

THE AGED PRISONER:
A CASE STUDY OF AGE AND AGING IN PRISON

by

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In all societies, age is one of the most important factors in determining the ways people behave towards each other. The social organization of all known societies is founded on roles and duties distributed to socially defined age categories. Thus, every human being is assigned certain roles and expected to engage in behavior patterns with respect to the age category of which he is a part. The individuals progression from one age grade to another is met, for the most part, with new roles which are socially appropriate for the different stages of development. Age therefore becomes a basis for the formation of certain relationships and activities as well as for the differential allocation of social roles.

With this in mind, the concern of this study is to explore the importance of age in the role structure of penal institutions. The enactment of the various roles in any society necessitates that the best qualified individuals be selected to play these roles. We will therefore look specifically at the importance that age plays in the assignment of roles. In more concise terms then, we will attempt to point out the types of roles assigned to individuals of the older age set. We will approach our concern by addressing ourselves to two basic questions.

The first question that we will deal with here is that of age-grading. To what extent are there observable patterns of age-grading in the institution. Age-grading will be here utilized in accordance with Cain's definition of the concept: one of a series of statuses

which, combined, encompasses the life course.¹ The emphasis of this study will be placed on the oldest or last grade of the life course, that of the aged prisoners. We will approach our question by exploring the interaction or friendship formation of this category of inmates in an attempt to pinpoint the influence of age in group formation. We will also attempt to pinpoint the various roles which are socially designated for these "old" inmates.

Because of the time factor, this study will limit its scope to two basic areas of the age-grading phenomena -- friendship formation and the work role of the aged inmates of the institution. Thus, the question of age-grading will attempt to explore the influence of age in the friendship formation and the work roles of the aged prisoners. It is the author's contention that these roles -- friendship and work roles -- are the basic role types of any institution regardless of the social setting. Activities not only give continuity to the social system through socialization but also serve as a means of social control, thereby giving stability to the system. It can be further stated that the social setting of the penal institution -- a total institution -- limits the activities of the inmate population, thereby increasing the importance of these roles among the prisoners. It can therefore be argued that to examine these roles is to examine the most integral aspects of the penal social system.

Our use of the concept of "old" and "aged" and our search of age

¹Leonard D. Cain, "Life Course and Social Structure," in Robert Faris, ed., Handbook of Modern Sociology (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1964), p. 281.

related roles and groupings makes it necessary that we recognize the criteria that the penal social system may utilize in defining age (institutional definition). Is age and thus the group and role assignments of an inmate based on his chronological age or is it based on functional terms (the inmates' ability to perform adequately in their positions)? A third criteria of age may be related to the length of incarceration. Here the longer an inmate has been in prison, the older he is defined to be, though chronologically he may be middle aged. What effect will this definition have on the prestige of one age-grade over another? What factor gives rise to the association of inmates of the different age categories?

The second question that we will explore concerns aging within the institution. When does an inmate begin to perceive himself as being "old" (subjective definition)? The age-grading system in general can be considered a process of aging in that an individual progresses through the social system, thereby implying age progression. We will attempt to look at the aging process within the institution by observing the factor(s) which moves an individual from one age-grade to another. Is chronological age the basic factor bringing about the aging concept in an inmate -- where the individual progresses from one age-grade to another as dictated by his chronological age? Or does an individual progress to another age-grade when he is no longer able to perform the role expectations of the previous age-grade? Another possible model of aging in our penal institution may be related to the length of time an inmate has spent in prison, as is explained in the above paragraph. Our goal therefore is to look for the existence of an age-graded system in the penal institution as well as exploring the aging process in the institution.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The societal response to behavior judged as a serious departure from the expected norms of society is and has been for the last two centuries, imprisonment. Ideally, places of incarceration are seen, first as a setting of rehabilitation and secondly as the proper locale to repay one's debt to the injured society. That the goals are such, necessitated that the social structure of penal institution be of a totalitarian nature. The goals, if they are to be met, has to be executed in a "total institution."² No longer is the prisoner a name or an individual. The structure of such institution addresses the inmates in block fashion. Not only do the incarcerated eat, sleep and work together, they are also told when, how and where these activities should take place.

When a convicted criminal enters an institution of this sort for the first time, his thoughts are focused on doing his allotted time with hopes that his time will be easy. Being processed or mortified by the bureaucratic structure of the institution, the convict feels that "easy time" is abiding by the rules and regulations that the administrative body has imposed on him. He feels that the administrators are the ones to be appeased. After a few days in the prison compound however, the novice quickly learns that his judgment as to how "easy time" is achieved has been premature. He quickly learns that in many instances, his well-being depends as much on his association with his fellow inmates as upon the wishes of the officials.

The inmate learns that it is not only through official channels that

²Erving Goffman. "On the Characteristics of Total Institution: The Inmates World," in Donald Cressey, ed., The Prison (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), pp. 15-67.

the rigors of prison life are mitigated but also through involvement in the social organization of the inmates themselves. He frequently learns that the institution is less tightly knit than he expected and that his fellow inmates can provide services which will make his time easier. He further realizes that to obtain these services, he will be expected to learn and to conform to the norms of the prison peer group. Thus, the newly arriving inmates learn that to do "easy time" and to acquire any of the "luxuries" of prison life, they must associate with other inmates and conform to the standards established by the inmate population.

Research on inmate social systems has focused on the factors that promote and facilitate the formation of peer ties in the prison. A number of such factors have been identified, i.e., professionalism in crime, similar work roles, similarities in background, etc. None of the studies have considered age as a basis for the formation of interpersonal ties and groupings in the prison setting. By examining this factor and its influence in the friendship roles of the inmates, it will become possible to determine if the age of an inmate is an important criteria in determining who an inmate associates with to mitigate the pains of imprisonment. Since we are here concerned with group formation among the aged prisoners, it might be helpful that we look at grouping among the aged in the free society.

A variety of social factors may be seen which serve to isolate the aged from the bulk of the non-aged population: (1) The emphasis on youth and economic productivity in American society which therefore de-values the aged; (2) The emergence of social organizations for the aged (Golden Age Club, Senior Citizens, etc.) isolates these individuals from the younger members of the society who are excluded from these

clubs (this, of course, may be understood in terms of the differential interest of the two groups as well as the fact that the aged are, for the most part, tied together); (3) The high mobility rate characterizing the life circumstances of young adults in American society can also be seen as a factor contributing to the isolation of the aged. It is in response to these factors that associations between the aged evolves. Another researcher identifies the aged as a social group. He claims that through organizations such as Senior Citizen Clubs, the aged congregate and there discover their similar problems. It is because of this recognition and their discussions of social action to remedy their problems that the group conception evolves.³ Our interest, here, however, will be more in line of an association between age categories as opposed to groupings (in the sociological sense) between these categories.

The emergence of subcultural patterns among the aged in the free society as well as the groupings among prison inmates implies that a patterned and stable social system in the prison, similar in most respects to social systems in the general society, does exist. Our recognition of these collectivities, particularly in the prison setting, leads us to inquire into the influence of age in these prison associations.

The significance of our findings concerning groupings among aged prisoners and their subsequent aging may not be directly applicable to the development of these processes in the free society but our findings can direct some attention to their development in institutions for the

³Arnold Rose. "The Subculture of the Aging: A Framework for Research in Social Gerontology," in Arnold Rose and Warren Peterson, eds., Older People and Their Social World (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis and Company, 1965), pp. 3-16.

aged. We feel here that through the study of the grouping tendencies of these aged inmates, factors contributing to this grouping behavior can lead to greater insight into the inducement of factors giving rise to group formation in institutions for the aged, for it is through groups or association with age peers that the loneliness, which is oftentimes part of institutionalized living, is eradicated.

The study is designed such that we will be able to answer questions concerning the emergence of specific concepts of age and aging in prison. Through discovery of these concepts and the analysis of their operation in the prison setting, it is hoped that the factors giving rise to these concepts may be introduced into institutions for the aged. For example, should we find a system defining an inmate as young relative to the other inmates in the institution only, the introduction of factors giving rise to this system of age conception in institutions for the aged can be functional for the integration of the institutionalized aged. It would then be possible for a significant proportion of the institutionalized aged, for example, to consider themselves in a new light relative to others in the institution rather than having each individual consider himself in relation to others in the general society.

Through the discovery of the factors giving rise to the inmate grouping tendencies and their conception of age and aging in the institution and the possible utilization of these in institutions of the aged, certain social values can be achieved. The formation of groups (in the sociological sense, with established goals) in these institutions may be instrumental in the formation of new roles for the aged, thereby structuring their lives and minimizing the anomic conditions typical of many institutions for the aged. Secondly, the utilization of

these factors may give rise to a new system of evaluation where age will be considered in terms relative to the aged only rather than in terms of everyone in the free society. It is possible therefore that entirely new self-conceptions will evolve within the institution.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the penological literature indicates certain trends of study dealing with penal institutions and their inhabitants. The first phase of sociological prison research can basically be represented by the work of Donald Clemmer. Clemmer published his pioneering study, The Prison Community, in 1940.⁴ The most important part of his work consists of his theory of inmate prisonization within the context of the prison. For Clemmer, "prisonization indicates the taking on in greater or less degree of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary."⁵

In his section dealing with inmate groupings, Clemmer found approximately 20% of the inmates belonging to what he called primary groups. He characterized these groups as possessing "a common body of knowledge and interest sufficient to produce an understanding and solidarity which is characterized by a we-feeling, sentimental attachment, and unanimity and which allows, at the same time, elements of competition and resistance among members only to the extent that cohesion is not disrupted."⁶

⁴Donald Clemmer. The Prison Community (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1940).

⁵Ibid., p. 299.

⁶Ibid., p. 115.

He characterizes these inmates as the younger, more intelligent and single men who have committed serious crimes. Clemmer found these groupings based on similar work assignments, notoriety as advanced criminals and the sharing of certain interests. His data showed the un-grouped inmates to be older, slightly less intelligent, more frequently married and in general, less criminalistic. These tendencies towards isolation, Clemmer attributes to three causes: (1) positive relations with family or friends in the normal community, (2) the unacceptability of the inmate by the various groups, and (3) inmates who play the role of a stranger -- an individual who deals with all of the inmates in the same fashion.⁷

As stated earlier, Clemmer found only 20% of his sample in primary group membership. This, of course, is due to the rigidity with which he conceives primary groups, a rigidity which is especially stringent considering the limitations on the social structure of all penal institutions. It should not be taken, however, that 80% of the inmates have no group affiliation, for as Clemmer himself admits: "To call them ungrouped is almost an abstraction, as persons, unless insane, live only in association with other persons."⁸ He goes on to say that these inmates are so defined (un-grouped) because of a lack of direct or strongly positive relationships with some of their fellow inmates. Other criminologists, because of a less rigid conceptualization of primary groups, were able to classify most inmates as affiliates of some group, emphasizing the loyalty of these group members. Higgins reports that these

⁷Ibid., p. 131.

⁸Ibid., p. 130.

inmates "cling to one another with a group loyalty not excelled in purity and inviolability by those fine emotions which animates and consolidates groups of human beings in any relationship."⁹ Clemmer concludes his work by stating that: "Contrary to impression and writings of other investigators, this study found and reported considerable evidence to indicate that consensus, solidarity and the 'we-feeling' among prisoners have been previously exaggerated."¹⁰

Clemmer reported however, that the population of his prison was divided into three general and relatively vague aggregates which he called the elite class, the middle class, and the hoosier class. He believed these class distinctions to be important only in determining social distance in the prison. The criteria used in the formulation of these three classes refer to the attitudes the men hold regarding who is the equal of whom. Clemmer claims the attitudes to be based on the reputation of the men before they came to prison, their behavior while in prison, especially in reference to officials and certain other personality traits.¹¹ Schrag likewise found that the inmate population of his prison tended to be classified into major types (five). His typology described a broad role system which tends to dictate the behavior of the inmates.¹²

⁹L. A. Higgins. "Prison Education," in Edwin Sutherland, Criminology (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1924), p. 430.

¹⁰Clemmer, op. cit., p. 322.

¹¹Ibid., p. 107.

¹²Clarence Schrag. "Social Types in a Prison Community," In Carl Bersani, ed., Crime and Delinquency (Toronto: The Macmillian Company, 1970), p. 481.

Of all the characteristics upon which the prison groupings or classes were based, no mention was ever made of the age factors involved (as indicated above, Clemmer is the only exception; however, it would seem that he mentioned age coincidentally). The average age of Clemmer's community is 34 years. The author found, however, the average age of the inmate leaders to be lower than the average age of the population. Though nothing explicit can be said of this, certain questions may be raised concerning the age composition of each group, the relationship between the age of the leader and the average age of the group, the importance of age in obtaining leadership roles, etc. Our interest would lead us to ask if these groups are in any way based on age. If they are founded on age relationships, it would be our objective to locate these groups in terms of Clemmer's more general class system.

Clemmer's work and the few others mentioned above represented the only research on prison literature having some bearing on the formation of groups in penal institutions for a considerable length of time. A review of publications after the appearance of The Prison Community discloses a scarcity of prison studies for the years during and immediately after World War II. An interest in this area of research was not revived until the late fifties, thereby initiating the second phase of sociological research in penal institutions. Among the many studies that appeared in this phase, Gresham Sykes' case study -- The Society of Captives -- is most influential. Unlike Clemmer, Sykes did not concern himself with how the prisoners take on the deviant subculture (prisonization) of the institution. His basic concern was why the presumed culture came into existence in the first place. He argued that many of the deprivations associated with imprisonment are extremely painful for

the inmate and that subsequently an inmate culture arises as a defensive response to the pains of imprisonment. The resulting subculture, he claimed, stresses inmates cohesion against staff and the law abiding world. The institutionalization of such a culture of cohesion thereby reduces the pains of imprisonment. Sykes therefore presents a functional theory in explaining the origin of the deviant inmate subculture.

Sykes reports from his research that a variety of roles can be observed in the prison community which can be used to describe the general behavior pattern of the inmates. He found that the prison argot labeled and described the positions and roles of the inmates; he described eleven roles which form the basic social structure of the prison community.¹³ Though Sykes concerns himself with the formation of groups among the inmates, like most penologists, no reference to the factors of age is mentioned.

Since Sykes' publication, a continuous volley of works have appeared on the prison as a social system. However, many of these studies following Sykes' were largely concerned with basically the same question -- that of the conditions giving rise to an inmate subculture. Other studies constituting this third phase of sociological research on penal institutions centered around the refinement of earlier theories of inmate subcultures and the different forms these subcultures take. As can be seen, the subject matter of these studies imply groupings and group formation among inmates. It is unfortunate, however, that these publications did not consider the factor of age related grouping among inmates,

¹³Gresham Sykes. The Society of Captives (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

for just as the grouping tendencies of inmates are implied in these studies, so are the age factors.

The concerns of acculturation (Clemmer's Prisonization) and culture formation (Sykes) in the penal studies cited above necessitates that the inmates learn the cultural norms and role patterns of the institution. Like any other system, its members must be socialized into the social structure; they must learn to become functioning members. Thus there must be individual inmates who, because they have acquired the necessary training (which implies age progression), play the role of the social agent. Therefore, these inmates are playing roles similar to adults, with the noviates in the penal systems playing the role of children. Thus the implication of age in the penal system is visible; our task is to see how it explicitly relates to the grouping tendencies of inmates.

Whether primary groups, as conceived by Clemmer or social classes (the broader and more encompassing classification), the above presentation shows that prison inmates do form collectivities of some sort. Though the literature implies some importance in age, no concrete evidence could be attained. The lack of any research on the importance of age in prison; our concern with age-grading and aged prisoners and the exploratory nature of this study necessitates that we look at the phenomena of age-grading among the elderly in the free society. It is our hope that by studying age-grading among these aged that greater insight will be gained as how this phenomena might occur among aged prisoners.

The first statement concerning group formation among the aged was posited by Barron's "Minority Group Characteristics of the Aged in American Society." He conceived of the aged in terms of a minority

status because: (1) they are stereotyped by the majority group (the non-aged); (2) they suffer subordination, discrimination, and prejudice as experienced by the older worker in industry; and (3) they exhibit hypersensitivity about their status, self-hatred, and defensiveness.¹⁴ Drake, noting the lack of a unique history, language or culture, designated the aged a quasi-minority group.¹⁵

Rose, in an extension of this minority conception of the aged, suggests that a subculture of the aged is developing due to the following social trends: (1) the large number of persons over 65; (2) the improved health of the older people; (3) shared grievances about the cost of health care; (4) segregation in retirement communities and institutional housing; (5) retirement at younger ages and the subsequent dissociation from major social institutions; (6) comparatively greater resources to pay for leisure time activities; (7) opportunities to interact and identify with each other in the increasingly numerous clubs for "golden agers;" and (8) decreased contact with the younger generations because older people less often live with their adult children and grandchildren. Rose saw these trends as promoters for the development of interaction within the aged category rather than between age grades. He characterizes the subculture with new values such as lessened emphasis on occupational prestige and sexual activities accompanied with greater prestige for good health and activeness. The concept of "aging group conscious," coined

¹⁴Milton Barron. "Minority Group Characteristics of the Aged in American Society," Journal of Gerontology 8 (1953):477-482.

¹⁵J. T. Drake. The Aged in American Society (New York: Roland Press, 1958).

by Rose, denotes the identification of the aged with their age-mates; Rose sees however deterrents to this "aging group consciousness" due to contacts with family, mass media, employment, and social workers in addition to resistance to growing old.¹⁶

In a related article, Rose attempted to measure this concept of "aging group conscious." He operationalized the concept in terms of memberships in organizations composed of aged group members only. He found differences in participation, social relationships, and attitudes when the aging group conscious were compared with those who were not. The aging group conscious aged were found to express a desire to associate with fellow agers, especially in formal associations and to exclude younger adults from these associations. These aged showed evidence of group pride especially when they considered the immorality of the younger age groups. The pride thereby resulted in self-acceptance as members of an esteemed group.¹⁷ Aldridge's study of the social relationships in retirement communities revealed that the informal social participation were even of greater importance to the aged than were the formal organizations such as the Golden Age Club. He states: "Often cliques developed around informal activities, sometimes on a neighborhood basis and almost always comprising only of older persons . . . The various informal social relationships seem to be important to older people because of their flexibility, lack of red tape regulations and requirements, low (if any) cost and the

¹⁶Rose, op. cit., pp. 3-16.

¹⁷Arnold Rose. "Group Consciousness Among the Aged," in Rose and Peterson, eds., Ibid., pp. 19-36.

support and social recognition received by the participants."¹⁸ Similarly, Rosow, in a study of working and middle class subjects, has shown that persons living in apartment houses with a dense concentration of aged tenants tend to have more friends and look at their age-mates as models. He sees the diminishing social participation of the aged as the basic factor in the segregation of the aged and thus claims that "the most viable opportunities for the integration of older people in informal groups lie in their age-peers."¹⁹

Rosenberg, sees the neighborhood of the working class as the main determinant of the number of friends acquired by the respondents in his study. He sees friendship bonds being developed to the extent that the neighborhood is composed of status similars. This notion is expressed in the concepts of "contextual dissonance" and "consonance." The former refers to a dissonant social relationship between the individual and his social environment due to situations where the social characteristics of an individual differs from those of other individuals in the neighborhoods. When there is similarity between individuals and their social environment, the relationship is called consonant. Employing these concepts in a study of the relationships between a variety of characteristics and isolation from friends in the urban working class of a large eastern city, Rosenberg, expected consonant neighborhoods would minimize the level of isolation. The study revealed that neighborhood contextual dissonance did account for isolation from friends among males over age 65 but not

¹⁸Gordon J. Aldridge. "Informal Social Relationships in a Retirement Community," Marriage and Family Living 21 (1959):70.

¹⁹Irving Rosow. Social Integration of the Aged (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1967), p. 287.

for those under 65. Old men living in neighborhoods where their wealth, occupation, or race differed from that of other residents were found to be isolated from friends. Rosenberg concludes that "the structural context of the neighborhood, and particularly, contextual dissonance, seems to be chiefly responsible for isolation from friends and indeed also for rates of local friendship interaction."²⁰

In a study of age-grading among retired men in Wisconsin, Bultena found that the majority of the daily and weekly contacts that his respondents had were with older persons. He found 67 percent of the daily contacts were with age-mates, that is, age 60 or older, as were 59 percent of the weekly contacts. Attempting to test his second hypothesis that the prominence of horizontal, as vis-a-vis vertical social ties, increases with the advancing age of the elderly, the author compared the patterns of interaction of the younger segment of the sample (age 65 to 79) to those of the very old (age 80 or older). His findings here goes contrary to his hypothesis that advancing age is associated with a greater confinement of social relationships to age-mates. Bultena's analysis indicated a greater proportion of the social contacts of the older group (segment) crossing generational lines than did the younger group. He attributes these contacts to: (1) increased likelihood that one's spouse will be deceased thereby limiting possible intragenerational contact; (2) reduced mobility thus limiting visits to the houses of age peers; and (3) the decrease of friends and relatives due to death.²¹

²⁰M. Rosenberg. "The Dissonant Religious Context and Emotional Disturbance," American Journal of Sociology 68 (1962):1-10.

²¹Gordon Bultena. "Age-Grading in the Social Structure of an Elderly Male Population," Journal of Gerontology 23 (1968):539-543.

We should keep in mind here that the argument of increased interaction by the older group was rejected. The fact still remains however, that a greater proportion of social contacts of these respondents are with their age mates.

The above presentation on the aged in the free society enables us to conclude that friendship patterns do occur among these individuals as a consequence of: (1) Social organization for the aged; (2) the high rates of mobility among the young; (3) devaluation of the elderly by the production minded society, etc. Further, it is implicit in these studies that the fact that they are dealt with in terms of stereotypes, that they are segregated, etc., serves as the basic causal factors behind their membership in peer groups. Thus their commonality in age serves as a drawing force for these individuals after which their common experiences due to or caused by age enables them to sustain these relationships. The relationships characterizing the Black Liberation Movement can serve to illustrate this point. Though the whole black race tends to experience discrimination, organizations are developed with certain underlying age criteria, i.e., the Black Panthers (young members) and the NAACP. It is to be understood that stereotyping, the segregation, etc., of the aged are emphasized to give the already existing group an added degree of cohesiveness. The penological literature also indicate a tendency for most prison inmates to form some sort of collectivity (groups and/or classes). It is our task, therefore, to analyze these groupings in terms of age.

CHAPTER II

SETTING AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study was conducted at Chillicothe Correctional Institute -- a medium security institution of approximately 1,050 men. Located just north of Chillicothe, Ohio, the institute, in 1966, became the state's seventh major correctional facility. According to the Department of Correction in the state of Ohio, the institute has programs consisting of:

- (a) An academic school attended by nearly 500 men enrolled in sociology, psychology, family development, etc.*
- (b) Vocational training in plumbing, welding, carpentry, sheet metal, and machine shop work. Several hundred men work in these areas and many are considered in training. Apprenticeship training, under the auspices of the Ohio Apprenticeship Council, is given in the sheet metal and machinist trade.*
- (c) Alcoholics Anonymous program serving the needs of former alcoholics.
- (d) Pre-release programs for all homeward-bound inmates -- a course designed to help the parolee adjust to an open society.

The institution is equipped with five industrial shops -- turning out wooden furniture, tobacco products, printing, mattresses, and hydraulic parts for state highway equipment. Inmates not employed at these jobs may be working in the dining room, the mail room, and as clerks and secretaries. Another area of employment is that of the "old men detail" -- work for the old and infirmed. This employment is suited for these individuals in that no lifting or any form of strenuous efforts on their part is required. We shall speak more of this in the following chapter.

*Though officially listed as part of the programs of the rehabilitation of the institution, most are in the elementary stages of development; this is particularly true of the academic department of the institute.

As stated earlier, the objective of this study is two-fold: (1) to what extent does age-grading exist in the institution, and (2) attempting to realize how aging occurs in the institution. Since our objective was to study the importance of aging among aged prisoners, only inmates who are 60 and above were included in our study. (N=63) Thus, the subjects of our study is the population of inmates 60 and above who were in the institute between August and October of 1972. Chillicothe Correctional Institute (CCI) was selected for this study because of its high proportion of "old" inmates (9%). Though not specifically an institution for the aged prisoner, CCI is typically the receiving grounds for such individuals. The fact that it is a medium security institution and therefore presents no problems for the "old" inmates in terms of the vigor of maximum security regulations, and the minor role of farm work -- in comparison to other state institutions -- at Chillicothe may be reasons that the aged are sent to the institute.

Respondents

To understand the interpersonal relations among the aged in the penal institution, it is essential to examine the composition of the aged inmates who comprised the respondents of this study. This is done for descriptive purposes of identifying who the respondents are. Also, the characteristics discussed below may have significant effects upon the prisoners involved in the inmate social system and more specifically upon interpersonal attraction and relations between inmates. There were 92 inmates in the institution who were 60 years old and above during this study. These inmates constituted approximately 9% of a total inmate population of 1,050 men.

AGE AND RACE

During the period of this study, the average age of the inmates in our study was 66 years of age. Thirty-three (52%) were under 66 and 30 (48%) were above 66 years of age with the oldest inmate being 85 years old. The largest percentage of our respondents were between the age range of 60 and 63 -- N=25 (40%), with the modal age at 63 years. Differing with the age of the prisoners is the average age at time of last commitment which was found to be 58 years of age. The extreme ages were 36 and 74 years, with the modal age at 60. Forty-nine percent (N=31) of the study group were last confined under the age of 60 and 35% (N=22) were above 60 years when last imprisoned. The average age of the respondents during their first commitment was 39 years of age. The extremely high average age during their first confinement can be explained in terms of the relatively high percentage of the respondents -- 33% (N=21) -- who were 50 and above when first imprisoned. The age range in this case is 15 and 69 years of age. Sixty-one percent (N=38) of our subjects were first committed under the age of 39 and 39% (N=25) were above that age.

The respondents were taken from a population of inmates constituting 40% (N=25) of the inmates being of the black race and 60% (N=38) Caucasian. Our population is representative of this racial proportion with 25 black inmates and 38 white inmates. The factors of age and race may facilitate or limit the interactions of some inmates. Age, for example, may be of great influence in structuring the social system of the inmates of the penal institution in that attractions between inmates may be based on this factor. Not only can age be seen in this light but it may determine

the form of the interaction occurring between inmates. Association, for example, may be based on trust and respect between inmates of different age categories but take on a contractual nature between members of the same age. The reverse may also occur. As in the broader social system of the free world, the most intense form of social interaction in the institution may occur between inmates of basically the same age. The factor of age frequently provides a source of common experiences from the past around which conversation and friendship may materialize. This, of course, is the question that we will delve into in the following chapter. The factor of race may also be an important factor in the penal social world for it may be influential in the formation and/or limitation of inmates associations.

HEALTH

Another important factor in the evaluation of our sample is that of health, for a healthy population will mold a different social system than will an unhealthy one. Though we will not attempt to give a complete appraisal of our subjects in this regard, general health conditions which may affect the personality which in turn may affect the culture may be mentioned here. It should be mentioned, however, that the information presented here is based on the respondents' subjective evaluations of their health and is therefore not socio-medical data. (It is felt that the subjective evaluation of one's health status is more influential to one's self-conception, for it is through such evaluations that an inmate determines his physical as well as his social abilities.) Twenty-five percent of our population indicated that their health was poor whereas 66% described their health as good or average. The most commonly

mentioned ailments are arthritis, respiratory diseases, heart disease, and diabetes. When asked to compare their health with the health of other inmates in the community who were their age, 60% (N=38) of our subjects felt their health to be about the same or better than their fellow inmates. Fifty-nine percent (N=37) of the inmates further felt that average to good treatment could be obtained from the prison hospital; however, several complaints were lodged against the medical staff by the diabetics. Their complaints were based on the fact that they were not placed on a diabetic's diet.

SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT AND RELIGION

Another variable which may have some effect on the association of one inmate to another is their educational achievement. The assignment of labor in the institution is based on the intellectual abilities of the inmates thereby placing the individual in contact with certain inmates and segregating him from others during the working hours. Further, high educational attainment may place an inmate in a leadership or influential position thereby affecting not only himself but the way his fellow inmates interact with him. Of the inmates, 4% had no educational training, 25% had a first to fourth grade education, 40% had a fifth to eighth grade education, 15% completed ninth to eleventh grade, and ten members or 16% of our sample completed twelve or more years of schooling.

One's religious conviction plays a minor role in American society insofar as dictating interrelationships between individuals; however, such conviction may take on a new significance in this particular setting. The activities initiated by and the influence of the clergyman in the

institution do give rise to religiously conscious associations. However, 4% of the respondents had no religious preferences. The bulk (78%) of the respondents were of the Protestant affiliations; 16% were Catholic; and one of the inmates was Jewish (See Table 2-I).

MARITAL STATUS

As has been indicated earlier, an inmate's attitude towards the administration of a penal institution and his stand in relations to the social world of the prison is affected by his contact with the outside world, a contact which may be determined to a degree by his marital status. Only 24% of our sample were married with 6% of the inmates separated from their spouse before incarceration. As can be expected, 19% of our subjects were divorced and 29% were widowed. The remaining 22% of our subjects were single (See Table 2-I).

CRIMES

Each man who enters the penitentiary has been sentenced for a specific crime. However, we should keep in mind that a murderer might be a robber who shot his victim during the hold-up or a sex offender might not have been incarcerated had his youthful partner been a few months older. However, the classification of offenses reveals the general criminality of the population. Of the crimes committed by our respondents, 84% were crimes of violence against another individual with 16% committing crimes against property. Forty-one percent of our subjects were convicted murderers, 17% were sex offenders, 15% were convicted on assault charges, and 10% were convicted on manslaughter charges. The highest percent of our subjects convicted for crimes

TABLE 2-I
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics	Number	Percent of All Respondents
AGE		
60-64	27	43
65-69	19	30
70-74	12	19
75 and above	5	8
Total	63	100
AGE ON LAST IMPRISONMENT		
35-39	1	2
40-44	5	8
45-49	9	14
50-54	16	25
55-59	20	32
60 and above	10	16
Information not available*	2	3
Total	63	100
AGE ON FIRST IMPRISONMENT		
Under 25	14	23
25-29	6	9
30-34	6	9
35-39	3	5
40-44	3	5
45-49	2	3
50-54	2	3
55-59	7	11
60 and above	10	16
Information not available*	10	16
Total	63	100
RACE		
Black	25	40
White	38	60
Total	63	100
TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS IN PRISON		
Less than 5 years	10	16
5-9	14	22
10-14	11	17
15-19	4	6

*Respondents did not remember.

TABLE 2-I (continued)
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics	Number	Percent of All Respondents
TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS IN PRISON (continued)		
20-24	11	17
25-29	3	5
30-34	3	5
35 or more	1	2
Information not available*	6	10
Total	63	100
CRIMES COMMITTED		
Sex Offense	11	17
Murder	26	41
Assault	10	16
Burglary	4	6
Larceny	2	3
Drug Violation	2	3
Manslaughter	6	10
Forgery	1	2
Weapons, carrying	1	2
Total	63	100
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS		
No formal training	3	5
First-Fourth	16	25
Fifth-Eighth	25	40
Ninth-Eleventh	9	14
High School and Beyond	10	16
Total	63	100
RELIGION		
Protestants	49	78
Catholic	10	16
Jewish	1	1
None	3	5
Total	63	100

*Respondents did not remember.

TABLE 2-I (continued)
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics	Number	Percent of All Respondents
MARITAL STATUS		
Married	10	16
Separated	7	11
Divorced	19	30
Widowed	18	29
Single	9	14
Total	63	100
HEALTH PROBLEMS		
Arthritis	17	27
Respiratory Disease	8	13
Heart Disease	6	9
Diabetes	5	8
Hypertension	3	5
Others	5	8
None	16	25
No Response	3	5
Total	63	100

against property falls in the burglary category followed by larceny, drug violations, forgery, and carrying a concealed weapon with 6%, 3%, 2%, and 2% respectively (See Table 2-I).

REFUSALS

Approximately 32% (N=28) of the total population of inmates who were 60 years old and over during our research refused to participate in our study. Reasons given for their unwillingness to be interviewed were varied: (1) most of these inmates, even after being told of the purpose of the study and given a description of the types of questions which would be asked, were still suspicious of the author's intention after the data had been collected and therefore declined the interview; (2) a small group of the refusals admitted quite frankly that their only interest was getting out of prison and that since the study served no purpose towards that end, that they would not participate; and (3) the remaining members of the category claimed that they had gone through countless numbers of such interviews and were therefore not willing to subject themselves to more of the same.

Information which could be obtained from the prison records will not enable us to indicate whether these individuals differ significantly from the subjects of our study. A group of inmates differing considerably from our subjects in terms of the traits described above may lead us to think that these subjects may have serious consequences in terms of our findings. The nature of our study is such that we are not able to talk about "social contacts" and aging in terms of these inmates. Thus, considerable differences between our sample and the "refusals" may exist

which will not allow us to generalize our findings to the population of inmates who are 60 years and above at Chillicothe Correctional Institute.

The traits showing the greatest variation between our respondents and the "refusals" appeared in the racial, marital, and the crime factors of the two groups. (The other characteristics, as described above, showed no difference when compared to the characteristics of the respondents of our study.) An eighteen percentage point difference appeared between the two groups when the race of the subjects was considered. Seventy-eight percent of the "refusals" were white as against 60% of the institution's population. A considerably higher percentage of the "refusals" were single -- 36% as opposed to 14% of our population. The other trait which differed considerably between the two groups has to do with the crimes of the inmates. Eighty-four percent of the respondents committed crimes of violence as opposed to 64% of the inmates in the "refusal" group. Of individual crimes, however, 39% of the "refusals" were sex offenders as opposed to 17% of our sample.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

As stated earlier, our examination of the existence or non-existence of age-grading will here involve the friendship formation and work roles of the respondents of this study. Furthermore, the interpersonal ties of the inmates will be based on the perceptions of our respondents as to who their friends are in terms of age. Thus, the concept of age-grading will be in operation among the respondents if they consider most of their friends and co-workers as belonging to the same age category as themselves. The exploratory nature of this study unfortunately yielded a weak methodological foundation, for we are not able here to speak of

the actual chronological age of our subjects' social contacts nor of the number of contacts that our respondents claim. Such information would have enabled us to speak in terms of the age ranges that our subjects would have attached to the different age stages. However, we mention this only in passing for our concern is only that of our subjects' perception of their associates' age category. Though the age ranges attached to the different age-grades presents an interesting topic of discussion, it is a topic outside of the scope of this study.

The presence of an age-graded society will be defined here as the existence of social interaction where most of our subjects interact with others they consider within their own age category. For purposes of validity, our definition must here be qualified. The conception of age-grading has been traditionally linked with the objective concept of chronological age. Individuals of the same chronological age interacting exclusively with each other, has and to a great extent, still is defined as age-grading. However, we contend here that an individual's subjective evaluation of his associates' age category as being similar to his is a more functional definition of age-grading. The term of age-grading implicitly refers to individuals of the same age; however, it explicitly refers to people who consider themselves in the same age category regardless of the actual chronological age.²² Therefore, interaction between individuals having 20 years difference in age may be considered individuals of the same age category and thus age-grading. We therefore speak of the psychological or subjective state of the individual rather than the

²²George Peters. "Self-Conceptions of the Aged, Age Identification and Aging," The Gerontologist, Third Report (1971-1972):72.

chronological age (objective) of the individual though the two are inter-related. Thus we will not conceive of age-grading in terms of chronological age here but more in terms of one's perception of others as belonging to his age category regardless of age.

We do not mean to say that chronological age has no bearing on this problem but more so that age-grading and interaction among individuals who are similar in age is not the only criteria of an age-graded system. We do concede the fact, however, that chronological age plays an important part in the idea of age-grading; however, factors such as health and ideological differences and/or similarities are also of great influence in this subjective definition. Thus, we will define the matching of the respondents' perception of his contacts with their actual chronological age as beyond the scope of this study.

Interlinked with the concept of age-grading is that of aging. Data was obtained on the aging self-conception of each of the respondents in an effort to pinpoint the factor(s) influential in producing the "growing old" self-concept in prison. Thus, the aging self-conception will be defined as the inmate's conception of himself as old. "Growing old" will therefore be in operation only when an inmate considers himself "old."

The concept of "social contacts," "associates," and "friends" are also subjectively defined by our subjects in that these terms were not pre-defined during our interviews. Again, we contend that it is upon the subjective interpretation of friendship ties that any individual acts and that it is upon such evaluations that an individual bases his interaction. The respondents were asked if they had inmates in the compound that they spent most of their free time with such as friends and/or associates. Thus the subjects were allowed to conceptualize

for themselves the meaning of these terms and then respond accordingly. Again, our only interest is to establish whether the inmate does or does not spend most of his time with the other inmates and who these inmates are in terms of age. How our respondents consider those he is in contact with or those he interacts with in terms of friendship per se (extent, magnitude, etc.) is beyond the scope of our work. Our objective is to determine whether our subjects do spend most of their free time with other inmates and how they see these inmates in terms of age categories vis-a-vis their own.

Instrument

The data were obtained through volunteer personal interviews with each of the subjects and the Correctional Officers as well as through official records of the institution and through observations. The interview schedule utilized was for the most part of an open-ended type which yielded valuable commentaries from our subjects. The inmates were privately told the purpose of the study and were told that the information obtained would be confidential. Of a population of inmates 60 and above, numbering 92 or 9% of the total inmate population, 68% (N=63) of the aged inmates consented to be interviewed. The interviews were privately conducted and ranged in time from 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the comments of the inmates. Once the respondents consented to be interviewed, they were usually quite willing to respond to most of the questions asked. However, of the few who were still skeptical of the authors' intentions, questions concerning friendship ties were the most troublesome. These respondents (N=5) for the most part, were not willing to answer questions which they felt in any way could involve

others. Thus, questions having to do with their relationship with their fellow inmates were not answered.

In addition to questions concerning the age category of the respondents' friends vis-a-vis their own, data was also obtained on the respondents perception of the age category of his co-workers. We are attempting to look at the possible existence of age-grading here in another aspect of the institutional structure, that of the labor force. Thus, we will limit our search of age-grading in the areas of recreation or personal choice of associates and labor associations which are structured according to administrative guidelines.

It is of course necessary that we look at other factors or traits with regards to our subjects for the interrelationship between these traits makes up the total person. It is through the understanding of as much of the traits of our subjects as possible that we are better able to understand the social aspects of our institution. Thus, data was also obtained concerning the various descriptive traits mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Since we have a total population, the use of statistical tests of significance were not employed.

CHAPTER III

AGE AND FRIENDSHIP

As stated earlier, the first question that we will attempt to answer here concerns what we have defined as age-grading. Our data reveal that 19% (N=12) of our subjects indicated that they had no friends or associations in the prison. These subjects did not mean that they associated with no one. Rather, they indicated that they did choose certain inmates to associate with, but that they did not consider them to be close friends. Their choice was to relate to others in a common and fairly superficial level, showing no preferences in terms of inmate acquaintanceship, similar to the inmates Clemmer found in his study.²³ As indicated by the following quote, these subjects played the role of strangers:

No, I found while spending several years in prison, that you can't trust too many people. I put no trust in a man with a number. I have become a close associate with a few institutional personnel . . . but I never put my trust in an inmate and that's why I never associate with any one individual at one time. I try to associate with everybody.

The above quote also implies that close friendship may be detrimental to the inmate. A few of these inmates felt that the close association with their fellow prisoners could and often does breed trouble. Therefore the policy of these inmates is to form casual relationships with the other prisoners as opposed to close social ties. However, as will be shown later, this is not the general attitude of the inmates towards their social contacts. Thirteen percent (N=18) of our subjects were

²³Clemmer, op. cit., p. 306.

more explicit about their social contacts in the prison by stating that they had no friends but did have associates. Again, these respondents saw inmate groupings as potentially harmful to themselves. In addition, many of these felt that a close friend meant interrupted privacy as well as exposing themselves to the negative aspects of the phenomena of prison "dealing" -- a type of bartering between inmates which we will talk about later. The following quote from one of our subjects articulates his views on social contacts:

The type of people I associate with, most people would call friends. My theory on friendship can be summed up as the Almighty God and the Almighty Dollar. God takes care of my survival, the Almighty Dollar takes care of my necessities, these are the only two friends I have, all others are associates . . . I do walk and talk with a few. I ask no favors and hope no one will ask me for one. He will have to talk my language for me to associate with him. If he has that rough profane language, I don't fool with him.

Approximately 67% (N=42) of our sample indicated that they did have contact with inmates that they considered friends. For them, friendship meant trust between individuals. Many of these friendship relationships were founded on similar positions in the prison labor force, their coming from the same city or the fact that they came in the institution at the same time and have done most of their time together. Our subjects saw friends as individuals whom they could turn to if they needed cigarettes, commodities, favors, etc. without having to pay double for the transaction. A friend for them was one they could have a decent conversation with, a conversation without the use of profane language, a conversation free from talks of sex and women and the life of crime:

I look for a man that doesn't always talk about crime, who doesn't always talk about women and I don't appreciate a man who uses these four letter words around here.*

Thus, criteria for friendship in the social system of these inmates are:

(1) mutual aid voluntarily given because of the individuals' feeling for each other as opposed to a contractual transaction; (2) trust between inmates; (3) intimacy to the point that one inmate is not threatened if he reveals secrets to another; and (4) acceptable behavior displayed by the actors.

In order to determine the existence of age-grading in terms of friendship formation among the inmates, we must first of all determine the respondents' self-conception in terms of age. We have defined age-grading in this respect (friendship formation) to be in existence if the age self concept of most of the inmates matches their perception of their friends' age. Thus, we must also determine the age category in which respondents place their friends.

Sixty-eight percent (N=43) of our sample considered themselves of the middle age category with the remaining 32% (N=20) placing themselves in the old or elderly categories (13% (N=8) and 19% (N=12) respectively).

*Our data indicates that most of our subjects (murderers and sex offenders) are many times highly disturbed by the profanity of the younger inmates. Many of these inmates were also found to be ardent readers of the Bible with strong religious convictions, convictions which most acquired while incarcerated. At what period in the life of an institutionalized criminal does the life of an outlaw become undesirable? Can this attitude be generalized to other prison inmates? Is age the only contributing factor in such attitudes or are these forces operating on these inmates (other than age) bringing about this change? Though we are unable to answer these questions, research dealing directly with these questions would be most rewarding in the field of penology.

This of course is in accordance with countless studies revealing the same finding. However, when asked about themselves in reference to age, many of the subjects attempted to justify their self-conception by stating that they could still put in a good day's work, that they could still take care of themselves, or that they felt just as good as they did twenty years ago. Such responses provide some clues as to what constitutes old age among the respondents.

It is implicitly inferred that to be "old" first of all means one's inability to be an active member of the prison labor force. Besides providing the inmates with possible work experience for outside employment, prison labor also provides them with time-consuming activities which makes their "time easier." An inmate working outside of the compound speaks of the importance of time-consuming activities:

You can make it tough on yourself, you can "cell up" and not do anything and make it hard on yourself but if you can find something to occupy your mind, something to do, your time passes so quick that your bed time comes before you know it.

However, of particular interest to our study is our subjects reference to their working capabilities when speaking of their age. Though many of the inmates are assigned portering jobs in the various dormitories and administrative buildings, their jobs are taken with the utmost seriousness. These jobs range in length from 15 minutes to one hour, after which the porters usually return to their dormitories. For those who are physically capable, (and many are), a full days work is required either in one of the prison industries, in the kitchen, or on the prison farm. These men speak with pride of their jobs, particularly when they could be working on the "old men detail" or the "litter bag

detail" as it is commonly called. Here are the old, infirmed inmates who are incapable of working in the industries or on the farm. Their duties calls for the peeling of potatoes, beans, etc., the making of crates (boxes), and as their collective name indicates, the folding of litter bags for use in state parks. Like the portering jobs but to a greater degree, the work of the inmates on the "litter bag detail" is negligible and sometimes non-existing. The workers all gather in their working areas and will engage in card playing, checkers, etc. when there is no work to be done. In describing the activities of these inmates, their correctional officer states:

They sit around and are allowed to play cards here or watch television or simply walk around. They get a lot of enjoyment out of being in the open air, walking around, feeding the birds or taking care of the animals (cats) around here.

It is, however, difficult to believe that such activities can serve as a means by which these inmates occupy a sufficient amount of their time, for these activities are not long lived and are likely to become monotonous. We will speak of their activities later in this chapter.

Another meaning attached to "old age" among our subjects seems to be physical disabilities. If the inmate should neglect to mention his working abilities, he will certainly mention his health and physical capabilities as being similar to what it was 20 years previous. Their self-conception is not too far from reality, however, for many of these inmates are amazingly mobile and are physically and mentally alert. Many of these inmates feel that prison life, besides all of its abuses, tends to preserve a man physically. It is claimed that prison life provides an inmate with regular eating schedules consisting of well-

balanced meals (the inmates complain about the way their food was prepared rather than about the food itself), sufficient rest and medical treatment whenever necessary. Their health and physical makeup is particularly sound yet we are dealing with individuals ranging in age from 60 to 85 years, with two-thirds stating that they had one (usually arthritis) or no physical ailments. Thus, we can easily see that most of our subjects consider themselves as similar physically to what they were two decades ago.

As stated earlier, we will look at aging in the institution in the following chapter. We mention the age conception of our subjects only in an effort to compare their self-conceptions with their perception of their friends' age category. When the inmates were asked about their contacts, 23% (N=14) of our subjects perceived their friends as middle-aged, 27% (N=17) felt their friends were either elderly, or old (16% and 11% respectively) with the remaining 50% (N=32) seeing their friends as belonging to the mixed age category, that is, their friends were young, some were old and some were classified as middle-aged.

Of the inmates who considered themselves middle-aged, 42% (N=11) considered their friends to be of mixed ages, 34% (N=9) thought their friends were middle-aged, with 12% (N=3) claiming their friends as young and 12% (N=3) as old. Of the subjects who considered themselves old, approximately 63% (N=10) thought most of their friends were mixed in age, 25% (N=4) thought their friends were old, 12% (N=2) considered their friends as young men and no one was classed as middle-aged (See Table 3-I). If we are to take age-grading to be individuals considering a majority of their friends as being of their age category, then we must then claim that age-grading in this respect does not exist.

TABLE 3-I
FRIENDSHIP TIES AMONG AGED INMATES
WITH RESPECT TO AGE

	Age Category of Respondents	
	Middle	Old
AGE CATEGORY OF FRIENDS	Middle	0
	9 (34%)	---
	Old	4 (25%)
	3 (12%)	
	You	2 (12%)
	3 (12%)	
	Mixed	10 (63%)
	11 (42%)	
	Total	16 (100%)
	26 (100%)	

Though our margins here are small, consideration of the more explicit age groups, that of middle and old age (ignoring the mixed category) would indicate a tendency towards age-grading, as it is here defined. Of our subjects in the middle age category, 66% considered most of their friends as middle aged, with the remaining 33% identifying their friends as belonging to the old or young age category (16.5% each). Those inmates who considered themselves old, no one considered their friends as middle aged whereas 66% considered their friends as old and 34% saw most of their social contacts as young. Thus, if we were to ignore the mixed age category, the social system would be age-graded insofar as that system

is structured exclusively by the inmates themselves (See Table 3-I). A larger number of respondents would reveal whether this is actually a tendency toward age-grading, a tendency we are not able to claim here because of the small number of cases.

However, to ignore the mixed category would totally distort our conception of the inmate social system for it tells us that age is not an important factor in friendship formations. Again, due to methodological weaknesses, we are not able to speak of the composition of the mixed age category. Though an inmate may consider his friends of a mixed age category, and thus not consider age in the selection of his friends, it is likely that his contacts for the most part are of a particular age category. However, in keeping with the subjective definition of age-grading, we must contend that to inquire into the composition of the mixed age category would lead our respondents to think of their friends in terms that they normally do not associate with their friendship selection. It is our contention, therefore, that age-grading does not occur in this aspect of the social system.

Penal institutions are such that most of the activities of its inhabitants are controlled. Most of the day and throughout the night, the activities of the inmate are dictated by the prison administrators. Since we have found no clear indications of age-grading in the unstructured aspect of the prison social system, we will look for the occurrence of this phenomena in the social system of our inmates as that system is structured by the prison administration. We will therefore look at the work assignments, living arrangements, and the eating situations of our subjects.

Of the respondents who had co-workers and considered themselves

middle aged, 50% (N=10) considered their co-workers as belonging for the most part to a mixed age category. Twenty-five percent (N=5) of our middle aged inmates also saw their co-workers as middle aged, the remaining 25% (N=5) of our subjects saw their friends as old (See Table 3-II). Thus, again, our data reveals that age-grading for the most part is not structurally induced into the social system of the inmates. However, we cannot say here that it is totally non-existing for our empirical data does indicate that there are job assignments which are to a degree related to age. We speak here of the "litter bag detail." However, it is necessary that we qualify our use of empirical data. First, it must be made known that our use of empirical data necessitates that we switch focus from subjectivity on the part of the inmates to the subjective interpretation of the interviewer. Thus we will speak here of the groupings of the members of the portering group and members of the "litter bag detail."

Each inmate is expected to report to work at approximately 8:30 each morning. This time varies however with the time required to count the inmates (a numerical count of the inmates is taken four times during the day) as well as with the thickness of the morning fog (inmates are not released from their dormitories until the fog has lifted). As stated earlier, the inmates working on the "litter bag detail" are assigned light jobs which are oftentimes completed within half an hour. The inmates therefore engage in card playing, checkers, dominos, etc. These activities usually continue until they return to the dormitories for their second count of the day and their noon meal.

After the men of the "litter bag detail" have had their noon meal, they are not usually required to return to their work area. Over two-thirds of our subjects are employed as porters or are members of the

TABLE 3-II
FRIENDSHIP TIES AMONG INMATE CO-WORKERS
WITH RESPECT TO AGE

AGE CATEGORY OF CO-WORKERS	Age Category of Respondents	
	Middle	Old
Middle	5 (25%)	3 (20%)
Old	5 (25%)	5 (33%)
Mixed	10 (50%)	7 (47%)
Total	20 (100%)	15 (100%)

"litter bag detail" (the inmates earn approximately \$15 per month). Upon returning to their respective dormitories, many of our subjects congregate in front of their dormitories with some of the other aged inmates. The composition of this congregation may be attributed to the absence of the younger men who are on their jobs. However, as can be inferred from the above quotes, these inmates associate with each other basically because of their dislike for profanity in speech, a trait which is an integral part of the prison jargon. Even though these congregations occur daily, our subjects either (1) do not perceive their associates as belonging to one particular age category and do not consider them in terms of their age; (2) they do not consider these contacts as their friends; or (3) they engage in a more intensive form of interaction in places other than

the area of congregation mentioned above and/or engage in such interaction at a different time during the day. We are inclined to see the latter alone with the unimportance of age in friendship selection. Thus, in response to questions of social contacts, our respondent speaks not only of his afternoon associates but his association with the younger men returning from their jobs in the late afternoon.

Thus, these men ("litter bag detail") are in contact with each other most of the morning and often extend this contact through the working day. Being in such close contact, many of these inmates do form close friendship ties. That most of our subjects claim that their friends belong to the mixed age category can be attributed to their contacts with the other inmates at the end of the working day, contacts in the dormitory during the evening, and their interaction with the inmates during the week-ends (most of the men do not work on week-ends). The remainder of this chapter will attempt to pinpoint the factors bringing about interaction of the aged inmates with the other members of the institution. However, we will first look at the major institutional structures affecting the social contact of our subjects.

Three aspects of the social system exclusively for the aged inmates evolve because of administrative structuring -- the aforementioned "litter bag detail," the living area of these inmates, and the eating arrangements. As was explained above, the "old" inmates are assigned to the "litter bag detail" and thus have no choice as to their working partners. However, the lack of work to keep the inmates occupied breaks down the structure of the situation. The inmate is therefore free to pick his associates, though all of his choices are of the "old" category. The other aspect of the system which is structured by the administration is

the living units of the inmates. Though "C" dormitory is known as the "old men dormitory," only 31% of its inhabitants are 60 and above. The administration determines where each individual lives but after this decision has been made, this structure provided by the administration exists only between dormitories but not within, and this is true only at night. Another aspect of the inmate social system structured by the guidelines of the administration is the eating arrangements of the inmates. At approximately 11:30 a.m., the inmates from all of the dormitories except "C" are allowed to leave for their noon meal. Though the "old" men of "C" are not segregated from the other inmates in regards to their eating area, they are allowed to leave their dormitory after the others for their own well-being. It is felt that the rush of the younger inmates to the dining room may be detrimental to the safety of these inmates. However, the following quote indicates that all of the "old" inmates do not feel this way:

The old men are held in under a lock until everyone else has eaten and sorted out their meals, then they let them out to eat what's left.

After the "old" men are allowed in the dining hall, they are again permitted to choose with whom they will eat, so the administrative structuring is again short-lived.

We mention the interrelationships of our subjects to illustrate the point that most of the interaction of the inmates is little affected by the structures of the administration. The interaction of the inmates is such that for the most part the rules and regulations of the administrators do not dictate who associates with whom. Thus, the official social structure of the institution is not age-graded, its closest point

to such a system occurs in the work assignments for "old" men.

After the inmates have completed their evening meals, they are free to move around the institution. The lack of restrictions as to the movement of the inmates enables a social system entirely structured by the inmates to emerge. Thus, the inmates are free to choose their own associates, regardless of jobs, dormitory, age, etc. It is because of their freedom of movement and their ability to interact with any of their fellow inmates that associations between members of different age groups evolved. The paragraphs below will attempt to enumerate other factors bringing about the association of inmates belonging to different age categories.

The Nature of Prison Life. The prototype of Goffman's conception of a total institution is of course penal institutions. That the inmates are stripped of their autonomy, that each inmate is for the most part treated alike, that he must conduct all of his social as well as anti-social activities* in the presence of others is the true meaning of a total institution. Thus, the inmates have very little to say about whom they work with or whom they will sleep next to. The nature of prison life provides for close physical proximity between inmates, which for the most part brings about the interaction of the inmates. That structure of the institution is such that age or any other variables for

*One of the inmates complained about the homosexuals in his dormitory. Upon being asked what bothered him so, he stated that he has to be in the presence of the acts for he explains that the only care that the sexual partners have is their not wanting to be caught by the guards. Thus, the homosexual acts are in full view of the men living in the barrack-type dormitory.

that matter (as will be explained below), is not an important in segregating inmates; therefore, associations between age categories is quite common.

Mutual Respect. The second factor that we shall look at and the most pervasive of these factors has to do with the importance of the personalities of the inmates. One of the most commonly mentioned characteristics that our subjects see in a friend is his trustworthiness. The obsession of the inmates with snitching* accentuates the importance of trust between inmates, for to be known as a snitch is to be known as the scum of the institution. To earn the trust and respect of one's fellow prisoners entitles one not only to close association with other inmates but more importantly, one is able to receive certain favors from his fellow inmates. That trustworthiness can be earned by an individual regardless of age, friendship ties between members of different age categories are able to materialize.

When our subjects were asked about the general attitude of the inmate population toward the "old" men of the institution, over 70% felt that the inmates in general tended to respect the older inmates with 22% stating that they felt that the general attitude in regards to the "old" men were negative. The prevalence of these positive attitudes was attributed to the character of the aged inmates themselves. Thus, inmates who respected themselves as well as their fellow prisoners are accorded the same respect. An inmate states:

*Snitching -- also called "ratting," when an inmate reports the activities of his fellow inmates to the officials for certain favors.

As far as I can see, they all respect them (the old men). I don't see anything I can say that is bad because if there is any young man -- black or white -- who doesn't like an old man, its because of the old man's attitude, that's all. I can say that because I know a couple of old guys in here who have a bad attitude and no one wants to be around them. If an old man acts right by a young guy, he'll be respected.

The members of our sample who found the attitude to be negative claimed that they were negative because of the inmates' negative views concerning old age. Though only a small percentage felt this way, the following quote can be used to summarize their feelings:

They are real nasty. They call the old men M.F., they say that they are just in the way, that they ought to get out of the way. I don't understand why a person, after he is above 40, should be out of the way, I don't see it. If you are financially secure, they want to use you; if they can't use you, you're no good.

Dealing or Conniving. The above quote leads us to the third factor contributing to the association of our subjects with some of the younger members of the prison, that of material possessions. One of the most interesting chapters of prison life has to do with its system of exchange, better known in the prison jargon as "dealing" or "conniving." These concepts refer to the exchange of goods and services in return for favors or for interest on the goods borrowed, i.e., an inmate may borrow ten cigarettes but now owes the lender an entire pack. Though this type of dealing rarely occurs between friends, inmates who are out to make a profit will engage in transactions of this nature. To clearly understand the association of the concept of "dealing" or "conniving" with the interaction of our subjects with the younger inmates necessitates that we look at the financial status of the inmates.

As stated earlier, the working inmates earn approximately \$15 per month, which, of course, is placed in their accounts. They are then permitted to purchase food items and cigarettes. Each inmate, on their appointed days, are allowed to make their weekly purchase, usually consisting of a box of canned soft drink, cookies (and other readily edible foods) and several cartons of cigarettes. Though the inmates are provided with three meals a day, many manage to spend all of the money in their account. It is because of this (an empty account) and perhaps because of the inmates' attempt to accumulate money in their account that interaction between some of our subjects and the younger inmates occurs. It is general knowledge in the institution that most of the "old" inmates receive monthly social security payments which increase their purchasing power considerably over that of the younger inmates.

An inmate attempting to swindle an oldster into making purchases for him will approach his victims as a friend, doing small favors for him, engaging in friendly conversation, etc. When he has gained the confidence of the "old" man, he will explain that he has no money left in his account and is in desperate need of cigarettes.* He therefore asks his new found friend for two or three packs until he is paid at which time he will return the cigarettes. The transaction may end with the aged individual out of two packs of cigarettes or it may continue. If the packs are returned, sometimes later, the transaction will occur again, but

*Because the inmates are not allowed to handle their financial earnings, the cigarettes are used as the system's legal currency. It is therefore used in the buying of food, favors as well as for gambling. It is officially forbidden to have in one's possession more than two cartons of cigarettes, however, this law is very seldom enforced.

with a carton or two of cigarettes being borrowed. It is time that the whole relationship ends for not only does he not pay the older inmate, he no longer associates with the old man.

Companionship and Favors. Other more enduring interactions between the older men and the other inmates are based on the presence of mutual gains. It should be noted here that the interaction that we speak of here and in the above paragraph is not of the close friendship type, for such relationships do not occur between friends. The gains of the "old" men usually include: (1) companionship and (2) favors which can be granted by young men only.

As shown earlier, most of our subjects conceive of themselves as middle aged. This conception is reinforced by the association of some of our subjects with a select number of younger men. To maintain this association, the old man provides them with cigarettes, cold drinks, etc. The following quote illustrates this point:

There are old men who can hardly walk out of the commissary because they are loaded down with goods. When they get to the dormitory, they tell those people: "I am going to throw this to the ceiling, anything that comes down is yours, all that stays up is mine."

Providing for their wants, the old men are thus able to remain in close contact with these young men. The interaction occurring between age groups is more prevalent because of this reason than it is due to trickery as is explained above.

In a few cases, the association of the different age categories may evolve into a homosexual relationship with the old men again providing the young men with cigarettes and other commodities. Speaking of these

associations an inmate states:

It's more of a love affair. He (the old man) gets it in his mind that he (the young man) is his wife, he calls him his wife, he calls him his girlfriend. Now he can be dangerous to this boy and he can be dangerous to me for perhaps talking to the boy. Now another man might come in the picture who might want to get this young guy or perhaps want to get me, so he'll tell the old man that I'm messing around with the young one. People do get hurt like that . . . They might even start a riot over things like that. It's not the guards or mistreatment, it's the guards keeping them apart.

It should be understood that we are not attempting to point out that these inmates engage in homosexual relationships because of their age or that age is a factor contributing to such behavior. Homosexuality is a function of various factors, i.e., length of incarceration, sentence, contact with family, etc. The factor of age is a variable which comes into play after the inclination has been established. Thus, a homosexual will desire the young inmates as their sexual partners as this quote indicates:

I was talking to a fellow in the tobacco shop and Y said, "X, you act like you don't mind doing this time. You seem so content all the time, I figured you had one of these young boys. You save your money all the time, why don't you get one of these young boys." I said, "You can keep these young boys. A man impersonating a woman doesn't move me."

Association between age categories is also, in many instances, due to the mutual favors gained by the individuals. The work area of the inmate may place him in a position to render certain favors to some of his fellow inmates in return for personal gains. An inmate who works in the kitchen, for example, may provide an "old" associate of his with food stuffs in payment for cigarettes he might have received. The

younger inmates who are farm workers are able to provide the "old" men of the prison with fresh vegetables in return for cigarettes, for cigarettes, as mentioned above, becomes the currency of the institution. However, as stated earlier, most of the associations of the older men with the younger inmates are based on mutual respect such that these favors are done without the intentions of getting anything in return, though the "old" man may offer the person something for his kindness. The following quote illustrates this point:

Now tomorrow is commissary day for me. When I go there, I never have to bring my groceries back. The first person I meet, he'll take it in for me. When I get to my room, my things are on my bed. They are my friends because of the things that they do for me and not charge me for doing it. If I want to give them something, I give them something, if I don't, I don't. Some of them wouldn't take anything anyway.

We will therefore conclude that our institution is not an age-graded prison in accordance with our definition of the concept. Our data inferred that age does not seem to be a factor in friendship selection among our subjects. Various factors were in operation which further prevented its occurrence; namely, (1) the nature of a total institution, (2) mutual respect and trust of one inmate to another, (3) inmate "dealing," and (4) companionship and favors. Such interactions between the different age categories are for the most part perceived as being favorable by the "old" inmates.

As stated earlier, our population included only the inmates who were 60 years old and above during our stay at the institution. Thus, our views are limited to those inmates only and our generalizations are likewise of a limited range. We can speak here of prison life as seen

through the eyes of "old" men. What is it like to be imprisoned as a middle aged man? How do they see the life of an old man in prison? The same question can be asked of the young inmates. Studies attempting to answer these questions will provide us with a complete analysis of the social system as seen by the different age categories. We will then be in a position to evaluate the perceptions of our aged subjects against those of the non-aged population.

CHAPTER IV

AGING IN PRISON

Aging is generally thought of in terms of changes occurring in the individual. These changes, though commonly associated with the later years of life, occur throughout the life span of the individual. The early years of life are characterized entirely by the growth of the individual as opposed to the general decline occurring during the latter years of life. Accompanying these changes are alterations in roles, status and the overall interrelations with other members of the society. Thus, aging, in the latter years -- in its biological sense -- is "a process of unfavorable progressive changes, correlated with the passage of time, becoming apparent after maturity and terminating invariably in the death of the individual."²⁴ Sociologically, aging is defined as "the point in an individual's life when he ceases to perform all those duties, and enjoy all those rights, which were his during mature adulthood, when he begins to take on a new system of rights and duties."²⁵

This chapter will attempt to pinpoint factors operating in the prison setting which are conducive to the acquisition of the "growing old" concept. For purposes of analysis, growing old or aging will be operationalized as the point in the life span of the individual where he begins to perceive himself as old; thus we are again dealing with a subjective

²⁴A. L. Lansing. "Some Physiological Aspects of Aging," Physiological Review 31 (1951):274.

²⁵B. Hutchinson. Old People in a Modern Australian Community (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955), p. 1.

definition of aging. The final part of this chapter will discuss aging, in the sociological sense, within the prison system.

Our findings, in terms of the health of our respondents, revealed that over 25% (N=16) of our subjects claimed no present health problems. As stated earlier, it is a widely-held belief among the inmates that prison life helps in maintaining one's health, as is revealed by this inmate:

They say that these places (prisons) preserve a man. I think that's very true. Your regular hours of eating and sleeping preserve your health. If a man doesn't catch something here, I believe he can live to be 110 to 115 years old.

The most commonly perceived illness of our subjects was arthritis which approximately 27% (N=17) of our subjects claimed. This was followed by respiratory diseases (usually black lungs of the mine workers), heart disease, and diabetes. Of our inmates claiming a decline in health, most attributed their deteriorating health to their advanced age with the remaining subjects seeing their declining health as being caused by past injuries (usually gun shot wounds), and by the environment (the arthritic patients felt that the location of the institute was detrimental to their health). Though most of our subjects attributed their declining health to aging, in general only 32% (N=20) of our sample perceived themselves as "old" with 68% (N=43) of the inmates perceiving themselves as middle aged.

When does an inmate begin to look upon himself as being "old?" Four factors were tested for its effects on an inmate's aging self-conception: (1) chronological age, (2) total number of years in prison, (3) the inmate's living unit, and (4) the inmate's health. Our data

showed no significant relations between the inmate's chronological age and his self-conception in terms of age. Our subjects' chronological age was broken down in four categories. The first category, ranging in age from 60-64 years of age, had 36% (N=5) of the subjects perceiving themselves as old. The remaining three age categories -- 65-69, 70-74, and 75 and above -- had 21% (N=3), 29% (N=4), and 14% (N=2) of the inmates in the "old" age category, respectively. Thus chronological age plays a minor role in the aging self-conception of our inmates (See Table 4-I). Our analysis of the "total number of years in prison" variable also showed no relationship with the perceived age category of the inmates, for 58% (N=7) of the inmates perceiving themselves as "old" were committed at the institution for less than 10 years. Those who were incarcerated from 10-19 years comprised 17% (N=2) of the inmates perceiving themselves as "old" with 25% (N=3) of the inmates having 20 or more years in prison making up the remaining "old" inmates (See Table 4-II).

TABLE 4-I
INFLUENCE OF CHRONOLOGICAL AGE
ON THE AGE IDENTIFICATION OF INMATES

AGE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS	Chronological Age				
	60-64	65-69	70-74	75+	Total
Middle	21 (47%)	15 (33%)	8 (18%)	1 (2%)	45 (100%)
Old	5 (36%)	3 (21%)	4 (29%)	12 (20%)	24 (100%)

TABLE 4-II
INFLUENCE OF LENGTH OF INCARCERATION
ON THE AGE IDENTIFICATION OF INMATES

		Total Number of Years in Prison			
AGE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS		Less than 10	10-19	20 or more	Total
	Middle	16 (39%)	11 (27%)	14 (34%)	45 (100%)
	Old	7 (58%)	2 (17%)	3 (25%)	12 (100%)

Similar non-significant results were found when the inmates' living units were tested for its effect on their aging self-conception. Sixty percent (N=27) of the respondents who conceived of themselves as middle aged resided in the "old" dormitory with the remaining 40% (N=18) residing in the "regular" dormitory. Of the respondents who conceived of themselves as aged, 64% (N=9) lived in the "old men's" dormitory as opposed to 36% (N=5) of these aged respondents in the regular dormitory (See Table 4-III). This can be attributed to the fact that the dormitory is not specifically an old man's dormitory; it was estimated that though there is a larger number of old men in this dormitory, the aged (individuals 60 and over) constituted only 31% of the occupants.

The only factor which was found to be related to the aging self-conception of the respondents is their health status. The data revealed the 33% (N=10) of the inmates who conceived of themselves as middle aged also defined their health as being poor whereas 67% (N=20) of the

TABLE 4-III
INFLUENCE OF THE HOUSING UNIT
ON THE AGE IDENTIFICATION OF INMATES

		Housing Unit		
		Old	Regular	Total
AGE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS	Middle	27 (60%)	18 (40%)	45 (100%)
	Old	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	13 (100%)

respondents in this age category saw their health as good. Of the respondents in the old age category, 67% (N=18) defined their health as poor with only 33% (N=8) of the aged respondents defining their health as good (See Table 4-IV). Thus, health seems to be the only factor

TABLE 4-IV
INFLUENCE OF HEALTH
ON THE AGE IDENTIFICATION OF INMATES

		Health Status of Inmates		
		Poor	Good	Total
AGE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS	Middle	10 (33%)	20 (67%)	30 (100%)
	Old	18 (67%)	8 (33%)	24 (100%)

influencing the aging self-conception of the inmates. However, as stated earlier, the health factor has little adverse effect on the degree of interaction or the number of social contacts that our subjects claim.

SOCIOLOGICAL AGING

The sociological aspects of aging in the free society correlate strongly with three important problems that the aged are faced with: (1) retirement, (2) our cultural attitude towards the elderly in our society, and (3) their feeling of economic insecurity. The remainder of the chapter will attempt to briefly discuss these three problems faced by the aged in the free society with the hopes of pointing out the prevalences of these problems in our prison setting.

Retirement is generally thought of as a break in the individuals' work career. Emphasis is placed here on the economic aspects of retirement; however, just as important as its economic consequences are the changes in the social roles of an individual after retirement. Such transition in roles are usually accompanied by the enactment of newly defined roles, i.e., the pre-med student now plays the role of a full-fledged doctor; however, the roles socially assigned to an individual after retirement are for the most part absent. There are no defined roles for a 65 year old retiree. Furthermore, the long established friendship ties or the mere contact with co-workers are often completely broken, thereby giving the individual an almost entirely new social world, a social world which he must mold from a society which is rapidly dwindling of individuals his age.

In addition to the problems created by retirement, a generally negative attitude in American society towards old age is also present. These

attitudes evolve simultaneously with retirement or more specifically because of the aged's non-productivity in the labor force. The youth-oriented, production-minded American society thus devalues the non-productive aged. The absence of employment furthermore presences a gap in the life of the aged. Employment, though not commonly thought of in this light, tends to shape the activities of an individual, for all other behavior is shaped around the individual's job. First, an individual's job, for the most part, helps create friends; secondly, it determines the style of the life of the individual; and thirdly, it shapes the time and occurrence of their social lives or leisure time. Thus, the absence of employment for the aged is not only viewed negatively by most of the non-aged but also by aged individuals outside the labor force.

Another consequence of retirement and the third basic problem of the aged results from the drastic financial cut which retirement brings. These cuts occur at a time when the medical bills of the aged are on the increase, for it is at this age that the illnesses of advanced age occur. These financial declines also mean that the aged individuals will, through necessity, change their life styles to commensurate their income. Thus is the plight of the aged in the free society. Utilizing these same problems, that of retirement, societal devaluation of the aged, and income insecurity, we will direct our attention to the condition of our aged subjects in the prison system.

Retirement. As stated earlier, the bulk of our subjects are employed as porters and members of the "litter bag detail." Though the actual work done by these inmates is minor and sometimes non-existent, each must report to their area of work. This, of course, is quite

functional although the work assignment itself may not be of any importance. The fact that the work assignments give structure to the lives of the inmates as well as providing social contacts for these individuals plays a more essential role than the work itself. Thus, the work of the inmate often means reporting to the work area but rarely means the expenditure of much energy. Though the work is such as it is, the assignment is considered with all seriousness by our subjects. This is particularly true of the porters, for their work was often mentioned during the interviews. That the work was taken seriously can be inferred from the following quote:

I'm a porter in "D" dormitory. I take care of two men's work over there. It's pretty hard work. On the week-end, it's a pain in the neck because these fellows are all walking in and out. Some of these fellows are like pigs, they dirty up the place as soon as I've cleaned it, then I have to clean it up again. We have to clean up the whole place and we are short-handed.

Contrary to the above quote, there is very little work for most of these men; however, everyone is assigned a job and is expected to report for work each morning. Thus, even the "old" men are assigned certain duties and are officially excused from these duties only during illnesses (only three of our subjects did not have to work).

As stated earlier, the institute operates several penal industries, utilizes farm laborers from the inmates population as well as providing jobs for the men of the "litter bag detail" and the portering positions. Inmates coming into the institution are usually assigned jobs according to the skills acquired on the outside whenever these jobs are available or are given positions where there are vacancies. Therefore, individuals coming in the institution who are functionally young or functionally

middle aged are assigned jobs accordingly and would therefore not be doing the work of a functionally "old" man.

An inmate who is aging in prison would experience this process as a series of role changes comparable to his functional abilities at different stages in his life span. An inmate, for example, who started out as a farm worker ages out of the role to perhaps assume the role of a laborer in one of the industries. His functional abilities might dictate further role changes, perhaps to a portering job. Thus, as the inmate ages, and as his abilities change, so does his work roles. Therefore, there is nothing in the institution which simulates retirement as we know the concept in American society.

It can be said that retirement in our penal institution may approximate retirement in a tribal society where warfare is an integral part of its social system. Retirement among these warring people would be a transition from a vigorous and youthful warrior to the role of elderly who is an advisor and peace-maker among the members of his tribe. It can likewise be said that among our subjects' retirement means a transition from farm work or employment in one of the prison industries to the "litter bag detail." Therefore, unlike retirement in the free world where an individual seems to shift from an active work role to a status (retirement) void of specific roles -- because of the "retirement roles" (litter bag detail) in the institution -- the lives of our subjects are given the greatly needed structure necessary in realizing one's function as a social being in a social world.

Cultural Attitude Towards the Aged. Our data revealed that a majority of our subjects perceived the attitude of the population of inmates as

being generally favorable towards the aged in the penal system. In addition to the economic variables which will be discussed below, there are other factors which may contribute to these favorable attitudes. Though not necessarily related to the age of our subjects, knowledge of prison life is learned through many years of life behind bars thus implying aging. This knowledge enables an inmate to gain access to certain favors as well as highly desired goods which are not available to others lacking this knowledge. Thus, the old men in prison are seen as a source of valuable knowledge about the workings of prison life. That this knowledge is economically valuable to other inmates as well, the "old" inmate is able to make demands on those who seek his knowledge. He is therefore able to gain access to scarce goods in the prison as well as demand respect from others seeking this knowledge.

The pursuit of economic gains through employment in industrial societies, particularly in the U.S., tends to shape the everyday lives of individuals in these societies. The absence of the aged as an integral part of the labor force may be seen as one of the major contributors to the anomic state of the elderly, for not only does employment structure a person's life but also to a degree determines who his associates are. Thus not only are the daily activities of the aged unstructured (anomic) but more importantly, their social world is drastically limited. This dissociation between these individuals and the non-aged causes each to view the other in terms of negative stereotypes. The lack of intensive intergenerational interaction enables these negations to persist in their perceptions of each other.

The communal-like life in prison is such that close social ties are formed. Furthermore, the penal system is such that the inmates have

very little to say about who they come in contact with. The social life of these inmates also places them in close contact; therefore, interaction between the age categories ~~does~~ occur in all of the activities of the inmates (except labor), thereby preventing the alienation of the aged prisoner. These inmates are provided certain institutional roles which are guided by established norms; their lives do not resemble the shapeless lives of most of our non-institutionalized aged. The fact that they are being told what to do, how to do it, and when it is to be done, gives structure to the lives of our aged prisoners. The inmates do have jobs, they do take these roles as authentic positions which in fact do structure their daily lives. Furthermore, the close contact between inmates -- which serves to eradicate interaction based on stereotypes -- as well as their position in the labor force, serves as a buffer against a world of anomie, a buffer not present in the free society.

The absence of significant social contacts between the aged and the non-aged in the free society may also be seen from another economic perspective. As stated above, most activities that the non-aged engage in are geared towards economic goals. Intergenerational contact would thus interfere with this pursuit. However, in addition to the nature of prison life, the economic pursuit of the inmates is curtailed to a point where the aged, regardless of their economic capabilities, are not viewed as a possible barrier to economic gains. The following quote by one of our subjects shows that all of their needs are taken care of but frankly indicates one of their "wants:"

It's women trouble. If a man could get to a woman he could stay here for 90 years. You can't want anything else; you get three meals a day, you get linen, you get your shoes and anything else you need except that woman.

Economic Insecurity. The proportion of the aged -- individuals 65 and above -- in the labor force has for the past fifty or so years drastically declined, particularly since the institutionalization of retirement policies in industry. Approximately one-third of these individuals are today still in the labor force, one-half of which are on a part-time basis. Continued employment for these individuals in conjunction with good health enable them not only to maintain their present life styles but possibly improve their livings standards.

However, to the majority of the workers who have lost their jobs to old age, retirement not only means an income amounting to less than half of what it was before but consequently means, unless proper plans for these changes were thought of previously, a change of life styles commensurable to the lower income. In his discussion of the income of the aged, Rosow states:

Of women 65 and over, one-fourth (25%) have no income at all; three-fourths (76%) have an annual income of under \$1,000 including those with no income and only one out of twelve (8%) has as much as \$2,000. Of the men, close to one-third (33%) have between \$1,000-\$1,999 and only the final third (27%) have as much as \$2,000 per year. Thus, only about one old person in five (22%) has an income approaching \$40 per week.²⁶

In contrast to the economic plight of the non-institutionalized aged, the aged prisoners occupy a higher economic status in the penal systems than do the non-aged inmates. As explained in the previous chapter, the monthly salary of the inmates is \$15. In addition to this salary, the monthly social security payment of most of the aged inmates places them

²⁶ Irving Rosow. Old Age: One Moral Dilemma of an Affluent Society (Washington: Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, 1962), p. 12.

at an economic advantage in relation to the other inmates. Though the needs of the inmates, i.e., food, clothing, shelter are provided for, the possession of cigarettes and food stuffs requires one's ability to purchase these goods. Cigarettes, in addition to their use for smoking, are also used as money in the prison's bartering system as well as stakes for gambling. Thus, the differential financial access of the inmates defeats the block treatment accorded the inmates. It is therefore the younger inmates who are often economically underprivileged as opposed to the aged inmates.

In summary then, the subjects of our study begin to perceive themselves as aging only when their health begins to decline. Unlike the individuals in the free society who, because of retirement, economic insecurity, and because of negative cultural attitudes towards the aged, the aged prisoners are not forced by these factors into viewing themselves as useless; they do not see themselves as old until their health begins to fail and are not economically insecure. Thus, in terms of their respective settings, the aged prisoners hold a higher status than do the non-institutionalized aged in American society.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Two major questions constituted the concerns of this study: (1) to what extent does age-grading exist in the institution, and (2) when does an inmate begin to perceive of himself as "old?" The search for age-grading among the inmates of the institution was limited to the areas of friendship choices and their occupational roles. Thus, age-grading was in operation when most of the respondents perceived their friends and co-workers as belonging to their own age category. The concept of "aging" was here defined as the identification of oneself as old, thus aging is placing oneself in the "old age" category.

Approximately 67% of our respondents regarded their social contacts as friends. For these inmates, certain criteria came into play in the production of friendship patterns: (1) trustworthiness, (2) mutual aid, (3) intimacy in terms of the content of conversations, and (4) the enactment of "appropriate" behavior. Other factors mentioned by our respondents which further enhanced and sustained these relationships are: (1) the occupation of similar jobs in the prison labor force; (2) inmates coming from the same towns; and/or (3) the fact that they came into the institution at the same time and have done most of their "time" together.

In order to match the aging self-conception of our respondents to the age category that they perceived their friends as belonging to, each respondent was asked to classify himself as well as his friends in terms of age. In reference to their age conception, 68% (N=43) of the respondents conceived of themselves as middle aged, 13% (N=8) classified themselves as old, and the remaining 19% (N=12) were in the elderly category. That over two-thirds of the respondents claimed that they were middle aged

confirms other studies with this finding. Our data further revealed that these subjects responded in this manner because of their physio-functional definition of "old age." For these respondents, "old age" meant:

(1) an inability to participate in the penal labor force, (2) an inability to take care of oneself, and/or (3) perceiving one's physical abilities as being worst than what they were 20 years before.

In characterizing their friends in terms of age, most of the respondents felt their friends were of mixed age categories; that is, age was irrelevant as a criteria for affiliation. Therefore, some of their friends were young, some were old, while others were middle aged. The data in our possession points to the irrelevance of age as a factor influencing the interaction of the inmates of the different age categories. It reveals that age per se, that is whether an inmate is defined as old or not, does not dictate the existence or non-existence of interaction between the inmates of different age categories. It is, however, significant for the administrators of the institution in that age -- defined in physio-functional terms -- is one of the factors utilized in job placement in the institution. This is particularly true for those in the older class of inmates, for such classification determines whether one is a member of the "litter bag detail" or a laborer in one of the prison industries.

We should, however, recognize that such placement goes beyond the mere assignment of a job (though that in itself is important) for it also provides an inmate with a limited range of individuals from which he is able to interact, for a good part of the working day, with members

who are institutionally* defined as "old." That these inmates are in daily contact with each other would lead us to think that closer friendship patterns would evolve between these inmates. Our data, as shown, reveals however, that friendship groups did not evolve out of this structure.

Other factors contributing to the interrelationship between inmates regardless of age perceptions were: (1) the nature of prisons or perhaps more specifically the nature of a total institution and its block treatment of inmates; (2) mutual respect -- closely related to trustworthiness, when the rights and obligations of an inmate are recognized (regardless of age); (3) dealing, the process of bartering for goods and services between inmates; (4) companionship; and (5) because of the ability of certain inmates to grant highly desired favors to his fellow inmates.

It can be further said that respondents' dissociation with the conception of "old age" is reinforced by their work roles. Known in the institution as the "litter bag detail," these jobs are of a very light nature and are assigned to the old and infirmed inmates. Though most of the duties of this age-role are of a minor necessity, its existence is functional in that it structures the lives of these inmates as well as providing them with time-consuming activities which is essential if an inmate is to realize a progress in his sentence. Each inmate, unless totally disabled, is assigned to the labor force, thereby warding off the ill-effects of the status known as retirement in the general society.

*We should realize that an institutional definition (administrators) of "old age" differs from "old age" as defined by the inmates. The former defines an inmate as "old" when he is no longer able to work on the farm or in one of the penal industries. "Old age," in terms of the latter's definition, means an inability to work at any type of job.

The "litter bag detail" and the portering jobs may thus be seen as the roles to which the inmate population retires to. Therefore, unlike retirement in the general society where a laborer retires to nothingness (no specific roles), the inmates retire to the "litter bag detail." Age is therefore dealt with in the physio-functional sense and is utilized by the inmates as well as the administration (through its assignment of jobs) though with different meaning, as is explained above.

In accordance with the physio-functional definition given by our respondents of the concept of age, our data revealed that the health status of the inmates was the most significant contributor to their aging self-conception. It is therefore only after an inmate begins to experience a decline in his health that he begins to conceive of himself as "old."

These findings again point to the functional aspects of employment for these elderly inmates, for it is not until one's working ability is impaired that one begins to feel "old." (We use "old" with the negative connotations given the concept in the prison.) It is through employment therefore that our "middle aged" inmates are able to conceive of themselves in a positive light. It is through employment that an inmate is able to maintain his contact with "middle age," even when in contact with others who are chronologically young or chronologically middle aged. Employment (employment which is permanent and which renders one self-supporting) in American society, even more so than marriage, is the "rite de passage" to adulthood. It follows, then, that it is likewise that factors through which individuals are able to cling to the middle aged conception. Complete separation from the work roles, as through retirement, breaks up the structure provided by such roles as well as destroys

the standards necessary in maintaining one's positive self-conception.

The negative self-conception of the institutionalized aged in the homes for the aged is closely associated with a decrease in the social interaction of these individuals. The establishment of work roles for these aged people, roles which could be seen as meaningful, would serve not only to increase the interaction level of the institutionalized aged but structure their daily lives as well. These roles should be, of course, assigned according to the physical capabilities of the aged, thereby institutionally establishing different levels or classes of work. The different work roles would perhaps enable a more intense form of interaction to transpire within the different levels of work as well as provide the inmates with continued role participation as they age. Furthermore, a physio-functional definition of aging, if used by the administrators, would enable the residents of these institutions to redefine themselves in light of the present definition of age (physio-functional) and shed the general chronological and negative definition of "old." That almost 70% of our sample of aged inmates, ranging in age from 60-85 years of age, were able to conceive of themselves as middle-aged, coupled with the association of declining health with the "old age" self-conception, attests to the importance of employment.

CRITICISMS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study had a number of methodological weaknesses. The data obtained were based on the perceptions of the respondents regarding friendship. We are therefore unable to talk about the type of and the degree of interaction that the "friends" engage in. Data of a more objective nature would enable us to speak of differences, if any, between the interaction

of individuals of different age categories. Are the perceptions of our subjects regarding who their friends are and the perceptions of these individuals in reference to the attitudes of the inmate population towards them valid? Would those individuals claimed by our respondents as friends, define their interaction as reciprocal by also claiming the respondents as friends? These are questions which, if answered, would allow us to speak not only of the perceptions of inmates in a penal setting but of the reality of these.

Lastly, and again related to the above statement, is the caution that we must utilize in analyzing the friendship patterns of our respondents, for we are dealing with 9% of the population who are basically similar in age. From an analysis of the population of "old" prisoners, we have attempted to construct their social world as if these individuals existed in a vacuum. A representative sample of inmates from the total population would allow us to report the actual social system of the institution rather than the perceptions of what the system is thought to be by a limited number of inmates. (This does not mean that their perceptions of the system are incorrect. It is just that our interests have broadened since the collection of the data.) Such a sample would then allow us not only to speak in general terms regarding the institution but would enable us to better understand our findings and thus explain our subjects' perceptions of their social system. Our criticism here is therefore the limited scope of this study.

Longitudinal studies of the aging process would be of value to the field of penology in that possible age stages of the inmates may be found to be related to the cessation of the criminal attitudes in these individuals. Such studies would enlighten members of the parole boards

as to the feasibility of release for these aged prisoners. Is there a time in the life span of an aging criminal when he may no longer be seen as a threat to society? If so, how important is age in initiating the establishment of anti-criminal attitudes in an inmate? What are the other factors influential in promoting such attitudes? Answers to such questions would perhaps allow our systems of justice to abolish the penal incarceration of "old" men.

In terms of the attitudes of the younger inmates towards the older prisoners, the judgment of these attitudes by our subjects was for the most part favorable. A comparison of these perceived attitudes to the judgment of the younger inmates of the older men should be examined. Should these attitudes as perceived by the subjects of this study be verified, questions as to why these attitudes are favorable would be of gerontological value. What are the factors giving rise to the favorable judgment of the aged? Are these attitudes brought into the institution or are they developed subsequent to incarceration? Should a study of this nature reveal discrepancies between the attitudes of the younger inmates and the perceptions of the "old" inmates, questions dealing with the reasoning for these negative attitudes should be investigated. Most important to the fields of Gerontology and Penology, however, would be inquiries into the ability of the aged inmates to maintain a positive-sense of self in a social setting which is detrimental to their self-conception. How are these inmates able to view themselves favorably in the midst of a setting which holds a negative judgment of them? Answers to this question would also be significant to aging in the general society in that findings of this nature would point to factors which may give rise to the evolution of a favorable self-evaluation by

the aged regardless of their social milieu.

Our findings have revealed that age -- as indicated by an inmate's physio-functional abilities -- determines the position of these individuals in the penal labor force and subsequently determines who these inmates interact with during the working hours of the day. However, age does not seem to influence the social interaction of our subjects insofar as who they interact with outside of the occupational sphere. We have further found age to play a minor role in the judgment of one inmate to another. We would suggest, therefore, that a more encompassing investigation into the importance of age in the general setting of a prison be undertaken, thereby enabling the researcher to answer the questions we have posited in the above paragraph.

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THE AGED PRISONER:
A CASE STUDY OF AGE AND AGING IN PRISON

by

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Two basic questions were considered in the study: (1) to what extent does age-grading exist in prison, and (2) when does an inmate begin to conceive of himself as being "old?" The search for age-grading was limited to two areas of the penal setting: friendship ties and the occupational roles of the aged inmates. Thus, the penal institution was defined as age-graded if the respondents perceived most of their friendships and/or co-workers as belonging to their own age category. The notion of "old" or "growing old" was operationalized as the conception of oneself as belonging to the "old age" category. The data for this project was collected from the aged prisoners at Chillicothe Correctional Institute, Chillicothe, Ohio. Our subjects were the inmates who were 60 years old and above during the time period of this study.

Two questions were inherent in our first concern: (1) the aging self-conception of the respondents, and (2) the categorization of their friends in terms of age. In regards to the first question, approximately 68% (N=43) of our subjects, when asked to categorize themselves in terms of age, conceived of themselves as middle aged with the remaining 32% (N=20) classifying themselves as old or elderly. Their concept of "old age" took on a physio-functional basis in that to be "old" for them meant: (1) an inability to work, (2) an inability to take care of oneself, and (3) a noticeable decline in one's physical make-up. Their identification with the "middle aged" self-conception can be attributed to and is sustained by the employment roles that the inmates enact. Thus, employment, in accordance with their definition of "old age," enables the inmates to dissociate with the "old" self-conception. These roles, assigned in terms of the functional abilities of each inmate, enable the majority of the respondents, unless totally infirmed, to ward off the

"old age" self-conception.

When questioned about their perceptions of their friends in terms of age, 50% (N=21) of our subjects felt that their friends were mixed in age, that is, both young and old. Of the remaining respondents, 23% (N=9) felt their friends were middle aged, and 27% (N=13) felt their friends were either old or elderly (11% and 16%, respectively). A similar trend is revealed if the respondents' individual age category is considered. Of the inmates who conceived of themselves as middle aged, 42% (N=11) considered their friends as belonging to the mixed age category as opposed to 34% (N=9), 12% (N=3), and 12% (N=3) as belonging to the middle, old, and young categories, respectively. Likewise, of the inmates conceiving themselves as old, 63% (N=10) considered their friends as belonging to the mixed category with 0%, 25% (N=4), and 12% (N=2) of their friends in the middle, old, and young age categories, respectively.

A similar trend was revealed in the analysis of the occupational roles of the respondents. Of the middle aged inmates, 50% (N=10) classified their co-workers as belonging to the mixed age category, 25% (N=5) saw their working partners as middle aged with the remaining workers in the old age category. The respondents who classified themselves as old saw 47% (N=7) of their co-workers as belonging to the mixed age category, 20% (N=3) in the middle age bracket, and 33% (N=5) in the old age category.

Therefore, in accordance with the definition of our concept, age-grading for the most part is non-existent. Various factors contributing to the interrelationship of inmates of the different age categories were: (1) the nature of a total institution, (2) mutual respect of one inmate to another, (3) the phenomena of inmate "dealing" or "conniving,"

(4) companionship, and (5) favors.

Our second question, that of the aging process in prison, is closely related and can be inferred from our respondents' conception of "old age." Our data indicated that an inmate begins to perceive himself as "growing old," only when his health begins to falter, which is closely related to the physio-functional definition of old age in the prison setting. Three factors, closely correlated with the problems faced by the aged in the general society, were examined to explore their effect on the condition of our prisoners. According to the analysis, the conditions of our subjects may be considered -- in regards to their respective setting -- better than those of the aged in the general society.