An empirical investigation focusing on the professional crime of pickpocketing and outpursing, the present study is devoted to spelling out the different dimensions of the problem.

Briefly dwelling on the nature and definition of pickpocketing, Chapter 1 presents the juristic and the criminological definitions of the profession, highlighting the typology of the professionals.

It makes a statement of the problem while attempting its delineation in both historical and contemporary perspectives. A humble effort is made to collate the isolated historical evidence,
sporadically scattered in the creative and juristic works of the past. Following Maurer, Inciardi and others, the beginnings of professional criminals as pickpockets and cutpurses are studied against the backdrop of the Tudor-Stuart through the Elizabethan period. The process of feudal disintegration giving rise to the "landless, masterless and penniless" class of pablistless people who fell as easy prey to the lure of pickpocketing and cutpursing as their source of livelihood is outlined as one set of causative factors. The process of urbanization, on the other hand, is another set of causative/promotive factors and forces.

The second part of the Chapter makes a brief survey of world ethnology in regard to pickpockets and cutpurses - a survey of some important metropolitan cities of the world and some criminal or ex-criminal tribes of India.

Attempting a brief but pointed resume of the major theoretical formulations of crime etiology as propounded by the different schools, Chapter 2 makes a statement of the hypothesis of the present study: the crime of pickpocketing and cutpursing and the social, cultural, economic and
psychological dynamics there of. The latter part of the chapter portrays the historical backdrop and the crime contours of Sagar town which forms the Universe of the present study and from where the sample population has been selected.

This Chapter presents a faithful account of the adventure in the field. All the methods employed in the course of the present investigation have been gone into. Beginning with the initial spadework of data collection through the police records and identification of the informants down to the administration of the schedule, the narrative offers an account of such sensitive areas as identification of the hitherto unidentified pickpockets and cutpurses, initial contacts and establishment of rapport with them, and the participant observation of the informants during their professional expeditions. The chapter highlights my successes and failures as faithfully as it describes the excitement and the challenge of the study, on the one hand, and my experiences on the other.

Chapter 3 through chapter 7 are devoted to the findings of my empirical investigation. The data are based on the information collected through are
Schedule, the formal and informal interviews, the procurement of their tools and weapons, the description and demonstrations of their techniques, and their secret language that was partly dug out in the course of my observation as a participant. All these facts figures are thematically arranged and presented in four Chapters.

Chapter 3 is devoted to delineating the characterological specialities of both pickpockets and cutpurses with special reference to their modus operandi. The chapter also highlights the basic premises of the professional ethics to which these criminals are wedded.

Personal and familial background of the sample of pickpockets and cutpurses forms the content of Chapter 4. The tabular presentation of the data drives home and following generalizations :-

1. Numerical preponderance of male offenders have an urban background of nativity;
2. Offenders of lower age groups out-number those of upper age groups;
3. There is a community-wise preponderance of the Hindus as against the Mohammedans, and caste-wise domination of the Scheduled Caste persons over the upper caste ones;
4. Unmarried offenders having low level of literacy are numerically superior;

5. Laxity of morals regarding sex is fairly significant;

6. There is a significant incidence of drop-outs from homes having the milieu of quarrel some and bad interpersonal relations;

7. Positive correlation appears to exist between the following social factors lower age group, vagrancy, eldest children of parents and numerical strength of delinquents.

Chapter 5 details the occupational background of the sample population along several inter-related contexts. The following generalizations emerge, out of the tables of the chapter;

1. There is a higher incidence of beginning of crime career at teenage;

2. Offenders having pickpocketing/ftarpursing as their exclusive occupation are more in number as compared to those having it as a subsidiary occupation.

3. A preponderantly large number of them fall in the monthly income range of Rs. 100–Rs. 500.

4. There is a greater tendency to operate within the familiar area and with the help of male accomplices/gangsters;
5. Timidity and non-violence towards victims and public at large is generally noticed.

Particulars relating to the gang and the gangsters are highlighted in Chapter 6, and the generalizations proceeding from the tables are as follows:

1. Higher incidence of both gang membership for training and starting of professional career under gang protection/patronage;
2. Greater incidence of higher shares given to gang leaders;
3. Universal acceptance of prevalence of rules/conventions of gang;
4. Higher incidence of non-violation of gang norms;
5. Universal acknowledgement of punishment with higher incidence of physical and monetary punishment and least;
6. Prevalence of greater freedom for voluntary continuance or dissociation of gang membership as against lesser incidence of permanence, tutelage on bondage.

Chapter 7 sheds some light on pickpocket-police relations. The tables in the chapter yield the following conclusions:
1. Numerical preponderance of persons arrested as against those not arrested;
2. Preponderance of arrests several times and release on bail as the most popular mode of getting out of police custody;
3. Bribery to police is a universally acknowledged truism among them;
4. Share given to police having high incidence, the extent of share ranging between 20% to 25%;
5. Frequency of arrests by police and acquittal by court appear to have a positive correlation;
6. High incidence of engagement of a defence counsel by gang leader or others suggests prevalence of patronage and protection by gang leader and moral support by the specific pleader(s).

Synoptic and hasty as they are, the foregoing generalization nevertheless go to indicate that the criminals are living and breathing human beings and psychological entities operating in the social and cultural system. A criminal is a part of the society, having a set of values and arriving at a specific type of personality; his personality is integrated in terms of a set of values albeit they constitute the very antithesis of the dominant culture. Let us recall Maurer’s passage:

Most pickpockets are born into a family living within a criminal culture which cultivates skills in criminal techniques
Most pickpockets are born into a family living within a criminal culture which cultivates skills in criminal techniques and hostility towards the dominant culture . . . . . . the child in the criminal family is not taught the sanctity of private property. In the course of daily life, he acquires the criminal values fundamental for the professional. To steal from one's family and friends is despicable, but to steal from "Suckers" is laudable.

(Mauzer, 1955)

The social facts emerging in the generalizations above as well as those contained in the chapter on the modus operandi go to indicate that significant correlations can be obtained between the various causative, promotive, supportive and reinforcing factors, forces and processes underlying criminal activity. These include those that are embedded in the social bedrock and get institutionalized through socio-cultural dynamics and the psychological processes of the individual.

In order to arrive at such deep-rooted factors, a more systematic, rigorous and methodical
investigation is needed—extensive in coverage and intensive in its analysis. Humble as the present study is, it nevertheless offers a model or al tentative blue-print, notwithstanding the obvious limitations of its findings in a relatively short span of time and unaided by any previous experience of research. The facts gathered about the modus operandi of my informants reveal the fact that an individual—whether a criminal or non-criminal—is a solid three-dimensional being, a product of social, cultural and psychological factors, forces and processes. This can be best illustrated through the following diagram:

The figure makes it clear that it is the improper or defective socialization of an individual that makes him drift his way from his family to the peer group and the gang. Likewise, inadequate or defective internalization of norms and values leads him to the sub-culture of the underworld. The slow and gradual criminalization through his induction into a criminal fraternity offers him the sense of security and emotional intimacy besides germinating in him the ethos of parasitic existence. To cap it all, the element of secrecy of the gang activity, the secret language of the
argot and the meticulous effort to conceal his identity not only invest him with a secretive personality but also transform him into a timid delinquent. The adolescent faces a real crisis and the crisis catches him in a vortex.