

Teenage Robbers

HOW AND WHY THEY ROB

August 30, 2003

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HIGHLIGHTS

This is a study of teenage robbers. Talking to teenage robbers about how to prevent robberies has not been done in this way before, and the findings of this study have not been previously published. Virtually all (85%) of the robbers from 13 to 18 years of age incarcerated in Texas in the summer of 2001 were included in the study. The juvenile robbers told us what they look for, why they do it, how they do it, and why people get hurt. They told us what they think made them violent. They gladly shared their stories because, as one robber put it: "I'm so glad to be talking about robbery instead of self-esteem. Robbery is something I know about."

I started interviewing robbers in the 1970's to get their ideas on selection of target, so that we would know what to do at potential targets to keep them from being robbed. The results of that early research, funded by the Department of Justice, have helped to reduce robberies by 65% in convenience stores. In 1985, we conducted a survey of 187 adult robbers in five states; in 1995, we did a survey of 310 adult robbers in three states (which was published as the book *Armed Robbers and Their Crimes*). Because crime is going up again in this decade, and because more crimes are being committed by younger, more violent robbers, we went to the source to find out what can be done about it. Here are some of the highlights of those findings of the survey of 178 teenage robbers.

- Overall, the teenagers' selection of targets to rob and what they look for at the location is virtually identical with that of the adults.
- However, they expect much more money from any location than do the adults.
- The most important thing they look for is escape route, followed by money. Cameras and unarmed guards, on the other hand, make little difference to them.
- They have a bravado beyond that of the adults, as far as power and control. They believe they can do virtually anything with a partner *and* a gun.
- They are more likely to have both a partner and a gun than are the adults.
- Fully 90% did not think they would be caught, and an equal number did *not* know how long their sentence would be.
- Even more than the adults, half of the teenage robbers say they were drunk or high at the time of the robbery.
- They had committed multiple robberies, even at this young age.
- They committed more violent types of robberies, including street muggings, car-jackings, and home invasions.
- Almost half wore disguises, more often than the adults.
- Half of them were members of gangs but said that is not why they committed the robbery.
- They rob, but many do not drive because they are not old enough to be licensed. Sixty percent lived within two miles of the site they robbed, while 40% of the adults lived that close.
- They tell us why people get hurt in robberies.
- They tell us how victims can keep from getting hurt in robberies.
- They are most likely to rob for the money (almost half), but some do it just for the thrill and the rush.
- The neighborhood is the biggest influence on their violence. Three-fourths of them said they experienced violence in their neighborhood when they grew up.
- Three fourths of them said that they learned to be violent from their friends.
- Nearly half of them experienced violence in their homes when they grew up.
- They were taught to be violent both by their family and friends, but most often their friends. Eighty percent of their friends commit crimes.
- Family members that coached them specifically in violence included fathers, mothers, uncles, brothers, and even grandmothers.
- Nearly half of the juvenile robbers had a parent or sibling in prison.
- They also claim that they learned to be violent from movies, television, videos and music, and they name the movies and music that influenced them.
- Three-fourths said that they had a religious upbringing, and half said they attended church regularly when they grew up.

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TEENAGE ROBBERS

How and Why They Rob

Introduction

The findings in this report are based on a survey of teenage robbers. The survey was conducted face-to-face with 178 juvenile robbers, out of 210, ages 13 to 18, incarcerated in Texas prisons in August of 2001.¹ The study was carried out by Athena Research Corporation. We had an 85% participation rate, which means that we talked to nearly every convicted, imprisoned teenage robber in Texas. Texas has the second largest population of juveniles in custody, second only to California². We asked them the same questions we had asked 310 adult prisoners in 1995 in three states—Texas, Washington, and Maryland. Our prior study of 187 adult prisoners was in 1985 in five states—Louisiana, California, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois. We also asked the teenage robbers, in this study, some additional questions to test a theory of youth violence. This research allows us to see how adult robbers and juvenile robbers are alike and how they are different. The history of the crime prevention research and the reasons for interviewing robbers, along with details of the current study, are discussed in the Appendix at the end of this report.

Two frequently asked questions about surveys such as the one reported here, are: “Why would they be willing to talk to you?” and “How do you know they are telling you the truth?” In answer to the first question, prisoners are bored and will do almost anything to get out of their cell-blocks or confined areas. Further, they are not used to having their opinions sought, so they are anxious to give them. Finally, the juveniles in particular said they were so glad to be talking about robbery and not about self-esteem for a change. This was in reaction to the extensive testing and evaluation they go through for proper placement and later advancement within the juvenile system in Texas. The answer to the second question about whether they are telling us the truth is that the results and consistency in responses indicate that they are. This kind of research, of getting the perpetrator’s input, is considered to be very important in the

social sciences as a source of information and is discussed in further detail in the Appendix.

Findings

All tables are based on 178 teenage robbers surveyed in 2001, and 310 adult robbers surveyed in 1995.

Characteristics of Robbers

A description of the sample of teenage robbers is compared to the sample of adult robbers in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Robbers, Comparison of Samples

Characteristics	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Race		
Black	56	47
White	27	16
Other *	17	37
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Education		
Elementary only	9	24
Some High School	39	46
High School Graduate	31	28
College & beyond	21	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Marital Status		
Single	71	97
Married	19	2
Divorced	9	0
Widowed	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Children?		
Yes	65	24
No	35	76
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
How Many Children?		
1	41	78
2	28	22
3	17	0
4 or more	14	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

*Includes Hispanic

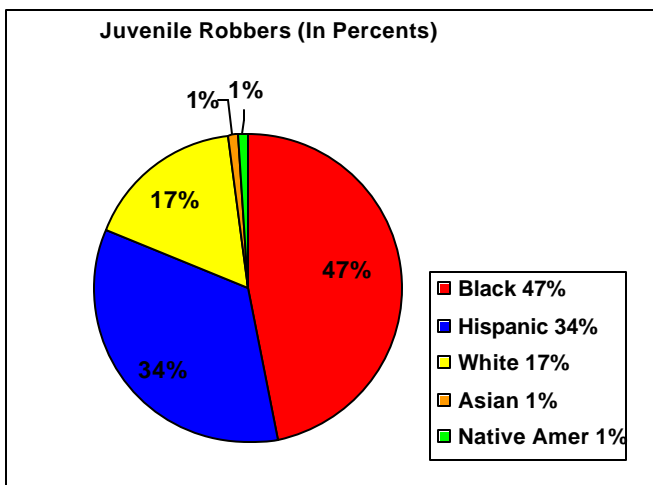
¹ We thank the Texas Youth Commission for their cooperation in making this study possible and thank the juveniles for their participation. This study was supported by Athena Research Corporation and 7-Eleven, Inc.

² Snyder, H. N. and Sickmund, M. September, 1999. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. Pittsburgh, PA.

Race

The race of the two samples is remarkably similar. Approximately half of both samples are black. Figure 1 shows the ethnic breakdown of the juveniles, with 47% black, 34% Hispanic, 17% white, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American. More of the adults were white, and more of the juveniles were Hispanic. Males make up 92% of the prison population nationwide. In the U. S. prison population in 2001, in all state and federal prisons, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics³, there were 45% black males; 38% white males; and 16% Hispanic males. The percentage black for both the adults (56%) and juveniles (47%) in this study are similar.

Figure 1: Race of Juvenile Robbers (In percent)



Education

Education is not as similar between adults and juveniles as race, for example, because the juveniles are too young to have received education beyond high school. Half of the adults were high school graduates but only 30% of the juveniles.

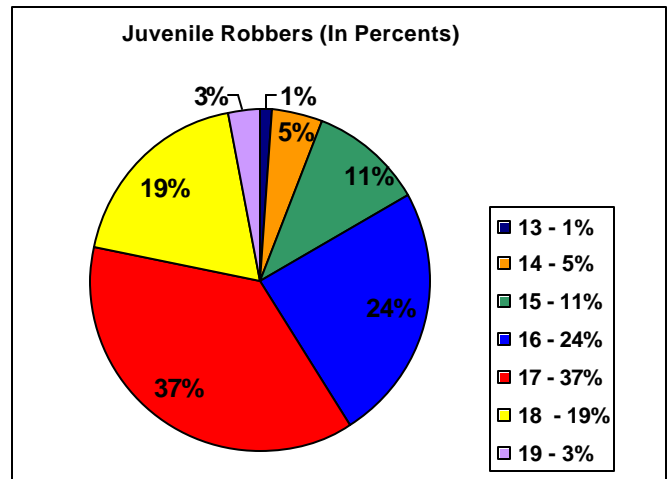
Marital Status

The samples of juveniles versus adults are vastly different on marital status, again because of the age difference. Ninety percent of the juveniles report being single, compared to 71% of adults. The juveniles have not had much time or opportunity to be married. The juveniles did report, however, that one-quarter of them have children. This compares with 65% of the adults who say they have children.

Age

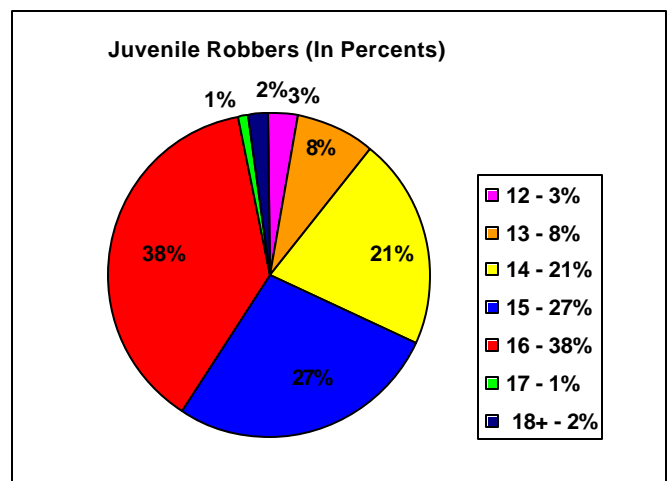
The median age of the adult robbers was 27. The median age of the juveniles was 17 at the time of the survey. Figure 2 shows the age of the juveniles at the time of the survey. One percent were 13; 5% were 14; 11% were 15; and 24% were 16. The most (37%) were 17 years of age. Nineteen percent were 18, and 3% were 19 years of age.

Figure 2: Age at Time of Survey



The juvenile robbers were asked how old they were at the time they did the crime for which they were in prison, and the median for that was lower—15 years of age. Figure 3 shows the age of the juveniles at the time of their crime. Three percent were only 12; 8% were 13; 21% were 14; 27% were 15. The most (38%) were 16; 1% were 17; and 2% were 18 or older at the time of the crime for which they are serving time.

Figure 3: Age at Time of Crime for Which They are Serving Time



³ U. S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics. April, 2002. *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2001*. WDC.

Characteristics of Robberies

In spite of their young age, the juveniles had committed almost as many robberies as the adults, according to Table 2. The adults were only slightly more likely to have committed over five robberies than were the juveniles, with one-third of the adults and one-fourth of the juveniles committing more than five robberies. A third of both samples said they had committed only one robbery. Two-thirds had committed multiple (more than one) robberies.

Table 2: Robbers' Experience, Comparison of Samples

Robbery Experience	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Number of Robberies		
1	31	37
2	14	17
3-5	20	21
Over 5	35	25
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Places Robbed

The most common robbery in the U. S. is street mugging, according to the FBI⁴, with almost half (44%) of all robberies being street robberies. It was the same with both adults and juveniles in this survey, as shown in Table 3. Forty-six percent of the adults, and over half (58%) of the juveniles had committed street robberies. The second most frequent robbery for adults was that of convenience stores, but for juveniles it was home robberies. Home robberies are the third most common robbery in the U. S., according to the same FBI report at 12.6%. Adults were only half as likely to commit home robberies, compared to the juvenile robbers (21% vs. 40%). Convenience store robberies nationwide account for only 6.6% of all robberies, according to the FBI's report. Commercial houses (not including banks) are the second most robbed in the U. S. at 14.4%.

Table 3: Types of Places Robbed, Comparison of Samples

Location	Adult Robbers % Who Robbed	Juvenile % Who Robbed
1. Street Robbery	46	58
2. Convenience Store	41	34
3. Home	21	40
4. Carjacking	18	39
5. Gas Station	27	20
6. Fast Food	22	12
7. Liquor Store	14	10
8. Bank Teller	15	2
9. Bar	11	6
10. Drug Store	8	5
11. Pizza Parlor	10	2
12. Taxi Driver	8	3
13. ATM	7	4
14. Armored Car	4	6
15. Donut Shop	5	2

The top three places that juveniles robbed were street robberies, then home robberies, followed by carjackings, all shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Types of Places Robbed, Rank Ordered*, Juvenile Robbers Only

Location	Percent Who Robbed
1. Street Robbery	58
2. Home	40
3. Carjacking	39
4. Convenience Store	34
5. Gas Station	20
6. Fast Food	12
7. Liquor Store	10
8. Bar	6
9. Armored Car	6
10. Drug Store	5
11. ATM	4
12. Taxi Driver	3
13. Bank Teller	2
14. Pizza Parlor	2
15. Donut Shop	2
Other	15

* Some are tied ranks, and multiple responses were allowed.

⁴ U. S. Department of Justice. 2002. *Uniform Crime Report: 2001*. Federal Bureau of Investigation. WDC.

Partners and Other People

We have known from our prior surveys of adult prisoners that robbers do not particularly care who is on duty, male or female. The same is true of the juveniles, with two-thirds saying they do not care if it is a male or female. (See Table 5). Similar to the adults, also, the juveniles say that the majority of the time other people or customers were not present. The juveniles rarely rob alone. One-third of the adults say they always rob alone, but only 12% of the juveniles rob alone. In short, the juveniles are brazen, but seem to get their bravery from their partners. This is what you would expect with teenagers running with their friends.

Table 5: Who is On Duty? Comparison of Samples.

People Present	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Who would you prefer to be on duty?		
Male	10	12
Female	22	13
Don't Care	59	64
Don't Know	9	11
Total	100	100
Were other people or customers present?		
Yes	46	35
No	54	65
Total	100	100
Robbed alone or with a partner?		
Always Alone	36	12
Sometimes with a Partner	42	49
Always with a Partner	22	39
Total	100	100
Violence?		
Someone Hurt or Killed	22	40
No one Hurt	78	60
Total	100	100

Violence

When asked if anyone was hurt or killed during the robbery, a greater percentage of juveniles said that someone was hurt or killed (40%) than adult robbers said were hurt or killed (22%). We hypothesized that a gun in the hands of a teenager is more dangerous than in the hands of the adults, and this appears to be the case. Guns were the weapon of choice, followed by knives.

The juveniles reported that 14 people were killed in the robberies in which they were involved, and 68 people were injured. Eight of the 14 deaths were with a gun (57%). Of the 68 people that were injured, a gun was used to injure them, either by shooting or pistol whipping, in 41 of the cases (60%).

Disguises

In Table 6, we find that adults and juveniles are fairly similar to the extent that they wear disguises. The juveniles wore them more often (43%) than the adults (32%). Over half of both groups do not wear disguises. The juveniles report that their most common disguise was "wearing dark clothes". For both adults and juveniles, other disguises included masks, bandannas, sunglasses, and hoods. An adult robber said he just took his teeth out.

Drugs

The adults and juveniles are also similar on reporting whether they were high on drugs or alcohol. Over half of both groups say they were high on drugs or alcohol at the time of the robbery. The juveniles were more likely to be high on marijuana (44%) than alcohol (17%). Other drugs reported being used by the juveniles included cocaine, pills, crack, and embalming fluid. In a study by the U. S. Department of Justice, 60% of the adult males arrested tested positive for at least one illegal drug (NIDA-5), including cocaine, opiates, methamphetamines, and marijuana.⁵ This is slightly more than the robbers reported, and the Department of Justice Study did not include alcohol.

Distances

Juveniles were more likely to live less than two miles from their robbery site than were adults. Fifty-nine percent lived within two miles of where they robbed, most likely because they were not old enough to drive or did not have cars. Forty percent of the adults lived less than two miles away. More specifically, 19% of the adults lived less than one mile from the location they robbed, and one-third (35%) of the juveniles lived less than a mile away from the location they robbed.

⁵ U. S. Department of Justice, ADAM. 1999 Annual Report on Drug Use Among Adult and Juvenile Arrestees (ADAM American Drug Abuse Monitoring Program). www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/adam99/pdf.

Amateurs or Professionals

The majority of adult and juvenile robbers consider themselves amateur, with 71% of the adults and 66% of the juveniles saying they were amateurs, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Robbery Circumstances, Comparison of Samples

Circumstances	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Did you wear a disguise?		
Yes	32	43
No	68	57
Total	100	100
Were you high on drugs or alcohol?		
Yes	55	64
No	45	36
Total	100	100
How far did you live from the site?		
Less than 2 miles	40	59
2 miles or more	60	41
Total	100	100
Do you consider yourself amateur or professional?		
Amateur	71	66
Professional	29	34
Total	100	100

Guns, Partners, and Control

The bravado of these robbers has a lot to do with having a partner, and as seen in Table 7, it also has to do with having a gun. Adults and juveniles were virtually identical in their responses, when asked “In robbing alone, and with a gun, how many people would you take on?” Thirty three percent said they would take on five or more people. By adding a partner, that number rose from one-third to nearly two-thirds that said they would take on five or more people.

Table 7: Control with a Gun, Comparison of Samples

Control	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
In robbing alone and with a gun, how many people would you take on?		
0	8	5
1	11	14
2	19	19
3	18	18
4	11	11
5 or more	33	33
Total	100	100

Table 7: Control with a Gun, Comparison of Samples... Continued

Control	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
In robbing with a partner and a gun, how many people would you take on?		
0	10	4
1	4	6
2	9	13
3	7	8
4	9	11
5 or more	61	58
Total	100	100

Getting Caught and Doing Time

Amazingly, 90% of the juvenile robbers, and 83% of the adult robbers did not think they would be caught for their crimes. (See Table 8). In fact, only about 25% of robberies are solved, according to the FBI *Uniform Crime Report*, cited previously, so they are not that wrong about their odds of being caught for robbery. They also did not know what their sentences would be, with another remarkable similarity between adults and juveniles. Eighty percent of adults, and 89% of juveniles did not know what their sentences would be, and 55% of the adults and 51% of the juveniles thought it was longer than they expected. This was all in spite of the fact that approximately half of both groups had been in prison, not just jail, before. As seen in Table 8, sentences were much longer for adults. The average sentence for adults was 184 months and for juveniles was 68 months.

Table 8: Current Crime Conviction, Comparison of Samples

Conviction Information	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Did you think you'd be caught?		
Yes	17	10
No	83	90
Total	100	100
Did you know what your sentence would be?		
Yes	20	11
No	80	89
Total	100	100
Was it longer than you expected?		
Yes	55	51
No	45	49
Total	100	100
Have you served time in prison (not jail) before this time?		
Yes	48	54
No	52	46
Total	100	100

Table 8: Current Crime Conviction, Comparison of Samples... *Continued*

Sentence Information	Adult Robbers		Juvenile Robbers	
	Mean Months	Median Months	Mean Months	Median Months
How long is your sentence?	184	120	68	48
How long have you been in?	38	30	18	15
How long do you think you'll serve?	81	62	37	36

Willingness to Rob and Expected Take

Table 9 tells us two different types of things. The robbers were asked, from a list of 15 places, which places they would consider robbing. The first rank listed by number is the rank for whether they would consider robbing it. For example, the first choice on the list for juveniles is convenience stores, followed by liquor store; whereas, the first choice on the list for adults is bank teller, followed by armored cars. The adults' ranks correlate more closely with the amount of take i.e., the more the money, the more likely they are to consider robbing it, but the juveniles apparently use a different criterion; for example, proximity, opportunity, and familiarity.

The second question related to Table 9 was "If you were to rob one of the following places, how much money do you think you would get?" This included cash only, not merchandise. The highest amounts expected for both juveniles and adults were from armored cars and bank tellers. Except for the expected amount from armored cars, bank tellers, supermarkets, and liquor stores, the juveniles *consistently* thought they would get more money than the adults thought they would get from a particular location.

Table 9: Consider Robbing, Expected Take, Rank Ordered, Comparison of Samples*

Location	Adult Robbers		Juvenile Robbers	
	Rank Order	Median Dollars	Rank Order	Median Dollars
Armored Car	2	\$ 20,000	7	\$ 10,000
Bank Teller	1	\$ 5,000	4	\$ 5,000
ATM	8	\$ 500	5	\$ 3,000
Supermarket	4	\$ 3,000	12	\$ 1,000
Bar	7	\$ 550	9	\$ 600
Convenience Store	3	\$ 200	1	\$ 500
Liquor Store	5	\$ 500	2	\$ 500
Drug Store	10	\$ 400	6	\$ 500
Fast Food	9	\$ 300	11	\$ 500
Gas Station	6	\$ 250	3	\$ 475
Delivery Driver	12	\$ 100	8	\$ 300
Taxi Driver	15	\$ 95	10	\$ 300
Dry Cleaners	13	\$ 200	13	\$ 300
Pizza Parlor	11	\$ 275	14	\$ 300
Donut Shop	14	\$ 150	15	\$ 250

*The first column is the rank robbers give for considering robbing. The second column is the amount of money they expected to get.

Amount of Money Worth Robbing For

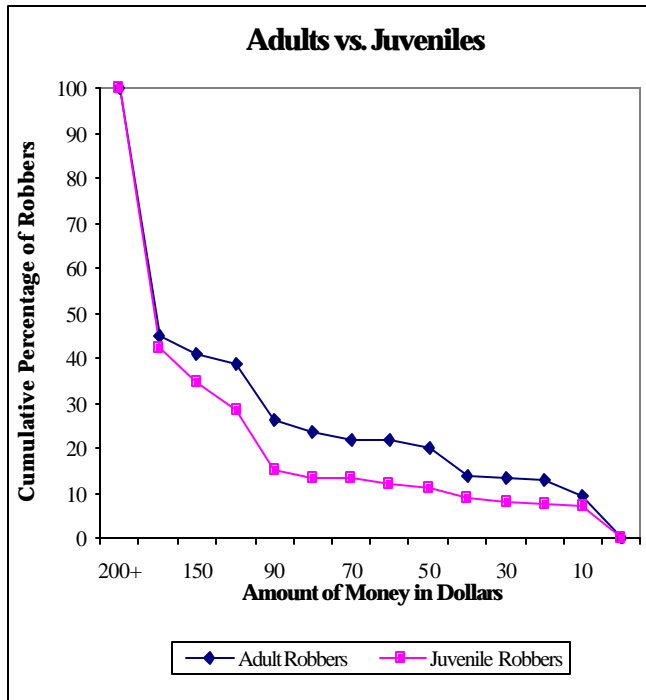
As seen in Table 10, nearly half of both the juveniles and adults would rob for \$200.00, and the rest would rob for over \$200.00. The recommendation for convenience stores is to have \$50.00 or less in their register, and only 20% of adults and only 9% of juveniles would rob for that amount, if they *knew* it was that amount. But adults thought they would get \$200.00 from conveniences stores, and juveniles thought they would get \$500.00, so they will rob it anyway, expecting to get that amount.

Table 10: Least Amount You Would Rob For, Comparison of Samples

Dollar Amount	Adult Robbers		Juvenile Robbers	
	% Who Would Rob	Cumulative %	% Who Would Rob	Cumulative %
10	9	9	6	6
20	4	13	1	7
30	1	13	0	7
40	1	14	1	8
50	6	20	1	9
60	6	22	3	12
70	0	22	1	13
80	2	24	0	13
90	3	26	2	15
100	12	39	13	28
150	2	41	7	35
200	4	45	7	42
200+	55	100	58	100

Figure 4 shows the least amount that both adults and juveniles would rob for, and the amounts are consistent, but overall the juveniles need more money before they are willing to rob. Unfortunately, according to Table 9, they think they are going to get more.

Figure 4: Least Amount For Which Robbers Will Rob, Adults versus Juveniles



Target Attractiveness and Deterrence Measures

For Table 11, the adults and juveniles were asked “What would be important to you if you were to rob a convenience store?” It is rank ordered by the juveniles, but both the juveniles and the adults agree on the first two items, ranking escape route first and amount of money second. The juveniles rank active police patrols third and anonymity fourth; whereas the adults rank anonymity third and armed guards fourth. Armed guards are fifth on the juveniles’ list. The juveniles and adults are identical on their ranking at the bottom of the list, with alarm system, number of customers, camera system, video recording and unarmed guards at the bottom of the list in that order.

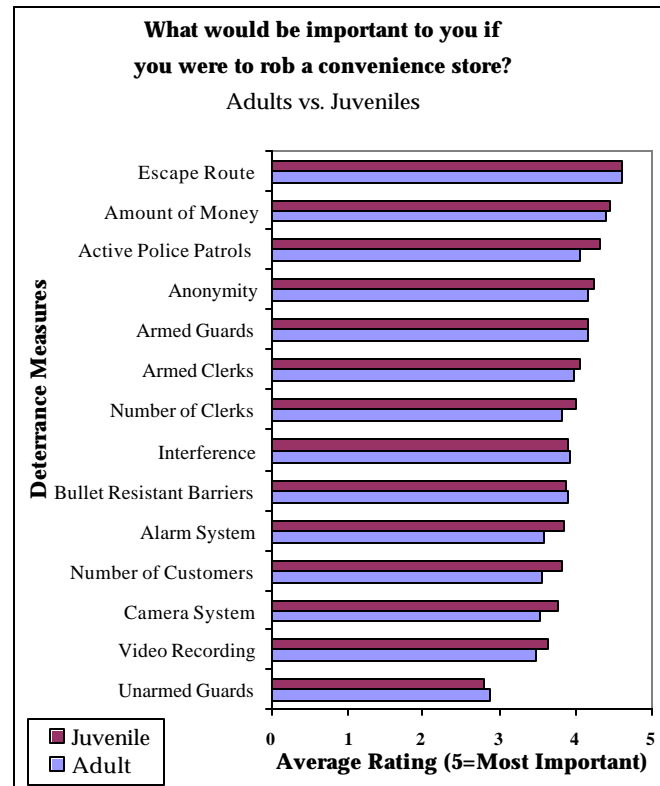
Table 11: Target Attractiveness, Comparison of Samples, Rank Ordered

Factors	Adult Robbers	Juvenile Robbers
	Rank Order*	Rank Order*
What would be important to you if you were to rob a convenience store?		
1. Escape Route	1	1
2. Amount of Money	2	2
3. Active Police Patrols	5	3
4. Anonymity	3	4
5. Armed Guards	4	5
6. Armed Clerks	6	6
7. Number of Clerks	9	7
8. Interference	7	8
9. Bullet Resistant Barriers	8	9
10. Alarm System	10	10
11. Number of Customers	11	11
12. Camera System	12	12
13. Video Recording	13	13
14. Unarmed Guards	14	14

*Scale: 1=most important; 14=least important.

Figure 5 is based on the same questions showing the rank order of target attractiveness for juveniles and adults, with very little difference in any category.

Figure 5: Target Attractiveness



The prior table (Table 11) and Figure 5 were based on target attractiveness at convenience stores. Table 12 reflects target attractiveness at any location, and the results are different from those at convenience stores. For this question, additional and different items were added, such as revolving doors, metal detector, fences, longer sentences, good visibility, good lighting, and robbing before closing. When considering robbing any location, the number one ranked deterrent for both adults and juveniles was bullet resistant barriers, followed by armed guards. This list did not include the amount of money or escape routes, which would still presumably be their first considerations. Eighty-two percent of the juvenile robbers said they would be deterred by bullet resistant barriers, and 76% of the adults said they would be deterred. Unarmed guards, video cameras, and two clerks were at the bottom of the list.

Table 12: Deterrence Factors, at any Location, Comparison of Samples

Deterrence Factors	Adult Robbers	Juvenile Robbers
	% Deterred	% Deterred
1. Bullet resistant barrier	76	82
2. Armed guard on duty	69	76
3. Frequent police patrol	63	71
4. Revolving doors	64	62
5. Armed clerk	60	61
6. Alarm system	52	65
7. Metal detector	55	51
8. Fences blocking escape	51	54
9. Longer sentences	45	53
10. Good visibility	40	54
11. Good lighting	33	44
12. Camera covering area	39	29
13. Rob before closing	28	37
14. Video camera in use	39	26
15. Unarmed guard on duty	35	29
16. Two Clerks on duty	28	26

The juveniles only were asked to rate the same deterrent factors, comparing convenience stores to any location. Table 13 shows the rank-order by what they look for in the convenience store setting, and they correlate almost identically to what they would look for at any location, with escape route and money ranking first and second and videos and unarmed guards at the bottom of the list.

Table 13: Target Attractiveness, Average Ratings

Factors	Juveniles Only	
	Convenience Store Ranking	Any Location Ranking
What would be important to you if you were to rob a convenience store?		
What would be important to you if you were to rob any location?		
1. Escape Route	1	1
2. Amount of Money	2	2
3. Active Police Patrols	3	4
4. Anonymity	4	3
5. Armed Guards	5	5
6. Armed Clerks	6	6
7. Number of Clerks	7	7
8. Interference	8	9
9. Bullet Resistant Barriers	9	10
10. Alarm System	10	8
11. Number of Customers	11	11
12. Camera System	12	12
13. Video Recording	13	13
14. Unarmed Guards	14	14

Planning the Robbery

The juveniles *only* were asked the questions shown in Table 14. They were asked if they spent time planning their robberies, and it was almost evenly divided between saying they did or did not spend time planning to rob, with slightly over half (58%) saying they did *not* spend time planning their robbery. Most of them that planned said they spent a week or less planning the robbery.

Weapon Use

The juvenile robbers were asked whether in those robberies in which someone was hurt or killed they had planned to use the weapon in advance. Over half said they did plan to use it *before* they went in to do the robbery. (See Table 14) Conversely, one-half did not plan to use the weapon, but apparently ended up using it anyway. The juvenile robbers were also asked where they got their weapon. Almost half (44%) claim they bought it, 12% got it from home, and 19% say they stole it, with the rest saying they got it “off the street”.

Table 14: Robbery Planning, Juvenile Robbers Only

Planning Issues	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Did you spend time planning your robbery?	
Yes	42
No	58
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>
If someone was hurt or killed, did you plan (in advance) to use a weapon?	
Yes	56
No	44
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>
Where did you get your weapon?	
Stole it	19
Bought it	44
From home	12
The street	25
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Robbery Advice

Both the adults and juveniles were asked the questions shown in Table 15 about their advice regarding robbery. They wrote out answers to the open-ended questions, which were then coded according to the categories shown. The very important information about why people get hurt that came from both adults and juveniles is that people resist or try to be heroes. Seventy-one percent of the adults say this, and even more (81%) of the juveniles say that people get hurt because they resist or try to be heroes. The remainder indicated that sudden movements or the robber being high or nervous can lead to injury.

The robbers’ advice to robbery victims to keep from getting hurt is to cooperate and give up the money. Eighty-two percent of the adults and fully 90% of the juveniles said this. We know from case studies that the teenagers are edgier and more nervous during the robbery, and thus likely to be quicker on the trigger if things do not go according to (their) plan.

The robbers were then asked what advice they would give to someone considering a robbery, and their responses are shown in Figure 6. Advice was largely philosophical, such as: don’t do it, think about the consequences, and you’ll get caught. Eighty-two percent of the adults gave

philosophical advice, and slightly less (71%) of the juveniles gave such advice. However a few robbers gave practical advice, such as: “stake out the place”, “get a gun”, and “don’t tell anyone”.

Table 15: Robbery Experience, Comparison of Samples

Question	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Why are people hurt in robberies?		
Resist/try to be hero	71	81
Other (sudden movements, robber is high or nervous)	29	19
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
What advice would you give to keep from getting hurt?		
Cooperate	53	46
Give up the money	29	44
Other (no sudden moves, don’t talk, don’t stare, don’t be a hero)	18	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
What advice would you give to someone considering a robbery?		
Philosophical (don’t do it, think about consequences, you’ll get caught)	82	71
Practical (stake the place out, get a gun, don’t tell anyone)	18	29
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Advice to Victims

The specific advice given to victims included what is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Advice from Robbers to Victims to Keep From Getting Hurt

DO:	DON’T:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate • Give up the money • Obey the robber’s commands • Keep your hands in sight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist • Talk • Plead • Stare • Make any sudden movements • Be a hero • Chase or follow

Robbery Motivation

Table 16 is about the robbers' personal experience with robbery and their motivation. They were asked why they robbed, and the majority of both adults (46%) and juveniles (45%) said it was for the money, and another 32% and 20% respectively said it was for drugs, either getting money for the drugs, or being high on drugs, and a number had other reasons. These other reasons for the juveniles included acceptance and being cool (11%); being angry (7%); or being bored (7%).

When the robbers were asked what has ever kept them from committing a particular robbery, they gave both personal and target-related reasons. The personal reasons included friends, family, religion, drugs, and poor timing. The target-related reasons were police, people, guards, and escape routes. Sometimes their reasons were that they were afraid, either afraid of getting caught, having bad vibes, or being nervous. One-fourth of the juveniles, more than the adults, said "nothing" has kept them from it. It is heartening, however, that almost a third of both groups say that something at the site has kept them from committing the robbery, so measures can be taken at the site to decrease robbery.

When asked how they got caught, a third of both groups said they had been snitched or ratted on, framed, or set-up. (Table 16). This is no doubt why they gave the advice of not telling anyone. When they were ratted on, it was likely to be by ex-girlfriends. Slightly fewer of both groups said they were careless or made mistakes, such as traffic stops. Other reasons for getting caught included Crime Stoppers, good citizens, or turning themselves in.

Table 16: Robbery Motivation, Comparison of Samples

	Adult Robbers (%)	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Why did you rob? What were your personal reasons?		
Money in general (needed money, homeless, hungry, poor, fast money)	46	45
Drugs (money for, or high on, drugs)	32	20
Other	22	35
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
What has ever kept you from committing a particular robbery?		
Personal reasons (friends, family, religion, drugs, timing)	39	20
Target-related (police, people, guards, escape)	29	31
Afraid (afraid of getting caught, bad vibes, nervous)	19	25
Nothing	13	24
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
How did you get caught?		
Snitched on/ratted on (framed, set up, etc.)	35	33
Careless/mistakes (traffic stop)	18	19
Police work	32	28
Other (Crime Stoppers, good citizens, turned self in)	15	20
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Peer Issues

The juvenile robbers were asked about their involvement with friends, and the results are shown in Table 17. First, they were asked if they had friends who do robberies or violent crimes, and 80% said that they did. When asked why they thought their friends did robberies and violent things, nearly half (46%) said it was for money, which was the same number they gave for doing it themselves. About one-fourth (26%) said their friends did it for the thrill or rush, which was another reason that they personally did it. When they were asked if they talked to friends about their own crimes, not quite half said they did (45%) but when asked if their friends talked to them about their crimes, over half (65%) said they did. In other words, these robbers said that their friends were more likely to tell about their crimes than these robbers were to tell them about theirs.

Almost half of the robbers were gang members (46%), but surprisingly, 88% said they did not commit the crime because they were a gang member. This question would have provided the opportunity to say that they committed their

crime because of their gang membership, but only 12% said that was the reason. It is clear that the reason they rob is for the money. When they were asked, in a follow-up question, how they use their money, 69% said they use it for drugs or alcohol, and another 27% said it was for material goods. Only 7% said they used it for supporting family.

Table 17: Peer Issues

Juvenile Robbers Only

Peer Issues	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Do you have friends who do robberies or violent things?	
Yes	80
No	20
Total	100
Why do you think they do robberies/violent things?	
Money	46
Drugs	13
Peer pressure/prove oneself	11
Fun / Thrill / Rush	26
Miscellaneous	4
Total	100
Did you talk to friends about your crimes?	
Yes	45
No	55
Total	100
Did your friends talk to you about their crimes?	
Yes	65
No	35
Total	100
Are you a member of a gang?	
Yes	46
No	54
Total	100
Were the crimes you did because you were a gang member?	
Yes	12
No	88
Total	100

Family Issues

Table 18 addresses the family and neighborhood issues for the juvenile robbers. When asked if they talked to their family about their crimes, only 19% said that they did. Recall that 45% said they talked to their friends about their crimes, but far

fewer talked to their families (19%). Further, 73% say that their parents did not think they were involved in crime. This is no doubt the reason that when a young male is arrested, the media often reports that the parents say: “But he’s a good boy.”

Experiencing Violence

Sixty percent of the juveniles said that they *experienced* violence when they were young, shown in Table 18. To further understand that response, we asked where they experienced violence. Three-fourths (76%) said that they experienced violence in the neighborhood. Not quite half (45%) reported that they experienced violence in the home.

Learning to Be Violent

When the juveniles were asked if they were taught violence by either family members or friends, almost half (48%) said that they were. When the juveniles were asked where they learned to be violent, the most frequent response was that they learned it from friends (73%). The next most frequent response was movies (36%), and then family (33%). Additionally, 29% said television taught them to be violent, another one-fourth said music made them violent, and 19% said videos. Two of the videos/movies they specifically mentioned as influencing them to be violent were *Boyz N the Hood* and *Menace II Society*. For this question, they could have multiple responses and list all of the things they thought they contributed to their violence.

Twenty-two percent said the street taught them to be violent. In short, the neighborhood (76%) and friends (73%) were the most likely to be where they experienced violence and learned violence, more so than family. We did however ask them a little more about their family. When they were asked which family member taught them to be violent, the family members they mentioned most frequently were their fathers, step-fathers, uncles, or brothers, but some said their mothers, sisters, and even their grandmothers.

Thirty-three percent said they learned to be violent from their families. We asked the juvenile robbers whether they had family members in prison. The results were that 29% said their father was in prison, 5% had a mother in prison, and 7%

had both. Thirty-two percent had a brother in prison, 3% a sister and 3% both, so the results were that 41% had a parent in prison, and 39% had a sibling in prison. This comports with the fact that about 40% experienced violence at home.

Table 18: Family & Neighborhood Issues, Juvenile Robbers Only

Family and Neighborhood Issues	Juvenile Robbers (%)
Did you talk to your family about your crimes?	
Yes	19
No	81
Total	100
Did your parents think you were involved in crime?	
Yes	27
No	73
Total	100
When you were young, did you experience violence?	
Yes	60
No	40
Total	100
When you were young, did you experience violence in the home?	
Yes	45
No	55
Total	100
When you were young, did you experience violence in the neighborhood?	
Yes	76
No	24
Total	100
Were you taught violence by a family member or friend?	
Yes	48
No	52
Total	100
Where did you learn to be violent? (Multiple responses)	
Friends	73
Movies	36
Family Member	33
Television	29
Music	25
Street	22
Videos	19

Religion & Other Influences

When the juveniles *only* were asked about their religious upbringing, three-fourths of them said that their families were religious. This compares to the U. S. population as a whole, where 70% of the population reports having church/synagogue membership.

Half of the juvenile robbers reported that they attended church/synagogue, which is slightly *more* than the 43% of the general population attending church or synagogue.

Of the juvenile robbers who are religious, 62% were Protestant, 31% Catholic, and the rest were other religions. The breakdown nationally is 55% Protestant, 28% Catholic, 2% Jewish, 6% other, and 8% non-religious.⁶ This is also similar to the juvenile robbers.

Sixty-three percent of the juvenile robbers said that they still consider themselves to be religious. The self-reporting of juveniles about their involvement with religion, and the type of religion, is not much different than that of the general U. S. population, but their religious upbringing apparently did not keep them from committing these crimes.

Two-thirds said they also had the DARE program in school, and one-fourth had Scared Straight, neither of which they felt did them any good for the most part.

This concludes the findings section, and we move next to a discussion and conclusions.

⁶ U. S. Census Bureau. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2000. Table #75: Church Membership and Attendance: 1980 to 1999. www.census.gov/prod/2001pb/statab/sec01.pdf.

Discussion and Conclusions

How They Rob

Juveniles do not plan their robberies for very long, and they tend to live very close to the site they rob. They pick the place for the amount of money they *think* it has. The most important finding about the robbery site itself is that juveniles and adults look for virtually the same things when they are considering robbing a site. Before this study, we did not know if it would be the same or different variables and security measures that the robbers would look for. We also found from this study that the variables and security measures are essentially the same whether the juveniles are considering robbing a convenience store or any other location.

The primary considerations for both the adults and juveniles when they are planning a robbery are the escape route and the amount of money available. Living as near the robbery site as they do, they are obviously aware of the escape possibilities. The problem with the amount of money available is that both adults and robbers consistently think there is more money available than there really is, and as long as they think there is more money available, they will go ahead with the robbery. As long as there are locations of a similar type that do indeed carry more cash, it gives a “bad name” to all of the similar locations. For example, if a large chain convenience store has reduced its cash, but a “Mom and Pop” store has not, then the robbers may not differentiate and they may expect the same from both. At the bottom of the list for both juvenile and adult robbers when they consider robbing are video cameras and unarmed guards. This is not to say that there may not be other benefits for cameras and even unarmed guards, such as for shoplifting, loitering, crowd control, or employee theft, but robbers do not consider video cameras as a deterrent. One of the reasons they give is that half of them wear disguises anyway.

From other research, there are both validated measures and unvalidated measures that have emerged for robbery prevention. The research on

these measures can be found in a number of other sources, including two by Erickson in *Convenience Store Security at the Millennium* available from www.nacsonline.com and in *Armed Robbers and their Crimes*, available at www.amazon.com.

The validated measures are shown in Figure 7. These include the basic components of the original WBSI research conducted in the 70’s and described in the Appendix. They are cash control, visibility, lighting, escape routes, and training. These measures are confirmed by the juvenile robbers, and adult robbers, in this study, when they placed escape routes and amount of money first and second in what they look for. They also want to be anonymous, and the advice they give to victims about how to keep from getting hurt is what is recommended for employee training, based on our earlier research. The importance of not resisting is discussed by Zimring and Zeuhl whose research showed that active resistance accounted for 82% of commercial killings, and victims who resisted were forty-nine times more likely to be killed than those who cooperated.⁷

Figure 7: Basic Robbery and Violence Deterrence Measures--Validated

DETERRENCE MEASURES—VALIDATED

- Keeping low amounts of cash in the register
- Ensuring good visibility
- Maintaining good lighting
- Limiting access and escape routes
- Training employees in proper behavior

The unvalidated measures are shown in Figure 8 and include multiple clerks, bullet-resistant shielding and guards. The two clerk issue has essentially been put to rest and is not considered to be an effective measure for robbery and violence deterrence. A summary of the “Two-Clerks” studies is available on the Athena web site at www.athenaresearch.com. Bullet-resistant barriers showed promise in a NIOSH study⁸, but the numbers were small and thus need further

⁷ Zimring, Frank and Zuehl, James. January, 1986. “Victim Injury and Death in Urban Robbery. A Chicago Study.” *Journal of Legal Studies*. Vol. 15, No. 1. pp.1-39.

⁸ Hendricks, Scott A., Landsittel, Douglas P., Amandus, Harlan E., Malcan, Jay, and Bell, Jennifer Bell, November 1999. “A Matched Case-Control Study of Convenience Store Robbery Risk Factors” in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, Volume 41, Number 11, pp. 995-1104.

study. In this study, the juvenile robbers and adult robbers both place *unarmed* guards and videos at the bottom of the list. Two clerks and bullet-resistant barriers were at the middle of the list, but *armed* guards ranked higher than either. Guards have not been sufficiently studied recently as a deterrent for robbery and that needs further investigation as well. It is often a business decision to not use armed guards because of the risk of more injury or death, by adding an additional weapon.⁹

Figure 8: Robbery and Violence Deterrence Measures --Unvalidated

DETERRENCE MEASURES—UNVALIDATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employing multiple clerks at night ▪ Using bullet-resistant shielding ▪ Employing guards or off-duty police officers at night

Cameras and video systems are not shown in either of the tables above because they have not been determined to serve as a robbery deterrent. They are, however, enjoying widespread usage. As the technology has improved, cameras and video systems have grown in popularity. They have essentially become state-of-the-art in the industry, even though robbers place them nearly at the bottom of the list of their considerations.

The program components described in this report, and in the Appendix are similar to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), as shown in Figure 9.¹⁰

Figure 9: Components of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

<p>Surveillance</p> <p>Involves the location and use of physical features, electrical and mechanical devices, activities, and people to maximize visibility, i.e., lighting, cameras, and clear lines of sight. Creates a risk of detection for intruders and offenders and a perception of safety for legitimate users.</p>
<p>Territoriality</p> <p>Uses physical features and activities to express ownership and control of the environment, i.e., landscaping, signage, fencing, and border definition. Promotes neighborhood pride. Discourages presence of outsiders by delineating private and semi-private spaces, controlling the movement of people and vehicles.</p>
<p>Access Control</p> <p>Employs people, electrical and mechanical devices, and natural measures to create a perception of risk to offenders and deny them access to targets, i.e., locks and guards.</p>

Why They Rob

We engaged in this research to find out what could be done at the site to deter juvenile robbers, which was discussed in the previous section. We also wanted to know what led them to do it; what motivated them; and what influenced their behavior. An overall impression of these 178 juvenile robbers was that they were neither particularly reflective nor introspective. They appeared not to have thought much about why they did what they did, as compared to the adult robbers who had several more years (and years in prison) to think about it. The institutional setting for this survey for the juveniles was different too. It was more restricted and more regimented than for the adults, and there was less opportunity for them to talk with the researchers on a one-on-one basis, which is where we had gained additional, valuable information from the adults beyond the survey itself in our prior studies.

The juveniles express more bravado than the adults about their robberies, and they expect more money at each location. They seemed more

⁹ Baumer, T. L. and Carrington, M. D. 1986. *The Robbery of Financial Institutions: Brief Summary*. National Institute of Justice, U. S. Department of Justice, WDC.

¹⁰ For a discussion of CPTED in similar environments, see Hunter, Ronald D. and Jeffery, C. Ray. "Preventing Convenience Store Robbery through Environmental Design". 1992. *Situational Crime Prevention*, Clark, Ronald V. Ed. Harrow and Heston, Albany, NY and see also Aggleton, David G. Electronic Systems Associates: NY, NY as presented at ASIS, June 1994.

brazen, less caring, and more unfeeling in their descriptions of events than were the adults. There was very little showing of remorse or regret articulated by the juveniles.

The juveniles, as with the adults, rob primarily for the money. Robbery is a different type of crime than the other violent crimes, because it is economically motivated and utilitarian in nature. The purpose is to obtain money and not usually to do physical harm. Other research, such as that reported by Jacobs and Wright of 86 armed robbers, confirms that robbers are motivated by a perceived need for cash.¹¹

When asked what led them to crime, the juveniles said that the neighborhood and their friends were the biggest influence, with three-fourths saying that they experienced violence and learned violence from the neighborhood. About the same number said their friends were engaged in violent crimes, that they were influenced by their friends, and that they learned violence from their friends. Their major influence is the group they run with, and in that, they may have little choice because of the neighborhoods in which they are raised. Research reported by Farrington concludes that having delinquent friends and/or living in high crime neighborhoods are more important predictors of youth violence in the teen years than family influence.¹²

Less important as a negative influence, but nevertheless an influence, was the fact that about half of the juveniles said they experienced violence in the home and that their parents taught them to be violent. They named the person that taught them, including father, stepfather, uncle, or grandmother. Almost half also had parents or siblings in prison. Farrington's research confirms that fathers convicted for violence tended to have sons convicted for violence.¹³ This study appears to further confirm the intergenerational tendency toward violence.

Another frequently named influence was the entertainment industry—videos, movies, music, and television—as a source of teaching violence. They even named the specific ones that influenced them. This media impact will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent larger report of these findings. We will examine, for example, a theory advanced by clinical psychologist Stanton Samenow, reported by Ringle. The theory is that it is the “sociopathic” or “anti-social” juvenile that is affected by violent media adversely—not the “normal” adolescent.¹⁴ That research has important implications for the influence of the media on criminal violent behavior. We also have case studies which demonstrate the effects of particular movies on individual behavior, which will be discussed in the larger report. The influence of family and friends will also be discussed in detail as a test of sociologist Lonny Athens' theory of violence—that a juvenile needs to 1) see violence; 2) experience violence; and 3) be coached in violence in order to become a violent criminal. Athens' theory is analyzed in a book by journalist Richard Rhodes.¹⁵

The juveniles had the DARE program in school, and some had the Scared Straight program in school, but both programs, they said, had little influence on them. Most of the juveniles were religious, both in their upbringing and their current beliefs, but that too apparently had little positive influence in keeping them from robbing. Durkheim's theory of the effect of religion will also be covered in the fuller report. The theory is essentially that lack of religion may lead to suicide, not homicide, but integration into religion may be more likely to lead to homicide than suicide.¹⁶

A key finding here is that, as expected, nearly half say they rob for the money. When asked how they used the money they obtained, 40% said they use the money for drugs or alcohol; in short, committing one crime to support another. Twenty-two percent robbed to obtain material

¹¹ Jacobs, Bruce A and Wright, Richard. 1999. “Stick-Up, Street Culture, and Offender Motivation.” *Criminology*. Vol. 37, Number 1.

¹² Farrington, David P. 1998. “Predictors, Causes, and Correlates of Male Youth Violence.” In *Youth Violence* edited by Tonry, Michael and Moore, Mark II. 1998. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: IL.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ringle, Ken. April 24, 1999. “Violent Nature: Behavioral Scientists Consider Why Some Kids Reach for a Gun.” *Washington Post*.

¹⁵ Rhodes, Richard. 1999. *Why They Kill*. Alfred A Knopf: NY.

¹⁶ Jensen, Gary F. 2003. “Religion and Lethal Violence: Unraveling Durkheim's Mystery.” *New Directions in Homicide Research*, Proceedings of the 2001 Annual Meeting of the Homicide Research Working Group. U. S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. WDC.

goods or to improve their lifestyle. There were few noble reasons given for the robbery, with only a few saying they robbed to support their family. These robbers were not “Robin Hoods”. The robberies do appear to be utilitarian in nature; that is, the robbers are robbing for the money. The low injury rate indicates that they are usually not in it to hurt anyone, though that can and does happen.

Another key finding is that they do not think they are going to be caught. Eighty three percent of the adults, and 90% of the juveniles did not think they would be caught. This means that measures such as hard time or a long time in prison will not serve as a deterrent because they do not think they are going to be caught. Further, half say they did not know what the sentence would be anyway, even if they were caught.

The juveniles in this survey seem to pick easy, convenient targets that are close to where they live. They commit the more violent type of robberies, including street muggings, car jackings, and home invasions. The crime scenes have a familiarity to them, and they are relatively easy targets for these predators to prey upon.

The juveniles in this survey, for the most part, are too young to work, too young to drive, too young to own a car, and too young to drink, but they are apparently not too young to rob or kill. In fact, some started robbing as early as 12 years of age, and most have done *multiple* robberies, while they are still teenagers. On the whole, they appear to have turned to robbery for the money and to buy drugs or alcohol with the money they steal. Some commit robberies because they want the thrill, or they are just bored. They also say they do it because they are exposed to material things that they want. They are influenced negatively by their neighborhoods, their friends, the media, and their own families. Many of the juveniles have parents or siblings, or both, in prison. When you hear someone say that “It’s up to the families”, look at the families and then consider that it is really going to be up to everyone.

These findings need to be compared with other findings, and other researchers in the field are encouraged to do just that. We need to concentrate on both the robbery site *and* the robber in

trying to effectuate a change. We know that crime is increasing, largely because of the demographics of the population, with a bigger crime-committing age group of 18-24 in this decade than we had in the past decade. For that reason, we need to harden the targets further and try to intervene early with our young people to change their behavior.

APPENDIX

Background

Talking to robbers for their ideas on robbery prevention can be found in early research at the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute (WBSI) carried out in the 1970s (Crow & Bull, 1975).¹⁷ That research, directed by Dr. W. J. Crow, which I coordinated, was funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Law Enforcement and Assistance Administration (LEAA). For the study, 7-Elevens were used as experimental and control sites to test out what were then new ideas in crime deterrence, and the ideas came from police, social scientists and ex-robbers.

The rationale of the experiment was based on the need to make the target (stores) less attractive by reducing the cash and maximizing the take/risk ratio. That is, to make the amount of money available small and the relative risk high. Components of the program to harden the target included:

- controlling cash
- altering escape routes
- increasing lighting and visibility
- training employees in not resisting.

The purpose of the original research was to test out new techniques to prevent robbery and violence. Intervention measures were implemented in 60 experimental stores, which were closely matched, on a stratified random basis, with 60 control stores. The measures were tested through a classic experimental design in a field setting. It was, and remains, the only such large-scale experiment on the subject. The experiment resulted in a 30% reduction in robberies in experimental stores, over control stores, during the experimental period. The results supported the concept that robbers do in fact select their targets, and that physical and behavioral changes at the

site can significantly reduce robberies. What remained to be seen was whether the results of the experiment could be applied successfully, on a large scale, over time. The program was subsequently implemented in 7-Eleven stores nationwide in 1976. After twelve years, from 1974 to 1986, robberies in 7-Elevens had decreased by nearly 65% (Crow, Erickson & Scott, 1987).¹⁸ The concept of the program was adopted in 1987 by the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) for use in stores nationwide.

Ten years after the original study, in an effort to update the findings, the Southland Corporation, operator and franchisor of 7-Eleven stores, supported the study by Athena Research Corporation to conduct a study of incarcerated armed robbers in five state prisons in 1985. Prisoners in Bordentown, NJ; Huntsville, TX; Joliet, IL; Chino, CA; and Angola, LA were surveyed. The robbers were asked, among other items, to rate factors on how important each one was in the decision to rob a target. Because the results showed the top factors to be essentially the same as in the original study, no substantive changes were made to the original program because the intervening decade had not appreciably changed what robbers look for when robbing a store.

Related Studies

Historically, a classic study of robbers was that of Floyd Feeney, conducted in 1973, for which he interviewed 113 robbers.¹⁹ He served as a consultant on the WBSI study to guide the experiment. Some other studies of robbers include that of Dermot Walsh (1986) who interviewed 45 burglars and 69 robbers who were incarcerated and then compared the two groups.²⁰ In a study in West Germany (Rehm & Servay, 1986), 259 convicted bank robbers were interviewed to analyze the factors motivating robbery, the obstacles the robbers perceive when planning a robbery and the influences of those obstacles on the robber's

¹⁷ Crow, Wayman J. & Bull, James L. 1975. *Robbery Deterrence: An Applied Behavioral Science Demonstration*. Western Behavioral Sciences Institute. La Jolla, CA.

¹⁸ Crow, Wayman J., Erickson, Rosemary J. and Scott, Lloyd. September, 1987. "Set Your Sights". *Security Management*. Vol. 31, No. 9., & data provided by The Southland Corporation.

¹⁹ Feeney, Floyd. 1986. "Robbers as Decision-Makers." *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*. (Ed. Derek B. Cornish & Ronald V. Clarke). Springer-Verlag: New York. pp. 53-71.

²⁰ Walsh, Dermot. 1986. "Victim Selection Procedures Among Economic Criminals: The Rational Choice Perspective." *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*. (Ed. Derek B. Cornish & Ronald V. Clarke). Springer-Verlag: New York. pp. 39-52.

decision making.²¹ In Canada, in-depth interviews were held with 20 career criminal armed robbers (Normandeau & Lanicault, 1983).²² Other case-studies have been done of career criminals, but few large-scale studies have been conducted.

Both Walsh and Feeney offer their rationale for interviewing robbers. Walsh (1986) says: "Because offenders are the source of the crime, it would seem absurd not to avail oneself of their versions of what they were doing and why." Feeney (1986) adds:

Detailed discussions with offenders about their crimes and their methods of thinking and operation have already had considerable payoff in recent years . . . This kind of work is in its infancy, however, and there is a great deal more to be learned. The greatest payoffs are likely to come from increased attention to the strategic decisions made by offenders and the learning process involved—the decision to rob, to continue robbing, and to desist from robbing. . . The offender has a whole thought process and belief system that ultimately lead to some kind of conclusion. . . Robbers know a lot about themselves and about robberies that no one else knows . . . if headway is ever to be made in dealing with crime, we must access the information that offenders have and use it for prevention and control.

Walsh (1986) notes that the problem of interviewing incarcerated robbers is that they may be unrepresentative, and there may be recall problems, reticence, distortion, and deceit, but he argues that the general gain accruing from letting offenders tell their own story is far outweighed by any possible distortions in some of their reporting. The study reported upon here is based on that rationale.

Study Design

The 1995 study of adult imprisoned armed robbers was conducted in order to update what robbers look for when they consider robbing a

place (Erickson, 1996; Erickson and Stenseth, 1996).²³ The study was conducted by Athena Research Corporation. For the study, 310 incarcerated armed robbers were surveyed in 1995. The sample consisted of male armed robbers incarcerated in the past two years. The study was carried out in 20 prisons in three states—Maryland, Texas and Washington. The sample consisted of 78 prisoners in Washington in 7 prisons; 125 prisoners in Maryland in 5 prisons; and 107 in Texas in 8 prisons, for a total of 310 prisoners. The sample was self-selecting in that they had to agree to participate, but the robbers were similar to state prisoners nationwide on sociodemographic characteristics. The range of robbers was represented, from street muggers to bank robbers and included commercial and home robbers. The data collection was carried out during a two month time period from May 10, 1995 to July 18, 1995. The survey consisted of a paper and pencil questionnaire, with 40 questions, which took the inmates about one-half hour to fill out.

The study of juvenile imprisoned robbers was carried out in August, 2001, in eight sites in Texas, with support from 7-Eleven, Inc. and Athena Research Corporation. As with the adults, the sample was self-selecting in that they had to agree to participate, but fully 85% of them agreed to participate in the survey. Similar to the adult study, they came to a central location at eight sites and filled out the paper and pencil questionnaire with 80 questions, which took about an hour to complete. Adults and juveniles all filled out human consent forms as a protection for human subjects. Surveys and consent forms were available in Spanish if needed. The participants in both studies were commonly in a classroom setting with about 20-35 in each group. After the survey, they were invited to stay to discuss issues, which they frequently did. The survey, for both adults and juveniles, was designed to measure psychological, sociological and structural characteristics, as shown below:

²¹ Rehm, &. & Servay, W. 1986. *Bank Robbery From the Perspective of the Bank Robber*. West Germany.

²² Ringle, Ken. April 24, 1999. "Violent Nature: Behavioral Scientists Consider Why Some Kids Reach for a Gun." *Washington Post*.

²³ Normandeau, A. & Lanicault, R. January, 1983. "Career of a Robber". *Canadian Journal of Criminology*. Vol. 25, No. 1: 33-46.

²⁴ Erickson, Rosemary J. *Armed Robbers and their Crimes*. 1996. Athena Research Corporation: Seattle, WA. and Erickson, Rosemary J. and Stenseth, A. October, 1996. "Crimes of Convenience". *Security Management Magazine*. 60-64. American Society for Industrial Security.

- 1) *Psychological characteristics*
 - motives
 - judgment
 - perceptions of opportunity
 - alcohol and narcotic involvement
 - the decision making process
 - the possibility of getting caught
 - knowledge of sentencing

- 2) *Sociological characteristics*
 - education
 - marital status
 - race
 - age
 - employment
 - prior criminal history
 - prior conviction record

- 3) *Structural characteristics*
 - site characteristics
 - proximity to offender's residence
 - multiple clerks
 - cameras
 - alarms
 - expected take
 - video (CCTV)
 - bullet-resistant barriers (BRB)
 - guards (armed & unarmed)
 - hours of closing
 - partners
 - guns
 - weapon use
 - history of violence
 - information on victims
 - information on incidents
 - reason for robbery
 - reason for getting caught

and Texas differed from each other. For the adults from the three states (Washington, Maryland, and Texas), there were no differences on their view of deterrence measures; no differences on the expected take; and no differences on their advice to victims. We are therefore confident that the question of how and why they select their targets and how they carry out their robbery would probably not be that different from teenage robbers in other states. Of course, a replication of this study in other states or countries can further address that question.

The adult prison studies in 1985 and 1995, and the juvenile prison study in 2001, were designed and directed by Rosemary J. Erickson, Ph.D. President of Athena Research Corporation, and support was provided by Athena Research Corporation and 7-Eleven, Inc. For the 1995 and 2001 studies, data collection within the prisons was conducted primarily by Arnie Stenseth, CPP (Certified Protection Professional), Vice President of Athena Research Corporation. In both the 1995 and 2001 studies, Scot Lins, 7-Eleven Director, Loss Prevention went into selected prisons. In 1995, Loss Prevention Specialists Ron Conlin and Earl Winterling went into selected prisons, as did Division Loss Prevention Manager Jim Dale. In 2001, Jeff Feldman, Division Loss Prevention Manager, went into selected Texas facilities. Sandra J. Erickson, MFS (Masters in Forensic Science), is a Research Associate with Athena Research Corporation, and assisted with all phases of the 2001 study. Kristi Balzer, who is an M. A. Candidate in Sociology at San Diego State University, and Research Associate with Athena Research Corporation, assisted with the literature review and report preparation for the 2001 study. The data analysis, for both the 1995 adult study and the 2001 youth study, was conducted by Jarrett Paschel, Ph.D., Atlanta, GA.

Data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A standard Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare differences in the means between, or among, groups. For cross-tabs, the Pearson Chi-Square test of statistical significance was used.²⁴

State differences were tested in the 1995 study to see how the robbers from Washington, Maryland,

²⁴ Statistical significance is reported as: *sig < .05; ** sig < .01; *** sig < .001.

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