A quiet hotel with not too many people around...that's what we looked for. Ones with a very reserved atmosphere. Ones that aren't going to have a lot of drunk teenagers around. (no. 17)

Late at night there was only one clerk on duty in the hotel and very few people in the lobby. We didn't have to worry about anybody trying to play hero. (no. 46)

Detectives from Vancouver City Police felt the number of victims played an important role in the target selection process.

There are always the crazy ones that will do it with thirty people inside, but most seem to prefer as few people as possible.

A lot of guys like to hit the small credit unions where there are only a few employees and no one is likely to confront them. They will go inside and, if there's too many people, they leave.

I think it is important. It seems to be the M.O. (modus operandi) for a lot of guys to rob banks just after they open when there are few customers.

In many cases, it would appear that they wait until no one or very few customers are in the bank. It's generally the lone gunman that's the most worried about how many people are inside. The note passer or a gang is probably not as concerned.

As one might expect, personal robbers were concerned with the number of people as well. From their standpoint, the fewer victims, the better.

There were only two people which is good because as far as I'm concerned the fewer the people, the better...ideally it would have been only one person. (no. 41)

I knew the man was alone and that there wouldn't be anyone else around...so no one could accidentally spot the robbery. (no. 45)

Like personal robbers, rapists also seek lone victims. As Chappell and James (1986) reported:

...a key element in the contact situation, from the rapist's perspective, is whether the woman is alone. Ninety-six percent of the sample reported that they always checked to see whether the woman was in fact by herself before implementing an attack. When the location was her own home, they mentioned looking through windows, checking cars in the driveway, or...knocking at the door and asking questions. If the initial contact was to be made on the street, or in a social setting like a tavern, they would observe the victim for some period to ensure she was alone (Chappell and James, 1986, p. 70).

Most residential robbers chose particular residences to victimize knowing that only a small number of people were inside the home.

We knew there would only be him and his wife in the house. Both of them were older people. We knew it would be easy to relieve him of the jewelry. (no. 30)



One robber, however, was not concerned with the number of occupants. As long as no lights were on, he knew the victims were in a poor position to resist.

It didn't matter if we thought the 'people were home or not... all the lights had to be out or we wouldn't go for it. If the lights are out, the people are usually in bed, which means they are in no position to put up a fight. (no. 66)

The number of people appears to be a factor in the choice of burglary targets as well. While a few burglars may not be concerned with the presence of people, most burglars prefer to select houses with no occupants. In their study of burglary, Bennett and Wright (1984) found that burglars did not want any victims in the residence during the crime (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 64). Maguire and Bennett (1982), Walsh, (1980) and Scarr (1973) also reported that most burglars think it is very important to have the house to themselves (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 84; Walsh, 1980, p. 81; Scarr, 1973 p. 70). Reppetto (1974) found that the overwhelming majority of burglaries were against unoccupied premises. Households with low occupancy levels had an average annual rate of burglaries over three times (94 per 1,000 dwelling units) that of medium (27 per 1,000) and high (28 per 1,000) occupancy level homes (Reppetto, 1974, p. 49). In ascertaining occupancy, burglars generally look through windows, knock at the door, phone the house, look at the number of lights lit, and/or examine the doorstep for milk bottles or newspapers.

The importance robbers assigned to the "number of people" criterion was further substantiated by the score they gave it. On a scale from one to five, "number of people" was given an average rating of 4.3. This is congruent with the literature on robbery. In Blazicek's (1985) study of incarcerated robbers, a high percentage of respondents declared the "number of people" to be an extremely important factor in the selection process. Several other studies (National Crime Survey, 1979; Conklin, 1972; Block, 1977) report that victims tend to be alone at the time of the robbery, thus indicating the importance of the number of victims in the

selection process.

### *Demographic Characteristics of the Victim*

A seventh criterion relevant to the selection of robbery targets is the "demographic characteristics of the victim". Only a handful of subjects, however, chose one target over another simply because the victims were all female. Females were seen as less likely to offer active resistance to a robbery attempt. A couple of bank robbers mentioned the gender of employees as a factor in their selection:

All the tellers were female. Females are more timid, more cooperative. They don't put up any arguments. (no. 53)

A convenience store robber voiced similar sentiments:

All four of these places had women working in them. Women are easier to get the money off...they are frail and less likely to resist. (no. 46)

Vancouver City Police detectives felt that demographic characteristics may be important to some robbers, but are generally unimportant to most in the choice of targets.

We have had some guys who preferred the small credit unions with only female employees...but in most cases, it doesn't seem to be a factor.

It's probably a factor for some, but mostly I don't think it matters.

If it happens, it certainly doesn't show up in the cases we have had.

Like some commercial robbers, rapists also have preferences for certain types of victims. Chappell and James (1986) described the characteristics of victims which appealed to the rapists in their sample:

The composite descriptions provided by the rapists sounded very much like the "American dream woman" --- a nice, friendly, pretty, middle-class, white female (Chappell and James, 1986, p. 64).

As only a few subjects mentioned the demographic characteristics of the victim as the reason for their choice of targets, it appears that this is not an

important criterion in the selection process. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that "demographic characteristics of the victim" was given a somewhat lower rating (3.9) in comparison to other target selection criteria. In accord with this, Blazicek (1985) found that the various personal attributes of the victim (age, race, gender) were of little importance in the selection of a target or victim.

### *Physical Characteristics of the Victim*

Another criterion in the choice of robbery targets is the "physical characteristics of the victim". Only a handful of personal robbers selected their victims for this reason. Some looked for victims who were inferior to them in physical size or build.

I wanted to make sure I could overpower him. If I wasn't sure, I wouldn't go for it. (no. 23)

The guy wasn't very big. We knew we could take him. (no. 63)

Others sought victims who appeared to be in poor physical condition or who were under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The one guy was drunk. We figured he was an easy mark, so we jumped him. (no. 63)

I was looking for guys that were a bit unbalanced because of the booze. They were easier to handle. (no. 23)

Physical characteristics of the victim were generally seen by Vancouver City Police detectives as unimportant in the selection of robbery targets. They were only seen as playing a role in mugging or strongarm robberies.

With the strongarm robberies, it's the law of the jungle...survival of the fittest. No one wants to pick on a seven foot weight lifter. They generally take advantage of the drunk, the disabled, the handicapped...

If I'm a robber, I'm not going to do it to Hulk Hogan...They usually rob someone that's not going to pose a threat to them.

All in all, the physical condition of the victim did not appear to be an extremely important criterion in the selection process. For the few personal robbers who mentioned it, though, it seems to be fairly important. On a scale from one to five, "physical characteristics of the victim" was given an average rating of 4.3.

The literature on robbery concurs with the above findings. Blazicek (1985) found that body build or physical condition were perceptually unimportant in the selection of robbery victims. In contrast, the literature on rape suggests that this criterion is more important for rapists than it is for robbers. Chappell and James (1986) report that rapists have preferences for women with certain heights and certain types of figures (Chappell and James, 1986, p. 64).

### *Size of the Target*

Another criterion examined is the "size" of the establishment. Naturally, this criterion is closely related to the "number of people". Several subjects selected one particular target over another because it was small in size. In a smaller establishment, it is much easier to "keep an eye on everything in the store" (no. 39) and maintain control during the robbery. As a department store robber explained:

The store had only one floor and there were only one or two exits...that way, I could see what was going on all the time. (no. 13)

A drug and a jewelry store robber mentioned size as one of the reasons for selecting their target. The jewelry store robber remarked:

The layout of this store was perfect. The store was not too large and there were no display cases which obstructed your vision. (no. 71)

An offender who robbed a cabaret was also attracted by its size.

This cabaret was on the second floor and there was only three exits. It was easy to contain the whole group. One guy could block off the whole place and control a hundred people. (no. 17)

"Size", however, seems to be a criterion of lesser importance in the selection process. This conclusion is based not only on the small number of subjects who mentioned this criterion, but also on how they scored it. "Size of the target" was given a rather low rating when compared to other selection criteria: 3.9. These findings are at variance with other studies on robbery. Blazicek (1985) found the "size of the establishment" to be an important or very important consideration to over half (57.8%) of the subjects in his sample. Servay and Rehm (1986) reported that, while not of great importance to "professional" bank robbers, "size" was important to "amateur" bank robbers in the selection of targets. Camp (1968) found that "size" is an important criterion in the selection of financial institutions.

### Degree of Risk

#### *Security*

"Security" is yet another criterion which influences the choice of robbery targets. Several subjects selected a particular target over another because its security was perceived as lax, inadequate, or non-existent. For example, some bank robbers sought targets which did not have surveillance cameras or armed security personnel.

I always picked ones without cameras. There was less chance of getting caught. (no. 74)

I prefer banks that don't have surveillance cameras. I don't want my picture being taken. (no. 26)

We went for the ones that didn't have an armed guard. Guards mean trouble and I don't need it. (no. 20)

Robbers who had victimized jewelry stores, small retail stores, convenience stores, and theatres also cited little or no security as one of the reasons for their selection.

Robbers took into account both internal security as well as external security (i.e., police). A few bank robbers monitored the routines of the local police prior to proceeding with the robbery.

I prefer places that have a standard routine as far as police patrols goes. I have to know where the police will be when I do the job. If I can't tie down their routine or if they don't have one, then I won't go there. (no. 12)

A couple of jewelry store robbers sought targets where police patrols were infrequent.

The cops only came 'round about every ten minutes. I was unlikely to be spotted by them. (no. 37)

There weren't many cops around this place. The police station was on the other side of the town. (no. 60)

A supermarket robber chose a particular store because he believed the police would not be patrolling the area on the day of the robbery as they were preoccupied with crowd control at a local summer festival some distance away.

Security was seen by Vancouver Police detectives as a criterion of lesser importance in the selection of targets. They felt that security devices only altered a few robbers' behavior.

There is no doubt some are deterred by cameras and alarms, but most aren't.

There are some guys that avoid cameras like the plague. For the great majority, though, I don't think they are a deterrent. They just wear a mask or a cap and glasses. It won't stop them from doing it.

Naturally, the security of the target is of concern to other offenders as well. Maguire and Bennett (1982) found that houses with security were typically avoided by burglars. As there are too many residences without security, the subjects felt there was no need to take the added risk of being apprehended (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 85). Letkemann (1973) found that burglars made a basic distinction between houses that are "bugged" (alarms) and those that are not. Residences with

security systems were usually avoided (Letkemann, 1973, p. 52).

Burglars assess the external security of potential targets as well. Bennett and Wright (1984) found that burglars avoided houses where police patrols were present. As one subject noted:

On one occasion there was a squad car that kept going round and round this bloody block. He never seemed to go away. It didn't seem natural to me that this car should keep circling round, so I thought, "no" (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 66).

Nineteen percent of Reppetto's (1974) burglars cited "few police security patrols" as the reason for their selection (Reppetto, 1974, p. 16). The burglars Letkemann (1973) interviewed were concerned with the frequency of police patrols. He mentions one safecracker who recalled how he and his partner would sit on a tall building near a Safeway store they intended to "make". After several days of watching the police routine from the building, they were ready to proceed (Letkemann, 1973, p. 154).

"Security" is no doubt an important criterion in the choice of robbery targets. And this is evident in the offenders' scoring of this variable. On a scale from one to five, "security" was given an average rating of 4.4. Others who report that security is assessed by the offender in selecting a target include Servay and Rehm (1986), Roesch and Winterdyk (1985), and Camp (1968).

#### *Familiarity With the Target*

"Familiarity with the target" plays a role in the choice of robbery targets as well. Many offenders stated that their knowledge of the target was a factor in their selection. Being familiar with the target reduces the likelihood of surprises during the robbery. As a supermarket robber explained:

I knew where the money was counted, how to get there unnoticed, how much money they had, and when the money would be there. Why go

somewhere else? (no. 25)

Subjects who robbed smaller commercial establishments, such as drug and jewelry stores, cited similar reasons.

I was very familiar with his store. There were no surprises, I knew exactly what to expect...and that's the way I like it. (no. 24)

This store was in my neighborhood and I had been in the place several times. I knew exactly what to expect when I did the robbery. (no. 56)

A similar declaration was made by a corner grocery store robber.

I knew the layout and I knew how the place operated. I knew all the escape routes and how to getaway fast...I knew I would getaway, so I did it. (no. 33)

A couple of subjects chose certain hotels because of their knowledge of the establishment. Familiarity means that there are few unknowns or intangibles. Consequently, the robber feels more confident.

I knew the place very well. I had been there countless numbers of times for dinner. I knew there would be no surprises. (no. 35)

I needed money at the time, I thought of where I could get it, and these two places came to mind. I was familiar with them. I knew what to expect as far as the lay-out of the place and the number of employees. (no. 43)

Personal robbers also attacked victims with whom they were familiar. As two of them explained:

These people were travelling and I knew their itinerary. I knew they weren't expected anywhere at any particular time and I knew nobody knew them in the area. It was the perfect setup. (no. 43)

I knew this old man for over ten years. He always had some money on him. When I saw him on the sidewalk, I jumped him. (no. 45)

Vancouver City Police detectives believed some robbers choose particular targets because they are familiar to them.

A lot of them are familiar with the place...they worked there or they know someone who works there...I knew of one guy who robbed a place where he had just worked. He figured, from what he had seen, that the pay-off was going to be very high.



The importance of "familiarity with the target" as a selection criterion is reflected in the offenders' rating of it. On a scale from one to five, "familiarity with the target" was given an average score of 4.7. Despite its importance, other studies on robbery do not seem to have paid any attention to this variable.

### *Familiarity with the Area*

A final criterion, related to the previous one, is "familiarity with the area". A few bank robbers stated that their choice of certain financial institutions over others was influenced by this variable. They felt their knowledge of the area increased the likelihood of making a successful escape from the scene. Other large commercial establishments, such as supermarkets, were also selected because the robber knew the area.

I didn't know the Vancouver area very well, but I was familiar with the area these two stores were in. I knew some escape routes for the area, so decided to go for these two stores. (no. 6)

A jewelry store and a drug store robber also cited this as one of the reasons for their choice of target. Both liked the flexibility of being able to change escape routes should something go amiss during the robbery.

Familiarity with the area was seen by several Vancouver City detectives as an important factor in the selection of targets.

Criminals are funny people, they really like to be on their own turf. Unfamiliar turf turns them off.

There's one thing about robbers, they like areas they know. They feel comfortable there because they know every possible escape route and hiding place.

Burglars also feel more comfortable in relatively familiar surroundings, knowing either the layout of the streets and alleys or the general habits of the people living in the area. Maguire and Bennett (1982) found many burglars were reluctant

to attack residences in totally unknown territory.

I stay within my own area. I never go more than twenty miles from home. It makes me feel secure because I know all the little roads to get back home if I'm in trouble. It sounds strange but I've never been stopped by the police at night (Maguire and Bennett, 1982, p. 82).

"Familiarity with the area" seems to be an important factor, at least to those who cited it, in the selection of targets. On a scale from one to five, "familiarity with the area" was given an average score of 4.8.

### Summary

This review of various target selection criteria strongly suggests that targets of robbery are not chosen at random. Of the criteria examined, the ones that emerged as the most important are "pay-off", "location", and "number of people". "Layout" and the "security" of the target run a close second, in terms of importance.

A few variables discussed in the review of the literature were not mentioned by our subjects. One of these was the "distance the offender had to travel" to the target. Blazicek (1985) found this to be an unimportant factor in the selection process. And in the present study, none of the subjects mentioned it as a reason for their choice of targets. The "likelihood of reporting the robbery" also appears in the literature as a possible selection factor. Again, none of the subjects in the study mentioned this variable. This may be due in part to the composition of the sample. Nearly all the offenders robbed commercial, rather than personal targets. Operators of commercial establishments almost invariably notify the authorities when victimized. It is only in cases of personal robberies that the offender might anticipate the victim not reporting the crime (e.g., prostitute, homosexual,

criminal). Thus, the "likelihood of reporting the robbery" might not have been mentioned because there were few personal robbers in the sample.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TARGET SELECTION PROCESS

#### The Decision To Rob

When does the potential robber decide to go ahead and commit the crime? At what time does he select his target? In some cases, the decision to rob is made and is followed by a short or long search for a suitable, appropriate target. This, it seems, is the way most professional robbers proceed. In other cases, the choice of target and the conception of the idea of the robbery occur almost simultaneously and are followed shortly after by the act itself. In such cases, it is the target that inspires the idea of robbery and sets the mental processes of the robber in motion. This is the case with most opportunistic robbers who act on the impulse of the moment without long reflection or careful planning. For a small percentage (11.4%) of robbers in the present sample, the decision was "opportunistic". "Opportunistic" in the sense that the idea of robbery came to the offender's mind to take advantage of a specific opportunity which presented itself.

I was walking down the street and the opportunity presented itself, so I went for it. (no. 28)

I was just waiting at a bus stop across the street from the bank and something struck me...that looks like a good place to rob. So I thought about it for a while, then did it. (no. 53)

Basically, the opportunity was there and I went for it. I wasn't thinking of robbery until I saw the guy and then something clicked. (no. 45)

This group of offenders is primarily composed of "first timer" and "serial" robbers, offenders with very little robbery experience. One may say that they basically stumbled on their targets. In the study of burglars by Bennett and Wright (1984), there was an equally low percentage of "opportunistic" burglaries. Only seven percent of the burglars stated that their actions were triggered by a chance discovery

of a suitable target. (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 43).

For most robbers (67.1%), however, the decision to rob was not "opportunistic", but "independent". The idea of robbery was conceived prior to, and independent of, the choice of any particular target. In cases of "independent" decisions, it is possible to distinguish between two different thought processes: a) the decision to rob is made and is followed by a search for an as yet unidentified target; b) the decision to commit robbery is made in relation to a target already known to the robber. The first pattern is by far the most common.

I needed some money and I decided I would do robberies to get it...then I just drove around looking for an appropriate place. (no. 69)

I knew I was going to do a robbery and I knew it would be a bank. I just had to go out and find the right one. (no. 42)

We went out looking for it. We knew we were gonna rob, and we just drove around until we found the right place. (no. 46)

All types of robbers (first timer, serial, professional), except "occasional" robbers, were fairly well represented in this group. None of the "occasional" robbers in the sample made their decisions strictly in this manner. Bennett and Wright (1984) similarly found that almost half of burglary decisions are of this nature. Forty-five percent of the burglars described typical offences which involved making a decision to commit burglary, searching for a suitable target, and committing the offence shortly thereafter. An additional fifth (21%) of the sample made a decision to offend, sought a suitable place to burgle, but committed the offence sometime thereafter (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 47).

Though the first pattern is the dominant one, the commission of some robberies followed the second pattern. In these cases, the targets that were later robbed were already fixed in the robbers' minds before the decision to rob was even made.

I knew I was going to rob ahead of time and I knew the place it was going to be. There were no other places I looked at. When it came time, I just went for this place. (no. 35)

I might be truckin' around the city and spot a place. I will check it out and then place it in the back of my mind if it's any good. When I need to do a robbery, I will go to one of these places. (no. 21)

We always knew when we were going to rob. We had places filed in the backs of our minds that we had spotted earlier. When it came time to rob, we just checked out these places again and chose from one of them. (no. 14)

Although there were "occasional" and "professional" robbers in this second group, most were "first timer" robbers. There were no "serial" robbers in this group. Bennett and Wright (1984) report decisions of a similar nature. In their sample, seventeen percent of the burglars described offences in which they discovered the target by chance and then returned sometime later to commit the burglary (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 47).

Several robbers in the sample did not follow strictly one pattern, but proceeded sometimes according to one and other times according to the other. At times they knew the target they were to rob in advance and other times they went out to search for an appropriate one.

I know in the back of my mind that I gotta commit an armed robbery. I know I gotta do two or three a year to live. When the money is getting low, I start thinking I gotta do a robbery, and then I start looking for a place...or I might just stumble across a situation and it will stick in the back of my mind...for future reference. When I need money, then I will case the place thoroughly and go for it. (no. 32)

The first bank jobs we did we knew we were going to rob and then we would go out and look for the best place each and every time. As time went on, I would spot places when I was driving around or shopping and I would remember them for the next time we needed to do a job. I became committed to robbery, so I approached it like a continual business. (no. 54)

When I was young, I just went out and looked for the best place to rob...it was pretty hit and miss sometimes. As I got older, I usually had something in mind before the money got low and I needed to do a job. I would do one of the places I had spotted since the last job. (no. 19)

The first target selection pattern seemed popular when they were younger or early in their robbery careers. The second pattern was adopted as the offenders aged and became more experienced. Experience taught them to plan ahead and to keep some potential targets in mind before their money ran out and a new "job" had to be done. Robbers who had made both types of "independent" decisions, belonged to all types with slightly more "professional" and "occasional". In Letkemann's (1973) study of robbers, informants made similar declarations. Some only searched for targets when they were on their way to rob, while others maintained in their mind a reservoir of targets to attack later when the time came or when the time was right:

...usually we would, like I say, when we knew we were getting low on money, we would start looking around. Now we may...have run into it. I've run into scores where I'd walk in and I'd be there on a perfectly legitimate reason, and I'd see what was going on and you're --- the average person doesn't look for --- he might see a big bag of money and think nothing of it or not know what it is (Letkemann, 1973, p. 143).

About one in five robbers (21.5%) made both "opportunistic" and "independent" decisions during their careers. Most of them graduated from opportunistic type robberies to carefully planned ones.

When I was younger, they were mostly spur of the moment robberies. I would spot things and I would go for it...because I thought that maybe this is the only time this happens, I better take advantage of it. I wasn't very patient...As I got older, I got more patient. I would drive around and check places out carefully to make sure I picked the best score...or I may be driving around and I see a place out of chance. If it looks good, I'll remember it until the time arises when I need a score. (no. 10)

When I was young, I was pretty wild. I never thought about getting caught. I would spot something and go for it right then and there...After awhile I learned I better wise up or I'll spend the rest of my days in here (prison). We usually had a list of possible scores. These were places we had spotted since the last job or place we got a tip on. Sometimes we would drive around and look for good scores...we would develop our own...We would find a place where there was money movement and watch it...to see if it's worthwhile. (no. 20)

This final group of offenders includes all of the well seasoned, high profile robbers

in the sample. It is primarily composed of "professional" and "occasional" robbers, with only one "first timer" and one "serial" robber. Letkemann's (1973) subjects made similar statements. That is, some targets were chosen on impulse while others were hand picked.

Well, just in the normal course of living in the city --- we would spend our days walking around or on the street car or so forth, and keeping our eyes open for various --- for various locations that looked as though they would be the least protected, and have the easiest access to and to get away from...sometimes, it would be simply impulsive --- we would just steal a car and then go looking for one (Letkemann, 1973, p. 142).

## Target Assessment

### *The Nature of the Assessment*

Exactly one fifth of the robbers in the sample made no assessment of the target prior to its selection. The decision to rob a particular target was impulsive, spur of the moment and this group included, as one might expect, nearly all those who chose their targets at random.

It was a spur of the moment thing. If it was planned, I would have gone somewhere else. There was no thinking about it, I just got up and went. (no. 70)

There was no assessment. I never thought of the consequences, I just did it. There were no thought processes working, it was just done. (no. 28)

It was spur of the moment, boom! There was no thinking about it. It was there, I went for it, and then it was done. (no. 23)

No, it wasn't well thought out and calculated. If I thought about a place too long, all I would do is just think about all the things that could go wrong and freak myself out. They were all impulsive, very fast decisions. (no. 33)

As one might anticipate, offenders who chose their targets impulsively were generally the least experienced robbers in the sample. They included many "first timer" and "serial" robbers and none of them could be labelled professional robbers.



Many (48.6%) offenders went through a target assessment process. In so doing they looked at various factors they deemed important, such as the location, the pay-off, the number of people, the layout, and the security. The positive features of a particular target were then assessed against the negative ones. If, on balance, the target seemed favorable, they went ahead and robbed it. In these cases, it could be said that the selection of the target was the culmination of a well thought out, calculated process. None of these targets were chosen in a random fashion.

There's X number of good points and X number of bad points. It's a weighing of the pros against the cons and determining if you can get away with it. If things look in your favor, you go. (no. 48)

I don't like to go out with a negative attitude or feeling on the day of the job. Everything about a place may be right but at the last minute I get a gut feeling. Sometimes you have the feeling someone has spotted you when you're casing the place. Someone knows something or suspects something so you back off...I like to have the percentages on my side. You look what's good and bad about the situation. For example, is there anywhere where someone could hide in this place. You weigh the good and the bad, if I think the percentages are in my favor, then I go for it. You never get a 100% chance of success, but I like at least a 60-70% chance of success. (no. 32)

I don't think it was a question of anything else. If these things fall into place it's right, and if they don't, then it's not. I feel quite confident that the positives and negatives were constantly weighed right up until the moment of the robbery. (no. 41)

Control is the central issue. I would balance the risks and rewards of robbing the place. As long as I figured I could control the situation, then I would do the job. (no. 25)

For some, selecting a particular target involved balancing only two factors.

Usually I just sit there and see what the chances are of getting caught at it. The whole thing is the take home pay...how much will I get? After looking at the pay-off, then I think about what my chances are of getting caught. Number one is the money and number two is the get-away. I balance the two against each other and see if it is worth it. (no. 37)

The money is the most important thing. I look at how much money I could get out of the place. The chances of getting caught is the other major factor. I look at what they are, and they have to be pretty low...unless of course the amount of money is excellent, which would counterbalance the apprehension factor... I look at what is negative about the place. If there are too many negatives, then forget it. I start with 100% chance of not getting caught. Then I look at the place and see, in

the end, what my chances of not getting caught are. (no. 2)

There were equal numbers of "serial", "occasional" and "professional" robbers in this group. The number of "first timer" robbers, however, was as large as the three other types of robbers combined.

Nearly a third (31.4%) of the offenders in the sample selected some targets without any assessment and other targets after a complete assessment of the situation. Some robberies were impulsive or spur of the moment and others were well thought out and calculated. The offenders were generally young and inexperienced when the impulsive robberies occurred. With age and experience they began to choose their targets more carefully, according to a set of criteria they had developed.

It was straight impulse when I was young. You don't weigh nothing over! As I got older, I started to look at places more carefully...to look at my alternatives...You weigh the facts to the best of your ability at the time. You look at what's good and what's bad...You start realizing that if you're gonna do this, you gotta do it right because there's less chance of getting caught and you make sure you're getting decent money for the job. (no. 1)

When I was a kid, I was just robbing to get high. Things were pretty hit and miss as far as picking jobs...By the time I was twenty-one, I was off drugs, I lost my "doesn't matter" attitude, and I knew this was going to be my business for the rest of my life. I wanted the maximum amount of money and the best chances of success, so I looked at scores a lot more carefully... It's in a chart in your head. You have a feel for what's there and you look at all the factors involved. You weigh the positives and negatives of the score and then make a decision. (no. 20)

When I was young, I would go with whatever was available at the time when I needed money. I would always wait until I was flat broke and then I would have to rob right away. After a few years, though, I started to think things out a little more. I would look over a number of places to see which one was best. I planned ahead a little more and wouldn't wait until I was broke. I learned through experience that there would be more money in a score if I planned it and there would be less chance of getting caught afterwards. (no. 12)

As the above quotations denote, this group included the most seasoned robbers in the sample. Indeed, it was entirely composed of "professional" and "occasional"

robbers.

### *Length of the Assessment*

Half the robbers professed that the assessment of a potential target took less than an hour and, in most cases, only a few minutes. What they really did was simply a brief examination of the target, nothing else.

The good ones are so few and far between that when you see a really good one, it kinda hits you on the head...After you have been doing this for ten years, you can make a decision about a place in a matter of minutes. You know in minutes whether you can getaway from the place and what your chances are...it comes from years of experience. (no. 9)

I will look a place over and my feelings tell me in five minutes whether I will go for it or not. (no. 36)

For approximately one third (32.4%), the assessment took slightly longer: from several hours to several days. They thoroughly examined the potential target before making their decision.

It usually takes several days. I can't go in their cold. I have to know as much as I can about the place before making a yes or no decision. (no. 39)

A couple of days at least. I need the time to check out the escape routes, to see if they are any good. (no. 10)

Most of the time it takes two or three days. I might spot something which looks good...then I'll watch it and fully check out the place, so I can make an educated decision. (no. 65)

For less than a fifth (17.6%), the assessment was done very carefully. These offenders took anywhere from a week to a few months to meticulously examine the target they finally robbed.

No less than two weeks, so I can think things out clearly and really check out the situation...to let things gel in my mind...to give myself time to think about all the little things. (no. 12)

It varies, it could be a couple of months...usually at least a month, anyways. You want to do a lot of surveillance before you make a decision because you could be paying for it for a long time. (no. 5)

It can be a couple of weeks to a couple of months. You need to find out the routines of the police patrols, when and where the business of the

bank comes from, when the armoured car delivers...you need to know everything about the place. (no. 11)

In a sample of convicted robbers, that is to say unsuccessful robbers, it is not surprising to find a majority who did not care to check their potential targets thoroughly. This probably explains why only a small percentage spent more than a week examining, assessing and selecting their target. The length of the assessment did vary, however, in relation to the type of robber. Among the "first timers", 54.5% spent less than an hour assessing a potential target, 31.8% spent from several hours to several days, and 13.7% spent more than a week. Of the "serial" robbers, 66.7% spent less than an hour, 33.3% spent from several hours to several days, and none spent more than a week assessing a target. For "occasional" robbers, the percentages were 43.8, 37.5, and 18.7 respectively. Finally, of the "professional" robbers, 34.8% spent less than an hour, 43.5% spent from several hours to several days, and 21.7% spent more than a week when assessing a potential target.

Neither the times nor the percentages should be taken literally. Nothing indicates that the robbers kept accurate account of the time spent assessing a given target. The time they gave was just a personal estimate, nothing more, nothing less. The only conclusion, and it is not the least surprising, is that professional robbers spend more time "studying" their target than those who are committing their first robbery.

#### *Location of the Assessment*

A majority (61.8%) of the offenders did their assessment while in close geographical proximity to the target. For example, sitting in a car across the street from the target or driving the car past the target several times. Some (14.7%) made the decision to rob a particular target while at home. Typically the robber would sit down with his partner(s) and discuss the positive and negative aspects of

a certain target. For the remainder (23.5%), the assessment and subsequent decision to rob occurred in various locations.

It depends what is handy at the time...whatever is convenient and private. You need a place where you can discuss it with your partners, a place where there aren't too many people. It's a different place every time. (no. 32)

You go through it in your mind every day for weeks. You think about the place over and over before you finally make the decision... but the decision could happen anywhere, anytime...with each score it's different. (no. 30)

### *Who Makes the Decision*

In cases where there are multiple robbers, the decision whether or not to victimize a particular target appears to be a collective one. Most (76%) of those who robbed with partners stated that target selection is a group decision in which all opinions are considered.

I will spot a place and check it out and it may look good to me. I send my partner to look at it...I tell him what to look for and how to size it up. He will come back and say yes or no. If he says yes we do it, if he says no we don't...we both have to agree. (no. 2)

A score was always discussed between the two of us. If one of us gets a gut feeling or says no, then we don't do it. (no. 9)

It's a group decision. All partners have an equal say in it, except the driver because he has fewer responsibilities in the job. (no. 24)

No one person makes the decision. It's fairly democratic...we usually let the majority rule. (no. 37)

We always kicked a score around. It's a group risk, so you have to decide together. We all had to have a good feeling about it. (no. 71)

With respect to the typology of robbers, this group was fairly evenly distributed among the four types: "first timer", "serial", "occasional", and "professional". There were, however, slightly higher percentages of "occasional" and "professional" robbers.

A minority (24%) of those who robbed with partners stated that target selection was not a group decision, but was made by just one of the members.

I don't like partners anymore, so I make all the decisions regarding the scores. My partner just drives and that's it! (no. 26)

Usually one guy makes the decision and the other guys follow along. You know your partners well enough to trust their judgment. (no. 38)

I made the decision to rob the drug store...it was my idea. There was no discussion between the two of us...he was just a driver. (no. 40)

The other guy made the decisions. He was the one going in, so he was the one that had to feel comfortable with it. (no. 46)

With respect to the typology of robbers, this group had fairly equal proportions of "serial", "occasional", and "professional" robbers. There was, however, a higher percentage of "first timer" robbers.

#### *Assessment Criteria Development*

Nearly half (47.7%) of the subjects developed the criteria they used for assessing potential targets through common sense and experience.

Common sense is part of it...I suppose...but it's also a natural absorption process from your own robberies and, if you can believe it, the media. (no. 68)

All of it came from my own experience because I have been in trouble with the law since I was eight years old...I did pick up a little from watching T.V.. (no. 53)

I would never listen to anyone else's advice in here (prison) because they are fuckups just like me. I learned everything from myself. (no. 23)

I would never trust what anyone else has to say. Most other guys don't know how to do anything properly. Their advice is full of shit! (no. 13)

In relation to the typology of robbers, this group was fairly evenly distributed among the four types: "first timer", "serial", "occasional" and "professional" robbers.

Only one offender admitted that his knowledge of what constitutes positive and negative features of robbery targets was gained strictly through other offenders' experiences.

I knew nothing about "A.R.s" (armed robberies) until I came to here (prison) the first time. All of what I have learned came from listening to these guys in here. (no. 33)

For most (50.8%) offenders, though, the knowledge of the positive and negative features of robbery targets was gained both through their own experience and the experience of others.

If I hadn't come to jail, I probably wouldn't have learned half of what I know. It's true what they say, it is a school of crime. A lot of it though was my own basic reasoning and common sense. (no. 30)

A lot of it comes from jail. Guys in here are always talking about their armed robberies. You pick up a lot of tips on what to do and what not to do. But a lot of it you pick up through your own robberies. It's a matter of going out, doing it, and learning from it. (no. 32)

When I was younger, I was kinda taken under the wing of a guy. He showed me everything about armed robberies. When I started to do my own scores, I learned a lot more about what to look for and what to look out for. (no. 14)

I got ten years in prison after my first couple of scores. I got a pretty good education from the older cons when I went to jail. When I got out and started doing "A.R.s" (armed robberies), I picked up a lot on my own. (no. 57)

In relation to the robber typology, this group was fairly evenly distributed among the four types: "first timer", "serial", "occasional", and "professional".

Letkemann (1973) also found that robbers learn what is a "good" target in prison.

Because of the time I spent in ----(name of prison). I would look around, and we're sitting there, two guys that were in for a bank robbery. They would say, well --- he would be talking to his partner, for example, and I would be sitting there, and maybe I'd know him, you know --- sort of and things like that, so he would call me over close to them, and he would say, "Well, Jesus Christ, you remember when we did that job, what mistake we done. We just should never have gone through that road, you know. We should have known better. We should have known

it." And things like that... now maybe I learn through the misfortune of others, you know... One that I communicate with best, and I will be walking back and forth for hours with him, talking of possible ways of doing banks, you see. And how we could outsmart the people, how we could react to certain circumstances during a holdup, and things like that (Letkemann, 1973, p. 123).

...once I got in jail, I learned to do things better. That's about all you hear in jail, how to do this, and watch for that, and how to change plates and everything. If you're going to become any kind of professional at all, you'd have to do some time... (Letkemann, 1973, p. 128).

### *The Commission of the Robbery*

Once the decision is made to victimize a particular target, the actual robbery soon follows. Many (51.4%) of the offenders rob the target within an hour, and most within minutes, of making the selection.

Nine times out of ten its right away. You do it now because the opportunity is then. (no. 1)

It may take up to an hour. I need time to psych myself up and build up my nerves. It takes a lot out of you. (no. 63)

It only takes a few minutes. Just enough time to park the car and walk over to the place. (no. 67)

After selecting a target, some offenders (21.4%) took from several hours to several days to commit the robbery.

You might wait up to a week at the most. You wait for the day when the most money will be in the bank...like on a payday Friday. (no. 2)

At the most, we would wait a week. It depends on when we needed money because we only robbed when we were low on cash. It also depends on when the most money was in the bank. We would wait for the best day. (no. 54)

Finally, some (27.2%) took more than a week to commit the robbery after choosing a target. Depending on the offender, this time is spent gathering equipment or partners, planning the details of the robbery, or simply waiting for the optimal day to commit the robbery.

It may be from ten days to two weeks. It depends on economics...how bad you need the money. It depends on the day of the week...you might



wait for a Thursday or Friday when the most money is on hand. It depends on the weather...lousy weather is better because traffic is slow, visibility is poor. It's harder for them to chase you. (no. 7)

Anywhere from two to four weeks is needed to plan my escape, get the details about the bank and about Brink's, find out the routines of the employees, how many work there, who the head teller is...You need to know everything and plan for everything. (no. 57)

I always wait two weeks. I have to plan the robbery down to the last detail...and it takes some time to get the equipment together you need. (no. 12)

The time between the selection of the target and the execution of the robbery did vary according to the type of robber. Of the "first timer" robbers, 50% waited less than an hour before committing the robbery, 31.8% waited from several hours to several days, and 18.2% waited more than a week. With regard to "serial" robbers, 66.7% spent less than an hour waiting, 33.3% spent from several hours to several days waiting, and none of these robbers spent more than a week waiting. Of the "occasional" robbers, 43.8% waited less than an hour before committing the robbery, 25.% waited from several hours to several days, and 31.2% waited more than a week. Finally, of the "professional" robbers, 34.8% waited less than an hour, 30.4% waited from several hours to several days, and 34.8% waited more than a week. Thus, it appears that "professional" and "occasional" robbers waited slightly longer after choosing a target to commit the robbery.

### *Casing the Target*

Casing almost always (93.1%) precedes target selection. Casing provides the information needed to accurately assess a potential target so that an informed decision could be made regarding victimization.

You always case the place before you decide to go for it or not. Through casing, things are checked out to see if they look good and if I will do the job. (no. 49)

After you case it out...that's when you decide whether you will do the score or not. (no. 32)

A handful of offenders (6.9%), however, did their casing after the target had been selected. These offenders used casing to prepare their plan of action against the target.

You know you are going to rob a place as soon as you spot it. Then you check it out for a few weeks to see how you're going to do the job. (no. 11)

The casing is done after you pick a score. I will go in and check out the place and see how I will do it...casing is used to see how I will do the score. (no. 56)

While a majority of the offenders cased their targets and did so before finally selecting it, several (17.1%) never cased their target(s). This group, however, is primarily composed of "first timer" robbers.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ROBBERY DECISION MAKING: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Theories of criminal behavior do not usually pay much attention to offenders' decision-making. That is, the conscious thought processes which give purpose to and justify conduct, and the underlying cognitive mechanisms through which information about the world is selected, attended to, and processed. The source of this neglect is the apparent conflict between decision-making concepts and the prevailing determinism of most criminological theories (Clarke and Cornish, 1985, p. 147). Criminological theories have traditionally been concerned with explaining the criminal "dispositions" of particular individuals or groups. These explanations have typically focussed on genetic differences or physiological functioning (e.g., slow automatic reactivity and low cortical arousal), on psychological factors of personality and upbringing (e.g., faulty conditioning of extroverted neurotics), or on sociological influences (e.g., "anomie", "subcultural", and "labelling" theories) (Clarke, 1983, p. 228). In these theories, the criminal is portrayed as a relatively passive figure in the offending process. He is seen either as prey to internal or external forces outside personal control, or as the battlefield upon which these forces resolve their struggle for the control of behavioral outcomes (Clarke and Cornish, 1985, p. 148).

The central problem with the above theoretical approach is that, while useful in explaining the development of criminal dispositions, it is generally not helpful in explaining how specific decisions are made by individuals with respect to offending. A theoretical approach which seems more useful in explaining criminal decision-making, and appears applicable to the findings of the present study, is rooted in the perspective of the classical school of criminology. According to Beccaria and Bentham, man is a rational being who makes careful calculations of

possible gains and losses before deciding on action. Furthermore, he is hedonistic in that he is attracted by pleasure and repelled by pain. Therefore, his habits are developed and his conduct oriented by the search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain (Fattah, 1976, p. 10). For an individual to commit a criminal act, then, the promised pleasure of the act must outweigh any potential threat of pain (punishment). On the other hand, an individual who is tempted by a particular form of threatened behavior will, according to this perspective, refrain from committing the offence if the pleasure he might obtain is more than offset by the risk of great unpleasantness communicated by a legal threat. In this simple model of deterrence, the process is a very specific one --- comparing this crime with this penalty for one particular moment. The results of weighing the pros and cons of lawbreaking, though, do not alter the individual's personality, or his concept of right and wrong, or his general propensity to obey the law. If the individual is to be kept law-abiding, the process of simple deterrence must confront him at every turn. That is, each form of forbidden behavior must be a risk not worth taking (Zimring and Hawkins, 1973, p. 75). As Bentham explains:

The profit of the crime is the force which urges a man to delinquency: the pain of the punishment is the force employed to restrain him from it. If the first of these forces be the greater the crime will be committed; if the second, the crime will not be committed (Zimring and Hawkins, 1973, p. 75).

The classical view, then, regarded man as a rational, hedonistic being endowed with free will and an ability to make a reasonable enlightened choice. This perspective, in recent years, has been revived by economists who study crime. According to the economists, criminals, in general, are rational decision-makers and careful calculators of the costs and benefits of their illegal actions. They are governed in their behavior by the concept of differential rewards. That is, individuals with the capacity to either comply or not comply with a given law will not comply

when the utility of noncompliance is greater than the utility of compliance. In other words, individuals will engage in the available alternative activity expected to yield the greatest net gratification (Stover and Brown, 1975, p. 369). Thus, they are encouraged by a prospect of high return from illegal activities and are likely to be deterred if such illegitimate behavior is costly (Fattah, 1983, p. 80). As Becker (1968) explains:

...a person commits an offence if the expected utility to him exceeds the utility he could get by using his time and other resources at other activities. Some persons become "criminals", therefore, not because their basic motivation differs from that of other persons, but because their benefits and costs differ (Becker, 1968, p. 176).

Economists further assume that crime is a chosen activity and that this choice, at least in its essential parts, is not unique. Therefore, criminal behavior may be analyzed within a general framework of economic choices, without presupposing a distinctive set of motivations (Fattah, 1983, p. 80). As Ehrlich (1973) explains:

A simple model of choice between legal and illegal activity can be formulated within the framework of the usual economic theory of choice under uncertainty. The central hypothesis of this theory is that if, in a given period, the two activities were mutually exclusive, one would choose between them by comparing the expected utility associated with each alone. The relevant object of choice to an offender may thus be defined more properly as his optimal activity mix: the optimal allocation of his time and other resources to competing legal and illegal activities (Ehrlich, 1973, p. 524).

Crime, therefore, is essentially viewed as a purposeful, instrumental and profit-oriented activity.

Traditional economic theory, as outlined above, postulates an "economic" man, who, in the course of being economic is also "rational". This man is assumed to have knowledge of the relevant aspects of his environment which, if not absolutely complete, is at least impressively clear and voluminous. Furthermore, he is assumed to have a well-organized and stable system of preferences, and a skill in computation which enables him to calculate, for the alternative courses of action

which are available to him, which of these will permit him to reach the highest attainable point on his preference scale (Simon, 1957, p. 241). Hence, this method of decision-making places severe demands upon the choosing individual. First, the individual must be able to attach definite pay-offs to each possible outcome or action. This, of course, involves the ability to specify the exact nature of the outcomes --- there is no room in the scheme for "unanticipated consequences". Second, the pay-offs must be completely ordered. That is, it must always be possible to specify, in a consistent way, that one outcome is better than or worse than another. Finally, the outcomes of particular alternatives must be known with certainty or at least it must be possible to attach definite probabilities to outcomes (Simon, 1957, p. 246).

Although widely used, the economic perspective, as one might expect, has not gone unchallenged. A central criticism of this approach is that the information-processing demands of an expected utility strategy are inconsistent with our knowledge of the human cognitive system (Johnson and Payne, 1986, p. 172). Research in cognitive psychology has demonstrated that choice and problem solving behaviors are typically based upon internal representations constructed by the decision maker. Choices are determined not necessarily by the objective properties of the alternatives, but rather how they are perceived by the decision-maker. Because decision makers have a limited capacity to process information, these representations will often only contain part of the information which is potentially relevant to the decision, particularly in complex situations (Johnson and Payne, 1986, p. 173). Thus, rather than considering every alternative and possible outcome in reaching a decision whether to offend, only a few aspects of a few alternatives may be considered, and the rest ignored. Evidence of such simplification by decision-makers has been found by several researchers. In one study, Carroll (1978)

presented subjects (adults and juvenile criminals) with hypothetical crime opportunities in the form of gambles, which independently varied on four dimensions: likelihood of gain and loss, amount to gain, and severity of punishment. In evaluating the crime opportunities, Carroll (1978) found that subjects focussed on only a few aspects of the situation and ignored the others. Decisions were not rendered by assessing all possible variables. He went on to conclude:

The results of the present study indicate that the decision to commit a crime is based upon a simple and perhaps unidimensional analysis of crime opportunities. This is in direct contrast to the expected utility model that describes criminal behavior as the outcome of a complex multiplicative weighing of features (Carroll, 1978, p. 1519).

Wright (1974), in examining the decision-making process, also found that an individual, when faced with a decision task of challenging complexity, may try to restructure the task into a simpler one by restricting his attention to certain portions of incoming data. The individual may exclude from consideration data about less relevant dimensions, even though he would consider those dimensions sufficiently important to input under less taxing conditions (Wright, 1974, p. 555). Wright (1974) concluded:

A tendency for people to accentuate negative evidence when the environment discourages leisurely processing may be indicated. A complementary tendency to use fewer attributes in the same circumstance is also indicated. The harassed decision maker is pictured as becoming extremely alert to discrediting evidence on a few salient dimensions (Wright, 1974, p. 560).

In looking at the decision-making of judges, Slovic and Lichtenstein also report that simplifying strategies were employed:

We find that judges have a very difficult time weighing and combining information --- be it probabilistic or deterministic in nature. To reduce cognitive strain, they resort to simplified decision strategies, many of which lead them to ignore or misuse relevant information (Payne, 1973, p. 452).

These simplification strategies for processing information have often been described as being heuristic in nature. That is, they are "problem solving methods which

tend to produce efficient solutions to difficult problems by restricting the search through the space of possible solutions, on the basis of some evaluation of the structure of the problem" (Payne, 1973, p. 440). By utilizing heuristics, the individual keeps the information-processing demands of complex problem solving tasks within the bounds of his limited capacity. A heuristic allows for efficient problem solving, but at the cost of possibly making a mistake (Johnson and Payne, 1986, p. 172).

The idea that human information-processing is limited and that this places constraints on decision processes is referred to as the concept of "bounded" or "limited rationality". The limited rationality hypothesis states that behavior is reasoned within constraints, but not necessarily rational in the strict expected utility maximizing sense. As Simon (1957) explains:

...because of the psychological limits of the organism, actual rational-striving can at best be an extremely crude and simplified approximation of the kind of global rationality that is implied, for example, by game-theoretical models (Simon, 1957, p. 243).

Thus, rather than advocating the global or total rationality of the expected utility model ("economic man"), this perspective suggests a "limited rationality" approach ("psychological man"), which takes into account the decision-making research conducted in cognitive psychology.

In the present study, decisions to offend made by the robbers cannot be described as totally rational. That is, exhaustive and complex calculations of alternatives along the lines of the expected utility approach were generally not used. However, the robbers in the sample did seem to exercise a "limited rationality". That is, decisions regarding the robberies were typically made on the basis of evaluating a small number of aspects of the alternatives. The positive (rewards) and negative (risks) characteristics of the potential crime situation were assessed or weighed



against one another. If, on balance, the situation was perceived as favorable, then the robbery was committed. Of course, this process did not occur in all cases. Some offenders made impulsive, spur of the moment, "irrational" decisions in which no assessment was made. In the majority of cases, though, the robbers appeared to exercise "limited rationality".

In addition to the present study, other research has found the "limited rationality" approach useful in explaining criminal decision-making as well. In a recent study, Walsh (1986) examined the victim selection procedures of economic criminals (robbers included). His concluding remarks accurately reflect the sentiments of the present author with respect to the decision-making of robbers.

Reading all the target selection comments from the interviews together, we find that each man mentions rational facts, and if we read the comments as a whole we get an impression that all the angles are covered. Yet closer examination shows that rather than each criminal covering all the points for his crime, considering area, target, victim defences, and so on seriatum, what is happening is that each man has bees in his bonnet about particular items and disregards others totally...The concept we are fumbling for...is perhaps limited, temporal rationality. Not all these men are highly intelligent, and few are equipped to calculate Bentham-style, even supposing the information was available. Yet it is very common for rationality to be used. Of course it is partial and limited rather than total, but at the time the actor feels he has planned enough and weighed enough data. Not all the statements about logic and method can be dismissed as bogus rationality. These men are doing their best to calculate, but in the end, risk and imponderables mean that they will often fail (Walsh, 1986, p. 50).

In an extensive examination of the decision-making of burglars, Bennett and Wright (1986) also found the concept of "limited rationality" the most applicable theoretical perspective.

According to the Utilitarian model of behavior, the individual strives to maximize pleasure by calculating the costs and rewards of alternative courses of action. This model does not match burglars' accounts of the way in which they decided whether or not to offend. Modern usage, however, tends to be less rigid than the classical formulation. Instead, an emphasis is placed on the limited nature of rationality. It is not presumed, for instance, that offenders weigh up all the relevant factors every time an offence is contemplated. The concept of limited rationality matches more closely offenders' descriptions of their decision-making...In

this sense, offenders behave rationally as they perceive it. As perceptions almost certainly vary over time, what might be perceived as rational on one occasion might not be perceived as such on another (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 152).

The "limited rationality" perspective appears applicable to shoplifters as well. In their survey of shoplifters, Carroll and Weaver (1986) concluded:

In terms of rationality of the process, it seems that subjects are sensitive to many features of crime opportunities that are objectively important for assessing the value of items and the risk involved. It also seems apparent that considerations at the point of decision are extremely abbreviated. Only a few features of the crime opportunity were evaluated by subjects (Carroll and Weaver, 1986, p. 32).

## CHAPTER IX

### TARGET ATTRACTIVENESS: A SYNTHESIS

#### Profitability

##### *Pay-Off*

As one might expect, potential "pay-off" is one of the most important determinants of both target preference and selection. With respect to general categories of robbery, commercial robberies were favored over residential or personal robberies because they were seen as more lucrative. In addition to being cited most often as the reason for the preference, pay-off was scored very highly by the robbers as well. Of the various commercial targets, armoured cars were seen by far as the most rewarding. Financial institutions, supermarkets, department stores, jewelry stores and drug stores were also viewed as attractive in this respect. The most unappealing, in terms of pay-off, were buses and taxicabs. Corner grocery, convenience and small retail stores followed a close second.

Of the criteria mentioned as being responsible for the choice of one target over another, pay-off was one of the most influential. In addition to being cited by nearly all robbers, it was rated very highly, in terms of importance.

#### Accessibility

##### *Physical Accessibility*

Physical accessibility was also determinative of target preference and selection. Commercial targets were preferred over residential and personal ones because they were considered more accessible. Robbers appreciated the ease with which they

could enter and exit commercial establishments. Although mentioned by many subjects as a reason for their commercial target preference, physical accessibility was rated only moderately high, in terms of importance.

Of the specific types of commercial targets, supermarkets, department stores, hotels and motels, and gas stations were seen as the least restrictive regarding physical movement. Trains, on the other hand, were seen as the most restrictive and least accessible targets.

Physical accessibility was influential in the selection of one target over another as well. Although it was not cited with great frequency, accessibility was considered important to the robbers who gave it as one of the reasons for their choice of targets.

#### *Temporal Accessibility*

Not only physical, but temporal accessibility was determinative of target preference and selection. Again, commercial targets were favored over residential and personal ones because they were seen, in terms of time, as less restrictive. Of the various commercial establishments, hotels and motels and convenience stores were most attractive in this respect. As they are usually open twenty-four hours a day, the offender has great flexibility in choosing the time of the robbery. Following a close second were supermarkets, gas stations and restaurants, taverns and bars. The only commercial targets considered unattractive, in terms of temporal accessibility, were financial institutions as they close their doors in the afternoon.

### *Physical Layout*

Another variable which played an important role in target preference and selection was "physical layout". As one might expect, layout was not given as a reason for the preference of commercial targets over residential and personal ones. However, specific commercial establishments were distinguished on the basis of layout. Those considered most attractive were financial institutions, supermarkets and drug stores. This is primarily due to the money being in an easily accessible or isolated location within the establishment. By far the most unappealing were department stores. Other targets looked upon negatively were convenience stores, liquor stores and restaurants, taverns and bars. This is mainly due to the fact that the cash is in a very visible or inaccessible area.

Physical layout was also influential in the selection of targets. Many subjects cited this as one of the reasons for choosing one particular target over another. In terms of its importance, in the selection process, the robbers rated this criterion fairly high.

### *Location*

Target preference and selection were determined, to a great extent, by the "location" of the target. Although it was not a factor in preferring one category of robbery over another, it was important with respect to specific commercial targets. Those viewed as most attractive in terms of location were supermarkets and grocery stores. Because they are usually situated in residential areas, these targets were seen as easier to escape from. Other businesses looked upon favorably were financial institutions, drug stores, liquor stores, small retail stores, and theatres. These targets are typically located downtown, which allows the offender to easily lose any pursuers in the crowds. Being situated downtown also means there is a

greater chance of someone spotting or interrupting the robbery. It was for this reason that these same targets were seen by some as unattractive.

Geographical location of the target was a very significant factor in the choice of one target over another. In addition to being cited the most frequently (along with pay-off), location was scored highly in terms of its importance in the selection process.

### *Ease of Escape*

Another variable determinative of both target preference and selection was "ease of escape". Of the three general categories of targets, commercial were favored over residential and personal because escaping from the scene was considered less risky. In a commercial district, the robber can easily blend into the crowd both before and after the crime, whereas in a residential area, the offender is conspicuous and more easily noticed as a stranger. This reason for preferring commercial targets was not only mentioned by many robbers, it was also scored highly in terms of importance.

The "ease of escape" was influential in the selection of specific robbery targets as well. Many subjects chose one particular target over another because it had several avenues of escape. These subjects also rated this variable highly with respect to its importance in the selection process.

### Manageability

## *Number of People*

Target preference and target selection were influenced, to a large degree, by the "number of people". Commercial targets were preferred over residential and personal ones because of some predictability in the number of victims. That is, the robber can get a rough idea of the number he must contend with. In a residential robbery, the offender never knows how many he will have to contend with. This criterion does not appear to be very important, as far as general target preferences are concerned. It was only mentioned by a handful of subjects and was rated only moderately.

The number of people was an important variable, however, in determining specific target preferences. The smaller commercial establishments, such as jewelry stores, small retail stores, corner grocery stores, convenience stores, and theatres, were seen as the most attractive in this respect. With few employees and customers, they were viewed as easy to control during a robbery. Some of the larger establishments were considered appealing as well. In department stores and supermarkets, there are few employees and customers where the money is located (financial office). As to financial institutions, hotels and motels, there are times in the day when the number of customers is very low. There were many robbers, though, who looked upon these larger commercial establishments as too dangerous. The most unattractive in this regard were buses, trains, restaurants, taverns and bars. With a large number of people in a confined space, the likelihood of resistance and/or violence was seen as too high.

The number of people was also very influential in the selection of one target over another. As might be expected, many robbers chose particular targets because there was only a small number of victims and, therefore, better control over the

situation. In addition to being the second most frequently cited reason for target selection, number of people was rated highly by the subjects as well.

### *Likelihood of Resistance*

Yet another variable which determined target preference and selection was the "likelihood of resistance". Of the three general categories of targets, commercial ones were favored over residential and personal ones because the chance of resistance was considered minimal. The victims are salaried employees and the money does not belong to them. From the standpoint of the robber, then, there is no reason for them to resist. In addition to being the second most frequently cited reason for commercial target preference, likelihood of resistance was also scored fairly highly, in terms of importance.

Of the various commercial establishments, financial institutions and supermarkets emerged as the most attractive. The subjects believed the employees in these businesses would be very cooperative in the event of a robbery. The targets considered most unattractive were corner grocery stores and taxicabs. As the loss suffered by the operators of these businesses would be their own, these individuals were viewed as highly likely to offer resistance. Similarly, owners/operators of jewelry, drug, and small retail stores were considered dangerous. Finally, establishments where alcohol is consumed, such as hotels and motels, restaurants, taverns and bars, were seen as equally volatile because of the possibility of drunk "heroes".

### *Demographic Characteristics of the Victim*

One variable not determinative of target preference and only marginally influential in target selection was the "demographic characteristics of the victim". Only a handful of robbers chose one target over another because the employees in



the establishment were all female. Females were viewed as less likely to actively resist the robbery attempt. In addition to being mentioned by only a few subjects, "demographic characteristics of the victim" was not rated highly either.

#### *Physical Characteristics of the Victim*

Another variable which was not determinative of target preference and only somewhat influential in the choice of targets was the "physical characteristics of the victim". A few personal robbers selected one victim over another because of the small physical build or poor physical condition of the victim. These types of victims were attacked as the robber could easily overpower them. Although cited by only a couple of subjects, "physical characteristics of the victim" was rated, in terms of importance, highly by those offenders.

#### *Size of the Target*

Yet another variable which was not determinative of target preference and of lesser importance in the selection of targets was the "size of the target". A handful of subjects chose certain targets over others because they were smaller in size and, therefore, easier to maintain control over. In addition to being cited by just a few robbers, "size of the target" was rated only moderately high.

#### Degree of Risk

##### *Security*

Target preferences and selection were determined, to a great extent, by "security". Commercial targets were generally seen as more likely, than residential or personal, to have security systems to deter robbers. However, employees in these targets were considered less likely to be armed. Although this was cited by several

subjects as one of the reasons for their commercial target preference, likelihood of the victim being armed appears to be, according to the ratings, of no great importance.

Of the specific types of commercial establishments, the most attractive in terms of security were corner grocery stores, small retail stores and gas stations. Following a close second were drug stores and supermarkets, as they were seen as having few security devices. By far the most unattractive targets were armoured cars. The presence of armed guards discouraged most robbers. Other unappealing targets included financial institutions, department stores, and jewelry stores. Corner grocery stores and taxicabs were also considered risky because of the high likelihood of the victim being armed.

Security was also very influential in the selection of specific targets. Many robbers chose one particular establishment over another because of the perceived lack of security. With little or no security, the risk of apprehension is significantly lower. Not only was security cited by many subjects as the reason for their selection, it was rated highly by those offenders as well.

#### *Perception of Sanctions*

Target preferences were also determined, to some extent, by the perception of possible sanctions. The subjects believed that they would receive longer prison sentences if apprehended and convicted of residential or personal robberies, than commercial ones. Although only cited by a few offenders as one of the reasons for their preference, "perception of sanctions" was rated very highly.

Of the various commercial establishments, the most attractive in this respect proved to be armoured cars, financial institutions, supermarkets and jewelry stores.

The most unattractive were taxicabs, buses, corner grocery stores, convenience stores and small retail stores. From the robber's standpoint, it is foolish to risk five to ten years in prison for little reward. If the risk must be taken, it is wiser to attack a target whose pay-off is substantial.

#### *Familiarity With the Target*

Although not determinative of target preference, "familiarity with the target" was influential in the selection of specific targets. Several subjects chose one particular business establishment, residence or victim over another for this reason. When the robber is familiar with his target or victim, he has added confidence that there will be no surprises during the robbery. The offender feels more in control of the situation. Not only was target familiarity cited by several subjects as one of the reasons for their selection, it was scored very highly by them as well.

#### *Familiarity With The Area*

"Familiarity with the area" was not determinative of target preferences, but was of influence in the choice of targets. Several robbers selected a particular target because they knew the area in which the target is located. This familiarity was seen as advantageous in that the offender is aware of all possible avenues of escape, should something go amiss during the robbery. In addition to being mentioned by several subjects, familiarity with the area was rated very highly, in terms of importance, by those offenders.

## Appropriateness

### *Denial of Injury*

Another factor which determined robbers' target preferences related to what Sykes and Matza (1957) have termed the "denial of injury". Many subjects favored commercial targets to residential and personal targets because, in most cases, the loss is insured. As the money stolen is covered by insurance, the victim does not suffer any real harm or injury. As a result, these were seen as acceptable targets for robbery. Conversely, residential and personal targets were inappropriate because the loss to the victims would be their own. Not only was "the money is insured" the third most frequently cited reason for preferring commercial targets, it was also rated highly, in terms of importance.

Of the various commercial establishments, some were considered more appropriate targets than others. By far the most appropriate targets were financial institutions. The subjects felt banks could well afford any loss due to robbery and would not suffer, as the stolen money is insured. As no specific person is hurt or injured by the victimization, the wrongfulness of the act is reduced in the mind of the robber. In contrast, targets deemed inappropriate were ones where the victims would truly be distressed or harmed by the robbers' actions. Included in this group were taxicabs, buses, corner grocery stores and small retail stores. The subjects viewed these victims as people struggling to earn a living, who would greatly suffer if robbed.

## *Blaming the Victim*

"Blaming the victim", as termed by Sykes and Matza (1957), was also a factor which determined target preferences of several robbers. For some, commercial establishments were seen as more appropriate targets for robbery because of all the "rotten things" they have done to the public in the past. Businesses are discredited and devalued so that they may be perceived as legitimate and deserving targets. The robbery, as a result, is not a criminal act, but a rightful retaliation or punishment (Sykes and Matza, 1957, p. 668). Residential and personal targets, on the other hand, have done no wrong and, therefore, do not deserve victimization. Not only was "blaming the victim" cited by several subjects as one of the reasons for their preferences, it was rated highly by those offenders as well.

Of the many types of commercial establishments, some were considered more deserving of robbery than others. Financial institutions, as large powerful corporations, and liquor stores, as agents of the government, were placed in the position of "wrongdoers". As a result, they were considered legitimate or appropriate targets of robbery.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

#### Hypotheses of the Study

The findings of the study, presented in the previous chapters, confirm the four major hypotheses. First, the subjects in the sample had preferences as to the type of robbery: commercial, residential, personal. Commercial robberies were predominantly preferred by the subjects. Second, the robbers had preferences as to the specific types of targets, with banks, supermarkets, jewelry stores the most popular. In other words, certain targets proved to be more attractive and, therefore, more prone to robbery than others. Third, in general, the offenders did not choose their targets at random, but selected them according to certain well defined criteria. Furthermore, the geographical locations of targets were not chosen randomly, but selected according to certain identifiable criteria. Fourth, the selection of a robbery target seemed to be the outcome of an assessment process in which the positive and negative features (criteria) of the target were weighed. The length of this assessment varied somewhat depending on the type of robber and the type of robbery.

#### Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important practical implications. One finding with far reaching policy implications is that robbers have definite target preferences, both general and specific. Furthermore, their selection of robbery targets is not random, but based upon certain identifiable criteria related mainly to the features of the target. The question which naturally follows is: what can be

changed or manipulated to reduce the attractiveness of certain targets or to deter robbers from attacking them?

One popular response is to attempt to deter potential robbers through the use of greater legal threats or sanctions. Economists and jurists of the classical school feel individuals engage in criminal activity to the extent that it is profitable. As a result, they believe crime rates can be drastically reduced if criminal activities are made less profitable. That is, if the risks (punishment) are increased to outweigh the rewards. As Cook argues:

The threat of punishment is in effect a government-imposed tax or criminal activity; the higher the tax, the fewer the criminal activities which will be deemed worthwhile by potential criminals (Fattah, 1983, p. 81).

The problem with this approach is that many criminals consider punishment, irrespective of how severe or certain it might be, a professional risk. Even when punishment is certain, it is still a remote risk compared to the immediate gain or pleasure derivable from crime. Quite often, an increased level of certainty, severity or both, instead of deterring will simply develop a greater sense of caution in the criminal. Rather than refrain from acting, he will try to find ways of evading detection and conviction. Moreover, the drive toward the threatened behavior may be so strong and motivation so powerful that the individual may be willing to risk the consequences regardless of how certain or dire they may be (Fattah, 1983, p. 82). As a result, few are actually "deterred" by the legal threat, which is confirmed by the findings of the present study. The threat of punishment did not seem to alter the behavior of many robbers. It simply made them more cautious in selecting targets and committing the offences. The robbers acted in ways to reduce the risk of apprehension, though they were not very successful.

A second approach is to attempt to deter robbers through the employment of physical deterrence techniques. This approach, as Fattah (1976) explains, appears

more promising than legal deterrence:

There is no doubt that in many of the cases where punishment fails or is likely to fail as a deterrent, physical deterrents can be an effective means of dissuasion (Fattah, 1976, p. 70).

...physical deterrents which render the commission of certain crimes more difficult and less tempting seem to be more effective in reducing the incidence of these offences than is the threat of punishment (Fattah, 1976, p. 100).

Physical deterrence refers to techniques aimed at hardening criminal targets by placing obstacles in the way of the potential offender so that it is difficult or impossible for him to commit the offence.

The use of measures directed at highly specific forms of crime which involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in which crimes occur in as systematic and permanent way as possible...Any measure which aims to reduce crime by altering the setting in which it is typically committed (Bennett and Wright, 1984, p. 2).

This approach is based on the view that the motivation to offend is to some extent determined by environmental and situational factors. The offender is seen as someone who actively chooses to offend in response to certain environmental stimuli and to particular situations. Consequently, to deter potential offenders, these situations must be made less attractive. That is, the target and its environment must be engineered in such a way that the commission of a crime becomes difficult or impossible (Jeffrey, 1968, p. 54).

In the present study, a number of characteristics and situational factors were found to attract robbers to certain targets. The solution offered by the physical deterrence approach would be to change or manipulate these features so that the target is "hardened" and made less appealing. The problem, however, is that most of the features which attracted robbers to particular targets are things which the victim has little control over. For example, the "location" of the target and the "escape routes" away from the target are characteristics which were considered attractive by the robbers. Both of these features would be difficult to change unless



the business relocated, which is not a practical solution to the problem in most cases. The "number of people" in and around the target is another feature found appealing by robbers. Most robbers preferred a target having few people inside and many people outside. Again, this is something which the business establishment has little control over and can do little about. The "accessibility" of the target is yet another characteristic found attractive by the subjects. The offenders preferred targets offering good physical and temporal accessibility. Targets could reduce their accessibility in the hope of deterring some potential robbers. The problem, however, is that by so doing, customers may be deterred as well. The establishment could lose business and profits. The "likelihood of resistance" is another feature of targets found appealing. Robbers favored targets where they knew they would encounter little or no resistance from the victims. Encouraging victims to resist the robbery attempt may, in fact, deter some robbers. This option, however, is not a prudent one as resistance from the victim can end in violence. Consequently, victim resistance might do more harm than good. The "security" of the target is another characteristic found attractive by the offenders. In most cases, the less security a target had, the more appealing it was to the offender. This seems to be one of the variables more amenable to change. Increasing physical and mechanical security would aid in deterring many offenders. There is, however, a certain percentage of offenders who are not deterred by any form of security. These measures would not stop them from robbing a particular establishment. For others, it might simply lead to displacement. The "layout" is another feature of targets found attractive. Offenders favored targets with several exits from the building and the parking lot, poor lighting, and an obstructed view of inside the target from the street. An establishment with one entrance, good lighting, and large windows with no curtains or posters would deter some offenders because the target is too "visible". Again, these measures would not deter all offenders. Finally, the "pay-off" is a feature of

targets found appealing by the offenders. According to the robbers in the sample, the higher the pay-off, the more attractive the target. The most obvious step would be to reduce the amount of money which is readily available and easily accessible to the robber. If the potential robber knows there is little money on hand or that the money is not accessible, the appeal of the target drops significantly. The incentive or motivation for the robbery is eliminated. The notices carried by buses and taxicabs or posted on some convenience and corner grocery stores are aimed at achieving this goal.

There is at least one practical difficulty associated with hardening robbery targets. Preventive measures against robbery, as outlined above, can be inconvenient as well as very costly to the individual or commercial establishment. As a result, if the risk of robbery is perceived by the potential victim as low, he may see these protective measures as unnecessary and, therefore, not implement them.

Even if targets can be hardened against robbery, there is an added problem: displacement. A differential level of protection between various potential targets, both human and nonhuman, will, in all probability, always exist. Given this differential and with no reduction in the offender population, the foreclosure of one type of criminal activity may simply shift the incidence of crime to different times, forms and locales. For example, the robbery might be displaced from one time to another (temporal displacement). Alternatively, offenders may continue to commit robbery at the same times and places and against the same targets, but may alter their tactics (tactical displacement). On the other hand, when one target appears relatively impervious to any criminal tactic, robbers may simply shift to another target (target displacement) (Repetto, 1976, p. 167).

For crimes such as bank robbery, which often seem to be the province of those who make a living from crime, reducing opportunities may be less effective. Providing effective protection for a particular bank would

almost certainly displace the attention of potential robbers to others...(Clarke, 1980, p. 141).

If one type of crime, such as robbing buses, is "shut off", crime will shift to other targets, such as robbing taxicabs or stores (Repetto, 1976, p. 167).

In response to blocked opportunities or increased risks, a robber might attempt to commit the offence elsewhere (territorial displacement) or he might turn his attention to some completely different form of crime (functional displacement) (Repetto, 1976, p. 167).

Thus, there does not appear to be a large number of "obvious" solutions to the problem of reducing the attractiveness of robbery targets. Finding such solutions, however, was not the primary objective of the research. The intended purpose of the study was to examine target preferences of robbers, the reasons for those preferences, and, most importantly, to analyze the process through which robbery targets are selected.

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT EXPERIMENT

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures, risks and benefits involved. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received the document described below regarding this project, that you have received adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Having been asked by Derek Wilson of the Criminology Department of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project experiment, I have read the procedures specified in the document entitled Research Statement.

I understand the procedures to be used on this experiment and the personal risks to me in taking part.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this experiment at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the experiment with the chief researcher named above or with Simon Verdun-Jones, Chairman of the Criminology Department, Simon Fraser University.

I may obtain a copy of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting Derek Wilson or the S.F.U. Criminology Department.

I agree to participate by being interviewed, as described in the document referred to above, during the period of June 1, 1986 to September 5, 1986 at

\_\_\_\_\_ (place where procedures will be carried out)

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS \_\_\_\_\_

When you have read the document referred to above, please initial the back of the last page of the document.

## Research Statement

The participants in the present study will be chosen randomly from all those currently being held in federal institutions in the Pacific Region who were sentenced for robbery. The data for the study will be collected through interviews with those serving time for robbery. From the interviews, information will be gathered on the robbery offence and its victims. All information will be held in strict confidence, will be anonymous, and will only be used for the purpose of Derek Wilson's master's thesis. Nothing will be included in the thesis which would make it possible to identify any of those interviewed. Interviews will be conducted in private and will not be tape recorded. Some notes will be taken at the time of the interview and additional notes will be written down upon the completion of the interview. It is anticipated that the interview will last between forty-five and ninety minutes. Participation in the study is on a voluntary basis without obligation and those who agree to participate can decline to go on with the interview at any time.

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Schedule

#### Part I: Characteristics of the Offender/Offence

##### 1. Demographic Characteristics

- a) Age at First Robbery
- b) Age at Current Robbery
- c) Length of Robbery Activity
- d) Sex
- e) Race
- f) Marital Status
  - (i) at time of offence
- g) Employment Status
  - (i) at time of offence
- h) Alcohol Use
  - (i) general history
  - (ii) at time of offence
- i) Illicit Drug Use
  - (i) general history
  - (ii) at time of offence

## 2. Offence History

- a) Number of Current Robberies
- b) Number of Previous Robberies
- c) Total Number of Robberies
- d) Frequency of Robberies
- e) Types of Targets in Current Robberies
- f) Types of Targets in Previous Robberies
- g) Types of Previous Offences (other than robbery)

## 3. Modus Operandi

- a) Number of Offenders
  - i) Current Offence(s)
  - ii) Previous Offence(s)
- b) Presence or Absence of Weapons
  - i) Current Offence(s)
  - ii) Previous Offence(s)
- c) Transportation
  - i) Current Offence(s)
  - ii) Previous Offence(s)
- d) Disguises
  - i) Current offence(s)
  - ii) Previous offence(s)

e) Temporal Factors

i) Current Offence(s)

- time of day
- day of week
- month of year

ii) Previous Offence(s)

- time of day
- day of week
- month of year

4. The Selection of Robbery as a Crime

Give reasons as to why a robbery was committed rather than some other type of offence.



Part II: General Targets -- Commercial, Residential, Personal

1. Does the offender have a preference for one general category of robbery target over another?
  
2. If so, what is the preference?
  
3. What are the reasons for the preference? Have the subject give a full explanation for each reason mentioned --- ie. why is it important?
  
4. Ask questions regarding the variables from Key 1 which were not mentioned above. Were these variables simply overlooked or are they not important? If they are not important, why?
  
5. Take the variables which the subject indicated as having determined his preference for one robbery category over another and have him score those variables in order of importance, using a scale from one (very unimportant) to five (very important).

Key 1: Target Preference -- Commercial, Residential, Personal

Potential Pay-off

- 1) relatively high      2) relatively low

Accessibility (physical)

- 3) unrestricted      4) restricted

Accessibility (temporal)

- 5) unlimited      6) limited

Weapons (suitable)

- 7) available      8) unavailable

Transportation (appropriate)

- 9) available      10) unavailable

Partners/Accomplices (suitable)

- 11) available      12) unavailable

Security (mechanical)

- 13) high level      14) low level      15) none

Security (human)

- 16) present      17) absent

Number of Potential Victims

- 18) single      19) multiple

Persons Other Than Victims (bystanders, intervenors)

20) present      21) absent

Likelihood of Resistance

22) high      23) low      24) none

Escape From Scene

25) difficult      26) easy

Likelihood of Reporting Robbery

27) high      28) low

Likelihood of Victim Being Armed

29) high      30) low      31) no

Other

32)      33)

### Part III: Specific Targets

#### A -- Commercial Sub-types

1. Does the offender have a preference or preferences for specific types of commercial targets over others?
2. If so, what are those preferences?
3. Have the subject score each of the types of commercial establishments according to their relative attractiveness as robbery targets on a scale from one to five. Ask the subject why he scored the sub-types this way. (see Key 2)

#### B -- Residential Sub-types

1. Does the offender have a preference or preferences for specific types of residential targets over others?
2. If so, what are those preferences?
3. Have the subject score each of the types of residences according to their relative attractiveness as robbery targets on a scale from one to five. Ask the subject why he scored the sub-types this way. (see Key 3)

#### C -- Personal Sub-types

1. Does the offender have a preference or preferences for specific types of personal targets over others?
2. If so, what are those preferences?
3. Have the subject score each of the types of persons according to their relative attractiveness as robbery targets on a scale from one to five. Ask the subject why he scored the sub-types this way. (see Key 4)

Commercial Targets

	Score
Financial institutions (banks, credit unions, etc.)	_____
Department stores (Eaton's, The Bay, etc.)	_____
Supermarkets (Safeway, Save-On Foods, etc.)	_____
Restaurants, taverns, bars	_____
Hotels/Motels	_____
Theaters	_____
Small retail stores	_____
Jewelry stores	_____
Liquor stores	_____
Drug stores	_____
Corner grocery stores	_____
Convenience stores (7-Eleven, Mac's, etc.)	_____
Gas stations	_____
Commercial trucks	_____
Buses	_____
Taxicabs	_____
Armoured cars (Loomis, Brink's, etc.)	_____
Trains	_____

Residential Targets

	Score
Houses	_____
Duplexes - Fourplexes	_____
Townhouses/Condominiums	_____
Low-rise Apartments (3 floors or less)	_____
High-rise Apartments (more than three floors)	_____

Personal Targets

Score

Group A

Young Males (under 25 yrs.)	_____
Young Females (under 25 yrs.)	_____
Adult Males (25-55 yrs.)	_____
Adult Females (25-55 yrs.)	_____
Old Males (over 55 yrs.)	_____
Old Females (over 55 yrs.)	_____

Group B

Caucasian (white)	_____
Black	_____
Asian (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, etc.)	_____
Native Indian	_____
East Indian	_____
Other	_____

Key 2: Target preference -- Commercial Sub-types

Potential Pay-off

- 1) relatively high      2) relatively low

Accessibility (physical)

- 3) unrestricted      4) restricted

Accessibility (temporal)

- 5) unlimited      6) limited

Physical Layout

- 7) favorable      8) unfavorable

Size of the Establishment

- 9) large      10) small

Adjacent Commercial Establishments

- 11) some      12) none

Characteristics of Establishment Employees

- 13) relevant      14) irrelevant

Weapons (suitable)

- 15) available      16) unavailable

Transportation (appropriate)

- 17) available      18) unavailable



Partners/Accomplices (suitable)

19) available      20) unavailable ,

Security (mechanical)

21) high level      22) low level      23) none

Security (human)

24) present      25) absent

Number of Victims

26) single      27) multiple

Persons Other Than Victims (witnesses, intervenors)

28) present      29) absent

Likelihood of Resistance

30) high      31) low      32) none

Escape From Scene

33) difficult      34) easy

Likelihood of Reporting Robbery

35) high      36) low

Likelihood of Victim Being Armed

37) high      38) low      39) no

Other

40)      41)

Key 3: Target Preference -- Residential Sub-types

Potential Pay-off

- 1) relatively high      2) relatively low

Accessibility (physical)

- 3) high degree      4) low degree

Size of Structure

- 5) relevant      6) irrelevant

Physical Layout

- 7) favorable      8) unfavorable

Characteristics of Inhabitants

- 9) relevant      10) irrelevant

Security (mechanical)

- 11) high level      12) low level

Security/Maintenance Staff

- 13) present      14) absent

Number of Potential Victims

- 15) single      16) multiple

Persons Other Than Victims (witnesses, intervenors)

- 17) present      18) absent

Partners/Accomplices (suitable)

19) available      20) unavailable ,

Likelihood of Resistance

21) high      22) low      23) none

Escape From Scene

24) difficult      25) easy

Likelihood of Reporting Robbery

26) high      27) low

Likelihood of Victim Being Armed

28) high      29) low      30) no

Other

31)      32)

Key 4: Target Preference -- Personal Sub-types

Potential Pay-off

- 1) relatively high      2) relatively low

Accessibility (physical)

- 3) unrestricted      4) restricted

Weapons (suitable)

- 5) available      6) unavailable

Partners/Accomplices (suitable)

- 7) available      8) unavailable

Number of Victims

- 9) single      10) multiple

Persons Other Than Victim (witnesses, intervenors)

- 11) present      12) absent

Likelihood of Resistance

- 13) high      14) low      15) none

Likelihood of Reporting Robbery

- 16) high      17) low

Physical and Mental Condition (apparent)

- 18) strong visible impairment      19) perceived impairment

- 20) no impairment

Physical Strength (apparent)

21) strong      22) average      23) weak

Likelihood of Victim Being Armed

24) high      25) low      26) no

Other

27)      28)

## Part IV: Selection Criteria

### 1. The Actual Target(s)

a) Was there anything specific or special about the target(s) which the subject chose that was a determining factor in his selecting that particular target(s)? In other words, how random was the selection?

b) What were the criteria which the subject assessed in selecting the target(s) which was ultimately victimized?

c) Note the criteria which were assessed by the subject and get him to fully explain each one. Why are they important?

d) Ask questions regarding the variables from the Key 5, 6, or 7 which were not mentioned above. Were these variables simply overlooked or were they not important? If they were not important, why?

e) Take the criteria which the subject indicated as having determined his choice of one target over another and have him score the criteria in order of importance, using a scale from one to five. Ask for reasons why he scored the variables this way.

### 2. The Selection Process

a) How are these various criteria assessed against or in conjunction with one another? How is a decision arrived at regarding a specific target? Does this assessment change depending upon the type of target? If so, why?

b) How long does this assessment regarding a potential target usually take? A few seconds or a few days? Is it dependent upon the type of target which is being assessed?

c) Is the selection of a target an impulsive act or is it a deliberate, well thought out process? Is it intuitive or is it well calculated?

d) When does the assessment regarding a potential target take place? Why? When is it done in relation to the casing of the target?

e) Where does the assessment regarding the potential target take place? Does it depend upon the type of target?

f) Who does the assessment and makes the ultimate selection of the target in robberies with multiple offenders? Is there a discussion between the offenders? Why?

g) When the subject selects a target, what is the usual ordering of events?

(i) independent decision: the subject conceives the idea of robbery and then he goes out and selects a target.

(ii) opportunistic decision: the subject does not have robbery on his mind. However, the subject encounters certain circumstances which inspire him to rob.

(iii) other:

h) How did the subject come to use or develop these criteria regarding the selection of targets? Through his own experience or through the experience of others?

Key 5: Commercial Selection Criteria

1. Potential Pay-off
2. Accessibility (physical)
3. Accessibility (temporal)
4. Physical Layout
5. Size of the Target
6. Characteristics of Establishment Employees
7. Weapon Availability
8. Transportation
9. Accomplice Availability
10. Security (mechanical)
11. Security (human)
12. Number of Victims
13. Number of Persons Other Than Victim(s)
14. Likelihood of Resistance
15. Escape From the Scene
16. Likelihood of Reporting Robbery
17. Number of Adjacent Businesses
18. Familiarity With Area
19. Familiarity With Target
20. Location of the Establishment
  - a) lighting
  - b) flow of traffic
  - c) number of pedestrians
21. Likelihood of Victim Being Armed



Key 6: Residential Selection Criteria

1. Potential Pay-off
2. Accessibility (physical)
3. Physical Layout
4. Size of Residence
5. Characteristics of Inhabitants
6. Security (mechanical)
7. Security/Maintenance (human)
8. Number of Victims
9. Number of Persons Other Than Victim(s)
10. Accomplice Availability
11. Likelihood of Resistance
12. Escape From the Scene
13. Likelihood of Reporting Robbery
14. Familiarity With Area
15. Familiarity With Target
16. Location of the Residence
  - a) lighting
  - b) flow of traffic
  - c) number of pedestrians
17. Likelihood of Victim Being Armed

## Key 7: Personal Selection Criteria

1. Physical Characteristics:
  - a) physical and mental condition (apparent)
  - b) physical strength (apparent)
2. Potential Pay-off
3. Accessibility
4. Weapon Availability
5. Accomplice Availability
6. Number of Victims
7. Number of Persons Other Than Victims
8. Likelihood of Resistance
9. Likelihood of Reporting Robbery
10. Escape From Scene
11. Familiarity With Area
12. Familiarity With Target
13. Location of the Victim
  - a) lighting
  - b) flow of traffic
14. Likelihood of Victim Being Armed

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