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JUDAS KISS: HOW NEVER RATTING ON YOUR FRIENDS & ALWAYS KEEPING YOUR MOUTH SHUT DOES NOT APPLY TO STREET SNITCHES

Joseph John Pashea, Jr.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale, jpashea@gmail.com

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Joseph John Pashea, Jr.

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A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Approved by:

Dr. Christopher Mullins, Chair

Dr. Joseph Schafer

Dr. Breanne Pleggenkuhle

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

JOSEPH JOHN PASHEA, JR., for the Master of Arts degree in CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, presented on December 2th, 2013, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: JUDAS KISS: HOW NEVER RATTING ON YOUR FRIENDS & ALWAYS KEEPING YOUR MOUTH SHUT DOES NOT APPLY TO STREET SNITCHES

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Christopher Mullins

This thesis aims to understand the complex world of the snitch. The data for this thesis comes from interviews that were obtained by Richard Rosenfeld, Bruce A. Jacobs and Richard Wright. The data was obtained by conducting interviews with 20 active offenders, 15 males and 5 females. The interviews were conducted in an informal manner and lasted between a half-hour and an hour. The interviews were conducted on a one on one basis and offenders used nicknames instead of their real names. The findings revealed that while snitching is prevalent in African American communities many of the subjects did not snitch. However, for those that have talked to police, subjects are motivated by money, jealously and dislike. Furthermore, older subjects portrayed themselves as veterans who understood the street and would rather share the criminal market and work around problems, than take them head on and possibly end up in a position where informing is the only way out.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my immediate family. I would like to thank my parents for instilling in me the importance of education. My brother and sister also deserve special thanks for their endless support and competition to be the favorite child. I would also like to express my thanks and gratitude to my wife, who has not only supported and encouraged me in this endeavor, but has made me want to be a better person.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money." (Mark 14:10-11)

From a very basic approach, 'snitching' is the practice by which criminals give information to the police in exchange for material reward or reduced punishment (Rosenfeld, Jacobs & Wright, 2003, p. 291). Some of these incentives could include: payment, reduced incarceration time, and elimination of one's enemies or competition. The basic idea of snitching only takes into account immediate solutions to temporary problems, and not the long-term problems that can develop. The simple truth is that once a person decides to become a snitch there is no turning back, and the long-term outlook for a snitch is full of consequences. The snitch has crossed an imaginary line, but in doing so, the snitch has instantly put him/herself on a plateau. If discovered, the snitch will no longer be trusted by friends, and criminal associates, the snitch's street credit has expired, and the chance of retaliation from those betrayed and the overuse of the snitch by law enforcement have both risen dramatically.

Once a person becomes a snitch the connotations and consequences vary based upon whom you ask. To the people that want the information, a snitch is considered an informer, a crime stopper, a hero. The snitch has provided a valuable service and should be rewarded. However, on the other side of the coin, to the people that the snitch has informed on, the snitch is now known as a traitor, a rat, a squealer. The snitch has betrayed his associates, friends, or family and most of the time the only punishment for this betrayal comes in the form of violence.

The quote at the beginning of this paper identifies one side of history's most famous snitch. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. To the chief priests, Judas

was an informer, who did the right thing by providing information about the criminal Jesus Christ. To everyone else, he was a traitor. Dante's divine comedy notes that the lowest circle of hell is treachery and in the last realm closest to Satan, sits Judas forever, along with all of the other traitors (Cary, 2004, p. 191).

While we know how it turned out for Judas, what about other famous informants? Take David Kaczynski, for example; his brother Ted is famously known as the Unabomber. The Unabomber killed three people and injured 28 by placing bombs in mailboxes (Glaberson, 1998, p. US1). The Unabomber pledged to stop bombing if his manifesto was published. David Kaczynski recognized phrases in the manifesto and after searching through old letters immediately knew it was his brother (Johnston, 1996, p. US1). Even with knowing this information, and the fact that the Unabomber may strike again, David struggled with turning his brother in. Ultimately, the idea of being partially responsible for the loss of another human life was too great and David turned on his brother (Dowd, 1996, p. Opinion).

While the stories of both Judas and David Kaczynski are extraordinary situations under unusual circumstances, questions can be derived from these instances that are easily transferable to everyday and real world situations. For instance, why did David Kaczynski wait so long? Why was he ever tormented with informing on his brother even at the expense of human life?

Most existing literature focuses on the relationship between law enforcement and the snitch. This thesis will take a different approach and look at the betrayal and the individual consequences that are associated with snitching. This thesis will focus on the snitching phenomenon within African American communities. Simply put, no other community has had their bonds tested and dealt with the actions and consequences of snitches than the African

American community. Snitching in the African American community has tested the bonds between family members, friends, and the community itself.

What causes a person to become a snitch? What causes a person to go against everything that they have been taught and decide to inform? Authors such as Anderson (1999) and Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright (2003) have pointed out that snitching can be based upon revenge or to eliminate the competition. However, I would argue that snitching has become another tool for the criminal toolbox. Donald Black has argued that crime can be used as a form of social control and as a form of self-help. Black (1983) pointed to Hobbesian theory in which more violence and other crimes are found in settings where governmental law is least developed. Gambling debts, prostitution and stolen goods are examples that involve individuals who must police their investments because law enforcement cannot or it would put the individual on law enforcement radar (Black, 1983, p. 41). A former burglar noted that he did not burglarize affluent people because he could get more from the crime, but because he, "really disliked them people, 'cause it seemed like they thought they was better 'cause they had more" (Black, 1983, p.38). The idea that someone would purposely inform on someone because they did not like the person or were jealous of the person is not new. However, when this dynamic is taken into account along with other aspects of street life culture, it is very understandable as to why criminals prefer to work alone or in very tight circles, and why the consequences for somebody who is found to be an informer are so great.

Snitching has simply become a new tactic to solve problems. Instead of risking an assault or a murder charge because a person is trying to keep a competitor in check, make them an example, or teach them a lesson, a person now can simply snitch and solve their problems. The snitch is still in business, his competition is in prison, and the snitch can even make some

money in the process. The consequences and repercussions of snitching are simply too great for a person to put himself or herself in such a vulnerable position for anything less than a specific and strategic outcome.

This thesis aims to understand the complex world of the snitch. Past literature has only looked at certain aspects or phenomenon with snitching such as: snitching in prison or the "stop snitching" campaign. This thesis will be different from other research in that this thesis aims to develop a more complete picture of a snitch and the factors that go into a person deciding to snitch. The importance of this topic is to develop a more complete understanding of the snitch and snitching, in doing so, this will add to the existing research in the area of snitches and hopefully this research can be used in conjunction with other literature to create a more complete and valid picture of street criminals within African American communities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is a Snitch?

While the word "snitch" is a slang connotation for someone who provides information, the correct term is informer, but there are various classifications for informers. "The function of the informer is usually limited to revealing information to law enforcement" (Miller, 2010, p. 205). However, confidential informants, due to various circumstances and diverse motives, assist law enforcement in an active manner. The difference between an informer and an informant is that an informer merely transmits information, while an informant seeks it (Miller, 2010, p. 206).

Within the informer and informant groups can be broken down to two sub groups. These sub groups are criminal versus non-criminal or sources. Non- criminal informers are different from non-criminal informants in that a non-criminal informants are actively involved in seeking out damaging knowledge on suspects, while non-criminal informers just report what they have seen (Miller, 2010, p. 206). The same rules apply for a criminal informer and a criminal informant. The only difference is that while non- criminal informers and informants are compensated, criminal informers and informants enter into exchange relationships to which their performance is compensated with various tangible and intangible rewards; favorable discretion about pending criminal charges, revenge, money, and for some leniency in continued illegal activities (Miller, 2006, p. 206). A basic example is presented in table 1.

Snitches in the Community and on the Street

Snitches or informants are a crucial part of proactive law enforcement and are considered irreplaceable for investigation and identification of drug traffickers (Dodge, 2006, p. 235). The use of informants revolves around complex ethical issues that are based upon bargaining, motivation and trusts (Dodge, 2006, p. 234). However, pressures from law enforcement are just one of the many aspects that press upon a snitch. The full spectrum of street life is incredibly complex. In some instances a person has to deal with pressures from law enforcement, the community, and the street. The street life itself is based on move making (strategies), loyalties, hierarchy and masculinity. The reasons why some people chose to snitch and why some people do not is formulated within the context of street life and the pressures that exert forces upon a potential snitch must first be realized.

While law enforcement is not the central focus of this issue, law enforcement does have a prominent position within inner cities and the world of a snitch. The simple fact is that many of America's neighborhoods are in serious trouble. In 2007, Baltimore's homicide rate topped 300 murders for the first time in seven years (Masten, 2009, p. 702). Cities such as Philadelphia are coping with a murder a day problem (Masten, 2009, p. 702). Other cities, such as Chicago, have also set new records for homicides. It should be noted that while many of these cities do have major problems with crime, the overall levels of crime has been steadily declining for the last two decades. However, most of the crime that takes place is still concentrated in disadvantaged areas. "Numerous sources have documented that violent victimization is concentrated disproportionately among African American youth, particularly those residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods" (Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006, p. 427). "Disadvantaged neighborhoods

were characterized by Anderson as having high rates of poverty, joblessness, violence, mistrust of police, alienation, racial discrimination, and hopelessness" (Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006, p. 431). Many disadvantaged neighborhoods have street codes and people who live in these areas may not agree with or follow street codes, but they are well aware of the consequences of violating these codes.

Street codes are prominent in disadvantaged neighborhoods, but many authors have argued about what factors contributed to the rise of street codes. The lack of formal laws, helpful police, and economic opportunity, have in part contributed to the development of the street code. However, feelings of racism and alienation have also contributed to the rise of street codes. "Thus the code of the streets emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety begin" (Anderson, 1999, p. 307). The possibility of developing strong community ties or working together to stop victimization is difficult in disadvantaged and violent neighborhoods (Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006, p. 433). Furthermore, residents are not as likely to help others or intervene is situations that might aid the community in a positive way. For example, if a resident calls law enforcement to aid a neighbor involved in a domestic dispute, it is proper procedure for law enforcement to run the identification of each person involved in the situation and that includes the resident who called the police. This is a tactic for law enforcement to arrest a person who might have an outstanding warrant or other criminal issues. Because of this the resident who tries to help is going to feel alienated, targeted, and possibly end up in jail and miss economic and prestige opportunities. The resident is possibly taking a big gamble by involving formal law. "Anti-police attitudes served to reinforce the push toward violent responses, as the police and law were not seen as viable modes of conflict resolution" (Mullins, 2006, p. 100).

Another aspect that is not helping communities is the stop snitching movement. The stop snitching movement is spread through mostly inner cities and African American pop culture (Masten, 2009, p. 703). The stop snitching movement was born through the distrust of law enforcement and the inability of law enforcement to protect informants. The inability of police to protect informants can create a slippery slope, where the snitch is caught in the middle. Even though the snitch may pass on to law enforcement false, exaggerated, or misinterpreted information, his associates may attack him and this could lead to counter attacks from authorities (Marx, 1974, p. 405). Snitching has moved from being a facet of street life to being a facet of community life. The same consequences and repercussions have moved from street culture and become expected norms within the community as well. As one community member from Masten's research noted, "if people know you talk to police, they don't be around you. And if people talk on them and they get locked up, their friends come up to you and hurt you or something" (Masten, 2009, p. 707).

The problem with the stop snitching movement is that it is a catch-22 for the community. Citizens in communities always want safer streets and neighborhoods, but by talking to police, the snitch is then possibly at risk. It is also very possible that citizens also feel guilt for snitching on their neighbors (Masten, 2009, p. 708). However, if nobody talks, then this does not stop the flow of violence, and in some scenarios it could even open the floodgates to more violence. For example, the chief prosecutor from the Dallas gang unit has made a plea to the community that they cannot lower the crime rate without the assistance from the community (Masten, 2009, p. 710).

A prosecutor from Philadelphia noted that the 'Don't be a snitch,' attitude is very present in the community and even condoned by the community (Masten, 2009, p. 710). In order for

criminals to be put behind bars, law enforcement and prosecutors need people to snitch, they need witnesses to speak, and the people that testify need to be protected. The use of informants and witnesses is the core of police work. As one district attorney noted, " without witnesses coming forward to provide information leading to the arrest and prosecution of violent criminals, law enforcement cannot apprehend and prosecute those accused of serious and violent crimes" (Masten, 2009, p. 211).   Similarly, informants have long been considered the life-blood of detective work. Informants extend the reach and presence of law enforcement, and they also provide leads, casework, and if needed, testimony at trial (Miller, 2009, p. 204).

Snitches on the Street

The pressures that are put on a snitch from a community and from the street are not that different. Urban communities in general have the same distrust of law enforcement, the same rules for snitching, and the same consequences for snitches, as can be found on the street. However, there are differences between street life and the community. For example, in a community setting, while some people may chose not to snitch because they adhere to a "do not snitch" policy, others will not talk to police because they have warrants out or other issues with law enforcement. While it may be wrong, it is expected that a person with an outstanding warrant would not risk incarceration or fines just for the sake of reporting a crime, especially when law enforcement's procedures dictate that they run everyone's identification at the incident. The chicken or egg argument can be raised in terms of which came first: street criminal's ideas about snitching from street codes adapting through communities or communities ideas about snitches assimilating through street codes to street criminals. However, both the community and street life affect one another and provide reinforcement to each other on aspects of snitching. According to Anderson (1999), because these behaviors occur in public space, they

can create impressions to communities that are external to these neighborhoods as being the modal form of behavior of all lower-class community residents. The biggest difference between a street criminal and a citizen is that street criminals cannot rely on police for protection and have a harder time in making a claim to victim-status (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, &Wright, 2003, p, 291).   Even though street criminals cannot rely on normal pathways to settle disputes, disagreements, or violations, this does not mean that some type of rule system is not in place to handle these issues. The code of the street was developed as a functional substitute for formal law (Rosenfeld et al., 2003, p. 291). However, "most of the demands of streetlife are not merely focused on successful criminality but on maintaining one's image as a *man* on the streets" (Mullins, 2006, p.16, emphasis in original).

Street life is not entirely focused on successful criminality; instead certain criminals and their crimes generally generate more respect from their peers than other types of crime. Vaughn and Sapp (1989) looked at the hierarchy of inmates and found that a violent-respect model emerges in penal institutions. Lifelong criminals such as a burglar's have the highest respect, followed by drug trafficking and murder. However, sex offender types are the least respected by inmates, with pedophiles and incest offenders being the lowest (Vaughn & Sapp, 1989, p. 80). Based on Vaughn and Sapp's research, it would be safe to assume that the same crimes that are respected among incarcerated offenders would also be respected among street criminals. Crimes that involve violation such as child molesters or rapists are considered dishonorable crimes through out criminal circles. Crimes such as drug dealing, burglary and robbery are considered normal and in criminal circles, respectable crimes. Please refer to table 2.

A criminal can be a very successful and profitable at robbery, however other aspects need to be taken into account for the offender to have respect on the street. "In everyday life, of

course, there is a clear understanding that first impressions are important" (Goffman, 1959, p.8).

There are very few places where first impressions are so important than in disadvantage

neighborhoods. "Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others

to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him" (Goffman,

1959, p.1). Disadvantaged neighborhoods provide a platform that allows offenders and the code

of the street to play out. This is similar to a stage providing an actor a place to take part in a

play. These places are unique to the players within them and not really transferable to other

areas. For example, offenders in disadvantaged neighborhoods are focused on gaining status,

respect and street credibility through the use of violence or acting tough (Anderson, 1999, p. 72).

Offenders or residents who are thought to be weak, who do not have a good reputation, or do not

follow the code of the street can expect to be targets in these neighborhoods. However, the roles

reverse when a different neighborhood is taken into account. Suburban areas are the direct

opposite of disadvantaged neighborhoods. For the most part, status in suburban neighborhoods

are gained through education, income level, job title, and the possessions one owns, however, the

violent culture that is found in disadvantaged neighborhoods has no place in suburban

neighborhoods, and works oppositely in suburban neighborhoods.

When the aspect of disadvantage neighborhoods is taken out of the equation, two factors

are left: offenders and street codes. These two factors produce a very interesting combination

and a result based on violence and respect. The code of the street is primarily found among

young African American men, and this informal code emphasizes respect through a violent and

tough identity (Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006, p. 428). "For those who are invested in the

code, the clear object of their demeanor is to discourage strangers from even thinking about

testing their manhood" (Anderson, 1999, p.92). Baron noted, the goal is to protect ones self

from victimization, this leads to a "rough justice" in the streets if one is disrespected or experiences a perceived injustice (as cited in Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006, p. 429).

Street life subculture is a US subculture where desperate partying and involvement with criminal activity interact with each other and spread into both areas (Mullins & Cardwell-Mullins, 2006, p. 15). "The acquisition of masculine reputation, status enhancing efforts and illicit drug use occupy most of their time and efforts" (p. 15). In mainstream culture, these goals are socially inappropriate, however in street life culture, failure to advance a one's reputation can open doors to harassment, violence, and even death. A person has to be willing to build a reputation in order to gain respect, and the only way to do this according to the code of the street is to appear tough and to fight for one's honor (Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006, p. 433). If a person is unwilling to commit a crime or seek out retaliation for even the smallest slight, then this person has taken a hit to their reputation and now may have become more open to challenges and violence. "Word on the street travels fast and reputational damage can be severe and long lasting" (Jacobs, 2004, p.297). Any person who subscribes to the code of the street, whether it is a young juvenile or a seasoned offender, must not only display an image of toughness and show a willingness to respond and offend, but must also make good on actions and threats of violence in order to maintain their street reputation.

These conflicting views are transferable to all areas of streetlife and this includes snitching. However, there are three views that are overwhelmingly associated with snitching on the street. First, snitching is widespread. Second, your best friend is going to snitch on you. Third, family will always trump friends, when a person's back is against the wall. Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright (2003), found in their interviews of twenty offenders that snitching is widespread on the street and that most of their respondents did not inform to the police, but

apparently everyone else did. However, even though most of the respondents claimed to have never informed, it is very possible that the respondents were not being absolutely truthful during the interviews. Akerstorm in 1983-84 conducted interviews of 23 inmates in Sweden about street snitching and found that "both snitches and nonsnitches in our interview claimed that most criminals (some 70-80 percent) snitch at one time or another"(Akerstorm, 1989, p. 24). Akerstorm's findings are contradictory to the findings of Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright, but other aspects such as time or culture differences could identify the differences in the results. As stated earlier, law enforcement and prosecutors often have a difficult time getting people to snitch about what they have seen. However, the view from snitches accounts for the family versus friend aspect and also when something is dangled over the potential snitch's head. The view from law enforcement does not take into account either of these instances when trying to get someone to come forward with information.

The literature also points out that family and friends play a significant factor in issues with snitching. Greasy in his interview noted that trust only existed between family members (Mullins, 2006, p. 55). This trust of family was also found in the interviews that Akerstorm conducted, but friendship is another aspect that weighs into snitching. Another interviewee Block also concluded this point, in that the person you know will be the person who snitches on you and not the person that you do not know (Mullins, 2006, p. 55). In terms of trust, a family is always to be trusted more than friends. If a person is forced to snitch, one's own family's well being takes precedent over any loyalties to friends or criminal organization. In Mullin's and Akerstorm's works, instances where a family member, girlfriend or a spouse was also facing prison time was leveraged against the person in order to get the person to snitch. The person does not really feel like a snitch, because they were forced to (Akerstorm, 1989, p. 23).

However, age and maturity appear to be determining factor in whether a person will snitch. Simply put, criminals who have been around the street life longer know who to trust, who to run with, and situations to avoid. The lessons learned from street life help to protect the older criminal in their future endeavors.

Snitches in Prison

An important aspect that must be addressed is the position of a snitch behind bars. Irwin and Cressey (1977) have argued that the culture an inmate brings with them from the outside plays an important role in daily prison life (Hunt, Riegel, Morales, & Waldorf, 1993, p. 398). This aspect is very important when taken into context of the entire criminal life experience. The sample that was used for Hunt's et al. research consisted of 39 incarcerated men. Nearly half (46%) identified themselves as gang members, while 14 of the respondents identified themselves as African-American (Hunt et al., 1993, p. 399). Drug related offenses, robbery and burglary accounted for nearly all of the crimes for which the respondents were incarcerated. It is unknown whether all the respondents are from the same area, if so; this would help provide a link between street crime and incarceration. This link also helps to identify a route in which aspects learned on the street could flow into other areas such as prisons. The code of the street is learned on the street, but for the most part snitches have served time whether it is in jail or prison. It should be explained that not all snitches have been to prison and that all inmates are not snitches. A majority of the respondents in Hunt's et al., research had long criminal histories and spent time at numerous prisons in the state of California. The opportunity for various views to take root is very present, based upon the number of incarcerated and the frequency of inmates that come into the system sharing the same street code. The code of the street is then refined, reformed, and reinforced under harsher conditions.

However, while an inmates' resolve to not snitch could be hardened during their incarceration, there is also a chance that an inmate's resolve to not snitch could be weakened during a prison sentence. As with street life, the same bartering system applies, but the currency is different. The pressure applied by law enforcement can be great, but the consequences of non-cooperation are in many cases, far worse. For example, "parole, snitch, or die is a common prison slang, which refers to the three ways a prisoner assigned to a term of confinement inside the secure housing unit of a supermax can leave" (Reiter, 2012, p. 536). By snitching, the inmate is not released, but his conditions are greatly improved once the inmate is transferred to a less restrictive area of the prison. Some of the improvements can include access to television, visitors, more yard time, and a better hygiene schedule. However, if an inmate does not wish to snitch, the US Supreme Court has ruled that a definite assignment to supermax conditions is constitutional as long as due process protections are kept in place (Reiter, 2012, p. 542; Austin v. Wilkinson 545 U.S. 209, 2005). In general populations, beat-downs, stabbings or worse can be the inmate's punishment for snitching. In many instances the inmate has to cooperate with law enforcement to avoid these punishments. If an inmate is a former gang member, the guards will threaten to send the inmate to a particular prison, where the inmate will be attacked by members of their old gang (Hunt et al., 1993, p. 402).

A "juice card" is an imaginary credit card used in prison, but the idea is very similar to the agreement that is found in street life between a snitch and law enforcement. For example, a inmate may let a guard know that something is about to go down, in exchange for this information, the guard is now in debt to the inmate. This "juice card" is now a form of credit with the guard. (Hunt et al., 1993, p. 402). An inmate can use this credit if he is ever in trouble and needs assistance. Another example is the inmate who does not talk. Hunt, Riegel, Morales,

and Waldorff, did interview an inmate who, "decided to do the extra time, than ending up saying something I would later regret" (Hunt et al., 1993, p. 402).

When an inmate is released, the circle is now complete, and while some inmates will be reformed and stay that way, some inmates will return directly to the street life. The lessons that are learned are now brought back to the community. Inmates that worked the system with "juice cards" while incarcerated now have a better understanding of trading information for favors and once on the outside the inmate can use this knowledge to work with law enforcement if caught and trade information in order to avoid ending up incarcerated again. However, the negative stigma that surrounds law enforcement and their conduct with snitches is only reinforced. On the other side of the coin, for the inmate who refused to talk and did his time, their dislike of snitches and the level that they are willing to go to deal with a snitch could be increased based upon the fact that their willingness to not snitch has been tested and hardened by time and prison.

The act of snitching is simply deciding on whether to inform or not. The events and decisions that lead up to a person deciding to snitch are much more complex and involved than people take into account. While it is very possible that a person decides to snitch on a whim, the literature suggests otherwise. First and foremost, a snitch has to decide what is most important to himself/herself, and then decide if the risk of snitching is worth the benefit gained. However outside pressures can take the decision out of the snitch's hands. Aspects such as community, incarceration, family, motivations, and street codes can force the snitch to make a decision that would keep the snitch in good standing and safe instead of doing what is best for the snitch. My proposed research questions will closely examine the idea and world of a snitch, in hopes of gaining a greater understanding of this action, the culture around snitching, and the outside pressures that push and pull on a potential snitch.

My research questions will focus on answering one central question and roughly five sub questions. My central question will ask, what is a snitch? The purpose of this question is to gain an overall view, understanding and description of a snitch. The goal of my central question is to fully understand what it means to be a snitch from the perspective of subjects who have informed and subjects who are active offenders and have knowledge and experiences with snitches. The sub questions will focus on aspects that were identified in the review of literature. The sub question categories are experience, age, community, motivations, and consequences. Does experience effect or make a person more likely to snitch? The experience category will question whether incarceration vs. street life makes a person more likely to snitch and how these experiences shape or develop a snitch. For age, I am interested in discovering, whether or not a person is more likely to snitch or cooperate with law enforcement based on that person's age? How does the community effect a snitch and can a snitch effect a community? What were the motivations for a person to snitch? This category will look at the decision-making process and aspects that sway the decision of a person to inform or not. Finally, what are the consequences for snitching? This category will focus on the external and internal issues from snitching or deciding not to snitch.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The data for this thesis comes from interviews that were obtained by Richard Rosenfeld, Bruce A. Jacobs and Richard Wright. Please refer to table 3 for names of interviewees.   The data was obtained by conducting interviews with 20 active offenders, 15 males and 5 females. The youngest subject was 20 and the oldest interviewee was 52. The average age was 28, and all of the subjects were African American and recruited from the streets of St. Louis. In terms of education, only one interviewee has a college degree, which is an associate's degree. Three interviewees have attended college with only one currently attending.   Six of the subjects have graduated high school while two have earned their GED. The rest of the subjects have dropped out of school with three subjects dropping out of school as soon as eighth grade, two dropping out in ninth grade and one dropping out in the twelfth grade. Interestingly enough one of the subjects who dropped out in eighth grade has completed their GED and has gone on to take some college courses.   Half of the subjects have children, but only three subjects are married. In terms of employment, only five subjects listed themselves as currently employed. Two of the subjects have done serious time (3 years and 12 years). One of the subjects did a work camp for two years. Their crimes ranged from minor crimes such as shoplifting, to major crimes such as armed robbery. The most common crime was drug dealing with 15 of the subjects listing this as one of their criminal activities. The drug of choice to be sold was crack with six subjects listing this as the primary drug that they sold.

A street based field recruiter was used in order to find participants for the interview. This recruiter is a member of the city's criminal underworld, and has successfully demonstrated his abilities to Rosenfeld, Jacobs & Wright on numerous occasions. The recruiter also, "has

extensive connections to networks of local street offenders and within those networks, enjoys

high status and a solid reputation for integrity" (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, & Wright, 2003, p. 293). The

only requirement for participation in the interviews was that the prospective interviewee had to

be an active offender. The purpose for this was that a person who is currently active in street

crime will also be vulnerable to the daily pressures of law enforcement (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, &

Wright, 2003, p. 293). The recruiter approached friends, family, and acquaintances, who met the

criteria and explained the project and that fifty dollars would be paid to them for their

participation in the project.

The interviews were conducted in an informal manner and lasted between a half-hour and

an hour. The interviews were conducted on a one on one basis and offenders used nicknames

instead of their real names. The use of nicknames created a more relaxed atmosphere and raised

the levels of confidence and cooperation during the interviews (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, & Wright,

2003, p. 294). However, the use of nicknames created a false sense of security because the

nicknames that were used, were often the real street nicknames of the interviewees. The

interviews were semi-structured, this allowed the interviewees to speak freely, but also allowed

the interviewer the ability to get the interviewee back on track if the conversation wondered.

Secondary Analysis

While the use of secondary analysis in quantitative studies is very common, the use of

secondary analysis in qualitative studies is becoming a growing trend. During the late 1990's

and very early 2000's the use of secondary analysis for qualitative research was gaining traction

in health science literature. The secondary analysis of quantitative data is a common and

generally accepted mode of inquiry; the same cannot be said of qualitative data (Thorne, 1994, p.

264).

Secondary analysis does have many advantages as well as disadvantages. For this thesis, the use of secondary analysis was very attractive for a number of reasons. The two most influential reasons were time and money. The amount of time that it would have taken to satisfactorily complete all the steps required of a normal qualitative research project were simply too long and expensive. Funding was also another issue to consider. While it is possible that some amount of funding could have been secured, I did not feel that it was likely. The economy is still very far from returning to its pre 2007 level, and in this current economic climate, budgets and funding for everything have been slashed across the board on a national, state and local level. The time that would have spent trying to secure funding to even begin this project would of put me even more off the goal of finishing this thesis in a reasonable time frame.

The disadvantage of using secondary data does not out weigh the advantages but both of these issues have to be addressed. Mullins (2006) noted well-collected qualitative data sets should contain a wealth of information that goes unexplored in initial analysis. However, Seale (2010) noted that one of the chief reservations about using secondary analysis is that the data will not have the kind of detailed contextual knowledge possessed by the primary researcher. Both of these aspects are true with secondary analysis and especially true with the data that was used for this paper.

There were several disadvantages that I encountered while using secondary analysis and all of these issues were related to the fact that I was not involved in the original interview process. The interviews that were conducted for the primary analysis occurred at least ten years ago and the authors of the data have since gone on to take part in multiple research projects and publish many articles. While it is possible that the authors of the primary analysis could remember certain aspects from their interviews, it is very unlikely that the authors would

remember intricate details of each interview. I also do not have either a personal or professional relationship with the authors. In terms of a personal relationship, I only have access to a data set and the paper that was written. I do not know any of the intricacies about how the author's think, plan, or underling goals with their research. However, this could also be an advantage in that I do not share their assumptions or preconceptions. In terms of a professional relationship, I do not have a working relationship with the authors. The fact that we have never worked together or even met could prevent me from gaining access to information because no previous relationship exists.

Another disadvantage was in the questions and interviews themselves. The interviews focused on snitches, but many of the questions focused on a snitch's interaction with law enforcement. Most of the interviews were very close to questioning many of the topics that I am interested in, but as the questions would start to venture into those areas, the interviewer would quickly get the interviewee back on the subject of their project.

Coding

The use of secondary data presents some interesting coding conditions. As stated earlier, the original authors took a path that encompasses the idea of snitching but looks at interactions with law enforcement. The coding process is one of the most crucial steps for qualitative research, but the importance of this step is compounded when using secondary data. Validity and reliability must also be taken into account and the standards for both must always be upheld.

I relied upon clarifying my research biases, existing literature, and rich description in order to protect the validity of this research. Past experiences have shaped my view of snitches, and in order to move forward those biases must be addressed. According to Merriam (1988), clarifying the research bias is important because the reader needs to understand the position of

the researcher and any biases that the researcher has that may affect the inquiry (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 251). My military experience and upbringing have influenced this topic. I have always been of the mindset that a person should not snitch or inform. I also believe that above all a person should never snitch on a family member. However, while I may not agree with the interview subjects reasons for or ideas about snitching, I was eager to understand this issue and any sub categories or nuances associated with snitching, completely.

The different sources that were used in the review of literature look at the world of snitching from different perspectives. Aspects from urban communities, embedded offenders, incarcerated offenders, law enforcement and civil services have helped to shed light on different perspectives of snitching. The act of snitching is not hard to understand, but the reasons why a person will or will not snitch are complex. Competing ideologies exert varying degrees of pressure upon a would-be snitch. These pressures must be identified and understood in order to truly understand what makes a person snitch.

The use of rich description must also be used in order to aid validity. However, because of the use of secondary data, it is simply not possible to fully understand certain types of descriptions. I only had access to transcribed interviews, and because of this, I cannot identify and process certain descriptions such as word emphasis or the body language of a subject. However, the transcribed interviews do provide detailed descriptions on aspects of snitching, and because of these descriptions it was very possible to identify and thoroughly describe these shared characteristics. The goal of using rich description is to provide abundant, and interconnected details (Stake, 2010, p. 49). Rich description offered the ability to describe general ideas down to the narrow, interconnecting the details using action verbs and quotes (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

The coding procedures established the reliability. The use of an inter coder agreement among different coders would have been the ideal approach to take. My goals with this data were different from others who have previously used this data. The classifications, interpretations, and results from the data that were developed by others can be compared to my own findings. This approach provided a consistency that cannot be found because I am the sole coder and no comparison can be made to other current independent coders.

The coding procedures were based upon data that has already been transcribed and completed as Word documents. These "hard copies" of all computer files of interview data were printed out and gone through using colored pens to distinguish certain text data that falls into various categories. A letter system was used to distinguish the categories, and information that fits into each category was tagged with a number to distinguish which respondent said the statement that is being used. I feel that a "less is more" approach is the best approach to take in coding the interviews. At the beginning of open coding procedures, a short list of no more than eight categories was constructed and used.

Primary Coding:

1. Community: The community that surrounds the respondent and law enforcement's actions within the community.
2. Incarceration: Information about snitching while incarcerated.
3. Motivations: The motivations for and against snitching.
4. Identification: How to identify a snitch.
5. Safety/Associations: Has the aspect of being snitched on change how you operate.
6. Maturity: Aspects of masculinity in street offenders and snitching.
7. Consequences: What are the consequences from snitching?
8. Other

Once all of the data that was useful to my topic was grouped into these categories, I went through the data once again. The data that has been grouped into certain categories was again examined and broken down even further into more specific categories. This secondary coding or

axial coding focused on identifying one open coding category to focus on and then create categories around this core phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 86). I feel that a build up approach is more comprehensive and easier to work with instead of using an approach that initially begins with a large number of categories and then the data is "sighted in" to a smaller number of themes. This list was a very specific axial coding list, but aiming for specifics will aid in classifying and sorting through the interviews.

       In conclusion, the act of snitching is simply deciding on whether to inform or not. The events and decisions that lead up to a person deciding to snitch are much more complex and involved than people take into account. The literature has identified different aspects that effect a person's decision to snitch or not. The secondary data that is being used is very capable of providing the answers to my research questions, and hopefully this research will provide greater detail and further insight into the different aspects, pressures, motivations, and consequences that play upon a potential snitch.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings from the interviews with 20 active offenders painted a very interesting and complex picture of not only snitching but aspect surrounding the criminal and the community and aspects of the police as well. As was discussed in the demographics section of this thesis, many of the interviewees do not have a lot of formal education, however many of the interviewees have demonstrated through the interviewees to have a command of not only police tactics and how to avoid them, but of legal standing and prosecutional actions or tactics. The world of the snitch however is also based on gossip and assumptions rather than reasoning and fact. For example, people will evaluate a person's quick release from county jail on if/then statements and not actual fact; it is assumed that the person has snitched, instead of posting bail or not being charged.

Some of the aspects of primary coding failed to identify certain information. The interviews did not convey enough information on topics such as family or snitching while incarcerated. However, what interviews did convey is that snitching is widespread and observations and experience do not necessarily trump gossip. Also, while family protection or family justice is a reason for a person to snitch, aspects such as likability and jealously are far more in command of a person's decision to snitch.

The Person

The person is the most important aspect of snitching. Everything that a person becomes involved in whether it be positive or negative stems from the person and the decisions that they have made. Without a doubt, family, friends, educators, community, etc. can influence a person,

but how the person decides to let those influences impact his/her life is ultimately up to the person who has been influenced.

Motivations

Those two categories are motivations to snitch and motivations not to snitch. In terms of motivations to snitch it should first be noted that from coding the interviews an overwhelming amount of subjects (14) claimed that they have never snitched, but everyone at least fell into one of the categories: they knew people who have snitched, or they were well aware that snitching was a huge problem in street issues. It is important to distinguish from the hearsay of what subject's think somebody else's motivations were to snitch and subjects who have actually snitched and what fueled their motivations to snitch.

Different subjects provided different reasons to snitch. The common motivations such as money, jealousy, and dislike can be found among the answers. However, even in the situation of not liking someone it basically boils down to money. Smoke-Dog was asked why he thought people were snitching, but Peaches, after chipping away at her answers, and working through her denials and excuses, finally informed the interviewer as to why she informed.

> Getting back to the most basic thing, it's about the money. You got snitches, dope men that are crackheads, . . . you got snitches that snort heroin, some that shoot heroin. You got some out there that just don't give a fuck about what ever it takes to get some money. If it takes to snitch on somebody then they're gonna snitch on them, and it's like that, you know. (Smoke-Dog)

> I didn't like them though. I wanted them to go to jail. I wanted them to get off our street because if they are making the money we're making then we ain't making enough money, so either they gotta go or we gotta go so they try to kick us out up the butt or we kick them out up the butt. So, as you know, we the ones that are left. (Peaches)

When asked to confirm the truthfulness of the statement, "People say that lots of criminals give information to the police," Big Mix responded with:

> Yeah, cos it's like, everything's like … down in our neighbourhood all the little boys be out there selling crack, weed, everything, but the minute somebody else making a little more money than them they'll tell on them just to get them from out there. I've seen it happen, I can't even count. I mean people be seeing this stuff, people see it and I know people been telling, I know people been telling cos there was a time when I used to deal and I was told on. It's like everybody just wants

everything, so ain't nobody gonna really be real with it. They gonna tell if they want you away from it bad enough, so they can get it. (Big Mix)

While money is a main motivation to snitch on a person, dislike of a person appears to also be a factor. Peaches was an interesting respondent because she presented all three issues. Peaches was not only jealous of the money that was being made that her and her associates were missing out on, but she appeared to dislike the people that she snitched on.

Either they don't like the person or they scared of police, I guess. (Peaches)

INT: But you did say you did it in this situation because you didn't like the person.
Stacy: That's right.
INT: So would you do that again?
Stacy: Yeah. Cos if it was another motherfucker I don't like then I'd do it again. (Stacy)

However, in some instances such as the one J described, prospective snitches will give information because they are afraid of jail, and in some instances, as Peaches pointed out above because the snitch is afraid of police. Nasty Bitch informed the interviewer about her background, and how hard it was raising her kids. Even though she had thought about snitching to help out her situation, Nasty Bitch never felt that snitching was worth it. Furthermore, only when her children became the bargaining chip in the questions, did she feel comfortable with snitching.

They are *(sounds like boiling)* to get you out of jail, a lot of people do that. A lot of people just stay out of the penitentiary, they'll tell on somebody quick, it's like selling your soul, you know what I'm saying, they do. There are a lot of them that don't care, they don't care, they'd tell on their own momas or their own daddies, you know, or brothers or cousins, that's how it is. (J)

Um, if they told me they were gonna lock me up so I couldn't see my kids no more and they gonna take my kids and if they wanted to know information on that person then I'd snitch then if I felt where I had not other choice, and a situation where they got me real good and, you know, I had no other choice (Nasty Bitch).

On a sublevel of snitching, there are snitches that inform and give precise and truthful information in order to protect himself or herself or receive a reduction in jail time. However, there are snitches that inform, but do not give the police correct information, or they give up

somebody who is not a close associate.

> Got kicked in, me, my sister and my brother and two of his friends, got kicked in. They took me in they car and took some other people in the paddywaggon. I knew what they wanted of me, they wanted me to snitch on somebody. I telling you I snitched but I gave them the wrong house and everything and they let me go and he was like, "If you lying, fucker, I'll come back and arrest your ass, you leave your kids for good and you be in the slammer for a long time." They always harass us, always. . . (Peaches)

The portion of the interview with Little Tony demonstrates the art of snitching, but not actually snitching because the person has somehow disassociated himself from the act. Little Tony swore that he had never given up anyone to the police. However, Little Tony recounted a story where in order to save himself, he gave the police some information. Furthermore, the interviewer was able to slowly chip away at the story and separate what Little Tony thought he did, and what he actually did.

> Little Tony: Yeah I got off out that jail. But I ain't told on nobody I grew up with, nobody I knew, I just told them about some motherfuckers I don't even know.
> INT: Did you know kind of who they were?
> Little Tony: Yeah I knew kind of, I'd seen them a few times and we had a few words, few ordinary words like, "Fuck you." It wasn't like "I'll take that bash". It was more like "I don't like you", and some shit like that.
> INT: You didn't really make it up, I mean you knew the people …
> Little Tony: I knew him, I knew what he was doing, but I ain't really too much know him know him, you know, we didn't hang together or throw rocks together or ride together, we didn't do none of that. (Little Tony)

The reasons to snitch are in line with what Black found in that some burglars will target a person because they dislike a person, or the burglar feels that the potential victim thinks they are better than the burglar because the victim has more (Black, 1983, p.38). The reasons to snitch are fairly common and what one would expect. There is a certain art to snitching that aids the snitch in protecting one's self from the potential consequences of snitching. However, as was worked through with Little Tony, there is definitely a very fine line between giving false information to police and actually giving information to police but justifying those actions to yourself. There are certainly little nuances that can be uncovered about the intricacies of snitching. However, no successful tool exists for actually identifying a snitch.

Maturity

For the most part the subjects can be broken down into two distinct categories. The age difference between the subjects created a maturity gap. Subjects who were over 25 years of age provided much more thorough and well thought out answers. These older subjects came across in a way that indicated they have been around longer and they possessed a deep understanding of aspects of the streets; snitching, police, and they were better at communicating their responses. The older subjects seemed to understand the enormity of the drug trade and that there is enough money out there for everyone to be successful. While Big Mix has been "told on" before in the past, and J is very aware that other groups will inform on other groups, when asked about different situations both of these interviewees refused to inform, and provided interesting answers.

> . . .People are getting it in jail. You can sell it anywhere. I ain't no hater, you keep your word and I keep mine. . . (Big Mix)
>
> We ain't no haters. What ever you doing then do it, we ain't got no problems as long as you don't mess with us. Cos there's enough money to be made by everybody, that's how we look at it, you know what I'm saying. (J)

The older subjects also came across as people who knew their priorities, and also did not want to mess with law enforcement. They understood the power and limitations of law enforcement and would rather go around the problem.

> You have to be wary of the people you are dealing with. I can't trust everybody for real. You can't trust nobody in the game, you know. That's how I am, I don't trust nobody. (J)

Jack-T No cos once they get you in there and stuff like that they got you pegged and you can't … they don't care where you move in. You ain't moving out the city, you see what I'm saying?
INT: You mean your record shows up?
Jack-T: Right, your record shows up. By the time they run you off, they run a line on you. You know with their computers they got you, it only take a few seconds.

Not to take anything away from the validity of the younger subjects, but their interviews presented unique challenges in that, their responses seemed truthful but with more posturing behind them. The younger subjects responded with answers that

conveyed truth but also wanted to identify how rough they are, how tough the streets are,

or how aggressive or stupid the police are.

Little Tony: I ain't worried about him. I still got big thumpers, I got shooters just like he got and I love to shoot at a person. I just ain't had to do it in a while but I'd still do it though.
INT: But you're not ...
Little Tony: I'd still do it though. So fuck him. He ain't gonna do shit to me. I don't give a fuck. Police can tell him or what ever. All the time they ain't locked him up

Cal provided one of the better answers about the police, and he demonstrated the

ignorance and arrogance of his age. A majority of the interviews concluded on questions

about how the interviewees felt about the police, their roles, and their functions in

society. Cal's answer was to the question, "do you think we need police in your

neighbourhood?"

> Hell no, hell no, they in the way. They (police) in the way man, they stand in our way. And they wonder why I'm up *(inaudible)*. There ain't no crime, they'll be no crime, it'd be them shooting motherfuckers. There'd be no crime in the neighbourhood. They make the crime, they're the crime coming around. There's crime every time you look up and they fuck up right in your face, fucking with you for nothing. So hell no we don't need them. They're shady little busters. They all think they can run shit. They gun holders. They're always trying to knock something. They trying to kill us off, but they're police shit.

The difference in maturity provided an interesting insight into the differences between the

older and younger subjects. The water and the rock scenario is an interesting but applicable way

of explaining this topic. For the most part the older subjects are the water and everything else is

the rock. The older subjects understand that there is enough money, and drugs out in the

community for everyone to be successful and get a piece of the action. The older subjects also

understand the police and try to flow around them. However, the younger subjects act like the

rock, in that they think they are the center of the world and everything flows around them.

Instead of trying to work around police, they encourage the police to slam up against them and

see who budges. The same can be said with rivals, instead of trying to work together and

everyone have a piece, the younger subjects want to crush everything in their path and prove

how tough or dominate they are. It is very possible that some of the younger subjects will figure

it out i.e. street life, selling drugs, interactions with police. However, some of the younger

subjects will not, they will get caught up in something that is to big for them to crush and they

might end up becoming a snitch to save themselves. The consequences of becoming a snitch

may also be more than any subject young or old can handle.

Community

Community is with out a doubt an important aspect of snitching, but the role of

community does not extend farther than being a facilitator for the person in the community. The

community in itself can only supply all of the "actors" i.e. police, criminals, law abiding citizens,

but the individual or group can decide how the person wants to operate inside of this community.

However the use of the term community is at best a lose interpretation. Community in the

context of these interviews would be better defined as a few social groups within the context of a

block or a street. The group that congregates at one end of the street is not necessarily the same

in views or actions as a group at the other end of the street. Also, these groups are not in line

with the formal community, in which the values that are shared by the larger law abiding

community are not those shared by these street groups.

The Community and Police

Law enforcement and African American communities have not always had the best

relationship. However, one of the more interesting findings was that people do call the police.

Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright (2003), argued that street criminal cannot rely on police for

protection and have a harder time making a claim to victim-status, so the code of the street was

developed in place of formal law. The interviews produced a result that was more in line with

the latter part of the above statement. Some of the interviewers would be willing to call the

police, but the interviewers indicated that the reasons were more medical than crime related.

Little Tony explained:

> If my mum was having a stroke or my gal was having a stroke or someone…… then I would call them, but before that if somebody just robbed me I would have been sitting on a warrant for this person that robbed me. Tell the police to go and lock them up. Fuck no, I ain't doing shit like that.

Some of the interviewers have actually called the police, but because of perceived bad treatment, an unfavorable outcome, or simply not showing up, these interviewees have either decided to no longer involve law enforcement in their lives or to simple go at solving their problems by themselves. Nasty Bitch explained:

> Well back in '91, . . . My grandmother had took her (Child) from me by force, like putting a gun up to my head and told me to leave or they would blow my head off and so I tried to call the police and I tried to get her back you know by the police being there with me and all this kind of stuff. . . when the police came, my grandmother had told them that they had filed for custody of my daughter and the police told me to leave her there until I'd talked to the lady that was in charge of this. So I was like how can you all tell me to leave my child here and I call you all, so right then I just despised them from there, because they didn't help me. . .

Big Mix has also called the police; she has called the police for other people and never for her own well-being.

> For like, other people. I've even called them – I've called them for other people, people like when my mommy used to get into it with her boyfriend and I used to get into it with my boyfriend, my friends, everything.

However, police actions that were done to other people have helped to mold and reinforce Big Mix's views of police.

> Well it's like five years back. Everybody was outside in my neighborhood and the police just came up and they were looking for one of our friends, ...and the police killed him in cold blood out there in the snow. Right in front of everybody, for nothing. . . . . . I feel there's really no need to call them cos most of the time they be like, they don't show up on time or they don't come at all. My uncle got shot and the police was called. The police or the ambulance they never come, they never come. We end up having to take him to the hospital, and this just happened in the summertime. They don't ever really come when you need them.

Law enforcement plays a dual role in this community as identifier and catalyst. An overwhelming majority of the subjects stated that not only do they not like the police, but they also do not trust the police. A majority of the subjects also indicated that they have been, or continue to be, harassed by police. However, those who identified that the police were harassing them were for the most part were doing something wrong.

> Well we was on the corner and the police was there and they swooped on us and gets us by the collar because there were a lot of people standing out on the corner. They threw us up, searched everybody, didn't have no warrants or nothing. . . . . . . They just told everybody to walk up to the car and put their hands on the car. (Block)

> Interviewer: Were you slinging?

> Yeah, we were slinging, bang bang (crack) was in my mouth, if they would have asked to open my mouth, I would have swallowed it. (Block)

In terms of being a catalyst, law enforcement perpetuates a cycle in which people are used to make cases or to stir up problems between associates or within the community. A majority of those interviewed indicated that law enforcement would not be as effective as they are without information provided from informants. However, law enforcement will do certain actions in order to get information or out a person when law enforcement either needs information or no longer has any use for the informant. When asked about certain harassment techniques used by police officers, Sleazy-E agreed with a previous interviewers claim about driving people around to make it appear that the person is snitching.

> Put you in the back of the car and you riding around in the back of the car with them and they ride through your hood and everybody see you in the car and then they get to the end of the block and they let you out. Then you got to walk all the way back up through the hood to where you live, to where your homies are at, and then everybody's looking at you like, " What you doing in the back of the car, was you talking, was you out of your mouth?" (Sleazy-E)

Cora was asked questions about the riskiness of informing and while information traveling through the streets was definitely a factor, being attached to law enforcement and having to deal with their constant harassment was the biggest risk.

> I mean OK, you could just be standing out on the block, right, with a couple of your partners, and they pull up. They probably ain't gonna say nothing to nobody but you. The probably say, "Come here!" and get you up to the car, ask you different shit like "Who was that dude right there, who was that?" and you are telling them and them niggers who are stood there with you, they see what is going on. Then they know you talking, and the police will put you on the front street like that. (Cora)

The respondent's did not offer specifics on how they dealt with the after actions of riding around with the police. Cora's answer was interesting because it gave insight into her priorities. In this instance, even though riding around with the police is very risky, her main priority was not to get locked up.

> INT: So you just drove around and you said, "OK, let's go"?
> CORA: Yeah. Anything not to get locked up.

Law enforcement's role in the community is very interesting. For the most part respondents do not like to interact with law enforcement except in instances that require medical assistance. Respondent's often feel harassed by law enforcement, but when pressed further, some respondents such as Block were up to illegal activities and the police were correct in initiating a stop. To say that respondents have a mutual agreement with law enforcement would be reaching. However, the respondents presented law enforcement as an un-liked task at a job; in that, it is a task that has to be preformed, but nobody ever likes doing it. Furthermore, the ride arounds presented an interesting paradox. Some respondents were worried about having to explain themselves to their friends and different groups, or as Cora explained, staying out of jail, but none of the respondents seemed to be troubled at all with dealing with law enforcement. However, it is very possible that law enforcement and associates might have more of an influence when coupled with the close quarters that are found in incarceration.

Identification

Identification of a snitch is based more on hearsay than actual fact. For the most part the identification of a snitch resembles more of a witch-hunt than an inquiry based on actual fact.

The identification process is mostly based on happen stance and gossip. In rare situations does the actual person that was snitched on find out who gave up the information? In confronting a potential snitch, it is very unlikely that the person will admit to informing unless actual unquestionable proof is brought to the table. Block, Cal and Jack-T were asked about the facts that led to their arrest, and while both claimed that someone had snitched on them. Block, Cal and Jack-T used different methods to figure out who had given them up. Block identified the huge gap between factual information and conjecture.

> INT: Do you have any ideas?
> Block: Yeah a couple of ideas cos the person got locked up about four days before I got kicked in, you see what I'm saying. That's who I think but I don't know.
> INT: How do you find out who snitched on you, how do you do that?
> Block: Cos the snitching ones they keep their mouths closed. If somebody snitch on somebody else and that person tell somebody else, and if he tell the wrong person, it get back to me.
> INT: Well why would a snitch tell somebody else that he's snitched on you?
> Block: Cos that's how snitches operate.

Cal on the other hand claims to have found out through the police report.

> Cal: Cos they had. You know what I'm saying. When you get a police report, you read it his name gonna be in the police report.
> INT: So their name's on the report?
> Cal: Yeah it be right there, the name be right on it. (Cal)

Jack-T knows who informed on him, but because this person did not go to court and testify against him then everything is okay.

> No, no, well you know, put it like this. You might talk but once you don't go to court you know, so that's the thing. That's just like nothing really if you don't go to court, you know. . . . . .Well he said it but, you know, as long as you don't go to court. It don't mean nothing, somebody saying you done something. That means nothing, but when somebody takes the stand you know that when trouble comes. (Jack-T)

Identification of a snitch is not really based on any real tried and true method. However, the consequences of snitching are very real and permanent. One would think that because there is so much on the line when confronting a potential snitch that the confronter would want to have indisputable and correct proof, but that is simply not the case. The world that has developed through the interviews paints a picture where

jealously, dislike and potential loss of money can put a person away. However, if simply getting out of jail early can put you life at risk, how can a person protect him/herself?

Safety/Associations

The chance of being informed on has caused the subjects to change the way that they operate their business. However, there are a lot of options in play, which could be identified. Some of the subjects mentioned that the chance of being informed on definitely caused them to change up who they associate with or who they sell to. For the most part, half of the subjects operate in a lone wolf mentality or at least have become very conscience of whom they work with. One subject quit crime because the subject had become very distrustful of associations within the criminal lifestyle. Four subjects chose to work with someone or in a small group, but the gang or pack mentality was not existent with many of the people interviewed. Subjects who did work with other associates for the most part had a really tight knit group, in that, if one person were pushed to snitch they would let the rest of the group know. Jack-T and Smoke Dog were asked if the risk of being informed on had changed the way that they do their crimes.

> Yeah. Yeah that's right. I'm by myself now, you know, cos only body that can tell on me is me. I'm the only one that can tell on myself so that's why, make sure I have nobody with me. (Jack-T)

> The only thing my boy gonna know about it is that we gonna do this, that's all. Cos when they deal our boys down it's either he told or you told, . . . and I mean he's not gonna come back to nobody but the one who did it, . . . and that's why it's always better to keep the boy in the dark. You say "Come on we gonna go" and before he know it we do it and it's over with, you know. But if he gets to snitching on you then I got to pick him out the box. (Smoke Dog)

However, in another aspect some subjects presented a different aspect where snitching had not caused them to change their ways, but the interviewer had gotten smarter in the game and had made changes based on past experiences with associates or sort of coming of age within the context of street life. When asked if the risk of being informed on had changed the way that

they do their crimes, both K-Ill and J acknowledged that it had, and went on to give their

explanations.

> In a sense you know I don't hang out no more, you know. It's like everything's gotta be like either you hit me, you call me, try to get in touch with me, you telling me some place we can do business, and I go about my business, keep on going with other things you know. There's more to life than just hustling, you know. I'm enjoying myself while I'm doing my thing. (K-Ill)

> All the time, you know. You have to be wary of the people you are dealing with. I can't trust everybody for real. You can't trust nobody in the game, you know. That's how I am, I don't trust nobody. (J)

The reason to work with a group or work alone appeared to be each subject's own preference.

For some it was a personal choice, but for others experience whether it was good or bad shaped

the respondents desire to work alone or with a group.

Consequences

The consequences of snitching are very real and for the most part very violent. Being

identified as a snitch is about as close as you can become to representing the modern day scarlet

letter. Once a person is identified as a snitch, not only has the world become increasingly unsafe

for the snitch, but also in many cases the snitch's time is very limited. The violence as you can

imagine is present, but the interviewers only spoke about what they have heard or expect to

happen, and not what they have seen with their own eyes. J and West Florissant were asked

about the risks associated with someone who had snitched and if this person could ever return to

a normal life in the streets. Furthermore, Stacy's response was to an incident in which a person

was attacked because this person was suspected of snitching on Stacy's sister's boyfriend.

> Well you see. That's the thing about it, it ain't gonna last long. Somebody gonna come up and take his head off for real, they don't last long, I'm telling you. The snitches only last, you know, just for a minute. (J)

> You see if you rat on this version you are getting off scot free, maybe leave the state for a little while, long enough for the heat to clear over or what ever, but you wearing that bell where ever you go. You never know who may see you out of town or may pop up on you. (West Florissant)

> . . .they caught him. Some of their friends caught him and kicked his butt real good. (Stacy)

Nasty Bitch was the only subject that elaborated about what happens to a snitch while they are locked up. While this information is only from a county jail perspective, the information still describes the violence that can follow if a snitch is discovered.

> You see them either getting stabbed in the cells or something like that. They have somebody to do it, you know, to the snitch. . .They ain't telling you when they turn the lights out and they shake you with a knife or cut your throat and things like that or hang you or rape you. . . So it's not a good point to snitch. . . cos you gotta look at your life cos if they don't get you in the jail or what ever then they're after your family and you gotta look at your family who ain't done nothing. The situation is between you, the cops and that person, so that it's not right that the police have made it out. (Nasty Bitch)

The consequences of snitching are compounded when law enforcement is involved. Not only, does the snitch feel pressure from the street, but law enforcement can "twist the screws" in order to keep the snitch informing. Smoke Dog was asked if it was possible for a snitch to stop giving information to law enforcement.

> I mean you can tell them you don't want to be a snitch no more. They'd say ok you don't want to be snitching but you got a case, and they gonna give you a case. They gonna tell you you got to be a snitch until the day you die. (Smoke Dog)

Smoke Dog elaborated further as to the consequences of being a snitch that is no longer useful to law enforcement.

> That's what you get when you're a snitch. You put your life on danger street when you're being a snitch, you know. You know that one day they gonna do this here, they gonna put you in a car and let you ride through the neighbourhood, they gonna stop to talk to everybody and you sat there in the back seat of the car. . . . . It's like, "come on everybody, he's snitching".

The consequences of snitching are not by any means easy. For the most part, violence awaits the discovered snitch. Even if a person is suspected of snitching, this connotation alone can create problems between the suspected snitch and his associates or competitors.

Incarceration

One of the goals of this paper was to find more information about aspects of snitching while incarcerated. However, only two of the subjects did any significant time, and one did two years at a juvenile work camp. Of the two subjects who were incarcerated, only one was asked about snitching while locked up. Jack-T indicated that snitching on the street is different than in prison, but no answer could be found about the consequences of snitching on the inside.

> Cos it's different cos see a snitch is confined to a little small place, like it's joined, that's too small for you to be …Yeah they easier to find, yeah. Don't get me wrong, there's a whole lot (snitching) of it going on in the penitentiary, there's a whole lot you know.

However, some subjects indicated that they have heard or know people who simply go to jail or prison to take a break from the rigors and stresses of street life. Neck explained:

> Yes, I know a lot of guys that, you know, want to get locked up because they are so bad on drugs that they don't care and they do things and wind up getting caught. Or either somebody looking for them cos they done something, and they in big trouble. . . So a lot of times they go to jail like that or get killed otherwise.

Obviously, in many instances it is for protection, but to give up freedom in order to "catch your breath" is a fascinating bit of information. The community and incarceration present different platforms for snitching. However, regardless of these platforms the basic motivations to snitch have to be examined in order to understand snitching in a broader context.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data produced a number of interesting results that in some instances were very much in line with what previous research has found. Dodge (2006), noted that snitches are a crucial part of proactive law enforcement are considered irreplaceable for investigation and identification of drug traffickers. While the subjects were split about whether or not we (society) actually need police, the subjects were almost unanimous in their agreement that police investigations would greatly suffer without the use of snitches and informants. Law enforcement has a prominent role in inner city communities. As briefly touched upon in the findings, law enforcement plays a duel role as identifier and catalyst. An overwhelming majority of the subjects stated that not only do they not like the police, but they also do not trust the police. A majority of the subjects also indicated that they have been, or continue to be, harassed by police. Because of these issues with law enforcement, many of the subjects chose to only deal with law enforcement when a problem arose that the subject was not equipped to handle. The subjects presented answers that limited their use of law enforcement to only medical emergencies such as a stroke or heart attack. However, if the problem was something that could be handled without the use of law enforcement, many of the subjects would handle the problem themselves or at least knew someone who would aid them in their problem-solving endeavor.

Anderson (1999, p. 307) noted, "Thus the code of the streets emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety begin." Because of the subject's distrust of law enforcement and unwillingness to call law enforcement for problems that were non- medical, the use of street codes could be found within the interviews. The findings indicated that the main reason behind the rise of street codes in the neighborhoods where these

interviews took place was the mistrust of law enforcement. While issues such as racism, economic opportunity and alienation could possibly be found in other neighborhoods, the interviews did not reveal or the subjects hardly touched on these issues other than the context of these issues within law enforcement.

While no evidence could be found that provided a direct link to subject's unwillingness to snitch because of some sort of campaign or movement, a majority of the subject's claimed that they have never snitched. However, all of the subjects indicated that they are aware of snitching problems within the community. Some of the aspects such as family or schooling, that were hoped to influence the subject's unwillingness to snitch, were not found in the interviews. Interestingly enough, in one interview, the subject did not like his elderly grandmother involved in his affairs because in past situations, the grandmother has involved the police if she saw something wrong. While the interviews did not reveal the initial source of the subject's first lesson with not being a snitch, through growing up in the area, associations with friends and just becoming a more intelligent and efficient criminal hardened the subject's unwillingness to snitch.

Maturity and learning issues were present through out the interviews and often seemed to work together with each other. According to Anderson (1999), because these behaviors occur in public space, they can create impressions to communities that are external to these neighborhoods as being the modal form of behavior of all lower-class community residents. The findings revealed that while behavior can create ideas in a community, the behavior could be very differently from one end of the street to the other. Groups of people can gather at one end of a street, and another group at the other, and while each group will have similarities, they will also have subtle differences. In terms of learning from a street context, almost everything is

done through observation. That is not to say information relayed by police or by other members is not taken in and given its appropriate weight, but conversation does not out weigh observation and experience. Many of the subjects relayed that they knew a person was snitching because the snitch would be picked up for something and released almost immediately after arrest. Furthermore, many of the subjects, felt that they could and did understand the actions of a snitch and could effectively identify them.

However, the difference between the older and younger subjects was very interesting from a learning and maturity sense. Not only did the older subjects seem to be much more relaxed and not in your face about trying to prove themselves, but the older subjects had a wealth of legitimate street knowledge that has not only been learned, but also successfully applied. The older subjects seemed to have a better understanding of legal standing and what the police could or could not do. Because of this age and experience, older subjects had a better understanding of police tactics and for the most part did not have to rely on hearsay or gossip. Older subjects also have learned through experience what methods work the best for their illegal activities, who to trust in these activities, and process's that can be used that not only keep the subject safe, but alert the subject to possible problems with associates or trouble from law enforcement. This knowledge and experience is for the most part almost the exact opposite of the younger subjects.

The younger subjects seemed to be more aggressive with law enforcement in the fact that they were unwilling to change their ways and the younger subjects were careless in their illegal activities. Younger subjects perceived themselves to be in the dominant position. Anderson (1999), noted, "with the code of the streets establishing techniques of self-presentation that simultaneously emphasize ways to avoid victimization and to respond to victimization when it occurs." The younger subjects wanted to dominate their section of the street, and if somebody

was getting more or crossed them in a bad way i.e. snitching, then the younger subjects wanted

to get even. This is completely different from the older subjects who: A. in their drug dealing

want a more cohesive and less competitive environment because there is enough income for

everyone, and B. have already been through many of the same problems, and not only are they

smart enough to avoid certain associates or problems, but if something does happen, it is taken as

a lesson learned, the older subjects moves on and does not have to worry about catching a case or

getting caught up in something else.

The findings produced some interesting results as to why people snitch and how snitches

will try to negate the blame in not only their minds but to their associates. I had suggested

through the review of literature that a snitch could inform and use this as a tool to rise above

their enemies. In the instances that were relayed by subjects, a majority of the snitches decided

to inform because they were jealous and did not like seeing somebody in the neighborhood

having more than they had. In another instance the person snitched because he/she did not like

the person.

While a few of the subjects indicated that they would snitch to protect their kids from

being taken or to help a family member, snitching on somebody because they are not liked or

because they are jealous can create major issues between associates, groups, and neighborhoods.

It is understandable that a person would snitch to protect the ones they love or to even bring

justice to a known person who harmed a family member. This idea of protecting loved ones has

been stated in past research and is again justified here. However, snitching on somebody because

they are not liked, or are jealous of the persons illegal success is a huge risk to take. Offenders in

disadvantaged neighborhoods are focused on gaining status, respect and street credibility through

the use of violence or acting tough (Anderson, 1999, p. 72). It is understandable that other

criminals would inform to keep competition down, in that respect, this would follow Anderson's ideas and help the criminal gain status and street credibility. However, some of the interviews painted a picture in that there was not only enough to go around, but by snitching or fighting for turf or a market, it not only hurts the market, and draws the eye of law enforcement. As stated earlier, the findings indicated that learning aspects of street life are just as much through observation as well as experience. A person trying to gain status by snitching on a rival is definitely a risky proposition based upon the fact that other people in the area have observed this action before, and have seen the after actions of other offenders in the past. From reading the interviews, it is very safe to assume that it does not take very long for other members of the community to catch on to what happened and who did it.

The consequences of snitching are identical to past research. Violent interactions are common after a person is discovered to have snitched. However the findings also point out that a snitch has to lay low and out of sight or move to stay away from being detected. However, some subjects indicated that even though a snitch moved away, the snitch might still be identified. The distance of movement was not identified, but this brings up an interesting idea, that even though some offender's only work by themselves and other offenders work with a small group of associates; there is an overarching network of information and gossip that travels through neighborhoods.

Limitations

The findings did present some methodological and researcher limitations. From a methodological perspective one of the few limitations were in the questions and interviews themselves. The interviews focused on snitches, but many of the questions focused on a subject's interaction with law enforcement. Most of the interviews were very close to

questioning many of the topics that I am interested in, but as the questions would start to venture into those areas, the interviewer would quickly get the subject back on the subject of their project.

Another methodological issued that I faced was in the use of the self-reported data. Aspects of selective memory could be found in many of the subjects. However, the previous researchers with this data did a fair job on pulling out the elaborated answers from the interviewees. Telescoping and exaggeration were both issues that could be found in the interviews, and they often worked hand in hand. Telescoping issues actually provided the hardest aspect of coding the interviews. It was necessary to reread some interviews many times over because the subject would telescope issue from the past to the front, and in some instances try to push recent, important issues to an earlier non-essential time. Exaggeration made the issue of telescoping worse, because not only did some subjects push stories or incidents to the front of their memory, but also they kept pushing the point until the interviewer provided some type of sympathy response, dropped the issue, or totally redirected the conversation.

As with telescoping, exaggeration was a big issue with this research. Exaggeration presented problems not only from a methodological standpoint, but also from a personal standpoint. "Especially when monetary inducements for participation are present, individuals may be inclined to fabricate incidents or to enrich minor incidents so they seem more noteworthy" (Mullins, 2006, p. 37). In many instances subjects would tell their side of a story or present a story that did not seem to be truthful or greatly exaggerated. For instance one subject talked about all the guns he had, how often he shoots his guns and how he was not afraid to shoot them at people, if needed, but the subject did not know the difference in the calibers of his guns, or even what calibers are associated with each gun. In another instance a subject repeated an

interaction with a police officer where he was just mouthing off and acting tough. However, in quite a few interviews, the subjects portrayed the police as the ones who were mouthing off, and being aggressive, but the subject was just minding their own business.

From both methodological and personal stand point this exaggeration made it very hard to think that what was being said was valid. On numerous occasions, outside crime research was conducted to find information that corroborated or set a precedent that what was being said had happened to someone else in the past. From a researcher standpoint, exaggeration made it difficult to trust that the answers were valid, and the exaggerated information produced issues in coding because while some information might have been really interesting, it was difficult to trust that information over information that seemed less exaggerated and more truthful. While primary research collectors can probe vague answers during an interview, as a user of secondary data, that option was not available.

From a personal aspect, the fluency of the language in the coded interviews presented some understanding issues. Every one of the subjects was African American, and for the most part almost all of them had low educational attainment, and were embedded in the culture of which they are speaking. This is not to take anything away from the culture of the interviewees, it simply points out that interpreting the language used was definitely an issue. After reading the interviews through numerous times, it became easier to understand when some of the interviewers were putting emphasis on what they were saying, and when they were simply answering the questions. However, on many instances, the use of outside sources such as Google and urban dictionary had to be used to understand exactly what the interviewer was talking about, this was especially true when the subjects described illegal drugs by different names.

Finally, the findings did not produce all the answers that were hoped for. Originally the goal was to present a total understanding of a snitch. However, the interviews only focused for the most part on interactions of subjects with police. To totally understand the world of the snitch, I figured that incarceration would be an important factor in this process. However, the interviews barely touched the subject of incarceration and snitches.

Implications & Future Research

The implication from this research is that a better understanding and more defined picture of snitches in an urban setting can now be added to existing research. This research identified some of the pressures and risks that a potential snitch must move through in deciding on whether to inform or not. Some of these biggest pressures include consequences from both informing and working with law enforcement. This research, while not all encompassing, serves as not only a starting point for future research, but also a light that can guide researchers down an introduced path.

The world of the snitch is in many ways just like the ocean, we know it is big, expansive, and encompassing, but we have only studied about three percent of it. The current research on snitches and snitching only covers a small select group. However, in order to truly understand the world of a snitch, the research needs to spread out horizontally and vertically as well.

From a horizontal perspective, research on snitches needs to look at the phenomenon of the snitch and snitch mentality across different groups, cultures and societies. The pressures that affect on group of people many not affect another group in the same way. In a cultural and worldwide view, different cultures may treat snitches differently. In many cultures or societies snitching many not only be accepted, but it could be against the norm not to inform when you see wrongdoing i.e. white middle class neighborhoods. A comparative analysis can be made of

snitching and snitches across these different spectrums and a collective identity could be determined. From a vertical perspective, research on snitches needs to look at many different aspects of the snitch. Research needs to be done to follow a snitch up through the ranks. Such as upbringing, street life, incarceration, etc. Much of the previous existing research focuses on snitches at one point in time and asks them to look back, research has yet to follow a snitch through time and different perspectives as the snitch goes forward through life. Overall, the world of a snitch is expansive, however the current research is bunched up in a few small areas. In order to understand more about the snitch and the snitching phenomenon the research has to grow and expand to encompass more areas.

Conclusion

The world of the snitch is very interesting to say the least. While snitching can be used as a tool to remove a competitor from a criminal situation, more often than not, the motivations to use this tool are based on jealously and dislike. An overwhelming majority of the subjects stated that not only do they not like the police, but they also do not trust the police. However, law enforcement has a prominent role in inner city communities. Law enforcement plays a dual role as identifier and catalyst, in that not only will they out a snitch using various tactics, but also law enforcement perpetuates a cycle in which people are used to make cases or to stir up problems between associates or within the community.

A majority of the subject's claimed that they have never snitched, but all of the subjects indicated that they are aware of snitching problems within the community. However, no clear indicator is available to determine if someone has snitched or not. While certain subjects identified different methods or observational pathways to identifying a snitch, the fact remains that the person seeking the truth is using untruthful information and evidence to make their

decision. Furthermore, the simplest way to identify a snitch is to ask the accused person, but of course, the accused person will lie. Violent repercussions for a suspected snitch based on half-truths and outright lies can happen at any time. Once a person has been identified as a snitch, true or not, the person's best option is to move away, but even that might not work.

Based on the jealously, dislike and violence associated with street life, many of the subjects chose to work alone. While this might not protect the subject from the streets, it will definitely give the subject more agency to correct or alter their business or relations if need be. Younger subjects for all of their flash and toughness seemed more caught up in themselves and unable or unready to attempt to understand the bigger street culture picture. However, older subjects not only understood the street game very well, but they understood that there is enough criminal activity for everyone to be happy and wealthy. Older subjects also understood the ins and outs of law enforcement, but avoidance of law enforcement seems to be valued over knowledge of police tactics. The world of the snitch is very complex and based upon misidentification and fear rather than fact. Snitching adds another layer of deceit to a criminal world in which anything out of the ordinary can drastic consequences.

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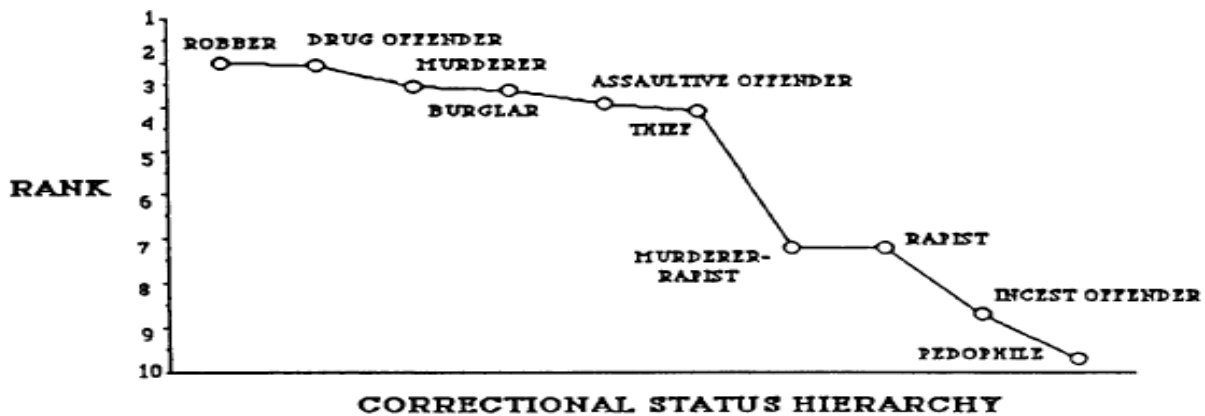
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 1:

	Criminal	*Non-Criminal*
Informer		
Informant		

Table 2:

(Vaughn & Sapp, 1989, p. 80)

Table 3: Created names of interviewees.

Name	Age	Sex
Beano	25	Male
Big Mix 2	41	Female
Block	22	Male
Cal	22	Male
Cora	24	Male
J	26	Male
Jack-T	52	Male
K-ill	23	Male
Lit	22	Male
Nasty Bitch	29	Female
Neck	40	Male
Peaches	23	Female
Pie	26	Male
Pumpkin	21	Female
Rock	20	Male
Sleazy-E	30	Male
Smoke Dog	42	Male
Stacy	18	Female
Sugar	Missing	Female
W. Florissant	24	Male

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Joseph John Pashea, Jr.

jpashea@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice, December 2007

Thesis Title:
    Judas kiss: How never ratting on your friends & always keeping your mouth shut does
    not apply to street snitches.

Major Professor: Dr. Christopher Mullins

Conferences:
    Pashea, Joseph. *Door-to-Door Surveys in St. Louis County Hot Spots: Approaches
    Taken and Lessons Learned.* Presented at the American Society of Criminologists
    Conference, Atlanta, Georgia on November, 2013.