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A New Identity for a New Beginning: Desistance from Crime by the Process of Informing

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Sommaire

L'objectif principal de ce mémoire est d'analyser et ainsi mieux comprendre le phénomène du désistement du crime par l'entremise d'un partenariat avec les représentants de la justice. De ce but général découlent ensuite plusieurs objectifs spécifiques. D'abord, un regard sera axé sur la façon qu'un délinquant surmonte ses barrières internes et les préjudices externes afin d'adhérer à une étiquette péjorative, telle que celle d'un *délateur*. Ensuite, on s'intéresse au processus émotionnel impliqué dans la décision d'un individu de se retirer du monde criminel tout en coopérant avec une entité gouvernementale. Finalement, une attention particulière portera vers les implications et les conséquences d'une telle collaboration sur la capacité d'un délinquant à intérioriser une nouvelle identité, ainsi qu'à maintenir une abstinence du crime.

Inspirées d'une approche phénoménologique, les données obtenues pour ce mémoire proviennent de documents littéraires, soient des autobiographies et des biographies portant sur, et écrites par des délateurs auto-proclamés. Plus précisément, l'échantillon se compose de douze (12) histoires de vie. Les données furent recueillies à l'aide de la méthode de codage qui s'appuie sur le codage de type *In Vivo*, émotionnel et descriptif.

Les résultats démontrent que la décision de mettre un terme à son implication criminelle en devenant délateur survient suite à un événement critique. Les événements critiques identifiés réfèrent à l'expérience vécue d'une perte significative. Qui plus est, contrairement aux justiciables qui cessent leur criminalité autrement que par la délation, il appert que les délateurs doivent faire preuve d'une plus grande adaptabilité à leur nouvelle identité pro sociale, surtout lorsque ces derniers sont pris en charge par un programme de protection des témoins. Quoique certains justifient leur coopération par la maturation, le désir de redonner à la société ou par la séduction d'un nouveau défi déviant, la délation ne s'est pas avérée une voie de désistement infaillible. En effet, alors que certains furent incapables de fusionner avec leur nouvelle identité dû à plusieurs facteurs (ex : nouveau nom, relocalisation géographique, solitude, besoins non traités par le programme de protection des témoins), d'autres ne pouvaient plus soutenir le poids omniprésent de l'étiquette de délateur (et par conséquent, la crainte des représailles).

Ces conclusions nous renseignent donc sur le processus émotionnel du désistement du crime par une transformation au niveau individuel, de délinquant à délateur. Idéalement, une meilleure compréhension de ce phénomène permettra aux décideurs d'améliorer la gestion et les pratiques rattachées aux délateurs afin de réduire le risque de récidive, et par le fait même, favoriser la protection du public.

*Mots clés: délateurs, identité, phénoménologie, désistement, crime, étiquetage, processus émotionnel

Abstract

The main objective of this dissertation is to analyze and comprehend the phenomenon of desisting from crime by providing information to law-enforcement authorities. From this general purpose, specific objectives were of consideration. First, the focus is shifted towards the way an offender overcomes internal barriers and external stigma to eventually adhere to a pejorative label such as *informant* or *snitch*. Second, the emotional process at the source of one's decision to turn away from crime and cooperate with the government is under study. Third, attention is placed on the implications and the consequences of justice collaboration on an offender's ability to appeal to their new identity, as well as their tendency to maintain desistance from crime.

Inspired by a phenomenological approach, data collected for this master's thesis was retrieved from literary works such as autobiographies and biographies written by and about self-proclaimed ex-offenders turned state informants. More precisely, the sample includes twelve (12) life-accounts. The data was extracted by using a coding sheet, constructed from *In Vivo* coding, emotion coding and descriptive coding.

Results show that the decision to cease criminal involvement by becoming an informant is based on a turning point. Identified turning points relate to an offender's experience of a significant loss. Furthermore, unlike offenders who desist from crime through a different path, those who inform must manifest greater adaptability to their new prosocial identity, especially when under a witness protection program (WPP). Although some justified their cooperation by their maturation, their desire to do good or by the seduction of a new deviant challenge, informing did not prove to be an infallible way to sustain desistance. Indeed, while some were unable to internalize their new identity due to certain factors (e.g. new name, geographical relocation, solitude, unfulfilled needs by the WPP), others could not bear the ubiquitous stigma of being labelled an informant (and congruently, the fear of retaliation).

These findings provide insight on the emotional unfolding of desisting from crime by transitioning from offender to informant. It is hoped that a better acknowledgement of the phenomenon will encourage policy makers and government officials to improve informant-related procedures in order to reduce the risk of recidivism and thus better protect society.

*Key words: informants, identity, phenomenology, desistance, crime, labelling, emotional process

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List of Acronyms

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation

WPPA: Witness Protection Program Act

WPP: Witness Protection Program

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INTRODUCTION

Rehabilitation of offenders has not always prevailed over punishment and reprobation. Throughout the years, societies have experimented and explored different doctrines in order to determine the appropriate treatment for those who have infringed the law. Certain philosophers have influenced governments with their ideologies, such as Kant's retributivism and Bentham's utilitarianism (Scheid, 1983). These movements focused on concepts such as punishment, isolation and neutralisation of offenders. Nevertheless, most modern societies have abandoned these mentalities throughout the years and have invested in corrective approaches rather than punitive ones. This shift in focus yielded a spotlight on rehabilitation of offenders, taking responsibility for their actions and reparation of their wrongdoing to victims. In turn, radical punishment methods like the death penalty decreased in popularity. For example, by the end of 2017, the death penalty had been abolished in law or practice in 142 countries (Amnesty International, 2018) and more correctional programs have since then been developed to help offenders successfully reintegrate into society when they decide to retract from crime.

The decision to leave one's criminal past behind relates to the notion of desistance. Shover (1996: p. 121) defined desistance as "the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation." Although this definition is not unanimously accepted by all researchers, it is a concept that has been the analytical focus of many studies. Indeed, research on criminal rehabilitation has bloomed, and mainly observes desistance from crime once offenders are granted parole. Such studies outline the punitive and dissuasive role played by correctional institutions, and underline the social crutches (e.g. employment, spouse) generally necessary to help one maintain desistance from crime.

That being said, the main concern of this study is to examine another path borrowed by offenders in their quest for desistance, that of delating.¹ Given the stigma surrounding criminal informants, this research aims to study the dynamics involved in the decision-making process of

¹ The term *delating* refers to the act of giving up information in a discreet and secretive context in order to restrain public implication. Theoretically, delating differs from the term *informing*, where an informant divulges information in an open and public way as to spur public debate (Brodeur and Jobard, 2005: p.13). In this study, both terms will be interchangeable, given the fact that individuals in our sample have made their stories public to spread various messages.

individuals desisting from crime through means of informing. More specifically, we will analyze how offenders strip themselves of their criminal identity to adopt the persona of someone they have learned to despise their entire marginal lives: a snitch.² To meet this objective, twelve autobiographies and biographies of offenders who made the decision to cooperate with state authorities in Canada, the United States and Italy were taken into account. The offenders were involved in various criminal activities such as organized crime, theft, drug trafficking and murder.

Desistance from crime is an important topic of study in relation to recidivism rates and the protection of society. Hoffman and Beck (1984) believed that, without a theory of crime, it would be wiser for researchers and policy makers to eradicate the term ‘desistance’ from their vocabulary and simply refer to the presence or absence of recidivism. Concurrently, in order to protect society and to prevent the reoccurrence of crime, active offenders must first be stopped. Hence, relying on informants to increase arrest rates and accelerate investigations is a discreet, yet frequent practice used by police forces. Past studies have elaborated on the debates generated by the use of informants by government agencies. A light has been shone on certain issues with this practice; for instance, the ethics behind rewarding an offender in exchange for information on the illegal activities of their delinquent peers. Furthermore, the dangers surrounding the use of informants have been discussed. More precisely, when a partnership is sparked between an offender and an officer of the law, there is a risk of police corruption, as well as a risk of physical and social retaliation (Natapoff, 2007; Rich, 2012). Nevertheless, these issues do not constitute a big enough threat to discourage this penal practice. In fact, the use of informants is a procedure that continues to be valued by government authorities, who qualify them as imperative tools to bring down the “worst” offenders and/or to dismantle large criminal enterprises (Skolnick 1966; Bloom, 2002; Natapoff 2004; Breitkreuz, 2008; Turcotte, 2008). In other words, offenders turned informants represent a “necessary evil” (Mallory, 2000). Whether informants operate in a police setting, inside a prison or in a court room, their credibility, reliability, demands and potential enemies represent risks that states are willing to accept in order to achieve their goals.

² A *snitch* is a slang word for delator and informant. Other related terms include rat, nark, turncoat, whistleblower, squealer, stool, canary, tipster, fink and tattletale.

The present literature focuses on the procedures and methods relating to the practice of informing, from the moment an offender is recruited to the moment he or she testifies or is assigned a new identity, as would be the case if the person enters a witness protection program. That being said, Laub and Sampson (2001) argued that a noteworthy theory of crime must acknowledge the onset, the continuation, and the desistance processes from criminal activities. Additionally, these researchers claimed the importance of understanding the influence of social context on desistance. The reason for this study comes from two limitations that have been identified in the studies made accessible to the public to this day. First of all, the number of articles discussing the emotions and cognitions related to the decisional process of informing appears to be limited. Secondly, a point of saturation seems to have been reached when it comes to theoretical frameworks adopted in studies on informants.

This master's thesis draws its inspiration from Maruna's (2000) study on the way ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives. There are important similarities between the decision to desist from crime, as described in Maruna's (2000) work, and the decision to become an informant. Laub and Sampson (2001) have also observed that the process of desisting from crime is similar to the process of ceasing many different types of problematic behaviours. For example, Maruna (2000: p. 17) explained the need of an internal change that can also be observed in those deciding to cooperate with the authorities:

“It is argued here that sustained desistance most likely requires a fundamental and intentional shift in a person's sense of self. The study of desistance may therefore similarly require something of a shift in the way that criminal behavior is studied and analyzed.”

This alteration in a person's sense of self refers to the reformation of one's identity, as previously mentioned. Therefore, when Maruna (2000) elaborated that an offender must develop a new rational and prosocial identity in order to be able to see oneself as a law-abiding citizen, we can extrapolate and argue that the same logistics apply to offenders who must now see themselves as whistleblowers. Not only must they embrace this new status, but Maruna (2000) mentioned the need for them to understand this change and make sense of their lives. In other words, informants must comprehend their decision to make a social transition and understand why they are not like they used to be anymore.

The following chapter (Chapter I) will paint the portrait of the double stigma in which informants exist, and how these social stains affect the decision-making process to cooperate. A review of the findings stemming from past studies on the phenomenon of criminal informants will then be presented in Chapter II. Chapter III will reveal the methodological approach, as well as the research strategies employed throughout this qualitative study. The results from our analysis will surface in Chapter IV, in addition to new concepts identified in the chain of events leading up to the identity shift. Chapter V will take a look at the consequences of making this life change and the particularities involved in whether or not a subject can maintain desistance. The concluding section will lend its pages to the evaluation of the study's findings, its limitations and its implication for future research on the subject.

CHAPTER I: Labels, Labels, Labels

1. The Dual Stigma Dilemma

Crocker and Major (1989: p. 609) defined *stigmatization* as “social categories about which others hold negative attitudes, stereotypes, and beliefs, or which, on average, receive disproportionately poor interpersonal or economic outcomes relative to members of society at large because of discrimination against members of the social category.” Goffman (1963) added that the social categories of persons are constructed by society who then defines the standard characteristics that members of these categories should project. These attributes can relate to a context, a quality or a person. More specifically, they correlate to three distinct types of stigmas as presented by Goffman (1963): (1) abominations of the body (includes physical handicaps); (2) blemishes of individual character (sexual orientation, mental illnesses, addiction, imprisonment, suicide attempts, political views, education, socio-economic status); (3) tribal stigma (race, cultural identity, religion). When we find ourselves in the presence of a newcomer, the expectations set in place by society’s social categories bring us to evaluate the stranger’s social identity based on our first impression (Goffman, 1963). When the person does not fit the mold, for example, an offender, a stigma is applied on the individual.

In the context of crime, stigmatization occurs when, according to Braithwaite (2000), a society supports a stigma by certain types of disrespectful communications where the shamefulness cast upon offenders only leads to an increase in crime. Stigmatization creates a dichotomy in which people are categorized as good versus bad. When meeting a new person and evidence shows that he or she possesses certain traits that diverge from the norm established by society, Goffman (1963: p. 3) argued that this individual will be demeaned in the eyes of others and depicted as “a less desirable kind – in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak.” This practice is described as unsympathetic, because it isolates a person from society and renders the stigma permanent. It has been shown that societies that diminish and humiliate offenders record higher levels of crime. This concept contrasts with what the author referred to as *reintegrative shaming*, a forgiving process where the level of shame communicated to the culprit should encourage him or her to desist from wrongdoing.

The notion of stigmatization relates to Lemert's (1951) labeling theory where he introduced the concepts of *primary* and *secondary deviance*. Primary deviance generally occurs at a young age when a child is exploring and learning from its surroundings. The individual will test its environment, for example, by vandalizing or stealing an object. The reprimand that will follow is habitually the deterrent required for the person to understand that what they did is frowned upon; he or she will not reproduce that behaviour.

Secondary deviance is more complex. It is the internalization of the deviant status derived from society's reaction to their behaviour (Lemert, 1951; Becker, 1963). As Goffman (1963) pointed out, members of society who represent the norm employ attitudes and actions that aim to discriminate, belittle and render inferior those who bear stigmas. Stigma-theories are constructed by society to justify the risk of danger one represents and elucidate resentment towards the outsider based on the distance between social classes. In turn, by constantly being referred to by stigma terms and reminded of their imperfections, individuals will orient their lives according to the label they wear (Goffman, 1963). Offenders may associate with delinquent peers, abandon conventional methods to reach their goals and participate in criminal acting-out.

It is through secondary deviance that labels tend to stick. For various reasons (e.g. criminal histories, mental illness, drug abuse, plea deals), offenders may be confronted with more than one label, which results in double stigma. Following the theme of this study, double stigma occurs when an individual deals with the basic offender label affixed by society, while also composing with the stigma of being an informant. Simply put, the person must face shame from society for having committed crimes, and from other offenders who resent informants (Crocker and Major, 1989). According to Roskes, Feldman, Arrington and Leisher (1999), the effects of dual-stigmatization surface when criminal-informants try to reintegrate society. These researchers claimed that not only is it difficult to adjust to society after a prison sentence, the stigma from an additional impairment (e.g. informant status or mental illness) contributes to the hardship of accommodating to society.

When a person is aware of his or her undesirable attribute (e.g. criminal record), interactions with others may feel unsettling, given that the stigmatized individual does not yet know which social category he or she will be assigned to (Goffman, 1963). Furthermore, self-doubt arises when the stigmatized party introspectively knows which category he or she should belong to (overseeing the undesirable trait), but knows others will estimate his social placement downwards, based on the stigma. Braithwaite (2000) noted that when a respectable community rejects one of its citizens, that person then faces a status problem. At that point, the rejected party will seek a solution to the status problem. Consequently, widespread stigmatization and conditions of unemployment emphasize the appeal of criminal subcultures as solutions for individuals experiencing status issues. Furthermore, they offer illegal business-like opportunities to make a living (for example, selling drugs, being a pimp). Adler (1993: p. 155) proposed a similar explanation of the dynamics between society's structure and those who cannot abide by it in her study on drug trafficking:

“It is precisely the rationalism of conventional society that has driven upper-level dealers and smugglers away from it, toward the hedonism and irrationality of their deviant subculture. They are profit-minded and business-oriented, but at this level of trafficking, individuals have always been. The dealing subculture is thus not a mirror of society, but a radically different alternative which serves as an escape from routinization and repression.”

To summarize, these criminal subcultures act as neutralizing agents for the stigma that would arise from law-breaking. Standard law and order cultures that perpetuate stigmatization stimulate the development of criminal subcultures. Those societies become responsible for the formation of a platform sought after by those with a status problem and looking for an oppositional identity.

1.1 No One Likes a Snitch

It is assumed that norms against informing are especially elevated in criminal groups, given that those betrayed have a lot to lose (Akerstrom, 1988; Woldoff and Weiss, 2010). Akerstrom (1988: p. 165) added that “To ‘snitch,’ you must inform on someone who has socially

legitimate claims on you not to tell.” This type of betrayal can explain why the informant figure is disliked in many subcultures.

In the context of a prison subculture, informants are extremely disliked individuals. An unwritten code of honour reigns among inmates who are expected to remain faithful to one another over guards, not to trust staff members and more crucially, to never sell out another prisoner (Carceral, Bernard, Alarid, Bikle and Bikle, 2004; Irwin, 1970; Mays and Winfree, 2005; Santos, 2003). According to Woldoff and Weiss (2010), prisoners’ loathing of turncoats partially comes from the prison system’s reliance on informants. As law-enforcement officers try to incite suspects to give each other up to increase the number of arrests, prison staff can encourage the act of informing by proposing certain advantages in exchange for cooperation. This serves as another example of offenders dealing with a double stigma, because not only are they labelled as inmates by prison staff, but they will also be labeled by other inmates as backstabbers who have disobeyed the prison’s implied code of honour (Gordon, 2000). Akerstrom’s (1988) study of informants in Swedish prisons has shown that once identified, informants are psychologically and physically harassed. Even though murder is supposedly less-likely to occur in a prison environment, the study shows that informant-inmates become highly at risk of physical harm.

Whether inside or outside prison walls, the labeling of a person as an informant renders them vulnerable to stigma and violent retaliation by those who were denounced (Carceral and Bernard, 2005). Ostrovsky (2006) declared that on an annual basis, drug informants are subject to assault, rape, and murder, compelling prosecutors in areas like Baltimore to qualify witness intimidation as “the number one public safety issue facing the citizens” (cited in Woldoff and Weiss, 2010: p. 187).

Another reason why becoming an informant is frowned upon is due to the fact that being able to keep quiet speaks to one’s masculine identity (Kupers, 2005). In other words, informants are related to images of weakness and femininity, which are labels that male offenders who come from a poor socio-economic background have learned to avoid and despise (Anderson, 1999; Lerner, 2002). Cooperating with the authorities is a breach of masculinity given that offenders

are culturally depicted as “tough men” who have honour and who can deal with problems on their own (Sabo, Kupers and London, 2001). Congruently, the criminal world being male-dominated, to inform is to strip oneself of its masculine identity (Messerschmidt, 1999).

As is the case in criminal circles, in certain communities, the desire to conform to the criminal subculture is prominent. Anderson (1999) mentioned that in poor crime-ridden communities like Detroit, a “code of the street” is followed by those who wish to demonstrate their manhood and win the respect of their co-offenders by adhering to a law of silence and autonomy from the authorities. Generally, respecting the code of conduct proves one’s trustworthiness and loyalty to the group. These qualities are highly valued in a context governed by informal social control mechanisms enforced by the offenders themselves (Anderson, 1999; Kupers, 2005).

As the social learning theory would have it, learning about the rules and procedures associated with the criminal world occurs at a young age for individuals who are brought up in an environment that is familiar with crime. Most offenders believe that a snitch will eventually always be uncovered and will “get what he deserves” (Akerstrom, 1988). Disrespecting the code of honour among offenders, notably by informing, may result in severe consequences, including assassination of the turncoat (Gambetta, 1993). This generates a climate of fear associated with the act of informing, which will eventually operate as a dissuasive agent if ever an opportunity to cooperate arises.

1.2 Lost in a World of Labels

When offenders begin to think about the possibility of becoming an informant, for reasons that will be detailed throughout this thesis, these people face a clash of identity. On one hand, the offender can experience internal shame simply by having let the thought of cooperating brush over them. On the other hand, to become an informant would mean to add another label to one’s list, a list that could become public knowledge to society should he or she decide to come forward, and in turn, bring about external shame. So how does someone get over the numerous

stigmas surrounding all these labels and make the decision to adopt yet another identity: that of an informant?

According to Shover (1996), a person contemplating a life of crime and eventually giving into it is the result of the person identifying with crime. When the criminal lifestyle seems to be an appealing and fruitful source of income, whether it be for a long-term period or for a quick fix, one may be seduced by this course of action, as suggested by Katz (1988). For those who were born into the life of crime, for example, because they were raised in a household where they witnessed criminal activity on a regular basis, the attraction of this kind of lifestyle may be inherent. McCall and Simmons (1966: p. 67) described identities as “the character...that an individual devises for himself...[It] is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting.” Hence, it implies that humans begin forging their identity during their early years, for example, when asked the question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The following passage is narrated by Henry Hill (from our sample), a mafioso, who described his childhood aspirations:

At the age of twelve my ambition was to be a gangster. To be a wiseguy. To me being a wiseguy was better than being president of the United States. [...] To be a wiseguy was to own the world. I dreamed about being a wiseguy the way other kids dreamed about being doctors or movie stars or firemen or ball-players. (Pileggi, 1985: p. 13)

When an identity has been engraved since a very young age and carried out through adulthood, it can be difficult to deconstruct the old self in order to build and adopt a new one. If an ex-offender manages to do so during the incarceration period, with or without professional assistance, it does not necessarily mean that he or she is completely freed from their previous identity. In fact, when it comes to reintegrating into society, ex-offenders are faced with legal and social barriers, due to the pressure of becoming prosocial law-abiding citizens. After their release from prison, they are expected to quickly become functional and effective workers, responsible adults at home and active citizens giving back to their communities (Uggen, Manza and Thompson, 2006). Yet, the stigmas affiliated to their legal situation generate a particular status of dishonour that can, in turn, impact their reputation as citizens, their political participation, and their community involvement. In other words, even if the person is ready to

reintegrate into the world with positive intentions, motivations and attitudes, it does not guarantee that the outside is ready to receive them. Uggen, Manza and Thompson (2006) argued that when society classifies offenders in a separate category or status group, it creates a problem of mobility, where offenders must be moved from a stigmatized status (outsiders) to a prosocial status (insiders). It is their understanding that this mobility issue causes problems for sustained desistance from crime and rehabilitation due to the many obstacles encountered through the reintegration journey. In fact, when a person has served their sentence and has created a new identity for themselves, sometimes, society deems it is not enough and perpetuates what was a “determined” sentence into a life sentence (Braithwaite, 2000). Goffman (1963) explained this phenomenon by illustrating the issue with society’s rigid expectations: an individual with characteristics that are incompatible or in conflict with society’s stereotype of an acceptable citizen will remain in a stigmatized social category.

Whether an offender is making a change to desist from crime or is making the decision to become an informant, he or she will be subjected to social stigma and their identity will be challenged. It will be argued here that the act of transitioning from offender to informant constitutes a shift in one’s status, career path, and values. Relying on Maruna’s (2000) study, when people abandon crime (permanently or temporarily) and become an informant, it implies that they have had to relinquish their previous identity to create a new one. The invention of a new self is necessary in order for the individual to be able to bring himself to bypass the stigmas and the labels that have overburden them. This reformation is, according to Maruna (2000), only accomplished when one has acquired a new role with new purposes and new meaning; only then may a change be observed.

1.3 Identity Crisis

Notwithstanding the fact that the concept of identity is imperceptible, much like the concept of stigma, there seems to be a lack of consensus on the type of event or emotions that can trigger a change in one’s personal identity. Furthermore, the distinction between the

constructs of radical personality change and self-perception appears to be somewhat ambiguous in the present literature.

In fact, according to Magai and Nusbaum (1996), psychologists have two different visions in regards to personality transformation potential. When questioned on said personality changes, Heatherton and Weinberger (1994) stated that there are multiple opinions and valid positions supported by data. For example, McAdams (1994) demonstrated that a mere quarrel can be sufficient to provoke a fundamental change in one's personality, depending on the interpretation and profoundness attributed to the event.

Magai and Nusbaum's (1996) thesis explained that sudden emotional experiences have the capacity to set in motion a change in the internal system that forms one's identity. Izard (1991) supported this claim by suggesting that terror and surprise associated with an extreme event are major precipitants at the source of a personality change. For example, if an offender learns that there is a price over his head, the fear of death may encourage a desire to change. Although some will argue that the offender in the example would only consider becoming an informant to gain an advantage such as protection, Magai and Nusbaum (1996) claimed that a change in one's identity is successful when done for internal reasons. Chodorkoff (1954) agreed and added that the feeling of surprise stemming from a conscious realization could have a similar effect.

Magai and Nusbaum's (1996) study distinguished between two types of identity change: the sudden and hasty change versus the progressive change. In the first scenario (also called radical or massive personality change), a study conducted by Miller and C'deBaca (2001) has proven to be relevant. Miller and C'deBaca (2001) described this identity transformation as a quantum change and they studied the phenomenon by using micronarrative techniques, such as the analysis of autobiographies and life stories that focus on a specific event in order to isolate the critical elements of the change process. Their study pinpoints the rationalization behind our choice of qualitative methodology, which will be discussed in Chapter III.

Miller and C'deBaca (2001) studied individuals who had undergone drastic changes in their values, emotions, attitudes and actions. They found that participants in their sample had not anticipated, nor were they prepared, for such an identity change to occur. The authors referred to the example of a person who suddenly realized, after completing a workshop on anger management, that they had been living their life in rage and shame. This would have forced the person to experience strong revolutionizing emotions, allowing for the weight of anger to lift off their shoulders. The same reasoning could be applied to a person who was once a racist or a homophobe, yet after some education and introspection, their prejudices dissipated. In turn, if an identity, racism and homophobia are social constructs, Akerstrom (1988) and Brodeur and Jobard (2005) have argued that the stigma surrounding informants is also the product of social construct. Hence, these authors proposed to normalize the act of informing by making it a civilized practice. If delating becomes more banal, then it may encourage offenders to resort to this practice as a means to desist from crime.

2. Desistance from a Deviant Behaviour

For the act of informing to be considered an acceptable route to desistance, not only is an offender required to accept social norms, but society must also accept those individuals in order to allow for sustained desistance (Meisenhelder, 1982). In the event where society would not be open to receive ex-offenders who are making efforts to maintain desistance, this rejection, alongside other obstacles, can open the door to recidivism. As Lemert (1951) and Becker (1963) underlined in the context of the labeling theory, when offenders experience repetitive failure, they may come to internalize the negative labels they are associate with. This type of response to labels and denied opportunities can lead to a sense of hopelessness, and in turn, a relapse in crime (Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell and Naples, 2004).

Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell and Naples (2004) created an interesting parallel with the premise of labeling theory by suggesting that there are two distinct stages to the desistance process: primary and secondary desistance. The researchers explained that primary desistance refers to “any lull or crime-free gap in the course of a criminal career” (Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell

and Naples, 2004: p. 274). The period of time between two crimes or an incarceration period relates to primary desistance. Secondary desistance depicts a halt of criminal activities and marginal behaviour due to a change in the offender's role and personal identity. In order to leave crime behind, Shover (1996) and Maruna (2001) specified that the offender undergoes a reorganization of his or her internal being. In other words, primary desistance refers to short-term or temporary pauses in a criminal career whereas secondary desistance implies long-term desistance.

That being said, is it realistic to believe in long-term desistance? Then again, how does one define, measure and conceptualize desistance? Laub and Sampson (2001: p. 8) have argued that, "Developing a definition of desistance for the sake of having a definition is not worth the effort" because the research community has yet to universally accept a definition of the concept. Indeed, too many questions remain unanswered: Does spontaneous remission really exist (Biernacki, 1986)? What is the difference between temporary cessation and suspension of activities (Elliott, Huizinga and Menard, 1989; Baskin and Sommers, 1998)? How does one differentiate between false desistance and genuine desistance? How much time must have passed before considering sustained desistance (Farrington, 1986)? Is it more accurate to view criminal involvement and desistance as a "zigzag path" (Glaser, 1964) or as shifts and oscillations (Adler and Adler, 1983)? All of these questions will not be answered through this thesis, although they represent potential avenues for future research.

As was encouraged by Laub and Sampson (2001), further developments are needed to better understand the conceptualization and measurement of desistance. Furthermore, to reiterate our previous claim pertaining to Maruna's (2000) work, the act of desisting from crime depicts similarities with the decision-making process to cease a problematic behaviour (e.g. drug use, smoking cigarettes). These researchers mentioned that desistance emerges from multiple complex processes (including developmental, psychological, and sociological), and therefore house a variety of associated factors. To reformulate, there are numerous perspectives and theories when it comes to determining the influential factors at the root of quitting crime. The most common theories on the subject have elaborated on components derived from social control

theory (Sampson and Laub, 1993), differential association theory (Warr, 2002), and cognitive psychology (Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002).

From their review of the literature, Laub and Sampson (2001) concluded that the main factors related to desistance from crime in adulthood include aging, marriage and/or family formation, finding and maintaining employment, and deciding to live as a law-abiding citizen, notably after weighing the costs and benefits of crime. Nevertheless, Wright and Wright (1992: p. 54) nuanced that “no clearly confirming set of findings has emerged from research to date that demonstrates that getting married and having children reduces the likelihood of criminal offense.”

In criminology, the ideology of crime declining as one ages is widespread (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Additionally, Hoffman and Beck (1984) observed lower rates of recidivism with increasing age, hence leading them to believe in an “age-related burnout phenomenon” (cited in Laub and Sampson, 2001: p. 5). Other researchers will argue that offenders experience changes as they grow older, which may influence their involvement in criminal activities (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986; Shover, 1996). Shover (1996) explained that formal and informal social controls have a greater impact on a person advancing in age. As a person gets older, for example, he or she may become more fearful of being imprisoned. On the other hand, Loeber and Leblanc (1990) argued that desistance does not simply occur due to a person’s age. They added that desistance can occur at any time during one’s life trajectory, and the factors influencing the desistance process vary depending on the age. Laub and Sampson (2001) suggested that leaving a life of crime most frequently takes place during and after adolescence.

No matter the age, Leblanc and Loeber (1993) hypothesized that the factors that come into play seem to be the opposite of the risk factors leading to the commission of an offence. An example supporting this claim stipulates that antisocial behaviors arise from the shift in social influence from parents to delinquent peers, whereas desistance would be a result from a shift in social influence from peers to spouses (Farrington, 1992). In accordance, Akers (1998: p. 164) disputed that “other than one's own prior deviant behavior, the best single predictor of the onset,

continuation, or desistance of delinquency is differential association with law-violating or norm-violating peers.”

In summary, findings from past literature addressing the act of desistance from crime or other deviant behaviours outlined the various avenues to desistance. Those which have received considerable attention from research include the development of a significant relationship (e.g. with a spouse), securing stable employment, a change in one’s personal values and identity, and the effect of aging. The present research will direct its focus on an unconventional road to desistance – the act of informing. Understanding the processes and dynamics involved in this type of desistance is relevant to the goal of targeting the appropriate interventions to prevent reoffending among offenders who become informants.

3. The Context of the Current Study

Stemming from the few research works on criminal informants – whether from a historical, legal, sociological or policing point of view – what we know can be summed up as this: informants are growingly relied upon by the justice system, and their participation is usually motivated and rewarded with benefits such as a reduced sentence, a financial compensation, protection or annulment of some or all charges (Navasky, 1980; Marx, 1988; Natapoff, 2007). Although society may resent informants based on the assumption they are acting on selfish grounds, they often embody the answer in solving criminal cases. Indeed, law-enforcement institutions are ready to give informants these types of advantages because the criminal justice system is after one specific goal: a high and rapid rate of convictions. Thus, Rich (2012) argued that it is society’s duty to protect its vulnerable members, a category under which informants’ fall.

That being said, what has been brought to light by past studies on the subject seems to have reached a plateau. The majority of the body of literature pertaining to informants has focused on identifying the motivations of justice collaborators in different contexts while relying on various theories. While some conclusions were drawn from samples related to individuals

involved in courtroom proceedings (Navasky, 1980; Hollander 1982; Morselli et Kazemian, 2004; Boisvert, 2005; Natapoff, 2007; Rich, 2012), others reflected the dynamics of informing in a prison environment (Marquart and Roebuck, 1985; Akerstrom, 1988; Lerner, 2002; Carceral and Bernard, 2005; Reiter, 2012). A common result among these studies is the importance of a structured and balanced relationship between the informant and its handler (whether it be a prison guard, a police officer or a prosecutor). Greer (1995) and Turcotte (2008) supported this finding and added the need to consistently refresh government protocols to protect both sides of the relationship. In fact, although some studies have outlined the value of relying on criminal informants in the search for justice (Shenon, 1987; Madinger, 2000, Brodeur and Jobard, 2005), others explained the necessity to tread lightly when using informants in order not to erode society's trust in the justice system (Shenon, 1987; Dunnighan and Norris, 1999; Baer, 2011). However, in our opinion, these types of studies give into over-rationality and lack in-depth reasoning. Although we recognize the existence and the role played by offenders' motivations to inform, we believe that these remain superficial in nature.

In fact, the central aim of this thesis is to study an offender's decision to desist from crime by means of informing. As Maruna (2000: p. 23) stated, "one could model the termination point as the moment when the person decides to quit the life of crime," or in this case, as the moment when the offender decides to reach out to the authorities to cooperate. Previous research (e.g. Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986) often created a parallel between the decision-making process and the choice or rational choice model of desistance. Yet, this thesis will stray from the obvious perspective and, instead, will follow in Katz's (1988) footsteps by presenting a phenomenological approach. This will allow for a better understanding of an informant's decision-making process, notably through the analysis of their thoughts, emotions and perceptions.

This master's thesis builds on Maruna's (2000) study on the way ex-drug addicts decided to desist from substance abuse, including considerations on sustained abstinence. Comparisons can be made between the decision to cease drug consumption and the decision to give up crime. To desist from a habit or behaviour are both actions that require a fundamental shift in a person's internal core. That being said, the study of one's decision-making process to become an

informant may therefore similarly require an alteration in the way that criminal behaviour is studied and analyzed. As mentioned by Maruna (2000: p. 17), “Desistance from crime is an unusual dependent variable for criminologists because it is not an event that happens, rather it is the sustained absence of a certain type of event.”

The act of desisting from crime in contrast with the concept of informing as studied through a phenomenological framework has not been the main analytical focus of previous research. It is by sorting through general transcendent patterns (emotions, experiences, thoughts) that we will attempt to extract a phenomenological explanation of the transition from offender to informant. This transition implies an identity shift, which is why this study will examine how an offender may have been psychologically and morally seduced into undergoing a radical identity change. The chosen theoretical framework invites the reader to leave their personal frame of reference behind in order to be open to the other (Digneffe and Adam, 2004). Twelve criminal memoirs have been qualitatively analyzed and deconstructed into markers, themes and analytical focuses (Adler, 1993; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2013) in order to stay true to the subject’s words and meanings.

Informants’ testimonial words have long been scrutinized and the meaning behind their cooperation has frequently been questioned. In the political and legal world, there seems to be dissident opinions pertaining to informants’ trustworthiness and reliability. Therefore, in the following section, we discuss the various social contexts of informing, without solely focusing on desistance, given that this is currently a blind spot in the literature. Hence, we lean on three specific topics tackled by the literature – informant use occurs in multiple environments such as courtrooms, prisons and police fieldwork – to outline what we know about the factors and the processes of an offender turned informant.

CHAPTER II: Informants of the Criminal World

1. The Face of Information

According to Brodeur and Jobard, (2005), informing is a type of denunciation which draws from questionable motivations. Habitually, victims of criminal acts are the primary sources of denunciation; victims wish to condemn the prejudice they have suffered. The justice system gives victims a voice in criminal proceedings and encourages them to press charges against their aggressor. When a victim informs on his or her assailant, this declaration is free of shame and disgrace, unlike when an offender informs on another wrongdoer. According to Brodeur and Jobard (2005), the main distinction between a victim and a criminal informant is that in the former case, harm resulting in suffering becomes one's motivation to come forward, unlike in the latter. For Boltanski, Darré and Schlitz (1984), denunciation is to a situation what delating is to an individual. Certainly, one can imagine contexts where these concepts may intersect.

Statistics gathered in annual reports produced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in regards to the Witness Protection Program Act (WPPA) have shown that the majority of "human" sources of information admitted to this protection program are or have been implicated in a crime (Department of Justice Canada, 2017). On this matter, the Deputy Commissioner of the WPPA in 2007, Raf Souccar, reasoned that informants are individuals who, in some cases, have basked in the world of crime since a very young age. Sometimes, this emulsion is the reason why a criminal informant proves to be a wealth of information and resources for the government (Breitkreuz, 2008).

Given their value, Rich (2012: p. 1433) argued that "society also has a normative duty to protect those who engage in socially-beneficial activities, such as assisting law enforcement." Despite the fact that an informant's popularity and need for protection are more prominent in dossiers pertaining to organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism (Morselli and Kazemian, 2004; Boisvert, 2005; Natapoff, 2007), justice collaborators may come into play in all types of crime cases (Harney and Cross, 1968).

1.1 Informant Typologies

Notwithstanding the debates surrounding the use of informants by government authorities, an increase in the use of this penal tactic has been noted within the justice system (Gilna, 2014). Certain experts stipulated that without rules and regulations to guide the collaboration between the state and the informant (e.g. rewards, witness protection program, rehabilitation), the justice system would obtain little to no assistance from criminal informants, potentially leading this government department to paralysis (Breitkreuz, 2008; Rich, 2012). This is the thesis defended by Schreiber (2001) and Brodeur and Jobard (2005) in their construction of two different types of typologies of informants.

Schreiber (2001) took an interest in the relationship between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States and confidential informants, as well as the problems generated by their services in police investigations. His study builds on the development of politics regulating those partnerships, the flaws in the administration and the evaluation of alternative measures in the hopes of improving the management of such a practice. Schreiber (2001) came to the conclusion that interactions between the FBI and informants could benefit from a better structure, which could be accomplished through the establishment of guidelines and appropriate supervision from government officials.

The classification created by Schreiber (2001) is divided into three distinct categories: (1) *confidential informants* are individuals actively associated to the criminal world and who continually feed information to law-enforcement agents; (2) *cooperating defendants* are people who are willing to testify in exchange for a sentencing discount; (3) *informant defendants* are offenders who, once they have been charged, give up information about criminal activities without having to testify as a witness.

Likewise, Brodeur and Jobard (2005) created a four-category typology. The *occasional source* refers to a person communicating information to the police on a periodic basis. The

regular source is a type of informant that focuses on a person or a group and informs on their involvement rather than on their activities. The *protected witness* is an individual who accepts to testify in court against those he or she snitched on, generally other group members or accomplices. Criminalized and sentenced, *whistleblowers* openly offer information pertaining to situations, rather than accusing individuals.

Brodeur and Jobard (2005) were interested in the act of delating as a phenomenon that evolved into a type of surveillance based on democracy and citizenship. They argued that in some contexts, informing is still frowned upon, whereas in others, speaking up is an acclaimed behaviour (situations where informing became normalized by society). The researchers demonstrated that in the context of crime and justice, informants provoke revulsion, even though they are necessary for the advancement of law and justice. They conclude that countries must sharpen their system in order to simultaneously control the use of informants all the while maintaining the public's trust. Society's lack of confidence regarding informants stems from the popular belief that offenders only cooperate to profit from a benefit, which gives the impression of a dilution of justice. Natapoff (2004) narrowed down the meaning of merciful treatment to a reduced prison sentence, a salary awarded during active cooperation, a percentage of the confiscated merchandise, a preferential treatment or an indulgence for someone else's crimes.

Awarding these types of benefits to cooperative offenders is one of the reasons why Schreiber (2001) compared the professional partnership to a deal with the Devil. This personification may be explained by the fact that certain types of informants, such as the confidential informant, are not sworn witnesses (by the court), which signifies that their person, their criminal history and their behaviour are overlooked by all governmental entities. Nevertheless, even if the informant has offended in the past, and even if his or her reasons to collaborate are ambiguous, "the informant [...] does serve the case of justice in his community, and thus fulfills an important citizen's responsibility" (Schreiber, 2001: p. 301). In other words, critiques and animosity aside, informants may be described as 'bad guys' who do 'good deeds'. Even if their primary motivation is personal, their decision to cooperate inevitably serves the greater good of society (Madinger, 2000; Rich, 2012).

Although Schreiber (2001) analyzed the use of informants by the FBI in the United States, his study relates to the Canadian environment which has the WPPA. Inaugurated in 1996, this law governs the relationship between informants and federal and provincial authorities by relying on specific regulations, such as a written contract signed by both parties, a decision-making committee and annual reports on the efficiency and productivity of the program. According to article 2 of the WPPA (1996), a beneficiary of the program is:

(a) a person who has given or has agreed to give information or evidence, or participates or has agreed to participate in a matter, relating to an inquiry or the investigation or prosecution of an offence and who may require protection because of a risk to the security of the person arising in relation to the inquiry, investigation or prosecution,

(b) a person who has assisted or has agreed to assist a federal security, defence or safety organization and who may require protection because of a risk to his or her security arising in relation to the assistance, or

(c) a person who, because of their relationship to or association with a person referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), may also require protection for the reasons referred to in that paragraph.

The WPPA presents a brief typology that distinguishes between two types of human sources: the informant and the agent-source. Both categories concur with the above definition of the *confidential informant* suggested by Schreiber (2001). The informant is perceived as an individual who communicates information collected through his or her implication in crimes, or by association with other members taking part in criminal activities. The agent-source is a person recruited by highly-ranked officers in the police force to help and advise during an operation aiming to neutralize a target (Breitkreuz, 2008).

2. Studies on Courtroom Cooperation

Although an informant with “Robin Hood” intentions may bear similarities with heroism, it is no secret that the use of informants in general by the criminal justice system has sparked many debates. In the context of using informants to testify in a court of law, many researchers have denounced the perverse effects of this practice by outlining the limits associated to their

credibility and reliability (Hollander 1982; Marquart and Roebuck, 1985; Akerstrom, 1988; Natapoff, 2007). When testifying, especially in cases pertaining to organized crime, drug trafficking or terrorism, it has been said that informants tend to lie (Natapoff, 2007). Rich (2012) added the possibility that informants exaggerate in their speech, proclaim what they think the court wants to hear, and/or blame others as a means of revenge. Researchers have argued that motives such as financial compensation, an indulgent sentence, revenge, or protection entice offenders to inform (Navasky, 1980; Marx, 1988; Natapoff, 2007). In a period when Canada needed to restructure its informant program, the Guerin Report (1991)³ was produced to restrict the justice system from being taken advantage of by offenders with unsavoury motives. The report mentioned that “on the legal and moral front, an informant is a citizen driven neither by their social conscience nor by remorse. Rather, the informant would only collaborate should he or she benefit from a gain. The report added that a delator’s testimony carries hefty consequences in the search for the truth in the context of a trial, and that should the informant receive compensation for his or her testimony, this individual may indulge in one-upmanship and/or commit perjury.”⁴

This loosely translated excerpt implies that an informant does not necessarily cooperate to fulfill a citizenship duty or because the guilt of past actions is overwhelming. The report argued that one’s desire to collaborate with the authorities is solely fueled by the gain of an advantage. Furthermore, the use of an informant’s testimony can significantly taint the trial and its outcome, as it is a truth-seeking process.

In a study led by Natapoff (2004), the author presented the consequences that may derive from the use of criminal informants in the courtroom. She claimed that not only do they play a dominant role in the occurrence of justice errors, but they also increase crime rates and threaten

³ The Guerin report (1991) was a collection of recommendations to guide individuals who interact with informants on a professional basis. It proposed a series of administrative measures, notably the inspector committee and the informant contract, in the spirit of eliminating the grey areas of the practice and to offer a better framework for the justice system in which navigate the informants (Boisvert, 2005; Breitzkreuz, 2008).

⁴ Integral French quote from the Guerin Report (1991): Sur les plans légal et moral, il va de soi que le témoin délateur n’est pas un citoyen guidé par sa conscience sociale et hanté pas le remords ou le repentir. Il collaborera seulement dans la mesure où il en tirera des avantages. L’utilisation de son témoignage est lourde de conséquences pour le procès lui-même, dans la recherche de la vérité. [...] Tirant avantage de son témoignage, le délateur peut se livrer à une véritable surenchère et même se parjurer (p. 13).

the social organization, the interpersonal relationships and the socio-legal norms in their community. There seems to be a larger proportion of informants in highly criminalized and disadvantaged communities, given that organized crime is more frequent in those areas (Hollander, 1982; Natapoff, 2004). Due to these potentially harmful consequences, Natapoff (2004) questioned an informant's relevance in the criminal justice system, even though prosecutors require their help to a greater extent. To this doubt, Rich (2012) answered that problems previously outlined could be limited if the prosecution was involved in the recruitment process of informants. In her study on the relationship between police officers and informants, Turcotte (2008) came to the same conclusion as Rich (2012), stating that the police investigator is in charge of informing the chief prosecutor of his justification for the use of an informant. Furthermore, other researchers have suggested the pertinence of creating a tool or to establish guidelines in order to evaluate the credibility of informants prior to their testifying in court (Boisvert, 2005; Natapoff, 2007). These propositions could help reduce the risk of wrongful convictions,⁵ as well as the risk that informants abuse their power.

2.1 Informants and Wrongful Convictions

Statistics provided by the Northwestern University Law School's Center on Wrongful Convictions specify that 45.9 percent of known wrongful convictions were caused by erroneous informant testimony (Natapoff, 2007). Warden (2004) added that this number reflects the reality that justice collaborators represent the primary cause of wrongful convictions in U.S. federal cases. Moreover, a study on exonerations showed that approximately 50 percent of wrongful murder convictions were related to perjury committed by a criminal informant or another type of witness who would benefit from an inaccurate testimony (Gross, Matheson, Montgomery and Patil, 2005). These wrongful convictions are, according to Natapoff (2007), the result of criminal informants who falsely accuse other individuals in exchange for financial compensation or clemency for their own crimes. According to the *United States v. Bernal-Obeso*, 989 F.2d 331, 333 (9th Cir. 1993) (cited in Natapoff, 2007: p. 122), framing innocent people is not recent news:

⁵ An example of a wrongful conviction occurs when an innocent defendant refuses to plead guilty and proceeds to trial, but is convicted anyway because the jury accepts the informant's testimony as credible and true (Natapoff, 2007).

“Our judicial history is speckled with cases where informants falsely pointed the finger of guilt at suspects and defendants, creating the risk of sending innocent persons to prison.”

That being said, the practice of using informants to increase and accelerate the rate of convictions has been qualified as a “necessary evil.” Due to the constantly growing dependant relationship between investigations and the informants’ ability to “perform,” protecting and gratifying justice collaborators has become an integral part of the criminal justice system (Natapoff, 2007). Informing is a market, and as Weinstein (1999) put it, informants are part of this booming business. Because there is an offer (offenders looking for a way out by offering information) and a demand (law-enforcement agents seeking the help of criminal informants), the market is set to keep thriving:

“[n]ever has it been more true that a criminal charged with a serious crime understands that a fast and easy way out of trouble with the law is...to cut a deal at someone else's expense and to purchase leniency from the government by offering testimony in return for immunity, or in return for reduced incarceration” (Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands v. Bowie, 243 F.3d 1109, 1123 (9th Cir. 2001)).

Within the market presented above, informants will offer information to law-enforcement authorities and, in return, they expect retribution that can take various forms. As is the case in the quote above, when the informant faces criminal charges, the motivation to cooperate with the authorities is just that; the offender’s future and freedom depends on what his or her testimony can influence in court (Harris, 2000). Thus, it is in the informant’s interest that his or her speech sways the jury in the direction desired by the “hiring” party.

However, here is where a double stigma may arise: not only are offenders stigmatized for having committed crimes, but they are also stigmatized for being untrustworthy informants, assuming they are lying simply to be rewarded. Law-enforcement agents will not always verify the witness’ version for various reasons, one of them being that the information provided by the justice collaborator may result in the only evidence the government possesses (Natapoff, 2004; 2007). Conjointly, since state authorities have become greatly dependent on the use of informants to carry out investigations, their sense of objectiveness can be impaired when it

comes to uncovering what is true and what is false in their discourse (Yaroshefsky, 1999). In turn, it is not impossible that an informant dupes the court and uses the justice system to his or her advantage, yet the government will not cease to employ this practice if it too benefits from the act. However, aware of the harmful consequences stemming from informant lies, numerous governments have put forward reform proposals, where guidelines and recommendations were created to control the use of criminal informants. In Natapoff's (2007) study, she analyzed the effectiveness of reliability hearings designed to evaluate an informant's credibility, truthfulness and intentions before allowing them to testify in court.

2.2 Like Expert Witnesses

The reason behind reliability hearings to evaluate an informant's integrity comes from the *Daubert v. Merrell Dow* jurisprudence (Natapoff, 2007), where the Supreme Court weighed in on the importance of such hearings for expert witnesses. According to Harris (2000), informants and expert witnesses share multiple similarities. For instance, on top of having a personal interest in how the case concludes, more often than not, informants are given a sum of money in exchange for their testimony, just like expert witnesses are paid for their work in court. In addition to being recruited and managed by the affiliated party, before giving their testimony, informants go through a coaching process by the prosecution team in order to prepare their robustness for cross-examination. In cases where there are no other actors than the informant (no victims or witnesses), not only is the testimony highly valued by the jury, but it is difficult to support or challenge the informant's testimony, since it is essentially the only proof pressing against the accused. Lastly, informants and expert witnesses can come across to a jury as having "inside knowledge" about the case which may persuade the jury to believe whatever they say (Harris, 2000). Put differently, by their words and their presence on the stand, informants may project a certain crime-related professional appeal that can seduce the jury into siding with the hiring party. Statistics on wrongful convictions associated with informant participation indicate that juries frequently believe their testimony (Harris, 2000; Morselli and Kazemian, 2004; Natapoff, 2007).

Nevertheless, no matter how powerful an informant's testimony may be, it does not mean that it is exact. This is why just as courts have deemed it necessary to evaluate the reliability of expert witnesses before they address the jury, Natapoff (2007) urged that a similar verification should be done in order to assess an informant's authenticity. In the researcher's study, she presented the criteria listed in a bill proposal by the state of Illinois to better evaluate informant testimony pre-trial. Briefly put, the elements taken into consideration by the statute include the informant's criminal history, whether or not compensation was given by the offering party, the accused's statements, the recantation of a statement by the informant, prior cases in which the informant testified, and any other information pertaining to the delator's reliability (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2003). By screening these individuals, it would allow for the partnership between informants and law-enforcement agents to be increasingly transparent, it would reinforce testing of informant's dependability and, ultimately, it would minimize circumstances for abuse (Natapoff, 2007). Although the factors presented above enable the courts to improve the discernment of an informant's true incentives to cooperate, the selection of sources for this thesis' sample differed for reasons detailed in Chapter III.

3. Studies on Inmate-Informants

In the context of correctional institutions, Akerstrom's (1988) study was a pioneer on the subject of inmate-informants. Her work is based on data from a Swedish study on violence and threats in nine prisons from 1983 to 1984 collected through non-structured qualitative interviews. Akerstrom (1988) was interested in the ways inmates were able to identify who was an informant and whether they had snitched inside and/or outside the prison walls. Her study not only discusses one's motivations to inform, but also inmates' motivations to discover the informants among the prison's population. Luhmann's (1979) work on trust as well as Shibutani's (1966) work on rumours were utilized by Akerstrom (1988) in order to describe the social conditions necessary to allow rumours to spread. Among the sample, inmates accusing others of informing mentioned that their motives could include the desire to get rid of a rival in the drug trafficking business, revenge on someone who cheated in a business transaction, or revenge on someone for stealing their lover (Akerstrom, 1988). Moreover, examples of reasons to motivate someone to

cooperate on the outside were said to be a lighter sentence, serving time in a “better” prison or benefiting from a transfer to serve time in a rehabilitation center. Those who collaborated with prison guards or other figures of authority inside the prison walls may have been motivated by the desire to get day-passes or a better prison job (Navasky, 1980; Ward; 1982). The study came to the conclusion that inmates were capable of bringing turncoats to light by observing who gained unjustified privileges, combined with the perception of who spoke too much to guards. All in all, interpersonal communication was found to be the main vessel to uncover the identity of informants.

Like Akerstrom (1988), Marquart and Roebuck (1985) and Reiter (2012) conducted formal and informal qualitative interviews to study the phenomenon of informing inside correctional facilities. However, these researchers also resorted to quantitative methodology by compiling data from inmates’ correctional files. As a matter of fact, Reiter (2012) gathered information over a ten-year span. In order to understand the act of informing in two maximum security penitentiaries in California, the researcher opted for the rational choice theory to explain why an inmate would become an informant. Reiter (2012) elaborated that there are three ways to exit a maximum security institution: obtaining parole, informing, or death. Given the fact that being granted parole from a maximum security penitentiary is highly unlikely, Reiter (2012) suggested that some inmates will make the conscious decision to cooperate with law-enforcement agents by giving up information in exchange for a chance at freedom.

If Reiter (2012) chose to associate the act of informing with the rational choice theory, Marquart and Roebuck (1985) chose to explain this practice through concepts of social control and environmental pressures. Their goal was to illustrate the techniques used by staff members of a maximum security penitentiary to incite inmates with a strong and dominant character to becoming informants. Findings of this study contrast greatly with those from Harney and Cross’ (1968) and Rich’s (2012) studies which addressed informants as vulnerable individuals. Marquart and Roebuck (1985) claimed that informants in their study were not in a state of vulnerability; on the contrary, they were the most aggressive, respected and envied inmates among the correctional population. Additionally, individuals identified as informants in the study were described as physically and intellectually superior than others, as well as being natural

leaders. Finally, Marquart and Roebuck's (1985) study concluded that despite these advantageous personality traits, informants were depicted as not always honest in their statements and were sometimes motivated by revenge, a purpose that has been noted by numerous researchers such as Akerstrom (1988), Greer (1995), Natapoff (2004), Boisvert (2005), and Turcotte (2008).

4. Studies on Police Cooperation

Turcotte (2008) took an interest in the informant-authority dynamic by assessing police officers' ability to augment the advantages and limit the risks associated with the use of informants in their practice. To do so, she observed the context and the extent to which a police officer is capable of asserting control over the informant. In other words, the researcher's objective was to evaluate the efficacy of this partnership. She relied on the social exchange theory, the sociology of negotiations and like Akerstrom (1988), on Luhmann's (1979) work on trust. In her qualitative study, Turcotte (2008) carried out interviews with law-enforcement agents and protected witnesses,⁶ as well as an analysis of case files. From this methodology, two significant results came to light.

First, Turcotte (2008) stated that during the recruitment phase of an informant, the police officer is generally advantaged by the terms of the exchange. She found that among the law-enforcement agents interviewed, the general consensus was that they can always dig up a motivation stemming from the informant's life story and utilize it to convince him or her to cooperate. This refers to a tactic which consists of creating or exploiting the source's motivations. Becoming an informant is presented to the person as an opportunity to fulfill a desire or to answer their needs. Turcotte (2008) agreed with other researchers on the fact that when an offender is arrested before the stage of recruitment, his or her legal status may not necessarily be the only reason persuading them to cooperate; the potential informant may demand an income or be seeking revenge (Marx, 1988; Dunnighan et Norris, 1999; Billingsley, 2001). Nevertheless, Turcotte (2008) specified that money is the primary source of motivation

⁶ See Brodeur and Jobard's (2005) definition of protected witness.

among informants, even more so than revenge. This statement opposes that of other researchers who claim that a collaborator's main interest over a monetary reward is to obtain clemency for their illicit behaviours by the criminal justice system (Harney and Cross, 1968; Goodman and Will, 1985; Greer, 1995). Skolnick (1975) seems to have agreed with the idea that informers operate selfishly in order to benefit from a lenient treatment of their crimes or even to escape punishment all together. In his study, Skolnick (1975) found that privileges granted to informants were generally indulgent prison sentences, immunity from criminal pursuit, preferential treatment during incarceration, financial compensation, and/or new beginnings under new identities.

Police officers and prosecutors have access to a relatively large range of advantages and rewards to lure offenders into becoming informants (Turcotte, 2008). This may be because more often than not, informants possess privileged information by their present or past implication in a criminal organisation which can be the key to solving an investigation. The authorities also understand that given the stigma surrounding the role of an informant, they must present a seductive offer that will convince the offender to overcome this negative label. According to Rich (2012), criminal informants are especially motivated by the fear of being subjected to criminal prosecution, which encourages them to chase after evidence against others. An informant can become a valuable asset for the advancement of an investigation when authorities seem to be caught in a dead-end (e.g. when the case is devoid of proof, witnesses or victims). Likewise, active criminal informants have been helpful in undercover cases, saving time and resources for the government by sending the informant back into his or her criminal environment to gather information, rather than training a law-enforcement officer for an undercover operation, putting them in harm's way (Mallory, 2000). Indeed, by their criminal connections and affiliations, informants allow authorities to infiltrate criminal organizations in a more productive and practical fashion (Rich, 2012).

That being said, in their attempts to convince an offender to cooperate, it is in the officers' interest to glorify their project during the first chance they get to establish a relationship with the informant (Turcotte, 2008). Thus, even if the informant wants something that is not realistically obtainable, or if they want to cooperate but mention certain loose ends needing to be

addressed, it is not unusual, according to Greer (1995) and Baldwin and Kinsey (1982) that law-enforcement agents will close their eyes in front of new crimes perpetrated by their own informant, especially if the offence falls under the jurisdiction of another department (e.g. theft), which is unrelated to the informant's past (e.g. drug trafficking). Similarly, if a potential informant does not have a personal motivation to become an informant, law-enforcement agents will try to convince the person to cooperate by flaunting privileges such as reduction of criminal charges or prison sentence (Rich, 2012). However, these examples illustrate why Natapoff (2009) and Rich (2012) warned against the risk of officers falling into police corruption and/or having their authority overthrown by the informants.

This creates a parallel with Turcotte's (2008) second conclusion, which concerns the proximity of resources between the informant and the officer. As the relationship and trust develops and persists through time, there is a risk that the informant will acquire more power, even leading to a role reversal. When the officer has lost control over the informant, not only is police corruption more likely, as mentioned earlier by Rich (2012), but public safety is put at greater risk (Natapoff, 2009; Baer, 2011). As a solution to this problem, Baer (2011) suggested a reduction in the frequency of the use of informants and the need for a more selective recruitment committee, while Cook, Hardin and Levi (2005) proposed the implementation of professional associations, an ethics committee and relational contracts to assess one's motivations and competences. In Rich's (2012) study drawing from existing literature on vulnerability and paternalism, he suggested ways society could dutifully protect vulnerable individuals such as informants, given the shadow cast upon them by the stigma: obtaining court approval before engaging with a particularly vulnerable informant and requiring prosecutorial consent for any other informant, subjecting informants and law-enforcement agents to a training process, and allowing remuneration for informants.

In sum, when informants' services are called upon in various contexts, their motives, interests and reliability may differ. Nevertheless, a commonality among criminal informants appears to be their appeal for the life of crime that once was, and as Katz (1988) studied the emotional processes that seduced people to deviance, we aim to analyze the emotional processes that enticed offenders to desist from crime, that is, by means of informing. By resorting to a

phenomenological approach, we should reach a level of understanding of what are, for the subjects, the true attractions of informing, although it means complying to a shameful label.

CHAPTER III: Methodology and Research Strategy

1. Research Objectives

Notwithstanding the efforts to date to attempt to break the secrecy surrounding informants, this theme remains fairly unexplored in the scientific literature (Hollander, 1982; Marquart and Roebuck, 1985; Akerstrom, 1988; Morselli and Kazemian, 2004; Natapoff, 2004; Natapoff, 2007; Turcotte, 2008). This phenomenon is difficult for researchers to study for many reasons. On one hand, given the controversy over this practice, individuals from either party usually refrain from openly discussing this type of partnership to the press and to researchers. On the other hand, since offenders turned informants become at risk of retaliation, their identity and location are often concealed, which makes it difficult for researchers to approach them and conduct interviews. Furthermore, protocols and official court documents are confidential, and for one to get their hands on this type of information would require a security clearance that sometimes time and money do not permit.

Hence, although the idea for this study was clear from the beginning and the objectives became more specific through time, selecting the methodological approach deemed most appropriate in this case required deeper reflection. Past studies regarding a similar interest have typically relied on qualitative interviews to collect the necessary data from more accessible sources than informants. For example, Akerstrom (1988) interviewed inmates on their thoughts pertaining to how they identify informants, whereas Turcotte (2008) interviewed ex-offenders and police officers to understand the dynamics of their relationship. While some studies focused on the use of informants by law-enforcement agents in different environments (e.g. court, prison, street), others have looked at their stigmatization (Madinger, 2000; Mallory, 2000; Rich, 2012). Nonetheless, despite variations in research methods and objectives, previous studies generally came to analogous conclusions on the costs and benefits of a relationship between governmental agencies and informants, on informants' motivations to cooperate and other adjacent factors.

As previously stated, the general aim of this thesis is to focus on an offender's decision to alter his or her life course by retracting from crime and becoming an informant. In order for

such a drastic change to occur, it is hypothesized that one's initial reason for informing stems from a turning point that will bring about an identity shift. Put differently, how do certain stressors, such as experiencing a loss or almost dying, can reveal a new sense of self among offenders? Therefore, more specifically, this study will converge on the sources' thoughts, emotions and reactions relating to a triggering event in their criminal trajectories and their intentions to collaborate with authorities. In other words, we will attempt to identify turning points in people's lives that may have had the power to make them reconsider the path they had chosen. Moreover, we will study the dynamics involved in this potentially high-in-emotion moment in one's criminal career, as they realize that thoughts about turning informant become invasive and overwhelming. Finally, given the stigma and taboo attributed to justice collaborators, we strive to understand how this identity crisis persuades offenders to not only desist from crime, but also accept the dishonor associated with said label?

2. Sources

Before settling on the source from which to draw data, different methodological approaches were considered to gain knowledge on criminal informants. One alternative was to interview individuals who have worked with justice collaborators, such as law-enforcement agents (police officers, prosecutors, judges, etc.). This option was rejected based on the fact that data collected in this fashion would not necessarily reflect informants' point of views. If the goal of this study is to analyze informants, data would lose its value coming from anyone else but the people concerned.

At this point we considered going straight to the source to acquire relevant data. Conducting interviews with informants themselves seemed like a reasonable option. However, these individuals represent a population that is difficult to access. Whether an informant is in prison, protected by a witness protection program or released into society under a new identity, delators are highly protected by the State and some have signed a contract that swears them to secrecy and a life of discretion. In Quebec, informants serving time in federal penitentiaries are housed in an institution located in Port-Cartier (approximately ten hours from Montreal).

Commuting to this facility not only requires time, but it would also require financial support which was not available for this research. Finally, conducting research in the Correctional Service of Canada necessitates an ethics permit and security clearance which can take up to a year to obtain. Time being of the essence combined with other reasons listed above, this methodological approach was discouraged.

Lastly, another possibility was participant observations of interactions between law-enforcement agents and informants. This option was rapidly pushed aside due to similar reasons stated in the interview alternative. Additionally, albeit observing and jotting down notes would be insightful in comprehending the immediate dynamics, it would not be helpful in understanding how the informant joined this partnership, nor would it explain the thoughts and emotions of the person (since we would not be able to ask questions). All things considered, this option did not seem appropriate and realistic.

In Bosworth's (2001) article on methodological implications of doing historical criminology, she outlined a methodological issue that relates to a problem we encountered while selecting the appropriate research method for this thesis. The obstacle concerns the lack of documentation on a phenomenon related to a hard-to-reach and skeptical population. It is difficult for researchers to approach informants due to the cryptic procedures and the thick layers of protection swaddling them. Justice collaborators are a sensitive topic to study because their identities and the government contracts remain strictly confidential. If an offender flirts with the idea of becoming an informant, most of the time he or she will refrain from pursuing this thought and will keep quiet due to the paralyzing fear of retaliation. If they do decide to confide, it will be to a person in whom they have faith and with whom a relationship of trust developed over a long period of time. This is why many informants will not easily open up to a researcher, as we are strangers to them and have not proven our reliability. Hence, as a researcher trying to study this type of population, we would have been confronted to accessibility hurdles, not only by the justice system, but also by the informants' wariness. However, as Linbaugh (1992) mentioned, even though certain voices are more difficult to hear than others, it does not mean that they should be ignored.

Unable to directly interrogate informants, we had to resort to an unconventional research method to achieve our goals. The chosen qualitative methodological approach consists of the analysis of autobiographical material. Miller and C'deBaca (2001) characterized this type of research method as micronarrative techniques, where autobiographies and life stories that focus on a specific event are broken down in order to isolate the critical elements of a change process. Despite this research method diverging from what has been done before, it was believed that carrying out this study by means of autobiographical analysis would allow for new insight to be collected on this population, thus adding onto what is already known on the subject. The purpose is not to compete with past findings, but rather to complement and extend the existing knowledge on informants by using rather unusual data.

2.1 The Autobiography

Lejeune (1996) defined the autobiography as a “retrospective account in which a real person elaborates on his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular the development of his personality.”⁷ In simpler terms, an autobiography or a criminal memoir is a reconstructed narration of the life of the author, stemming from social, literary and narrative logics (Bertaux, 1997). According to Lejeune (1996), a worthy autobiography must be written from the first person singular perspective, as the author, narrator and main actor should typically be the same person. Secondly, the content presented is presumed to be true; the readers entrust the author who should deliver a selection of his memories and refrain from any fiction. Another characteristic of the autobiography as described by Lejeune (1996) relates to the push and pull between segments of narration and analysis. As the author reconstructs his past, he also analyzes what was through an emotional or critical standpoint. Lastly, the choice of verb tenses should not be overlooked. The author is to use the present tense to make relevant comments or statements, the past tense to refer to a distant memory and the perfect tense to give the impression of proximity. The search and selection of the written works for the sample of this study were based

⁷ Integral quote in French : Récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité (Lejeune, 1996 : p. 14)

on the abovementioned criteria. Ideally, all of the components together reflect an introspective account where the author's internal, and thus, subjective perspective depicts his experiences, thoughts, intentions and emotions.

Through the analysis and comparison of autobiographies, emphasizing the similarities in facts, opinions and/or expressions should prove to be interesting (Lahire, 1999). These unique and personalized stories depict an individual's beliefs and experiences. When elements are common to more than one autobiography, it illustrates a collective dynamic where these beliefs and representations are shared by the authors; in this case, informants. Such cohesiveness among written works should not be interpreted as a copy of the literary sub-genre of autobiographies. On the contrary, coherence exposes the uniformity of shared representations, which allows readers and researchers to uncover the root of the meaning (Moraldo, 2014).

Relying on written works as a qualitative methodology has its supporters and defenders among social science researchers, especially pertaining to the validity and credibility of the method (Lejeune, 1996; Godfrey, 2012; Moraldo, 2014). According to Moraldo (2014), life stories, criminal memoirs and autobiographies are important sources of factual information on a defined subject. This type of text permits the discovery of pertinent details as to the era where, for example, informing took place, as well as informant's social properties. On this note, autobiographies obtained orally as opposed to on paper may be similar in their content, but Moraldo (2014) hypothesized that the precision of the information found in written works can be enhanced in comparison to its oral counterpart (which would stem from an interview, for example). The rationale behind this affirmation is that the author of a written autobiography can supply the written production by dipping into personal documents, such as journals, correspondences and annotations.

Godfrey (2012) characterized autobiographies, memoirs and personal journals as new historical sources. Moreover, this author presented a research headed by Sir Leon Radzinowicz on the development of criminal justice in the UK following the Second World War. This professor conducted a qualitative study on post-war criminology mainly based on written sources such as government publications and inquiries, committee reports and criminological reports

published annually. Although Sir Leon Radzinowicz was himself a Polish refugee in the UK in the 1930s, his personal experience did not taint the conclusions of his work. In fact, he was capable of presenting a coherent study with adequate internal consistency due to the research strategy he favored; his methodology consisted of closely reading and reporting the words found in the selected documents. Even though modern criminologists can diminish this technique on the grounds of its simplicity, Darmon (2008) added that methodic comparative analysis between autobiographies allows for one to stray from a singular point of view to reach an overarching position, thus enabling a sociological analysis.

Autobiographies allow for original and pertinent conclusions to come to light, since they provide a different outlook into the social world (temporally and geographically). For the purpose of this thesis, we hope to offer a new frame of reference on a social matter: the dynamics involved in becoming an informant. This type of medium also gives way to the exploration of one's perspective through their glasses. Bertaux (1980) mentioned that albeit autobiographies are personal stories, they become of value because they represent a pretext to study a lesser known social universe.⁸ That being said, the method of research chosen for this thesis seems to marry well with the selected theoretical framework: the phenomenological approach.

3. A Phenomenological Framework

Conducting research under a phenomenological perspective has become more prevalent over time, notably in fields where the emphasis dwells on the understanding of human experiences in a specific context (Crotty, 1996). In fact, phenomenology seeks to provide raw descriptions of lived human experiences without any contamination from interpretations of its source or its cause (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Congruently, van Manen (2007) stated that phenomenology is a reflexive approach on human experiences as they are lived, stripped from any theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional influences. In this regard, the autobiographies and biographies of this thesis' sample were chosen in accordance with the researcher's view and

⁸ Integral quote in French: Si les récits de vie (et, bien entendu, les autobiographies) nous intéressent, ce n'est pas comme histoires personnelles (ce dont nous n'avons que faire) mais dans la mesure où ces histoires «personnelles» ne sont, que le prétexte à décrire un univers social méconnu (Bertaux, 1980 : p. 216).

description of phenomenology. A written account founded on facts rather than distorted reality or sensationalism was an important selection criterion.

Although interpretation does not usually partner with a phenomenological approach, it occupies a particular role when a study relies on hermeneutic phenomenology, as is the case in this essay. Even if this branch of phenomenology aims to deliver direct descriptions and to expose the bare truth, it may also be interpretive (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005). Admittedly, one may argue the presence of an oxymoron between the concepts of description and interpretation. Yet, Denzin (1989: p. 53) also recognized that hermeneutic phenomenology transpires when “two interpretative structures thus interface one another.” In other words, he explained that a subject who describes a personal experience has not only lived it, but has also interpreted the events that occurred. Subsequently, the researcher who receives this information will proceed to a second interpretation of the story according to his personal and professional background. Thereby, when the researcher and the subject find themselves at the core of the research process where two interpretations intertwine, hermeneutic interpretive research betides.

Phenomenology attempts to transform a lived moment into “a textual expression of its essence” (van Manen, 1990: p. 36) for the reader to internalize something meaningful. This reflective appropriation is also known as *in-seeing* (Hoffman, 2014), which occurs when the words and the explanations of a phenomenological text resonate with one’s own life experiences, as well as their own interpretation of life’s meaning.

Phenomenology is an approach fixated on and fascinated with the meaning of lived experiences that occur throughout one’s existence. When we orient our attention to where meaning stems from, marinates and blooms, as the process of reflective appropriation wants it, one may become overwhelmed and touched by a formative affect. Thereby, the objective of a phenomenological project is to create a connection with the readers. In other words, this type of framework is meant to be relatable to its audience, just like a work of art may speak to a person (phenomenological reflection) who has allowed him or herself to be open-minded and attentive.

On one hand, to give way to phenomenological reflection, Hoffman (2014) suggested two efficient methods: the *epoché* and the *reduction*. In the first case, one must try to find oneself in an open state of mind to receive the experience of the studied phenomenon. The reduction method entails that once we have expanded our horizon, we must narrow in on the meaning of the phenomenon as it reveals itself in accordance with our experience or consciousness. On the other hand, to achieve hermeneutic phenomenological writing, van Manen (1990) proposed four methodological practices:

(1) *Turning toward lived experience*. To accomplish phenomenological research, one must turn attention to address the nature of the lived experience. To do so, the researcher must lock away their own experience (anterior knowledge, assumptions);

(2) *Investigating the experience as lived*. The researcher must use adequate methods in order to uncover relevant data for phenomenological scrutiny;

(3) *Reflecting on essential themes*. Reflecting on the collected data and its interpretation should enable an explanation of the main elements of a lived experience. To aid the process, it is recommended to analyze a literary work by its themes;

(4) *Writing and rewriting*. Writing and reflecting are two processes that should unravel simultaneously. When writing, close attention should be devoted to the choice of words in order to analyze the object of study with an underlying sensitivity.

Pursuing phenomenological research using these reflective methods of writing does not strive to develop scientific tools or prescriptive templates to guide us through what to do and how to do it (Heidegger, 1953/2000). In contrast, phenomenology's goal is to create a formative parallel between "being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact" (van Manen, 2007: p. 13). To successfully utilize a phenomenology of practice, one must forgo any traces of calculative rationality. Commonly, it is said that the difference between practice and theory is that practice applies notions and concepts to real world experiences. However, van Manen (1997; 1999) argued that the main distinction between practice and theory lies in the way phenomenology of practice knows the world differently. The author stated that this perspective 'grips' the world pathically.

The term pathic stems from the word pathos, which entails “suffering and also passion.” When applied to real life experiences, the pathic relates to the global mood, sensuality, emotion and feeling of existing in the world. Terms such as empathic and sympathetic suggest a type of social understanding that may be qualified as relational; we try to feel or acknowledge what the other is feeling. Hence, analyzing a phenomenon pathically refers to an understanding that is interpersonal, situational, corporeal, temporal and actional, rather than being calculated, intellectual and technical.

To reiterate, the objective of a phenomenological research is to discover phenomenal insights that fuel our understanding and social practice by analyzing descriptions of lived experiences. Furthermore, an account of a lived experience must always be a retrospective recollection, rather than an introspection rendering (Hoffman, 2014). This study aims to gather lived experience descriptions of individuals who made the decision and took action to leave their life of crime behind by becoming informants. In turn, the objective is the use phenomenology of practice to formatively understand who they were and who they became, how they thought or felt and how they acted.

In criminology, Katz’s (1988) study on the attractions of committing crimes is a staple in phenomenology. He claimed that sensual envies, thrills and feelings of moral restoration represent the essential core of an offender’s lived experience. While Katz (1988) introduced the concept of phenomenological foreground of crime to study the qualities of experience that outline various forms of criminality, Maruna (2000) analyzed those involved in different forms of desistance, as inspired by the former researcher. In continuity, the reason for resorting to a phenomenological approach for this research is to push our understanding of desistance by addressing the lived reality from the perspective of those who became criminal informants.

Katz (1988) argued that the main political and sociological understanding that crime is fueled by materialism is weak and should rather be understood on the ground of sentimentality. Likewise, because the current body of literature on criminal informants primarily focuses on their motivations (i.e. material gains, political favors), we challenge this perspective by suggesting that desistance from crime through the act of informing is dominantly based on

sensibility and pathic attraction rather than pertaining to superficial desires. Although an offender's group relations, criminal values, internalized machismo and prejudice about informants remain the same, it appears as though the individual must suddenly become propelled to become an informant. For this matter, always following in Katz's (1988) path, the main problem here is to understand the rise of unique sensual dynamics propelling the offenders in our data-base to adhere to the label of informant.

4. Selection Process

In order to construct the data-base for this thesis, a selection process took part on two levels. The first selection concerned the type of book treating on the subject matter, which is informing. Secondly, a discrimination process was necessary for the selection of informants (and hereby authors), narrowing down our interest to criminal informants.

4.1 Selecting Written Works

When it came to the selection of what type of written work would be considered and analyzed, as mentioned previously, autobiographies were the better option. The objective was to find books about the phenomenon of informing, as written by the main actor him or herself. This was not an easy task, as there is only a small library of this sort available to the public. Furthermore, in our search for these books, we came across numerous accounts that were classified as autobiographies, but were not actually written by the informant nor were they constituted of their personal thoughts. In concordance with the objectives of this study, it was crucial that the chosen accounts were drafted or co-drafted by the informants. The main criticism that can be attributed to books about someone's life as told by an outsider is that the events and interpretations would only reflect what the author deemed important. Moreover, some stories can be embellished or even fabricated in order to justify the relevance of the book. After all, no author writes a piece with the intent of not appealing to any audience, and in turn, not making any profit. Seeing that the category of "autobiographies" was sometimes stretched and far-

fetched, the limit we were willing to accept was, for example, a book that was written by an outside source (e.g. reputable author, journalist), as long as the content of the book was the integral interview between said author and informant. In some libraries, these types of books are classified as biographies rather than autobiographies.

One thing is for certain, we had to make choices in order for this project to come to life. It is no secret that the obstructed access to the object of analysis, as well as the alternative methodology chosen both represent significant limits. First, the fact that we were not able to integrate multiple methodologies to fortify the representativeness of the sample, as Turcotte (2008) did in her study, constitutes a limit in this case. Indeed, Turcotte (2008) directly interviewed criminal informants and supplemented the data collection with the help of autobiographies in order to complete any information-deprived topics. Second, although we have done extensive research to try to cover the majority of autobiographies that were recognized and validated by other studies, we are aware of the strong possibility that some may have eluded our attention. During the reading stage of this thesis, we had to discard some books that were classified as autobiographies or co-written biographies because, after consultation, we realized that they were only based on the author's (not the informant's) point of view.⁹ Lastly, we focused on retrieving autobiographies that were written in English or French, given that those are the researcher's competencies. Therefore, it is possible that other pertinent material written in other languages exist and could be considered relevant research paths for future studies.

Nevertheless, among the twelve autobiographies making up the sample of this study, five books were written by the informants, in partnership with authors and journalists. Six other books were written by an outside party after having interviewed the informant (hence, the book is mostly made up of the informant's speech between quotation marks). Lastly, one book was entirely and solely written by the justice collaborator.

To reiterate, the selected sources were French or English autobiographies and biographies that focused on the themes of crime and informants. The books had to be written by or in

⁹ For example, *A Gun in my Gucci* by E.C. Smith (Special Agent FBI) and *King of the Godfathers: "Big Joey" Massino and the Fall of the Bonanno Crime Family* by Anthony M. Destefano (Journalist in legal affairs).

collaboration with the informants themselves. In addition to the characteristics previously detailed pertaining to valid autobiographies (first-person narration, trust pact between author and reader, content analysis and verb tenses), it was important to filter out the autofictions from the traditional autobiographies. Besides fact-checking using other qualitative sources and the Internet, another option was to try to get a true feel of the author's intentions in writing this book. In turn, we reflected upon the possible reasons the informants wrote about their lives: To leave a trace of their existence? To inform and educate others? To fight against injustice? To justify or explain their decisions? Although this process is subjective (as it is the researcher's point of view), we took the time to question a writer's motives and evaluate whether those intentions were "noble". For example, an informant who writes his story to study his own evolution and to better understand his life choices would not benefit from reporting fiction. In turn, those who portrayed a vulnerable version of themselves gave the strong impression of a commendable and truthful autobiography. On the other hand, accounts written by informants who seemed to simply want to impress and put on a show probably had greater incentives to incorporate fiction in their tale, which is why they were dismissed from the sample.

4.2 Sample Selection

To create the sample for this study, it was important that the book was written by or in consultation with the informant. Additionally, the main subject of the account had to relate to an offender who made the conscious decision to open up to government agents about others' involvement in illicit activities. If both of these conditions were met, the written pieces were deemed relevant for the purpose of this study.

The selected books tell the story of twelve informants which will serve as the total sample for this study. The analytical focus of this research being the act of providing authorities with information on other offenders, it was important that an exchange of information took place between the concerned parties. That being said, books selected for this study were specifically chosen because the subjects were offenders who decided to collaborate with law-enforcement agents. Even though Boisvert (2005) broadly described justice collaborators as being victims of a

crime, witnesses to a crime or law-abiding citizens who possess relevant information for authorities, these types of informants were not of interest for this study, given that they were perhaps simply acting as dutiful citizens. This thesis relies on criminal informants who are (or were) involved with the people and the activities being informed on.

Individuals accepted as autobiographical authors were not limited to organized crime criminal informants. A thief or a low-level drug-dealer could offer similar insight on the topic of this thesis. The reasoning behind the decision to include other criminal contexts is related to the fact that the focus of the study is to understand, on an individual level, the decision-making process to desist from crime by informing rather than analyzing, for example, group associations by using informants as a pathway. A study with a phenomenological approach should be based on what Katz (1988) formulated as the “phenomenological foreground of crime’: the motivations, personal projects, and perspectives of individual ex-offenders” (cited in Maruna, 2000: p. 55). Therefore, it did not matter what type of criminal environment the informant was involved in.

5. Sample Description

The average age of the informants at the time of the publication of their book was fifty-two years old. This may seem to indicate that the act of informing occurs later in one’s criminal career; most of the subjects fall in the range of late thirties to early fifties, depicting with more precision the reality of the phenomenon. Compatible with the positive relationship between age and crime desistance, Shover and Thompson (1992) contended that aging offenders come to identify with differential expectations opposite from criminal participation, thus striving to make changes in order to reach more age-appropriate life goals. Moreover, in the current sample, the youngest informant was thirty-two years old, whereas the oldest was eighty years of age.

The amount of time the informants served after cooperating varied considerably. Prison sentences varied from no time served (n=2) to life sentences (n=2). For those who were given a quantified sentence, the majority of the individuals completed a sentence of six years or less

(n=6), with the exception of one twelve and one twenty-year sentence. Only a few informants were sentenced to three years or less (n=5). More than half of the informants in this sample have a history of convictions and time served, whereas the others accumulated criminal charges but were never caught until their latest arrest or their decision to turn themselves in to cooperate. Previous convictions and the duration of the informant's last sentence are relevant points in regards to the study's objective, which is to analyze desistance through the act of informing. For both individuals serving life in prison, maintaining desistance was not necessarily a perilous task. For the others, the number of years of incarceration they were attributed and the way they were treated by authorities and/or witness protection programs may have played a role in the desistance process. The following chapters will detail the possible impacts of incarceration on an offender, as well as the pros and cons for an informant to live a reformed life under a WPP.

When it comes to the types of crimes perpetrated by the informants in this sample, the crimes for which the offenders were arrested and/or sentenced for at the time they decided to collaborate included homicide, manslaughter, drug trafficking, drug dealing, robbery, conspiracy to commit offences¹⁰ and gangsterism.¹¹ Crimes committed in the context of organized crime also proved to be significant. In fact, with the exception of one informant in the sample, all of the informants were related to a criminal organization.

Concerning informants' social histories, some (n=3) described growing up in underprivileged environments where poverty, unemployment, violence and substance abuse were significant societal issues (e.g. the Bronx in New York). In five cases, the informants were born and grew up in a dysfunctional family tainted with alcoholism and domestic violence. Five other individuals were divided between middle-class and working-class families where parents had employment. While one informant married into an organized crime family, two other subjects were born into them; both of them experienced direct exposure to violence within their families. For example, one of them witnessed his uncle shoot another man and was taught that this is how one deals with someone that comes in your way. The other, who grew up in the 1930s, was

¹⁰ According to the Criminal Code of Canada, section 465(3), everyone who, while in Canada, conspires with anyone to do anything referred to in subsection (1) in a place outside Canada that is an offence under the laws of that place shall be deemed to have conspired to do that thing in Canada.

¹¹ In Canada, before 2002, an individual could be accused of having committed an act of gangsterism (participating in gang activities) if the infraction was perpetrated in association to a criminal organization.

subjected to racism by the Ku Klux Klan and witnessed his young cousin get shot. Otherwise, according to the written accounts, most of the offenders seem to have minimally been subjected to criminality. As mentioned above, the only type of violence (apart from organized crime) reported in the autobiographies was domestic abuse between the parents. It should be noted that few have mentioned some indirect exposure to organized crime, such as noticing men gather around across the street or at church to discuss business.

Over the years, most of subjects created a family of their own. At the time of their arrest and cooperation with authorities, only two individuals did not have a wife and children. Finally, after collaborating with the government and giving multiple testimonies, two informants lost contact with their family, either because they did not want to enter a WPP or because they did not support the person's decision to become an informant. In most cases, when the contract with the government came to an end, guided by the WPP, the informant and their family took upon new identities and were moved to a confidential location for security purposes.

Lastly, looking at the informants' degree of education, the majority had the equivalent of a high-school level education. Nevertheless, three of them had dropped out of high school and one individual ceased his education after elementary school. Only one person attended college and became an engineer before entering the criminal world, and two other informants had experiences in the army.

The objective of this section was to paint a global picture and contrast the different life spheres of the men representing the sample of this thesis. The following segment offers individual summaries of the sample subjects in order for the reader to better anticipate the analysis to come. This type of content will be reported analogously.

5.1 Portraits of Sample Subjects

The first two subjects presented below come from Italian roots. Notwithstanding the fact that they originated from different geographical regions, both criminal lifestyles intertwined with organized crime.

Tommaso Buscetta was born in Palermo, Italy in 1928. He came from a family of ten children. His parents owned a glass business which grew significantly after the war. Buscetta completed his high school education (around the age of fourteen). He then found employment and married in 1946. At that time, the Sicilian Mafia had a significant presence in the town of Palermo. The subject had his first encounter with the Mafia at fifteen years old when he was asked to kill a few German soldiers. Over the years, Buscetta moved to Argentina and then Brazil where he would open glass factories. When he moved back to Palermo with his family, he started taking part in Mafia activities, because he felt a spiritual allegiance with the group traditions. Buscetta became an important figure in the drug-trafficking business, and was known to be an organizer of the Mafia's operations in South America. He was first arrested in 1970 for illegal entry in the United States, and later arrested in Brazil in 1983 while he was a fugitive (he was wanted in Italy for breaking parole and in America for a heroin-trafficking case; both countries demanded his extradition). He was detained for approximately a year in Brazil. A week before his transfer from Brazil to Italy, where he would be trialed, the offender tried to commit suicide. After the failed attempt, he realized that this was not the solution to his melancholy; he then became an informant because he felt betrayed by the old Mafia values. The subject died in 2000 at the age of seventy-two.

Antonino Calderone was born in Catania, Italy in 1945. He grew up in a poor family. Although his father was not affiliated to the Mafia, his mother's family was. The first mafia family in Catania came to light in 1925 and was founded by one of Calderone's maternal uncle. After completing his schooling, Calderone worked in an anchovy and packed-olive business until 1957. He then enrolled in the military for a year. Afterwards, his uncle presented him with an opportunity to be part of the criminal organization. Alongside his brother Pippo, he became the leader of the Catania family from the sixties to the early 1980s. It is after his brother's death that

Calderone began considering becoming an informant. He had no more money and became a fugitive, as an arrest warrant was issued in his name for criminal association. He fled to France where he was later arrested, and finally, made the decision to cooperate. He served eight months in prison while he awaited trial. His collaboration with the Italian justice department dismantled over two hundred offenders who were arrested and trialed. Calderone entered the WPP and was relocated abroad with his family. The informant passed away in 2013.

The next three life accounts came about approximately fifteen to twenty years after the last subject. They are Canadian offenders who became informants, and played a role in the provincial (Quebec) justice system. All three men collaborated with a criminal organization, yet their motives differed greatly.

Jim Boivin was born in Sept-Îles, Quebec, in 1961. His father was an officer for the Royal Canadian Mountain Police. He described having been brought up in a dysfunctional and violent environment. He started consuming illicit substances at the age of eleven and began committing petty crimes (shop lifting, breaking and entering) in elementary school. Soon after, he sold drugs. In his early adulthood years, he was hired as a hitman to murder a woman's ex-husband in order to receive insurance money. Not wanting to do this job himself, as he did not see himself as a killer, he delegated this task to an associate who carried through with the crime. After a twenty-year criminal career, Boivin accepted to cooperate with the provincial police to infiltrate a criminal organization known as the Hells Angels. He signed an informant contract with the provincial government (Quebec) and served approximately a year and a half in a federal penitentiary for manslaughter. After his release, under a new identity provided by the WPP, he became an aviation pilot and later, a paramedic. He eventually left the WPP on the grounds that his informant contract was not respected. He then led a fight against the justice administration in order to defend justice collaborators' rights.

While Jim Boivin mixed with the Hells Angels, Peter Paradis ran with their rival gang, the Rock Machine. Paradis was born in 1964 in Montreal, Canada. His parents were owners of a convenience store. The subject described his mother as a hard-working woman, while his father was an alcoholic. Paradis dropped out of high school and moved out when he was eighteen years

old. He started selling drugs in pool halls to make fast money. When he finally joined the criminal organization known as the Rock Machine, Paradis climbed the ladder to become a full-patch member. According to his account, throughout his career as a member of the Rock Machine, he would have made several million dollars from selling drugs. Although he claimed he did not commit any murders himself, he would have given numerous orders to kill. It is only after losing his mentor and surviving a murder attempt on his and his brother's life that the offender decided to collaborate with the provincial government. Nevertheless, he received a twelve-year federal sentence for drug-trafficking and gangsterism. He then entered the WPP with his family and was given a new identity.

Serge Quesnel was born in the same decade as his predecessors, in 1970, in Quebec, Canada. His parents separated when he was four years old, and so he moved around frequently. In his first year of high school, Quesnel was into petty crimes and consumed drugs and alcohol. After shoplifting came breaking and entering into private homes, as well as bank robberies. His first conviction occurred at the age of eighteen; he served one year in prison. Since then, Quesnel was in and out of correctional institutions. When the subject was sent to Donnacona, a maximum security penitentiary in Quebec, he began hanging around with the inmates who ran the institution's sub-culture, the Hells Angels. Quesnel became their hitman. When he was arrested and charged with five murder counts, the offender realized he wanted to live a different life away from crime; hence, he offered his collaboration to the provincial government. However, Quesnel was given a life sentence for the murders he committed, eligible for parole after twelve years.

Remaining in North America, while the last three cases were active in Canada, the following seven offenders operated their illicit affairs in the United States. Some, like the next two subjects, ensured international bonds in the context of running a cocaine cartel.

Max Mermelstein was born in 1942. He grew up in a Jewish middle-class family in Brooklyn, New York. The subject grew up to become a well-paid engineer. After his first marriage fell apart, he met his future, Cristina, whose family was well-involved in the Colombian cocaine cartel. Mermelstein soon became a major player behind the American cocaine trade, moving sixty-six tons of the illicit substance to the United States, while racking

three hundred million dollars for the Medellín Cartel in Colombia. Eventually, the subject was given another task, that of killing ex-Green Beret and Central Intelligence Agency operative Barry Seal. Unable to carry out the task and his entire family threatened to death if he did not deliver, Mermelstein made the decision to turn his life around by informing on the cartel. Although he cooperated, he served two years in jail followed by a highly controlled parole. He obtained protection for his whole family. Mermelstein passed away in 2008 from lung cancer.

Jon Roberts was no stranger to Mermelstein, as their paths have crossed throughout their criminal journeys. Roberts was born in 1948, in the Bronx, New York. He is said to have been born into Mafia royalty, an environment in which he would have witnessed his first murder at the age of seven. In his early adulthood years, Roberts joined the army and was shipped to Vietnam. Back in New York, the subject made a name for himself in the nightclub business. Once in Miami, he rapidly worked his way up to become one of the most influential cocaine smugglers in the Medellín Cartel. When in custody in 1992, Roberts faced a three-hundred year prison sentence for his association to the cartel. Becoming an informant knocked his sentence down to three years of prison, after which he was reunited with his family. Some media sources claimed that in 1997, he was arrested and convicted of escape, battery on a law-enforcement officer, and stalking. Jon Roberts passed away in 2011.

Frank Lucas was born in 1930, in a rural town in North Carolina. Like Roberts, he was exposed to violence at a very young age. As young as six years old, he witnessed his cousin's murder by white supremacists from the Klu Klux Klan. Around the same time, Lucas' father became a fugitive and left him to be the man of the house. Thus, he began his criminal career as a thief in order to provide food for his family. With no education and a first run-in with the law around the age of thirteen, Lucas found work at a pipe factory. In 1944, he moved to New York City. He continued his thief activities until the day his cousin introduced him to the heroin trade. Quickly, money began to flow and Lucas grew in popularity with women and customers. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the subject was known as an international heroin dealer and organized-crime boss. When he was finally arrested, the authorities seized eleven million dollars and Lucas received a forty year sentence for heroin distribution. The combination of his frustration and police pressure led Lucas to cooperate. He served six years before being released.

That being said, Lucas did not maintain his desistance from crime. He was arrested and sentenced to seven additional years for breaching his parole conditions and participating in drug-related crimes.

Contrary to Lucas who was a respected and powerful offender in his environment, Joseph Valachi was a simple soldier at the bottom of the organized crime ladder. He was born in 1904, in East Harlem, New York. He grew up in a poor family and his father was a violent alcoholic. He dropped out of high school and had many encounters with the law. For thirty years, he belonged to the Mafia and took part in heroin trafficking. While he was incarcerated for this matter, he was assailed by the fear that other members of the organization were going to kill him, as he had been labeled a snitch before even considering turning. When his paranoia led him to take the life of the wrong inmate, Valachi decided it was time to talk. Although his confession broke the silence surrounding the world of organized crime, Valachi died in 1971 while he was serving a life sentence.

The last few case studies detailed below depict three individuals who were born and raised in the same era, as well as in neighbouring areas. Henry Hill was born in 1943 in East New York. He comes from a working class family with seven children. His father was an Irish man who worked as a construction company electrician. His mother was Sicilian. Although Hill completed his high school education, he aspired to be a wiseguy (a gangster) since the age of twelve. At this young age, he found employment at a cabstand which was a storefront for Mafia business. Since the age of sixteen, the subject was in and out of jail and turmoil with the authorities. In 1980, Hill was arrested in the context of the Lufthansa heist and faced twenty-five years to life. After eighteen days in prison and learning that his mentor and protector, Paul Vario, was through with him, the subject decided to cooperate with the authorities. In May of 1980, Hill signed a contract with the United States Department of Justice Organized Crime Strike Force. When his services were no longer needed, he entered the WPP with his family. Later, he and his wife were evicted from the WPP due to their arrest for narcotics-related charges.

Joseph Cantalupo was born in the same year as Hill (1943), and grew up in New York. His parents were separated and his father owned a real estate company. The subject graduated

from high school in 1961. He then joined the army until 1964. Back in New York, he got a job within the family company. His father's real estate office was also a front for organized crime business headed by Joe Colombo. Cantalupo eventually started working with Colombo and participated in mafia-related activities such as loan-sharking. The crime boss took the subject under his wing and showed him the ropes. Cantalupo became the personal notary to 'chairman of the board' Carlo Gambino and did business with the Genovese family. When his mentor, Colombo, was murdered, Cantalupo was left vulnerable and without any protection. In addition to being constantly followed by the FBI, living in fear finally pushed the offender to become a justice collaborator in 1972. For many years, he took on the role of an undercover agent and state witness against other offenders. He wore a body microphone for six years in order to record incriminating evidence against the organization. In exchange for his cooperation, Cantalupo obtained immunity for all and any past crimes. After his involvement with the government, he entered the WPP with his family.

Lastly, Salvatore Gravano (also known as Sammy the Bull or Sammy Gravano) was born in 1945 in Bensonhurst, New York. Both parents originated from Sicily, Italy; his mother was a seamstress and his father was a house painter. Gravano experienced difficulties at school; he doubled his fourth grade and suffered from dyslexia. These events had a significant impact on his self-esteem and used violence to seek respect from others. He completed a junior high level of education. In his early teens, Gravano became part of a youth gang named the Rammers. Then, in 1964, he joined the army and departed for Vietnam. When he came back to his home town, he rejoined the Rammers and took part in robberies. According to the subject, organized crime families would sometimes recruit boys from the Rammers, which was the case for Gravano. He became associated with the Colombo family. It is only in 1989 that the subject began to consider making a life change. At this point, he had suffered the loss of three close friends in one year and he had been betrayed by his boss, Gotti. This is when he decided to send word to the FBI to inform them of his decision to collaborate. Although he wanted immunity in exchange for his testimony, he received a five year sentence followed by three years on parole for multiple racketeering counts. Gravano had a family, but they did not support his decision to cooperate and so they deserted him. Under the WPP, he found legitimate employment and had some tattoos

removed. Nevertheless, he eventually left the WPP, resorted back to crime and was once again arrested on drug-trafficking charges.

All twelve individuals have led a distinct life, and yet, they have all made the same decision to deviate from the criminal path to become an informant. The nature of this identity change represents the data collected through the books that would eventually serve for the analysis of the phenomenon.

6. Data Collection

The acquisition of the books, as well as their reading took place between August 2017 and February 2018. We proceeded to an initial reading of each book, to then revisit pertinent passages in order to conduct a thorough collection of the significant elements. Before the second reading, the next step was to create a list of codes¹² that would in turn serve as a template to group themes and concepts to compartmentalize the relevant information. This tool was helpful to have at hand when browsing through the written accounts. It served as a checklist to keep in mind while scrutinizing the pages. Since these books are rich in information and make it easy for the reader to get carried away in the exciting rhythm of the story, the checklist allowed for one to stay alert in the quest for analytical themes and concepts. During the second reading, when a passage seemed significant, a research technique called coding was applied to extract the information. In short, this method of analysis consists of attributing an evocative word, expression or short sentence to a chunk of text that appears relevant. A code is applied in capital letters in the right-hand margin of a page, parallel to the identified segment. These labels allow the researcher to efficiently find, gather and categorize information in order to analyze the data and draw conclusions.

¹² See Appendix I for coding sheet.

6.1 Coding

The main objective to achieve by analyzing qualitative pieces such as autobiographies is to understand certain concepts as lived by individuals directly implicated in the event of concern. The analytical strategy employed during this phase of the research consists of the application of both First and Second Cycles of coding as described by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) in their chapter on coding data segments for category, themes and pattern development. The First Cycle coding consists of applying different types of codes to passages of qualitative data. The Second Cycle coding aims to find patterns among the different passages gathered under the same codes previously applied. Nevertheless, in both stages of coding, we focus on the words, as they contain the data that will eventually be extracted. A code is a label that attributes a symbolic meaning to the word or group of words in question (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). A code can be simple and concrete, and it can also be more intricate and abstract (e.g. an analogy or figurative speech). When analyzing extensive qualitative accounts such as autobiographies, codes are useful “to retrieve and categorize similar data chunks so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme” (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014: p. 72). Throughout the reading process of the autobiographies, different codes were used, such as MOTIVATION, CHANGE, CONTROL, FEAR, etc.

Codes like the first three enumerated above are grouped under the *Descriptive Coding* category of Miles, Huberman and Saldaña’s (2014) study, as they place a label on data in order to abbreviate (in a word or small group of words) and identify the global topic of a paragraph. FEAR is a code from the *Emotion Coding* category, where labels are applied to emotions explicitly expressed by the subjects or deduced by the researcher. An example of an inferred emotion would be if a source stated that a person made them smile, the researcher could insert the code HAPPY in the margin. This type of coding is especially interesting to use in projects studying intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences and actions, which would be the case with informants going through a status change. Additionally, it underlines the person’s point of views, interpretations and social environment. Finally, a third type of coding known as *In Vivo Coding* was called upon to cluster the information gathered in the autobiographies. In this case, codes are

determined by re-using the exact word(s) as spoken (or written) by the individual in order to harvest information relating to informant's emotions, values and attitude. This process allows the researcher to remain as true as possible to the meaning that informants attribute to their words. This technique limits the influence and arbitrary interpretation coming from the researcher's personal characteristics; the goal is to respect their voices. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) and Bischooping and Gazso (2016) mentioned the imperativeness of interpreting one's speech through their personal frame of reference and the importance of avoiding any prejudicial or preconception contamination.

Such emphasis on the necessity of remaining unbiased is to reduce the doubts about the credibility and effectiveness of this type of medium as a methodological approach. Arguing in our favour, Lejeune (1996) supported that there seems to be an agreement between the author (who vows to be honest and transparent) and the reader. He explained that autobiographies are referential texts, and just like scientific or historical works, they cast a light on a reality that goes beyond the text, rendering them available for its content to be verified. In other words, these public accounts leave their authors vulnerable, as they may be subjected to "truthfulness tests" and to any accusations of falsification (Bouilloud, 2009). Thus, it is in the interest of the autobiography's author to write true realities based on personal, historical, scientific or public archives. To this, Godfrey (2012) added that there are more and more varied sources at the public's hands, making methodological research exhaustive to the point where historians and social scientists can come together to discover and understand a hazy phenomenon such as desistance through the act of informing.

7. Event Characteristics and Analytical Themes

Adjacent concepts to the main event of exchanging information with government authorities set the stage for the analytical themes that will be discussed in the upcoming chapters. The concepts identified through the readings were found to be involved in the decision-making process of desisting from crime by means of informing. This process involves a turning point (triggering event), a vulnerable social stance or state of mind, the need for control and the

outcome of informing the authorities. These elements allow for the understanding of one's perspective, emotions and interpretation of the event.

As mentioned above, the main themes and concepts that were of interest to the researcher were included in the checklist that was often referred to during the readings. This was a way to avoid getting lost in the story, nor to forget the purpose of the study. As Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014: p. 73) mentioned, "That's why we think that conceptual frameworks and research questions are the best defense against overload." That being said, just as researchers follow an outline during interviews with their participants, there should always be some leeway for respondents to bring up unforeseen themes or questions. This was also the case during the scoping stage of all twelve books. Even though the researcher was looking for particular aspects pertaining to the decision-making process, a margin was permitted for unanticipated concepts to arise. For instance, prior to the readings, grief was not a topic one had planned to incorporate in this thesis. Nevertheless, the coding strategy led to a deep analysis, and the interpretation of the data's meaning proved the relevance of discussing an unexpected concept such as the mourning process.

The themes and concepts identified through research and data collection were taken into consideration for the analytical phase of the thesis, which will be developed in the following chapters. In Chapter IV, the objective will be to contribute to the literature on crime desistance by detailing the transcendent implications of becoming an informant. Chapter V will focus on what comes after the act of informing and its consequence on desistance and identity change. These chapters will be frequently coloured with cited passages from the autobiographies so as to create a detailed and precise rendition of the phenomenon. Given that the sample consists strictly of male subjects, from this point on, we will refer to offenders and informants by using masculine pronouns. This will lighten the analytical text and increase the cohesiveness of the work as a whole.

Chapter IV: Turning Points

According to Sampson and Laub (1993: p. 309), change can be defined as a “modification, reshaping, or transition from one state, condition, or phase to another.” These authors analyzed conceptual issues pertaining to continuity and change in an individual’s criminal implication during the course of their life. The main argument of this thesis is that social capital and turning points are significant elements to our comprehension of change in adult behaviour. In other words, the dynamic process which unites trajectories and transitions will bring upon a turning point or a change in one’s life course (Elder, 1985).

A turning point frequently involves a particular event, experience, or awareness that leads to changes in the direction of a pathway or persistent trajectory on a long-term basis (Wethington, Cooper and Holmes, 1997). Sampson and Laub (2005) described such a defining moment as a deviation in a long-term life trajectory that was triggered at a previous point in time. In the context of this research, Wethington, Cooper and Holmes’ (1997: p. 217) definition of turning points is of the most relevance as it creates a parallel with hermeneutic phenomenology: “A turning point involves a fundamental shift in the meaning, purpose, or direction of a person’s life and must include a self-reflective awareness of, or insight into, the significance of the change.” The subject’s introspection of the lived experience is taken into account, and reflection on differences between pre- and post-revolutionary events is encouraged.

In this study, the lived experiences identified by the offenders as most striking – and consequently, preceding their decision to become an informant – will be treated as turning points. Understanding how an individual adjusts to a lived experience is pertinent, since the same event, combined with different adaptations, can create different trajectories. This statement concurs with Maruna’s (2000) warning against generalizing one individual’s reason for change. Nevertheless, a turning point can alter life trajectories or enable a person’s path to be redirected (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Turning points can trigger different self-transformation reactions depending on the person. For some individuals, turning points can be the consequence of a specific dramatic event that gave way to sudden changes. For others, alterations come in a

cumulative fashion, occurring gradually over time where eventually, some sort of “epiphany” will initiate change in one’s life.

When someone lives through a turning point which in turn forces change, choices and decisions will have to be made by the subject (Sampson and Laub, 1993). It was found that multiple types of choices were available to an offender after going through a disorienting episode (Lofland, 1969). The first choice concerns desistance from crime or maintaining criminal activities. Once the first decision is made, if the answer is to desist from crime, the second consideration addresses how one will proceed to retract from this lifestyle. When offenders come to re-evaluate their interest in being criminally active, the choice and the way to opt out may be determined by the main actor, or it can be proposed by an outside party (e.g. law-enforcement officer, family member) depending on varying circumstances. Lastly, when the decision to desist from crime by means of informing has been established, through time, the person will have to decide whether the desistance is sustained or not.

Implying that one specific triggering event occurred in each twelve cases of desistance by informing would be an overgeneralization of the role played by such experiences. However, a common type of event was observed in the majority of the analyzed life courses, which eventually influenced the offender’s decision-making process to become an informant. The main situation that we singled out in most criminal memoirs was the experience of a loss. In some cases, the loss was tangible, meaning that lives were taken away, whereas in other cases, the loss was rather symbolic (e.g. loss of a mentor’s support). Regardless of the nature of the void, this type of situation created a social and psychological imbalance for the offender who began to consider alternative life paths. That being said, Maruna (2000: p. 25) expressed his concern for identifying identical turning points for all, as one offender’s motivation for change may be someone else’s reason to further offend: “As such, randomly assigning identical turning-point experiences to addicts and offenders, in the hope that this would trigger self-transformation, might be a formula for disaster.” To answer the author’s caution, rather than suggesting that the single event of a loss is at the source of every decision to transition from offender to informant, we simply stipulate that it may bring an individual to question one’s direction. We do not presume that this experience has a causal effect on desistance.

Nevertheless, for most of the offenders, the thought of cooperating with the authorities arose after experiencing a loss as described above. This goes to show that the motivations detailed in the literature about offenders becoming informants for money, clemency or revenge do not paint a complete picture of the decision-making process. The following analysis explains the primary motive to adopt a new identity (that of an informant) and depicts other advantages gained throughout the process as being secondary.

To begin, one can ask why these offenders chose to desist using the role of an informant to do so. After all, most offenders who leave the life of crime behind do not necessarily choose the informing route. All of the informants in our sample being directly or indirectly associated with a co-offending environment may explain why the option of informing was envisioned. According to Bovenkerk (2011), when a person knows too much about the association, the crimes and where the bodies are buried, other offenders may not feel comfortable having “loose ends”; repercussions can be expected. Antonio Calderone wrote about a moment in his life where he wanted to abandon the Cosa Nostra. He wanted to leave the criminal organization to focus on his family, but another member explained to him that the option of casually walking away was not possible. Calderone wrote:

He wouldn't let me leave, and it made sense. Apart from the fact that the mafia doesn't take resignations, there was the fact that I knew too much. I absolutely had to be kept in the family, even if everyone was aware that I knew roughly who had murdered Pippo. Either they killed me or they kept me in the family. There were no other alternatives. (p. 264)

Although Calderone's desire was to terminate his criminal involvement, he understood the rationality that kept him hooked. In his opinion, desistance from crime was, ironically, possible by death. Alongside this reflection, Max Mermelstein explained how even though he wanted to leave the drug trafficking business, it was easier said than done:

Even though I often thought about getting out of trafficking – and there wasn't a week that Cristina and I didn't mention the possibilities, and of course the lack of them, of renouncing the life I was living and taking my family somewhere that the Colombians would never find me – I never forgot Rafa's grim warning that there were only two ways out, and I didn't like either one.

(p.175) [...] *There are only two ways you get out of trafficking coke, in a box or in a cell.* (p.213)

Albeit Calderone and Mermelstein had the pro-social intention of changing their lives by desisting from crime, it was their understanding that the only exits were through incarceration or death. This reasoning may illustrate why these offenders chose the path of informing in order to relinquish the life of crime; the other routes to desistance were not viable options.

The following sections will present four types of turning points which were revealed by the offenders in the written recollection of their lives. Experiencing the loss of a loved one, the loss of the criminal organization's support, the threat of losing a fundamental right, as well as material losses are all traumatic events described by the subjects. Finding out what the offenders felt at that point in time and which emotions and thoughts came upon them after such disorienting events will also be discussed throughout this chapter. The last section will cover the effect of the triggering event on the offender's identity, which will come to be in crisis.

1. Significant Losses as Turning Points

The most common reason at the source of the offenders' decision to desist from crime, as depicted through their stories, was having suffered the loss of someone or something significant. The type of loss and the relationship with the loss differed from one subject to another. Nevertheless, behind every decision to leave their criminal past to become an informant lies a meaningful loss.

Feeling the need to put one's life into perspective in the face of adversity is not a thought unique to offenders. At least once during their lifetime, most people will experience a disorienting episode which may bring upon changes or revelations. In this regard, offenders are no different than regular law-abiding citizens. The reasoning behind an offender deciding it is time to retire from crime is similar to the logic behind those who chose to become informants. Most of the findings in the literature on crime desistance (Farrington, 1986; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Shover, 1996; Akers, 1998; Maruna, 2000; Laub and Sampson, 2001; Maruna, Lebel,

Mitchell and Naples, 2004) are in harmony with the explanations given by the offenders for turning informant. The end game being desistance from crime, it appears that this goal is strongly linked to concepts of fear and vulnerability. Specifically, fear is related to the potential of being a victim of a criminal or violent act, whereas vulnerability stems from having lost a sense of security (whether this security was physical or figurative). These emotions may be so strong as to entice offenders to reconsider their life choices.

Following a traumatic lived experience (turning point), if the offender comes to the realization that he or she must bow out of crime, the subject will consider the available options. When time is of the essence (e.g. if the offender's life is in danger) or if there is a lack of desistance opportunities, the offender may have to think outside the box. While government cooperation may enable retirement from crime, the informant may also benefit from certain judicial advantages, and gain protection from a designated program. This route to desistance not only accommodates the offender, but also the law-enforcement agency involved in the partnership, as they both depend on one another (Dupont, 1994). The findings which depict turning points or disorienting events correspond to Maruna's (2000: p. 17) desistance theory which argues that long-term desistance necessitates a "fundamental and intentional shift in a person's sense of self." In other words, individuals in this study undergo an introspection on two distinct levels; first, when they suffer a meaningful loss, and second, when their values are confronted by thoughts of becoming a turncoat.

The data gathered from the analysis of the autobiographies and biographies confirmed these statements pertaining to the consequences of being involved in a criminal network and the will to desist from this lifestyle. Notwithstanding the nature of the losses, it was found among the literary sample that a loss acted as a disorienting episode, which in turn led to an identity re-evaluation and finally, to the thought of becoming an informant.

At the source of a person's questioning whether or not and how to desist from crime, four types of losses were drawn out from the written works. The first involves the physical loss of someone with whom the offender had a significant relationship with. The second refers to the symbolic loss of a person, for example, by losing the support or the protection of one's mentor.

The third consists of the personal loss of a human being's fundamental rights, such as liberty. Finally, the last type of loss refers to material belongings, such as drugs or money.

1.1 Lives Lost

It is not unusual for offenders to form strong friendships or family-like bonds with other individuals partaking in similar socially-deviant activities. The significant relationships may be forged between two offenders, two partners or a crime boss and his protégé. The influential interaction between friends and criminal involvement has long been a subject of interest in the literature pertaining to fields such as criminology and sociology (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Sutherland, 1947; Sarnecki, 2001; Warr, 2002). Calvó-Armengol and Zenou (2004) stated that although offenders may sometimes find themselves in competition in certain criminal endeavours, they often gain from being friends by sharing knowledge and protection in the criminal world. In fact, when a person feels rejected by society and adheres to a criminal subculture to find acceptance, friendships and mentoring bonds can thus develop (Adler, 1993). These relationships may be long-lasting and sturdy, and sometimes, even the offenders' families come to mingle. An example of this phenomenon is depicted in Max Mermelstein's account, describing a night when his family hosted a Christmas dinner and the invited guests consisted of other criminal partners and their families.

Given these significant relationships, when some offenders in the sample lost a loved one, the lived experience became a traumatic turning point in their lives. Similarly to turning points as proposed by Sampson and Laub (1993), this type of situation illustrates the concept of disorienting episodes presented by Lofland (1969), where individuals are compelled to question their typical patterns of behaviour and become susceptible or willing to change (e.g. by going straight). Once again, losing someone dear can be difficult for anyone, offender or not. For this matter, it was found that offenders from the autobiographies and biographies did not remain indifferent after experiencing the passing of a family member, friend or mentor.

The notion of lives lost as a turning point was described by Antonio Calderone, who could be characterized as a crime boss in a criminal organization known as the Catania family. Over the months following his brother Pippo's death, Calderone was thinking about what to do next with his life.

My brother was killed in September 1978, and after that everything fell apart.
(p. 19)

I had no young people ready to do anything and everything to support me, and our friends in the rest of Sicily had either been killed or didn't have the courage to act. After the loss of Pippo even my relations to the Costanzos had changed; or rather, had been broken off. [...] I was a has-been, a relic, useless, forced to coexist with the assassins of the person who had been dearest to me – with my future executioners. (p.263)

Calderone's account described how competition between rival criminal groups gave way to critical consequences, such as the loss of his brother. Within the Catania family, Calderone's identity was forged by his relationship with his brother, and now that this individual was out of the picture, the subject felt as though he had lost power and influence in his milieu. Without Pippo and his soldiers (referred to as "young people" in the excerpt), Calderone began questioning his identity and his position in the life he had chosen to live.

Likewise, Joseph Cantalupo, who operated in a very similar environment, explained what it felt like when he lost his mentor, who also happened to have important standing in the hierarchy of the organization. This man cared for Cantalupo and for his evolution in the criminal organization.

Colombo was my rabbi. Without him, I was nobody...I had nothing. There was no chance for anything without him. With him, I had opportunity for future things. I knew, with him, if I got in trouble or wanted to do things, I had him. Under him, I might have even become a made guy. Now, he was gone. His sons were off doing their own thing. They didn't give a damn about me. (p.127)

The relationship between Colombo, the mentor, and Cantalupo, the subject, resembles the relationship that unites a father and a son. The source felt untouchable with his mentor's approbation and respect. He was comfortably nestled under the protection umbrella of his guide

and felt like he knew in which direction to steer his life. His identity was, in a very large part, linked to the identity of Colombo, his teacher. After his death, losing the shield that Colombo represented left him feeling disoriented. With the passing of his friend, he not only lost a large part of his identity, but also the confidence that he was going down the right path.

For Tommaso Buscetta, the turning point was not so clear to decipher at first. According to him, his reason for becoming an informant was not related to revenge, although he had personally lived through the murders of his sons. Throughout most of the book, Buscetta denied that his actions were motivated by vendettas, but at the end of his written account, there is an interesting contradiction in this speech that sheds a light on what seems to be his turning point. While the offender (turned informant) was on the stand testifying against others, he had a heated exchange with the head of the family he used to belong to, the Porta Nuova crime family. During this argument, Buscetta exploded when his interlocutor provoked him by insisting on his poor family values. This is when he revealed:

The brother of my wife, and my sons, my son-in-law, and cousins, you have killed all my family, but you have not been able to kill me. (p.303)

In what appears to be a cry of desperation from Buscetta, the reader may interpret the content of his declaration as an accumulation of lived experiences which eventually amounted to a final turning point. Many people with whom the subject had a significant bond with were taken away from him. Lapsley, Rice and FitzGerald (1990) discussed the importance of attachment relationships in the development of one's identity. Thus, the aforementioned source having lost numerous members of his family can in fact play a role in his decision to reevaluate his social choices and position, as his identity gradually changed with each successive loss.

A person's death can also affect one's well-being even if the relationship between both parties was not based on friendship or family. For some, it was the loss of their victim's life that acted as a turning point. In other words, the consequence of their crime became a haunting and destabilizing agent. Although such a relationship is not necessarily a trusting one, as found between two brothers or a mentor and a mentee, one may argue that the relationship between a murderer and his victim has some kind of intimacy or exclusiveness of its own. Whether the

offender and the victim knew each other or not, due to the nature of the crime, both parties will forever be united; the perpetrator's future (e.g. incarceration) will be linked to the victim's fate, and the victim's memory will be associated with the culprit's actions. Furthermore, even if the murderer acted on moral beliefs or used an emotional logic to carry out the crime (Katz, 1988), what both individuals personally lived at the moment of the killing solely belongs to them. After the thrill of the act has worn off the perpetrator, and given the closeness he shared with the victim, feelings of guilt and humiliation may then dawn on him, transforming the act into a turning point. This scenario was experienced by Valachi:

It was in the associate warden's office that I found out I got the wrong guy. I was there about fifteen minutes when he went out of his office for a second and came back in and threw a picture at me. "Do you know him?" he said. I said, "No," and he said "Well that's the man you just hit." I didn't know what to think. I was in a fog. (p. 28)

[...]

This, in the opinion of a special agent of the FBI who would later spend more time with Valachi than anyone else, was the turning point. "Valachi," he says, "has no real remorse for anything he has done in his life, except this. Nothing crushed him more than the fact that he got the wrong man. It really plagues him. Getting a guy who was going to get him was the one satisfaction he was willing to settle for. If he had been successful, he probably never would have talked." (p. 29)

In this case, the disorienting episode occurred when Valachi realized he took the life of a man who was not relevant to him, as he had mistaken him for someone else. The thought of what he had done in the prison yard was unconceivable and from then on, something inside him changed. As the FBI agent mentioned, if Valachi had murdered the right person, it may not have had the same introspective effect, as it would have been a righteous slaughter. Katz (1988) explained that this type of crime occurs when (1) the offender feels attacked by the victim and believes there is cause for defence; (2) the offender undergoes an emotional process where he transforms humiliation into rage, and (3) the offender honours his worth by carrying out the project of violently and physically injuring the opponent. Hence, when Valachi felt humiliated by the rumours spreading that he was an informant, his project was to kill his opponent before he

would get killed. This, he thought, would have given him the satisfaction of having defended his worth.

Even if offenders are generally more exposed to violence than the regular citizen, it does not necessarily mean they are comfortable or proud of their criminal acts. In his criminal memoir, Jim Boivin thought back on the violence his victim suffered, and he explained how he had difficulty accepting what he had done. He claimed that at the age of twenty-one, he already had a man's death on his conscience. According to his account, Boivin did not kill the victim himself, but he admitted to hiring a man who beat the victim to death. Not able to carry through the crime himself, he rationalized that the reason why he hired an acquaintance to do it was because he did not think this other person could do the job either. Yet, to his surprise, the murder took place. For this reason, Boivin mentioned that he would never forgive himself.¹³

This account demonstrates that not every offender is capable of violence and is insensible to victims being wronged. Even though Jim Boivin did not deliberately take the life of the victim, the death sentence he had ordered constituted a destabilizing event; it is as though he vicariously lived the experience of being a murderer. Moreover, in his autobiography, he added that his decision to cooperate with the authorities was crystallized after the death of a fellow member who had been killed by a rival group. To depict the extent of the significant relationship he had with this victim, he explains that this was the man he chose and trusted to build his motorcycle with. This episode, alongside with the other man's death on his conscience, constituted Boivin's turning point.

1.2 Symbolic Losses

Another recurrent disorienting event that was brought to light by the sources involves the symbolic loss of someone close to them. Some of the offenders explained how they often found

¹³ Integral quote in French : *À vingt et un an, j'avais déjà la mort d'un homme sur la conscience. Je n'ai pas tué René Caron de mes propres mains, mais j'ai recruté Alain Fortin qui l'a battu à mort. Je n'ai jamais cru que Fortin puisse avoir l'étoffe pour s'acquitter d'un tel contrat, et c'est précisément pour cette raison que je l'avais engagé. Malheureusement, je me suis trompé. Je ne me le pardonnerai jamais.* (Boivin, 2006: p. 63)

themselves distraught after hearing that their mentor or their gang turned their backs on them. Some also fell into a downward spiral after learning that they would no longer have the protection of their partners, and that in fact, some were possibly plotting to murder them. The following sequence illustrates the context which surrounds the risk of being betrayed and witnessing the disintegration of a significant relationship. Henry Hill, who was part of the Lucchese family, described the impact of losing his best mate's endorsement.

I grew up with Jimmy. He brought me along. Paulie and Tuddy put me in his hands. He was supposed to watch out for me, and he did. He was the best teacher a guy could want. It was Jimmy who got me into cigarette bootlegging and hi-jackings. We buried bodies. We did Air France and Lufthansa. We got sentenced to ten years for putting the arm on the guy in Florida. He was at the hospital when Karen had the kids, and we went to birthday parties and holidays at each other's houses. We did it all, and now maybe he's going to kill me. [...] If I was going to survive, I was going to have to turn on everything I knew. The decision was almost made for me. (p.269)

This quote demonstrates the strength of the relationship Hill thought he had with his friend, also a member of the same criminal organization. He explained the crescendo of activities that brought them closer together throughout the years, to the point where one's support and loyalty was merely assumed. Thus, Hill's turning point is based on the realization that his mentor was through with him and that someone who he was once so close to was now orchestrating his death. According to Cook, Hardin and Levi (2005), trust alludes to the fact of believing that the person we have a relationship with will act in our best interest or will take into consideration what matters to us. Hill realized that his mentor and best friend no longer had his best interest at heart so he had to find a new way to protect himself. Although the subject's interpretation of this symbolic loss was founded on rumours, he did not trust his former partners and thought it best to make a decision about his future before it was too late.

For another offender, an important member of the Medellín cocaine cartel in the United States, even the thought of killing someone and having a death on his conscience was disorienting. Furthermore, the fact that the cartel had put him in this position represented some sort of betrayal in his eyes. In other words, the abstract thought of having to take someone's life, as ordered by the criminal organization, was an unconceivable action for Max Mermelstein.

The last thing in the world I wanted to do was kill Barry Seal. I'd never killed anyone. Until five minutes ago killing was something I thought I'd never have to do. But I knew too well the consequences of saying no to the cartel. I couldn't believe the sound of my voice when I heard the words, "All right." (p. 195)

Mermelstein surprised himself when he agreed to comply with the task, but the following pages in his autobiography describe all of the ways he used to put off this mission, because he could not bring himself to take a man's life away. The act of murder was too conflicting with his personal values and unlike trafficking narcotics, the subject did not feel the need to seek additional thrills by committing a murder. When he finally got arrested by the police for an unrelated criminal activity, the source realized he had lost the support of his cartel and was left alone to fend for himself. He decided to cooperate with the authorities in order to prove his innocence pertaining to a murder he was being accused of.

At least my actions removed me from the conspiracy, and eliminated any involvement in his demise. But it ate at me that the Colombians would let me stand for a murder rap and essentially throw my life away. It was one of the things that eventually led me to turn against them. [TALKING TO HIS LAWYER]: Maybe I should cooperate. I got a weird feeling that the Colombians might stiff me, leave me to twist in the wind. (p. 225)

Once again, coming to the realization that the group betrayed one of its own is a big hit to take in for the offenders. Adhering to a co-offending experience reflects notions of agency, power among numbers, and solidarity (McCarthy, Hagan and Cohen, 1998). Mermelstein sensed that he no longer had the support of his criminal organization and this marked the moment when he began to put his life into perspective.

Serge Quesnel also experienced the pressure to commit crimes as well as the loss of his partner's support. The subject was a hit-man for the Hell's Angels. Like Mermelstein, the pressure to kill others became overwhelming to the point where he had to take a step back to re-evaluate his personal desires and needs. Moreover, when Quesnel was arrested alongside another group member (Pit – his apprentice), during the interrogation, he realized that his partner had

given him up. He then understood that the matter was serious and that he was in deep water. He was baffled by the thought of someone turning informant, as this was not common practice.¹⁴

When Quesnel was being interrogated, the police officer said something that alerted him to the fact that his co-accused had revealed information. Whether or not this was part of police-interrogation tactics, we cannot speculate, but it planted a doubt in Quesnel's mind that the other group member had broken his oath of loyalty to him. Moreover, since this co-offender was also Quesnel's protégé, his actions were associated to him by default. Hence, Pit talking to the authorities reflected negatively on the source. This is when he started thinking, if he (Pit) can talk to the cops, why can't I? In other words, Quesnel figured that since he would already be labelled as an informant, vicariously through his student who turned, he may as well comply with the title. Coincidentally, this event happened around the same time he was asking himself if he could manage to be a hit-man for much longer and whether or not it was a life worth living.

Peter Paradis, a member of the Rock Machine, also wondered if the organized crime life was worth it. After his brother was the victim of an attempted murder, he wondered if this was the right choice for him. Not only had many people he cared about lost their lives before this specific event, he also lost the support and the presence of his spouse and his son who decided to get away from him and the lifestyle he had chosen.

I thought of all my dead friends, the fear of being shot again, the arrests, the police harassment, the loss of Brigitte and my son. The nightmares, my body creaking all the time from stress. Now my only brother. Is all this worth it? (p. 218)

The same offender described another moment in his criminal career when he was considering making a radical change. This reflection took place after he was the target of an attempted murder.

I sat in prison steaming, trying not to let the others see my rage at my brothers in the Rock Machine. In a way, they made my decision easier. Since my

¹⁴ Integral quote in French: *Lorsqu'il [police officer] m'a parlé du fameux Rouleau de ruban gommé, j'ai compris que Pit collaborait avec eux. Tout à coup, j'ai su que c'était sérieux. C'est vraiment à ce moment-là que j'ai réalisé que j'étais dans la merde. [...] J'étais consterné. Bien sûre, Pit m'avait paru un peu bizarre, cette fois-là, mais jamais je n'aurais pu croire qu'il était passé du côté de la police. Jamais.* (Quesnel, 2002: p. 148-149)

shooting, I'd thought often about retiring. My biggest worry wasn't the Rock Machine, but the Hells. I didn't think they would accept my retirement. Also, what would I do? Get a real job? My last job was 15 years ago, as a stripper. In my hefty state, that line of work was out of the question. [...] All the pain of the past year and a half rushed through my mind. I decided to contact the cops. (p. 231)

Thinking back on his criminal past, the offender acknowledged the tangible lives that were lost and the relationships that were broken. Moreover, after he and his brother were the target of assassination attempts, all the past events taken into consideration created an internal discomfort which led Paradis to ask himself existential questions about his future. The absence of protection, combined with a confused sense of identity stemming from a long-lasting offending experience may explain why criminally involved individuals decide to take matters into their own hands and make a substantial life change. As depicted through Paradis' statement, his identity was one with crime so it was difficult for him to imagine a different life for himself. Being an offender had been, since his early teenage years, the only identity he had ever had. This is why Maruna (2000) explained that to make a fundamental and personal change (e.g. a change in one's social status, career path, and values), individuals must relinquish an old self in order to create a new one. Yet, this shift takes time and, given the social stigma surrounding the identity change being studied here, the decision to fully commit to desistance from crime by becoming an informant may be difficult to make.

1.2.1 Threats

Like the loss of support from co-offenders or family members, threats of violence or death represent turning points according to informants' perspective. This type of event may give way to an introspective reflection about one's future. For an offender in the sample, Max Mermelstein, the threat of death for himself and his family played the role of a disorienting episode.

In November 1985, I got some really bad news. Cumbamba had gone out to my house to give my wife some money. He delivered the money with this remark: "We understand your husband might be thinking of doing something that he

shouldn't. Tell him if he does, you're dead, the kids are dead, your entire family is dead." When Cristina told me this I went off the deep end. Threaten my family? Never! Nobody threatens my family! If they weren't going to protect my family, I'd find someone who could. It was after this threat that I started to think about cooperating with the government. (p. 232)

Not only was the source feeling like his criminal organization was potentially throwing him under the bus, as seen in the last excerpt from the same individual, but a second betrayal occurred when his co-offenders threatened his life and his immediate family. Mermelstein stated that he would have to take responsibility for protecting his family given that he no longer had the support and the weight of his group behind him.

The abstract notion of loss in this case proved to be quite influential in the decision-making process of this international drug-trafficker to become an informant. The strength of his motivational desire to make a change was largely due to the intense feeling of loss of support and ties to his co-offenders. The reality of not being respected by one's crime group anymore, and that other loved ones may be in harm's way, creates a sense of loss of control over one's fate. Feeling vulnerable to danger and not having any control may encourage a person to change in order to find equilibrium in their present circumstance and regain control of their future.

While some may feel disequilibrium when their family is the victim of violent threats, others may experience an internal imbalance when their own life or their freedom is threatened. As mentioned throughout this chapter, the loss of life of a meaningful relationship has been considered important in the grand scheme of the decision to re-evaluate one's personal identity and become an informant. Yet, there is also a notion of loss to be taken into account in regards to the individual himself. Life and freedom are two of the most cherished fundamental human rights. Hence, facing the loss of either of these rights, whether it is through death or confinement may represent a turning point for some individuals.

We have discussed ways through which the fundamental right to life could be at risk, whether it be violent threats on an offender's life by co-offenders, or threats directed towards family members. However, offenders can also represent a threat to themselves when they engage in self-inflicted violence (e.g. suicide and attempted suicide). Yet, just like those who survive an

attempted murder by an outside party, overcoming a suicide attempt can be an eye-opener on potential changes to be made at the individual level.

The same logic could be applied in reference to the threat of losing one's freedom by means of incarceration. Being cornered by the threat of imprisonment as a potential consequence of one's actions may be confrontational to the point of becoming a turning point. Although we recognize the debate surrounding the dissuasive power of prison, we hypothesize that depending on the offender and the circumstances, facing a large period of time behind bars may have an impact on future decisions. As Shover (1996: p. 164) wrote about the rationalization of crime,

This is the process by which persons develop and employ in decisionmaking a more precise calculus and metric of crime and punishment. By contributing to this process, imprisonment replaces an emotion-laden and impulsive decisionmaking process with a more careful and prudent one. (Shover, 1996)

In other words, a suicide attempt or the possibility of being incarcerated are both lived experiences that can act as deterrence-based crime control agents. In accordance with Shover's (1996) concept of maturation¹⁵ among persistent offenders, he draws attention to the fact that offenders' willingness to either risk death and/or imprisonment will alter over one's lifetime.

1.2.2 A Threat to Oneself

When offenders age, they may be less courageous and, in turn, less prone to engage in high-risk situations (Walsh, 1986). If they no longer feel the excitement and reap thrills in committing crimes, we may assume that their identification and adherence to crime will thus weaken. That being said, an offender who no longer entertains a strong passion for crime but cannot visualize a way out may begin to feel desperation. This is when the risk for self-harm becomes alarming.

¹⁵ Maturation implies that aging offenders become increasingly interested in positive gains from conventional lifestyles and also grow more rational in decisionmaking (Shover, 1996).

Although most of the offenders studied entered a state of deep vulnerability and fear prior to making the decision to become an informant, only a small percentage of those individuals tried to relieve their negative emotions by attempting suicide. For Tommaso Buscetta, living through this experience shed insight about how to recuperate from this event and which new life purposes were meant to be pursued.

When I finally came out of the coma...I understood that such a solution, that of dying, would not have been enough. Something more was required – to destroy the present reality of the Mafia. To destroy the Mafia: this is for me so important that I haven't hesitated to accept all the risks that this entails, including those to which the members of my family will be exposed. (p.192)

After this suicide attempt, Buscetta started opening up to a police officer who was guarding him prior to his transfer from Brazil to Italy, because he claimed that “the moment had arrived to tell the truth” (p. 193). After his suicide attempt, he realized that there were better options to live for and to devote his future. Like Maruna (2000) pointed out, a reformation among an individual is only fulfilled when the person has acquired a new role with new purposes and new meaning. For Buscetta, breaking down the Mafia and coming clean about this criminal organization became his new mission through which he would mold a new identity.

1.2.3 The Threat of Life in Prison

For other sources, the threat of spending a large part of their lives behind bars seemed to have sparked envy for change. Even if they have had a first encounter with jail during their juvenile years, Shover (1996) argued that the majority of adults are apprehensive about their first stay in prison. Indeed, their perception of imprisonment is usually based on movies, rumours, and media sensationalism. Nevertheless, the same researcher explained that incarceration is one of the most significant precipitating factors for rationalization of crime. Prison confinement encourages rationalization of crime because offenders are familiarized with penal procedures and notions stemming from the criminal code (definitions, range of sentences and penalty tables). As such, incarceration contributes to a greater awareness of the consequences associated with offending. With time, offenders who come to understand that criminal definitions and crime

control are rational constituents demonstrate that imprisonment improves their capacity to think prior to acting.

The next excerpts come from two men who first experienced confinement as juveniles, and later faced a prison sentence during adulthood. It should be noted that these offenders do not qualify their actions of collaboration with the authorities with those of an informant. Having gained knowledge of the justice system throughout the years, they rationalize their behaviour by stating that they only gave up information on corrupted law-enforcement agents or on other offenders who had turned; for them, this did not represent grounds on which to be labelled 'informants'. That being said, their discourses demonstrate a different tone and attitude compared to the previous quotes detailed throughout this chapter. For Jon Roberts, an American representative of the Medellín cartel (cocaine trafficking), facing a long prison sentence was simply part of the game he had learned through previous encounters with the justice system.

If you're ever indicted, don't get worked up over things they write in the indictment, or the numbers they throw out. A three-hundred-year sentence? Please. Nobody wanted me to do the three hundred years. Nobody wanted a trial. What everybody wanted was a negotiation. In a situation like this, they want you to give them things. You got things you can't give them, but some things you can. They want things from you that are so good, they'll feel good about knocking down your time. And when they feel good doing that, you feel good, because you're out sooner. (p. 525)

Although he did not want to face a sentence of three centuries, he claimed that the threat was customary practice in order for both parties – the offender and the government – to get what they wanted. Although the offender made it seem as though he was comfortable with this bluffing dynamic, the fact that he finally cooperated to avoid seeing his freedom taken away indicates otherwise. Given that Roberts had had numerous tangles with the law growing up, his testimony depicts an individual who is familiar with how law proceedings develop and who grew accustomed to having to tango with the authorities to avoid any significant losses. Despite the three hundred year sentence which was at stake, it was disorienting enough to get Roberts to cooperate, but we recognize that it was not a turning point as revolutionary for him as other events may have been for the other subjects.

Likewise, for another individual, Frank Lucas, a Harlem crime boss and a heroin dealer, being charged and sentenced to almost half a decade in prison brought him perspective. He had previously served time, but had never received such an extensive penalty. Criminal rationalization led him to re-calculate his choices in order not to lose his freedom.

Soon after I gave my information to Richie [law-enforcement agent], they took down the cops just like they said they would. I can't tell you the specifics about who was in charge of springing me out of prison. All I can tell you is: in the fall of 1981, I was released from prison six years into a forty-year bid. Say what you want about how I got out. The point is, I did. (p. 272)

Regardless of the coping mechanisms (e.g. denial, minimization) employed by either Lucas or Roberts who do not see themselves as informants, it is clear that the threat of losing their fundamental right to freedom created an internal discomfort, thus provoking a behaviour such as cooperation. Lucas' introspection was in part fueled by the threat of imprisonment, but the main turning point in his life is related to a different type of loss, as depicted in the following section.

1.3 Material Losses

The last type of loss we examine pertains to significant material losses. For a number of street offenders, their criminal involvement mostly results in scarce living and minimal financial gains (Shover, 1973). When substantial monetary gains are made, it has been shown that the loot is rapidly lost through superficial indulgences or repeated incarceration periods. It is the main reason why, Shover (1996: p. 139) explained, that "Repeated failure causes most eventually to see that the expected monetary returns from criminal involvement are paltry, both in relative and absolute terms."

Nevertheless, for a crime boss who has made a reputable name moving large quantities of drugs in and out of the country, financial loss can represent a significant turning point when the means to continue the criminal activity or the ill-gotten gains are seized by the authorities. This was the case for Frank Lucas, who claimed that the turning point in his life, in addition to losing

his freedom to forty years in prison, was more specifically having eleven million dollars taken away from his home without his consent.

Richie wanted me to rat on cops. Crooked cops. The ones, like Babyface, who had stolen money from me, the ones who had taken payoffs and bribes from me. Some of them had even taken kilos of heroin. I could take them down. I had never been one to drop dime on anyone. It just wasn't how I got down and it had never been necessary. But the cops I'd dealt with were a different story. There was no honor among thieves the way there was among other drug dealers. They would chase me down, curse me out, steal my shit. I thought about them taking my wife on some stupid obstruction-of-justice charge. But what really did it for me was one thing; the eleven million dollars that had been in my attic. Those motherfuckers stole it. And no one can tell me different. I know what I brought in my house that night. And there was nothing in the newspaper about it being turned over to the authorities. When Richie came back to see me a few days after he approached me, I knew what I was going to do. (p. 271)

For this offender, the fact that he suspected corrupt law-enforcement agents to have stolen his money appears to be one of the main motives behind his cooperation. Having lost this large sum of money was, in his eyes, more important and more insulting than the threat of his own wife falling victim to criminal charges as a result of his own actions. According to the subject's logic, it was worth being labeled an informant if it meant getting revenge for the loss of his money, rather than to help his wife's case. It appears as though the offender had a greater emotional attachment to money, which was the forefront of his criminal motives, than to his family.

In summary, our analytical search of all twelve literary works has outlined the common presence of a loss at the origin of the decision-making process of an identity change. Losing a significant other, physically or emotionally, was the most frequent type of loss described by the offenders in their respective accounts. This can be somewhat of a surprise to some, given the fact that the available literature on informants mentions no trace of where the decision to desist actually originates from. Granted, motivations such as financial compensation in exchange for cooperation, revenge and judicial clemency can surface during negotiations, but it was found that these reasons (if they exist) are only secondary to the decision to inform, which has been founded on the repercussions of having suffered a significant loss.

2. Turning Point Process

After having endured a significant loss which, in this study, also plays the role of a turning point, it has been found that the offenders are inclined to enter a state of vulnerability, coloured with fear, paranoia and/or depression. It is under these emotional conditions that the decision to make a life change is forged. The changes we have observed focus on one's personal identity, where the offender decides to end his criminal career by becoming an informant. The fragile psychological state described in many written accounts of our sample relates to the normal process of grief when a person, offender or not, copes with a loss. Furthermore, it has been found that for the sources, their vulnerability and distress appear to be amplified due to the internal confrontation of being labelled a delator.

The following sub-sections aim to illustrate the turning point process by drawing parallels with the five stages of grief, according to Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014). These researchers identified five coping steps known as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. In the most referred context of grief (i.e. loss of a loved one), denial comes with the shock of heavy news. In such, this first mourning stage is a survival mechanism that paces one's emotions by dosing only as much as one can take. Anger is the gateway to healing and it acts as an anchor to the person who feels deserted. Being angry at something or someone becomes a purpose when there is nothing else that makes sense. Anger is a representation of the intensity of one's love for the deceased, and slowly allows one to be in touch with their pain. Bargaining is a way to try to return to equilibrium, such as the past when all was well. In this stage, guilt and unanswered questions arise. Additionally, bargaining is used to try to numb the pain one feels from the loss. As simple as it may seem, depression is a natural response to a depressing situation such as the death of a close one. This temporary stage occurs when grief settles in at a deeper level and brings upon intense sadness. Acceptance takes place when the mourner accepts the physical absence of the deceased and realizes that this new reality is permanent.

Of course, just like the grieving process, the turning point process is not a recipe, given that not everyone goes through all of the stages, nor are they cemented in that order. Furthermore, although we are aware of the notion of grief as a popularized object of study, we believe that there are interesting similarities well worth discovering between the theory behind the five identified stages of grief and the offenders' coping methods in regards to their loss, and their former identity.

2.1 Denial/Negation

For a person grieving the loss of a significant entity, denial relates to notions of disbelief or incomprehension of one's permanent absence (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). The first mourning stage does not imply that a person literally ignores the loss by obliviousness or stubbornness to accept what or who is gone. A figurative image of denial is a person who wishes the loss of a loved one was just a dream and thinks "this cannot be true", all the while going through the motions of preparing the funeral, knowing that the situation is very true. Denial simply helps the human being survive an obstacle that seems unfathomable (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). Indeed, the same researchers explained that denial is a natural defence mechanism for the psyche to protect an individual from being overwhelmed by negative emotions. In other words, it only feeds us the amount of pain we can handle at that moment in time in order to get through each day. Similarly, in his study on fetishism and psychosis conducted in 1925, Freud defined denial as a defence mechanism consisting of one's refusal to recognize the reality of a traumatizing perception (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967).

For the offenders in the sample, this defence mechanism was noticeable when thoughts about collaborating with the authorities began to surface. This would bring upon a state of anxiety and a sense of loss of one's self-identity. Denial was used to bury the disturbing idea that they may have to let go of their offending identity and adopt that of an informant. According to Freud, this process relates to a variant of denial known as negation, which is a form of resistance where a person suppresses his emotions, for example, following a loss (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967). On one hand, in their debut of commitment to crime, offenders relinquished the thought

of security and relative peacefulness associated with respecting the law. They rejoiced in the excitement and thrill that derived from breaking the law (Katz, 1988). Dismissing their offending identity meant accepting to be part of the working-class and living in subtleness, depending on a safety net. On the other hand, offenders are aware of the strength of the pejorative label related to informants, and it is rarely the outcome one envisions for oneself. Hence, the suggestion to cooperate, whether it comes from an outsider or from the offender himself, can create an uncomfortable feeling which will likely be suppressed by denial or negation. Sammy Gravano explained what his thoughts were after his brother-in-law, Eddie, proposed that they both strike deals with the government and make a new life for their families and themselves.

[...] And I'll think about it when I go back to my cell. You're hitting me with something I never thought about in my life. And it's true. Back in '74 when I got pinched in the double murder of the Dunn brothers and the D.A. was offering me total immunity, I didn't even consider cooperating. I'm trying to figure where Eddie's coming from. (p. 285-286)

He later added:

I needed some time to think. This is the most major thing I've ever done in my entire life. It's something against my grain. It's something that I've never even thought of doing, couldn't imagine doing, in any way, shape or form. And here I was about to do it. It wasn't that I was going to change my mind. I'm not a half-assed guy in anything I ever did. Once I decide to go forward, that's it. But I knew this was going to be enormous. I needed time to just breathe and relax...and just think about everything. (p. 290)

The offender was shocked by this recommendation, because it was an extreme measure that went against his values as an outlaw. Gravano's brother-in-law planted the seed of an uncomfortable thought, and the source's negating reaction was an indicator of unconscious ideas or desires beginning to pierce through his subconscious (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967). Hence, when he stated that he needed to take his *time to just breathe and relax*, it could be interpreted as though the offender needed to suppress the idea and negative emotions associated to the thought in order to regain an internal truce. Along the same lines, Antonio Calderone explained how he and his brother perceived being asked to aid the government by collaborating with the police.

'Arrest who? We Mafiosi, make arrests? Listen, we don't do police work! We won't arrest anyone, my brother said,' shocked. 'If we have to kill someone, fine. We'll kill him. But we don't do the work of the police.' (p. 103)

The subject's brother, Pippo, of whom Calderone is speaking of in this excerpt, was dumbfounded when he was asked to carry out a job in order to assist the police. He categorically refused, stating openly that he would rather kill someone than work for the police. For these individuals, their denial of one's identity as an informant or police aid was so strong that they preferred to be labelled as 'murderers'. Quesnel also reflected¹⁶ this ideology, explaining that no one, offender or not, wants to be known as an informant. When he was called to testify against other offenders, he felt ashamed of having to wear this title and even claimed to feel dirty.

Being ashamed and even disgusted with oneself can cause a person to use defence mechanisms to better deal with the situation. Frank Lucas is an offender who appeared to still be in denial of his identity as a justice collaborator at the time his criminal memoir was written. In fact, while Calderone and his crew rejected the thought of working for the police, Lucas justified his cooperation by proclaiming that he only denounced corrupt police officers.

So there you have it. I never snitched on any dealers, although I know people have said this about me for many years. In a few papers, they would even write things about me testifying against other drug dealers. It's not true. I ratted out crooked cops who were also drug dealers. I ratted out the ones who stole from me after taking an oath to protect and serve. If you think that it's wrong to turn on crooked cops, I don't care. They had never done anything but make my life miserable. If I had to go down, I was taking them down, too. (p. 272)

The explanation given by Lucas can be interpreted as a type of cognitive distortion where denial is at the centre of his reflection. He insists on denying and minimizing his role in the matter, even after the partnership was over; this is the offender's way to rationalize his actions. As presented by Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014), when an event is too difficult to deal with at first, the psyche protects itself by using denial and blame. Blame has also been identified as a cognitive bias, where a person holds others accountable for his negative emotions and/or

¹⁶ Integral quote in French : *Bien sûr, quand je me retrouvais dans la salle d'audience, en présence du public, je m'efforçais de montrer l'image d'un gars sûr de lui, souriant, baveux même. Mais ce n'était qu'un masque, une carapace. Lorsque je croisais le regard de Rick, je sentais tout le mépris qu'il pouvait avoir pour moi. Je n'étais pas fier. Aucun criminel ou citoyen ne veut porter le titre de délateur. Je me sentais sale.* (Quesnel, 2002: p. 183)

behaviour (Burns, 1989). In his reasoning, Lucas blamed the corrupt officers for his behaviour and projected his collaboration onto the officers' dishonesty. Denial could have helped the subject unconsciously manage his negative feelings about becoming an informant.

For the previous source, it was justified to inform on fraudulent agents of the law. Likewise, Jon Roberts did not think of himself as an informant, due to the type of people he revealed to the authorities. Discussing the process he used to filter through his contacts in order to decide on whom to inform, Roberts elaborated:

The best way to start is to feel them [authorities] out, let them come to you with all the things they want, then figure out the things you can't give them. For me that was easy. The Ochoas. Albert San Pedro. They were out. They were still strong. Other things I could help them with. General Noriega – that was easy. He was a pedophile who'd lost 150\$ million of my money. Plus, he didn't even have a country. He wasn't coming after nobody. Anything they wanted on him was okay. They wanted Ricky Prado on the Schwartz murder. I had no problem giving him up. (p. 526)

This source's discourse depicts another example of cognitive distortion where Roberts made sense of his behaviour by labelling others as 'bad people'. He displaces responsibility for his actions on the fact that it is acceptable to inform on offenders deemed despicable, such as sex offenders and other informants. In turn, he feels as though his actions are justifiable, given that the problem lies with the character of those individuals. This rationalization makes the subject feel better about his actions and leaves little room for negative emotions to settle in. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014: p. 10) wrote "People often find themselves telling the story of their loss over and over, which is one way that our minds deal with the trauma." If we apply this to Roberts' case, the loss being his identity as a loyal offender, the fact that his story is being read over and over by the public can become a way for him to internalize this denial.

2.2 Anger/Shame and Humiliation

In a dynamic of shame and humiliation, anger sometimes also leaves footsteps behind. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) illustrated anger as a feeling that can arise if the person grieving

has the impression that he was left behind by the lost entity. Those who have lost a family member or mentor to bullets may feel as if they have been abandoned. Anger can also be felt when the person believes they had done everything right by their loved one who has passed. In relation to anger, Katz (1988: p. 26) stated that “Shame and humiliation are social and moral emotions in the sense that in both, one feels isolated from a community one regards as sacred.” Hence, those who have been betrayed by their co-offending peers and, in turn, lost their support can be angry with themselves and/or others. Moreover, just like some people question their relationship with God after suffering a loss, offenders may question their relationship with crime after experiencing a physical or symbolic loss.

Sammy Gravano came to question the ‘brotherhood oath’ he had taken when he joined the criminal organization after he had been betrayed by Gotti, his mentor. From his point of view, he had always respected his social network, but when he heard other members letting him take the fall in court for certain criminal acts, he understood otherwise.

They say I broke the oath. But it wasn't the oath I thought I was taking. I thought it was about honor and brotherhood. I mean, when you took the oath, that honor stuff got you as high as a kite when you were being made. You really believed in it, that it was worth living for and dying for and going to jail for. It was none of that. It was all about greed and power. In reality, it was a total joke. (p. 300)

The subject explained that with time, he concluded that the oath binding all of the members together was not as strong as it had been advertised. Situations like the one depicted above can fuel anger for the person who could not stop, for example, the betrayal from unravelling. Moreover, the use of the expression *total joke* by the offender implies a sense of ridicule and foolishness. In other words, Gravano may have felt humiliated when he realized, in his opinion, he was in a position where he was made fun of by the phony oath. As Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014: p. 12) pointed out, a person can be angry due to an “unexpected, undeserved, and unwanted situation” in which they may find themselves. Tommaso Buscetta shared a similar reasoning that helped him justify his cooperation.

I remain a member of the Cosa Nostra in the same spirit as when I joined. But from the 1970s onwards, the ideals of the Cosa Nostra changed and there have been acts of violence which do not correspond to the original ideals. (p. 26)

Buscetta claimed that he decided to talk in order to denounce the changes he disagreed with among the criminal organization. He no longer identified with the type of violence that was carried out by the group. Since the criminal organization had changed in the offender's eyes, it seems as though he lost control over his criminal identity, and thus felt humiliation. Through time, when a person realizes that his identity has been transformed by forces out of his control, he may feel morally incompetent (Katz, 1988). Throughout his written account, on numerous occasions, Buscetta reminded the reader that by informing, he remained a 'Man of Honour' (respecting the code of honour of the Cosa Nostra). He was ashamed of the way the organization acted (with violence) and felt humiliated in his role of honour by those who, in his eyes, disrespected the original spirit of the group. One can hypothesize that becoming an informant was the source's way to regain governance of the evolution of his identity.

2.3 Bargaining/Guilt and Negotiation

The push and pull of finding common ground can occur before or after a loss (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). In the first case, people often ask for a loved one to be spared, whereas in the latter case, for example, people tend to ask for the suffering to cease in exchange for their devotion to a cause. Guilt is a feeling that frequently accompanies the negotiating stage. As we have previously discussed, some sources have thought about leaving the life of crime before as a bargaining chip for having lost numerous loved ones or for having put their families through enough. Jon Roberts illustrated this concept when he realized that his criminal career had created a world of distance between his girlfriend, Vera, and himself, which in turn brought him sadness.

I left Mexico with a bad feeling. Vera showed me the differences between our lives. Her life was riding horses on the ocean. Mine was sitting with a dirty mayor at a donkey show. For the only time in my life – until I had my son – I got the idea of trying to go to the other side. (p. 180)

In this example, the offender expressed feelings of guilt for the life he had chosen and the impact it had on his personal relationships. Although he was successful in the criminal world and made a great amount of profit, the description above implies a sense of emptiness. According to Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014), most subjects seek a logical explanation to help them cope with their own feelings of culpability, stigma, and possibly with the sense of hollowness in their lives (from what they have lost). The stigma they are confronted with is external, for being outlaws, and also internal, for thinking about becoming an informant. Hence, as Maruna (2000: p. 55) stated in regards to ex-offenders in his sample, these individuals “face internal questions of shame, blame, guilt, and culpability for their offending and also for the state of their lives. Finally, like everyone else, they struggle to fill their lives with some pursuit that is worth living for.”

Before being betrayed by his mentor and realizing that he was not enjoying a life worth living, Sammy Gravano had also experienced the loss of many friends and crime partners. To counteract the pain of the grief from those losses, the offender negotiated with the pain by doing what he knew best: keeping up with the life of crime.

A couple of days after the funeral, I was in my office. I was devastated, completely destroyed. In the space of a year and a half I lost Stymie, then Frankie DeCicco and now Paruta. [...] Well, I thought to myself, you can't put back what happened. You got to just keep going, no matter what. (p. 224)

Despite feeling emotionally ravaged by the loss of three significant relationships, Gravano did what he thought was best in order to numb the pain from those losses. As Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) put it, he remained in the life he knew, trying to negotiate his way out of the hurt. Bargaining is the phase where one explores those “what if” and “if only” thoughts. For the men in our sample, on one hand, thinking about “What if I make a change?” or “What if I become an informant?” could stem from a sense of guilt of still being alive or being the source of someone else’s pain. On the other hand, these negotiating thoughts can become ways to plead for others around them to be spared from harm.

In the context of informants, bargaining can also be discussed from a different stand point. In fact, some sources in the sample quite literally bargained with the authorities for

privileges including financial compensation, leniency during sentencing, special treatment during incarceration and protection for themselves and/or their family. While Gravano and Roberts negotiated for the dismissal of some charges and for immunity, Mermelstein asked for his family to be protected should he pursue down the informant road. Cantalupo, Hill and Quesnel discussed the possibility of receiving payment for their services. Other requests extracted from the sample comprised of cigars, helicopter rides, Italian delicacies, and newspapers.

Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) mentioned that in the bargaining stage, people will try anything in order to shield themselves from the pain induced by the loss. If this is the case, the offenders' demands may be a way for them to cover their pain by focusing on something that will bring them some sort of temporary satisfaction. In other words, grasping onto an advantage could be the incentive needed to push themselves towards the acceptance phase of their new identity. Bargaining for such perks and obtaining them may counteract some of the negative feelings for the time being.

2.4 Depression/Emotional Distress

While in the last stage, the person dwells on the past; in this phase, the person finds himself in the present which puts him in touch with difficult emotional states such as depression, fear and vulnerability. Depression is said to be a state that settles in when the person's attention comes back to reality (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). According to these authors, depression in the context of grief is not a sign of mental illness; it is simply the natural response to a deep and significant loss and it can yield beneficial effects.

As difficult as it is to endure, depression has elements that can be helpful in grief. It slows us down and allows us to take real stock of the loss. It makes us rebuild ourselves from the ground up. It clears the deck for growth. It takes us to a deeper place in our soul that we would not normally explore. (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014: 24)

This quote greatly correlates with Maruna's (2000) notions of sense of self and rebuilding one's identity. Indeed, research on individuals suffering from depression has found that they may

tend to be more realistic about their chances for the future and success in comparison to individuals who do not suffer from depression (Alloy and Abramson, 1979; Bandura, 1989). Hence, this emotional and psychological state can give way to new beginnings and change. Nevertheless, before the occurrence of this flourishing, we have found that offenders in our sample who have undergone a state such as depression have also experienced fear and vulnerability.

For Joseph Valachi, being in prison and labelled an informant (before deciding to turn) by co-inmates seems to have pushed him into a fragile state of mind. In addition, the constant feeling that his life was in danger transformed his fear into rage. What is more, the subject subconsciously felt humiliated by the rumours of his cooperation, but Katz (1988) would argue that he did not acknowledge this emotion to himself until he attempted to transcend it in rage. As a matter of fact, when the offender's rage led him to murder another inmate, the realization that it was not the right person caused Valachi to abruptly transition from rage to humiliation. Back in touch with his senses, the offender realized that the emotions of rage and humiliation significantly transformed his lived experience. Hence, he finally had the clarity to decide to cooperate with the authorities. Beforehand, he was submitted to a psychiatric evaluation to assess his capability of standing trial. The evaluation read:

In view of his later decision to talk, however, the report of the neuropsychiatric examination he underwent before trial makes fascinating reading. While 'amiable in manner,' it says in part, Valachi 'appeared under much tension and his mood was characterized by moderate anxiety and depression'. (p. 29)

Prior to the decision to become an informant, the subject experienced a personal construction of his emotions. Katz (1988) suggested that there is a sense of coherence in the transition from one emotional state to another. Although Valachi's rage and humiliation unraveled on a background of depression, Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) would nuance that he was not in a psychotic state. Therefore, the feelings of depression he was experiencing were normal after dealing with the loss of a human being at his own hands. This vulnerability gave him insight on the need to make a significant life change, which led to his cooperation.

Similarly, when Max Mermelstein was incarcerated, not only did he have a bad feeling about being left to fend for himself, he also learned that the charges against him had been increased. Although, in his own words, he felt “depressed as hell” (p. 228), he still had the lucidity to think about cooperating. When he eventually did, he experienced a shift in his emotional state.

Contrary to the last two subjects, Serge Quesnel felt a state of anxiety and depression after having made the decision to become an informant. He felt the same uneasy emotions as the previous two offenders, but the timing of when he entered this state of depression differed. Quesnel explained that he had difficulty accepting his situation when he noticed his picture on the front page of the newspapers associated with a headline claiming he was an informant. He indicated that he could not wrap his head around the fact that he was identified as such, although it was the truth. This is when he requested to consult a psychologist; he was angry, dark thoughts invaded his mind and the idea of suicide did not elude him.¹⁷

The difference in the moment when Quesnel suffered from depression in comparison when Valachi did demonstrates how malleable and personal the turning point process can be. For Quesnel, it was difficult to accept that his criminal identity had died and that he had become an informant, a character he had long learned to despise.

Another common observation related to the situations described above is the notion of loss of control. Cannon (1932) explained perceived control as relating to a person’s thoughts about control over situations and events. Although perceived control may differ from actual control due to an individual’s beliefs about their abilities and their actual competencies, an overestimation or underestimation of perceived control can cause a person to experience anxiety and aggression. For example, Valachi killing the wrong man, Quesnel seeing his picture as an informant in the newspaper and Mermelstein not being able to clear his name in court are all situations in which the offenders realized they had less control on their future than anticipated.

¹⁷ Integral quote in French : *Le matin où j’ai vu ma face en première page d’un journal avec le titre ‘délateur’, là j’ai eu de la misère à l’accepter. Je ne me faisais pas à l’idée d’être identifié comme délateur. Pourtant, c’est là que j’étais rendu. C’est durant cette période-là que j’ai demandé à voir un psychologue. Je broyais du noir. J’avais des pensées plutôt sombres. L’idée de me suicider m’a effleuré l’esprit. Je souffrais d’anxiété et de dépression.* (Quesnel, 2002: p. 155)

This lack of control let feelings such as anxiety and fear stream in, rendering them vulnerable and beginning to reconsider their life trajectory.

2.4.1 Vulnerability

After experiencing a significant loss, it is not uncommon for the mourners to isolate themselves or experience feelings of loneliness. Whether this emotional state is due to feelings of abandonment, alienation, generalized anger or avoidance of grief triggers, being vulnerable after a loss is a natural response (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). More precisely, coping with a loss in equilibrium has been described as one's capacity to respond to grief with resilience (Sim, Machin and Bartlam, 2014). When this capacity is limited, the person may be subjected to a greater risk of vulnerability. Suicide arguably representing the most extreme form of isolation, Tommaso Buscetta explained the logic behind his suicide attempt.

[It] was not an act of weakness or a mental breakdown or fear of being threatened by those who had savagely and unjustly attacked innocent members of my family. Rather, it was an act of love towards my wife and children because I thought that, if I was out of the way, it would make their life much less complicated than it would certainly be if I was imprisoned in Italy. It wasn't out of desperation, or through being mentally unbalanced, rather it was a carefully calculated act of love towards those who are my sole reason for living. (p. 191-192)

The offender justified his self-harm act as being heroic rather than tragic. Although he did not characterize his suicide attempt as a sign of weakness, he mentioned that he wanted to take his life in order to spare his family harm. As stated above, this form of bargaining consequently implies a sense of guilt for what his family has been through, not mentioning the fact that many of his family members, including children, had been murdered over the years. Guilt is a sign of vulnerability, and according to Sim, Machin and Bartlam (2014), the death of a child has shown to spawn more profound periods of vulnerability.

Another form of isolation is that of being a fugitive. Given that the objective is not to be recognized and not to be found, being on the run can bring upon negative emotions such as

loneliness, anxiety and mistrust. Antonio Calderone lived on the run for a lengthy period of time after having suffered the loss of his brother, and at the same time, the loss of his social status among the criminal organization.

The period between Pippo's killing in September 1978 and my escape to France in February 1983 was the worst in my life. It was almost four and a half whole years in which I stagnated, hiding out, living in the shadows. I was bitter, poor, reduced to a shell of a man. (p. 265)

But let me tell you what the life of a fugitive is, always on the run, always in the shadows, always anxious. (p. 285)

Calderone explained that being on the run, combined with the fact that he was alone and had no money, was a difficult ordeal. Those four and a half years took an emotional and psychological toll on his person, to the point of affecting his identity as a man. When he was arrested, although he had been in distress for an extended period of time, he was able to make an important decision about his future, such as to become an informant. Similarly, for Joseph Cantalupo, losing his mentor and protector, Colombo, also meant that he lost power and social standing.

Miraglia and company reasoned it was no time to be running around without a rabbi – without a godfather to stand up for you. The uncertainty of family rule was having its effect. It was also making me think more and more about my future. As I thought, there were the ever present FBI agents...prodding, always prodding. (p. 125)

The death of his teacher led to a killing spree during the following year. Thus, it was deemed unsafe to walk the streets unprotected. For Cantalupo, knowing that his protector had been murdered, he found himself in a vulnerable position which forced him to consider making changes to survive. Following the same train of thought, Henry Hill described feeling vulnerable after learning that his protector had deserted him.

I knew I was vulnerable. I knew that you were vulnerable when you were worth more dead than alive. It was that simple. [...] I kept thinking that if I watched my step, if I kept the thought of my getting whacked in the middle of my mind, I might have a chance of surviving. (p. 267)

When he was incarcerated and faced fifteen years in prison, Hill thought to himself that his crew would not let him live for that long and run the risk of having its secrets exposed. He also mentioned that being in prison signified that he was an open target for anyone who wished to take his life. This is the reasoning that led him to realize that if he was going to survive, he was going to have to turn on everything he knew; he had to cooperate.

Lastly, another form of isolation that has been depicted through the written accounts was induced by police officers and their pressure tactics. Serge Quesnel was arrested and taken into an office where he was interrogated for several hours. During this time, law-enforcement agents bombarded him with information and incriminating evidence they possessed against him. This propelled Quesnel into a state of shock where the isolation and the interrogation methods cornered him into a vulnerable position. According to the subject, the police efforts were deployed in the hopes of obtaining his cooperation. He believed the officers knew he was unnerved and internally conflicted. He was vulnerable because he was alone against the police and the evidence, he had no protection and nowhere to go; reality was quickly catching up to him.¹⁸ In this instance, the offender demonstrated the systematic vulnerabilities commonly found in criminal informants, as described by Rich (2012); he had an interest in avoiding punishment, an interest in avoiding harm and an interest in maintaining his autonomy.

2.4.2 Fear

As mentioned previously, the loss or the threat of a loss is a trigger event in which a climate of vulnerability, laced with depression and anxiety, may occur. Such an event, whether it unravels in a prison environment, under police pressure or on the run, could be perceived as hostile by the offender, causing that individual to choose an appropriate response to ensure one's survival. When the answer to survival is that of informing, numerous offenders have identified the emotion of fear associated with the risk of falling victim to retaliation. Harney and Cross (1968) and Rich (2012) mentioned that informants risk bodily harm or death should their

¹⁸ Integral quote in French : *C'était une invitation à passer dans leur camp. Ils n'étaient pas fous! Ils savaient que, intérieurement, j'étais très ébranlé. Pour une rare fois, j'étais confronté avec moi-même. Je ne pouvais pas fuir. La réalité me rattrapait. J'avais mal.* (Quesnel, 2002: p. 149)

collaboration be uncovered. Not only can they be subjected to physical harm from those who they inform on, but also from any individual who condemns delators. Milhizer (2004) added that informants may also face moral harm by committing more crimes, as well as social harm by putting their personal relationships (e.g. family) at risk of reprisal.

During his incarceration, Valachi was living in fear that he was marked for death and that there were rumours going around depicting him as an informant. He was afraid to the point of skipping meals, fearing poisoning, and stopped bathing, given that violence often occurred in secluded areas such as prison showers. When he thought he had identified the inmate assigned the task to kill him, the subject decided to take him down first, only to realize he had killed a random prisoner. This turning point took place within a climate of intense fear, bordering on paranoia, and resulted in the offender's decision to cooperate. From what he told the law-enforcement agent in whom he confided,

Revenge was a large part of it, but it was also a cold, calculated move for survival. Don't think for a moment that this was a repentant sinner. He was a killer capable of extreme violence. He was devious, rebellious against all constituted authority, and he lived in a world of fear and suspicion. Fear especially marked him. Fear of what he was doing and at the same time fear that nobody would believe him. (p. 34)

As Shibutani's (1966) work on rumours revealed, rumours and gossip are very common in a prison environment. Being labelled a turncoat before the fact played on Valachi's sanity. Nevertheless, once he decided to become an informant in order to ensure his survival, the fear of being labelled turned into the fear of having made the right decision. Henry Hill, another source, felt the fear of being labelled by other inmates as he was thinking of cooperating.

It was a scary time. There were guys from Jimmy's crew, like John Savino, who were on work-release, and they'd leave every morning with all the news about who was cooperating and who was not. I was being as cautious as I could – I hadn't told anybody anything yet, but I remember shaking myself to sleep with fear every night I stayed in jail. I was afraid Jimmy would find out what I was planning and have me killed right there in my cell. (p. 270)

Just like Valachi, this offender was assailed by fear of being discovered and identified as an informant. Offenders know the consequences and the violence reserved for informants, which

heightens their feelings of anxiety and despair. When the fear is intensified, it often gives way to panic and paranoia. Hill continued:

I was feeling paranoid, but I also knew that sometimes you were either paranoid or dead. (p. 272)

Everything and everyone around the offender seemed suspicious which only contributed to this state of paranoia. A third subject, Calderone, felt his sanity degrading over the course of his incarceration, fearing that his life was threatened. This overwhelming state of vulnerability preceded his decision to cooperate.

On the morning of December 31 I was assailed by paranoia and started to raise hell. I shouted and shrieked as hard as I could, demanding to speak with the warden. [...] I screamed like a madman. They put me in a straitjacket and locked me in a room. In the afternoon the warden came in and I told him I urgently needed to speak with Judge Falcone. I had decided to collaborate and to tell him everything I knew about the mafia in Sicily. (p. 275)

Fearing for one's life after losing a mentor or the group's support leaves an individual to fight for himself in an environment ruled by the 'survival of the fittest' mantra. Hence, even if an offender is not incarcerated, fear can still become paralyzing and powerful enough to encourage change. For Cantalupo, the fear of going about life unprotected was negatively consuming.

All this ate at me, that and the indictment and the fear that was churning my guts, making me lie awake sleepless night after night; I was out there naked and alone in a vicious and violent underworld, and someday someone would decide that Joe Cantalupo was fair game. (p. 128)

This offender explained that fearing for his life became overpowering and was impinging on a basic need such as sleep, just like Valachi could no longer tend to life's necessities like eating or bathing. Cantalupo acknowledged the reality that his decision could expose him to serious danger. In fact, studies have shown that offenders who interact within criminal networks defined by considerable violence and instability or those who expose themselves to greater risks due to certain choices will assume higher risks of victimization (Fattah, 1991; Cordeau, 1989). Similarly, Paradis described the crushing fear he felt and, in consequence, his preference to be incarcerated rather than to be alone out on the streets.

In time, I had enough of the fear and empty pockets. I needed a safe place that would feed me. (p. 2)

Whereas for some offenders prison was a stressful milieu which contributed to their feelings of fear and anxiety, Paradis saw this environment as a safe haven where he would be protected from unforeseen violence. That being said, given that most subjects have experienced a period of emotional distress during the turning point process, one could argue that the occurrence of a fragile state such as depression, vulnerability and fear is common in the wake of a significant life alteration. When one finds clarity behind their distress and a decision is made, it may indicate the person is open to the next phase of the turning point process.

2.5 Acceptance/Recognition

Recognition represents the fifth and final stage of the turning point process. As Kübler-Ross and Kessler's (2014) final step of the grieving process is acceptance, the authors also cautioned against confusing acceptance with being 'all right' with the loss. This is why we believe that the term recognition is more appropriate in the context of this study. Some subjects did not embrace their new identity as an informant, but they recognized and acknowledged their new reality. The offenders in the sample have come to coexist with their new identity and try to navigate through the terms and conditions that accompany the change (e.g. life under WPP, prison sentence, testifying in court). In other words, the individuals may in time become aware of the common sense reasons for their decision, and if they do not, they may resort to crime again. For the next two offenders, Joe Cantalupo and Henry Hill, making the decision to collaborate with the government went against all of their values as organized crime members. In that respective order, they wrote:

Then one day in 1973, I crossed the over the line. I turned against everything I believed in and became a Tallia, a Bureau informer. (p. 9)

If I was going to survive, I was going to have to turn on everything I knew. The decision was almost made for me. (p. 269)

The expressions used by the sources, *crossed over a line* and *the decision was almost made for me*, are not necessarily signs of individuals who openly accepted and chose the informant life. Rather, their words give the impression they went through the turning point process and once they arrived at the final stage, they were compelled to recognize the situation they found themselves in. Turning on what we know and believe in can be interpreted as losing a part of ourselves. Given that most sources became criminally active at a young age, their identity and their beliefs were deeply engraved into their psyche. Their relationship with crime and co-offenders could be so profound as to be embedded in their identity. It is for these reasons that it would not be realistic to presume that the offenders were at ease with their decision to completely lose touch with their past life, but rather, they understood that it was one of their only options for a chance at survival. Max Mermelstein described this idea of acknowledgement after making the decision to cooperate. What is more, he even felt a sense of deliverance after transitioning from offender to informant.

I felt an enormous weight lift from my shoulders. I knew the negotiations with the government would be long and hard, but I felt elated, happy, free. And I began to cope a little better with my prison environment. (p. 233)

This excerpt demonstrates the transition from the depression phase to the acceptance phase. Once he decided to cooperate, Mermelstein felt a change in his emotional state and felt liberated from the fear that was suffocating him. He also mentioned that he was then able to slowly cope with his new reality which not only included his new informant status, but also a prison sentence. Without prejudice, we do not believe many people would be 'ok' with having to serve time, but one could come to accept this reality and try to live in it. For these individuals, it means leaving the past behind to be reborn as criminal informants in what could seem to be a whole new world. In Sammy Gravano's case, the judge proceeding in court declared:

There has never been a defendant of his stature in organized crime who has made the leap he has made from one social planet to another. (p. 298)

Becoming an informant truly meant that Gravano left his world behind in order to step into a new dimension. Although he was sentenced to five years in prison followed by three years

of probation, the source was going to have to learn to adjust to this new world. Likewise, the author of Buscetta's biography wrote:

Buscetta had entered a different universe. The journey that had led him to the witness-box, and to the betrayal of his friend and the world that they had shared, encompassed more money and murder than most people could even conceive of. (p. 21)

Once again, learning to live after a loss, referring here to the loss of one's criminal identity, can seem to be a parallel universe to one's past life. There is an immeasurable distance that separates the informants from their old self. Hence, this phase refers to the notion of acknowledging that a change has occurred (e.g. a loss, a new identity) and learning to live accordingly. After having journeyed through the first four stages of the turning point process and understanding that they could not maintain the past intact, for example, due to lack of protection, the offenders come to realize that the next logical step is the compliance of their situation.

This reflection creates a parallel with a principle proposed by Katz (1988). When discussing involvement in crime and search for exhilaration, he argued that a project does not always seem seductive at first. Some projects, which eventually reveal themselves as being quite pleasurable for offenders, commence with an acknowledgment of the difficulties to surmount. It seems as though this consideration could be applied to offenders who contemplate embarking on the project of informing. At first, they only see the obstacles and the negative consequences of engaging in such a behaviour, but after testing the waters (e.g. confiding in family members or law-enforcement agents), some offenders come to appreciate the outcome of this unusual possibility. Indeed, a few subjects in our study, such as Cantalupo, Gravano, Hill and Paradis, developed a feeling of compelling attraction to the task of informing.

Thus, they have had to learn to reorganize their values and beliefs, reassign their mission and take on new roles in order to cope with their new life exempt from crime. Nevertheless, according to Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014), the more an individual's identity was connected to their loss, the more difficult it can be to complete and maintain a change. This may explain why although the offenders in the sample have all desisted from crime through informing, some have

had more difficulty than others upholding their desistance. The following chapter will discuss the ebbs and flows of general crime desistance versus informing-desistance.

CHAPTER V: Informant Particularities during the Desistance Process

Deciding to desist from crime by means of informing was not so much a matter of wanting to ‘go straight’, but rather, in the context of necessity, it was the safest and most reliable option for the offenders under study. According to Laub and Sampson (2001), there are a number of factors that have proven to correlate with desistance from crime, for example, good marriages, stable work, shift in identity, and aging. In regards to desistance from a criminal network, Curry and Decker (1998) specified that besides the experience of violence, life-course milestones such as employment, marriage and parenthood are motivations to cease engagement in crime. However, none of the subjects justified their retraction from crime due to the acquisition of satisfying legal employment or union in wedlock. On the contrary, while most of them already had a spouse and children, none of them were actively seeking pro-social employment. On this matter, Hagedorn (1988) commented that changes at the macro level in regards to job and marriage opportunity have led to ongoing criminal involvement in group activities among adults and, concurrently, to a diminished rate of desistance from crime. Given their psychological and emotional state following the losses as previously described, some offenders have accounted for maturation to have weighed in on their decision to retire from crime. Nevertheless, the most influential factor to come into play in the decision-making process of desisting via informing is that of identity transformation. The main difference we have identified that distinguishes the subjects’ experience of desistance in comparison to other offenders pertains to the repercussions of a witness protection program. In some cases, this variable encouraged sustained desistance, whereas in other cases, it led to recidivism.

The majority of the sources from the sample entered a witness protection program following their cooperation with the authorities and giving their testimonies in court. The other informants either remained in prison (in a protection wing) or decided to take the risk of re-entering society on their own. Regardless of how one chose to live one’s life after having informed did not always consist of persistent desistance; some have fallen back into old criminal habits.

1. Witness Protection Programs

Many countries have created witness protection programs in order to protect cooperating witnesses from violent retaliation. The American and Canadian governments, for example, supply WPPs with an annual budget envelop to fulfill its tasks and to divide among beneficiaries of the program. The program is opened to witnesses, as well as their dependents (e.g. spouse, children, parents, siblings). Although a number of applicants will submit their case to the WPP of their government, only a restricted selection will be admitted. Criteria used to assess whether or not a witness is suitable for the program include: an evaluation of the risk potential for the witness or family members of being victim to a life threat, the significance of the person's testimony for indictment or conviction, a psychological assessment of the witness' risk to relocate in a new environment, and the evaluation of the impacts of relocating either a child or parent without the other (Koedam, 1993). If the person is deemed fit to enter the WPP, he (as well as the dependents also adhering to the program) will be attributed new names that are ethnically compatible and that have not been used by the witness in the past. The beneficiaries receive new personal identification documents, such as a new social security card, driver's licence, passport, birth certificate, proof of citizenship, diplomas (if earned), and if necessary, an immigration card.

All of the sources under analysis were active offenders prior to their cooperation and were subjected to criminal charges for engaging in various criminal activities. Although the majority were offered the choice to comply with the witness program, some still had to serve years in prison for their own actions. Certain offenders entered the WPP before testifying, and were either held in the protective wing of a prison or in a safehouse controlled by the government. When their testimonies were delivered and their help was no longer needed, they spent the next years of their lives in prison, in a secluded and dedicated institution for vulnerable offenders, such as informants. Those who, on the other hand, had obtained immunity in exchange for their testimony immediately 'disappeared' under a new identity and geographical address after testifying in court. Serge Quesnel's case relates to the first situation described above; the contract he signed with the government insured he would be protected during his years of incarceration, as well as when he would be released on parole. The subject mentioned that he

negotiated for monetary compensation, tattoo removal, and a safe living environment once he regained his freedom. Although he was satisfied with the terms of the agreement, the informant stipulated that he was not overwhelmed with joy, given that he still had to serve twelve years in prison.¹⁹

This informant is not the only one who wished to address his tattoos. For the subjects in this study, these bodily marks were part of their past identities as offenders. In order for a person to completely adhere to a new internal identity, it would be logical that physical traits match the social and psychological alterations. Not only would the elimination of these markings reduce the chances of being recognized, they would also allow for greater cohesiveness in one's transition. In other words, to transcend from one identity to the other, one must shed the skin of the old self. Shover (1996: p. 124) qualified such changes as “career contingencies,” given that adjustments in offenders' characteristics (physical and personality wise) and life objectives have the effect of converting them to a non-criminal lifestyle. Peter Paradis echoed Quesnel's comments, considering he was compelled to serve time before being authorized to vanish.

In a conference room, I told the government officials what I wanted. New identity, relocation, a small allowance for my son while I was in prison, tattoo removal. They agreed readily to that. (p. 236)

Even though this individual had to fulfill a prison sentence before living under the WPP, he thought ahead by including his family in the protection plan that would be in effect. While he was serving his sentence and, in turn, when he would be released from prison, his wife and son would be considered his dependents, and so could also benefit from the WPP. For Paradis, it was important to continue to be in contact with his family throughout the entire process.

¹⁹ Integral quote in French : *Une fois la question financière réglée, j'ai continué de négocier. J'ai demandé et obtenu qu'on m'enlève les tatouages qui me recouvraient les deux bras, ainsi que les larmes que j'avais sur le visage. On allait aussi me trouver un endroit sécuritaire, au moment de ma libération conditionnelle, en 2007, avec des meubles et tout ce qu'il fallait. Lorsque les négociations ont été terminées, j'étais satisfait. Pourtant, contrairement à ce que certains ont pu croire, je ne sautais pas de joie. J'avais quand même douze années de prison à purger!* (Quesnel, 2002: p. 173)

Brigitte and my son will make it easier for me to mellow out, to become anonymous, to live a normal family life. Without them, I would have been very alone. Seeing them every day will remind me why I want to change. I've had second thoughts about leaving behind a life I knew, however destructive, and jumping into the unknown. Those doubts come and go for various reasons, especially when I feel out of control, having to rely on police and the government – my past enemies – for my safety, sanity, and future. (p. 246)

The informant's family represented an anchor for him. His wife and son kept him grounded and played an important role in maintaining Paradis' mental health afloat. The strength of these conventional social bonds was a significant contingency on the informant's path to desistance from his criminal career (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Shover, 1996). Although the subject decided to desist from crime after suffering a loss and experiencing a shift in his identity, we recognize the secondary influence of his spouse and his attachment to parenthood in his quest to live pro-socially.

Had the informant abandoned his family ties by not including his loved ones in the contract with the WPP, he would not have been able to see or speak to them again. Indeed, for those living under the WPP, there are a number of rules and regulations to abide by. Breaching a rule or a protocol may result in expulsion from the program. One of the main restrictions imposed on the beneficiaries is that they are not permitted to have direct contact with friends and relatives from their past life (Breitkreuz, 2008; Koedam, 1993). In turn, the program closely monitors the individual's phone calls and mail, based on the assumption that they are not safe from anybody, including old associates and family members. The protectees cannot consume drugs and must vow to never refer to their past, their birth, their previous name, their home town or their past associations (Koedam, 1993). The program provides the users with an allocation for a certain period of time, usually until they are able to secure employment or become self-sufficient in their new life and new community (Shenon, 1987).

The rules and conditions deriving from this protective measure can become overwhelming for a number of witnesses in the program. Just as some ex-offenders find it more strenuous to function out on parole rather than in prison, given the set of conditions they must obey, some informants will come to find that it is more difficult to reintegrate into society under

a WPP. This is when the risk of re-offending increases. Taking the United States' WPP as an example, 97% of the beneficiaries who had committed crimes before enrolling in the program registered a 17% rate of recidivism leading to reincarceration (Werner, 1984). Koedam's (1993) article explained that numerous individuals leave the WPP to return to their past criminal habits under the pretext of a 'cleansed identity'. Put differently, the witnesses are given a clean slate to take part in their previous lifestyle based on the fact that in their new geographical location, there is no evidence of their criminal history and past identity. Furthermore, these individuals frequently bypass obligations relating to lawsuits, creditors and child support payments due to their protection from the program; they cannot be traced because their previous identity has been destroyed (Koedam, 1993; Shenon, 1987).

1.1 New Identity

Although all of the studied subjects have undergone a symbolic transformation of their identity given the nature of their action, some have also experienced a literal change of identity. A witness protection program is an extreme measure of protection, where a total identity change should only be considered as a measure of last resort. This type of mutation applies to exceptional cases, where individuals face considerable risks after having collaborated with the government's justice department (Breitkreuz, 2008). In Canada, in an annual report produced by Mrs. Boisvert, President of the Working Committee of representatives appointed by the Ministries of Public Security and Justice, she noted that an identity change is a difficult experience to live through for the participants and their families, in the short term as well as in the long term. For the government, on an administrative level, it is also a hefty measure to set in motion; it is imperative to follow protocol in order to defy public system mechanisms to preserve the transparency, reliability and flow of the information (Boisvert, 2005). Such a change implies that protectees are expected to perpetually lie about their origins and their past. They must cut ties with most of their relationships and must live with the reality that they will never develop honest and authentic personal relationships because they can never truly be themselves. In other words, the rules and conditions of the protection program reinforce feelings of solitude and

isolation, mainly because beneficiaries are forbidden to reach out to family members and friends from their past. Joseph Cantalupo explained what it felt like to be taken in charge by the WPP.

We were going to have to be moved to a new area. We were going to have our identities changed...our whole lives changed. There would be no contact with friends or family, no return visits to our home, no school with their old friends for the kids. I'd have to start a whole new way of life. While I was doing that with my family in some strange community I'd never seen before, I would have to be returning to Brooklyn under protection to testify against some of the most powerful criminals in America. (p. 260)

He added:

When we landed in Minneapolis, I felt like a Sidge getting off the boat from Sicily. I felt out of place, I looked out of place, and I was convinced that the mob would find me in a minute. I wasn't far wrong, as events later turned out! (p. 262)

The delator mentioned that it was not only a matter of changing environment; it was their entire lives. They were forbidden to contact anybody from their past and were expected to rebuild their lives in a new city. For ex-offenders, it can feel foreign and unnatural to embody law-abiding citizens when there are no familiar faces around and no points of reference. While reintegration of ex-offenders circles around the idea of entertaining existing conventional bonds, as well as forging new pro-social relationships, informants must try to connect with others and yet keep most of their real life and identity secret. As previously stated, it can be difficult for witnesses to keep up the charade for the rest of their lives under the WPP. This expectation can create internal conflicts within the participants of the program, and as Koedam (1993: p. 364) wrote, "They must live a life of pretense and deception, which is usually quite ego-dystonic." In fact, the program asks its protectees to put aside their beliefs and personality to adopt a new identity, in a new geographic setting, with little to no support system. In regards to desisting from crime under a new identity, Paradis disclosed:

I still feel for the Rock Machines in this war, and that probably won't change for many years, if ever. Which leads to the question in everyone's mind, mine included. Can I stay straight after this? Even my police handlers tell me the odds are against informants. The public has the impression that a criminal takes the easy way out by becoming an informant. They are paid, pampered, and given special privileges in jail. But people seem to forget something. Is it

really easy to change every aspect of the only life you know, to abandon one set of morals, however skewed, for an untried set while going from pure criminal to regular citizen? Let me tell you, it is terrifying. (p. 247)

To reiterate, the biggest adjustment individuals in the WPP must face is not so much the adaptation to society, but rather, having to learn to live with “a new, manufactured identity which is alien to their life history” (Koedam, 1993: p. 364). Not only must they interiorize a new name and integrate a new environment, they must also develop behavioural patterns that are aberrant to them (values, morals, priorities). Fear of being recognized or killed is a feeling commonly felt among hidden witnesses. Ideally, beneficiaries of the program should demonstrate sustained vigilance and alertness in their daily interactions so as to avoid giving away any information pertaining to their past. This is a difficult task that requires concentration and coherence in order not to get mixed up in their long-lasting lie. Furthermore, given that many offenders have shortcomings in social skills or have an antisocial personality, regular social interactions can be difficult, let alone having to keep track of their fabricated stories. Additional stress and pressure is palpable knowing that the witness and his family risk expulsion from the program should the individual divulge the wrong type of information (Neufeld, 1990). Consequently, program participants will choose to isolate themselves from the outside world to avoid making any mistakes, hence deepening the sense of loss of identity (Koedam, 1993; Smith, 1984).

While some will choose or are granted permission to have their families protected by the program, others will decide to enter the program alone to spare their families the burden of having to reinvent their lives. A few individuals in the sample have had to face the harsh reality of separation from past associations, which can include parents, siblings, spouses and children, because they refused to live under the WPP. Sammy Gravano illustrated the hardship of informing his family of his decision to cooperate and enter the protection program.

I called them to come see me, my wife and my daughter, not my son, who was only fourteen. I told them I was going to cooperate. Debbie says ‘No!’ She’s shocked, she’s scared, she’s everything. My daughter is hysterical. Completely and totally. Her idol, her father, is about to join forces with the enemy. And I’m thinking, Jesus, how did I fuck up my whole life so badly? She’s crying. ‘No, Dad, please!’ and she runs right out of the visiting room. My wife’s eyes are full of tears. She says, ‘I have to tell you, Sammy, I’m not going into any witness protection program. I’m not going to be part of this. I was never part of

that part of your life, and I'm not going to be part of this. I'm not going to be part of anything.' I said, 'Deb, I understand your position and I respect it. You're a mother, not a gangster. You do what you got to do as a mother and I'll understand it one hundred percent.' (p. 291)

This family decided to dissociate from the offender and from his choices. His wife imposed her limits and did not wish to participate in the WPP. In fact, she divorced the subject. This meant that once Gravano entered the program, he would no longer have the right to contact his family, including his children. Doing so would result in his dismissal from the program. Likewise, Cantalupo experienced some difficulties when he announced to his wife that his future would be ruled by the WPP. When asked if she and their children would join him, there was some resistance.

Veronica, at first, wouldn't even consider leaving the area. It was just too overwhelming for her and for the boys. Starting life in some strange place without friends or family is a frightening thing to face for a woman who has hardly ever left the confines of her hometown, even when that hometown is a borough of the City of New York like Brooklyn. When she finally agreed, it was only if the government would agree to move and relocate her mother and father. That presented problems, but the government did agree. (p. 260)

Social reintegration is generally known to be challenging for ex-offenders, but it can prove to be just as difficult for regular citizens, such as family members, who are forced to move to a new community. For the government, it is more complicated to relocate an entire family than to move the lone informant, as there are ample considerations to factor in when selecting a new geographical site (Breitkreuz, 2008). According to Werner (1984), the main elements to survey when relocating the whole family include children's ability to maintain secrecy, emotional trauma and acquiring all the legal documentation (e.g. birth certificates for school enrollment). Family units must learn to live in secrecy and learn to be coherent in their fictional stories. At the same time, they are expected to project the image of a normal, functional and socially integrated core in their new community. In the case of Max Mermelstein, his Colombian wife agreed to partake in the WPP, only if extended family members could also be protected. Hence, the U.S. WPP contacted thirty one family members across the U.S. and Colombia and offered them the opportunity to enroll. Only sixteen accepted the offer, but at the time, it was the largest number of dependents the government agreed to protect for the purpose of one witness. While the

informant was in custody awaiting his trial, which took over two years, family members were dispatched across the country and were sworn to secrecy. Even the informant did not know where his wife and children were. When he was released from prison, Mermelstein was authorized to join his family wherever the WPP had relocated them. He depicted his perception of life in hiding:

And what of my own future? I and my family can only contemplate a life of concealment and altered identity, never being able to live totally freely in my country. As long as there is a single tentacle of the cartel reaching into America, my life, and the lives of my family, will be in jeopardy. It is the price I must pay. (p. 289)

As per this excerpt, even when individuals are taken in by the government and are highly protected by the WPP, there are still doubts about one's safety. No matter the measures and protocols in place by the authorities, the program inevitably has limits and blind spots. Jim Boivin confirmed this statement by declaring that given possible security breaches, no official and legal documentation can guarantee one's peace of mind.²⁰ The program is a structure in which beneficiaries may carefully navigate, but completely eliminating the risk and believing that threats can be reduced to zero is an unrealistic expectation. This is why just like Mermelstein, Buscetta claimed that even though he had joined the WPP with his family, he continued to fear for their safety.

With a new identity, Tommaso Buscetta is living quietly in the United States. [...] He knows that the Mafia still want to destroy him and he has accepted the idea of dying. He is not afraid for himself, only for his family. (p. 307)

Whether program participants are afraid for their own security or for that of their families, it is a reality they must accept as a consequence of their past lifestyle choices. Some beneficiaries choose to deal with this crippling fear by exiting the WPP to regain greater control of their life. As the saying 'keep your friends close, and your enemies closer' would entail, certain individuals will prefer to reintegrate into the criminal world in order to better manage

²⁰ Integral quote in French : *Aucun document officiel, soit carte d'assurance sociale, permis de conduire ou carte d'assurance maladie, ne peut garantir la quiétude des délateurs en raison des failles de sécurité.* (Boivin, 2006: p. 171)

their chances of surviving retaliation. For example, moving closer to their previous social circles and mending old associations may allow the offender to keep an ear out for rumours and an eye out for himself. In addition, one could better prepare for violent repercussions by acquiring protection material such as weapons, which is not permitted under the WPP. Before doing just that, Sammy Gravano gave his opinion on living under the WPP.

A lot of guys in the program look over their shoulder every minute. Who was that guy on the corner? What was that car doing parked down the block? A coward dies a thousand deaths. A man only dies once. I'm not saying some kid won't try and make a name for himself taking me out. But if it happens, I'm only going to die once. Not a thousand times. And this kid, whoever he may be, better be good. (p. 301)

For Gravano, constantly living in fear and paranoia was not how he wished to see his future unfold. In his opinion, it made more sense to leave the WPP and take matters into his own hands. He accepted the possibility of falling victim to a murder, but he did not want to go down without a fight. Therefore, whether a person chooses to leave the program or is pushed out because of a contract violation, this type of protective measure is not without its flaws and is not an impenetrable shield either. Needless to say this controlled environment is not suitable for everybody.

1.2 Informants' Criticism of Witness Protection Programs

This type of identity change has been the subject of numerous discussions and debates for various government committees, especially in regards to the rigid guidelines to which the protectees must obey. Furthermore, many grievances have been reported concerning this measure. In some cases, notwithstanding the fact that informants had to plead guilty, serve time in prison and sever their relationships with loved ones, Turcotte (2008) demonstrated the lack of guarantee that governments will honour the informant's contract and provide easy access to rehabilitation and social reinsertion programs. Some complaints blame the naivety with which some individuals have interpreted and dealt with this security measure. A common mistake made in regards to this practice is to underestimate the extent of a complete identity change. In the

past, participants have assumed that a simply changing their name was synonymous with a full identity change, without paying further attention to the details of their contract. Misinformed, some informants did not understand that a new identity supplied by the WPP implied the civil death of who they once were (Boisvert, 2005). This misunderstanding is one of the reasons accounting for some the informants' ins and outs of the criminal lifestyle. Other reasons for breaking their desistance streak included aging, the need to return to one's sources and the erroneous perception that danger decreases with time. All of these reasons have led informants to infringe the rules of their protection contract and come out from hiding.

Abiding by the program's restrictions is essential to prevent the witnesses and their families from finding themselves in harm's way. However, following the protocols comes to the detriment of the participant's psychological well-being. Indeed, losing one's emotional support, the sense of belonging to either a family, a group of friends or a network, and the loss of one's identity may contribute to higher levels of depression, anxiety and suicide among beneficiaries of the WPP (Koedam, 1993; Werner, 1984). While the program is supposed to find help for those individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental health issues, Koedam (1993) outlined the numerous clinical problems impinging on the successful administration of therapy for this type of clientele. That being said, a beneficiary having difficulties adjusting to the WPP could calculate the pros and cons of remaining a protectee: if the person realizes that he is not getting the appropriate treatment that was promised and is longing to reunite with his loved ones, the risk of leaving the program might then seem acceptable. When Sammy Gravano decided to enter the WPP after collaborating with the authorities, he did not tell his son so as not to disappoint him. Consequently, leaving his son in the dark was one of the reasons he later retracted from the WPP.

I was thinking of my son. I was worried about him. I had all kinds of thoughts about him. His father, the underboss, is going to jail. His father is a big hero in the neighborhood. And my son might try to follow in my footsteps, and I can't stop it because I'd be in jail. He's going to be running around, his father is this big underboss, and people are going to cater to him and he's going to wind up in the fucking life. He's a tough kid, but a good kid. He's not for the life. I had always sheltered him from it. And if he winds up in the lie, he's sure to end up either being whacked or going to jail himself. (p. 291)

Never having said goodbye to his son was an experience that would later haunt the informant. Gravano was feeling lonely in his new concealed life, given that his wife had divorced him and no longer had contact with his children. Under the program's umbrella, he found legitimate employment for a while and removed his tattoos as a symbolic effort to paint over the past. Yet, these actions were not sufficient enough to suppress his desire to be close to his son again. He exited the program and reunited with his son in the late 1990s. His offspring was associated with a youth gang named the 'Devil Dogs', and here, Gravano saw an opportunity that seduced him and lured him back into the criminal lifestyle. He used the youth group as a platform to start a major ecstasy trafficking organization. In 2001, Gravano was once again arrested and sentenced to twenty years of incarceration. Could the outcome have differed had the informant received the help he needed to cope with the loss of his family?

These observations, through time and countries, have opened a discussion on the efficacy of such a protective measure. Gerald Shur, a retired Principal Deputy Director of the Witness Protection Program in the United States, characterized the Canadian guidelines as too restrictive, which in certain circumstances, could be counter-productive. The rules of a WPP require one to undergo a radical change, and for some individuals, this is unachievable. For example, most witnesses being ex-offenders, they were generally acclimatized to a fast-pace, luxurious, and/or dangerous lifestyle. Some were also accustomed to being an important figure to their subgroup. Under the WPP, these individuals must give up old habits and old ways to fit in a working class, low-income and monotonous lifestyle. Koedam's (1993) research stipulated that the addiction to the benefits of crime and the appeal to the thrill of adventure from their past life may have an influence on one's incapacity to stay under the radar in the WPP. Henry Hill was evicted from the WPP, along with his wife, after accumulating multiple infractions to the program's rules. More precisely, the couple was arrested on several occasions on narcotics-related charges (Fischer and Murphy, 2012). Once they were expelled from the WPP, it was discovered that Hill retrieved his initial identity. In other words, Hill was compelled by his attraction to crime and was incapable to live a dull life. If we follow Katz's (1988) train of thought, we could hypothesize that Hill's return to criminality was an attempt to transcend an existential dilemma: finding cohesiveness between his inner (who is really is) and outer (the image he projected in the WPP) identity. His inner (and former) identity overpowering his new one, the offender deployed

sneaky efforts to take part in old criminal habits; Hill may have found amusement in seeing if he could get away with 'it' (Katz, 1988). Nonetheless, there were moral discrepancies between his true morals and the artificial identity he projected under the WPP.

Another criticism of WPPs stems from international comparison and touches upon the issue of beneficiaries making a living for themselves. In Canada and the United States, many users have complained about the program's helpful hand. It has been said that it does not consistently help individuals find employment or training as the contracts have ensured. There have been problems relating to getting basic documentation or work history. Regular parolees experience difficulties finding employment due to spotty work curriculums or their criminal records. Hence, factoring in an additional obstacle, such as lack of documentation to support one's new identity, could render the task of securing a job for WPP parolees even more laborious (Smith, 1984; Werner, 1984). Cantalupo expressed his frustration towards the WPP's inability to adequately help him find work that would allow him to meet his family's needs.

The government is supposed to help witnesses find new jobs, train them for new occupations, place them where their talents and abilities can best be used. They don't do that. They gave me one offer – filling potholes for a highway department. I was forty-one years old. I have been a witness for five years, worked for the government for ten. I knew the real estate and insurance businesses. I was a salesman. I could do a lot of things. I would have happily taken training in computers or heavy-equipment operation. But what the marshals wanted me to do was fill potholes. As a witness with a family, I was drawing \$1,347 a month. As a pothole-filler, I would net \$750. When I protested, I was told by the marshals to take it or leave it. I left it. (p. 302)

This informant was not satisfied with the help he received from the program. He did not feel his abilities and knowledge were put to good use, and found it difficult to provide for his family on a low salary. Cantalupo felt as though the government did not uphold its end of the bargain and did not take into consideration his new lifestyle and responsibilities. For these reasons, he decided to leave the WPP and make it out on his own.

For the moment, I was afraid, wondering if I could make it again, if I could provide for my families. I was back to the street, back to basics, using my instincts and my wits to provide for my families, stay alive, and survive. I was

through with the government, through with their double deals, through with false promises... (p. 302)

From this account, the expressions *back on the street* and *back to basics* could be interpreted as if the subject dipped back into old criminal habits in order to make a living and survive. Nonetheless, of this we cannot be certain. Given his main objective was to be the breadwinner for his families, he had to find the means to achieve his goal. In accordance with Agnew's (1992) general strain theory, the government representing an obstacle to this goal can be seen as a source of tension, to which Cantalupo could have turned to crime in order to relieve these frustrations and meet his objectives. This explanation for oscillating in and out of crime can also be true for regular ex-offenders. Once they are released from prison, they may come to realize that their pro-social goals are a challenge to attain because of how they are perceived by society and how much more effort they must invest to overcome their label. For those with limited resources, sources of tension may be overwhelming and propel them back into a life of crime.

Jim Boivin is a subject who felt overwhelmed by his frustrations generated by the WPP's treatment of the protected informants. He became a voice to be heard by creating an association called l'Association des Témoins Spéciaux du Québec in order to fight for informants' rights. He outlined many shortcomings concerning informants' security under the WPP and approached the media and Ministries in the hopes of being heard.²¹

Contrary to the previous delator, although Boivin identified numerous issues in regards to the WPP, he fell back into the criminal lifestyle. He also attempted to commit suicide to free himself from the misery consuming him. After this breaking point, the subject got back onto his feet and decided to channel his frustrations through an association that would fight for

²¹ Integral quotes in French : *Les contrats de délation ne sont pas respectés par le ministère de la Sécurité publique. Le Ministère respecte généralement les ententes salariales, mais pas elles de sécurité personnelle. La première chose qu'on réalise en prenant le chemin des cellules, c'est que nous ne serons pas incarcérés dans une prison ou un établissement adapté à notre situation de délateur.* (Boivin, 2006: p. 169)

[L]a première chose qu'on réalise en sortant de prison, c'est qu'on n'a pas de nouvelle identité. Des gars comme Kid Lalonde, Normand Brisebois et Pit Caron doivent absolument avoir une nouvelle identité. Ils ont tenté de tuer des membres d'un gang ennemi, en plus d'avoir vendu leurs «frères» motards. Mais, comme dans mon cas, la Sûreté du Québec n'a pas fait les démarches nécessaires afin de me fournir une nouvelle identité légale, comme c'est écrit dans mon contrat. (Boivin, 2006: p. 171)

informants' rights. Becoming an advocate facilitated his reformation, since the subject had acquired a new role with new purposes and new meaning (Maruna, 2000). Boivin associated his sustained desistance to having new life goals, combined with the reality that he was advancing in age, a process known as maturation.

2. Maturation and Repulsions of Crime

Over time, various sources, such as crime statistics, meta-analysis studies, longitudinal studies and criminal autobiographies have proven the positive relationship uniting age and desistance from crime in adulthood (Farrington, 1986; Gartner and Piliavin, 1988; Shover, 1985). Although Spergel (1990) suggested that there is growing evidence that gang membership does not end with adolescence, Shover and Thompson (1992) argued that most street offenders, even the ones who partake in criminal activities during their adult years, eventually desist from serious crime involvement. There are multiple logical explanations supporting this tendency, one of them being that offenders become less audacious as they age, hence making them less interested in crime and high-risk behaviours (Walsh, 1986). In two separate passages, Serge Quesnel evoked this idea of saturation with the criminal lifestyle.²²

When the offender was arrested and interrogated by the authorities, Quesnel explained that he suddenly realized he had an opportunity to change his life around. As he was settling into adulthood, prior to turning thirty years old, the subject claimed he could no longer bear the pressure to kill. Therefore, his interest for criminal activities decreased while he longed for a different calling. Similarly, when Peter Paradis decided to become an informant, he told police officers:

²² Integral quotes in French : *Du même coup, je réalisais que j'avais une chance de refaire ma vie, de quitter le milieu criminel. Je ne voulais plus tuer des gens. Je n'étais plus capable de vivre avec cette pression. Je voulais vivre autre chose.* (Quesnel, 2002: p.149)

Mon choix a été fortement motivé par le désir de vivre d'une nouvelle manière. Je voulais voir l'autre côté de la vie, ne plus avoir la pression extrême d'une vie de criminel, d'une vie de tueur, même si la sentence allait être sévère. De toute façon, y avait-il d'autres solutions? Je ne crois pas. (Quesnel, 2002: p. 150)

I've had enough of this life and shit. I've got no more gas to keep going and I am fed up. (p.5)

Around the age of thirty-six, and having survived an attempt on his life, as well as on his brother's life, Paradis no longer held an interest for this high-risk business. He was tired and had no desire to keep fighting for his life, which is why he decided to desist from the criminal world. In other words, maturation has shown to have a direct and significant dulling effect on individuals' inclination to crime.

From Quesnel's words, *I didn't want to kill people anymore*, and Paradis' use of the words *shit* and *fed up* to qualify his lifestyle, we discern a certain disdain towards the crimes they used to do. Whereas they may have found delight in crime at a younger age, with maturation and arrests comes shame (Katz, 1988). When one feels shame, retrospection can yield feelings of repulsion and disgust for exhibited behaviours. Surely, shame and repugnance are not indivisible concepts from maturation, yet we have caught a glimpse of its influence on desistance from crime in a few criminal memoirs. This emotional process can encourage a radical change if an offender grows fonder of the possibilities of a different future over his attachment to past experiences.

While people typically become wiser as they get older and learn from past experiences, Shover (1985) suggested that maturation improves an offender's capacity and proclivity to calculate with further precision the cost and benefits from past and future criminal activities. Frequently, the result of this decisional balance reveals a greater chance for desistance. An example of this calculation surfaced in Antonio Calderone's discourse when he was debating whether or not he should cooperate and enter the WPP with his family.

I wouldn't have been able to resist, after December 31, 1986, the physical attacks and the nervous tension of prison life in France had I not had a security, a certainty, just one. That was essential for me. After my repentance a very thorough protection plan was set up. My wife had sold the house and launderette and moved to another city with the kids. The French police kept them under vigilant watch, and even the Italian police – the Central Anticriminal Center led by Mr. Gianni De Gennaro – was collaborating in the protection program. (p. 279)

The informant's personal experiences made him conscious of the fact that he would not have been able to survive among the other inmates in the French prison. His conscience also led him to consider his family's protection. In addition to his turning point, these reasons confirmed his desire to desist from crime. Prior to becoming an informant, the source had voiced his willingness to leave this underworld; he wanted to be free and focus on being present for his family. Calderone did not identify with the criminal organization anymore, which is why he wanted 'out'. Shover and Thompson (1992) created a parallel with Akers' (1998) social learning theory by asserting that the more an offender identifies with self-defined success from crime, the more the individual will be interested and confident about potential gains from extended criminal involvement, and the less probable desistance will occur. Vice versa, the more an offender encounters failure from crime, the less optimistic they will be about their luck changing, creating an increased probability for desistance from crime. In other words, success stemming from criminal participation endorses one's illicit behaviour and dampens the perceived risks of crime. Another subject who no longer identified with his criminal role is Joseph Cantalupo. When he accompanied his co-offenders on debt collection runs, he realized that he could not be as ruthless as his peers, nor could he bring himself to perpetrate violence.

Meanwhile, occasionally I was still going with some of Colombo's old loan sharks on their collection routes. It was on those collection sweeps that I realized I wasn't cut out to be a mob wiseguy, a tough loan shark. Oh, I could threaten to break the windows of some kid's limousine – the only source of income he had in the world – to make him pay his weekly vig, but I'd get sick to my stomach when I saw some people get terrible beatings or see wives and kids begging for food because the shylock took their old man's last nickel. (p. 128-129)

The offender explained the realization he came to when he would physically feel repulsed after witnessing others suffering at the hands of his co-offenders. Let us recall that Buscetta justified his reason for turning on his co-offenders because he believed its original ideals were soiled through time. Likewise, Boivin used words such as *sickened* and *revolted* to describe his

feeling of saturation in regards to a crime network.²³ All three men felt as though the traditional qualities of their organization which they once identified with were now, in their opinion, distastefully being used towards a different purpose. While “Merton attributed deviance to a contradiction in the structure of modern society” (Katz, 1988: p. 313), we attribute desistance from crime (by informing) to a disruption in the structure of their deviant circles. Through the aging process of the offenders themselves and of their associations, it appears they no longer wore the criminal label with pride. While some, like Cantalupo and Boivin, ceased to find pleasure in criminal participation, others, like Buscetta, continued to identify with the criminal underworld, but saw themselves in a different light. Hence, the attraction of sneaky thrill may not necessarily vanish with age, but instead may transcend from one form of activity to another (Katz, 1988).

For some, this transposition is a timely process as the need for excitement outweighs the negative consequences. Taking Frank Lucas as a short case study, his desistance process was more elaborate than others given that he remained strongly attracted by the idea of getting away with a booty *one last time*. The notion of success in the criminal world is defined by one’s ability to earn well from crime (‘score big’) while serving minimal time in prison (Shover, 1996). Lucas’ pattern of arrest and return to crime illustrated this concept of a ratio between financial successes versus jail time. Before his incarceration, he had accumulated eleven million dollars. Although this loot was seized by the authorities, the offender knew he was capable of collecting large financial gains while serving little prison time, given the fact that he was released six years into a forty-year sentence. Thus, through the power of magical thinking, Lucas dived back into his criminal ways after being released on parole.

I had no idea what the next step would be. I knew the feds would be paying very close attention to everything I did. I had the law watching me and it would be difficult to do anything. But I had no choice but to try. Yes, after being released from prison, I decided I was going right back to the drug game. It was all I knew. (p. 273)

²³ Integral quote in French : *En fait, ma motivation était purement intrinsèque. J’étais las de voir les Hells se comporter en rois et maîtres partout où ils passaient. Leur recherche de pouvoir m’écœurait. Ils agissaient en sauvages et ça me révoltait.* (Boivin, 2006: p. 96)

The subject's reasoning as described above does not only apply to informants or beneficiaries of a WPP; it is common to any type of offender. Too often, when inmates are released from prison, they are not well-equipped to face society and engage in a pro-social life. Whether this is due to lack of emotional support or lack of professional skills, some ex-offenders become overwhelmed by the unknown and decide to go back to what they know best: crime. This is what happened in the case of Frank Lucas, who left prison with the same thirst for fast money and success as when he was admitted. Instead of desisting from crime, he returned to old criminal habits and was once again arrested, but the charges were dropped.

Julie and I got back on our feet. She was taking care of Francine, while I was dabbling in the game, being as careful as I possibly could. But at this point, I really didn't see any options. Even though I knew I was being watched, I still had to do what I had to do. Just like in so many movies and books, I needed one more score. One more opportunity to make a decent payday and then retire. Before, I didn't retire because I wanted a fucking plane. This time, my needs were much simpler. I just needed enough to take care of my family. One or two decent shipments from Southeast Asia and into Harlem would be all I needed. Then I'd use my profits to invest in a few straight businesses. (p. 279)

Knowing that the loss of eleven million dollars was this man's turning point, he was avid to replenish his bank account by completing *one more score*. For Lucas, after calculating the costs and benefits of perpetrating another crime, he decided that it was worth the recidivism in order to make his family financially comfortable. Piliavin, Gartner, Thorton and Matsueda (1986) demonstrated that age has an influence on renewed criminal involvement when the person believes that anticipated financial gains from crime will be greater or equal to what one would earn through regular employment. Nevertheless, after approximately two years of perpetual illicit activities, Lucas was arrested through an undercover operation. The offender blamed this outcome on the fact that he was getting older.

At this point, I was over fifty years old. And I was a different person in a lot of ways. I was more mellow, had less of a temper, and I was a lot more laid back and easygoing then I had been as a young man. I learned the hard way that being more laid back was not going to work. (p. 279-280)

Lucas claimed that as he was advancing in age, he became less vigilant, which eventually got him arrested. The offender was sentenced to seven years for conspiracy to purchase and

distribute cocaine. In time, he was released on parole, lived with his mother and renewed his participation in the drug game, for which he was once again arrested. This individual demonstrates how one accepts the perceived risks of maintaining criminal involvement rather than desisting from crime.

On the other hand, alterations of perceived risks associated with criminal involvement can contribute to desistance while offenders advance in age (Glassner, Ksander, Berg and Johnson, 1983). As previously mentioned, it would appear that offenders become progressively preoccupied and fearful of the legal and physical risks of crime (Shover and Thompson, 1992). Moreover, according to previous studies, offenders who grow older and who are capable of finding a secure and gratifying social calling and who manage to adhere to pro-social activities greatly enhance their chances of desistance (Glaser, 1964; Irwin, 1970; Meisenhelder, 1977; Shover, 1985; West, 1978). When an individual commits to society's conventional lines, his life may take on a new meaningful path which will encourage continuous law-abiding behaviour (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986; Maruna, 2000). Jim Boivin explained how he felt when he took on new social roles such as becoming an advocate for informant's rights and paramedic.²⁴

At forty years old, the subject felt for the first time in his life that he was contributing to society by doing some good and giving back. He let himself become submerged by this new identity to the point where he could sometimes forget his criminal past. He had new purposes that were meaningful to him, and in turn, helped him maintain a desistance from crime.

Desistance from crime, just like from any type of behaviour, can be difficult to measure as it may be subjective to one's point of view. Among the sample of this study, some ex-offenders have desisted permanently, while others desisted on a short-term basis before reengaging in old criminal patterns. In some cases, being taken in charge by a WPP was helpful in maintaining abstinence from crime, yet in other cases, it facilitated recidivism due to its rigid rules and regulations or lack of support. Nonetheless, reintegrating into society can be difficult

²⁴ Integral quote in French : *Pour la première fois de ma vie, à quarante ans, j'avais le sentiment de faire quelque chose de bien au sein d'une équipe solide. Même si j'amorçais une campagne médiatique agressive contre l'État, lorsque je travaillais comme ambulancier, j'avais le sentiment que mon passé criminel ne faisait plus partie de moi. Ce sentiment d'appartenance n'a jamais été aussi fort...* (Boivin, 2006: p. 161)

for any ex-offender, as these individuals are expected to accept and respect social norms. Society also has a duty to accept ex-offenders and must take a chance on those who are actively making efforts towards collaboration with authorities and sustained desistance.

3. Seductions of Collaboration

Just like Katz (1988: p. 3) took on “the challenge of explaining the qualities of deviant experience”, we believe there are some alluring elements to the informing experience. Although we have looked at the way offenders make sense of the thought of desisting from crime (after experiencing a loss), we now wonder how does it make sense to them to cooperate with the authorities when stigmatization and heavy labelling are at stake? In other words, what are (if any), the distinctive attractions of government collaboration? As previously mentioned, in order for offenders to adhere to a new identity, they must make sense of the lived experiences at the origin of their turning point, the emotions they are feeling and the changes they are undergoing. Thus, despite the fear one may feel at the thought of becoming an informant, it appears that the excitement and thrill an offender once sought through crime can transpose into their new-found purpose in life. Furthermore, Katz (1988) stated that to a certain extent, we are constantly pulled in and pushed away by the world. In turn, while offenders in this study have once felt repelled by society and seduced by crime, after experiencing a turning point, we may argue that they felt repulsed by crime and enticed by government collaboration. Taking Joseph Cantalupo as a short case study, his decision to cooperate depicts the way his strengths from his criminal career can be recycled as he takes on a new social role.

I was ripe that September morning in 1973 when I made the choice, when I decided I couldn't be a wiseguy, but maybe I could be an underworld spy, a big wheeler-dealer with federal protection; maybe I could use all my connections with all the mob people to my advantage and make money for myself...and nobody would ever be the wiser. It was like a light bulb that flashed on in my mind all of a sudden; something inside of me said do it, change your life. (p. 130)

In the subject's opinion, he would be more successful should he retire from this life and use his wits to help the government solve and close cases. In accordance with Maruna's (2000) findings, for most offenders, 'going straight' is not a synonym for failure. Rather, desistance is interpreted as "an active, rewarding, and even defiant process" (Maruna, 2000: p. 154). Cantalupo was no longer compelled by his role as an organized crime member or a violent debt collector. In turn, he saw desistance as an opportunity to discover his true self and to better his worth as a person. After negotiating with the authorities, and in the adoption of his new role as an active criminal informant, he became seduced by his new purpose, tasks and responsibilities. The source found pleasure in infiltrating crime networks and reporting the information to his handlers.

I confess I liked the excitement of crime, the danger it brought, the ease with which we made money, and the power I felt from running small gangs of thugs who did what I wanted them to do right under the noses of the FBI agents who were making me jump through their hoops. It was as if I were a goodfellow without all the consequences. I didn't have to take orders from a capo or a boss to do a job. I didn't have to beat up frightened old men or rape shylock victims' wives to collect a debt. I didn't have to kill someone because someone else ordered it. In a sense, I was my own boss – as long as I kept the wolves from my door by paying off my shylock loans and providing the FBI with the information they wanted. I was walking a tight-rope over a fire, and for some weird reason I loved it, at least some of the time. (p. 178)

Unexpectedly, I felt a surge of excitement at the thought of once again doing what I had done for a decade and knew I could do best – infiltrate and spy on criminal organizations. Until that moment, I had never admitted to myself that I liked the emotional highs I got from my work as a professional informer. There was an excitement, a sense of danger, I had grown used to and now missed. (p. 323)

It is quite evident from these excerpts that the subject was in a frenzy while working for the government. From his discourse on the effortless with which he infiltrated the organizations and fooled his co-offenders with his informant identity, a parallel can be drawn with Katz' (1988) concept of 'It would be so easy'. The researcher argued that a person who thinks 'It would be so easy' to achieve this or that, referring to one's engagement in a deviant project, finds excitement in said activity. The level of danger, risk and irony reflect the level of excitement of the challenge in the deviant project. Cantalupo's description of his sense of

trepidation as he duped other offenders related to a kind of perversion in the matter. Another example of this phenomenon was highlighted in Serge Quesnel's case. While he was negotiating the extent of his collaboration with the authorities, the informant was frequently flown in a helicopter to all of the crime scenes in which he took part. Not only was the source seduced by the helicopter rides, the body guards and the stops at restaurants, he was especially beguiled by the act of revisiting the sites of his crimes (p. 170).²⁵ Given that offenders habitually cannot return to a crime scene in order to maintain cover from the police, one may argue that here lies the excitement in Quesnel's deviant project.

Nevertheless, no matter where or how the ex-offender experiences pleasure in his new role as an informant, Maruna (2000) explained that for this personal change to be sustained, it is imperative that the person finds meaning in its new identity. The same researcher discovered an interesting dynamic among those who embraced new roles pertaining to change agents. It was suggested that some reformed ex-offenders felt qualified and called upon to aid others with certain issues. Their new purpose was that of a generative goal (Maruna, 2000). If we apply this notion to offenders turned informants, it appears that some sources were driven by the genuine desire to assist the justice department, and also to redeem themselves by repairing the damages they have done to society. Max Mermelstein described his intention to achieve a generative goal.

This was my chance to perform a great service to the government that could win me my freedom to rejoin my wife and children. [...] No promises were made, but I knew this was my chance, not only to do what was right but what would help me, help the drug prosecutors, and help the country rid itself of the drug scourge which I had helped bring on. (p. 254)

The informant saw the opportunity to collaborate with the government as a window to engage in the project to make good. In his own words, he interpreted this new role as a time to

²⁵ Integral quote in French : *J'aimais beaucoup me balader en hélicoptère. C'était très plaisant de voir la nature du haut des airs. J'avoue qu'à un moment donné, j'ai songé à sauter de l'hélicoptère pour me suicider. [...] Mais j'ai manqué de courage! Je préférais collaborer. C'était beaucoup de travail, car je ne devais rien oublier. Les enquêteurs me suivaient partout en prenant des notes, en me posant des questions. La plupart d'entre eux ne m'imposaient rien. Ils ne me mettaient pas trop de pression. Si une journée était chargée, le lendemain, on prenait ça plus calmement! Des fois, j'avais quasiment l'impression d'être plus important que le premier ministre. Je faisais le tour du Québec avec plus de gardes du corps que lui. On mangeait au restaurant et on rentrait en fin de journée. (Quesnel, 2002: p. 160)*

perform. For a person to feel coaxed into putting on a performance, one may argue that certain aspects of the project must be alluring. In this specific case, Mermelstein may have wanted to prove his reformation by helping those on the right side of the law. The challenge could have been for the ex-offender to seize the chance to be recognized as a success story in order to materialize his reformation (Maruna, 2000). Furthermore, engaging in such a generative goal can be seen as efforts deployed in the hopes of fully turning the page on one's criminal past and old self to be able to better interiorize one's new reformed identity. Following this train of thought, Peter Paradis declared:

Before that life can start, I have to testify over and over again. I was begrudgingly persuaded to be an expert witness of sorts at the megatrials of all those Hells Angels arrested in the spring of 2001. That could delay my life for years. But Brigitte helped convince me it could be a good way of repaying my debt to society. (p. 247)

The source explained that at first, he was reluctant to take part in the project of testifying as an expert witness. His initial reaction was to think about the possible obstacles and frustrations that could come with this engagement. Paradis had a self-conscious awareness that by delaying his adherence to a new life under a new identity, he would continue to be labelled as an offender, and an informant. Yet, a suggestion from an objective outside party made him appreciate the positive consequences of collaborating with the government, and slowly realized the attractiveness of the project. As Katz (1988) would conjure, the sensual pleasure one experiences from a complex task generally arises when repetition leads to mastery of the assignment. Finally, ultimate satisfaction would emerge only after the person understands how to interpret the lived experience. Taking Paradis' situation as an example, although he was primarily hesitant to become an informant, he was eventually charmed by the responsibility and power he possessed. When he found gratification in making sense of his turning point, he even decided to publish his life-story to the world, as did all the other subjects in our sample.

Regardless of every informant's different particularities, turning points and desistance process, they all concealed their lived experiences and changed identity in a criminal memoir for the public to read. Maruna (2000: p. 105) stated that "The construction or reconstruction of one's life story into a moral tale might therefore, itself, be an important element of sustaining

significant behavioral reform.” It is difficult to assert with certainty whether the sources revealed their story for extrinsic (for our entertainment) or intrinsic (to complete their metamorphosis) motivations, but what is certain is that their account made for pertinent contribution to our understanding of the decisional process of desisting from crime by informing.

CONCLUSION

From the first pages of this study, it was acknowledged that analyzing the act of informing as a path towards desistance from crime would allow for a better understanding of the emotional process involved in this phenomenon. This master's thesis was founded on the lack of literature discussing how offenders' felt when they decided to become informants. The reason for this blind spot relates to the stigma and shame surrounding those who talk. In turn, offenders are typically repulsed by the thought of being labelled a snitch or an informant. Yet, by taking into account various types of offenders operating in different countries, as well as their respective life histories, valuable information was collected pertaining to their motivation to take on a new identity. The analytical focus of this study, which was composed of the personal and emotional turning points as described by all twelve subjects yielded significant insight into their individual desistance experiences under new identities.

Past studies and public opinion have created a false correlation between an offender's decision to inform and superficial motivations (monetary gain, leniency, revenge). In such, while the nature of one's identity shift has proven to be consistent with Maruna's (2000) study, it differed from, for example, Natapoff's (2004; 2007) argumentation. This study diverged from the extrinsic motives to cooperate as depicted in the literature and outlined the intrinsic essence of the act, which aligns with Maruna's (2000) proposal: for an ex-offender to refrain from crime, he must make sense of their lives. It revealed that the decision to inform is rooted in a much larger dynamic where the advantages listed above have proven to be secondary details. It was discovered that an offender's decision to leave the illegal world behind by cooperating with the authorities was triggered by an emotional turning point. More specifically, such a turning point referred to an important sense of loss in one's life.

Two types of losses were identified through the sources' accounts: physical and symbolic losses. The former implies the reality that a close one has died (murder being the number one cause of death). The latter refers to the symbolic loss of a mentor's support and protection, the loss of family support and the threat of lives lost. The most impactful type of loss depicted by the offenders was that of a mentor's endorsement, either because this person had been killed or had

chosen to pull their support. The offender's perception of this loss as a turning point was the main driving force which motivated their desire to become an informant, and thereby desist from crime. For the subjects under study, the emotions they underwent during the grieving process of their loss gave way to introspection and a re-evaluation of the self.

Nevertheless, giving into the option of informing was not automatic. Whether the offender's lived experience brought upon the realization that he was not cut out for this line of work, that he had had his fill of this lifestyle or had grown too fearful of the violence and repercussions of the underworld, the desire to become an informant was rarely the obvious choice. While some were proud of their offender label or proud to identify with a criminal organization, the shame of wearing an informant label was a feeling shared among all of the subjects.

That being said, with time, reflection, and sometimes counselling, the offenders came to appreciate the difficulties from being seduced by such a deviant project. The project can be categorized as deviant on three fronts. On a social level, for a delinquent to become an informant, one must deviate from the unwritten code of silence that binds all offenders. On the individual level, the person must overrule his values and accept to be demonized by a label that carries heavy pejorative meaning. Lastly, politically, the fact that governments perceive the use of informants as a necessary evil and are willing to assume the ethical risks derived from this practice speaks to the deviant nature of the project. Thus, every offender had their own purpose for engaging in the act of informing as a means to desist from crime.

For some, the appeal of collaboration pertained to the continuous need for thrill and adventure, which is why this master's thesis could be interpreted as an extension of Katz's (1988) study. The excitement of helping the authorities all the while not getting caught by their co-offenders resembled a riveting game. For others, adhering to an informant identity was a way for them to regain some control over their lives. Those who felt in danger of retaliation, who were on the run or unable to ensure their family's safety wanted to recover the reins of their destiny. One of the ways to protect their loved ones was for the offender to enter a witness protection program. Yet, to use this escape route, one must first become a justice collaborator to

later gain access to a WPP. Another reason for becoming an informant was to complete and fortify one's identity transformation. When an individual and his dependents are taken in charge by the WPP, they must abide by their new identity, as well as numerous rules and regulations. In this context, some protectees had certain demands, for example, relocation and tattoo removal, in order to help them completely shed their old self and embrace their new law-abiding profile. The last explanation that was given as to one's decision to cooperate with the authorities related to Maruna's (2000) concept of generative goal. These offenders felt as though their past criminal involvement and knowledge qualified them to adequately aid the government in their convictions. For them, this was a way to give back to society, atone for their wrongs and commence their rehabilitation on the right foot.

However, the subjects did not all reintegrate into society successfully, as some were unable to come to terms with their new identity and were drawn back into old criminal patterns. As Trice and Roman (1970) stipulated, some exaggerate their 'rock bottom' stories in order to allow for an extraordinary comeback narrative. Yet, in the context of this study, there was very little leeway for impressive recovery stories; whether or not the ex-offender/informant successfully desisted from crime, the dual stigma continued to weigh down on him. Other reasons to break abstinence from crime included the informant feeling constricted and suffocated by the WPP guidelines, he feared for his safety or simply missed his loved ones. The few individuals on whom we were able to gather information after their stories were published demonstrated that informing as a path to desistance is not an infallible one.

Here lies one of the limitations of this study. The subjects' lives after informing and desisting were only briefly presented in their accounts, given that those under a WPP were limited in the information they were authorized to divulge. As a result, the content of chapter V relied partly on information that could be found through the media. For example, discovering that Henry Hill and Sammy Gravano were recidivists after having informed was only known due to published news articles; there may be others who have not maintained desistance from crime but who escaped the lens of media outlets. However, in relying on information reported by tabloids, we must be vigilant of the biases involved. If the media do not report on a source's coming out from hiding, or if false or exaggerated information is broadcasted, we find ourselves

restricted in ways to overcome this type of issue. In other words, depending on media coverage and its accuracy calls into question the representativeness of our analysis of sustained desistance.

Perhaps this reality can translate into a lesson for future research, emphasizing on the necessity and significance of conducting longitudinal studies on the subject matter. This type of research would allow for a clearer understanding of the relationship between informants and desistance from crime. Laub and Sampson (2003) argued that long-term studies of career-offenders demonstrate that the majority will retract from crime in due course. Therefore, although the journey to desistance is not without its challenges, it can also be characterized as relentless. According to Uggen, Manza and Thompson (2006: p. 305), “If putatively ‘hardened’ criminals can indeed become decent citizens, policies that impose a castelike stigma upon them may erode democratic institutions.” This forces the question: if the negative label of informing was overturned to a positive one, what would be the impact of this reformation on sustained desistance?

The concept of positive labeling in regards to police collaboration was explored by Brodeur and Jobard (2005). These authors hypothesized that certain types of delation have become normalized over time, and even acclaimed by society. This favourable perception of informing reduces the stigma surrounding informants and permits a greater sense of acceptance among one’s community. Along the same lines, Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell and Naples (2004: p. 279) argued that an over-looked element of upholding prosperous desistance from crime could include the “negotiation of a reformed identity through a process of prosocial labeling.” What is more, it could be appropriate to rethink the benefits granted to informants, not only to appease public revulsion, but also to formalize recognition of their reformed identity (e.g. a type of ‘certification’).

In her study, Turcotte (2008) identified an issue with the Canadian situation; while government authorities encourage the act of informing, they do not compensate those who decide to halt their involvement in crime. In fact, these individuals are penalized; they must plead guilty, serve part of their sentence behind bars, and cut ties with family and friends. Additionally, there is no guarantee that their informant contract will be respected or that their quest to reintegrate

into society will be adequately supported. Offenders who become active informants (who continue their illegal activities while informing), on the other hand, are eligible to receive alluring advantages. In turn, the message conveyed to offenders is that law-enforcement agencies depend on informants to fight crime, as it enables the continuation of one's criminal career. This oxymoron perpetuates the double stigma and places public security in the background.

Our comprehension of active criminal informants remains premature, as the sample of this research only contained a few human sources of the sort. Alongside this limitation, we must add that our findings do not allow for the generalization of our conclusions, given that the sample is too small. The data pool is solely composed of criminal memoirs that were written or translated into the French and English languages. Furthermore, we have selected the autobiographies and biographies that have received greater praise from the academic community. Lastly, the analyzed literary works only covered three countries: Canada, United States and Italy. These countries seem to share similarities in regards to crime rates and tendencies, their views on the political practice of using informants to fight crime and the execution of their witness protection program. Because of these historical, cultural and political particularities, we cannot claim that the tendencies observed are necessarily present in other regions of the world. Consequently, there is no doubt about the fact that other less popular accounts written in different languages may be relevant to take into consideration for future studies.

A suggestion for future research would be to diversify the methodology with complementary sources of information. In regards to our chosen analytical framework, Katz (1988) resorted to a mixture of literary works in his phenomenological study on crime implication. Concerning the object under study – informants – Turcotte (2008) enriched the data collected through qualitative interviews by considering legal documents as well as autobiographies from self-professed human sources. The logic behind the use of multiple types of qualitative media is to better recognize or disconfirm the empirical validity of a study. Katz (1988: p. 11) detailed: “Because the search for evidence and the development of theory proceed in mutually altering steps, the analytic results do not emerge from a straightforward, deductive, hard or inflexible application of theory to fact.” To study a human behaviour, such as offenders becoming informants, as well as an abstract concept like that of identity, one must be open to

various information channels in order to determine the presence or absence of correlations. Given that most men in the sample occupied relatively important positions in their respective crime circles and were sometimes known to the public even prior to their cooperation, it would be pertinent to conduct interviews with local, unknown informants to determine if the phenomenon (turning point, grieving process, desire for a new life, decision to inform) is the same.

What has been confirmed is that no matter the government, every justice department encountered in this study found relevance in using criminal informants to battle crime and reduce society's exposure to danger. On the contrary, and somewhat ironically, we found that becoming an informant and adhering to a new identity do not guarantee complete abstinence from crime. Some issues – for example, the government's ability to respect the informant contract, or the rigid lifestyle imposed by the WPP – have had the counter-effect of encouraging informants in the direction of recidivism. As some will say, these kinds of studies are helpful in outlining what does not work, but come up shy in suggesting solutions to the problems. Of course, the reality of the high victimization risks informants face after being involved in violent criminal environments justifies the need for protective measures such as a WPP. Our objective is not to displace the blame on the government's legislation addressing informant regulation, but the findings conclude that one must be more rational and sensible to collaborator's needs in terms of sustained desistance. Currently, the government is at an advantage by productively fighting crime, but given that the WPP controls are only effective to a certain extent, releasing informants into society without the appropriate tools to ensure prolonged desistance brings the government back to square one. Now that we have greater knowledge of the informant population itself and how they come to make this identity change, future studies should focus on the adaptation of protective programs to more adequately answer their needs and perpetuate desistance from crime, and thus reduce the rate of recidivism.

As discussed at the very beginning of this thesis, the bulk of the literature on informants seems to primarily fuel the debate of their relevancy and credibility among the justice system. They are depicted by the public as profiteers, and as conniving snakes by other offenders. That being said, by backtracking through their decisions to desist from crime by means of informing,

we will often uncover an individual undergoing an identity crisis. Regardless of this reality, as well as popular belief and prejudice concerning justice collaborators, governments continue to engage in partnerships with informants because human beings, just like state departments, are programmed to thrive. It seems as though both sides of the debate are arguing over a phenomenon that will always exist, just like crime will always be a part of society. Hence, since there is no way to 'beat' the issue, this study aimed to take the next logical step, which entails understanding the main actors (informants) and their emotional process in embracing this new identity. For these reasons, upcoming studies on the matter are encouraged to stray from the debate and provide insight on a harm reduction approach for the use of informants by the justice system.

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APPENDIX I
Coding Sheet

CATEGORY : SUBJECT IDENTITY	ABBREVIATION : SI
SI : CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION	SI-ORG
SI : CRIMIAL ACTIVITIES	SI-ACT
SI : MENTOR	S-MENT
SI : FAMILY	SI-FAM
SI : OFFENDING EXPERIENCE	SI-EXP
SI : CHARACTERISTICS	SI-CHAR
SI : LABELS	SI-LAB
SI : LABELS-OFFENDER	SI-LAB/OFF
SI : LABELS-INFORMANT	SI-LAB/INF
SI : CONFORMITY TO LABELS	SI-LAB/CONF

CATEGORY : TURNING POINT	ABBREVIATION : TP
TP : LOSS-PHYSICAL	TP-LOSS/PHY
TP : LOSS-SYMBOLIC	TP-LOSS/SYM
TP : LOSS-MATERIAL	TP-LOSS/MAT
TP : LOSS-IDENTITY	TP-LOSS/ID
TP : LOSS-MOTIVATION	TP-LOSS/MOT
TP : THREAT	TP-THR
TP : THREAT ON LIFE	TP-THR/LIFE
TP : THREAT OF INCARCERATION	TP-THR/PRIS

CATEGORY : GRIEVING PROCESS	ABBREVIATION : GP
GP : DENIAL	GP-DEN
GP : ANGER	GP-ANG
GP : BARGAINING	GP-BAR
GP : DEPRESSION	GP-DEP
GP : DEPRESSION-VULNERABILITY	GP-DEP/VUL
GP : DEPRESSION-SUICIDE	GP-DEP/SUI
GP : DEPRESSION-FEAR	GP-DEP/FEAR
GP : ACCEPTANCE	GP-ACC

CATEGORY : TRANSFORMATION PROCESS	ABBREVIATION : TRANS
TRANS : INITIAL MOMENT	TRANS-START
TRANS : THOUGHTS	TRANS-IDEA
TRANS : MOTIVES	TRANS-MOT
TRANS : SECONDARY MOTIVES	TRANS-MOT/2
TRANS : PLAN	TRANS-PLAN
TRANS : READINESS	TRANS-REDI
TRANS : CRITICAL EVENT	TRANS-CRIT
TRANS : CRITICAL EVENT-POLICE PRESSURE	TRANS-CRIT/POL
TRANS : CRITICAL EVENT-NEED PROTECTION	TRANS-CRIT/PROT
TRANS- CRITICAL EVENT – SUGGESTION	TRANS-CRIT/SUG
TRANS : REGAIN CONTROL	TRANS-CONT
TRANS : EMOTIONS	TRANS-EMO
TRANS : COGNITIVE DISTORSIONS	TRANS-COGDIS
TRANS : EVENT CHRONOLOGY	TRANS-CHRON
TRANS : DESISTANCE	TRANS-DES
TRANS : STIGMA	TRANS-STIG

CATEGORY : POST-INFORMING	ABBREVIATION : PI
PI : WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM	PI-WPP
PI : WPP-NEW IDENTITY	PI-WPP-ID
PI : WPP-EFFECT ON DESISTANCE	PI-WPP-DES
PI : EFFECT ON FAMILY	PI-FAM
PI : PROBLEMS	PI-PROBS
PI : EFFECT ON IDENTITY	PI-ID
PI : LABEL	PI-LAB
PI : ATTRACTION TO PROJECT	PI-ATT
PI : EMOTIONS	PI-EMO
PI : EVENT CHRONOLOGY	PI-CHRON
PI : COGNITIVE DISTORSIONS	PI-COGDIS
PI : STIGMA	PI-STIG
PI : RECIDIVISM	PI-RECID
PI : ADAPTATION TO CHANGE	PI-ADAPT