

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: PUTTING PARENTHOOD IN PERSPECTIVE:
THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD,
PARENTHOOD, AND CRIME FOR
FORMERLY SANCTIONED AT-RISK
YOUNG ADULTS

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Qualitative research suggests that becoming a parent contributes to desisting patterns of crime for male and female offenders (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Moloney et al., 2009), yet quantitative analysis provides less support for a relationship, especially for male offenders (Siennick and Osgood, 2008). This paper addresses this apparent disagreement by examining whether and how parenthood relates to involvement in crime among formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults. I analyze in-depth, semi-structured interviews from an ethnically diverse sample of men and women, parents and non-parents, ages 20 to 25, who participated in the Research on Pathways to Desistance study in Philadelphia. The accounts of parents and non-parents allowed me to explore the underlying social and subjective mechanisms in desisting and persisting patterns of crime. I found that many of the informants, persisters and desisters, engaged in intermittent offending and described

qualitative changes in offending during the transition to adulthood. Informants associated movement in and out of crime with cognitive shifts, supervision and monitoring from others, and restructured routine activities, many of which were related to markers of adulthood, including parenthood. When informants persisted or returned to crime after periods of abstinence, it was often because these mechanisms and processes failed or were discarded. With respect to parenthood, many parents initially met the challenges of parenthood by selling drugs and other crime. Desisting patterns of crime were related to parents recognizing the consequences of their involvement in crime for their children and to an interdependent “package deal” that included employment and a co-parent. By contrast, persisting patterns were associated with informants seeing themselves as bad parents and with living apart from their children. Implications of these findings for theories of continuity and change in crime, future research, and policy are discussed.

PUTTING PARENTHOOD IN PERSPECTIVE:
THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD, PARENTHOOD, AND CRIME
FOR FORMERLY SANCTIONED AT-RISK YOUNG ADULTS

By

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PREFACE

This is not the dissertation I thought I would write. When I first applied to graduate school I wanted to do qualitative research on women and crime, but Eric Wish, my boss at the Center for Substance Abuse Research, quickly disabused me of the qualitative angle, especially since I wanted to attend the program at the University of Maryland. But I was ok with that. As someone who hated math as a kid, I learned to love statistics in college (it helped that my teacher was Ray Paternoster, who makes everything seem easy), so I looked forward to learning quantitative research methods, which I did, and I loved it.

Then, as I was figuring out what to do for my Master's thesis, John Laub invited me to work for him, and later offered me access to the Glueck data for my thesis. So rather than writing about gender and childhood victimization, I wrote about the long-term effects of low birth weight in a sample of old white men from Boston. And I loved it.

When that was finished, I enrolled in the Maryland Population Research Center's Populations Studies Certificate program to study demographic methods and family demography. Just as I was trying to make sense of it all, to formulate a research agenda for my dissertation, John asked me if I would be interested in doing qualitative interviews with serious young offenders in Philadelphia. I had no training in qualitative methods. I did not know Philadelphia at all. I had never been inside a prison or a jail. I was shy about talking to strangers. It was not the path I had seen for myself at the start of graduate school, but I jumped at the chance. And I loved it, hated it, and loved it again.

As is the intent of the dissertation process, I have learned many valuable lessons and not everything I learned was planned. I learned to work independently, I learned how

to design and execute a research study, I learned about the strengths and limitations of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis. I learned how powerfully motivating my sense of obligation to others could be, and I was surprised to find that sense of obligation extended not only to the people who had a stake in the project, but also to the men and women who participated in this study.

In the original concept paper for this study, I said I wanted to follow the Chicago School researchers and “bring back the news” of how high-risk youth experience the transition to adulthood (Emerson 2004). To do that, I had to learn to listen to people and not to be afraid to ask strangers deeply personal questions. Along the way, I learned that I enjoy listening and trying to make sense of people’s lives at the same time that they are trying to make sense of it themselves. I found that some of their struggles were similar to my own, and that they experienced challenges I could not begin to imagine. I learned something about how formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults experience the transition to adulthood, about how they move in and out of crime and the criminal justice system, about their relationships, about their experiences, about their injuries, and about their pleasures. I learned that I could not possibly fit all of this thick, rich data into one dissertation. This dissertation presents just a sliver of the incredible and moving accounts the men and women in this study shared with me, and I am afraid it does not do them justice.

Finally, I think the hardest lesson I learned is that life (and a call to service by the Obama Administration) gets in the way of ambitions and goals. You have to learn to adapt and roll with it. I am still working on that one.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I recently read that the acknowledgements of a book tell the story of how the project came about and developed over time. That is certainly true for this dissertation. While putting together the list of people to include to whom I owed my gratitude, I was overwhelmed to recognize the wealth of support, mentorship, and advice I have received. John Laub said it takes a village to put together a project of this scale, but this list is more like a Metropolitan Statistical Area.

There is no way to fairly justify whom to thank first—I had two advisors that guided (sometimes pushed, sometimes shoved) me through this project—so I will go with convention and start with my dissertation chair, Ray Paternoster. You are partly to blame for this dissertation in more ways than as my advisor since it was during your undergraduate statistics class at Maryland that I first considered attending graduate school. More than that, I am grateful to you for picking up this dissertation somewhat midstream and seeing it through to the end. Thanks also for providing me with the toolkit to think critically about theory and theory development—it has been a blessing and a curse, but I appreciate it nonetheless.

I am especially grateful to John Laub, my advisor and mentor until President Obama called him to service. You exposed me to a way of thinking about crime and human lives that fundamentally shaped my approach to criminology and you challenged me to be cautious and critical in every aspect of my writing and thinking. We started this project together and it would not have been accomplished were it not for all the work you put in. You gave me the opportunity, oversaw the development of the project, and provided feedback and guidance at every stage. You also threw me into the pool, forcing

me to learn to swim. I hope you can forgive me for not going with the dissertation you suggested as we were collecting the data (well, really Remi is the one who suggested it; I will not put it here for fear that it will sully the rest of this dissertation). That suggestion ultimately pushed me to ensure that such a title would *not* resonate with content of this dissertation.

Thanks to Ed Mulvey and Carol Schubert, first for believing that I could accomplish this project, but even more so for their immense support, kindness, patience, and advice from the start. The sense of obligation I felt toward you both kept me going when the project seemed too big for one person. Carol, you were especially wonderful for always responding to my inquiries about the Pathways data with celerity, and then waiting patiently for my semiannual status updates. I owe you both drinks, meals, and my undying gratitude.

Thanks also to the rest of my dissertation committee: Sally Simpson, Thomas Loughran, Joe Richardson, and, for a little while, Bill Falk. I am proud to have been jumped in to this academic gang by you.

I also owe thanks to all the people who helped with the Pathways qualitative project. First, thank you to the Research Pathways to Desistance Working Group for agreeing to let me do this. Special thanks goes to my fellow UMD alums, Bobby Brame and Alex Piquero, and to Lawrence Steinberg, Jeff Fagan, and Laurie Chassin, who provided feedback on the interview guide in the early stages, and Elizabeth Cauffman, whose analysis helped us select the women in this study.

Thanks also to Sir Anthony Bottoms and Professor Joanna Shapland, for sharing their qualitative interview guide from the Sheffield Pathways Out of Crime, from which I adapted a number of questions in the interview guide for this project.

The Pathways to Desistance staff at Temple University were instrumental in collecting the data for this project. Thanks to Sonia Cota-Robles, the project director, who helped me coordinate my dozen or so trips to Philadelphia and Western Pennsylvania, including (and especially) gaining access to prisons and jails. Thanks also to Hilary Hodgdon, who spearheaded a Pathways study special project of her own while I was working on mine. She let me tag along on quantitative interviews, met me for meals, and shared gossip with me, all of which helped me navigate Philadelphia and this project. Thanks also to Kate Monahan for giving me a guided tour of North Philadelphia and advice on how to handle myself in the field; Joanna, for serving as a guinea pig for a mock interview; Brooke, for letting me tag along to an interview and introducing me to State Road; and all the other staff at Temple who provided feedback on the interview guide, background on the informants, and assistance with tracking down informants to schedule interviews. I could not have done any of this without you.

Thanks to Brett Buckland, my classmate and researcher (now Research Director) at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, for putting in a good word or two that help me gain access to informants in prisons.

Thanks also to the graduate students who spent long hours helping me to transcribe the interviews: Megan Collins, Rachel Stephenson, Lauren Rothe, and especially Sarah Greenman, who has also been a source of support in the final stages of this dissertation.

Thanks to Professor Michael Paolisso and Dr. Shawn Maloney from the University of Maryland Anthropology Department who gave me great advice on transcribing interviews and using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti.

There have been many smart, wonderful graduate students at Maryland, and I am honored to have had some of them give their time to provide feedback on the development, execution, and analysis of this study. Erin Miller, Maggie Pendzich-Hardy, Rachel Philophsky, Mariel Alper, Doug Weiss, Mauri Matsuda, Katie Zafft, Hattie Jones, Tracy Sohoni, Amy Sariti, Melissa Rorie, and Holly Nguyen all stand out, though I am certain there were more. Special thanks to Bianca Bersani, my former officemate at Maryland, who turned around from her desk one day in 2006 or 2007 and said something to the effect of “qualitative research takes a really long time.” You gave me fair warning, Bianca, and though there have been times when I thought, “Damn, I should have listened to her,” I am still glad I did it. Special thanks also to Heather Harris for her bold criticism, generous assistance with graphs, commiseration, and general good cheer during the weeks when I was racing to finish the final draft.

Thanks to Jean McGloin for her comments and suggestions on some of the data analyses; also for her willingness to serve as my last-minute mentor on multiple occasions, for pushing me to be more critical of my data and methods, and for being someone I knew would always be honest with me about my work. I am grateful to know you weren’t just blowing smoke up my ass.

Words cannot express my gratitude to Jamie Fader, my qualitative mentor and guru, whom I met up with in Philadelphia at the start of all this, at John’s suggestion. She

has provided spot-on advice, generous encouragement, and valued friendship. Thanks for being awesome. And you were right, Jamie. Writing is thinking, and I am trying to do it as much as possible.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

How do experiences, structural and subjective processes, and challenges faced by formerly sanctioned, at-risk youth relate to their involvement in crime during the transition to adulthood? This dissertation draws from the life-course perspective to address these questions and to build upon existing research and theories of desistance and persistence in crime. The life-course perspective asserts that the dynamic processes that produce and reproduce change and stability in behavior occur across the life span. These processes are influenced by social factors such as a person's historical and geographical location, social embeddedness, and social ties. Lives are interconnected; what occurs in one person's life—in marriage, parenthood, work, and crime trajectories—has implications for the trajectories of other people. Life course perspective principles also assume that people have (and exercise) agency and personal control in constructing their own lives, but that variation in the timing of life events and transitions to social roles and institutions relates to later outcomes (Elder and Giele, 2009: 9; Elder, 1994, 1998; Laub and Sampson, 2003).

Though the life-course perspective implies a long view of crime, its emphasis on social context, agency, and social roles integrates the seemingly incongruent social factors and subjective features of the transition to adulthood implicated in theory and research in continuity and change in offending. Early adulthood is dense with changes in social context and social roles, and it presents new challenges to a person's perceptions of himself and the world. For that reason, the life-course perspective guides this study. This study focuses on continuity and change during the early young adulthood rather than over the full lifetime or from childhood to early adulthood. Specifically, this research draws on

narratives of involvement and change in criminal behavior during late adolescence (ages 14 to 17) and young adulthood (ages 20 to 25) among formerly sanctioned men and women to examine how change occurs. The interviews were conducted when the men and women were still young adults in their early 20s; thus, the temporal proximity of the narratives to a period characterized by transitions provides a unique opportunity for exploring the social and subjective factors associated with transitions into adult social institutions, like parenthood, that might facilitate change in crime. Furthermore, these narratives can provide insight into persistent offending patterns, including what happens in the negative case, such as when individuals appear to transition into new social roles while their involvement in crime appears stable.

Of course, the problem with focusing on any circumscribed period of the life course is that it limits certainty about whether the observed patterns of behavior will go on indefinitely. We cannot know whether the young adults interviewed for this study will maintain patterns of continuity or change throughout their lives, or even into the next year of their lives. The trade-off is that by observing involvement in crime over a shorter period, we can observe significant but short-term changes in local life circumstances and offending, such as intermittent patterns of offending or reduced diversity of offending (Horney, Osgood and Marshall, 1995; McGloin et al., 2007). Longer timeframes might mask this critical variation, thereby challenging how we conceptualize continuity and change, persistence and desistance.

CURRENT RESEARCH AIMS

This dissertation research employs qualitative methods to address fundamental questions about changes in offending during the transition to young adulthood. Drawing

on the perspective of the offender, I focus on social and subjective factors related to role transitions during the transition to adulthood. The central research question of this dissertation is: what function, if any, do transitions into adult social roles play in change and stability in offending during early adulthood among formerly sanctioned youth? The goal is to identify potential role-related mechanisms—social factors and subjective factors—that facilitate processes of change and continuity in offending and to assess how these mechanisms relate to each other from the perspective of the offender. First, I investigate the role transitions and other experiences the offenders themselves identify as most important to understanding their involvement in crime during late adolescence and early adulthood and how those experiences might operate. Then, I focus on the experience of parenthood as a special case of role-transition to evaluate the respective functions of and relationships between social-structural change and subjective change within trajectories of crime.

Qualitative research in developmental and life-course accounts of desistance and persistence has examined how social and subjective changes relate to involvement in crime, but many of these studies utilize samples of former and active offenders, many of whom were well past the peak age of offending when interviewed (see, for example, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Shover, 1985, 1996). As a result, interviewees report on processes and decisions that occurred sometimes decades earlier and over a broad time period. By contrast, I analyze in-depth, semi-structured interviews from an ethnically diverse sample of thirty men and ten women in the midst of transitioning to young adulthood—between ages from 20 to 25—who participated in the Research on Pathways to Desistance study in Philadelphia. This

subsample drawn from the larger Pathways study by using trajectory analysis and other quantitative methods to evaluate patterns of offending over time and to identify those participants that exhibited either desisting or persisting patterns of offending during the three years after receiving a sanction for a felony offense.

I argue that the unique features of the transition-to-young-adulthood period of the life course—including the concentration of both changes in social roles and changes in offending—make it a valuable lens through which to observe change and continuity in offending. Further, because the qualitative life-history interview data were collected from a high-risk sample as its members were actively engaged in the transition to adulthood, I can gain a fuller picture of the experience and challenges of the transition to adulthood for this population. Narratives recorded during this period of the life course allow for a more proximate and focused assessment of the salience of social-structural factors and subjective factors in understanding the processes underlying desistance and persistence in offending. Additionally, the use of quantitative assessments in the identification of offending patterns allows me to compare narratives of “persisters”—those who maintained a relatively high level of involvement in crime as they transitioned into adulthood—and “desisters”—those who reported a high level of involvement as adolescents but a much lower level as they reached adulthood. The structure of the sample also allows for comparison of the narratives of males and females within persister and desister groups. Further comparisons can be made between the narratives of those incarcerated at the time of the interview with those in the community.

In this research, I examine experiences of crime, challenges previously sanctioned youth face in the transition to young adulthood, and how these challenges relate to

criminal offending. Then, I focus on one specific role transition—parenthood—in an effort to identify and explore potential social and subjective mechanisms linking new adult roles to changes in offending.

Transitioning to Young Adulthood and Involvement in Crime. One of the goals of this research is to tell the story of what the transition to adulthood looks like from the point of view of previously sanctioned serious juvenile offenders. In particular, I seek to identify the ways in which the challenges faced during the transition to young adulthood relate to involvement in crime by revealing how previously sanctioned young adults describe and explain change during this period. I investigate how they view their involvement in crime during this period. I also explore their perceptions of expected role transitions and the challenges they face as they attempt to meet those expectations. Finally, I explore those factors they believed are most salient to understanding their involvement (or lack of involvement) in crime, as well as other emerging themes related to continuity and change in offending. I expect that these factors include transitions to new roles and related structural changes, criminal justice system experiences, and cognitive shifts, though I allow for alternative factors as well.

Parenthood. As a social-structural transition, parenthood can occur in the absence of a desire, decision, or motivation to become a parent, yet it can also be a significant turning point in the life course. We know surprisingly little about the relationship between parenthood and changes in offending, especially during the transition to young adulthood. Qualitative research suggests that becoming a parent contributes to desisting patterns of crime for male and female offenders (for example, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Moloney et al., 2009). By contrast, quantitative analysis rarely supports

this relationship, especially for male offenders (for a review of this research, see Siennick and Osgood, 2008). In order to unpack this apparent discrepancy, this dissertation addresses whether and how formerly sanctioned youth adapt their involvement in crime to meet the challenges of parenthood during the transition to young adulthood. I explore the relationship between dimensions of parenthood and crime, including time spent engaged in parenting, one's perception of self as a parent, and how crime relates to the challenges of parenthood.

OUTLINE

In the following chapter, I discuss why it is important to examine continuity and change in crime during young adulthood. Then, I review some conceptual challenges for how we understand continuity and change in offending, including how we define persistence and desistance from crime, what it means to examine continuity and change in offending as a process and the benefit of examining mechanisms within processes. I then review criminological theories that implicate social and subjective factors as mechanisms in the desistance process and the empirical basis for these theories. Finally, I discuss how these theories might explain the relationship between parenthood and offending and review the empirical evidence for such a relationship.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the current study, including the specific research questions about changes in offending during the transition to young adulthood, the data used address these questions, and how the data were collected. Then I describe the analytic strategy employed to answer fundamental questions about continuity and change in offending during the transition to young adulthood among formerly sanctioned youth.

In the fourth chapter presents findings on patterns of crime during the transition to adulthood among formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults and highlights both intermittent patterns of offending and qualitative changes in crime. Chapter five explores the relationship between markers of adulthood (education, employment, and romantic relationships) and crime. It also examines emerging themes related to continuity and change in crime, including themes related to dominant theoretical perspectives. Chapter six examines these themes more closely within the context of parenthood. Chapter seven discusses the findings from the preceding chapters, highlighting major theme as well as similarities and differences in the accounts of men and women. It also suggests implications of these findings for future research and for policy.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

What happens to serious juvenile offenders when they grow up? What happens in young adulthood that facilitates desistance or persistence in serious offending? How do offenders desist from crime, especially when they have a low probability of experiencing key role transitions implicated in the desistance process? How do others persist in offending, even if they have experienced one or more of these transitions? Do the qualities of the role and role transition explain continuity and change? Or should we look at intrinsic qualities and changes within individuals to understand these processes?

Criminologists have long asked why some people engage in crime while others do not. For decades, we looked to largely juvenile populations to answer this question. With the advent of the criminal career debate of the 1970s and 1980s, the criminological gaze shifted to understanding variation within a population of offenders—why some people seem to engage in one type of crime rather than another, or what explains between-person variation in the rate or seriousness of offending patterns over time. More recently, this debate has shifted to explain desistance from crime—how can we explain why some offenders quit crime when they do while others do not? Specifically, the debate has focused on the processes and mechanisms involved in desistance from serious juvenile offending and in continuity in offending from adolescence to early adulthood.

Empirical research has partially illuminated these questions. For many offenders, desistance takes place as they transition into adult roles (Siennick and Osgood, 2008). Transitions into adult social institutions like marriage, employment, military service, or parenthood, provide opportunities for turning points in the criminal career (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002), though other factors such as

avoiding troublesome friends, family and neighborhoods have also been implicated in the desistance process (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Warr, 2002). There is a debate in desistance research, however, about the relationship between social factors and subjective, internal change. This debate is rooted in the question of selection—do offenders that desist in crime and persist in crime differ with respect to their propensity to get married, obtain a stable job, or engage in parenting, in a way that also affects whether they desist from crime?

One possible difference between desisters and persisters might be how they subjectively experience their lives. Offenders who desist from crime want to desist from crime *and* want to get engaged in parenting because they view the world and themselves differently from those who persist in crime. Those who persist in crime do *not* want to engage in parenting, nor do they want to stop engaging in crime, so they do not. Alternatively, persisters might see themselves as the kind of person who engages in crime, and parenthood is incompatible with that self-image. Social factors such as parenthood, marriage, and employment, then, are merely indicators of underlying internal change that has already taken place, and the relationship between these social institutions and desistance/persistence is simply correlation rather than causal. Of course, we must account for the quality (or qualities) of the parenthood, marriage (Sampson and Laub, 1993), or job (Wadsworth, 2006), but again, the meaning of those qualities to the offender is thought to extend from the significant internal change that has already taken place.

As an adult social role, parenthood encompasses a set of culturally prescribed behavioral requirements for the physical and financial care of children (Doherty,

Kouneski, and Erickson, 1998; Knoester and Eggebeen, 2006). As such, parenthood offers unique insight into this debate for at least two reasons. It is the only structural marker of adulthood that is higher among young adults with criminal records than those without criminal records, unlike marriage, employment, and other social factors (Uggen and Wakefield, 2005). Further, it represents a social transition that is not easily connected to subjective, internal change. There may be much less intentionality in becoming a parent than there is in getting married or getting a job—many people become parents without actively trying or even wanting to. Moreover, the mere fact of having a biological child fails to capture whether a parent participates in parenting behaviors or views themselves as a parent. Instead, the social and subjective dimensions of parenthood might emerge over time. Furthermore, individual efforts to meet the behavioral expectations of parenthood are limited by the structural and cognitive resources at hand (for example, see Roy, 2004). Opportunities to meet the demands of parenthood—especially the financial demands—might draw from legal or less-than-legal resources. For example, a father might view selling drugs as a legitimate opportunity to provide for his children because he perceives his access to legal employment is limited (Sullivan, 1989; Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; Uggen and Thompson, 2003).

When followed over the full life course, most offenders appear to desist from crime but the majority of offenders start to desist during early adulthood or the transition to adulthood period (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Though there are many correlates of desistance, as yet there is no consensus for how to understand for this pattern. At the heart of this dissertation is the goal to understand why desistance appears to start during early young adulthood for most offenders and what is different about the experiences of

those offenders that appear to transition to adulthood but continue to be involved in crime. Parenthood provides unique insight into how social and subjective variables operate as mechanisms in the persistence/desistance process. This research also seeks to rectify differences in findings between qualitative support for parenthood as a factor in the desistance process and the lack of quantitative support for this relationship.

The existing desistance research is limited in its generalizability across populations as well as by the kinds of questions it has yet to address. With respect to generalizability, the existing research is limited by the race and gender of subjects as well as by the age of subjects. For example, Sampson and Laub's (1993; Laub and Sampson, 2003) research has been based on a sample of white men from Boston who were followed up when they were an average age of 70 years. Age at follow-up is especially important. When research participants are asked to reflect on periods of their lives—for example, the period in which involvement in crime started to decline—they might be drawing on events and memories from years or decades prior to data collection. Alternatively, some analyses have been conducted when the participants were still in the midst of early adulthood and the peak (average) age of offending, before they experience significant changes in other areas of their lives (for example, see Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004). Participants in such studies may not have had the opportunity to complete formal education, secure a steady job, or establish a mutually supportive relationship, let alone get married or start to have children of their own. As a result, data used to examine the effects of those institutions on offending might lack sufficient variation in the independent variables to detect such relationships. Furthermore, a number of the longitudinal data sets used to address these questions sample general populations or

populations “at-risk” for delinquency (based on demographic, individual, and community characteristics). These studies were designed to address a different set of questions than the ones I want to address here—they were designed to explain entrance into criminal careers and to explain between-group variation. As such, they still have much less variation in between- and within-individual patterns of offending than a sample drawn from an offending population might have. Those longitudinal studies that started in the late 1980s—such as the Rochester Youth Development Study, The Pittsburgh Youth Study, and the Denver Youth Study—are at greatest risk for these last two criticisms (see Thornberry and Krohn, 2003). Finally, much of the existing research has been limited by its bias toward quantitative data and the latest sophisticated means of analyzing this data (Sampson and Laub, 2005b). Though quantitative analysis has greatly advanced our understanding of continuity and change in offending, understanding variation within individual criminal trajectories requires that we explore processes and mechanisms that might escape quantitative detection, either because the questions quantitative data can help us answer do not ask what we want them to ask or because we do not ask the right questions to begin with.

Attempts to frame what we think we know about persistence and desistance from crime within a theoretical context are also limited. Generally, theoretical accounts of desistance from crime might be aligned as either social explanations (social control theories and opportunity theories) or subjective explanations (theories rooted in symbolic interaction or rational choice traditions). At first blush, these two accounts might appear diametrically opposed. Social control accounts emphasize the strength of bonds to social institutions (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Hirschi, 1969); opportunity theories emphasize

variation in access to attractive targets (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Thus, social explanations appear to privilege factors external to the individual as providing constraints on behavior. By contrast, symbolic interaction and rational choice traditions emphasize internal factors—cognitive processes such as identity and decision-making constrain behavior or provide motivation for behavior (Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Matsueda and Heimer, 1997).

In this chapter, I set up my argument for why continuity and change in crime during early young adulthood and parenthood are important to understanding longer patterns of desistance and persistence. Then, I outline the conceptual challenges for understanding continuity and change in offending, contemporary theories of desistance from crime, and how those theories would explain the potential relationship between parenthood and desistance. Finally, I review what we know so far about the relationship between parenthood and continuity and change in crime.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD AND PARENTHOOD AS CONTEXTS FOR CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Individuals experience change throughout the life course and across a number of domains, but a tremendous amount of change is concentrated during the “demographically dense” period of young adulthood (Cook and Furstenberg, 2002). Young adults undergo a series of core social role transitions (structural changes in their interactions with social institutions, organizations, and individuals): they move away from their family of origin, they complete their formal education, they spend less time with peers, and they become increasingly involved in adult institutions as they join the work force, marry, and become parents (Hayford and Furstenberg, 2008; Hogan and Astone 1986; Shanahan, 2000). Though most young adults undergo some or all of these

transitions, the transitions vary according to intentionality, salience, sequencing, timing, and success (Hogan and Astone 1986: 124; Shanahan, 2000). This variation in turn influences, intersects with, and is influenced by, other outcomes and role transitions over the life course.

In addition to structural changes, adult social roles provide young adults with opportunities for subjective change and the development of a new sense of self. Individuals derive identity from the internalized sets of expectations associated with age-graded social roles (Andrew et al., 2007; MacMillan, 2007; Stryker, 1979). Because people can occupy and transition into multiple roles, they hold multiple identities—parent, spouse, worker, friend—that vary in terms of commitment and salience. Role-related identities, in turn, tend to produce behaviors that express those identities (MacMillan, 2007: 15). From a cultural perspective, social roles provide scripts for behavior and patterns of interaction that reduce uncertainty—they are shared symbols that foster shared meanings. Without this shared understanding or when norms about social roles are weak, “idiosyncratic definitions and subjective interpretations” guide social interactions (Caspi and Moffitt, 1993: 267). Thus, as young adults transition into new social roles, they may also experience a subjective shift that manifests as the performance of a new set of behaviors associated with that social role.-

The transitions experienced during early adulthood hold theoretical and empirical significance for continuity and change in criminal behavior. Though the relationship between age and crime has long been acknowledged and debated (for example, see Laub and Sampson, 1991), the criminal career debate of the 1980s invigorated efforts to understand different parameters of involvement in crime. Though many important

questions emerged from this debate, two stand out for the present study: 1) why does involvement in crime peak during late adolescence and early adulthood, declining thereafter (Blumstein et al., 1986; Blumstein, Cohen, and Farrington, 1988a; Farrington, 1986; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1986; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983)? And 2) what explains continuity and change—persistence and desistance—in crime more generally (Nagin and Paternoster, 1991; Horney Osgood and Marshall, 1995)? These are two broad yet important questions for criminology, as they speak to both the causes of crime as well as to how society might reduce crime. If there is “something” going on during the transition to adulthood period (or during late adolescence and early adulthood) that can be “treated” then we can better prevent and intervene in criminal careers.¹ Empirically, there appears to be a link between change in offending (i.e., desistance from crime) and adult role transitions, including marriage (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Sampson, Laub, and Wimer, 2006), employment (Uggen, 2000), and parenthood (Kreager et al., 2010; Moloney et al., 2009). By contrast, the experience of incarceration and the absence of engagement in social institutions have been implicated in continuity or persistent offending (Laub and Sampson, 2003).

There is also a growing body of qualitative research emphasizing the importance of subjective factors or internal change in the process of desisting from crime. Subjective factors include identity or self-concept (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001), cognitive transformations (Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002), agency (Laub and Sampson, 2003), emotions (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007), and spirituality

¹ Something other than the inexorable aging of the organism, as Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990: 141) suggest.

(Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). Though definitions of these subjective factors vary considerably across studies (and are at times unclear), the central idea is that offenders experience a reorientation in how they view themselves and the world around them, and this new perspective stimulates or sustains a willingness to change and desist from crime. Such a reorientation might be associated with new social roles (Laub and Sampson, 2003), though there is some theoretical debate as to whether a) subjective shifts result from role transitions, b) whether subjective change influence decisions to take on new social roles, c) whether subjective changes occur independently from social factors, or d) whether social and subjective factors interact such that they are difficult to disentangle at all (Laub and Sampson, 2001; LeBel et al., 2008).

COMPLICATING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINOLOGY

Most of what we know about turning points in the lives of serious offenders is based on observations of samples that transitioned to adulthood in a period when marriage, parenthood, and work were experienced in a more orderly sequence, and earlier in the life course, than the average American experiences today (for example, see Laub and Sampson, 2003). As Frank Furstenberg and his colleagues (2004: 33) described:

In the years after World War II, Americans typically assumed the full responsibilities of adulthood by their late teens or early 20s. Most young men had completed school and were working full-time, and most young women were married and raising children. People who grew up in this era of growing affluence—many of today's grandparents—were economically self-sufficient and able to care for others by the time they had weathered adolescence.

The process of transitioning to adult roles does not occur overnight when teenagers come of age, which may pose problems for explanations that implicate these transitions in the desistance process. The process of transitioning into adult roles, in

which young adults develop the necessary skills for adult social roles and adopt those roles, takes more time than it once did (Arnett, 2000; Furstenberg et al., 2004; Roisman, Aguilar and Egeland, 2004). Though earlier generations expected to take a specific path into adulthood, there are now multiple paths to adulthood. At the middle of the twentieth century, youths expected to first finish school and then get a job before leaving the parental home to get married, which in turn preceded having children. Today, young adults are less likely to transition directly from family of origin to family formation, instead experiencing an “independent life stage.” While some Americans are delaying adulthood all together (by mid-20th century standards), others are transitioning into some adult roles but not others, and not in the expected order. Since the 1970s, parenthood in particular has increasingly occurred out of sync with traditional sequences, especially for young adults. Moreover, marriage and family formation are increasingly viewed as “life choices” rather than requirements for adulthood (Rosenfeld and Kim, 2005; Settersten and Ray, 2010). The macro-historical shift in the transition to adulthood period has resulted in great deal of variation in the paths to adulthood within the United States. As Arnett (2000: 471) has pointed out, it is “[very difficult to predict] a person’s demographic status in these areas ... on the basis of age alone.”

Indeed, the nature of the transition to adulthood has changed so dramatically in recent decades that some have argued for the identification of a previously unacknowledged period of the life course. In particular, Arnett (2000) argues that these demographic shifts and cultural shifts “have altered the nature of development” between ages 18 and 25, the period between adolescence and young adulthood that he calls *emerging adulthood*. Defined as “a [theoretically and empirically] distinct period of the

life course characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions” (Arnett, 2000: 496). Adulthood is delayed during this period, as most people have not yet met those markers of adulthood and do not see themselves as adults.

The transition to adulthood is not unidirectional, however. As Roy and Jones (2014: 3) point out, not everyone has the option to allow adulthood to emerge in a “linear and almost inevitable forward motion” as Arnett (2000) suggests. Individuals may have retrograde experiences or role reversals as they move in and out of relationships and work. Such movement is affected by contexts (e.g. premature disengagement from school, pre-marital childbearing, incarceration) and opportunity structures and can have consequences for how individuals view themselves (Benson and Furstenberg, 2006; Roisman, Aguilar and Egeland, 2004). Intentionality, salience, sequencing, timing, and success of these transitions are associated with factors such as economic resources, gender, race, and involvement in the criminal and juvenile justice systems (Shanahan, 2000; Osgood, Foster and Courtney, 2010). For example, when compared with whites, African American men and women in their 20s are more likely to live with their parents, less likely to have a high school diploma, less likely to marry, less likely to live independently if they do get married, more likely to have children, and more likely to be incarcerated (for a recent review of these disparities see Settersten and Ray, 2010). All of these features limit options for “exploring possible life directions” and place adult responsibilities on men and women regardless of the number of markers of adulthood they have achieved. Further complicating our understanding of the transition to adulthood period as a context for conceptualizing continuity and change in offending is evidence suggesting that the population of most interest for the study of desistance—serious

offenders in early adulthood—appears much less likely to experience or to take advantage of opportunities for change, and evidence suggests that they differ significantly from the general population with respect to whether, when, or how they transition into adult roles. In their review of the 1997 National Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, Uggen and Wakefield (2005) found that inmates age 25 or younger with prior criminal records were more likely to have experienced childhoods marked by socioeconomic disadvantage and precarious family environments, suggesting this population is at a disadvantage with respect to social support. Moreover, prior to incarceration, young inmates with prior criminal records were more likely than those without prior records to have experienced problems attaining adult status—they were less likely than incarcerated first-time offenders to hold a high school diploma or GED or to have been working full time prior to incarceration. They were also more likely to have children, report regular drug abuse, to be homeless at the time of arrest, and to have a spouse or sibling incarcerated. Uggen and Wakefield reported that inmates generally—recidivists and first timers, males under age 25—lagged behind U.S. males age 18 to 24 with respect to attaining adult markers: fewer than 20 percent of young adult inmates had a high school diploma or GED, compared to nearly 75 percent of the comparable cohort in the general population. Similarly, inmates were more likely than those without criminal records to be unemployed prior to incarceration than the general population, and if they were working, they were less likely to be employed full-time. Finally, though inmates and the general population were unmarried at a similar rate (between 85 and 90 percent), 48 percent of inmates reported they had at least one child (Uggen and

Wakefield, 2005). By contrast, 83 percent of men, age 20 to 24, in the general population reported having no children at all (Bachu, 1996).²

In spite of these differences in adult role markers, desistance from serious offending during early adulthood is possible. Stouthamer-Loeber and her colleagues (2004) found that of the 506 boys in the oldest cohort of the Pittsburgh Youth Study—a study of boys randomly selected from seventh-grade public school classes and followed from 13 to 25—190 boys were classified as persistent serious delinquents based on measures collected between ages 13 and 19.³ From ages 20 to 25, 40 percent (n=66) of persistent serious delinquents either desisted completely or reduced the seriousness of their self-reported offending (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004). Perhaps more encouraging are results from the Research on Pathways to Desistance Study (from which the sample for the present study was drawn), which, since 2001, has followed a sample of serious juvenile offenders who had been adjudicated delinquent for a felony offense. Trajectory analysis of the full sample revealed five distinct patterns of offending, including one group (14.65 percent of the sample) that displayed a desisting pattern of offending in the 36 months following adjudication (Mulvey et al., 2010). This desisting pattern started with a relatively high level of self-reported offending at the baseline interview that

² Based on the 1992 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

³ Pittsburgh Youth Study participants were classified as serious offenders if they had ever participated in the following behaviors during adolescence: auto-theft, breaking and entering, strong-arming (robbery), attacking to seriously hurt or kill (assault), and rape or forced sex. Persistence was defined as reporting serious delinquency in two out of seven assessment years up to age 19 (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004: 902).

steadily decreased.⁴ Thus, it appears that, in spite of the poor odds of successfully transitioning into adulthood prior to age 25, some serious young offenders are able to embark on a path toward of desistance.

It appears that efforts to understand continuity and change in crime during early adulthood for serious juvenile or formerly sanctioned offenders might prove fruitless if these offenders are less likely than the general population to undergo transitions to adult roles. Further, the role that they are most likely to have access to—parenthood—has received little quantitative empirical support as a catalyst for desistance, in spite of apparent support from qualitative research (Siennick and Osgood, 2008; Kreager et al., 2010). In the next section, I review how the experience of parenthood by at-risk young adults might provide a context for understanding continuity and change in offending for formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults, with a specific focus on fatherhood.

PARENTHOOD FOR AT-RISK YOUNG ADULTS

Though desistance theory and research has emphasized the role of marriage and work over parenthood as a key social institution, Aldous (1996) notes that childbearing and childrearing are more critical than marriage in marking the entrance to adult status. Criminologists have yet to fully explore the meaning and experience of the transition parenthood for at-risk young adults and offenders. In this section, I review demographic and ethnographic research on parenthood suggesting that the transition to and experience of parenthood for contemporary populations of young, low income, and/or African

⁴ Patterns of self-reported offending were measured using a variety score of 22 offenses that participants reported they had “ever done” (at baseline) or over the “last 6 months” (at follow-ups) (Mulvey et al., 2010: 458).

American men and women differs from that of older, more advantaged men and women as well as from previous generations of parents. Moreover, there is some evidence that criminal justice system involvement (for example, incarceration, community supervision) might structure parenthood.

The transition to parenthood carries role expectations. Parents are expected to act as providers, caregivers, and protectors of their children. Bowman and Forman (1997: 217) list five interrelated functions, responsibilities, and expectations of the parent role:

- a) an economic provider to insure the material well-being of children
- b) a caregiver role to provide child nurturance, socioemotional well-being, and socialization
- c) a homemaker role to maintain an orderly and healthy home environment
- d) a security role to protect children and the home from external threats
- e) an interface role to guide and advocate for children with others in the community.

Research on the transition to parenthood suggests that men's lives change in significant ways when they become fathers. For example, using data from the National Survey of Family and Households, Knoester and Eggebeen (2006) found that the transition to fatherhood is marked by changes in how fathers spend their time and in exchanges of social support, and that the magnitude and qualities of this change is related to whether fathers live with their children. Co-residential fathers—fathers that lived with their children full time—reported less social activity, more service-oriented activity, and more hours worked, after the birth of their first child, while non-residential fathers reported more exchanges of family support (for example, babysitting, transportation, repairs around the house, advice) and more contact with extended family; non-residential fathers were also more likely to report feeling lonely after the arrival of a new child. Furthermore, men transitioning to parenthood or from non-residential to co-residential

status were more likely to be affected by new children than were men who were already co-residential fathers. This research suggests that the experience of having a new child is structured by residential circumstances and prior parenthood, with the greatest changes in structural conditions occurring with more dramatic shifts in status (from non-father to father, from non-residential father to co-residential father). Though this study controlled for age, race, and socioeconomic status, it did not examine whether the transition to parenthood was conditioned by these demographic factors.

In addition to structural changes, the transition to parenthood provides an opportunity for identity transformation as the new social role carries expectations that fathers and others have with respect to how they should behave. These expectations are likely to relate to both how a father sees himself and how he spends his time. Generally, being a “good” father requires a man to be both emotionally invested, nurturing, and involved in his children’s life, and the dominant means of involvement is providing the resources children require (Christiansen and Palkovitz, 2002; Warin et al., 1999). Providing largely occurs through work—an activity that ironically generally occurs away from the home and from children—and thus is confounded by the worker role. Indeed, Settersten and colleagues (2014: 73) assert that establishing oneself at work is “a central task of both adulthood and fatherhood,” and it is balanced against the expectation of being an emotionally involved and nurturing caregiver. Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) argue that providing is a means by which men invest in their families; sacrificing their own needs and wants to meet the needs of one’s operates an expression of a father’s emotional and psychological connection to his children.

One's ability to fulfill these expectations are partially shaped by structural location, and young, low-income parents like the subjects of the present study appear to be at a disadvantage with respect to fulfilling these role expectations. According to the 2006-2008 National Survey of Family Growth (Edin and Tach, 2012) most parents age 24 and younger are unmarried, have low economic resources, and have unstable romantic relationships. Based on data from the Fragile Families Study, Edin and Tach reported that at the time of the child's birth, fathers in unmarried couples with mothers under age 24 were less likely to be employed, earned less, were less educated, and much more likely to have ever been in jail than were fathers in married couples. Moreover, relationships among young parents, married or unmarried, tend to be unstable and brief—young couples in the Fragile Families Study knew each other on average less than a year before getting pregnant, and 20 percent were no longer in a relationship at the time of the birth. Of those who were married or cohabitating at the time of birth, just over half were still together five years later; one in four non-resident partners were still in a relationship. Though not directly measured in the Fragile Families study, evidence from previous research suggests that unintended pregnancies are more common among unmarried couples; however, qualitative research suggests that many pregnancies among unmarried couples are “neither fully planned nor avoided” (see Edin and Tach, 2012 for a review).

Christian and Palkovitz (2001) suggest that being able to provide for children might have greater salience to low income fathers than it does to high income fathers because low income fathers sacrifice their own needs to a greater extent. Providing might have less salience to higher-income fathers because the work might be more satisfying on its own, without being connected to the father role. When fathers cannot fulfill the

providing role—either through unemployment, underemployment, or incarceration, they may view their general involvement as less meaningful and withdraw from parenting generally. Alternatively, men may negotiate their desire to be good fathers within the structural constraints they face if they are unemployed (or underemployed) or if they are current or former offenders, and other parenting activities such as caregiving, monitoring, and play may have greater salience (for a discussion of how disadvantaged populations reframe negative situations to positive ones, see Leverentz, 2010). For example, in his study of how the provider role matters and the conditions that shape its salience, Roy (2004:256) asserts that changing family structures and transitions in and out of jobs shape men’s expectations for providing for children, and their involvement with their children is shaped by crime, and limited job opportunities, and educational opportunities as well as by but also by efforts to be responsible, respectable fathers. His analyses of the life history accounts of 77 noncustodial fathers and incarcerated fathers revealed that providing was often seen as a form of involvement with children, but that “too much commitment to providing could limit and even harm paternal involvement” (Roy, 2004: 263). Some “successful” providers (those who met their own expectations for providing and made consistent financial and material contributions to their children) made efforts to adjust their work schedules to allow more time to spend with their children. Roy also found that “unsuccessful” providers (those who did not fulfill their expectations as providers) included fathers with felony records or substance use problems. These fathers were unemployed or under-employed in sporadic, low-paying, part-time service-sector jobs (when not incarcerated) and they struggled to maintain long-term relationships with their children. Because their own expectations for providing (and the expectations of

others) were lowered, unsuccessful fathers negotiated the provider emphasizing nurturance and presence as central aspects of involvement in their children's lives.

Some young, low-income fathers might meet the challenges of unemployment and under-employment by engaging in informal (unregulated) sector or illegal work either to supplement legal earnings or to replace them. Drawing from qualitative, in-depth interviews with noncustodial, low-income fathers in Philadelphia, Edin and Nelson (2001) found that fathers engaged in a lot of work that was unregulated, especially fathers with criminal records.⁵ Fathers ranked illegal work with minimum wage jobs as being incompatible with fatherhood, however. Illegal jobs that involve a felony offense, especially selling drugs, was incompatible with being a father because of the risk of incarceration, death, and danger to their families; and minimum wage jobs in the service sector were incompatible because they were insufficient to support children due to low pay, few benefits, and instability or part-time hours. Moreover, Edin and Nelson (2001) found that among those noncustodial fathers who sold drugs, money earned from selling drugs was rarely used to provide for their children. Instead, fathers used drug money to buy drugs and alcohol, fast food, and gifts for girlfriends (Edin and Nelson, 2001: 393).

A father's involvement with his children, especially as a caregiver, is also shaped by his relationship with his children's mother (or mothers). Analyzing longitudinal qualitative interviews of Fragile Families participants, Waller (2009) found that mothers' support for paternal involvement was necessary for fathers to initiate and maintain a large

⁵ Job types were categorized according to whether they were legal and whether the men were employees or entrepreneurs. Within these categorized, jobs were either regulated or unregulated. Legal, unregulated, employee work included labor jobs like roofing, painting, landscaping, and lawn maintenance. Legal, unregulated entrepreneur work included auto repair, junking, plumbing, handyman, and construction. Illegal entrepreneur jobs included hustles (recycling copper, reselling liquor from out of state, prostitution, stealing or selling to fences) and drug sales (Edin and Nelson, 2001: 383, table 14.1)

caregiver role.⁶ When co-residential unions dissolved, those fathers who remained involved with their children held full-time jobs and stable housing situations, factors that were viewed as prerequisites for transitioning into a caregiving role. Non-residential fathers also became more motivated to be involved when the mothers' circumstances made it harder for her to be sole caretaker. In these cases, fathers acquired caregiving skills "on the job" and sought out social support for parenting in new romantic partners or female family members.

Criminal justice system involvement also structures the experience of parenthood, in part because of the obvious constraints imposed by incarceration, but also because fathers rely heavily on their children's mother (or mothers) to moderate their involvement with their children (see Dyer, Pleck, and McBride, 2012, for a review). For example, in their study of incarcerated men, Roy and Dyson (2005) found that mothers sometimes restrict or sever men's contact with their children while during periods of incarceration, while at other times (or other mothers) might attempt to facilitate and encourage father-child relationships while they are incarcerated (Roy and Dyson, 2005). Moreover, Community-supervised men who continue to be involved in crime might avoid stable routines with partners, children, and work as a means of avoiding probation or parole officers, or mothers might employ the threat available to them as a result of the community supervised status as a way to keep fathers in line (Goffman, 2009).

⁶ Waller (2009) assessed four key sources of paternal involvement, which were expected to act cumulatively, in a particular order, and vary by context: 1) employment, which might provide opportunities or barriers for time spent with children; 2) social support, e.g. from the mothers of their children; 3) childcare skills and confidence as a caregiver; and 4) motivation—the desire to be a caregiver and the belief that fathers can and should care for their children.

The research presented here indicates that the transition to parenthood introduces opportunities for structural and subjective changes. Moreover, young, at-risk fathers—under age 24, low-income, with past criminal justice system involvement—encounter a number of challenges as they negotiate parenthood, since work, current criminal justice system involvement, residential status, and relationships with mothers shape their ability to fulfill parenthood role expectations. In light of these challenges, how might parenthood be related to change and continuity in crime? To address this question, I next turn to the conceptual and theoretical challenges to understanding continuity and change in offending generally, and the relationship between parenthood and crime specifically.

CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES

DEFINING DESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE

This study is rooted in recent research on desistance and persistence in crime over the life course; however, a focus on crime during early young adulthood requires an examination of how existing conceptions of *desistance* and *persistence* (and their focus on long-term patterns of change) constrain our understanding of continuity and change in offending. Specifically, both conceptions neglect intermittency in offending—patterns of movement in and out of crime over time—that might provide insight into how change occurs. In the next section, I place the idea of persistence and desistance in recent intellectual context. Then, I address definitional issues for desistance and persistence in turn and review conceptual and methodological concerns.

The Idea of Persistence and Desistance

The idea of the persistent or chronic offender is not a new one; many early theories of crime assumed that offenders were inherently different from non-offenders,

suggesting that involvement in crime, or at least the factors contributing to involvement in crime, are relatively stable over time. Indeed, the assumption that offenders can be identified by their stable, chronic involvement in offending has received empirical support—the best predictor of future antisocial behavior is past antisocial behavior (Farrington, 1995; Robins, 1966). Most juvenile offenders, however, grow up to be non-criminal adults (Robins, 1978). Wolfgang, Sellin, and Figlio (1972) classic study of the 1945 Philadelphia Birth Cohort invigorated efforts to understand what differentiates stable, persistent offenders from those that appear to desist from crime. They found that though the number of active offenders (indicated by police contacts) increased sharply between ages 10 and 18, only six percent of the cohort (18 percent of offenders) was responsible for approximately half of the crime committed by the cohort. They also found that high-rate delinquents had their first police contact earlier than the other delinquent boys and they continued to have police contacts over a longer period than did other delinquents.

The criminal career paradigm developed by Blumstein and his colleagues (1986) emerged as an early response to the 1945 Philadelphia Birth Cohort study findings. Rather than explaining why some people in the general population engage in crime and other people do not, the criminal career paradigm redefined the crime problem to explore variation in offending within the offender population. That is, the criminal career paradigm sought to disentangle aggregate crime rates by looking beyond rates of prevalence or participation to the causes of variation in a) the frequency of offending among active offenders (or *lambda*), b) the types of crimes engaged in, including offense seriousness, and specialization and generalization in types of offending; and c) duration

of the criminal career, which is bounded by age of onset and age of termination.

Comparing offenders to offenders along these parameters, Blumstein and his colleagues argued, allows criminologists to isolate the effects of various factors on the different dimensions of offending, thereby providing for more precise knowledge about offending (Blumstein, Cohen, and Farrington, 1988a, 1988b).

Together, the Philadelphia Birth Cohort study and the criminal career paradigm provided a catalyst for the age–crime debate, an argument that challenged contemporary approaches to explaining and studying crime (Blumstein, Cohen and Farrington, 1988a, 1988b, 1988b; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1986; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Laub, 2004). The age–crime debate, in turn, contributed to the emergence of developmental and life-course theories of crime in the early 1990s, as well as new quantitative methods to explore continuity and change in offending over time (Nagin and Land, 1993). Even with this progress, however, Laub and Sampson (2001) noted that criminologists know little about the processes involved in desistance and persistence in crime.

Since 2001, research and theory on desistance from crime has expanded considerably. Where at one time it could be argued that few criminological theories adequately tended to the idea of “maturational reform” (Matza, 1964), contemporary criminologists can draw from many perspectives intended to account for crime over the life course, including Sampson and Laub’s (1993) age-graded theory of social control and various developmental psychology approaches (Moffitt, 1993; Patterson and Yoeger, 1993). Additionally, a number of theoretical approaches specifically intended to explain desistance from crime have emerged (for example, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Maruna, 2001; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009) and some traditional theories, like

general strain theory and social learning theory, have been expanded to account for desistance (for example, Agnew, 2006; Akers and Jensen, 2005).

Methodological improvements have also contributed to expanding desistance research. As researchers become increasingly sophisticated in examining desistance as a process of change over time. In their seminal 1993 article, Nagin and Land introduced criminology to trajectory analyses, which allowed for the examination of patterns of offending over time. Bushway and colleagues (2001) argued that desistance should be conceptualized as a process in which the propensity for crime changes over time rather than as a state of non-offending. This argument was supported by later analysis of the Rochester Youth Development Study, which indicated that static and dynamic operational definitions of desistance identified different people as desisters (Bushway, Thornberry, and Krohn, 2003).

In addition to quantitative advancements, desistance research continues to be enriched by in-depth qualitative studies. Qualitative research was used to examine criminal careers long before the emergence of the criminal career paradigm. For example, Chicago School criminologist Clifford Shaw (1966) elicited the life history of Stanley in *The Jack-Roller: A Boy's Own Story*, and Howard Becker (1963) traced the development of marijuana use in *Outsiders*. More recent examples of qualitative studies of desistance include Shadd Maruna's (2001) *Making Good*, in which he developed a composite image of the desistance process from a sample of former and active offenders in Liverpool in the 1990s, and Laub and Sampson's (2003) *Shared Beginnings Divergent Lives*, which used life history interviews of delinquent boys followed to age 70 to unpack potential mechanisms in the desistance process. Typically, contemporary qualitative desistance

research has been used to illustrate or illuminate quantitative results (for example, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002) or to help narrow hypotheses for quantitative analyses (Kreager et al., 2010).

The interplay between methodological advances and theory has likely contributed to the growing popularity of the study of desistance. Despite of these advancements, there is still no agreed upon definition of *desistance* (Laub and Sampson, 2001; also see Massoglia and Uggen, 2007). Moreover, there has been little progress toward clarifying *persistence* from crime. How we define persistence and desistance has conceptual and methodological implications for the study of continuity and change in crime, particularly when the focus of such study centers on a relatively brief period—late adolescence and young adulthood.

Defining Desistance: Change and Permanence?

First and foremost, desistance refers to some kind of change in offending. In their discussion of the meaning of change for criminology, Laub and Sampson (1993) argued that *change* in offending occurs on a continuum. Three types of change might occur on this continuum. At one end, *systematic* or *deep* change occurs when a person's rate of offending is relatively high at one point and then is zero at a later point, suggesting a binary model of change (Caspi and Moffitt, 1993). At the other end of the continuum, an *exchange* model of change occurs when one type of offending replaces another, such as the change from burglary to robbery (also see Horney, Osgood, and Marshall, 1995). In between deep change and exchange models, *modification* occurs when a high rate of offending declines to a relatively lower rate (Laub and Sampson, 1993; Caspi and Moffitt, 1993). Laub and Sampson (1993: 310) argued that deep change and modified

change are of most interest because they are “enhanced when changing roles and environments lead to social investment.”

Indeed, deep change and modification are often what criminologists have in mind when they refer to desistance: desistance is the idea that some people with histories of criminal behavior stop engaging in crime on a relatively permanent basis. Though often operationalized as a binary outcome (either offending or not offending), Laub and Sampson (2003: 21) distinguish between the criminal career concept of “termination”—the point at which one stops criminal activity (Farrington, 1986; Blumstein et al., 1986)—and “desistance,” defined as the process that supports the termination of criminal activity. By delineating termination and desistance in this way, Laub and Sampson suggested, we can see that termination is the *outcome* and desistance is the *cause of the outcome*. This definition clarifies the object of study for criminology: desistance research should examine the process by which the abstention from crime is *maintained* rather than simply the factors associated with the absence of crime. This definition also emphasizes, however, that desistance processes result in termination, which suggests that processes that do not ultimately result in permanent abstention from crime hold little to no relevance to our understanding of the desistance process. While this conclusion may over-state Laub and Sampson’s position, the implication is the same: the emphasis on termination as the outcome of interest limits the processes of interest to those that result in relatively permanent patterns of non-offending.

The assumption of permanence in a definition of desistance seems inconsistent with efforts to understand desistance from crime. Though most adult offenders started out as juvenile delinquents (Robins, 1966), research suggests that long-term patterns of

offending are difficult to determine prospectively. For example, Laub and Sampson (2003) found that that childhood and adolescent risk factors were poor predictors of the long-term offending trajectories of delinquent boys followed over the life course. Similarly, recent analysis of two independent longitudinal data sets indicated that social and cognitive factors measured in late adolescence (ages 17 to 18) were weak predictors of within-person changes in crime seriousness by age 32 (Kazemian, Farrington, and LeBlanc, 2009). Finally, Mulvey and his colleagues (2010) found that, among high-frequency juvenile offenders in the Research on Pathways to Desistance study, individual case characteristics measured during late adolescence (ages 14 to 17, including age, ethnicity, antisocial history, deviant peers, criminal father, substance use, and psychosocial maturity) could not differentiate between males on a desisting pattern of offending and males on a persisting pattern of offending who were followed for three years after adjudication for a felony offense.

The issue of termination is of particular concern for the study of continuity and change from crime during early adulthood among a population of formerly sanctioned youth. Because I examine young adults, holding to the operational definition of desistance to a permanence requirement is impractical. Permanent patterns of offending are difficult to observe in a population characterized by change and transition across multiple domains; it is simply too early to determine whether current patterns of crime (including the absence of crime) will be sustained over the life course. Indeed, as many have rightly pointed out, the most reliable measure of the permanence of anything, including termination of the criminal career, can only take place retrospectively, after the offender has died (Maruna, 2001: 23).

The notion of desistance is problematic to the study of change in offending because it neglects the third type of change, *exchange* or replacement of one type of offending for another. As noted previously, Laub and Sampson (1993) discount this type of change as less interesting than the type of change typically captured by desistance, presumably because exchange reflects heterotypic continuity rather than “real” change.⁷ That is, changing the type of offending one engages in is still offending and not termination. Nonetheless, recent research indicates that changes in diversity of offending are related to changes in local life circumstances (McGloin et al., 2007, 2009), and local (short-term) life circumstances are associated with desistance (Horney, Osgood and Marshall, 1995). This suggests that reduced diversity in offending might follow similar processes as desistance in crime; indeed, mechanisms contributing to changes in diversity in offending might provide insight into the desistance process concerned with a decline in crime toward zero.

Defining Persistence: Chronicity, Continuity, and Stability.

While the idea of desistance is that involvement in crime stops, what do we mean when we talk about persistence in offending? Traditionally, criminologists have been concerned with identifying that small group of habitual offenders responsible for a large proportion of the overall crime rate that Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin (1972) labeled “chronic offenders” in their 1945 Philadelphia Cohort Study. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines *chronic* as “marked by long duration, by frequent recurrence over a long time, often by slowly progressing seriousness.” The key indicators of chronic

⁷ Pogarsky (2004:125) defines heterotypic continuity as “consistency in the tendency to commit different types of problem behavior.

offending, then, should be frequency, duration, and maybe seriousness. This definition seems to agree with Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin's operational definition of chronic offending as five or more police contacts between age 10 and 18, thus capturing an apparently high rate of involvement in crime during late childhood and adolescence. Similarly, Blumstein and colleagues define chronic or habitual offenders as those who commit serious offenses with high frequency over an extended period of time (Blumstein et al., 1986: 13-14).

The problem with "chronic" as a means of identifying a stable pattern of offending is that it also suggests illness, disease, and infection that may or may not express itself in symptoms. It implies that "chronic" offenders are different from other offenders and that their involvement in offending is not amenable to change; it is "untreatable." This in turn implies that the best policy solution to reduce crime among this group is to incapacitate them. Indeed, selective incapacitation was a key implication of the criminal career paradigm (Blumstein et al., 1986). This conceptualization is incompatible with the life course framework, however, which explicitly assumes that both continuity and change are possible. If we are interested in understanding the mechanisms that explain continuity and change, we require a definition that acknowledges potential for change.

Similarly, formal definitions of "persistent" can shed light on what we expect to observe when we examine persistent offending, including "existing for a long or longer than usual time" and "continuing to exist despite interference or treatment" (Merriam-Webster, 2012) Perhaps, then, a "persistent offender" is someone whose involvement in crime has continued beyond some expected point of termination. In criminology,

expected points of termination of offending might occur after a criminal justice system intervention (for example, a police contact, arrest, conviction, incarceration, etc.) or during young adulthood, as suggested by the age-crime curve. The aggregate age-crime curve indicates that involvement in crime peaks in late adolescence, around age 17, and then declines thereafter (Farrington, 1986). Whether the shape of curve is due to change in the incidence of offending by individuals or to change in the number of offenders (see Moffitt, 1993), most offenders refrain from or reduce their involvement in crime by their early 20s (Bushway et al., 2001). To persist in offending, then, is to engage in crime longer than the “usual time,” and that usual time ends with young adulthood. This definition appears in a number of studies of persistence in offending. For example, Blumstein and colleagues (1986: 93) use the term “persistent offender” for those who start their criminal careers by age 18 (as measured by arrest records) and remain criminally active into their 30s. Moffitt’s (1994:7) developmental taxonomy defines “life-course persistent” offenders as “a small group of persons ... engaging in antisocial behavior of one sort or another at every stage of life.” Similarly, Laub and Sampson (2003: 150) define persistence in offending as “being arrested at multiple phases of the life course.” Though Moffitt’s definition stands out in its implication that early onset of antisocial behavior is an important aspect of persistence, generally, these definitions suggest that persistent offending patterns are noteworthy not because they are marked by high-rate or serious offending, as indicated by the idea of the chronic offender, but because they maintain a rate or seriousness of offending during a period of their lives in which offenders with similar criminal histories (for example, those who had been serious

or high-rate offenders in the past) are less involved in crime (lower rate, less seriousness) or have abstained from crime.

This conception of persistence means at least two things for the study of persistence. First, it tells us what to look at and how to find it: persistent offending can be measured as relative to desisting offending patterns, and we can identify persistent offenders by their continued involvement in crime during the period of the life course in which most offenders decrease involvement or abstain from crime—young adulthood. “Persisters” and “desisters” can be identified from a single group of offenders with the same starting point in that they display similar patterns of offending at one period in life (for example, adolescence) but diverge at a later period of life such that crime committed by most of the group follows a desisting or downward pattern of offending while a smaller portion of the group continues along the same pattern of offending they followed before or a much lower rate of decline (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Mulvey et al., 2004). Second, this definition also tells us what *not* to look at, and it does so in a way that limits our understanding of persistence (Paternoster and Bachman, 2001). By defining persistence as “involvement in crime at every stage of the life” or as behavior that recurs in multiple phases of the life course, the threshold for identifying persistence is quite high, as it can be identified only when multiple phases of the life course have been observed. As with desistance, this data requirement restricts the study of persistence to samples whose full life course has been observed. This requirement is impractical for most studies of crime (see Laub and Sampson, 2003, for an exception) and it nullifies any attempt to understand persistence during young adulthood.

We might overcome this limitation by adopting a more flexible definition of persistence. As suggested before, criminology “expects” involvement in crime to decline or stop after an offender has received some intervention, such as a sanction by the criminal justice system. In policy-oriented research, re-offending after an arrest, conviction, or sanction, indicates “recidivism” rather than “persistence.” This research assumes that the period in which recidivism occurs is relatively brief, for example, one to three years after the intervention (Bushway, Brame, and Paternoster, 2004). This abbreviated window reflects an interest in identifying the efficacy of the intervention for reducing reoffending rather than in the factors related to stable patterns of offending over time. However, if we conceive of persistence as continued involvement in crime despite some interference or treatment, one can imagine other kinds of “interventions” expected to result in desistance from crime, including the experiences and life events empirically linked to declining patterns of offending, such as marriage, employment, military service, and even reform school and incarceration, each of which might be viewed as “interfering” with continued patterns of offending (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Uggen, 2000).

Conceptualizing persistence as continued involvement despite some interference or treatment directs our attention to a variety of situations that might interfere with patterns of offending. Further, we can take a cue from recidivism research and examine persistence in offending over relatively brief periods rather than over the entire life course, which is an approach taken by research that examines *local life circumstances* (Horney, Osgood, and Marshall, 1995; McGloin et al., 2007; Piquero et al., 2002). This allows us to examine two things with respect to persistent offending: first, whether short-

term change is associated with local life circumstances; second, qualitative interviews provide us with an opportunity to examine the negative case—why some offenders fail to change when they experience role transitions and changes in local life circumstances?

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES FOR PERSISTENCE AND DESISTANCE

Aside from basic definitional issues, there are a number of conceptual and methodological issues for the study of persistence and desistance from crime. Typically, reviews of the literature have focused on those issues relevant for desistance from crime (for example, Laub and Sampson, 2001: 6, 2003; Kazemian, 2007), but some of these issues are also applicable to research on persistence as well. For example, what is the population of interest? What are desisting offenders desisting from, and what are persistent offenders persisting in? How many offenses constitute persistent offending? Should we count self-reported offending, arrests, or convictions? Should we concentrate on the most serious crimes, such as robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, homicide, and rape, which are relatively rare, or should we include less serious but more common offenses?

Each of these questions has serious implications for the conclusions we draw about whether a pattern of offending is persisting or desisting, and, consequently, the causes of that pattern. Official measures of crime based on arrests or convictions likely under-estimate the prevalence of persistence and over-estimate desistance (e.g. Massoglia and Uggen, 2007; Kazemian, Farrington and LeBlanc, 2009). Furthermore, arrests and convictions might be subject to the biases of criminal justice system processing (Mosher, Miethe and Phillips 2002). Though some argue that arrests and convictions—or even self-reported offending measures based on legal definitions—reflect underlying patterns

of behavior, the relative infrequency of arrests and convictions means that patterns of official reports of crime mask potentially important dynamics within the underlying patterns they are meant to represent.

Challenges to the Persistence-Desistance Dichotomy

A further concern for conceptualizing persistence and desistance is how to account for *qualitative changes in* and *intermittent patterns of* crime (McGloin et al., 2007; McGloin, Sullivan, and Piquero, 2009; Piquero, 2004). Qualitative changes in crime include changes in the seriousness, mode, and diversity of offending that may occur over time (see for example, McGloin et al., 2007; McGloin, Sullivan, and Piquero, 2009). Changes in variety-score measures that count the number of offenses engaged in over a specific period might reflect a reduction in the diversity of offenses engaged in rather than a change in the level of involvement in crime generally. This might be especially true if the measure of involvement includes offenses that are statistically more rare in their frequency of occurrence, such as homicide, aggravated assault, rape, robbery, and burglary, and offenses that occur with some regularity, such as selling drugs. Massoglia (2006) argued that “displacement” might more accurately describe patterns of criminal and antisocial behavior during late adolescence and early adulthood. Using data from two waves of the National Youth Survey, Massoglia found that people move away from violent crime as they become young adults, but they do not completely desist. Instead they initiate or continue substance abuse. Similarly, McGloin, Sullivan and Piquero (2009) found modest support for the hypothesis that short-term changes in routines and situational contexts shape repetitive offending behaviors over time. Thus, we need to decide whether to consider such qualitative shifts in offending represent

continuity (and persistence) in offending, or whether such an exchange in offending (but not desistance) might be meaningful to the goal of understanding the mechanisms of continuity and change in offending.

Studies of persistence and desistance concerned with the perceptions and experiences of former and active offenders should also be sensitive to offenders' subjective assessments of their involvement in crime to understand within-individual change. Massoglia and Uggen (2007) contended that *subjective desistance* captures movement away from crime by asking respondents to assess their present involvement in crime relative to their own past involvement in crime in prior years. Though they measured subjective desistance using relatively minor behaviors (for example, partying and rule-breaking) that are not directly comparable to arrest and self-reported offending behaviors, they found that the prevalence of subjective desistance fell between the prevalence of official desistance (arrests) and self-reported offending desistance—72 percent of the Youth Development Study (followed from high school to age 30) reported subjective desistance, compared to 85 percent for official desistance and 65 percent for self-reported behavior desistance. They also found that the effects of correlates of desistance—race, gender, prior crime, peer relationships, and parental status—varied according to desistance measure. Indeed, parents in the sample reported less involvement in crime relative to same age-peers (*relative desistance*) but they were more likely to have been arrested (thus less likely to report *official desistance*). Moreover, there was no relationship between parental status and subjective desistance or self-reported offending desistance.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for understanding continuity and change in offending is *intermittent offending*—short-term changes in crime, including periods of abstinence from offending that are not explained by periods of incarceration, illness, or other means of physical incapacitation. Intermittent offending, which Laub and Sampson (2003: 197) call “the vast middle ground of offending between the end points of persistent offending and desistance,” complicates the ideas of persistence *and* desistance. As they note, lives are messy and complicated, and offenders may drift in and out of periods of involvement over time (also see Matza, 1964). Bushway, Brame and Paternoster (2004: 90) have pointed out that short-term changes in criminality suggest that “individuals do not initiate and subsequently cease offending but move between repeated periods of activity and inactivity in criminal offending.” Intermittency is viewed as a kind of “false desistance”—a temporary suspension in offending that may represent ambivalence in the decision to desist (Burnett, 2004; Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard, 1989; Kazemian, 2007; Piquero, 2004). To date, there really is no theory of intermittency.

Methodologically, how we measure crime *and* the length of the observation period may mask intermittent, within-period changes in crime. For example, if the measure of crime reflects involvement over the previous year, we may not know whether involvement occurred throughout the year or was concentrated at one or two periods in the year, thus missing an opportunity to identify lulls or intermittency in offending. Short-term lulls and subsequent returns to offending are substantively interesting, as they may provide clues into both how change starts and how it might fail.

RESOLUTION? PERSISTENCE AND DESISTENCE IN THE SHORT-TERM

The transition to adulthood period of the life course is dynamic across multiple domains, and working definitions of persistence and desistance should allow for volatility in patterns of offending and role transitions, making room for impermanence and retrograde experiences. In order to learn whether persistence or desistance has occurred we must identify a level of offending from which change is expected to occur and allow a sufficient window of time to observe patterns of behavior. Understanding desistance as a process does not require desistance to be permanent, however, as the process by which people return to crime or engage in episodic or intermittent patterns of crime can be informative. Just as we need to know how stable patterns of crime are maintained and how people successfully change their involvement in crime, we want to know how the maintenance of desistance fails after periods of relative success. Successes and failures in the desistance process can further help us to understand the mechanisms by which subjective and structural factors, such as identity and role transitions, facilitate desistance. Successes and failures also provide a window through which to observe the dynamics of the relationship between subjective changes and social changes.

Definitions of desistance and persistence should provide us with the flexibility to examine lulls in criminal behavior as representative of the desistance process without requiring prescience of long-term outcomes. Here I suggest broader definitions of desistance and persistence that build upon Laub and Sampson's (2003) conceptualizations while allowing us to examine the processes and mechanisms involved in continuity and change in early adulthood rather than over the full life course. *Desistance* is the process that facilitates and maintains change in offending toward a rate of zero for a significant period. *Persistence* is the process that facilitates and maintains

continued involvement in crime for a significant period after, and in spite of, some intervention or other expected point of termination. Neither pattern of offending is permanent or expected to be sustained across the life course, however, and these definitions are intended to allow for intermittency in offending. Desisting patterns might be interrupted if an offender returns to crime, and persisting patterns might change toward zero. For a study of continuity *and* change, definitions must allow for both in order to understand not just *why* change occurs, but *how* it change occurs.

To identify patterns of persistence and desistance, involvement in crime at the start of each pattern of offending should be the same or similar; the specific operational requirements for identifying patterns of persistence and desistance (type of measure, level and seriousness of offending, length of follow-up in which the pattern is observed) should be dictated by the specific research question (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Mulvey et al., 2004).

PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS

One of the goals of this dissertation is to better understand the mechanisms involved in the process of continuity and change. The purpose is to determine whether the mechanisms identified in the prevailing accounts of desistance from crime can be observed during early adulthood and to explore how those mechanisms relate to each other in the processes of desistance and persistence. Rather than focus on the higher-level frameworks presented in theoretical accounts of desistance and persistence, I am interested in “unpacking” the mechanisms described or implied by those accounts. Though the terms “process” and “mechanisms” are sometimes used interchangeably, I distinguish between them here by suggesting that mechanisms are more concrete than

processes. For example, Bushway and colleagues (2001) and others argue that desistance is a *process* by which involvement in crime declines towards zero. By referring to processes, it is clear that these authors mean that desistance is not an event or a state but something that takes place over time rather than a state or event. Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that the mechanisms in this process are tied to changes in age-graded social bonds while Maruna (2001) and Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002) argue these mechanisms involve cognitive transformation. But how do social bonds and cognitive changes relate to change in offending?

Discussions of desistance from crime frequently note that desistance is a “process” that occurs overtime, and increasingly, desistance is something that must be “maintained.”⁸ In their now seminal review of desistance research, Laub and Sampson (2001: 3) conclude:

On the basis of our review of the literature, desistance stems from a variety of complex processes—developmental, psychological, and sociological—and thus there are several factors associated with it. The key elements seem to be aging; a good marriage; securing legal, stable work; and deciding to “go straight,” including a reorientation of the costs and benefits of crime. Processes of desistance from crime in general, specific types of crime, and multiple forms of problem behavior seem to be quite similar.

Subsequent research seems to confirm this conclusion. What is less clear, however, is whether criminologists understand *what it is* about aging, marriage, and work that make them key elements. It is also unclear how we should make sense of the decision to “go straight” and reorientations of the costs and benefits of crime. How to

⁸ In this section, I may refer to the *desistance* process and neglect references to persistence. This is in part due to the fact that persistence is assumed to be due to a lack of the factors implicated in the desistance process. This study treats this assumption as an empirical question.

these decisions and reorientations come about? And what is their relationship to age, marriage, and work? Just what are these “processes”? At the heart of this issue is a lack of conceptual depth in attempts to understand the mechanisms implicated in the desistance process.

First, what do criminologists mean when they refer to desistance as a process? There are a few different ways of defining the term process. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary includes the following options in its entry for *process*: a) something going on, like a preceding; b) a natural phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead to a particular result, as in the process of growth; c) a series of actions or operations conducing to an end. Given how desistance has been studied to date, it seems that each of these definitions might be at play, but they each have different consequences for how we might understand what happens when a young adult moves from a state of high involvement in crime to a state of low to no involvement in crime. For example, if by a desistance process we mean the first definition—something going on—this suggests that there is nothing to learn about how desistance comes about: it just happens. Similarly, the second definition is developmental in nature—if desistance is a natural phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead to cessation from crime, then it is interesting to note those gradual changes; but since the phenomenon is natural, it is expected, and there is little to explain (see Laub and Sampson’s [2003] discussion of developmental accounts of desistance). The final definition provides the most promise to understanding what is meant by “desistance process.” By recognizing that desistance is a series of actions or operations conducing to an end of a criminal career suggests that a “process” is not a

monolithic phenomenon and prepares us to attend to the actions and operations that contribute to this process.

Defining process as events and actions linked by intelligibly connected events, Vayda, McCay, and Eghenter (1991: 319) note three ways in which the term “process” is used in social science research: first, the term process signifies “change and conflict rather than stasis and concordance;” second, process refers to an outcome but without knowledge or understanding of the events leading to the outcome and how those events are linked; third, they suggest that process is used to refer to a set of events linked according to specific rules and within specifiable parameters of time, such as the judicial process. Vadya and his colleagues warn us that using the term process in these ways gives the process “a life of its own, independent of human agency” and suggests “greater regularity and ontological status” (Vayda, McCay, and Eghenter, 1991: 319). To extend their argument to desistance research, references to the “desistance process” implies that desistance involves a regular and systematic unfolding of events beyond the control of the individual; this leads us to assume that there is little (if any) intentionality involved when individual offenders desist from crime. They also warn against assuming too much intentionality in processes by viewing processes as teleological—naturally aimed at a specific goal, that actors are continually consciously directed toward greater control over an outcome like desistance. This view fails to account for the context in which processes like desistance might occur. To rephrase an example suggested by Vadya and his colleagues (1991: 324) to apply to the desistance literature: If we assume that people intentionally desist from crime because they got married, had children, or experienced an identity shift, we must face the fundamental problem of accounting for the responses of

significant others (the context) to these social and subjective changes. Responses of others to structural or subjective change might be unpredictable and slow. This follows because the relationships or identities that an offender would have to start with are based on factors that *are* beyond his or her control, including individual capabilities and temperaments, the cumulative consequences of past actions, and available opportunities.

If we adopt the definition of process as events and actions linked by intelligibly connected events leading toward a specific end, we start to get the idea that making sense of desistance and persistence in offending is more complex than simply identifying social institutions or social roles correlated with patterns of offending. If desistance is a series of actions or operations conducive to refraining from or stopping offending, how do we know which actions and operations to pay attention to?

Hedström and Ylikoski (2010: 50) contend that “proper explanations should detail the cogs and wheels of the causal process through which the outcome to be explained was brought about.” That is, mechanisms are the cogs and wheels—the events and social actions—linking events and outcomes, or cause and effect (Wikström, 2006; Wikström and Sampson, 2003). Stinchcombe (1991: 367-368) asserts that mechanisms of lower-level theories, such as individual or situational theories can make higher-level, social structural theories more supple, precise, complex, elegant, or believable. This suggests that the cogs and wheels of structural theories are found in lower-level theories, and that does seem to be the case. For example, in Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory, society constrains individuals to collective norms through social institutions; adequate socialization creates a bond to social institutions, and in turn, to society. When a person’s social bond is strong it creates a stake in society, which in turn exerts control over that

persons actions and prevents him from acting in his own self-interest. Social institutions, socialization, the social bond, direct and indirect informal social control, attachment, commitment, and belief—these are all mechanisms of varying levels of abstraction that make up the cogs and wheels of the process by which society constrains and controls crime.

For the present study, the processes of interest are of a much lower but still abstract level of conceptualization. Rather than trying to explain the “desistance” or “persistence” processes, this dissertation is concerned with exploring the potential mechanisms offenders draw upon when they desist (or do not desist) from crime. That is, what are the cogs and wheels connecting role transitions to change and continuity in offending? To understand what the cogs and wheels are and how they might work, however, requires a review of contemporary approaches to the processes and mechanisms of change in offending.⁹

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Laub and Sampson (2003) argue that both persistence *and* desistance from crime can and should be understood within the same theoretical framework; thus, desistance and persistence processes should share mechanisms that vary on a continuum rather than consist of discrete sets of explanatory factors. Most recent theoretical approaches and research, however, focus only on desistance or change in offending (for example, Loeber et al., 2009; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). This approach limits our ability

⁹ It is important to note that the research methods used in the analyses presented in this dissertation are ill-equipped to identify causality; thus the intent of this dissertation is to explore potential linkages based on the accounts of offenders that can provide insight into more abstract processes.

to understand the extent to which desistance and persistence processes share underlying mechanisms. As it is the present state of knowledge, however, this is the body of literature the present study aims to build upon.

A good marriage, a steady job, a decision to “go straight,” and a reorientation of the costs and benefits of crime have all been implicated in the desistance process (for an extensive review of the theory and research on desistance through the end of the twentieth century, see Laub and Sampson, 2001; also see Bersani, Laub, and Sampson, 2009; King et al., 2006; Uggen, 2000). These correlates of desistance are sometimes dichotomized as *social* or *structural factors* and *subjective factors*, according to their assumed source, and desistance theories and research might similarly be distributed along these dimensions (Bottoms et al., 2004; LeBel et al., 2008).¹⁰ Though the correlations between social and subjective factors in desistance and persistence processes have been recognized for some time (for example, see Gartner and Piliavin, 1988; also see Laub and Sampson, 2001), criminologists have recently increased their efforts to theoretically and empirically sort through questions of their differential relationships with desistance and persistence.¹¹

¹⁰ This division falls along similar lines as the classic “structure-agency” debate in sociology (e.g. Bottoms et al., 2004: 372). As with the social-subjective debate, the question is which comes first, which matters more, or how do they relate to each other. Also see Ritzer (1996: 224) for a discussion on approaches to agency-structure integration in European social theory. For example, Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory argues that agency and structure are a *duality* that cannot be disentangled; structure is constraining and enabling of agency. Archer (1988) argues that agency and structure are a *dualism* that can and should be separated in order to analyze their relationship to one another. Bourdieu (1977; also Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) focus on *habitus and field*, which have a dialectical relationship. Habitus is the internalized mental or cognitive structure through which people deal with the social world, and field is the network of relations among objective positions; the structure of the field constrains agents and conditions habitus. In turn, habitus constitutes the field.

¹¹ This may be due in part to Laub and Sampson’s (2001:41) footnoted suggestion that a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods might be shed light on these questions. Certainly, a number of mixed method studies of desistance have been published since their landmark review.

Theoretical accounts differ in the extent to which they explicitly attempt to organize the relationship between early adulthood role transitions and crime. Few theories consider subjective changes related to role transitions and structural changes at the same time. Instead, theories that address both subjective factors and structural factors tend to prefer one over the other as the central causal factor in desistance and persistence. Laub and Sampson (2003) organize theoretical accounts of desistance into five categories: maturation or aging accounts (Glueck and Glueck, 1974; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990), social learning accounts (Akers and Jensen, 2008; Warr 2002); rational choice accounts (Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1996), developmental accounts (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Maruna, 2001; Moffitt, 1993), and life course accounts (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Of these, developmental, rational choice, and life course accounts attempt to account for structural factors *and* subjective factors. Developmental and rational choice accounts privilege subjective factors while life course accounts privilege structural factors.

The prevailing tactic of organizing possible mechanisms of desistance and persistence along a structural/subjective dichotomy, however, reflects theoretical tension regarding the assumed relationship between social factors, subjective factors, and change in offending (for example, see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna and Roy, 2007; Vaughan, 2001). The structural factors perspective is dominated by Sampson and Laub's (1993) age-graded theory of informal social control, which privileges structural turning points for understanding the desistance process. By contrast, theories of desistance in the

subjective factors camp downplay the importance of external factors in favor of cognitions, emotions, identity, and preferences. Examples of these perspectives include Giordano and her colleagues (2002; 2007), who emphasize cognitive transformations and the role of emotions in the desistance process; Maruna (2001), who argues that offenders must reframe their past involvement in crime in order to desist; and Paternoster and Bushway (2009) who suggest that offenders become dissatisfied with their present identity and must change their preferences in order to work toward a pro-social future self prior to experiencing structural changes.

The tension between the structural and subjective camps likely arises from the different background assumptions that frame theories of desistance. All theories make assumptions about human nature, the nature of social order, and the nature of crime, though oftentimes these assumptions are unacknowledged or downplayed in theoretical presentations (Wallace, 1971; Paternoster and Bachman, 2001). Unacknowledged background assumptions might affect how others (theorists, researchers, policy makers) interpret and translate the theory for empirical tests and policy proposals. The apparent simplicity of the social/subjective dichotomy may mask these assumptions and pits these factors against each other in unwarranted competition, thereby diverting attention from the complexity and diversity of the phenomena social and subjective factors are meant to explain. Grouping the correlates of desistance as either social or subjective suggests that each category represents a discrete and general process by which desistance occurs, so less attention is paid to understanding *how* offenders employ both sets of factors when they desist from (and persist in) crime. Consequently, the dichotomy essentially

circumscribes our understanding of desistance and persistence processes and mechanisms.

The questions behind this tension revolve around *how* structural factors and subjective factors contribute to continuity and change and the nature of the relationship between social and subjective factors within desistance or persistence processes. What are the mechanisms linking each to the outcome? Do desistance and persistence *require* change in either social factors or subjective factors, or do both matter? Do subjective factors lead to changes in structural conditions, or do social factors lead to subjective changes?

Such challenging questions are fundamental to understanding whether and how transitions into adult social institutions such as parenthood relate to changes in offending among formerly sanctioned youth. To address these questions, I develop working definitions of *subjective factors* and *structural factors* in order to identify the range of events that might fall in this category. Then I review the dominant contemporary theoretical perspective associated with each camp, identifying the underlying assumptions, constructs, and mechanisms regarding continuity and change in offending for each theory. I also discuss how each theory attends to the social-subjective relationship.

SUBJECTIVE MECHANISMS

Defining Subjective Mechanisms

One distinct line of desistance theory and research focuses on subjective factors—internal processes and mechanisms such as decision-making, identity, emotions, cognitions and thoughts, motivations, and goals. This theoretical tradition assumes that

ideas and meanings drive continuity and change in offending. Desisting offenders experience a change in the ideas and meanings they hold about crime, while the ideas and meanings about crime held by active offenders are relatively stable. LeBel and his colleagues (2008: 133) “use words such as cognitive, internal, and identity, to refer to changes in the way individuals experience, understand, interpret, and make sense of the world around them ... [and] to refer to what are sometimes called ‘agentic’ changes (choices, values, goals and motivations)” and refer to subjective states such as “optimism and the desire to change.” Theories that emphasize subjective factors seek “to uncover just *how* desisting ex-prisoners think and how these thinking patterns differ from those of active offenders” (LeBel et al., 2008: 136). Thinking patterns include future orientation, decision-making, self-perceptions, or more general theoretical constructs like agency, rational choice, and identity—factors that exist within a person’s mind and reflect that person’s view of themselves and of the world around them. Subjective factors, then, are cognitive in nature and assume the mechanisms involved are conscious—involving self-concept, thoughts, perceptions, preferences, and emotions—and result in deliberate or intentional action.

Subjective Mechanisms in Theory

Developmental accounts and rational choice accounts are similar in that they assume that offenders must experience some kind of internal change *prior* to adopting behavioral change. Developmental accounts, according to Laub and Sampson (2003: 28-29), assume desistance is normative and expected across the lifespan. Some developmental accounts draw explicitly from developmental psychology (Moffitt, 1993) or symbolic interaction perspectives (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Giordano, Cernkovich, and

Rudolph, 2002; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007). Similar to developmental accounts, *rational choice* accounts of desistance privilege internal processes but focus on how people weigh the costs and benefits of crime in the decision making process (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Rational choice accounts assert that desistance occurs when an offender reevaluates his readiness to commit a crime and perceives the costs of crime to be greater than the benefits (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Though this perspective acknowledges the influence of external events like marriage or incarceration on this calculus, it emphasizes individual decision making as the central foreground mechanism in the desistance process.

Three contemporary theories that privilege subjective factors include Maruna's (2001) theory of redemption scripts, Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation, and Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) identity theory of desistance. Each of these theories assumes that that cognitive change—that is, conscious intellectual activity such as reasoning, thinking, decision-making, and perceiving—precedes behavioral change. Identity and agency are central subjective mechanisms. Desisters may rewrite their past to fit in with their present identity (Maruna, 2001); they may undergo a change in their present identity (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002); or they may become dissatisfied with their present identity and fear who they might become in the future (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). For each theory, agency (choice, will) based on identity drives desistance from crime. Structural factors matter to the extent that they maintain a non-criminal or prosocial identity, but any link between structural factors and desistance is due to selection. For example, Maruna (2001) asserts that offenders employ a “redemption script”—a coherent narrative in which one's

criminal past is rewritten into a prelude to a productive life—in order to change.

Similarly, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) contend that offenders must experience a “cognitive transformation” in how they view themselves and their environment in order to change their behavior.

Social-structural factors exist in the background of these theories. In Maruna’s redemption script, some outside force empowers desisters to change. Giordano and colleagues’ (2002) cognitive transformations draw from environments that provide hooks for change, and a person’s structural location determines how much human agency or will an offender requires to make a cognitive transformation. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) argue that people who change select into marriage and work because these institutions have become important to them.

Though developmental accounts and rational choice accounts are based on the premise that offenders must undergo some kind of change in perception of self *prior* to adopting behavioral change, it is less clear how a person accesses or gains exposure to the requisite hooks for change (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002) or a blueprint for a possible self (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009, 2011). Paternoster and Bushway (2009) dismiss the role of chance events, arguing that criminal embeddedness makes it difficult for offenders to access to legitimate employment and social networks if they do not present an indicator to others that some “up front work” and internal change has taken place. Placed in the context of early adulthood role transitions, youthful offenders must change how they think and how they see themselves *before* they can engage with adult institutions such as legitimate employment, marriage, and parenthood.

Redemption and Condemnation Scripts

Maruna (2001:27) suggests that that a person's ability to maintain desistance might be unrelated to the cause for desistance and that social-structural models of desistance downplay selection effects. To explain how offenders "go straight" and maintain desistance in spite of clear structural barriers, Maruna drew from a phenomenological, socio-cognitive perspective to explore the foreground of experience of the desistance self-project; that is, he examined how self-image, goals, and strategies for creating meaning underlie the desistance project. He found that the narratives of desisters contained key themes absent from persisters' narratives. First, desisters' narratives established the *true self* of the narrator as essentially good and conventional, as characterized by their core beliefs, and distinct from the self that committed crime. Second, desisters expressed a sense of control over their own destiny. Third, desisters received assistance from some outside force—a catalyst for change—that helped to empower them to change. Finally, desisters expressed generative aspirations, a desire to give something back to society and to put their otherwise shameful pasts to good use. These four themes make up what Maruna calls a *redemption script*—a coherent narrative in which one's criminal past is rewritten into a prelude to a productive life—that is required for change in offending to occur.

The redemption script allows offenders to manage their own self-image and identity and permits them to see themselves as having always been a good and conventional person; thus, foregoing crime is really a return to their true selves. The redemption script allows offenders to manage the stigma of their pasts as well as their feelings of shame, blame, and guilt for their past and present situations. It also provides

offenders with a way of giving meaning to their lives—“some pursuit that is worth living for” (Maruna, 2001: 55). Offenders experience a number of internal changes when they desist from crime, including change in their view of the past self and past behavior; a recognition of their “true self” that provides both a self-concept and a framework for judging the self and others; and the development of an awareness of time and of internal and interpersonal goals (also see Shover, 1996).

By contrast, persistent offenders employed a condemnation script. They made sense of their lives in terms of their own powerlessness, blocked opportunities, and a sense of hopelessness. Though they expressed discontent with their lives and their involvement in crime, persisters perceived the structural impediments to change—drug abuse, poverty, lack of education or skills, stigma—as insurmountable, and themselves as victims of circumstance.

Generativity, identity, and agency are central mechanisms in the maintenance of desistance. Generativity is defined as “the concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, manifested through parenting, teaching, mentoring, and generating products and outcomes that aim to benefit youth and foster the development and well-being of individuals and social systems that will outlive the self” (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1998: xx, cited by Maruna, 2001: 99). It offers former offenders a sense of fulfillment (a sense of meaning and achievement in life), exoneration (relief from feelings of guilt and shame), legitimacy (as the penitent ex-offender), and therapy (helping others to help one’s self stay out of trouble) (Maruna, 2001: 118-120). It also suggests that commitment to others and lines of action outside of one’s self are important to the

desistance process. Identity is captured by the idea of the “true self.” Agency is reflected in the sense of control over one’s own destiny.

Maruna’s work suggests the following propositions regarding the subjective processes and mechanisms of desistance:

1. Desisters desist by rewriting a shameful past into one that involves their true self as a good person, as evidenced by their core beliefs.
2. Desisters view themselves as having control over their own lives.
3. Some outside force empowers desisters to change.
4. Desisters want to put their shameful pasts to good use through generativity; they want to be productive and give something back to society.
5. Persisters tend to see themselves as powerless to change.
6. Persisters tend to blame some outside force as having blocked or inhibited their ability to change.
7. Persisters tend to express hopelessness about the future.

Cognitive Transformations

Drawing from symbolic interactionism (especially Mead, 1934) and differential association/social learning theories (Sutherland and Cressey, 1960; Akers, 1998) of crime, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) contend that offenders must experience a cognitive transformation in order to change their involvement in crime. The theory of cognitive transformation implicates identity, agency, and emotions—which occur in the foreground experience—as central mechanisms in the process of change in offending (also see Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; Giordano, 2010). Desistance, then, entails a four-stage “ideal typical sequence” that transforms the

meaning and salience a person ascribes to criminal behavior and, in turn, “inspires and directs behavior” (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002: 1002). First, people vary in their openness to change; an offender must be ready to change in order to desist from crime. Second, an offender who is open to change must be exposed to *and* perceive potential *hooks for change* (marriage, employment, parenthood) or opportunities for change in the environment. If prosocial relationships are available to them, offenders who are ready to change will choose those relationships that provide models or blueprints for change and reinforce change behavior. Offenders also have to perceive the relationship or some other feature of the environment as a potential “hook”; thus, an offender’s attitude about potential hooks for change is vital to desistance. Third, the offender who has been exposed to and perceived hooks for change uses the hook and its prescribed behaviors to create a conventional *replacement self*—a shift in identity—for which involvement in crime is incompatible. Finally, the offender contrasts the lifestyle of the replacement self to a criminal lifestyle and finds that the meaning and salience of crime has decreased thereby reducing or terminating his or her involvement in crime; the offender has embraced the replacement self.

Thus, in this early conceptualization of cognitive transformations, change in offending requires a person to be open to change, to change how he perceives criminal behavior and how he feels about criminal behavior, and to change the importance of criminal behavior for his developing identity or view of himself. The extent to which change requires agency depends on a person’s structural disadvantage. Offenders with more structurally disadvantaged backgrounds require more agency and will to change

relative to offenders from less disadvantaged backgrounds in part because they are exposed to fewer hooks for change and receive less support for change.

In 2007, Giordano and colleagues elaborated the cognitive transformation model to include emotions as a means of explaining the *why* and *how* of change and linked symbolic interaction mechanisms to differential association and social learning mechanisms (Sutherland and Cressey, 1960; Akers, 1998). They define *role-taking* is the reflexive process by which a person compares his perception of himself to how he thinks others view him (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007: 1617; also see Matsueda and Heimer, 1997), and argue that emotions “emerge in connection with role-taking experiences” (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007: 1608). Role-taking and identification experiences not only define some situations as aversive, they also provide the “appropriate” reaction to aversive situations—anger, for example. When role-taking experiences recur, they “shape and solidify” emotional identities—an *angry* self-image, a *party* self-image—through differential reinforcement, and they provide positive meaning to antisocial behaviors such as fighting, stealing, or substance use (definitions favorable or unfavorable to crime).

Central to this reformulation of cognitive transformation theory are the emotions of anger, excitement, sadness, and love, and core differential association/social learning theory mechanisms. Anger and excitement appear central to the onset and continuity of offending. Offenders learn to define specific situations as aversive and to respond to such situations with anger. Giordano and colleagues (2007) suggest that these definitions and emotional responses likely develop within the family context, when offenders are young, because family members model such definitions repeatedly over time. As children get

older and have more role-taking opportunities through peers they learn to associate antisocial behaviors such as stealing, fighting, and drug use with excitement (Akers, 1998; Sutherland and Cressey, 1960; also see Katz, 1988)—a positive emotion. The associated party self-image rewards youths with a sense of self-worth. As they enter adulthood, youths are better able to regulate their emotions because they have a wider range of prosocial role-taking opportunities available and greater exposure to prosocial others who model age-appropriate behavior and self-regulation (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; also see Akers, 1998).

The theory described by Giordano and colleagues (2007: 107-117) suggests the following propositions as central to the emotional transformations:¹²

1. A wider set of *role-taking opportunities* (beyond school and family) introduces new attitudes and definitions (cognitions) and reduces an offender's "angry self" image. Persistent offenders will have a stronger anger identity than desisters, net of marital and prior delinquent histories.
2. A reduction in the *social reinforcement* for a "party self" reduces an offender's "party self" image. Persistent offenders are more likely to suffer from depression, regret, or sadness than desisters, which prevents them from seeing a way to change.

¹² The development of the different emotional identities described by Giordano et al. (2007) seems to follow the age-graded theory of informal social control's emphasis on transitions into age-graded social institutions—the family is the central social institution for young children and is the staging ground for the angry self; peers become more salient in adolescence and provide meaning and reinforcement for the excitement-seeking party self, and adulthood allows access to marriage and employment; success in marriage and employment is incompatible with crime, the party self receives less reinforcement, and there is more access to successful adults who model ways to control emotional responses to aversive situations.

3. *Exposure* to prosocial others (differential association) and the *process of the role-taking* those who exhibit age-appropriate behavior and means of coping with emotions increases an offender's ability to regulate their own emotions in socially acceptable ways.
4. As an offender is better able to manage his emotions and the character of his emotions changes, the meaning and salience of deviant behavior changes, as does the meaning and salience of relationships.

The first two propositions (change in role-taking opportunities and social reinforcement for deviant identities) address *why* change occurs when it does: offenders desist from crime because they have more pro-social role-taking opportunities and fewer reinforcements for an angry self-image and, later, a party self-image. The latter two propositions describe *how* change occurs when it does: new role-taking opportunities expose offenders to definitions *unfavorable* to deviance and law violation and increases exposure to models of prosocial behavior. Offenders learn to manage their emotions and cope with aversive situations with prosocial responses. However, Giordano and colleagues (2007: 1611) also noted that these cognitive changes may co-occur with major life transitions —such as marriage or becoming a parent—or they may occur independently of life transitions “as a part of development.”

When cognitive transformations are role-based (i.e., related to new social relationships), Giordano and colleagues (2007) emphasize the emotion love as central to their explanation of initiating the desistance process. They argue that whereas the development of routine activities or the actions of romantic partners require time to develop salience, love and other positive emotions are immediately available as a

motivation to change and “fosters concrete, *positive reflected appraisals* that allow the individual to see past the contours of the current self, envisioning at least the broad outline of a more worthy one” (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007: 1615, original emphasis). As a relationship develops, the prosocial partner provides an emotional role model and a source of social support—a hook for change, a blueprint for how to behave and manage emotions, and a source of new meanings, definitions, and “increasingly an other-directed worldview” (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007: 1615-1616).

In a more recent article, Giordano and colleagues (2010: 831) argued that identity and agency are intimately linked. Identity provides the motivation for behavior, serves as a “cognitive filter” for decision-making, and is a way to process experiences of the past, present, and future. A person exercises agency based on his (developing) view of his current and possible selves; he simultaneously creates his social environment and is influenced by his social environment.

Giordano and her colleagues (2002: 992) have characterized Sampson and Laub’s (1993) age-graded theory of informal social control as “essentially a theory of constraint that is focused on the long haul,” and external forces—a good spouse or a stable job—cause desistance from crime through the accumulation of capital and thus commitment. This view, Giordano and colleagues argue (2002: 992), “tends to bracket off the ‘up front’ work accomplished by actors themselves—as they make initial moves toward, help to craft, and work to sustain a different way of life.” The theory of cognitive transformation, however, is “more ‘agentic’” and can account for offenders who desist even though they do not have spouses or good jobs (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph,

2002: 992). Social factors structure and constrain access to opportunities, but Giordano and colleagues (2002: 993) argue that level of disadvantage—determined by the intersection of historical time and place, race, gender, and socioeconomic factors—affects the degree to which agency is necessary. People with a cluster of personal and social resources—like a *respectability package* of children, a spouse, and employment—can desist more easily than those with fewer resources (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002: 1021, 1030). “[On] a continuum of advantage and disadvantage, the real play of agency is in the middle. Given a relatively ‘advantaged set of circumstances, the cognitive transformations and agentic moves we describe are hardly necessary; under conditions of sufficiently extreme disadvantage, they are unlikely to be enough” (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002: 1026, original emphasis).

The Feared Self

Similar to the developmental accounts described above, rational choice accounts of desistance privilege internal processes. Rational choice accounts, however, focus on decision making and how one weighs the costs and benefits of crime; that is, when individuals reevaluate their readiness to commit a crime and perceive the costs of crime to be greater than the benefits, they will refrain or desist from crime (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). These accounts acknowledge the influence external events such as marriage and incarceration on this calculus, but the emphasis is on individual decision making rather on external factors. Shover (1996) has asserted that self-perceptions and the accumulation of experiences that come with age—financial success with crime, time spent in prison, time left in one’s life—are important weights in the decision to remain involved (or persist) in crime. Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986) similarly noted that estimates of the

certainty of incarceration increase with age. This view bridges developmental accounts (such as Maruna, 2001, and Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002) and rational choice accounts.

Recently, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) proposed an identity theory that makes the link between identity and decision making, as suggested by Shover, more explicit. They argue that a person's identity—a sense of who you are—weights preferences and social alignments, thereby providing motivation and direction for behavior (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009:109). Identity change initiates a shift in those preferences and alignments.

Desistance comes about when persons are dissatisfied with their working self as a criminal offender and the preferences that are aligned with that identity and actively do something about it. In our theory, once the decision to change one's self is made, persons intentionally seek out conventional institutions like legitimate jobs, stable marriages, and more conventional social networks (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009: 1153).

As with developmental accounts of desistance, a change in identity provides the up-front work necessary for behavioral change and engagement in conventional institutions and social networks. As with rational choice accounts, this identity theory explicitly acknowledges a change in preferences, i.e., a change in how one weighs the costs and benefits of any given behavior, whether criminal or conventional.

Paternoster and Bushway (2011) argue that social-structural supports play a role in change only after an offender has started to feel uneasy about how he sees himself. Such supports—friends, spouses, professional help, and jobs—provide alternative sources of identity to those who are discontented with a criminal identity (also see Kiecolt, 1994). The process of identity change must have already started in order for the person to weigh the benefits of (i.e., prefer) social supports for the new identity relative to

the costs of the present or former criminal identity. Social and structural factors, then, provide important resources to facilitate and maintain change, but they are not the cause of change. Instead, individuals seek out social supports only after they gradually start to perceive their present or *working identity* as unsatisfying or disappointing, and they conceive of an alternative or *possible self* to guide and provide goals for behavior.

As implied by the above discussion, temporal orientation is a central component of the identity theory of desistance. Drawing from Baumeister's (1994) idea of the crystallization of discontent, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) argue that in order to experience an identity shift, a person must first reflect on his past failures in life and begin to tie them together. If that person views past life failures—arrest, incarceration, injury, lost relationships or missed job opportunities—as unrelated incidents outside of his own control, he will remain committed to his present or working criminal identity. Alternatively, when an offender links many (perhaps minor) life failures to his present working identity, perhaps as a result of a triggering event that seems to represent past failures, but not necessarily, his dissatisfaction with his current life coalesces (the crystallization of discontent; see Baumeister, 1994). He starts to change the way he views his life and to look to the future, comparing the past and current self to a possible future self. The future, possible self is the foundation for change and desistance from crime.

Paternoster and Bushway's (2011: 190-192) identity theory suggests the following propositions:

1. A structural break in an individual's time-series of offending (which is the manifestation of desistance) is associated with a possible self.

2. Structural breaks in offending occur around times of accumulated negative life events.
3. The individual perceives the negative life events as connected to each other and to a feared possible self. This is the crystallization of discontent: the recognition that one needs to change and is responsible for that change, and the decision to change.
4. The crystallization of discontent precedes identity change in the direction of a prosocial possible self and a change in preferences that support the new possible self.
5. Desistance is associated with a change in preferences that support the new possible self. Factors that mattered to explaining offending before the structural break matter less or not at all to the individual after the break (for example, peers, partying, excitement), and factors that did not matter before the break matter more after (for example, children, responsibilities, thinking about the future, keeping a good job).
6. The prosocial possible self provides the foundation for change and structures attempts by the individual to create change in how he interacts with the world, including the selection of structural supports for the new identity (for example, social support, professional support).
7. Successful maintenance of the new identity (which requires social support) maintains the decision to desist from offending.

Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) identity theory of desistance has yet to be evaluated empirically, though they are clear about the observable implications of their

theory. An evaluation of this theory should consider: how participants view failures in their lives (as isolated or connected events, as isolated or linked to the self); how they perceive the future and themselves in the future (feared selves and possible selves, future orientation); their involvement in activities that either support or do not support a working identity; how they view the role of potential and actual structural supports for change in offending (including timing and influence of supports); whether changes in preferences and social relationships are deliberate and intentional; and how those preferences and social relationships support past, present, or future selves (including changes in how one weighs long-term costs and benefits of their preferences). Change is expected to occur gradually, as a series of minor but successful steps (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009: 1132).

Summary. Ultimately what subjective theories of desistance (and, in some cases, persistence) propose is that offenders perceive themselves as effecting change in their lives and offending patterns—whether they attribute that change to a crystallization of discontent and a feared self, cognitive shifts, or by becoming their true self, each approach requires that an offender sees himself as willing and able to make deliberate, “agentic” choices, and that choice to desist from crime leads to choices and actions that support the desistance process—to (try to) obtain legitimate employment, to get married, to spend time with prosocial others who provide social support as well as resources and opportunities for prosocial behavior, and to seek out support groups or professional help to desist from crime. Regardless of these supports, however, desisting offenders view themselves as the locus of control in their own lives—where they are and where they are going depends almost exclusively on them. Similarly, each of these subjectively oriented

theories suggests that persistent offenders do *not* express that sense of control over their own lives and over their own behavior.

STRUCTURAL MECHANISMS

Defining Structural Mechanisms

In contrast to theories of desistance that emphasize subjective factors, theories favoring structural mechanisms in the desistance process focus on the social context of continuity and change in offending. Bottoms and his colleagues (2004: 374) identified three dimensions of the social context in which desistance, persistence, and other dynamic human behaviors are accomplished: structure, culture, and situations. *Structure* is defined as “social arrangements external to the individual” (Bottoms et al., 2004: 372); that is, the patterning of social relationships (Kornhauser, 1978: 2).¹³ The patterning or arranging of social relationships occurs within events or states such as marriage and work that occur outside of the individual and result from interactions between units—individuals, collectivities, and social institutions (family, economy, community, criminal justice system, etc.) as well as across levels of units (for example, between individuals and institutions or between collectivities and institutions; see Hunter, 1985). The patterning of social relationships varies within units (such as individuals) over time, constituting *structural* changes that can occur over the life course. Structure is linked to desistance by enabling or constraining a person’s actions (Bottoms et al., 2004: 372).

Bottoms and colleagues (2004: 373) also point out that social contexts are shaped by *culture*: assumptions, beliefs, and patterns of behavior shared by members of a group.

¹³ Kornhauser (1978: 2) argues that structure secures order (cohesion) and conformity (control) independently from culture “by interlocking positions and affiliations and lines of action they constrain.”

Kornhauser identifies culture as an additional source for “patterning in human conduct” (1978: 6) and as “basically a design for moral order” (1978:1). As the shared understandings and meanings people use to “apprehend and endow experience with ultimate human experience” (Kornhauser, 1978: 6), culture sets “the rules” for expected or normative behavior. A structural view of culture emphasizes the *strength* of culture’s ability to engender commitment to those rules rather than the specific *content* of the culture. The rules for normative behavior in a strong culture can meet the needs of the group. The specific content of the culture both emerges from interactions within structures of social relationships and situations and guides those interactions (Sampson and Bean, 2006). Culture is important to the present research because it serves as a source of behavioral expectations—expectations for how to behave as members of society generally, as well as expectations for how to act within social institutions and social roles such as parenthood. To the extent that a person is bonded to a cultural context, he or she will attend to the behavioral expectations of being a good parent, including not getting into trouble

Finally, social contexts include *situations*, the foreground or behavioral setting (Wikström, 2006). Situations contain social and nonsocial sets of problems and sets of resources (Kornhauser, 1978: 1), and vary according to lifestyle and routine activities (Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo, 1978; Felson, 2002). Situations contribute to the general social contexts in which continuity and change in offending occurs in one of two ways: a person chooses a situation according to whether and how the situational problems or resources enable access to opportunities for crime; or situations may result from

routine activities (Bottoms et al., 2004). Thus, situations serve as a third manner by which human behavior is patterned.

Thus, social context organizes, gives meaning, and provides resources for actions and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, structure, culture, and resources are interrelated. People apply the meanings they derive from the larger culture to their socially structured relationships, and they may derive social and nonsocial resources from those relationships. These dimensions of social context illustrate that dynamic social factors (hereafter simply referred to “structural factors” or “structural mechanisms”) cover a range of factors that might be implicated in desistance and persistence. They vary in their proximity to processes of desistance and persistence—structural factors (background and foreground), the degree to which they reflect agentic or other selection processes, and the mechanisms linking them to the outcome; that is, the initiation and/or maintenance of continuity and change in offending.

Structural Mechanisms in Theory: The Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control

Of the dominant contemporary explanations of continuity and change, only Sampson and Laub’s life-course account explicitly attributes a causal function to role transitions (Laub and Sampson, 2003).¹⁴ Sampson and Laub’s (1993; Laub and Sampson,

¹⁴ Often presented as a foil to subjective accounts of continuity and change in offending, Sampson and Laub’s (1993) theory of age-graded social control presents a *life-course* account of desistance. The life-course view generally examines within-individual variation over time and emphasizes four principles: human lives are embedded in and shaped by *historical time and place*; the *timing of life events* matters; human lives are *linked and interdependent*, such as the intergenerational transmission of social patterns; and *human agency* plays a key role in shaping lives—individuals make choices and have an active role in constructing their own lives (Elder, 1998; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Laub and Sampson (2003) view the life-course perspective and developmental theories as distinct, though this is not a universally recognized distinction. Laub and Sampson (2003: 33) argue that developmental theories emphasize systematic pathways of development based on a program written at some earlier point in time, while the life-course perspective that they endorse views lives as unpredictable and dynamic. While developmental accounts are

2003) age-graded theory of informal social control explicitly addresses how changes in social context affect processes of continuity and change in offending. The age-graded theory starts from the central control theory proposition—people are more likely to engage in crime when their bond to society is weak or broken (Durkheim, 1951; Hirschi, 1969; Janowitz, 1975; Kornhauser, 1978)—and elaborates control theory from a life-course perspective. Taking Hirschi’s notion of a dynamic social bond earnestly (Hirschi, 1969), Sampson and Laub argue that the salience of specific social institutions and opportunities to participate in those institutions change over the life course in an age-graded manner. People move through multiple age-graded social institutions over their lives. Social institutions like family of birth and school provide more salient structures, norms, and situations for children than for adolescents and young adults, whereas peers become the most salient institution during adolescence. Social institutions like parenthood, marriage, and employment, are socially accessible only when a person reaches late adolescence and early adulthood. Ties to social institutions create the social context from which the processes and mechanisms that change or maintain behavioral trajectories emerge, while transitions into and out of these social institutions provide opportunities for people to access these processes and mechanisms. Transitions have potential to become turning points that dramatically redirect a person’s behavioral trajectory.

“forced to assume that there are different ‘groups’ or ‘types’ of offenders (for example, life-course persisters) that display distinct and different pathways and probabilities of continuity and change, even if the manifestations of these pathways vary by age” (Laub and Sampson, 2003: 34), Laub and Sampson reject developmental theories as overly-deterministic. Instead, the life course perspective allows for the examination of individual differences and development in addition to the influence of situations and time-varying social contexts. Laub and Sampson argue that the life course perspective reflects a “theoretical commitment to social malleability across the life course” (Laub and Sampson, 2003: 34).

Social context and institutional processes are key themes in the age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1993). These themes are clearly illustrated in the proposition that the structural context of family life (including parental deviance, family poverty, family size, residential mobility) has both a direct effect on juvenile delinquency and an indirect effect to the extent that context shapes family processes. That is, the structural features of family life and the child's individual characteristics (for example, temperament and troublesome childhood behavior) shape, give meaning to, and provide resources for family processes. Family processes include parent-child attachment, how well the child is supervised and monitored, and the use of harsh or erratic discipline. In turn, the structure and processes of family life impact the strength of a child's bond to society. As juvenile delinquents enter adulthood, their social context is partly conditioned by prior structural disadvantages and the official and unofficial consequences of juvenile delinquency (arrest, labeling, incarceration) through the process of cumulative disadvantage. The accumulation of disadvantage qualitatively and quantitatively constrains transitions into and within adult social institutions, adult social bonds, and access to emotional and instrumental resources.

With an emphasis on the person-environment interaction, structural turning points are central to the desistance process in the age-graded theory of informal social control, and structural turning points are linked to human agency, life-course events, situations, and historical context. Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that transitions into adult social institutions such as marriage, work, military service, and presumably parenthood, contribute to desistance from crime because they provide opportunities to increase or rebuild a person's bond to society, especially when ties to these institutions are

characterized by interdependency and mutual obligation. Moreover, transitions can change the social context of behavior by altering the structure of a person's social arrangements and patterns of behavior; they introduce a new set of normative expectations of behavior; and they provide new situations, challenges, and access to resources.

More recently, Laub and Sampson (2003) argued that three general processes link structural turning points or life events to continuity and change in offending: 1) variation in informal social controls, 2) the structure of routine activities, and 3) purposeful human agency. Transitions into and out of age-graded social institutions occur independently from prior criminal propensity, at least in part, and can be due to chance. Laub and Sampson also emphasize the importance of situational context and "normative behavior in certain situations or contexts" (Laub and Sampson, 2003: 249) that shape offending patterns (continuity and change) as well as a person's perceptions of his or her own involvement in crime over the life course. Sampson and Laub (2005a: 17-18) conclude:

Based on analysis of in-depth interviews with 52 delinquent boys followed to age 70, the mechanisms underlying the desistance process are consistent with the general idea of social control. Namely, what appears to be important about institutional or structural turning points is that they all involve, to varying degrees 1) new situations that "knife off" the past from the present, (2) new situations that provide both supervision and monitoring as well as opportunities of social support and growth, (3) new situations that change and structure routine activities, and (4) new situations that provide the opportunity for identity transformation (for details see Laub and Sampson, 2003, chaps. 6-8). The lesson we drew is that involvement in institutions such as marriage, work, and the military reorders short-term situational inducements to crime and, over time, redirects long-term commitments to conformity.

These mechanisms can explain both continuity (persistence) offending as well as change (desistance). Laub and Sampson (2003) noted that by age 70, the lives of

persistent offenders were lived on the margins, lacking in the kinds of social connections and structures that facilitate desistance. Persistent offenders did not experience structured role transitions, but they did see their lives as the result of their own choices. As the age-graded salience of social institutions changes, offenders encounter new opportunities to form bonds to society through these institutions. Laub and Sampson are careful to note, however, that though the mechanisms they identified support change in offending, no single mechanism is required for desistance. This is a significant departure from the developmental and rational choice accounts of desistance that argue that desistance initially requires subjective changes in identity, self-concept, or decision making. The age-graded theory of social control maintains that identity changes might result from new life circumstances and social bonds, but such new situations and bonds may or may not follow changes in identity.

Subjective Mechanisms in a Social-Structural Theory

Sampson and Laub's age-graded-theory of informal social control privileges social-structural factors—factors external to the individual—in the desistance process, yet agency and identity also link structural turning points to continuity and change in offending. Agency is central to their theory; it is one of the three processes that explain desistance and persistence in crime, while opportunities for identity transformation is one mechanisms linking the processes of informal social control, the structuring of routine activities, and purposeful human agency to continuity and change in crime. But what place do agency and identity have in a theory emphasizing social and structural processes?

Sampson and Laub have been criticized for neglecting or mischaracterizing the role of *agency* in continuity and change processes, but human agency has long been at the center of the broader social control tradition. In his effort to bring social control theory into mainstream sociological discourse, sociologist Morris Janowitz (1975) contended that agency is an essential feature of social control theories. Critical of over-deterministic explanations of social change and social order, Janowitz (1975: 86) argued that social control theories assume human action is voluntaristic and articulated toward various schemes of ends and means, but that there are limits to rationality. The goal of all social control theories is to identify the limits to rationality in the selection and pursuit of goals, and they posit “a format of influence based on the notion of interaction and mutual (two-way) relations among social groups” (Janowitz, 1975: 86-87). Thus, social control theories assume that individuals both shape and are shaped by their environments; indeed, control theories are concerned with the “interface between micro- and macro-analysis,” and the role of informal relations as aspects of the social structure, and the capacity of social institutions to regulate behavior (Janowitz, 1975: 87). Institutions regulate a person’s behavior through his connections or disconnections with those social institutions. A person’s connections to social institutions manifest in face-to-face interactions—with romantic partners, family members, friends, and co-workers, as well as between parents and children—as well as in his or her interactions with higher levels of social institutions, such as community or parochial institutions (like schools, churches) and public institutions (local and federal government, criminal and juvenile justice systems) (e.g., Hunter, 1985). Controls originate and are maintained by these social relationships. Importantly, control theories assume individual behavior is voluntary—

people choose to act in their own self-interest according to the actual and perceived costs and benefits of the options available to them—and control theories seek to understand how linkages to social institutions limit rationality (Janowitz, 1975; Kornhauser, 1978).

Laub and Sampson (2003) bring agency into the age-graded theory of informal social control in their emphasis on the situations and opportunities that emerge from structural turning points. As described by Sampson and Laub (2005a), what is important about structural turning points is that they all involve access to new situations and opportunities—situations that knife off the past from the present, situations that supply supervision and monitoring and opportunities for social support, situations that structure routine activities, and situations that provide opportunities for identity transformation. Change in offending comes when people (offenders) capitalize upon—perceive, choose and act on—structural and situational circumstances, including resources that might come with a transition into adult social institutions (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Furthermore, Laub and Sampson emphasize Shover’s (1985, 1996) idea of contingencies—things that may or may not happen—and the role of emergent experiences and chance events. Indeed, they are critical of what they see as a deterministic or “selection-bias view of the world” that argues that adult life changes are simply proxies for other factors (such as self-control; see Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990).

Though Laub and Sampson (2003) carefully acknowledge the role of agency and subjectivity in processes of desistance and persistence, their use of the agency construct is somewhat loose and open to criticism. For example, they refer to human agency alternatively as personal choice and as situated choice (Laub and Sampson, 2003: 38, 281). Individuals are “active participants in the construction of their lives” (Laub and

Sampson, 2003: 38) and “crime is a vehicle for demonstrating freedom and agency” (Laub and Sampson, 2003: 54), at times seductive (though this implies a subjectively appraised *lack* of choice; Katz, 1988) or calculated and articulated as resistance to authority (Sherman, 1993). Agency is also reflected in the conscious efforts individuals make to project a new sense of self (Sampson and Laub, 2003: 146). Drawing from Kohli (1986) and Emirbayer (1997), Laub and Sampson (2003: 54) view agency as “reciprocally linked to situations and larger structures (cultural, social, and psychological), past, present, and future.” Human agency in constructing one’s life course is a principle of the life course perspective; individuals are actors embedded in time and space, in situations that offer both opportunities and constraints to which actors must respond (Emirbayer, 1997: 294, cited by Laub and Sampson, 2003).

Laub and Sampson’s life-course theory departs from developmental and rational choice views of agency and identity by acknowledging that the intentional commitments a person makes to one line of action can have unintended consequences for competing lines of action. Becker (1960) called this *commitment by default*; Laub and Sampson (2003) referred to this as *desistance by default*. For example, a desisting offender may choose to get married or, as was more common in this study, have a child or otherwise take on a parenting role, and he might do so without considering or completing appreciating the consequences of the new role for his subsequent participation in crime. Yet, after taking on the responsibilities associated with parenthood, the offender nonetheless finds that crime does not fit into or creates problems for this new, parenting line of action. If the parenting role is more salient (more preferred?) to the offender than the costs of offending, he withdraws from involvement in crime. Thus, subjective

changes in identity or agency directly related to crime are not required for desistance from crime. Change results from structural turning points, but that change involves choices by offenders in response to potential turning points (Bottoms 2006: 251).

Some argue that the importance of human agency in Laub and Sampson's theoretical framework appears marred by their simultaneous emphasis on the notion of side bets, chance, and the prominence of desistance by default (for example, see Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; and Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Though Laub and Sampson's (2003) notion of desistance by default asserts that offenders can desist from crime without making a conscious decision to forego crime—desistance results from conscious intentions but not necessarily the intention to desist (or persist), subjective perspectives might argue that desistance by default indicates Laub and Sampson's (2003) approval for the idea that social institutions and social roles *coercively* change people. Additionally, Vaughan (2007) has criticized Laub and Sampson's emphasis on side bets for making the actor “too passive” and without deep and lasting commitments.

Where human agency is a core process explaining continuity and change in offending, identity transformation—specifically opportunities for identity transformation—is one potential mechanism linking structural turning points to continuity and change (Laub and Sampson, 2003, 2005). Structural turning points like role transitions provide opportunities for identity transformation. Though identity is associated with subjective models of continuity and change, Laub and Sampson's age-graded theory is more concerned with socially constructed, role-related identities than developmental and rational choice frameworks appear to be. Indeed, the notion of role

identity is central to the social control theory from which Laub and Sampson draw their own framework. As theories of social control, Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control and its most proximate theoretical predecessor, Hirschi's social bond theory, are fundamentally concerned with how individuals, groups, and societies organize their lives *together* and how social actors come to conform to the rules of society so that order is maintained (Innes, 2003; Janowitz, 1975). One way that societies organize and ensure conformity is by constructing social roles as a means of differentiating social units (for example, social institutions, groups, individuals) according to positions characterized by a distinctive set of activities, resources, and links to other positions (Kornhauser, 1978: 250). Social roles are defined by their relation to other social roles, differentiated either by purpose or function, or by hierarchy. When a person's has a strong bond to a social institution such as family, their role-related identity within that institution is salient and role-expectations are clearly defined. As illustrated by Laub and Sampson's (2003) life history interviews, the identity transformations of most importance to processes of continuity and change from a social control perspective are those that are socially defined roles—for example, from hell-raiser to family man. By contrast, the identities and perceptions of self emphasized by Giordano and colleagues (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007), Maruna (2001), and Paternoster and Bushway (2009) are more subjectively defined. For example, Giordano and colleagues' (2007) cognitive shift away from an angry self-image or party self-image, Maruna's (2001) emphasis on rewriting a shameful past into one that involves the true self as a good person, and Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) emphasis on the working self, the future self, and the feared self. Though the

identities emphasized in subjective models might be partly socially defined, the emphasis is on a person's subjective view of himself.

Laub and Sampson's (2003) age-graded theory of informal social control makes the following assertions about desistance and persistence in offending:

1. Informal social controls, routine activities, and purposeful human agency are the processes that explain persistence and desistance. Informal social controls include attachments and social support (external, indirect controls), supervision and monitoring (external direct controls), identity (internal, indirect control)
2. The mechanisms underlying the processes of persistent offending and desistance from crime are embedded in life course transitions into adult social institutions such as parenthood. These transitions can increase one's bond to society as reflected by their salience; and when they are salient, they can alter opportunity structures, thereby reducing involvement in crime.
3. The mechanisms linking life course transitions to changes in offending include: a) opportunities to knife off the past from the present; opportunities for supervision and monitoring conditioned on social support; opportunities to restructure routine activities (situational contingencies and activities); and opportunities for identity change, a new sense of self.
4. Each of these mechanisms must be acted upon (agency) to cause change. Decisions to act on the opportunities described above (and the execution of those decisions) do not necessarily reflect choice to desist from crime but may result in desistance from crime anyway (desistance by default).

5. Access to these opportunities might be constrained by past behaviors and situations in the process of cumulative disadvantage.

Though there is evidence that transitions to adult social institutions are associated with desistance from crime (for example, Sampson and Laub, 1993; Laub and Sampson, 2003), few studies have explored the mechanisms linking adult social institutions to desistance that Laub and Sampson (2003) identified in the life histories of delinquent boys followed to age 70. In a study of ex-prisoners from New Orleans, Kirk (2012) found that parolees who moved to a new parish upon release from prison due to damage caused by Hurricane Katrina were less likely to be reconvicted during the three years after release than were parolees who returned to the same neighborhoods. This study suggests that residential change (which knifes off past contexts and situations) might support the desistance process as Laub and Sampson propose.

PARENTHOOD IN THEORY

Expectations about a relationship between parenthood and continuity and change in offending can be inferred from each of the social-structural and subjective theories of desistance described above. The age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Laub and Sampson, 2003) is perhaps the most explicit. First, parenthood is an age-graded social institution; transitions into parenthood can create turning points—a redirection of a trajectory of behavior—across a number of domains, including work, marriage, and crime (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Second, the age-graded theory makes specific predictions about the mechanisms linking parenthood to desistance and persistence in offending. Parenthood leads to desistance when it knifes off the past from the present, provides opportunities for supervision and monitoring conditioned by social

support, structures routine activities, and provides an opportunity for a new identity. Becoming a parent does not necessarily result in desistance from crime (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Desistance depends in part on commitment to parenthood, the relative salience of parenthood, and on whether the offender chooses to become involved in parenting. Persistence or continuity in offending is more likely when a person does not want to become a parent or be involved in parenting, or when parenthood is not accompanied by supervision and monitoring, social support, new routines, or a salient identity. Furthermore, *choosing* to engage in parenting and commitment to parenthood does not require a conscious decision to desist from crime. Instead, a person who commits to a parenthood line of action can desist by default because they find, over time, that their investment in parenthood is too great to put at risk by participating in crime (Becker, 1960; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Finally, the age-graded theory of informal social control emphasizes parenthood as a social institution that is broader than a parent-child relationship. It structures social interactions related to parenthood, including parent-child interactions as well as interactions between the parent and his or her family of origin and between the parent and the community at large.

Some have argued that informal social control dynamics within a parent-child relationship flow one way—direct informal social control flows from parent to child. Children do not exert informal social control over their parents because the parent-child relationship is necessarily built upon dependency. Infants and young children depend on their parents or caregivers to meet any physical and social needs (Giordano et al., 2011; Van Eseltine, 2010). Taking on the *role* of parent, however, constitutes a transition into the social institution of parenthood. Becoming a parent can provide access to new

social networks (for example, other parents, teachers) or change interactions within existing friendship and kinship networks. For example, family members might be reluctant to help an offender with financial or employment resources generally but become eager to provide resources and social support when the offender becomes a parent because the family member sees himself or herself as helping the child. Thus, the transition to parenthood broadens or changes an offender's access to systems of interdependence and informal social control. Children, or rather parenthood, propagate connections to others.

Taking on a parent role can increase a person's bond to society as well as his commitment to meeting the expectations of the parent role. Those expectations are rooted in the idea that to be a good parent (and to maintain social order), one must move beyond an individual or self-focus to a dual, relational focus. Attending to relational concerns rather than self-interests is the *cost* of becoming a parent. The benefits of becoming a parent are similar to those of becoming a spouse—access to a blueprint for a new identity, social support, and social capital, and even access to material support. Becoming a parent signals to others and to society that a person *belongs* to a family, and is tasked with the physical, social, and normative maintenance of a child, which in turn motivates parents to perform related roles within and outside of the family sphere (Price, McKenry, and Murphy, 2000).

Becoming a parent constitutes a transition rather than event—it occurs over time as new parents try out and settle into new behavioral patterns—new routines, new ways of thinking about the world (Aldous 1996, cited by Price, McKenry and Murphy, 2000).

Establishing new patterns of behavior might be difficult for formerly sanctioned young adults, as old patterns of behavior provide the foundation for new patterns

The role of parenthood in Giordano's theory of cognitive transformation is less clear (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007). Children cannot operate as a source of role models or social support, thus simply becoming a parent is insufficient for change. Instead, parenthood serves as a hook for change in the environment: for someone who is open to change, parenthood provides a blueprint for the behavior of a conventional replacement self for whom crime is incompatible (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). Additionally, parenthood should introduce a new of role-taking opportunity, expose a person to prosocial others that model age-appropriate behavior and coping, and provide less reinforcement for party-self and angry-self emotional identities. When an offender is better able to manage his or her emotions as a result of this exposure and role-taking, the meaning of crime changes, the salience of crime declines, and the salience of other relationships increases, presumably including the parent-child relationship, and foster positive reflected appraisals (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007). Love and positive emotions are immediate motivations for change and allow the offender to envision a worthy self, while emotional role modeling and social support emerge over time.

The potential role of parenthood in Maruna's (2001) theory of desistance maintenance is a minor one. Parenthood provides one opportunity to redeem one's self, to enact one's true self as a good person, and to engage in generativity through which the desister's knowledge and experience is put to good use. Erikson (1968) defines generativity as the ability to care for the next generation; parenthood provides a number

of opportunities for generativity. By drawing from his or her shameful past, a desisting offender contributes to future generations and finds meaning in life.

Parenthood also plays a minor, supporting role in Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) identity theory. After the accumulation of negative life events crystallizes into general discontent, the recognition that change is necessary, and the decision to change, parenthood is one potential source of support and structure for prosocial possible self and for the selection of other structural supports for the new identity. Concern for one's children and the related responsibilities represent a change in preferences that occurs after the break in offending, and a successfully maintained new identity maintains the decision to desist, but parenthood is not the cause of the break in offending.

Since the transition to parenthood in early adulthood is likely to be rife with social and economic problems (Osgood, Foster and Courtney, 2010; Shanahan, 2000), it stands to reason that at-risk parents are less likely to have access to the mechanisms thought to facilitate desistance from crime suggested by Laub and Sampson (2003). Moreover, it seems unlikely that at-risk parents select into parenthood in the same way that they select into work and marriage, as suggested by Giordano and colleagues, since children are rarely planned (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; Giordano et al., 2011).

QUANTITATIVE EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

The body of research linking parenthood to change in offending is small relative to the research on marriage and employment (Siennick and Osgood, 2009), and the quantitative evidence is inconsistent. For example, Graham and Bowling (1995) found that the odds of abstaining from crime were three times greater for young women who

took responsibility for children by spending most nights at home with their children than it was for those women who did not, but there was no significant difference for males. Similarly, Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) found that mothers in the National Supported Work Demonstration were less likely than nonmothers to enter periods of illegal earnings, but this pattern was not observed in illegal earnings for men or in arrests for both men and women. However, contrary to expectations, Wakefield and Uggen (2004) found that parenthood actually increased illegal earnings of women when they estimated the within-individual effects of parenthood using the same data.

Also contrary to expectations (and in line with Wakefield and Uggen, 2004), Massoglia and Uggen (2007) found that among those with a prior arrest in the Youth Development Study in St. Paul, Minnesota, childbearing *increased* the likelihood of subsequent arrest. The authors speculated that “among the most disadvantaged individuals, those likely to have repeat arrests, having a child creates an earnings imperative (Uggen and Thompson, 2003) that increases motivation for economic crime” (Massoglia and Uggen, 2007: 100).

Increasingly, however, researchers are finding a link between parenthood and crime. Research by Savolainen (2009) and Kreager and colleagues (2010) suggests that a link between parenthood and crime might be conditioned or mediated by community context or sociohistorical context. For example, Savolainen’s research found that parenthood reduced crime among male and female felony offenders in Finland; becoming a parent reduced the number of new convictions by 15 percent. He also found an effect for a *full family package*—the cumulative effect of union formation and parenthood. Men who were cohabitating or married with children experienced a 22 percent decline in

felony convictions, whereas there was no significant effect for men in childless unions. Finally, Savolainen found that labor market status partially mediated the family package, suggesting that part of the family effect is explained by employment. Noting that parenthood is associated with improvements in general wellbeing for Finnish men and women but with stress, depression, and less life satisfaction for American parents, Savolainen suggested that the divergence between the results of his study and the analyses of American samples might be attributed to Finland's public policies that support parenthood.

Looking only at women, Kreager and colleagues (2010) found that motherhood related to a decline in antisocial behavior, above and beyond the effect of pregnancy, among women living in disadvantaged communities. Moreover, they found that the effect of teen motherhood on delinquency becomes non-significant after four to six years, and that additional children had no effect on delinquency after the first child, suggesting that the *transition* to motherhood matters more than the *cumulative* effect of motherhood. Finally, they found that motherhood had the strongest inhibitory effect on delinquency for Hispanic women and the weakest for Black women.¹⁵

More immediate qualities of the parenthood experience might also matter, such as age at first child and whether the parent resides with their child. Kerr and colleagues (2011) found that self-reported offending decreased after first fatherhood and that co-

¹⁵ They conclude that other research might not find a relationship between motherhood and desistance because it uses samples from incarcerated populations—populations with more severe problems (and a higher risk of criminal justice contact) than the disadvantaged population targeted by Kreager and colleagues' analysis. It might be that the relationship between motherhood and antisocial behavior follows an inverted U-shape pattern so that it applies to those at a relatively mid-range of disadvantage. Of course, this study gives us a reason to examine the parenthood-desistance relationship more closely as it does not tell us anything about a fatherhood-desistance relationship, and it does not does not examine the causal mechanisms linking parenthood to desistance from crime.

residence with children partially explains the effects of fatherhood. Further, men who were older when they first became fathers experienced a more abrupt change in self-reported offending, while men who were first fathers by age 20 showed a more gradual decline in offending. Examining men and women born between 1969 and 1977 and who had been institutionalized in juvenile justice facilities during adolescence, Zoutewelle-Terovan and colleagues (2012) found that though parenthood had no impact on criminal convictions for women, being a parent for men related to a 33 percent reduction in convictions; non-married men were 24 percent less likely to be convicted after becoming fathers, and married men were 54 percent less likely to be convicted.

In separate analyses, Giordano and her colleagues (2002, 2011) have examined possible mechanisms by which parenthood might affect desistance from crime. In the first study, Giordano and colleagues (2002) examined attachment to children and desistance from crime with a sample of delinquent girls and boys identified in 1982 and followed up as adults.¹⁶ They found that attachment to children had no impact on adult self-reported involvement in crime for men or for women, which can be interpreted as failing to support Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control. More recently, Giordano and colleagues (2011) examined a general parenthood-desistance link and explored possible mechanisms and the conditioning influence of disadvantage in their analyses the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS) data.¹⁷

¹⁶ Attachment to children was measured with a Likert scale of agreement with the statement: "I am closer to my kid(s) than a lot of people my age are to theirs" (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002: 1007).

¹⁷ Youth in the TARS sample were, on average, age 15 in the first of four waves of data collection and age 21 in the final wave. Using hierarchical linear modeling, Giordano and colleagues (2011) tested whether becoming a parent (measured as a pregnancy ending in a live birth at each time period) lead to within-person change in criminal trajectories, and whether the relationship between parenthood and crime was conditioned by cognitive factors (the wantedness of the pregnancy), relationship status (cohabitating or

They found a conditional relationship between parenthood and desistance from offending. Parenthood had a marginally significant direct effect on desistance for female participants but not males. Wantedness of the pregnancy—an indicator of a subjective readiness to change and a hook for change (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002)—was related to a significant decline in criminal trajectories for women regardless of level of disadvantage, suggesting support for a subjective model of desistance—if the pregnancy is wanted, it is perceived as a good thing and serves as a potential hook for change. However, unwantedness of the pregnancy (they did not want to get pregnant or they wanted to but not at that time) related to a significant decline in offending for the least disadvantaged females and males only, which complicates a clean interpretation of the effect of wantedness on desistance. Finally, living with or being married to the biological co-parent of one's child contributed to marginally significant declines in offending for females and advantaged males only, suggesting limited support for the effect of a respectability package. Thus, though there is some evidence to the contrary, the most recent and growing body of research supports a relationship between parenthood and a reduction in crime. We still know little about the mechanisms linking parenthood to continuity and change in offending, however, and this might help us better understand inconsistencies in the earlier research. There is a small body evidence suggesting that some of these theoretical mechanisms might be at work generally. For example, support for Laub and Sampson's propositions regarding the mechanisms of desistance might be found in the research reviewed above: Graham and Bowling (1995) found that British

living with the biological co-parent of the child), and family-of-origin socioeconomic status (disadvantage index ranging from 0 to 4).

women under age 25 who spend most nights at home with their children were more likely to desist than those who did not, suggesting structured routine activity might facilitate change in offending. Similarly, Savolainen's study of Finnish felony offenders suggests that socially supportive policies might reduce recidivism for parents. Regarding cognitive transformations, Giordano and colleagues (2011) found that wantedness of a pregnancy matters reduces involvement in crime regardless of their level of disadvantage, suggesting that the parenthood-crime relationship results from readiness to change or a hook for change; however, they also found that *unwantedness* of a pregnancy reduces crime for the least disadvantaged men and women in the study, complicating a clean interpretation and suggesting that something other than readiness for change is at work.

QUALITATIVE EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Qualitative research has found support for a relationship between parenthood and desistance from crime more consistently than the quantitative research has. In their cross-sectional study of Scottish youth, McIvor, Murray, and Jamieson (2004) found that males and females identified similar transitional events that influenced their desistance from crime, including leaving school, starting work, getting married, settling into a relationship, and having a family. Parenthood was associated with desistance for both males and females, though males were more likely to attribute their desistance to some other family responsibility than parenthood.

The qualitative interviews included in analyses by Giordano and colleagues (2002) highlighted that merely having children did not lead to desistance inevitably. First, women's interviews were more likely to focus on children as a hook for change while men's interviews referenced family (children connected with a partner) more generally.

Some respondents, however, made a connection between the birth or maturation of their children and changes in their own lifestyle, including an increased receptivity to shaming and being able to reflect on the negative consequences of criminal behavior—fearing that their child will know that they got into legal trouble. Giordano and colleagues (2002: 1040) argued that this is a “reconfiguration of the meaning and impact of ‘shame.’” It suggests that parenthood leads to desistance when parents consider the consequences of their behavior for their children, including how their children perceive them. The respondents in this study also reported a shift from a concern for oneself to a focus on tending to the daily needs of their children, and shifts in social networks from non-parents to other parents involved with their children. The authors concluded that, “At least in the early years, [children] cannot be considered a direct form of social control. Having a child creates possibilities for a reorientation of the self, but it is a self that must be actively embraced. Thus, changes respondents attribute to their children and movement into parenthood afford particularly strong examples of the role of cognitive transformations in the change process” (Giordano et al.: 1043). Finally, respondents *knew* the timing of this transformation—some reported it occurred with the birth of their child, while others reported that it occurred as the child grew older and “increasingly aware.”

This supports the theory of cognitive transformation, in which Giordano and colleagues (2002) argued that parenthood serves as a hook for change because it creates the possibility for a change in self-conception and contributes to social network changes. However, parenthood is merely a blueprint for change, and internalization of this blueprint might not be automatic. In order for parenthood to operate as a hook for change, offenders must see their old behavior as incompatible with the new person who is a

parent and they must experience and embrace a reorientation of the self—simply exposure to the condition of parenthood and being attached to one’s children is not enough to ignite change.

Giordano and colleagues (2011) also employed qualitative narrative data from parents in the TARS sample to illustrate their findings regarding parenthood and crime. They concluded that the cognitive salience of parenthood generally, and as it connected to partying, drug dealing, and other offenses specifically, varied across respondents. Additionally, TARS participants reported varying degrees of affection for and enjoyment of their children, suggesting that the *event* of a pregnancy ending in a live birth—presumed to indicate the onset of parenthood—does not adequately reflect variation in the cognitive experience of having and parenting a child. The narrative data also indicated that relationship status—as living with or not living with the co-parent of a child—failed to capture variation in the kinds of relationships participants have with the co-parents of their children. Narratives revealed that these relationships were often unstable, and many reported that the child resulted from brief relationships (such as a “two-night stand”, Giordano et al., 2011: 9) rather than from a long-term relationship. This finding has been reported in other places as well—disadvantaged women in particular tend to be more cautious about who they marry than they are about with whom they have children (Edin and Reed, 2005). Finally, the qualitative data also suggested that disadvantaged parents (who were more likely to report having unwanted births and were less likely to live with the biological co-parent of their child) might experience a cluster of disadvantage, each of which might interfere with the desistance process, including

receiving less support from their own parents, dropping out from high school, and unstable employment.¹⁸

In their study of 91 San Francisco gang members who were fathers, Moloney and colleagues (2009) concluded that the impact of fatherhood on desistance depends on structural changes and on subjective changes. The gang members reported that when they became fathers, they spent more time at home and less time on streets and hanging out with friends. Moreover, the mothers of their children supervised and monitored their behavior. They also reported subjective changes that came with fatherhood—feeling less impulsive and less prone to violence since becoming a father; greater sense of responsibility; and greater concern for future possibilities. Gang fathers reassessed the risks of gang participation and engaged in less risky income-generating behavior in order to be there for their children. Finally, gang fathers expressed a desire to be the positive role model for children that they lacked in their own lives.

Moloney and colleagues (2009) also reported that fatherhood provided an alternative identity to the gang-member identity—a breadwinner, provider, and protector instead of someone engaged in aggression, violence, and drug use. However, the gang members also reported that the expectations of fatherhood—especially providing—were difficult to navigate. Though they expressed a desire for legitimate employment, criminal records and lack of education and job training often blocked access to employment, and some experienced children as added pressure to sell drugs (also see Wakefield and

¹⁸ Though not addressed by Giordano and colleagues (2011), the qualitative representations of relationships combined with the indicator of the wantedness or unwantedness of a birth—approximately 75 percent of births to males and females were not wanted or wanted but not at that time—suggests a general lack of intention to become parents among the study participants.

Uggen, 2004). This suggests that *hustling* can improve one's standing as a good father by providing for their children, but at the cost of being unable to provide because of loss of freedom or life, of being a poor role model for their children, or of being cut off from their children by custodial co-parents because of their involvement in crime. Finally, becoming a father was linked to sudden changes in outlook, but gang fathers reported gradual changes in actual behavior. The timing of the change in outlook varied—some reported that their perspective changed when they learned of the pregnancy, but others reported experiencing change after the birth of their child (or after multiple children) or after the threat of losing their children.

In a related study, Hunt and colleagues (2005) found that gang-involved mothers reported many of the same factors that facilitated change for fathers—support from family, less time spent with peers, feeling less impulsive and more future-oriented and responsible. But in contrast to variation in the timing of change among gang fathers, gang-involved mothers reported that behavioral and identity changes started during pregnancy. Not only did they move away from risky behavior generally to ensure the well-being of the baby, the mothers in this study felt pressured to negotiate a sense of motherhood, and some negotiated the mother identity by controlling and regulating behavior; for example, they drank less in public and more at home, more with partners than with friends. Boyfriends and family members exercised supervision and monitoring of behavior that disagreed with a mother identity.

The ethnographic literature on street gangs also provides some evidence that parenthood is an important catalyst for desistance from gang membership, but it might be more salient for women than for men. Similar to McIvor, Murray, and Jamieson's (2004)

findings regarding desistance, parenthood was a more salient factor for leaving gangs for women than for men. Female “squares” among Moore’s (1991) adult Chicana gang members that left the gang were characterized by marriage and children for women, though men cited marriage and low involvement in drugs and prison as contributing to their ability to leave the gang. Moore and Hagedorn (1996: 211) report that having children has a greater impact on female gang members than male gang members and argue that the “new responsibilities associated with childrearing may speed up the process of maturing out of the gang.”

The relationship between parenthood and leaving the gang may be in part due to a change in identity and a change in routine activities. In their study of female gang members from Milwaukee and Los Angeles, Moore and Hagedorn (1996) found that gang girls might internalize identity changes associated with childrearing, and gang girls identified both childrearing and marriage as significant turning points for them (compared to males in this study, who indicated drugs, arrest, and jail time served as turning points). In his study of Chicana gangs in 1970s Los Angeles, Quicker (1999) reported that female gang members often left as the result of a “status change” such as getting married or having a baby. Gang girls can reclaim their reputation in the community if they assume the role of the “good mother” and retreat from gang activities, thus reducing the stigma of her former membership (Moore and Hagedorn, 1996). The responsibilities of child rearing may also serve to restructure the routine activities of gang girls. Additionally, there may be changes in the girl’s relationship with her parents as her parents become more involved in helping her to raise her child. This may give the girl the social support and supervision necessary for desistance.

Motherhood does not ensure that a young woman will leave the gang, however, especially if she is motivated to manage the potential of stigma. For Campbell's (1999: 111) Puerto Rican gang girls in New York, "Motherhood did not require abandonment of the gang, but it did entail making satisfactory arrangements for the child." However, female Puerto Rican gang members were labeled as bad mothers if they brought their children to hang out on the corner, so children were often left with grandmothers for the night.

SUMMARY

To date, there is little conclusive evidence of a relationship between parenthood and crime. There is some role for parenthood to play in the desistance process according to each of the theories described above, and the qualitative research consistently finds such a relationship. Thus far, quantitative research findings have been equivocal, but consensus is building. Furthermore, there is little research evaluating the claims made by the dominant desistance theories regarding the mechanisms within the desistance process. As Siennick and Osgood (2008) pointed out, most quantitative studies of parenthood and crime look at the impact of having a child, not the impact of living with a child or involvement in a parenting role. Also, the research examining why some offenders persist in crime after becoming parents is extremely thin. Finally, very few of these studies have examined the relationship between becoming a parent and continuity and change in crime specifically during the transition to adulthood among formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults.

THE PRESENT STUDY: EARLY YOUNG ADULthood, PARENTHOOD, AND CHANGE IN OFFENDING

Though we have some idea of the (un)likelihood that serious juvenile offenders will experience role transitions in early adulthood, we have a poor sense for how they experience this period of their lives. For example, how do they see the role of crime—their involvement in crime and the sanctions they have experienced—in their lives? What factors do they think are important in understanding whether they remain involved in crime? How do they perceive their opportunities for transitioning into adult roles and successfully meeting key markers of adult status? If they have experienced adult roles (gainful employment, parenthood, marriage), how do they think these new roles have related to their involvement in crime? If they do not experience traditional adult roles, what other factors might be related to their involvement in crime? Rich, qualitative data such as this could help us to build a fuller image of the factors that are most important in the lives of serious juvenile offenders and formerly sanctioned youth as they enter early adulthood. This data, in turn, can help us identify any similarities between their lives as they experience them and what we might expect based on theories of continuity and change derived from other samples of offenders

The specific propositions regarding the mechanisms of desistance and persistence processes have not been extensively evaluated. Instead, these propositions tend to be cited in discussion and conclusion sections of empirical studies rather than tested as hypotheses. As qualitative analysis can be ill equipped to test these propositions in the traditional, quantitative hypothesis-testing sense, this dissertation explores the assertions made by these theories using in-depth qualitative interviews of formerly sanctioned young adults.

The central research question for this dissertation is whether and how role transitions generally, and parenthood specifically, facilitate desistance and persistence from offending. Based on the theories reviewed here, the secondary question is, do formerly sanctioned young adults perceive role transitions as hooks for change (i.e., desistance from crime), or do the changes associated with adult role transitions contribute to change in offending regardless of whether desistance from crime is the ultimate goal? Redemption scripts, cognitive transformations, crystallization of discontent, and the age-graded theory of informal social control suggest the following competing ideas regarding the relationship between social factors, subjective factors, and desistance from crime. As a step toward better understanding the role of subjective factors and social-structural factors in crime, this dissertation examines how high-risk young adults experience the transition to adulthood and how becoming a parent relates to continuity and change in offending.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The present study was designed as a supplement to a larger, ongoing study, and the parameters for selecting informants for in-depth qualitative interviews were largely guided by existing research trends and gaps. Specifically, this study was designed to address an emerging concern with persistence and desistance from offending and with a growing theoretical interest in explicating the underlying mechanisms of the processes sustaining patterns of continuity and change.

The data for the present analyses consists of a one-time, in-depth interview with a subset of formerly sanctioned youth who participated in the Pathways to Desistance Study in Philadelphia. The primary purpose of these interviews was to capture perceptions of involvement in crime during the transition to young adulthood among this criminologically important population.¹⁹ In this chapter, I explain the rationale and advantages of qualitative methods to the study of continuity and change in offending and the value of conducting such a study with the Pathways sample. Then I provide more detail on the selection of subsample cases, sample characteristics, and data collection procedures. Finally, I describe the analytical approach that I used for findings presented in subsequent chapters.

RATIONALE

Laub and Sampson (2003: 58-59) argue that in-depth qualitative interviews offer at least five advantages to the study of criminal and delinquent behavior: 1) qualitative

¹⁹ The secondary purpose of this study was to suggest explanations and to generate hypotheses about the processes of continuity and change in offending that might be explored in the future with the detailed quantitative data set generated by the larger Pathways Study.

approaches have the potential to capture the processes of continuity and change in offending that might not be reflected by survey data; 2) qualitative accounts can “uncover complex patterns of continuity and change in individual behavior over time,” including intermittent offending patterns and turning points; 3) open-ended interviews can provide a detailed account of the experience and meaning of crime to the offender; 4) qualitative narratives ground behavior in social and historical context, helping to illustrate how macro-level events (like wars, economic recessions, changing family structure) might influence individual-level movement into and out of crime; 5) qualitative data are important to criminology because they show the human side of offenders to a field whose methods and theories often place a distance between criminologists and their subjects as well as between offenders and non-offenders. Becker (1966: xii) also notes that qualitative data can “[give] us insight into the subjective side of much-studied institutional processes,” such as experience in the juvenile and criminal justices systems.

The Pathways sample of offenders presents a unique opportunity for a qualitative study of desistance from crime. Primarily, as a group the subjects are at the age when most offenders and non-offenders transition from adolescence to young adulthood, entering new social roles and institutions thought to influence one’s criminal behavior and leaving the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Asked to reflect on their early adulthood years, older adult former offenders often associate role transitions, or lack thereof, with the direction of their criminal trajectories, but one might challenge such a long retrospective window (see Laub and Sampson, 2003). Interviewing offenders about their criminal behavior as they transition into new roles means that the interviews are more proximate to the period of interest and they

provide insight into offenders' perceptions as the transitions occur. Therefore, we develop a contemporaneous image of the processes, mechanisms, and decisions involved in continuity and change in criminal behavior during a crucial age period.

STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLE

This dissertation is the analysis of a qualitative supplement to the Pathways to Desistance study directed by Edward Mulvey at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine. Started in late 2000, the Pathways to Desistance Study is a large-scale, prospective longitudinal study of desistance from crime among serious adolescent offenders. It was conducted in two sites— Phoenix and Philadelphia. The aim of the Pathways study was to understand how developmental processes, social context, and intervention and sanctioning experiences influence the process of desistance from crime. It used a prospective design with multiple sources of information, including self-report, collateral report, and official records to understand within-individual change (Schubert et al., 2004). The original sample included 1354 adolescent boys and girls that had been adjudicated delinquent or found guilty in adult court for felony, misdemeanor weapons, or misdemeanor sexual assault offenses. The informants were between ages 14 and 17 at the time of the offense leading to a court petition to the juvenile or adult court system. Potential participants for the Pathways study were identified from a daily review of court information at each site. Because drug offenses represent a large proportion of offenses committed by this age group, the proportion of males with drug offenses was limited to 15 percent of the sample. No restriction was placed on females or youths transferred to the adult system (Schubert et al., 2004).

A baseline interview was administered within 75 days of the adjudication hearing for youth in the juvenile system or 90 days of the decertification hearing for youth in the adult system. The informants were subsequently interviewed approximately every six months for the three years following enrollment in the study, and then yearly after that (Mulvey et al., 2010; Schubert et al., 2004). When that the subsample was identified for the qualitative study (November 2006) all informants had completed the 48-month interview. Informants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 with a mean age of 21.5 years.²⁰ At the end of 2008, all informants had completed the 72-month interview (6 years, or 9 follow-ups plus baseline). Due to funding restrictions, data collection ended after the 84-month interview. Overall, the Pathways study followed these youth for the seven years after the initial court experience.

As I am located near Washington, DC, we selected cases from the Philadelphia site (n=701) for in-depth interviews. The Philadelphia sample participants for the Pathways study were predominately male (86.4 percent) and black (71.9 percent). Ten percent of youth were white and 15 percent were Hispanic. The remaining 2.7 percent were Asian, Native American or had missing ethnicity data. At the baseline interview, ages ranged from 14 to 19 and the median age was 16 years old (Brame et al., 2004: 263). Because the informants in this sample were just approaching young adulthood at the time of the qualitative interview and were predominately African American, the sample presents a counterpoint to the small body of qualitative literature on desistance that has been limited to mostly white and older adult informants (for example, see Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Shover, 1985, 1996).

²⁰ Carol Schubert, email to the author, November 8, 2006.

CASE SELECTION

The sampling strategy for the qualitative project was purposive and stratified based on patterns of offending. We wanted to identify individuals who appeared to be consistently involved in a high rate of self-reported offending over some period, and we wanted to identify those who appeared to desist from a period of high-rate self-reported offending (hereafter referred to as “persisters” and “desisters”). To select the male informants, we took advantage of the group-based trajectory analysis conducted by Mulvey and his colleagues (2010; also see Nagin and Land, 1993). These analyses modeled self-reported offending during the three years following adjudication, taking into account the effect of institutional confinement on the subject’s level of offending during each period. The variety score scale is composed of 22 items listing different serious illegal activities, and the participant indicated whether he or she had done any of these activities “ever” (at the baseline) or over the “last six months” (at the baseline and first six time points covering 36 months).

Five distinct subgroups were identified (Mulvey et al., 2010) and case selection of male informants for the qualitative study focused on two of these groups (see figure 3.1).²¹ In order to capture continuity of behavior, we selected from a group of males that was involved in a high rate of antisocial behaviors at the baseline interview and maintained a high rate of involvement over the 36 months following adjudication; “persisters” made up 8.7 percent of the total number of males in the Pathways study. In

²¹ Other patterns of offending were also identified (Mulvey et al., 2010), including a group that participates in offending at consistently “mid” level with a slight reduction in offending over time and two groups that reported relatively low levels initially and declined over time. These patterns are important to assess, but due to potential constraints on resources I hope to return to these groups at a later time.

order to capture behavioral change, we selected a group of males who reported a high rate of offending at the initial interview but reported a much lower rate at the 36-month interview. “Desisters” made up approximately 14.6 percent of the sample. Analyses conducted by Mulvey and colleagues (2010) indicate that the males in these two groups spent an equivalent amount of time in institutional care during the follow-up period (approximately 50 percent of both groups) and are equally likely to have received community-based services during this period. Though we intended to recruit an equal number of males from each of these two groups, the final sample for the present study was composed of 16 “persisters” and 14 “desisters.”

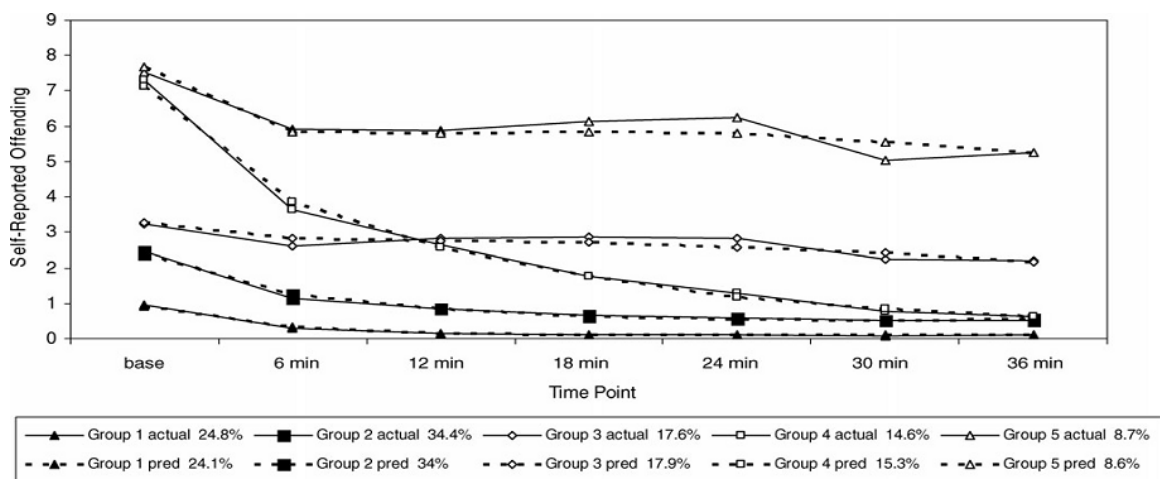


Figure 3.1 The five-group trajectory solution for males controlling for exposure time using the zero-inflated Poisson model (Mulvey et al., 2010: 463)

Because there were too few women in the sample to conduct a trajectory group analysis (184 females in the Pathways study), female informants were identified using a comparable method in which they were ranked by patterns of offending over the first seven time periods (covering the baseline and the first 36 months of the study). Women who reported at least one offense at the first five time points (baseline through 24 months) but no offenses in the last two time points (30 months and 36 months) were

identified as “desisters.” Women who reported at least one offense in each of the seven time points were identified as “persisters.” The top five women of each group were selected for interviews for a total of ten women.²²

RECRUITMENT, REFUSALS, AND NONPARTICIPATION

The staff interviewers working on the Pathways study at the Philadelphia site were instrumental in recruiting potential informants. Once potential cases were identified, the Philadelphia Pathways staff contacted informants to obtain updated contact information and permission to allow me access to their information. For enrollment, the Pathways staff interviewer contacted each potentially eligible informant, requested his or her authorization for sharing contact information with me for the qualitative interview, and completed a locator sheet that provided the informants’ name and contact information.

Everyone approached about the qualitative interview agreed to allow his or her information to be released to me. All ten of the potential female informants who authorized the release of her contact information agreed to the qualitative interview. I received contact information for a total of 36 male informants, six more than our goal. All of the six subjects that authorized the release of their information for the qualitative interview but ultimately did not participate in the qualitative interview were incarcerated. Two of the six men refused to participate in the qualitative interview; both refusals were from men incarcerated at State Correctional Institutions (SCI). The first man refused to meet with me once I arrived at the SCI and I had been warned by the Pathways

²² Elizabeth Cauffman, email message to Carol Schubert, spring 2008.

interviewer that the he might refuse because he suffered from anxiety and preferred to not leave his cell. The second man met with me briefly and but refused to participate in the interview because he was preparing for a parole hearing later that day. The third man was located at a local jail, but when I tried to schedule a meeting with him, I learned that he was in FBI custody for a court appearance and he remained with them for the remainder of the qualitative data collection period. The remaining three men were incarcerated at SCIs that refused permission to use a digital voice recorder at the facility.

An additional eight men initially identified as potential informants were ruled out from the final recruits. Two men moved out of state and one man was in the restricted housing unit (RHU) in an SCI and therefore could not give consent to be contacted by me, and five men were not located prior to the completion of data collection; ultimately they were not needed to complete the study.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

In all, forty interviews were conducted. The final sample for the qualitative interviews consisted of thirty men, sixteen of whom followed a persisting pattern of offending at the end of 36 months following adjudication; fourteen followed a desisting pattern. The ten women were evenly divided among persisting and desisting patterns. Table 3.1 presents demographic characteristics of the subsample that participated in the qualitative interviews. At the time of the interview, everyone was between ages 20 and 25. The sample was predominately African American (73 percent of men, 80 percent of women). Six of the men were white; two men and two women were Hispanic. At the time of the interview, 56 percent of the men were incarcerated; none of the women were incarcerated at the time of the interview.

In table 3.1, informants were considered parents if they reported at least one biological child. Some of the male informants reported involvement with their partner's children in a quasi-stepparent role. Unless they also reported having biological children, they are not counted here, though their insights and accounts are included in the parenthood analysis in chapter 6 to the extent that they are relevant, as they proved valuable to the analyses. More than half of the men reported being the biological parent of at least one child; 60 percent of the women reported having at least one child. Table 3.2 presents basic characteristics by informant, including the informant's nickname, age, and where the interview took place—either in the community (which includes Temple University, a residence, or a public space), a prison (i.e., State Correctional Institution), or a local jail. Additional demographic and life circumstances for each informant are presented in tables 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1 in the chapters that follow. Table 3.2 also presents information about parenthood, including the number of biological children the informant reported having (if any), he or she was expecting another child, and whether he or she reported taking on a parenting role with children other than biological offspring (for example, a romantic partner's children).

Table 3.1 Subsample characteristics

	Males (n=30)		Females (n=10)	
	Persisters (n=16)	Desisters (n=14)	Persisters (n=5)	Desisters (n=5)
Age	20–25	21–25	20–23	21–24
African American	62.5% (n=10)	85.7% (n=12)	80% (n=4)	80% (n=4)
White	31% (n=5)	7% (n=1)	0	0
Hispanic	6% (n=1)	7% (n=1)	20% (n=1)	20% (n=1)
Parenthood	50% (n=8)	64% (n=9)	60% (n=3)	60% (n=3)
Incarcerated at time of interview	69% (n=11)	43% (n=6)	0	0

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The intent of the qualitative study was to capture the informants’ “own stories.” To accomplish this, we employed a semi-structured interview format and used an interview guide to ensure we discussed a number of key areas of interest with respect to changes in offending during the transition to adulthood. The interview guide included questions about important relationships; perceptions of criminal behavior; perceptions of criminal and juvenile justice system experiences; critical events; perceptions of individual change; future goals and expectations; and advice for others who want to change.²³

Relationships. The first substantive section of the interview focused on important relationships in the lives of the informants. Strong interpersonal relationships with prosocial others facilitate desistance when they provide an offender with an emotional

²³ See Appendix A for the complete semi-structured interview guide.

bond to a conventional or significant other that allows that offender to see himself or herself as others see do (Matsueda and Heimer, 1997). Relationships provide physical or virtual supervision or monitoring, or restructure routine activities (Laub and Sampson, 2003). They provide social support and social capital, and can increase access to jobs and other resources (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993), and they might model prosocial behavior and attitudes (Akers, 1998; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007). Alternatively, strong relationships might have a negative effect, such as those that build criminal capital rather than social and human capital, or provide models for criminal behavior (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998). Moreover, a lack of relationships with strong ties may reduce a person's incentive to conform (Hirschi, 1969). The salience of relationships with family, peers, non-family adults, romantic or sexual partners, and children varies between young adults, and the salience of each relationship may vary for the individual young adult over the life course. In this section, I asked informants to discuss three domains of relationships: Important people in their lives, romantic partners, and their children.

Important people. Informants were asked to identify, describe, and discuss the influence of people in their lives they thought were most important. Depending on whom they talked about first, I encouraged the informants to identify different people, including someone older, someone their age, and someone they thought had a negative influence on their life (Bottoms and Sheffield, 2008; McAdams, 1995).

Romantic Partners. In this section, informants were asked questions similar to the questions regarding “important people” but that were specifically about romantic partners—either the informants' current partner or their most recent serious relationship.

Romantic partners were typically identified (by the men) as their baby's mother, as their wife (who may or may not have children), or their "girl" (who typically did not have children with the informant). I asked how the informant felt the relationship was going, what they thought might happen in the future, what they liked most about their relationship, and what potential problems might be. Additionally, I asked whether their partner knew about (or the extent of) the informants' involvement in crime, how their partner responded to arrests or incarceration, and how the informant thought their partner tried to keep them out of trouble. Finally, I asked the informants to identify the criteria for an ideal spouse and an ideal parent, and whether they felt that they or their partners met those criteria (Aronson, 1999; Bottoms and Shapland, 2008).

Children. Informants were asked to discuss any children in their life. Children typically included those that the informants were the biological parent of, though a few childless men claimed they felt fatherly toward and performed parental tasks for stepchildren or the children of their girlfriends. If informants reported that they had children, they were asked whether they lived with their children or saw their children regularly. I also asked a series of questions adapted from Edin and Kefalas' (2005) interviews with single mothers in Philadelphia. These questions touched on how the informants' lives had changed when they had children, what they liked and did not like about being a parent, how their expectations of being a parent compared to the reality, and how they spent a typical day with their children. They also include questions regarding their first thoughts upon learning they would be a parent, how other people responded to the news, whether other people treated them differently after they had their child, whether being a parent made them think differently about themselves, and how

they think their lives might be different if they had never had children. Finally, I also asked whether they thought having children influenced their involvement in crime and what that influence was.

Perceptions about one's own criminal behavior. Informants were asked about their perceptions of their own criminal behavior. How a person perceives himself, his behavior, and the crime payoffs sets the stage for involvement in criminal activities. A number of factors may influence whether someone commits a specific crime in a specific situation; the perceived risks (including sanctions) and benefits of a crime, perception of the potential victim, the use of alcohol or drugs, the presence of co-offenders, and an audience constitute the foreground factors of offending (Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Katz, 1988). But past experiences of doing crime can help shape one's assessment of the next criminal opportunity (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Desistance may occur if young adults perceive fewer opportunities to commit crime, become sensitive to the effects of their behavior on victims and others, or become more sensitive to the long-term costs of crime relative to its short-term benefits. In this section, I asked informants to tell me about their most recent or most salient arrest experiences and the kinds of illegal things they typically did (when actively involved in offending) that they might not have been arrested for. I also asked them about any changes in their involvement in crime, avoiding crime, and the costs and benefits of crime.

The criminal justice system: sanctions and services. Services, interventions, and sanctions each serve the goal of stopping crime. In the case of serious adolescent offenders, the goal of each justice system domain is to prevent future crime and facilitate desistance, but they operate in a much different manner, and their impact can vary from

person to person. For example, services might include counseling, anger management, or life-skills courses, which have the intended goal of preparing young adults for the transition to adult roles and facilitating re-entering the community, with the expectation that such preparation or treatment addresses the causes of criminal behavior.

Interventions might include mentoring programs, which aim to establish positive role models and build social capital for young adults who may not have it, as well as help them to build social ties and provide models for alternatives to crime. Sanctions such as probation and incarceration are intended to punish the offender and deter future crime by increasing the cost of crime relative to its benefits. The overall impact of any one of these system responses to criminal behavior, however, may not meet its intended goal. Young adults may think services do not address their needs or deny that they have a need for the service; sanctions may be viewed as unfair or operate as a venue for building criminal capital and severing ties to the community. In this section, I asked them about their perceptions of the criminal justice system in general, their incarceration or juvenile placement experiences, their probation or parole experiences, and their experiences with other interventions.

Critical events. “Critical events” or “turning points”—events that individuals believe had an influence on who they are now and where they are going, are a common theme in the life course literature (for example, see Sampson and Laub, 1993; Maruna, 2001). These events may emerge from narratives, but what might sound like important events to the interviewer may not be the most important events to the informant. To ensure that the interview captured those events the informant deemed most salient, I used the following script:

Now I want to spend some time talking about things that might have happened to you that have had a big impact on you. I want to focus specifically on events that might have affected whether you did things that could get you into trouble or things that happened that kept you out of trouble. To help us do that, let's look at your calendar [timeline] and talk about what might have been going on at different points in the last few years.

Then I asked, "During the time that we've been talking about, does anything stand out as something that changed the direction of your behavior? That is, can you think of an event or situation that you think is related to being more involved or less involved in crime? Some people might call this a turning point." Followed with, "Is there an event or situation that you think is related to some other change in your life?"²⁴

The transition to adulthood, agency, and future orientation. It is commonly asserted that the transition to adulthood is a crucial phase of the life course. The transitions associated with leaving childhood and entering adulthood are accompanied by opportunities for new identities and perceptions of self. Human agency and future orientation also play a key role during the transition to adulthood. Agency refers to one's perception of their own ability to make decisions *and* act on those decisions. It affects one's sense of control over what happens to them in the present and in the long-term future. Related to agency and control is a sense of the steps one needs to take to achieve one's goals, and whether such goals are realistically attainable. Agency affects whether one continues to be involved in crime or desists from crime as it influences how one perceives the role of crime in one's life, one's alternatives to criminal behavior, whether those alternatives are attainable, and the steps one must take towards acting on those perceptions. In this section, I asked informants about their childhood expectations of

²⁴ Loosely adapted from McAdams (1995) The Life Story Interview.

young adulthood (Aronson, 1999); what it means to be an adult; and about their expectations for the future with regard to goals and desired changes in themselves and their circumstances. I also asked informants how they could get the future they want and whether they perceived any obstacles to that future. Finally, I asked them to reflect on their future involvement in crime and to suggest a way to help people desist from crime (Bottoms and Shapland, 2008).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

The design and resources called for a one-time semi-structured qualitative interview with the informants. Since my time with each informant was limited, I took a number of steps to ensure I made the best use of the interview time possible. My main concerns were with establishing rapport and legitimacy with the informants and with avoiding redundancy—that is, asking background questions that were already reported in the regular interviews. First, to aid in establishing rapport and legitimacy, Philadelphia staff interviewers made the initial contact with potential informants to both gain their consent to release information to me and to convey information about the additional qualitative interview. This connected me with the ongoing study. Further, in most cases, the Philadelphia staff interviewers had met with and interviewed the same informants a number of times for their regular interviews. As a result, they were able to provide me with some additional information about the current lives of the informants and let me know what to expect when going to a particular neighborhood or home. When scheduling and conducting the interview, I usually mentioned the name of the Philadelphia staff interviewer. I also made a point to acknowledge some detail of informants lives

mentioned by the Philadelphia staff interviewer when possible (for example, whether they were working or had recently experienced the birth of a child or the death of a family member).

At the start of the qualitative interview, I explained to informants that the qualitative interview differed from the regular interview in that it allowed us to talk about things that the regular interview did not—specifically to explain why something happened the way it did. I told informants that I wanted to hear more of informant’s story in his or her own terms. I explained that we would discuss the circumstances around past involvement in activities that could have gotten the informant into trouble, as well as both positive and negative changes in the informant’s life, especially how involvement in crime fit into the informant’s life at the time. Informants were also informed of the steps taken to protect their confidentiality and of the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. They were asked whether they agreed to a digital recording of the interview (everyone agreed). Informants in the community and in local jails were paid \$100 for their participation; a couple of jail inmates asked that the money be sent to a family member, such as their mother or their children rather than deposited into their account through the jail. Inmates in the State Correctional Institutions were not paid for their participation.

The interviews took place at the homes of the informants, at Temple University, at county jails, and at State Correctional Institutions (SCIs) across the Pennsylvania. Interviews lasted, on average, about two hours and ranged from 90 minutes to 3 hours. The length of time depended largely on whether the interview questions were relevant to the individual informant and how eager the informant was to talk. On a few occasions, interview length was restricted due to time constraints. When the available time for the interview was limited (either due to facility requirements or the informants’ schedules),

the interviewer typically asked fewer probing questions or made an effort not to stray from the interview guide rather than omit sections of otherwise relevant questions. As a result, though perhaps varying in depth of description, all interviews are complete in that everyone was asked everything that was planned according to the interview guide.

VISUAL TIMELINE

Another way in which I connected the qualitative interview with the ongoing study was to make use of the extensive quantitative data available; this served to focus the interviews on substantive questions without spending a lot of time on background factors and to anchor those substantive questions to specific periods in the informants' lives; the timelines also helped establish rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee by connecting the qualitative interview to the ongoing Pathways study in the mind of the informant. To these ends, timelines were constructed utilizing the extensive calendar data collected in the regular interviews. In the regular interviews, informants were asked to recall information from a number of different domains on a month-by-month basis, covering the entire period between interviews. These domains include legal involvement (arrests), self-reported offending, sanctions (including time spent incarcerated), social service involvement, living arrangements, school involvement, work, and romantic relationships. Each domain was color coded to make them easy to follow. The timelines also included notes at each time-period regarding reported substance use consequences and symptoms, important relationships (friends and family), whether the informant had children, whether someone close to them died, and whether they witnessed or experienced violence. The timelines covered five to seven years (typically 2001 through 2007), and there was a gap of about 18 months, on average,

between the end of the timeline and the qualitative interview. At the time of the qualitative interview (summer 2008 through spring 2009), most of the subjects had completed their 60-month interview (two years past the period used for the trajectory analysis, five years in the study), many had completed the 72-month interview, and some had completed the 84-month interview. Most of the timelines covered a total of six years, including the three years covered by the trajectory analysis used to identify patterns of offending. The qualitative interviews occurred more than one year after the visual timeline ended, though for some of the subjects I was able to construct timelines that ended a few months prior to the qualitative interview.

The timelines were introduced shortly after starting the interview. I explained the timeline and reviewed some of the information it contained. The informant was allowed a few moments to review timeline on their own and was asked to confirm that the timeline “looked like them.” Informants were also asked to fill in any major omissions with respect to the birth of children, institutional placements, and arrests as these domains arose over the course of the interview.

REFLEXIVITY—MY ROLE AS CO-PRODUCER OF THE DATA

One factor to consider with all qualitative data collection is the role the interviewer plays in the production of the data, especially with respect to how the interviewer might be perceived by the informant (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Finlay, 2002). As described above, I took a number of efforts to connect myself to the Pathways to Desistance Study, in which the informants had been participating for five to seven years at the time of the qualitative interview. Informants were told that I would be contacting them; I identified myself as connected to the study at Temple University; I

mentioned the name of their regular Pathways interviewer when I called to scheduled interviews; some of the informants met me at Temple University to do the interview; and I used calendar data they had provided to the Pathways study to facilitate the qualitative interview. I even gave each participant my business card, which included with my name, a local phone number, an office at Temple University, and the Pathways to Desistance logo.

I also made an effort to present myself neutrally. As a small, white woman in my mid-30s, I was aware that I might be perceived as a representative of one of the many public agencies the informants had encountered over the years. In an effort to distance myself from these agencies and to put the informants at relative ease, I dressed casually but conservatively in cargo pants, jeans, and solid, dark-colored knit shirts and sweaters for each interview, regardless of whether it took place at Temple University, at the informant's home, or at a jail or prison. During the interviews themselves I tried to act in a relaxed manner, laughing when appropriate, asking informants to clarify slang terms (for example, the game, being on paper, back-judge, old head) and then using the slang later in the interview as appropriate.

Regardless of these efforts, some informants clearly perceived me as something other than a neutral interviewer. Three informants stand out in this regard. In the first example, Teresa (age 21, persister) referred to me as her counselor to someone who called her on her cellphone during the interview. This might have been because it was easier than explaining about the study, but it also might have reflected her general approach to the interviews. In a second example, Galatea (age 22, persister) became

defensive about her involvement in crime, in spite of my best efforts to remain neutral and to assure her that I did not view her as a criminal or a bad person.

In the third example, it was clear before we met that George (age 23, incarcerated persister) regarded me with a lot of suspicion, starting with when I called to schedule the interview. My initial contact with George went relatively smoothly—I contacted George on his girlfriend’s cellphone and he agreed to meet me at Temple the following week. The day after our initial contact, however, he called me from a different number wondering whom I was, indicating that his girlfriend told him someone called from my number. I explained whom I was and that we had talked the day before. The day before the scheduled interview, I called George to confirm our appointment and spoke with his girlfriend. She said he might not be able to make it to the appointment because he was “going through something right now.” The following day prior to our scheduled meeting, I left messages to find out if he would be able to make the appointment. When I finally spoke to his girlfriend, she said that George was “freaking out” because he had an appointment with his PO later that day, that the interview probably would not happen, and that she would call me back. When I did not hear back from her and George did not show for our appointment, I left a message with his girlfriend asking her to please let me know when would be a good time to try to contact him again, otherwise I would call back later in the week. At midnight I that evening, I received a hang-up call from the girlfriend’s cellphone number. I received another one the day after that, and another still a week later, just minutes after I attempted to call him again.

About one week after that I sent a letter to his girlfriend’s address suggesting that we meet at a restaurant that is close to his home, as I assumed he was nervous about

meeting me at Temple and his regular interviewer suggested this might help. I received no response. Ultimately, I interviewed George the following spring when he was in jail—he had been picked up on a probation violation a few months before. Even then, he was difficult to interview (difficult even for the jail setting) because he seemed to be constantly looking over his shoulder.

Though these three cases suggest that how I was perceived by the informants probably affected the qualitative data the informant and I were creating, they are likely not the only times it happened. It is likely that some of the men and women I interviewed presented to me the self they wanted me—as a mid-30s white woman—to see. This might be especially true for the parenthood accounts. Moreover, some informants might have been guarded about what they said because of the digital voice recorder or because we were in a jail or prison (or both), though all agreed to allow the recording. I am encouraged, though, that there were a number of common themes across interviews, suggesting to me that regardless of the presentations of self and reflected appraisals each of us were enacting do not reduce the overall validity of their accounts for the purposes of the analyses presented in this dissertation.

RECORDING AND TRANSCRIBING PROCEDURES

All of the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and saved in .mp3 format. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by six graduate students (including the interviewer) in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland. Each transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement prior to transcription and were expected to follow a strict transcription protocol and format adapted from McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003), Poland (2002), and Oliver,

Serovich and Mason (2005). As the interviewer, I reviewed each transcript to ensure consistency and to alter identifying information like names and specific locations. Additionally, the interviewer compared the transcripts to the audio recordings to verify the accuracy of the transcript.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The study employs Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis program, to facilitate the basic steps of analysis: coding the data, writing analytic memos, and creating visual displays of the linkages between codes, themes, and memos. The data have been “made manageable” with the first stage of coding, sometimes referred to open coding. Open coding is the first step toward condensing and organizing qualitative data by demarcating the core domains of inquiry and specific questions addressed in the interview guide (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). In addition to highlighting interview guide questions and domains, the interviews were reviewed line-by-line to assess what the data represent or illustrate in an effort to identify and code repeating ideas or emerging themes. This process involved asking basic questions such as, “What is this? What is it an example of? What is the person saying?” (Lofland et al., 2006). Memos linked to the thematic and open codes elaborate on emerging themes, describe how different themes might relate to each other, and link interviews that share themes. Codes appearing within a single theme were also linked using a visual display of the relationships between codes, thereby grouping the codes into more abstract constructs. Increasing the abstraction of concepts ultimately allows for the development of working hypotheses related to emerging themes and helps to make sense of what is “going on” in the data during analysis.

Of course, not all of the interview guide questions and emerging themes are relevant for the present task of describing and explaining how informants characterized continuity and change in offending. Thus, the analyses presented here focuses on the interview content specific to the domains of interest for the present study: adult role transitions, especially parenthood, challenges to role transitions, and involvement in crime.

The purpose is to explore whether key theoretical constructs, mechanisms and processes are present in the narratives (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). Generally, this purpose was met using an iterative process of “hearing what is said” about continuity and change. Analyses involved close, repeated readings of the data to identify similarities and differences within and between interview accounts. Preliminary analytic observations were documented as memos throughout the process. Emergent themes were evaluated, rejected, or refined by the interview data by making constant comparisons within and between informants as well as theoretical comparisons of the interview data to existing theories of desistance and persistence. I also looked for and evaluated negative cases (Carbone-Lopez and Miller, 2012; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2008). At each stage, I evaluated similarities and differences between persisters and desisters, men and women, and incarcerated men and non-incarcerated men.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

This study draws from “observed facts of empirical reality to form scientific opinions about theories and generalizations” (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994). It aims to systematically evaluate theories of desistance and persistence in offending using qualitative data. Qualitative data provide insight to how people organize their perceptions

of themselves and the world around them and allows us to investigate mechanisms within processes, and understand how processes develop over time (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Though qualitative data analyses has a reputation for being vague and non-scientific, the research presented here strives to be scientifically rigorous by a) explicitly stating the research problem and theoretical constructs; b) explicating each step of the data collection and data analyses processes, thereby anchoring interpretations and conclusions on potentially replicable empirical observations, and c) connecting the present research to existing frameworks and research on desistance and persistence from crime.

In spite of the strengths of this study, some limitations are worth noting. First, though this research is concerned with understanding long-term outcomes regarding continuity and change in offending over the life course, it is a retrospective study in which informants were asked to reflect on the recent past and to speculate about the near future. Though the perceptions and reflections that make up the data for this study are anchored by life-history calendar data presented during the interview, the patterns of behavior upon which case selection was based might or might not reflect patterns of offending at the time of the interview (as there was a lag between case selection and the qualitative interview), after the interview, or in the future. Recent trajectory analyses conducted by the Pathways to Desistance investigators indicated that one of the 14 male desisters interviewed for the present study “switched” to a more persistent pattern of offending when using seven years of data instead of three, and three of 15 male persisters switched to a desisting pattern (one male persister was excluded from the analysis due to missing data; analysis was based on males only).²⁵ It is important to keep group

²⁵ Carol Schubert, email to the author, spring 2012; also see Piquero and colleagues (2013) for more on the

membership discrepancies in mind over the course of these analyses. However, these data can provide valuable insight into intermittent patterns of offending. Furthermore, relatively short-term changes in offending and in life circumstances can provide clues into those mechanisms and processes underlying long-term, lasting change, especially if it resonates with observations from other studies and with existing theory (Horney, Osgood and Marshall, 1995; McGloin et al., 2007).

One might argue that the present study is its limited generalizability due to the sampling strategy. Generalizability to other populations, however, is not the goal of this study. The purpose of this study is to inform and refine existing theoretical models by uncovering processes and mechanisms not easily observed in quantitative research (Carbone-Lopez and Miller, 2012; Charmaz, 2006).

Another potential limitation of these analyses concerns the validity of the coding scheme and interpretations. Though I endeavored to maximize the clarity and transparency of the processes by which I draw my conclusions and the factors upon which my assessments are made, I am the only coder of these data. Future projects with these data should employ multiple coders and assess inter-coder reliability.

ORGANIZATION

The analyses and chapters proceed as follows:

Descriptive analyses of patterns of offending. I draw from the quantitative self-report data collected by the Pathways study to evaluate whether the persisting and desisting patterns identified at 36 months after adjudication, that were used to select the

trajectory analyses over 84 months.

informants for this study, reflect patterns of offending more proximate to the qualitative interview, which took place at roughly 84 months after adjudication. Then I analyze interview content and themes to describe how informants perceived and characterized their involvement in crime, thereby setting the context for the rest of the analyses. As with all of the qualitative analyses, I grouped similar repeating ideas illustrated by the interviews into categories that reflect emergent themes as well as theoretical constructs and processes from the theories of desistance (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

Crime and the transition to adulthood. In this section extend the descriptive analyses to explore whether and how structural and subjective mechanisms associated with continuity and change in offending are related to adult role transitions. I use theoretical comparison analysis to systematically examine whether and how these data reflect the constructs and propositions asserted by desistance theories (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). I look for examples that illustrate key theoretical constructs and identify patterns in how those constructs relate to role transitions, challenges, and involvement in crime.

Parenthood and crime. Organized around the *parenthood* role transition, I delve more deeply into whether and how social and subjective factors related to parenthood for this sample of formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults, and, subsequently, whether those mechanisms relate to continuity and change in offending.

CHAPTER 4: INVOLVEMENT IN CRIME DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

The purpose of this research is to address fundamental questions about changes in offending by formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults: What function, if any, do early adult social roles play in continuity and change in offending during early adulthood? To evaluate this question, I must first empirically assess the extent and nature of continuity and change in offending during the period most proximate to the qualitative interview. This chapter presents a brief description of changes in group membership (either persisting or desisting) from 36 months to 84 months following adjudication according to self-reported offending variety scores. It then presents the key findings regarding qualitative patterns of involvement in crime that emerged from the in-depth qualitative interviews with the forty informants from this study.

QUANTITATIVE CHANGES, 36 TO 84 MONTHS

One goal of this study is to develop a contemporaneous image of the mechanisms and processes involved in continuity and change in criminal behavior during early young adulthood. The life history-style interviews collected from the subsample of formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults selected from the Pathways study are well suited for this inquiry because the interviews occurred during the transition to adulthood—the period in which changes and challenges implicated in persistence and desistance from crime are concentrated. The informants were initially selected based on their patterns of offending in the first three years (36 months) after adjudication; however, many of the interviews took place more than 72 months after adjudication, during the last wave of the Pathways Study data collection (between months 72 and 84 of the Pathways study) or after data collection had ended; on average, the qualitative interviews took place an average of four

years (48.25 months, $s=7.445$ months, range 35 to 63 months) after the selection criterion period at the start of the study and occurred between 12 months before and 17 months after that their last Pathways Study interview (mean= 2.2 months after, $s=7.408$ months).

The length of time between the 36-month Pathways interview and the qualitative interview impacts the value of the original groups for the present analysis. To draw meaningful conclusions from comparisons of the narratives of “desisters” to “persisters,” the groups should be relatively distinct with respect to their involvement in crime at the time of the qualitative interview. As stated previously (in chapter 3), the men and women were selected based on their patterns of offending over the first 36 months of the Pathways study as measured by a variety score of self-reported offending. A group-based trajectory analysis of men’s self-reported offending conducted with the full complement of the Pathways study period (baseline to 84-month interview) indicated that four of the 30 men (13 percent) changed group membership.²⁶ One man, changed group membership from “desister” to “persister”; three men, changed from “persisters” to “desisters.” In each of these four cases, their group membership change agreed with the content and context of their qualitative interviews. Sal, age 21, changed from the desisting to the persisting group and was in jail awaiting trial on several charges for violent crimes related to drug market involvement. Of the three “persisters to desisters,” Eddie (age 25) had not reported an offense in 16 months or an arrest in over two years. Though Allen (age 22) and Jack (age 24) were incarcerated at the time of the qualitative interview, each

²⁶ Carol Schubert, email to the author, spring 2012; also see Piquero and colleagues (2013). It might not be surprising that group membership might change when more years are added to the data; the initial trajectories were estimated on only the data that were available at the time that the sample were selected (the first 36 months of the Pathways Study data). As with any model, adding more data can change the results.

had reported being involved in fewer offenses when not incarcerated in recent years. Finally, one man, Roy (age 22) was not included in the 84-month trajectory analysis due to missing self-reported offending data. Initially selected from the 36-month persisting group, Roy had been incarcerated for five and a half years at the time of the qualitative interview. During the qualitative interview, he confirmed the Pathways data proximate to our meeting, which indicated that his last involvement in crime occurred 13 months before. For this reason, Roy is included in the desisting group for the following analyses.

Group membership was relatively stable among the women as well. To assess the stability of group membership, the women were rank-ordered according to their self-reported variety scores at the 84-month interview.²⁷ Two of the 10 women changed groups: one from “desister” to “persister” and one from “persister” to “desister.” As with the men, the content and context of their qualitative interviews supported the group membership change. One woman, Galatea (age 22), shifted from the desisting to the persisting group; compared to the other women, Galatea had the highest self-reported offending variety score at 84 months (0.32, or 7 different offense types out of 22 possible compared to 0.045 to 0.18 or 1 to 4 offense types for the four other persisting women) and she was arrested and jailed three times in the year prior to the qualitative interview. Princess, age 20, shifted from the persisting to the desisting group. As with the other four desisting women, her self-reported offending variety score was 0 at the 84-month Pathways interview, but in the year prior to the qualitative interview (the period covered by the 72 month Pathways interview), she reported involvement in fights on two separate occasions.

²⁷ This is similar to the original method used to select the women into the original groups.

In all, seven of the forty informants formally changed group membership according to the quantitative data. However, many of the 33 other informants' involvement in crime was dynamic in the last four years of the Pathways study, as indicated by arrest, incarceration, and self-reported offending data collected by Pathways and as reflected in the qualitative interviews (see figures 4.1 and 4.2). Table 4.1 presents the criminal history data for each of the 40 informants. According to self-reported offending measures by the Pathways study as well as reports obtained during the qualitative interviews, all but one informant engaged in at least one offense in the previous 4 years;²⁸ 70 percent (28 out of 40) reported at least one offense in the 12 months prior to the qualitative interview. Thirty of the 40 informants had been arrested in the previous 4 years; only one informant had not been arrested since the baseline of the Pathways study.²⁹ Of the 10 informants who were arrest-free during the last four years of the Pathways study, three were incarcerated or had been released from prison very recently after 50 or more months of incarceration.³⁰ During that same period, 27 informants (67.5 percent, including 23 men and four women) were incarcerated or institutionalized at least once, either as adolescents, adults or both, in jails, prisons, detention centers, youth development centers, or a contracted residential facilities. Seventeen men (42.5 percent of the sample, 56.7 percent of the men) were incarcerated in jails or prisons at the time of the qualitative interview; no women were incarcerated at the

²⁸ Ramona's last self-reported an offense 72 months before the qualitative interview.

²⁹ Rita had not been arrested since the baseline offense.

³⁰ Leon had been released from prison the week prior to the qualitative interview after having served 75 months incarcerated; Roy had been incarcerated for 66 months; Damion had been incarcerated for 51 months.

time of the qualitative interview. The 17 incarcerated men had been locked up for periods of less than a month to 66 months, or for an average of 20.15 months ($s=20.14$).

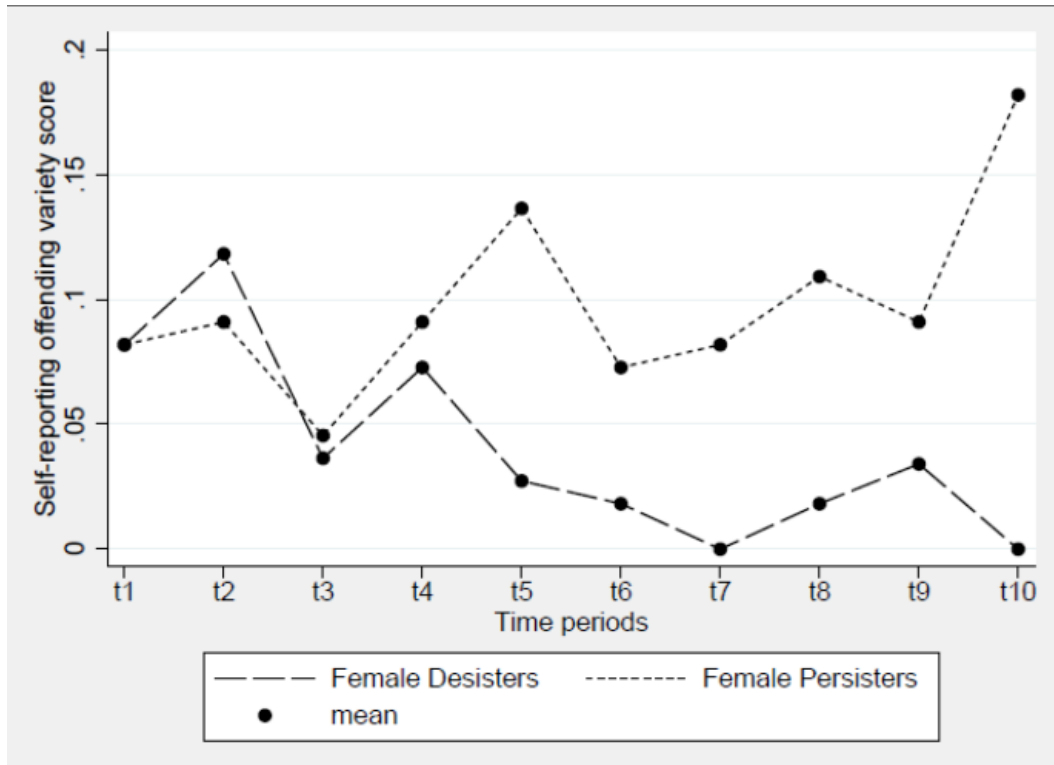


Figure 4.1 Mean patterns of self-reported offending over 84 months (10 time points), females

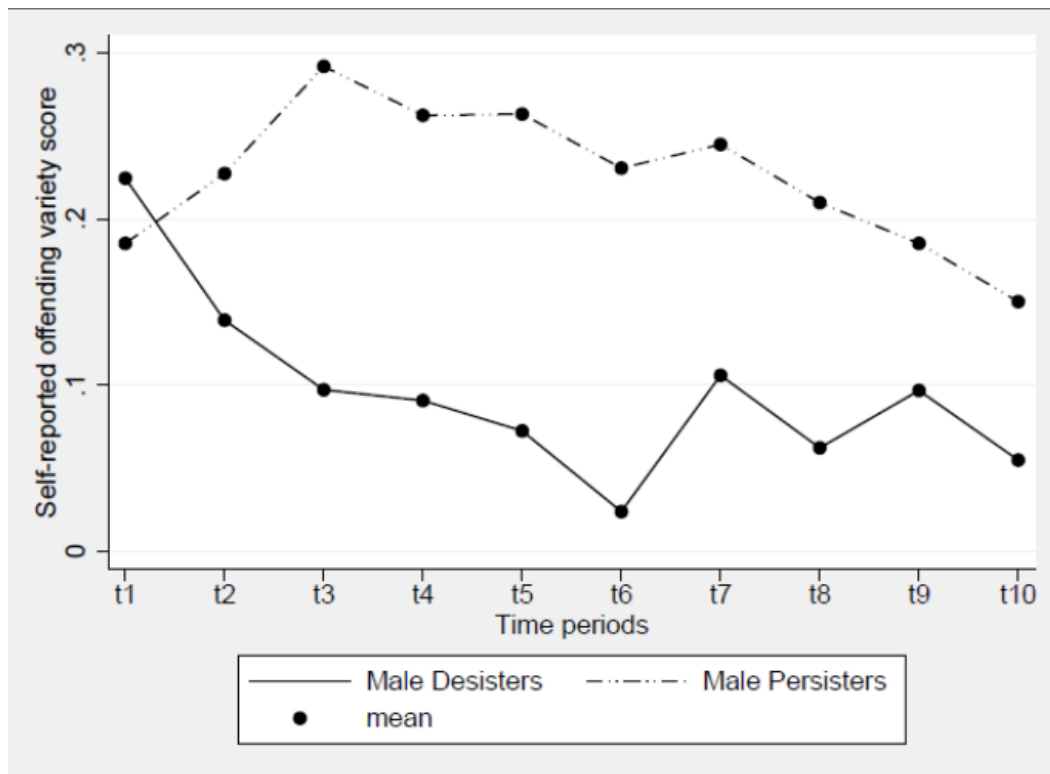


Figure 4.2 Mean patterns of self-reported offending over 84 months (10 time periods), males

Table 4.1 Criminal history, baseline to qualitative

Nickname	Age at qualitative	Age at Baseline	Changed group since 36 months	SRO variety score, wave 10	SRO variety score, qualitative	Months since last SRO	Months since last arrest	# Arrests, baseline to Wave 10	Months since last incarceration ⁺	Length of last incarceration in months	# Times incarcerated baseline to wave 10	# Months incarcerated baseline to qualitative	Proportion of time incarcerated baseline to qualitative
<i>Desisters at 84 months (n=22)</i>													
Anne	22	15		0.0000	0.0000	8	77	2	**	**	0	0	0
Camille	21	14		0.0000	0.0000	12	54	2	45	10	1	10	0.13
LeeAnn	22	15		0.0000	0.0000	32	28	2	5	23	2	46	0.54
Princess	20	14	yes	0.0000	0.0455	3	19	1	63	10	1	11	0.14
Ramona	24	17		0.0000	0.0000	72	78	4	56	10	3	37	0.43
Adam	24	16		0.0455	0.0455	0	30	3	0	30	3	79	0.87
Allen	22	14	yes	0.0000	0.0000	12	14	3	0	16	4	55	0.63
Cody	23	17		0.0455	0.0455	8	32	1	60	14	1	15	0.2
Damion+	24	17		0.0000	0.0000	27	51	4	0	51	3	80	0.93
Eddie	25	17	yes	0.0455	0.0455	16	26	2	84	14	1	14	0.14
Gregory	25	17		0.0000	0.0000	19	66	1	54	9	1	10	0.11
Henry	21	14		0.0455	0.0455	0	8	5	62	11	2	19	0.22
Isaac	25	18		0.0455	0.0455	0	59	1	50	9	1	10	0.11
Jack	24	17	yes	0.0000	0.0000	5	5	6	0	6	7	43	0.49
Kenneth	24	16		0.0000	0.0000	39	41	6	3	0.25	5	29	0.33
Leon	22	16		0.0455	0.0455	4	60	2	0.25	70	2	75	0.89
Neal	24	16		0.0909	0.0909	0.25	0	6	0	0.5	4	38	0.42
Raymond	23	16		0.1364	0.1364	13	1	3	64	14	1	13	0.17
Rollo	23	16		0.2273	0.2273	10	46	1	34	13	3	47	0.54
Warren	24	17		*	0.1818	10	12	9	0	12	1	10	0.13
William	23	17		0.0455	0.0455	0	13	7	0	13	4	56	0.67
Roy	22	16	yes	*	*	13	65	3	0	66	2	67	0.94

Table 4.1 Criminal history, baseline to qualitative, continued

Nickname	Age at qualitative	Age at Baseline	Changed group since 36 months	SRO variety score, wave 10	SRO variety score, qualitative	Months since last SRO	Months since last arrest	# Arrests, baseline to Wave 10	Months since last incarceration ⁺	Length of last incarceration in months	# Times incarcerated baseline to wave 10	# Months incarcerated baseline to qualitative	Proportion of time incarcerated baseline to qualitative
<i>Persisters at 84 months (n=18)</i>													
Frankie	21	14		0.1818	0.1818	0	41	4	**	**	0	0	0
Galatea	22	14	yes	0.3182	0.3182	0	4	3	6	2	2	4	0.05
Rita	21	15		0.1818	0.1818	0	**	0	67	4	1	5	0.07
Rosie	23	15		0.1818	0.1818	1	1	2	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.01
Teresa	21	14		0.0455	0.0455	12	8	1	70	20	1	21	0.26
Carlos	24	16		0.2273	0.2273	3	3	7	0	3	11	48	0.53
Danny	22	16		0.0455	0.0000	13	4	1	0	5	5	31	0.42
Dean	24	17		0.0455	0.0455	14	47	2	22	13	3	34	0.43
George	23	15		0.4545	0.4545	0	3	4	0	3	5	53	0.54
Gerard	23	16		*	0.1818	21	22	1	0	22	4	48	0.55
Lee	23	15		0.0455	0.0455	15	44	7	0	44	2	61	0.64
Peter	25	17		0.2273	0.2273	12	15	1	80	17	1	16	0.17
Raphael	21	14		0.2273	0.2273	0	1	7	25	13	4	31	0.4
Remi	20	14		0.2273	0.2727	3	55	3	38	16	1	29	0.39
Sal	21	14	yes	0.0455	0.0455	4	12	5	0	13	5	63	0.73
Stan	24	16		0.3636	0.3636	0	6	3	0	2	3	14	0.16
Tommy	22	15		0.0000	0.0000	9	9	7	0	9	5	70	0.89
Yusuf	24	17		0.0455	0.0455	0	47	2	0	59	2	67	0.78

* Data missing; informant did not complete the Pathways interview.

** Not applicable because informant did not experience the event since the Pathways baseline interview.

+ Informants whose months since last incarceration were 0 were incarcerated at the time of the qualitative interview

To determine whether comparisons of narratives should be made based on original group membership (36 months) or on group membership based on more proximate patterns of offending (84 months), I used t-tests to compare desisters to persisters to each other (at 36 months and 84 months) according to sample means across a number of different criminal history variables assessed relative to the time of the qualitative interview. *SRO variety score, most proximate wave* is the variety score calculated by the Pathways study for the data collection wave closest to the qualitative interview (either the 84 month wave or the 72 month wave; the cut-off point for distinguishing between waves was 6 months). For qualitative interviews that were more than 12 months after the last Pathways wave, data from the last wave were used. *Time since last SRO, time since last arrest, and time since last incarceration* are all counts of the months since the last event based on either the Pathways data or, if they conflicted, the informants' qualitative report. *Proportion of time incarcerated* is the number of months incarcerated as a juvenile and/or adult since the Pathways baseline interview divided by the number of months from the Pathways baseline interview to the qualitative interview.

For each comparison, the null hypothesis was that desisters were not significantly different from persisters. Because the women were generally less involved in crime than the men regardless of group members, t-tests were conducted using all 40 informants and for the 30 men only. Table 4.2 presents results for the t-tests comparing original two groups based on the sample selection criteria (pattern of offending in the 36 months following adjudication). The t-tests indicate that the SRO variety scores most proximate to the qualitative interview are marginally significant different. Persisters reported a

larger variety of offending than desisters (0.1386 compared to 0.0670; $p=0.055$ for the full sample; 0.1476 versus 0.0685, $p=0.098$ for the men only). Persisters also reported marginally significantly fewer months since their last arrest than desisters did, but only for the full sample (21.57 months compared to 35.37; $p=0.077$). Thirty-six-month persisters and desisters were no different on months since last self-reported offending, number of arrests during the study period, months since last incarceration, and proportion of time incarcerated. Together this suggests that the two groups are not very distinct with respect to their involvement in crime proximate to the qualitative interview, which could make it difficult to determine the mechanisms underlying each pattern of offending.

Table 4.2 T-tests comparing desisters to persisters as indicated by 36-month groups

Variable	Desisting mean (SD) n	Persisting mean (SD) n	t-score	p-value
SRO variety score at Qualitative (most proximate wave), All	.0670 (.0888) n=19	.1386 (.1315) n=20	-1.983 df=37	.055*
Men only	.0682 (.0685) n=14	.1424 (.1476) n=15	-1.715 df=27	.098*
Months since last SRO, All	13.59 (18.230) n=19	7.24 (6.789) n=21	1.489 df=38	.145
Men only	9.59 (11.730) n=14	8.50 (6.890) n=16	.315 df=28	.755
Months since last arrest, All	35.37 (26.079) n=19	21.75 (20.53) n=20	1.817 df=37	.077*
Men only	30.79 (23.225) n=14	22.88 (21.587) n=16	.967 df=28	.342
Months since last incarceration, All	24.40 (27.251) n=18	22.50 (31.824) n=20	.197 df=36	.845
Men only	23.38 (28.381) n=14	15.56 (28.381) n=16	.751 df=28	.459

Variable	Desisting mean (SD) n	Persisting mean (SD) n	t-score	p-value
Proportion of time incarcerated, All	.3932 (.30641) n=19	.4095 (.27885) n=21	-.177 df=38	.861
Men only	.4514 (.31354) n=14	.5075 (.23999) n=16	-.544 df=28	.584

* $p \leq 0.10$

Desisters and persisters are somewhat more distinct when group membership is based on patterns of offending at 84 months, which includes the period proximate to the qualitative interview. As illustrated in Table 4.3, using this criterion, persisters reported statistically significantly higher self-reported offending variety scores than did desisters during the period most proximate to the qualitative interview (full sample, $p=0.001$, men only $p=0.017$), with persisters reporting a greater variety of offending than desisters at the time of the qualitative interview. Persisters reported marginally fewer months since last self-reported offending than desisters when looking at men and women together ($p=0.071$). Persisters also reported significantly fewer months since last arrest in the full sample ($p=0.029$). As with the 36-month groups, persisters and desisters do not differ significantly in time since last incarceration and proportion of time spent incarcerated, and male persisters and desisters do not differ significantly on months since last self-reported offending and months since last arrest.³¹

³¹ These analyses were repeated on a subsample restricted to those men and women who were not incarcerated and the patterns remained substantively the same (the p-values were slightly larger but they were still at least marginally): 84 month persisters ($n=9$) and desisters ($n=14$) differed significantly with respect to self-reported variety score at qualitative interview ($p=.000$), months since last self-reported offense ($p=.085$), and months since last arrest ($p=.060$). This suggests that the t-tests were not dramatically influenced by the incarcerated men.

Table 4.3 T-tests comparing persisters to persisters as indicated by 84 month groups

Variable	Desisting mean (SD) n	Persisting mean (SD) n	t-score	p-value (2-tailed)
SRO variety score at Qualitative (most proximate wave), All	.0476 (.0634) n=21	.1692 (.1321) n=18	-3.749 df=37	.001***
Men only	.0597 (.0679) n=16	.1643 (.1467) n=13	-2.545 df=28	.017**
Months since last SRO, All	13.78 (16.76) n=22	5.94 (6.855) n=18	1.858 df=38	.071*
Men only	10.37 (10.685) n=17	7.23 (7.132) n=13	.913 df=28	.369
Months since last arrest, All	35.68 (25.188) n=22	18.94 (19.441) n=17	2.266 df=37	.029**
Men only	31.12 (23.449) n=17	20.62 (20.123) n=13	1.291 df=28	.207
Months since last incarceration, All	27.63 (30.248) n=21	18.18 (28.243) n=17	.987 df=36	.330
Men only	24.19 (30.815) n=17	12.69 (23.907) n=13	1.111 df=28	.277
Proportion of time incarcerated, All	.4105 (.3043) n=22	.3900 (.27474) n=18	.221 df=38	.826
Men only	.4582 (.3131) n=17	.5115 (.2191) n=13	-.509 df=28	.615

* $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$

Together, these t-tests of different indicators of involvement in crime support my decision to rely on more proximate patterns of offending for the two comparison groups, desisters and persisters. However, as the rest of this chapter will show, within both groups—and within the members of these groups over time—a lot of variation in offending remains.

PATTERNS OF OFFENDING: INFORMANTS ACCOUNTS

There is a maxim in qualitative research that says that qualitative data analysis begins the moment the researcher steps into the field. Though the quantitative data indicate that there was remarkable stability in group membership in between the time-period used by the sample selection criteria (36 months) and the period most proximate to the qualitative interview (84 months), there appeared to be a lot of movement in and out of crime over time among both persisters and desisters, and this was apparent even before the qualitative interviews were scheduled. That is, many of the desisters did not appear to have terminated their involvement in crime at 36 months, and many of the persisters experienced periods of involvement in fewer types of offenses as well as periods of abstinence.

Recall that preparation for each qualitative interview required that I receive updated contact information for each informant from a Pathways Study interviewer. I also constructed visual timelines of monthly self-reported offending, arrests, incarcerations, employment, living situations, and other domains based on life-event calendar data collected by Pathways study. The first indicator that the desister/persister selection criteria inadequately described recent patterns offending emerged as I received contact information for each informant. Nine of the 14 desisting men were incarcerated at either a local jail or a state correctional facility at the time the contact information was collected. Though arrest and incarceration are not definitive indicators of continued involvement in crime, such a high rate of incarceration among a group that appeared to be desisting 36 months into the Pathways study is cause for investigation. The second indicator of ambiguity emerged as I examined calendar data and constructed timelines in preparation for the interviews. Members of both groups self-reported intermittent

offending; that is, crime after periods of abstinence, and/or periods of abstinence after long periods of continuity. The crime most informants returned to after a period of abstinence was selling drugs—sometimes for a few weeks, sometimes every day for months and years at a time. Some also engaged in crime only occasionally, and such spontaneous, episodic offending was usually violent or destructive, and usually related to anger, alcohol and drug use, or coming to the aid of a threatened friend or family member. Finally, a few who had been locked up briefly and repeatedly in recent years said these periods of incarceration resulted from technical violations of parole and probation.

OFFENDING WHILE DESISTING

During the interviews, I asked each informant about the context and meaning of recent arrests, incarcerations, and a typical self-reported offense from the last few years of the timeline. For those identified as “desisters” this sometimes meant they had to account for recent periods of offending, or “not staying out of trouble.” Three patterns of emerged from the accounts of “desisting” men and women:

1. Drug market involvement.
2. Spontaneous, episodic offending. Altercations, destruction of property resulting from arguments or fueled by anger, alcohol, or drugs.
3. Technical probation violations. For example, not attending anger management classes (Kenneth) or violating house arrest conditions that resulted in 45 to 90 days in jail (Raymond).

Selling Drugs

Drug market involvement (typically selling drugs) was mentioned by 36 out of the 40 informants: All of the persisters and 19 of the 22 persisters discussed selling drugs at some point. Of the three emerging patterns of “offending while desisting,” drug market involvement was the most pervasive. Only Jack, Princess, Camille, and LeeAnn never mentioned selling drugs; the remaining two female desisters, Anne and Ramona, had not recently been involved in selling drugs (roughly the previous four or five years). Ten of the remaining male desisters reported selling drugs for sustained periods in the past five years; four of these men—Gregory, Isaac, Raymond, and Warren—said they had failed to report their involvement in selling drugs to the Pathways to Desistance Study, though they did report other offenses.³²

During the qualitative interviews, each of these men said that they supported themselves and their families with income earned from involvement in the drug market. As the men explained, past (and sometimes present) involvement in the drug trade supplemental legal income or took the place of legitimate employment (Sullivan, 1989; Uggen and Thompson, 2003).

Though he had been out of the drug trade for over a year when we met, Raymond’s long-term involvement in selling drugs supplemented his legal income. At 23, Raymond was married for four years, was raising three children, and was steadily employed in the restaurant industry for a couple of years. At one point, Raymond

³² A fifth man, Rollo, hinted at regular involvement in selling drugs in spite of what the Pathways self-reported data indicated, but he did not state it outright during the qualitative interview as others did.

returned to selling drugs after a brief period of abstinence. When I asked him why he went back to selling drugs, he said,

Raymond: *As far as, like, that money—that money was good, and I had to do what I had to do for my kids, for my wife, and for me.*

Many of the men I interviewed who sold drugs at some point said that selling drugs was an easy and viable means of supporting themselves and their children, especially during periods of transition. For example, when Henry's (age 21) daughter was born, when he was 19, he underwent a number of changes in a short period of time. He had moved out of his mother's home into a home he shared with his girlfriend and his daughter. At the time, he had been detailing cars and selling drugs on the side for a few months, but when he landed a better job at a baker, he stopped selling drugs. After just one month, he lost the bakery job when he left work in the middle of the day to meet with his probation officer; his employer claimed he failed to punch out at work. When he was fired, he reluctantly returned to selling drugs. Henry said,

Henry: *It took a long time to get back out there because I ain't want to. But as times got harder and bills started piling up, I had to do something.*

Selling drugs served as the only income for the most of the previous five years for at least two informants: Isaac and Warren, neither of whom reported their drug market involvement to the Pathways study. Warren (age 24, incarcerated) said that he sold drugs "twenty-four seven." Isaac (age 25) had been unemployed for nearly all of the previous five years, since around the time he was arrested and incarcerated on a drug charge. Asked if he was trying to stay out of trouble (my words), Isaac paused before answering,

“I’ve been trying, of course. But you know [I’ve] just been a little lucky.³³” I then asked what kinds of “stuff” he was involved in. He responded, “Oh, the last couple of years? To eat and survive I’ve been selling drugs. Just trying to survive.” He explained that he had filled out numerous applications for legal employment, but he felt he was at a disadvantage on the job market because he had a felony record.³⁴

Spontaneous Offending

For at least nine of the desisters—four women and five men—involvement in crime in recent years was spontaneous, sporadic, often violent, and usually the result of a dispute or anger. Four of the five desisting women and five of the desisting men engaged in occasional, spontaneous violence.

At 23, Cody was living with his two sons and his girlfriend of four years. He had recently been laid off from work. He self-reported periods of abstinence (no offenses at all) in the fourth and fifth years of his participation in the Pathways Study, but subsequent years were marked by brief periods of offending. Cody described his intermittent involvement in crime as spontaneous and episodic, the result of an argument or simple opportunity, and often fueled by anger, alcohol, or drugs. For example, Cody said, “It was like, I break something before I punch you now. And usually, [it used to be] I just punch them and keep punching. . . . If you a guy I would probably punch you in your face,

³³ Isaac’s answer, “I’ve just been lucky,” to my question about whether he was staying out of trouble suggests we had different definitions of “trouble.” My definition of trouble was involvement in crime, while his appeared to be detection by police and arrest.

³⁴ I will return to the perceived relationship between having a felony record and employment in the next chapter.

but if you a female, I probably just break something of yours. Something I know that you love.

Similarly, Henry (age 21) had not self-reported any offenses in the two years before we met; however, he had been arrested on a drug charge and on a simple assault charge the year before. The simple assault charge stemmed from a very public argument he had with his ex-girlfriend in front of their child's school:

Henry: *[We] start arguing, she start hitting me. All I try to do is grab her. I grabbed her and tried to put my hands in her pockets to get my keys, but she wouldn't let me. Then I guess somebody, a neighbor, heard all this noise and stuff, called the cops. We weren't supposed to be around each other because we had restraining orders from something, so I got locked up.*

Henry and his ex-girlfriend (his daughter's mother) both had restraining orders against the other for several incidents the year before.

Anne's (age 22) experiences with fighting during adulthood characterized each of the other four women's experiences—in each case the fight was between the informant and another woman as the result of petty arguments. One of Anne's 2 fights in the previous year stemmed from jealousy (Anderson, 1999; Daly, 1994).

Anne: *A friend of mine, she thought I like her husband for some reason. And of course, I didn't. And she just like kept calling me names and calling me names, and that doesn't really bother me or anything like that. You can say whatever you want to say, just don't get in my face. Stay out of my area, and you can say whatever you want to say. She stepped in my area and she got beat up. And that's pretty much it. . . I don't even want to take it back. . . I blacked her eye and that was it. She was alright.*

LeeAnn (age 22) was the only woman to have spent time upstate in a prison. She had been released from prison about five months before the qualitative interview after

having served nearly two years for assaulting another woman outside her aunt's house where we met. She described the incident this way:

LeeAnn: *I stabbed a girl up, right outside of this door.*

Me: *OK. Can you tell me what happened?*

LeeAnn: *She kept getting smart and she was bothering me and we was fighting and she threw bleach on me and I stabbed her up and went to jail.*

Violating Probation, Technically

Two desisting married fathers, Kenneth (age 24) and Raymond (age 23), were incarcerated in local jails while I was trying to schedule interviews with them. In both cases, the men were entangled in the criminal justice system and their most recent confinements resulted from technical parole or probation violations, violations they said they incurred when they had to choose between meeting the conditions of their parole or probation and going to work and caring for their families (Petersilia, 1999).

When the Pathways staff obtained Raymond's (age 23) contact information, before I interviewed him, Raymond was incarcerated at a local jail, serving 45 days for violating the conditions of his house arrest; the monitoring system for his ankle brace reported to the monitoring company (and ultimately to the police) that he was forty-five minutes late returning home from work. He explained to me that the monitor had been alerting throughout the day, starting when he left the house in the morning to take his children to school.

Raymond: *The box was going crazy all day like it had been at seven-thirty. We get up at 7 o'clock and I drop the kids off at school. When I came back the box was just going off. My wife was like, "Yo, you need to call the people. Your box was just going off crazy." This was like every 15 seconds: It would just go off for 30 seconds, it would just stop, [and] then it would go off. It was doing that all*

day. So I'm calling—I called them like, "You need to come out here and do me this for the box, because it's—like it's going crazy." They were like, "Well, you need to call your PO. He didn't give us the authorization to come out." Blah, blah. So I called and left him two messages. Nothing happened. I'm like, "Alright, forget it." I went out [to work]. Came back that night, [and] they came and got me.

By age 25, Kenneth had spent a significant amount of his adult life in local jails for probation violations stemming from a four-year-old drug charge that he said he was not responsible for. By his account, he had given up crime and selling drugs shortly after his daughter was born, when he was 20. When I initially tried to schedule an interview with Kenneth, age 25, he had just been locked up for missing three anger management classes that were a condition of his probation; he spent 90 days in jail. Kenneth explained his most recent violation when I asked him whether probation restricted what he would do otherwise.

Kenneth: *Yeah, it restrict a lot of stuff. But, I mean, I wouldn't be doing the stuff [crime] anyway right now. But it definitely mess with your schedule. . . Like you might got to work or have something to do that's important—probation comes first... Yeah, this time right here—that's another reason why I got violated. I couldn't go to the anger management program because I was working.*

Me: *So you had to make a choice?*

Kenneth: *I chose work, because the PO wasn't going to let me and my family come live with him (laughs) while I do the classes.*

Ultimately, Kenneth completed the anger management classes while he was incarcerated.

The perceived threat of unfulfilled probation requirements from the past hung over other desisters, though they made light of it. For example, Gregory (age 25, desister) said he never finished paying restitution to his juvenile probation officer, and Anne (age

22, desister) said she believed that she still had a bench warrant for not completing community service dating from 2003.

Anne: Since I've been back in Philly, I'm like, man, what if I get pulled over, since I'm driving, and they lock me up for a bench warrant when I was a kid? Where would I go? Would I go to the Youth Study Center or would I go to big people prison? And I'm like, ahhh! That's scary! (laughs)

CRIME ON THE INSIDE

Not surprisingly, some men who were incarcerated engaged in crime while they were behind bars (five of the seventeen incarcerated men). These men described differences in crime, their own crime and that of other inmates, according to whether they were “upstate” in a State Correctional Institution (SCI) or whether they were in locked up at a local jail. Nearly all of the men spent some time in one of four facilities in the Philadelphia Prison System on State Road, and those who also spent time upstate described the conditions and opportunities for crime in the two types of institutions as being very different. The State Road facilities were described as being staffed with correctional officers (COs) who came from the same communities as the inmates, so the inmates and COs had similar racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status backgrounds, and they often knew each other on the outside. The environment and opportunities for crime were described as being just like the streets in that drugs, cellphones, and weapons were all easy to come by in the State Road facilities. Yusef (age 24, incarcerated persister at an SCI) said the only difference between jail and the streets was that he did not have a car in jail. Some men said that they knew inmates who had sexual relationships with female COs, or they themselves had sexual relationships with COs, which further facilitated opportunities for crime:

Me: So it sounds like you did a lot of the same stuff (crime) when you were locked up. Did you worry about getting caught?

Yusef: In jail?

Me: Yeah, when you were doing stuff in jail.

Yusef: It wasn't a secret. It wasn't a secret. Like the guards, I mean, everybody knew for real for real. This ain't no lie. ... Like, I had so many of them female guards throwing themselves at me. Like when you come in the jail, no lie, my man came with seven homicides (and) he had a baby by the guard. He was in there popping all the guards. That's how it is. If you move up, you like a damn celebrity, man. I got my piece of it (laughter). It's crazy, man. Serious, though... it sound retarded because it kind of is retarded, but that's how it is.

This connection with the COs facilitated drug use as well as violence in the jail. For example, Yusef explained that he was arrested for attempted murder while he was on State Road as resulting from "a little war in the jail" he and some of his associates were going through. Even though the COs knew there was a problem and took steps to keep Yusef confined, he was able to access and stab his victim, a fellow inmate, multiple times, with the COs assistance. Yusef explained,

Yusef: That's ok because me and the CO chick, we was having a relationship in jail, so I told her, '... Get one of them dudes down here.' She called her girlfriend up. Her girlfriend said that he [the victim of the attempted murder] touched her ass, put him right there on the block for me.

There were fewer opportunities for drugs, sex, and violence in the SCIs than in the jail. Many SCIs are located four to eight hours away from Philadelphia, and SCI correctional officers (COs) typically came from the surrounding community, so informants were much less likely to know the COs from their time on the street. However, some men reported fighting with the correctional officers themselves. For example, Yusef said that he was beaten unconscious by COs at a previous prison, and Roy said he accrued a new assault charge for fighting with a CO.

Asked what the SCI was like in terms of safety, Yusef responded, “If you ask me, it’s like a witness protection program.” Though there had been some incidents of violence between inmates and between inmates and guards, Yusef and others said it was safer upstate than in the county jails.

***Yusef:** The difference between the county and up here is that, for one, it’s cameras everywhere. Ain’t no cameras on the blocks in the county, so you stab somebody, somebody literally got to tell on you. Number two is that even if the person don’t press charges, the state going to press charges and that kind of stop people. And three, every time somebody get their time, whether it be life on down, they start to realize, “I want my life back.” So you’re really more so in the mode of trying to get the hell back out. [. . .] Everybody—even the dudes that wild out, they still really just want to go home. They might beat somebody up because they got a reputation to defend. But for real for real, I’m trying to get home.*

QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN OFFENDING

Changing Needs, Changing Crimes

Many of the informants—persisters and desisters—indicated that the *kinds* of crimes they engaged in changed as they got older. Informants explained that involvement in crime might change qualitatively—either in type of crime or in seriousness of involvement—in early young adulthood because perceived needs change with age.³⁵ For example, Adam (age 24, incarcerated desister) asserted that as you get older, crime is less about acceptance from peers and more about money. The result of this for him was that now he engages in just one crime: selling drugs.

³⁵ McGloin, Sullivan, and Piquero (2009: 257) suggest that changes in type and variety of offenses result when offenders “shift their preferences [regarding types of crime] over time, likely due to changing opportunity structures” (also see Shover, 1996). Sullivan (1989: 117) found that motivations for economic crime change, but he suggested this change came with *experience* and a perceived need for regular income rather than that perceived needs change with age, a theme that came through strongly in the present study. It is likely that opportunity, preferences, and experiences all mattered to this sample. I return to this in the next chapter.

Me: [When you were last on the street and not incarcerated,] do you think that you were doing more or less crime than you were doing when younger?

Adam: Less crime. . . It was just one, just selling drugs. That was it.

Me: You weren't doing like robberies and stealing cars and stuff like that? How come you were just doing the one thing at that point?

Adam: Because certain crimes were only for certain ages.

Me: Yeah? You felt like you were too old for that stuff?

Adam: Too old to be punching people in the face, stealing cars. You older, you need money so you can buy your own car.

Me: Yeah? Okay. So... so when you're doing that other stuff that was not selling drugs when you were younger, why were you doing that other stuff?

Adam: I was being a follower. . . [I] saw other people do it, I wanted to do it, so because I wanted to be... wanted to be accepted by people I was around. ... I felt like I'm going to do that, they going to accept me. So I do it.

Me: Okay. Okay. And then as you got older, it wasn't so much about acceptance, it was about money. Is that correct?

Adam: Yeah, that's the main goal. That's the main goal when you get older.

George (age 23, incarcerated persister) described the difference as the stakes being higher now that he is older. He clarified, "I don't go out after no pennies. Ten, twenty thousand ain't really no money to me." Sal (age 21, incarcerated persister) agreed that the reasons for crime change with age. When asked whether he was involved in the same kinds of crimes now as when he was younger, he responded that they were the same, but whereas involvement in crime used to be about having fun, as he got older it was about having money.³⁶

³⁶ Though some of the informants said they used their illicit incomes to care for family members, bills, and attorney fees, others, like Sal, said they used most of their money to party (Shover, 1996; Wright and Decker, 1997).

Sal: *Yeah... Yeah, it kind of switched though. When I was younger it was about having fun. Instead, this time it was more about getting money. You know, just trying to help myself get money so I could do things. And even though I made money, I just used it the wrong way. Like, going to bars and things like that. Spending money on everybody and going to Atlantic City and Wild Wood. It was stuff like—yeah. Not stacking my money up. I could have saved money. One thing about being in crime, you got to save money for a lawyer. It's stupid [when] you look at it. You do the crime. If you do make money, you either going to spend it on fun or you going to put it back into the system, give it to a lawyer. It's not worth it. It's not even worth it unless you make a lot of money. And then you still might get hit.*

Stan (age 24, incarcerated persister) also described how his involvement in crime became more serious in terms of being more involved in violence and in terms of selling drugs.

Stan: *When I was younger—see all this petty [stuff]? (referring to the timeline) See, destroying property? Like you always going to do something to destroy some property, but that shit is petty, little dumb shit. Like from selling a little weed, like when I was younger. [Then] I was selling oxys (oxycontin), you know what I'm saying, I'm getting forty and fifty dollars for one pill. Fuck weed. Fuck a little five-dollar bag of weed. I'm getting money. This shit, man—when you start going from weed to selling crack to selling coke to selling, you know, oxys and crack all at the same time. Selling heroin, you know what I'm saying? Dope. Like, the more money you get, the more problems you have. The more bitches you going to get (laughs) But the more—the more chances you got to get locked up, killed, or, you know what I'm saying.*

Even though they remained involved in crime and, in some cases, said they had no intent to terminate their involvement in crime in the future, some of the persisters also described qualitative changes and/or slowing down their involvement in crime over time. Stan (age 24), a persister incarcerated in a treatment-oriented secured facility was a serious, chronic offender who described himself as drug-involved (his drug of choice was Xanax) and his involvement in crime as largely violent—robberies, aggravated assaults,

shooting people. Though the crimes he committed were more serious as he got older, he also described his involvement in crime as slowing down over time.

***Stan:** These years, instead of shit getting more—instead of shit doubling, going a lot deeper, shit is kind of like calming down. I did a bunch of shit being young. I started young. And then as years go on I stop doing one thing, stop doing another thing. But not stop. I slowed down doing some shit, you know what I’m saying?*

***Me:** Yeah. So even though you’re reporting doing this stuff at least once a month, you’re not doing it as often in each month.*

***Stan.** Right. Right, right.*

Qualitative Change in Selling Drugs

Those who sold drugs as adults said that their role in the drug market and how they transacted business changed as they got older. As their perceived needs changed, drug market informants sought ways to maximize their profits while minimizing the risks of selling drugs, including violence, arrest, and ultimately prison. Informants described three general strategies for reducing the risks of selling drugs (rather than forgoing crime all together): taking a “hands off approach”; maintaining legitimate, structured routine activities; and shifting to a different product and customer base.

Hands-off. Many of the people who sold drugs as adults explained that they did not sell on the corner as they did when they were younger, and many said that that the corner was “for kids.”³⁷ Instead, they said their involvement was “hands-off”—they supplied drugs for others to sell on the corner—or they made deliveries arranged via

³⁷ Carlos (age 24, incarcerated persister) is the only man actively participating in the drug trade who said he worked the corner. Based on his demeanor and the content of his interview, I suspected that Carlos might be cognitively or intellectually impaired, which might have left him vulnerable to being taken advantage of by drug suppliers. Indeed, he was sensitive to being exploited—he calls it being finessed. He said that his participation in the drug trade made it easier for him to detect whether he was being finessed or bullshitted, but given what other informants said about selling drugs as adults, I was not convinced of this.

phone. Though the informants of this study did not state it explicitly, presumably one reason for the move to this approach was to continue to evade the adult sanctions they avoided as juveniles. Moving off of the corner could also increase earnings; it is more lucrative for drug dealers to buy their own “package” of drugs and to work for themselves rather than for someone else (thus becoming more “embedded” in the drug market, see Hagan, 1993). This point is illustrated by Allen (age 22, incarcerated desister), who said that he became more involved in selling drugs as an adult than he was when he was an adolescent.

***Me:** Was it the same kinds of stuff or were you doing different stuff?*

***Allen:** It was kind of the same stuff, but I was more into it. A lot more.*

***Me:** How did you get more involved?*

***Allen:** Ah... one—when I came home, I started getting my own stuff. Like, my own crack. Before I was hustling for someone. And then, you know, when I came home [from prison] I started hustling for my own self. It was fronted [the drugs were initially paid for by someone else] and when I—after you pay them back, you get your stuff—ride your stuff. And that’s how I kept building up and building up. I was way more involved.*

At least four other informants who sold drugs as adults (all desisting men) said that they stopped selling drugs on the corner and took a more hands-off approach to selling drugs. Gregory said when he was younger he shifted from the corner to using a payphone to set up deals in order to avoid detection, but others explained that they were even further removed from the process. Raymond said that until the previous year, he was actively (and apparently successfully) involved in selling drugs. When asked whether he was concerned about getting caught selling drugs, he explained that he reduced the risk of being caught by the police by giving his drugs to other people to sell within a specified time.

Raymond: *It like, it crossed my mind a couple times, but like as I got older I started being more discreet about it. It was more hands off. It was just as, “to you take this, you take that, bam bam. Y’all got this much time, I come back and then...it’s gravy. And that was that. Like it wasn’t, like it wasn’t no more hands-on with me. Like you wouldn’t have caught me out there hand-to-hand. I just dish it out.*

Many of the informants described similar experiences with drug market involvement: As they got older they “moved up” and away from street—corner dealing. Isaac explained this to me when I asked him about how he avoided detection by the police.

Me: *What was that like one way to avoid detection, too? By making deliveries rather than being on the corner?*

Isaac: *No, it was just that—if you get to a certain point, you don’t have to stand on the corner, so.*

Me: *Okay, okay. So ... so you were like a supplier? [. . .]*

Isaac: *I wouldn’t much so—I wouldn’t go as far as saying so much as a supplier, but I was a dealer-slash-middleman. I could get you what you needed. I got what I needed, et cetera, et cetera.*

Damion, age 24 and a desister who had been incarcerated for more than four years when we met, described the changes in his drug-selling activities that he enacted before he was incarcerated.

Damion: *I’m not dealing with the little petty customers no more. I’m only dealing with the ones I know that actually going to spend some money that’s going to be worth it. And I’m not on the block no more. I’m going door-to-door now.*

Structured, routine activities. Some informants who sold drugs as adults reduced the risk of detection by keeping to a regular routine of legal activities while they sold drugs, including steady, legitimate employment. In one account, Raymond explained that

working his regular job helped him to hide his drug market involvement from his wife: Because she knew his schedule, he made sure he did all drug-related business within that schedule.

***Me:** Did people, did other people know that, like how involved you were? No? What about your wife? Really. How did you keep it from her?*

***Raymond:** I-I (laughs)—Like, basically like she knew what my schedule was. I mean, she knew I go to work, she know when I come home. I just do things like either before I go to work or after I get off work. You know what I'm saying, and then it's still, it's not that far from our neighborhood, so it just be like a quick drive. I mean, it's "sho-sho-sho" [making sound of passing out drug packages], you know what I mean? And then like all our money, we got like a joint account, so all the money that I get from my job, I just give her that. She put it in the bank account or whatever. And the money that I got from the drugs or whatever, I put that in a safe in the basement or go give my mom some of it to hold, or give this person some to hold. I never had all my money inside my house. I'd have it like spread around.*

When I asked whether his wife ever questioned where the money for trips and cars came from, Raymond said, "She probably knew [that] like I ain't really stop stop [selling drugs], but she know I wasn't out there standing on the corner. She knew I wasn't doing that because I was always with her or the kids."

At least three other informants also said that they also worked a legitimate job at the same time that they were selling drugs. Though he indicated that his own involvement ended some time before the qualitative interview, Gregory (age 25, desister) said that selling drugs could—and should—coincide with legal employment.

***Gregory:** Yeah, because like, I don't know—because, like I was told, like even no matter what you do, you're always going to have a job, period. That way if you are doing something illegal you could explain why you got money in your pocket. That's what I was taught, you know what I mean? So, and then having a job, you don't always have to chase every dollar that come past your face, so it was*

always beneficial. That's why a lot of times I always had a job, so. And then like even working at my job some people like, "Hey you know somebody got this [for sale]?" I just be like, no, no, I'm at work. I don't trust these people. But then I see them and I like, fuck it, they ain't spending this much money; I can just go grab the stuff. And I be at work and I making double all the way, you know what I mean. Like I don't give a fuck about these paychecks, I'm making more money with these people here, and so it's always like that.

Shifting customer base. Isaac and others reported that they reduced the risks of detection and the risks of violence by shifting from one customer base to another. Isaac said that he stopped selling cocaine because the legal penalty was too high.

Me: *So why'd you—can I ask why you switched . . . markets?*

Isaac: *Honestly, they tried to send me upstate for three to six [years] for forty-two dimes. And that was the first time I got locked up for coke. So I'm like, well if y'all trying to send me up for three to six on my first time, imagine what y'all going to do to me on my second time, or third time, so.*

Me: *So it's just safer to sell weed?*

Isaac: *Just a little bit. It's all illegal, you could go to jail any day. But it's just a little safer.*

Me: *Can you tell me a little bit about why it's safer?*

Isaac: *The time you face . . . of incarceration. I would safely say that's probably it.*

Me: *[That's] the main thing, it's different time?*

Isaac: *Yeah, different kind of consequences upstate.*

Isaac latter added that although the cocaine market was more profitable, it was a riskier endeavor than the marijuana market because the customers' behavior was unpredictable. Peter (age 25, persister) agreed with Isaac's assessment, adding that the unpredictable behavior of crack users increased the risk of violence and increased the risk of detection by police. By contrast, marijuana was sold in a more casual, friendly context

that made passing drugs to customers easier and less detectible, and increased the likelihood that they would know their customers.

Peter (age 25, persister)—who was selected for the study due to his high and chronic level of persistent offending throughout the Pathways study but who told me he had been out of “the game” for nearly a year by the time we met—said that he shifted customer bases over the course of every month according to market demand. This came up when I asked him whether caring for children affected his involvement in crime. Peter answered, “Not really,” and then explained”

***Peter:** I was doing what I do, but it was like I wasn't doing it as like how I used to do it. I went from selling coke to selling weed. ... Like crack— basically, selling that is like the rush. You gotta be aware at all times, because they coming, they coming from everywhere. Like everywhere you look, somebody need it, somebody need it. So when it comes to traffic like that, you gotta worry about the cops, because now the cops [see] all this traffic so now they gonna keep coming through. But if you selling weed it's like, you ain't selling to everybody because it's like you got a younger crowd. So it's like [when] they come by, it's like they homies, so I can give you a handshake and a hug and put it in your hand, you know what I'm saying? Like compared with a [crack] fiend—a fiend come, they scratching and all that. Cops see that and they, “Oh, he doing something he ain't supposed to.” So the weed, like, it was—it was different—like the money's slower because it'd take me probably about a whole month to make what I make probably in a day selling coke, know what I'm saying, [when I'm] selling weed, so it's like ... But I was—yeah, but like it was more money then. Slow money better than no money, so.*

Later, when asked to describe his last arrests—one on a weapons charge and one for possession of cocaine, Peter gave more details on shifting drug markets:

***Peter:** Because like I told you like I kept a gun on me. But the cocaine, it was like ... alright I was in-between selling weed and the cocaine. But the cocaine was like—Alright, I'll sell it from the first to the like the sixteenth, because like from the beginning of the month everybody get checks. So okay if I grab all that money*

*at the beginning of the month and then the rest of the month, like from the beginning of the month and all the way through I'm [only] selling weed. [At the beginning of the month, selling cocaine] I'll make almost what I'd be making if I sold weed for about six months. So when I got money every month, stack it.*³⁸

SUMMARY

This chapter presented evidence that though seven of the 40 informants changed group membership between the timeframe used to select the sample (the first 36 months after adjudication) and qualitative interview (at roughly 84 months), most informants stayed in the same group. In spite of the stability of group membership and the differences between groups, individual patterns of offending were dynamic in the years leading up to the qualitative study, regardless of group membership. Many desisters and persisters described periods of abstinence and intermittent offending as well as qualitative changes in the type and seriousness of offending. Additionally, though many of the incarcerated men abstained from crime when they were locked up (or perhaps from self-reporting crime), incarcerated men had opportunities to engage in crime when they were confined in jails and they took advantage of those opportunities.

Finally, a number of informants said that they supported themselves and their families by selling drugs, often while also working legal jobs. Sullivan (1989: 96) also found that youths in one of the neighborhoods in his study sold drugs to “supplement rather than replace” legal employment. Informants in this study who sold drugs described changes in the manner in which they sold drugs that they associated with age, a desire to increase profits, and an effort to reduce the risks of crime. The qualitative changes in selling drugs described by the men in the present study are similar to those Sullivan

³⁸ “Stacking” money means making a lot of money and, in this case, saving it or putting it aside to accumulate.

(1989) observed among youth drug selling in the early 1980s, including advancing from “kid stuff” and street-level dealing to selling a package on consignment, and adapting where and what is sold according to risks (though in Sullivan’s study youth moved from the marijuana market to the cocaine market, where the men in the present study said it was the other way around).

The remainder of the analyses rely on these patterns of offending—both between group membership and within-individual continuity and change—to explore crime during the transition to adulthood and the factors that might account for these patterns.

CHAPTER 5: CRIME AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

In this chapter, I turn to the qualitative interviews to explore how formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults experience the transition to adulthood and the structural and subjective processes and mechanisms linking adult role transitions to continuity and change in crime. I start by examining how persisters and desisters experience three markers of adulthood—completing formal education (at least high school), employment, and romantic relationships—and the role of family social support (I return to a fourth marker, parenthood, in chapter 6). I then turn to two broad themes that emerged from the interviews with respect to continuity and change in offending. The first theme is that most persisters and desisters associated changing opportunity structures with changes in crime. These structural changes include changing “people, places, and things” (routine activities) and changing where you live (residential change) (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Kirk, 2009). The second theme is that many persisters and desisters described cognitive shifts, including becoming more concerned about others beyond themselves and a crystallization of discontent with crime and the lifestyle associated with crime (Baumeister, 1994; Gove 1985; Maruna, 2001; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Though the informants did not always directly associate these subjective changes with changes in their offending, there appears to be a connection between whether an offender connects negative events and experiences from the past with his or her involvement in crime and then makes a decision to change.

MARKERS OF ADULTHOOD

Youth undergo a series of role transitions on their way to adulthood. The complete their formal education, enter the formal labor market, establish mutually

supportive romantic relationships and get married, leave their family of origin, and have children (though not necessarily in that order) (Hayford and Furstenberg, 2008; Hogan and Astone, 1986; Shanahan, 2000). Table 5.1 outlines these markers of adulthood—education, legal employment status, romantic relationships, parenthood status, and living situations for the 40 men and women in this study. *Education* indicates the level of education completed by the respondent. Whether the informant completed a GED or high school diploma is based on Pathways survey data; whether the informant spent any time in college is based on Pathways calendar data and qualitative accounts. *Legal employment status* indicates whether the informant was employed in non-criminal work, either part-time or full-time, including self-employment or potentially “off the books” employment. It is based on the informants report.³⁹ *Relationship status* is based on whether informants indicated they were in a romantic relationship at the time of the interview.⁴⁰ *Living situation* indicates with whom the informant said they lived at the time of the qualitative interview or prior to incarceration.⁴¹

³⁹ Informants who were incarcerated for more than four weeks at the time of the qualitative interview are not included in legal employment status for two reasons: it was generally not a topic of discussion and the nature of prison employment seemed very different from community employment. For example, prison employment was occasionally described as an assignment rather than something the men sought out and worked to maintain. Additionally, Camille was unemployed but was enrolled in community college.

⁴⁰ Relationships were considered “short-term” if the informant said they had been in the current relationship for less than one year. A few informants said they had been married in a Muslim ceremony but did not have a marriage license from the state. I note if an informant said they were divorced in a Muslim ceremony. Informants were categorized as single if they did not identify a specific romantic partner when asked or said they were no longer with the romantic partner they discussed.

⁴¹ Sometimes living situations were difficult to discern from the qualitative interviews. For example, Ramona reported that she did not have anywhere to go; asked to clarify, she explained that she and her children had been living with her mother but that situation ended when the rent was raised and they could no longer afford it. Since then, she had been “jumping from house to house, not having enough for the rent and all that.” I could not tell if she changed houses repeatedly over a short period of time or over a long period of time. Also, Lee had been released from prison and started living at his grandmother’s home just the week before we met.

Table 5.1 Demographics and life circumstances

Name	Age At Interview	Race/ Ethnicity	Location of Qualitative Interview	Education	Legal Employment Status	Romantic Relationship Status	Children	Living Situation
<i>Desisters</i>								
Anne	22	black	community	—	self-employed	divorced (Muslim marriage)	2 (ages 4 ½, 2)	with children, mother
Camille	21	black	community	high school diploma, some college	unemployed/ student	short-term boyfriend; long-term boyfriend died	—	own place, alone
LeeAnn	22	black	community	—	employed (5 mos.)	single	—	with sister-in-law
Princess	22	black	community	—	unemployed	off & on long-term w/baby's father	pregnant	with mother, siblings
Ramona	24	Hispanic	community	—	unemployed	long-term boyfriend	4+ (ages 8, 6, 3, 1, pregnant)	with children, possibly homeless
Adam	24	Hispanic	prison (2 yrs. 6 mos.)	GED	—	off and on w/long-term girlfriend	—	with girlfriend
Allen	22	black	jail (15 mos.)	high school diploma, some college	—	single	1 (age 5)	unknown
Cody	23	black	community	high school diploma	unemployed (recent)	with baby's mother	2 (ages 3, 4)	with children, girlfriend
Damion	24	black	prison (5 yrs.)	high school diploma	—	single, married to baby's mother until prison (Muslim marriage)	1 (age 5)	off & on w/girlfriend
Eddie	25	black	community	high school diploma	employed	short-term girlfriend	—	with mother, siblings

Table 5.1 Demographics and life circumstances, continued

Name	Age At Interview	Race/Ethnicity	Location of Qualitative Interview	Education	Legal Employment Status	Romantic Relationship Status	Children	Living Situation
Gregory	25	black	community	high school diploma	employed (4 yrs.)	long-term w/baby's mother	1 (age 19 mos.)	with child, girlfriend
Henry	21	black	community	GED	employed (4 months)	on & off w/baby's mother	1 (age 2)	With child part-time
Isaac	25	black	community	high school diploma	unemployed (2 ½ yrs.)	single	—	own place, alone
Jack	24	white	jail (6 mos.)	—	—	short-term girlfriend	—	homeless
Kenneth	24	black	community	GED	unemployed (3 mos.)	married to babies' mother	2 (ages 5, 8 mos.)	with children, wife
Leon	22	black	community	GED	unemployed	short-term girlfriend	—	with grandmother
Neal	24	white	jail (2 weeks)	GED	employed (two wks.)	single	—	with roommates
Raymond	23	black	community	high school diploma	employed (<1yr.)	married to babies' mother	3 (ages 6, 4, 20 mos.)	with children, wife
Rollo	23	black	community	GED	employed (3 yrs.)	short-term girlfriend	1 (age 1)	with girlfriend
Roy	22	black	prison (5 yrs. 6 mos.)	—	—	n/a	—	n/a
Warren	24	black	jail (10 mos.)	GED, some college	—	single, with baby's mother until jail	2 (ages 4, 2)	unknown (not with children)
William	23	black	jail (12 mos.)	GED	—	single, long-term girlfriend until jail	—	with girlfriend

Table 5.1 Demographics and life circumstances, continued

Name	Age At Interview	Race/Ethnicity	Location of Qualitative Interview	Education	Legal Employment Status	Romantic Relationship Status	Children	Living Situation
<i>Persisters</i>								
Frankie	21	black	community	high school diploma	unemployed (2 yrs.)	off & on with baby's father	1 (age 2)	with child, mother
Galatea	22	black	community	—	employed (just hired)	single	1 (age 4 ½)	unknown (not with child)
Rita	21	black	community	—	employed (3 yrs.)	long-term w/ baby's father	1 (age 5 ½)	with child, boyfriend
Rosie	23	black	community	high school diploma	unemployed (3 mos.)	single, long-term boyfriend died	—	own place, alone
Teresa	21	Hispanic	community	—	unemployed (1 yr.), applied for disability	short-term boyfriend, off & on with baby's father	2 (ages 3, 2)	unstable housing/homeless? (not with children)
Carlos	24	black	jail (3 mos.)	—	—	short-term girlfriend	—	unknown
Danny	22	white	jail (5 mos.)	high school diploma	—	short-term girlfriend	—	on street/ own place
Dean	24	white	community	high school diploma	unemployed (recent)	short-term girlfriend	2 step-children (infant, age 3; with them for 3 mos.)	with stepchildren, girlfriend
George	23	black	jail (5 mos.)	GED	—	long-term w/ babies' mother	4 (ages 6, 2, 1, 3 mos.)	with child, girlfriend
Gerard	23	black	prison (21 mos.)	high school diploma, some college	—	unknown	1 (age 7)	unknown

Table 5.1 Demographics and life circumstances, continued

Name	Age At Interview	Race/Ethnicity	Location of Qualitative Interview	Education	Legal Employment Status	Romantic Relationship Status	Children	Living Situation
Lee	23	black	prison (3 yrs. 8 mos.)	—	—	with baby's mother until prison	1 (age 5)	with child, girlfriend
Peter	25	black	community	—	employed (less than 1 yr.)	ongoing relationships w/ 2 babies' mothers	2 (ages 5, 3)	With girlfriend, part-time with children
Raphael	21	Hispanic	community	GED	unemployed (approx. 2 mos.)	single	—	own place
Remi	20	white	community	—	employed (3 yrs.)	single	—	with father, shares costs
Sal	21	Hispanic	jail (12 mos.)	—	—	1-2 years w/ baby's mother	1 (age 1)	with girlfriend
Stan	24	black	jail (3 mos.)	—	—	off & on w/ 2 baby's mothers	4 (ages 7, 5, 3, 8 mos.)	unknown
Tommy	22	white	jail (7 mos.)	GED	—	separated from wife	1 (age 4)	unknown
Yusuf	24	Hispanic	prison (3 yrs.)	GED	—	divorced (Muslim marriage)	1 (age 6)	with former wife

EDUCATION

According to the Pathways Study survey data, most of the informants (73 percent) completed either a high school diploma or a GED, including 16 of 22 desisters and 9 of 18 persisters. More desisting males than persisting males earned a high school diploma or a GED by the time of the qualitative interview (89 percent of desisting males compared to 54 percent of persisting males). Among the women, one of five desisters and two of five persisters obtained a GED. Additionally, during the qualitative interviews three desisters and one persister said that they had some college experience.

Though school experiences were not specifically addressed in the qualitative interviews, some themes emerged regarding the completion (or incompleteness) of high school or a GED. One theme among the persisters who had not obtained a GED or high school diploma was that they worked toward a diploma or GED while they were in juvenile placements, they are still a few credits short of finishing high school or a few points shy of passing the GED. In at least one case, being transferred from one facility to another interfered with completing school.

Teresa (age 21, persister): They said I need like two or three credit to finish high school, and I haven't went back. That's why I want to go to GED or something to prove that I can get my diploma or something.

Peter (age 25, persister): I took my GED test [while in a juvenile placement], but I failed that jawn. And I just ain't feel like—I failed it by one point on the writing skills, because of the way I write. I write—they say I write “street” so it's like, I failed it because of my writing skills. So I figure, in all actuality I would have my GED if I wrote different. So I just didn't go take it again.

Sal (age 21, persister): It was a juvenile lockdown, a jail. I was about to get my diploma there and they had transferred me from—you can see [on the timeline that] they transferred me from there to [a different detention center]. I was two

weeks away from finishing. Yeah, all I had to do was type it up and send it, because you know, now you have to do a senior project type of thing, and it was crazy man. I ain't never get it.

Some complained that their high school was criminogenic for a variety of reasons.

Though she earned her high school diploma, Frankie (persister, age 21) described her alternative high school for at-risk youth as a school for crime:

Frankie: *It made me bad. It was just too much freedom to do everything you wanted to do. The teachers, [...] they would just let you do what EVER you wanted to do. I never did no work, I passed like—I never did shit. [...] [Me and my friend], we used to fight every day. We never got suspended. We used to go to school at like twelve o'clock, school was over at two-oh-five. We was bad. It made us worser. It made us dumb. And we got dumb. Like I was stupid as shit—I didn't know math, I just felt so dumb [...]. Like I knew like regular and all that division and all that, but I didn't know like algebra. I was dumb as shit. . . It's not school. It's not even school at ALL! [...]—Teachers used to get stabbed, teachers used to have guns. [...] That shit was crazy. It got so bad you couldn't even get on SEPTA.*

Anne (desister, age 22) did not receive her high school diploma but she described her experience at an alternative high school for high-risk kids in a similar manner. She was sent to the alternative school after she was arrested for “chewing on a piece of metal” when she was at her first high school.

Anne: *I think they should have let it go. They kicked me out. They expelled me from school, sent me to a bad kids' school. I'm... I mean I got—see the thing about it was, I got good grades. I hardly ever went to school, but I'm smart. So I would go to school, we'd have a test and I'd pass. And they be mad. 'You ain't come to school all month, and how you pass the test?' Don't worry about it, I passed. And it wasn't fair because I'm surrounded by all these idiots, and I can't stand being around dumb people, I really don't—it bothers me, it bothers me a lot. And it's just like, I understand, yeah, we're young and we talk slang and stuff like that, but when it's time to get down to business, you should be able to get down to business. I should be able to understand what you're saying. And I was surrounded by a bunch of crazy kids that were into some crazy stuff. And then*

like, the school I went to [...] you had to be with girls, there was only girls in the class. I hate being around a bunch of females. And then they were all dykes at that—I'm not like—I'm not discriminating against them or anything like that, you do what you do, but keep it away from me. I don't want to be a part of that, so it was just like, I got into a lot of fights. I got into a lot of fights because of that.

Two women said that going to school helped them to stay out of trouble—

Princess (age 20, desister) who went to the same high school as Frankie, and Rosie (age 23, persister) who went to a public high school.

Me: *So you have this chunk of time from like [age] 18 to really pretty much to now, so like couple of years where you really weren't telling us you were doing anything in terms of like getting into fights, and also looks like with substance use. Did some things [change]?*

Princess: *Because I was, into something more. Like I was into Chris [my boyfriend] more, so I was living with him so a lot of that really stopped. A lot of it. And see, I stopped using... I just stopped using everything because it was like... like, let me see. Around... this time is when I really stopped using because-[...] Yeah, around that time because... like, I had to focus on school more. And I knew me getting high would just have me just sitting in the house and that's what it did, because I missed a lot of days of school. And then after a while I just dropped out. And finally this year I went and got my GED. Well, actually, I took the test and I failed one part, so now I'm going back to take the last part of the test, so I can get my GED.*

Where Princess seemed intent on completing school despite the setbacks, Rosie, a persister, became frustrated with her post-high school education experience. She participated in a program that helped her get her high school diploma and that promised assistance with student loans for college. She attended some classes in medical office management, but was discouraged from continuing after five months when she learned that she was expected to draw blood as part of the training. Since she accrued student loans, she said, she could not return school until she paid them off.

Rosie: *And there's always a setback. I mean I got my, once I have my mind set on something, I have it, I'm going to do it and it's just something always getting in my way.*

For others, school, including college, interfered with earning money on the street, suggesting a preference for immediate rewards over long-term goals. Asked whether he had sacrificed anything by staying involved in crime, Gerard (age 23, incarcerated persister) said, “Like I was in college and stuff, you know what I mean. Then once I started getting money, that went out the door.”

Desisters tended to have different experiences with school. Where persisters tended to complain that their juvenile justice system experience interfered with finishing school or that they never returned to complete credits or retake the GED test, many desisters said that they completed their degrees while they were in placements. For example, Damion (age 24, incarcerated desister) said that once he succeeded at finishing his diploma, he wanted to set more goals.

Damion: *[School at the juvenile placement] was a good thing because one thing I promised my mom was a high school diploma. So that was one of my goals and I, it, this was my last chance at getting it. So I gave it, I gave it my full effort and once I accomplished it, I had to set some more goals because I got c—I ain't have nothing left to do. So that's, I started—it made me set up more goals.*

Me: *What kinds of goals?*

Damion: *That to actually learn a trade because—and to learn how to play some sports because I was—the only sport I played before was football. And to learn how to—to socialize with people so, I started learning—I started getting myself a goal like every six month and once I accomplished that, work on the next.*

Rollo (age 23, desister) said that though he thought he was “book smart,” he hated school and was glad to take the GED the first chance he got.

***Rollo:** I just wanted to hurry up and—I just wanted for them to give me a test so I could take it and prove my intelligence. I wouldn't never have to go to school no more. That's all I wanted, but they didn't come out with their test until I went to jail and I heard about it. What, a GED? Give me one of those.*

The main difference between persisters and desisters with respect to school is that more desisters completed school. With respect to their experiences of school, some of the desisters' accounts suggest that those who wanted to finish school could finish (whether they enjoyed school or not), and some went on to attend college. By contrast, some persisters were easily frustrated by their school experiences and failures, and they were easily distracted by the immediate rewards of crime and selling drugs.

EMPLOYMENT

Completing high school or earning a GED should have prepared these offenders for successful adulthoods, including (and especially) legal labor market participation. Of those the 16 desisters who completed school, eight were legally employed or had been employed until recently, one (Camille) was a student, and one had been unemployed for more than two years (Isaac). The remaining six men who completed school were incarcerated at the time of the interview.⁴² Of the desisters without a diploma, two women were employed—Anne was self-employed making Muslim clothing for women, and LeeAnn babysat regularly for her sister in-law; two women were unemployed; and two male desisters without diplomas were incarcerated.

By contrast, three of the nine persisters with a high school diploma or GED were employed; the remaining six were incarcerated at the time of the qualitative interview. Of the 10 persisters who did not finish school, four were employed (Galatea, Peter, Remi,

⁴² Including Leon (age 22), who had been released from a long prison term the week before we met.

and Rita), two women were unemployed (Frankie stopped working when her daughter was born two years earlier, and Teresa had been unemployed for a year after a boyfriend shot her in the knee; she was in the process of applying for disability); and four men were incarcerated.

In all, 10 of the 21 desisters and 7 of the 19 persisters were employed at the time of the qualitative interview. Only six of the forty informants (persisters Remi, Rita, and Peter, and desisters Raymond, Rollo, and Gregory) had been steadily employed for a year or more. Of those, four (Remi, Peter, Raymond, and Gregory) were in jobs they enjoyed and wanted to continue with into the future.

Remi (age 20, persister) had been working as the sole employee at an auto shop for three years. Remi's grandfather got him the job because he knew the shop owner, Remi's boss, and his grandfather often stopped by the shop to visit the owner and to check up on Remi. The owner took Remi under his wing to teach him a specialized area of auto mechanics. Such an investment on behalf of Remi's boss, combined with the social connection between his boss and his grandfather, fostered in Remi a sense of obligation to and respect for his employer. Remi discussed his job a number of times. He was proud of his job, he felt valued by his boss, and he expressed a commitment to his job, which in turn, he said, affected his involvement in crime (Wadsworth, 2006). In the year prior to our interview, Remi, self-reported offending declined.⁴³ Before this job, Remi reported a wide variety of offenses, including selling drugs and stealing items from

⁴³ Though Remi continued to engage in some crime, he self-reported fewer types of crime after he started this job—his monthly self-reported variety score (SRO) regularly ranged between .4 and .5 during the time points before the job, even while he was serving time in a juvenile residential facility; after starting his job his SRO ranged fluctuated between .23 and .27.

cars and selling them. Much of the crime he engaged in recently, though, occurred while he was hanging out with “his boys” and included fighting and driving while drunk or high. Asked whether he was trying to stay out of trouble, Remi replied ambiguously, “Trouble’s calling, I ain’t running.” When asked to explain what he thought accounted for this change Remi said it was his sense of obligation to his employer.

***Remi:** Feel as my boss depends on me, so if I get locked up or if I get too fucked up that night at the bar, I ain’t making it to work. So I feel as though I have someone depending on me. I’m getting paid for that dependency, so I feel as though I would be—I’m a good person to rely on.*

***Me:** So you stay out of trouble because you’ve got him counting on you?*

***Remi:** (overlapping) Yeah, my work.*

Later Remi described his commitment to his job in general:

***Remi:** That’s about the only goal I got set, to go back to the question you asked previous. That’s about the only goal I got set for myself, is being a good mechanic and being fair and honest. Because there’s a lot of fucking rip offs out there. People tell you, “yeah, you need this, you need that.” You—you got to have a good heart. I got a conscience. I can’t sleep at night knowing I rip people the fuck off and shit.*

Raymond (age 23, desister) worked as a cook when we met for the qualitative interview. Around the time that he stopped selling drugs, Raymond attend a twelve-week certification program in food service, something he decided to do on his own (rather than as a part of a correctional program or as a condition of probation or parole). Recently, he served a community service sentence by assisting with the same program:

***Me:** What did you have to do as community service?*

***Raymond:** Well I’m actually cooking. Like I’m a, like it’s like a school [downtown]. I go there—that used to be my class, so she [the instructor] got me*

to come in there, you know give a little demonstration to the class, helping them with their cooking projects or whatever, elaborate on some stuff that I know, or I can help them out with. That, that right there beats cleaning, sweeping up stuff off the streets any day, so.

Me: *Yeah. So what do you mean that that was your class, the-*

Raymond: *Like I took a, a 12-week course there to get certified from the state for cooking, like for food service. So I did that.*

Me: *So it's sort of is it, are you teaching, or sort of like how, what would you...*

Raymond: *Well I ain't gonna say like, the teacher like, you can say like teacher help, something like that. I'm saying, just, what they do is like when they get together it be two groups, you know what I'm saying like her other assistant assists the other group and I probably assist the other group. I mean on whatever project or topic, she's you know demonstrating.*

Gregory (age 25, desister) had always worked in construction and was a union member. One benefit of the construction job is that his criminal record did not interfere with getting the job. He said, "They didn't care about felonies and stuff, like just as long as you know how to work and a good worker." Gregory's girlfriend told me that he liked his job in construction, which Gregory confirmed.

Gregory: *Yeah, I do. Like, I really do like construction. I like getting dirty and just building stuff. Like, even though I know like people that do computers and all that make more money and like—but like, I make good money. But, just like building something—that's always what I always liked.*

Peter (age 25, persister) started working as a home health aide about a year before we met, and was currently employed by two companies. When I asked whether he liked this job Peter was ambivalent and said, "Yeah, well, it ain't a career but it pays the bills for now." His commitment to his clients, however, emerged as we discussed the time and financial demands of raising children.

Me: *Is it like a financial thing that is the biggest, or is the time?*

Peter: *(overlapping) Yeah, it's more so the time. It ain't really so much as the money, because like I make enough. Like both of my jobs I get paid close to six hundred every two weeks, so. That's like, it ain't really the money. It's just, sometimes my son, he be having these trips with his school and he always 'Daddy, you wanna go?' ... I can't go. And I don't wanna just tell him like, 'I can't go because then I'll catch attitude. So I say, alright, I'm gonna try to go. Then make it seem like I'm gonna put the effort into it. But if I—I work with old people, so I can't just take off to go on a trip because it's like, what if something happened to them with the next aide? I don't know. And then after a while like once you working with people so long, like you get adapted to them, it's like your family. So you wonder like, ok, if I don't come in [and] they send somebody else in, what they gonna do to them?*

Me: *You wonder if they're going to be able to take care of them as well as you do?*

Peter: *Yeah.*

The Mark of a Criminal Record

Isaac (age 25, desister): *My actions—they made me who I am. I would never take them back. But [...] like as far as filling out applications, I have a criminal background now, so you're going to look at my application last, as opposed to somebody who don't have a criminal background. Don't tell me that 'we don't discriminate.' It's bullshit. Y'all do. So I'm at the bottom of the list in that category.*

Many of the informants discussed the “mark of a criminal record” and the extent to which they thought the stigma of having a record, especially a felony record, limited the kinds of jobs they could have and they likelihood of getting jobs that they applied for (Pager, 2003). Moreover, there is evidence indicating that applicants' criminal records and race affects employers' hiring decisions (for example, see Pager, 2003). The persisters and desisters in this study were keenly aware of this. For example, Gregory

(age 25, desister) explained that people are expected to think and act differently as they get older in order to avoid “the gluey stuff” of an adult criminal record.

Gregory: *I mean, when you're young that's fine because like, whatever you do until you 18 get expunged and you don't really got to do no hard time for a lot of stuff. And it's always because you're a child. But then, from like then on it's like the stuff that stick, like the gluey stuff, like the stuff that stick to you and all that stuff.*

Later in the interview Gregory clarified what he saw as the impact of “the gluey stuff.”

Me: *You said before that, we were talking about options it sounded a little bit like you were saying when people get caught up in the system that the system sort of affects their options. Is that what you said?*

Gregory: *(Overlapping) Yeah it's like jobs, when they say you can't work here or can't work there because you got a felony on, that affects your options. Hell yeah, that affects your options.*

In Camille's (age 21, desister) experience, having a juvenile record might still show up on a criminal background check, even though it was supposed to be expunged.

Camille: *I did [the background check] for myself and I had to bring the papers [to the job I was applying for.] And it came back. But it don't really say nothing. It just say I have a record. It don't tell me what it's for though.*

The perception that a criminal record limits employment opportunities also related to the actions and expectations of the persisters and desisters in this study. Eight persisters and fourteen desisters expressed concern about how felony records limit employment opportunities. Adam (age 24, incarcerated desister) said that his chances at avoiding selling drugs were slim because he had a criminal history, which limited his job prospects to night work and washing dishes, jobs that “disrespected” him. He said, “It's too late. [...] If you ain't change when you was younger, it's over.”

Like many of the informants, Gerard (age 23, incarcerated persister) said that he commits crimes because most regular jobs are not available to him because of his felony record, and those that are do not pay enough for him to maintain his lifestyle and to support his daughter. He said that in the future he wanted to open his own business, but his felony record limited even this option.

Gerard: *I don't know exactly, specifically what type of business that I really want. I want a bar but I know I can't get a liquor license, and then I would have to put it in somebody else's name. And then, you know, anything could happen with that.*

Though he viewed such policies and practices as discrimination, Gerard said that if he owned his own business, he would not hire ex-offenders either.

Gerard: *I wouldn't want them around.*

Me: *Why not?*

Gerard: *They not to be trusted. Like, I mean certain crimes—I would say certain crimes.*

Me: *Ok, but not a blanket, like, [exclusion].*

Gerard: *Yeah, not – not just a blanket.*

For many, starting one's own business was one potential way to circumvent the mark of a criminal record and the (perceived and actual) blocked employment opportunities for felony offenders. Kenneth said, "That's why I can't see myself working for a lot of people."

Three of the five persisting women were facing felony charges at the time of the qualitative interview: Galatea had drug charges pending, Rosie and Frankie had an assault charges pending. Each expressed concern that the felony record, above and beyond the legal outcome of the charges, would limit opportunities in the future. For

example, Frankie (age 21, persister), said she was more concerned about having a felony on her record for a charge stemming from a fight she had with another woman.

***Me:** Why are you worried about getting a felony?*

***Frankie:** Because I want to get a good job one day and you ain't going to get it if you have a felony on your record. Because that's going to fuck up my future. That's why I look at the bitch, like, you trying to fuck up my future.*

At least three informants said they had first-hand experience with the limitations felony records put on employment. Danny (persister, age 22) said that he met with military recruiters when they visited the facility he was placed in as a juvenile. "I tried every branch of service," Danny said. "They wouldn't let me [in]." Later, Danny elaborated on how he thought his record affected his employment opportunities.

***Me:** Do you think about what kind of job you might want to have? I mean, you got a lot of different skills.*

***Danny:** See, my whole thing recently, the last couple years, is like these felonies been dicking me over every which way possible. I told you I got management experience—I coulda went back to school [for] business management, all that shit. Like, I go back to school now—yeah, I could still go back to school, but I got all these felonies on my record. Ain't no one going to hire me. I feel like I can't get a good job. So I'm reduced to either cutting hair or doing tattoos. I mean, they both pay good, but that's not really what I saw myself doing, you know what I mean? Like, I was always on the honor role in school. I graduated valedictorian from the [juvenile residential facility school]. I'm not dumb. I just—I don't know. Drugs are a motherfucker. Drugs, man.*

Kenneth also said he had direct experience with applying for jobs with a felony record. When I asked him what happened when he applied for jobs, he said:

***Kenneth:** I feel as though when people look at the application and you put down what you been arrested for, they look at you like you crazy. Or like one job, I forgot where it was—I think it was at a restaurant somewhere—they did a*

background check. And it seem good at first until that background check came back. Then it went downhill from there.

Me: *Did they just come out and tell you?*

Kenneth: *I mean, they didn't really say that was the reason, but they said they was going to call back. Ain't never call back.*

Peter, a 25-year-old persister who said he had been abstaining from selling drugs and working a legal job for nearly a year, had the most direct experience with the mark of a criminal record. The summer before we met he worked as a counselor at a day camp at his church and worked with a group of adolescent boys. He said that it was this experience that first made him think he wanted to pull away from the streets.

Peter: *I wanted to work with kids, but I can't do it now. I was working with them last summer but I got fired because of my record.*

Me: *Oh, so you have felonies on your record?*

Peter: *Yeah, when I was a juvenile. I ain't never—like all the cases I've caught as an adult, I beat them so they're not on my record. But it's my juvenile case.*

Me: [...] *What kind of work were you doing with kids?*

Peter: *Hmm, like I was like a counselor, like trying to keep them out the streets and like teaching them little stuff and doing little projects with them. Taking them on trips and all that.*

Me: *Ok. How'd you get into that?*

Peter: *It was a church. I was going to church and the church had an opening for a summer camp. So I trained up for the summer camp and I was doing that. Then they made me a counselor, and from there. But then they had to let me go when they found my record.*

Me: *Right. So you're not ever able to work with kids?*

Peter: *No.*

Peter later indicated that the problem for the employers at the church camp was not that he had been involved in crime—they knew his neighborhood reputation as a drug dealer and he told them he had been locked up as a juvenile. The problem, however, was that, as a juvenile, he was charged as an adult for aggravated assault. Pennsylvania has a lifetime ban on working in childcare for ex-offenders with aggravated assault convictions.⁴⁴

In addition to felony criminal records, incarceration can limit potential job opportunities by preventing the accumulation of job experience and the development of skills (Western, 2006). As George (age 23, persister) said, “This jail shit fuck your future up.” Danny said that periods of incarceration create gaps in a person’s resume that are difficult to explain.

***Me:** So how much control do you think you have over your future? Do you feel like you have a say?*

***Danny:** I do but I don’t. I feel like I got a say in it, but at the same time I feel like my say don’t mean shit, you know? Like, I want to be able to have a say in it. I think I might be able to. But then I got all this past shit, like my felonies, all this jail time. Like, you write on the resume that your last job was there years ago, they want to know what you been doing between then and now. They don’t want, ‘oh, I was incarcerated,’ you know what I mean? It don’t look too good. I feel—feel like I’m stuck.*

***Me:** Yeah? What do you think would help you feel unstuck? Do you think there’s something that could help?*

***Danny:** The only time I don’t feel stuck is when I’m getting high.*

⁴⁴ Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law, § 6344. Information relating to prospective child-care personnel, section c. accessed http://www.pa-fsa.org/CPSL_5_09.pdf on March 19, 2014.

Despite being incarcerated for four years when we met, Damion (age 24, incarcerated desister) was one of the few informants who said that his experience and training in computers and fiber optics (acquired at a juvenile placement) will help him overcome his felony record and get a stable, long-term job with benefits and work-family balance. He said, “I ain’t going to say I know, but more than likely any phone company will hire me because of that.”

The mark of a criminal record was widely perceived as a barrier to gainful legal employment, and some had direct experiences with that barrier. Some said directly that their felony records kept them involved in crime by choice—selling drugs, especially, was perceived as a viable means of income. There was no discernable pattern that distinguished persisters and desisters in this respect. The mark of a criminal record was a universally perceived challenge faced by these men and women.

Social Capital: Knowing People Who Know People

One potential way to circumvent the mark of a criminal record is to access legal employment through social capital networks (Coleman, 1988; Sampson and Laub, 1993; also see Hagan, 1993). When I asked LeeAnn (age 22, desister) whether she thought her felony record would affect her ability to get a job as a security guard, she said, “That’s why you got to know people that know people.”

Fourteen of the forty informants talked about knowing people who know people: opportunities for employment provided by family members (parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings) or friends. Most of the opportunities made available to them by family members were labor, retail, or maintenance work. Of the fourteen who discussed legal job opportunities available to them, only one—Remi (age 20, persister; see above).

—had steady employment at the time of the qualitative interview as a result of such connections. Rosie said her uncle provided extensive financial support as well as social capital. However, since her boyfriend died, she lost her job and remained unemployed when we met a few months later.

***Me:** OK, and what about jobs? Was it through like people he knows or-*

***Rosie:** Usually it be companies that he done work with or people that he do know, Yes.*

***Me:** Does he send you in their direction, or does he put in a good word for you or-*

***Rosie:** He'll put in a good word sometimes or he'll send me in that direction or he'll let me use him as a reference.*

Some of the informants talked about the social capital networks available to them in the past. If they took the opportunity, the jobs did not last long. For example, Carlos (age 23, incarcerated persister) worked a number of different jobs for his girlfriend's parents over a three month period while he was also spending time with his girlfriend and not selling drugs. Ultimately, Carlos returned to selling drugs because he could earn more money than he did working odd jobs for family members.

***Carlos:** I was spending time with her, I was going to work with my pop, I was going to work with her step-pop, I was going to work with—like sometimes her mom needed a security guard, I'd go work with her mom. I don't know, like I was bussing dishes. I really don't know.*

Low wages were a common complaint. Neal (age 24, incarcerated desister) said that he was trying to get a job where his stepfather was a boss and that his stepfather was trying to help him even though, he said, his stepfather knew he would probably not keep the job.

Neal: My step-pop, I've been trying to get into his work and like... I don't think—he knows I'm going to quit or something because it's like eight dollars an hour and, you know what I mean, you got to do hard ass work. You got to like lift all this heavy metal and shit. So I think he's like waiting for a position to open, and it's like good like couple hours and shit like that. But he told me—he brought me down there a couple times when I told him like, look, I really need a job. He would bring me down there and to talk to his boss. Well, now he's the boss now. But then I was doing good, I didn't even need it. I had a lot of money so I didn't even want to get a job when I was just out there.

In the past, Allen's father tried to secure employment for him at the factory where he worked, but Allen did not want the job. He said, "I just didn't want to. I was doing what I was doing [selling drugs] and like that money [at the factory job] wasn't nothing to me." When considering his prospects for the future, though, Allen knew he had some social capital to draw upon and that he could not "be choosy" if he wanted to succeed.

Allen: Well, hopefully when I get home my stepbrother he has a UPS job. He's a manager. I don't know exactly what it is he do, but he's a manager, I guess he can get me in. Even though he told me to be part time and then talk my way up to full time, you know. It's certain things [that] a lot of things people got in mind for me when I come home, but I want to find something I'm going to be happy with. But, you know, I can't be choosy, you know what I'm saying?

For the incarcerated men, especially those who were doing or facing a lot of time, the legal employment opportunities available through their social capital networks were largely speculative and ambiguous. For example, Yusef (age 24, persister incarcerated for 5 years) said that in addition to the social and financial support he expected his mother would give to him when he returned home from prison, his friends would also help him find a job.

Yusef: [I also have] a few good friends. When I say good, I got a man right now, and it's crazy because he got this job since I been in jail, he work for the armored truck. I laughed so hard when he told me he worked for the armored truck. I had

to go—he like support me. [...] And so, I got a couple support groups that, that, in layman terms, going to wet my beak. (laughter) [...] You know, see what happens from there.

Though many informants said they had access to social capital networks, few took advantage of opportunities that arose from those networks; those that did stayed at the low-paying jobs for a short period before leaving, in some cases, to return to selling drugs. Others said they resisted legal job opportunities because they could make more money selling drugs.

It is possible those who said they had access to legal employment through a family or friend but had not taken advantage of it were overly optimistic about their prospects. Smith's (2005) research suggests that formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults might have trouble activating or mobilizing social capital or personal contacts to gain employment. Smith found that among poor urban Blacks, those with a reputation for delinquency or "acting ghetto" had trouble gaining job referrals through job contacts close to them. Family members, friends, or acquaintances were reluctant to make a referral out of concern for their own reputation. Potential job contacts share the same concerns as potential employers—the job seeker may fail to be a reliable and trustworthy employee. Such a failure might leave the job contact vulnerable to reputation denigration or to job loss.

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Romantic relationships among the informants were complicated. In addition to past and current romantic or sexual partners, some men and women said they were balancing multiple relationships at the same time or referred to brief relationships. During the qualitative interviews, I asked each person to reflect on their most recent or most

significant romantic relationship and to describe what they perceived to be the impact of that relationship on their lives. I start this sub-section by discussing the men and their relationships—how they viewed the association between their involvement in crime and their relationships, especially with respect to incarceration experiences and their partners' involvement in crime. Then I turn to the women, where the dominant themes complement and then diverge from those themes highlighted by the men.

Men

Three of the seventeen desisting men reported being single. Of the remaining 14 desisting men, three men lived with their romantic partners when they were in the community and five men lived with their romantic partners *and* children. Two men were legally married to the mother of their children. Three of the incarcerated desisters said they ended long-term romantic relationships when they were incarcerated, two of whom had children.

Many of the men said that their romantic partners were a source of supervision and monitoring as well as a source of social support. Most of those who said their girlfriends and wives provided these structural supports had conventional partners, experienced a change in opportunities for crime, and abstained from crime. Those men whose partners were non-conventional (i.e., crime involved) engaged in crime with their partners. Even when the men valued and cherished their romantic partners, incarceration disrupted relationships, and many chose to sever ties rather than expect their partners to wait for them.

Supervision, Monitoring, and Social Support. Many of the men, especially the desisting men, said their romantic partners provided them with social support and helped

them avoid crime (Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; Laub and Sampson, 2003).⁴⁵ For example, Cody's girlfriend (and mother to his children) provided him with supervision, monitoring, and social support that helped him avoid crime *and* that fostered a sense of obligation to her that encouraged him to follow through on pro-social goals like returning to school. Asked whether he thought he would achieve this goal, Cody said:

Cody: *Another thing about my baby mama, her thing is... if you say you going to do something, you make plans to do it, you have to do it regardless. And that's what I'm going to do. [...] Plus she working all these hours, you know what I'm saying? Because I'm not working now, so she make sure she put in all these hours, [so] I better do it.*

Kenneth described how his relationship with his wife curbed his behavior both through the time they spent together and because he listened to her and considered her opinion on his involvement in crime.

Me: *How have things changed since you guys first hooked up?*

Kenneth: *Mm, she changed me around a lot, well, I say she changed me a lot too because I was back on that—that urge to go on back to the streets 'til I met her. And that just dissipated a lot.*

Me: *How did—what do you mean it dissipated?*

Kenneth: *She start spending—we start spending a lot time together so the thoughts of the streets, even if I did want to, we were spending so much time together that it wouldn't have worked out like that so.*

Me: *So you just didn't have time?*

⁴⁵ Giordano et al., (2007: 1614) would expect that romantic relationships foster a sense of immediacy, reciprocity, and positive reflected appraisals, allowing offenders to envision a more worthy self; the partner, then, provides informal social control and social support as well as an “ever-present emotional role model.”

Kenneth: *I mean, I talked to her about it [and] she give me her opinion. At first she—she was on some, “You grown, I can’t tell you what to do, but if you make this decision, then I’m going to do this” and whatever, so I just got thinking about it.*

Kenneth also said that his wife monitored his cellphone log against his wishes in order to keep him away from old “business people.” He did not like the monitoring, but ultimately, he said, he was fine with not communicating with those people, indicating his preferences had shifted (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Additionally, his wife tried to give him a curfew to limit his opportunities to get into trouble (Laub and Sampson, 2003).

Kenneth: *I go see family members or whatever, [she] trying give me time limits and stuff like that.*

Me: *Like she gives you a curfew?*

Kenneth: *Yeah, I ain’t trying to hear that. I don’t ever make the curfew so then she think I was somewhere else.*

Me: *Yeah, do you—when she gives you a curfew do you intend to keep it or—*

Kenneth: *Nope. (laughter) I don’t know why she keep on doing it. I’m coming in when I come in. It ain’t like I come in at disrespectful times or whatever, but I ain’t going be coming over there at no six o’clock, when I just left at three o’clock. Think I’m going to be all the way out Jersey, spending an hour with my family. Nah, I ain’t doing that.*

Me: *Ok, so, but you think that she does this because she worries about—because you were locked up?*

Kenneth: *(Overlapping) She worry about me and she jealous. Sh—I don’t think she like people around me or whatever. Even her family, her uncles or whatever, they got a girlfriend and whatever, she don’t even like me talking to them, or them talking to me, asking me for nothing or whatever. She—I don’t know what’s up with that.*

Raymond (age 23, desister) described his wife in a similar manner.

Me: *So does she, these days does she do anything or say anything to encourage you to stay out of trouble?*

Raymond: *Always. Always. Always. Always. Like if I ain't working or doing my community service for these people, like I'm basically in the house. Nothing else. Like, she make sure I'm on time, you know what I mean? "What was the hold up? Nigga you about to be late, like where you at?" Yeah. She don't be playing. (laughs)*

Damion (age 24, incarcerated desister) described how his wife supervised and monitored his behavior, but he also expresses a sense of commitment or responsibility to her, which encouraged him to stay out of trouble.

Me: *What were some of the good things about that relationship?*

Damion: *Good things is she stayed on my, she stayed on my back so it was hard for me to really mess up or get caught up in a lot of stuff with her whining in my ear, so. And then when it's like, she depended on me, so for me to be out in the streets messing up and getting locked up though all the time, I know it was going to have a big impact on her because her family really ain't like me so they wouldn't accept me and she would leave them for me. So I didn't want them to get the—get the better hand, saying, "I told you so" about me messing up so, it was—it was a lot of controversy dealing with -it was a lot of benefits, but a lot of controversy dealing with her.*

Me: *Ok. But you feel like to some extent, she kept you out of trouble?*

Damion: *Yes*

Gregory (age 25, desister) said that his girlfriend (with whom he lived and had a child) "stopped him from doing a lot of stuff."

Me: *Yeah? How did she stop you from doing stuff?*

Gregory: *Because like she'll see me coming and say, "What you about to do?" And I tell her, I'm about to go do this. And [she's] like, "No you don't need to be out there doing that."*

Me: *So she actually just told you, "no, don't do it."*

Gregory: *(Overlapping)* Yeah, and then, I, at that point in time, I be mad about it. But then just being older, looking back at it, it was like, yeah, that's probably kept me from being locked up right now.

Me: OK. Did you guys ever fight about some of the stuff you were involved in?

Gregory: *(Overlapping)* Yeah, we fought about a lot of stuff.

Me: Yeah? *(Laughter)* OK. How did it make you feel to like fight about that kind of stuff, do you remember?

Gregory: Now I feel dumb, but back then I was probably just mad like she won't let me go do what the hell I was about to do.

These desisting men also described the social support their partners provided.

Gregory and Cody both said that their girlfriends stuck by them during legal and employment troubles.

Me: Can you describe her for me?

Cody: Hmmm, like personality wise?

Me: Whatever you want—whatever is most important to you.

Cody: Hmm *(long pause)* Her just... just her period. [...] We had a little rough times, but we got back together because of ... how we felt about each other. Then I lost my job at Target, I thought she was going to leave me or whatever, but she stuck by me, you know what I'm saying. She helped me out, I'm going to get through it. And then it was like, when I got arrested for that situation, she was like the only person besides my cousin that believe me, that I didn't do it. She stood by me through then. Anything I need—if I ain't got it, she give—she give it to me. [...]

Kenneth also said that his wife stuck by him during lean times and helped him resist the temptation to return to selling drugs.

Kenneth: Yeah, I wasn't doing nothing at the time, but it was lot of temptation going on, so I was telling her about it, like stuff what I having a plan on to do and like she talked me out of it, changed my mind made me see different light.

***Me:** How did she talk you out of it? Like what kind of things did she say?*

***Kenneth:** Ah, I'm a person that-I don't like-I don't like asking nobody for nothing, and if I feel as though I can't take care my female, then I see it like as a problem. So she basically was like telling me like she don't care if I ain't have no money or whatever, that she still was going to be there for me no matter how long it took for me to get a job.*

The desisting men seemed to submit to the informal social control efforts of their partners, at least when they looked back on their experiences. Certainly, they did not have to listen to (and obey) their partners. Indeed, some of the persisting men received similar messages from their partners, and some would heed their partners' wishes for a time, but it did not usually last. For example, Carlos said that his girlfriend did not ask him to stop selling drugs, but she did encourage him to stay off the streets; she also tried to find legal work for him.

***Me:** Did she ask you to stop hustling?*

***Carlos:** Nooooo. She just like, just like, "you know you ain't got to be out there." I say, "I know I ain't got to be out, but what's wrong, what you mean?" It's like, "You ain't got to go out there on the street. They go ahead, you know, and let them do them. You ain't got to go out there." [...] Then she was lining up these little jobs up and everything—it wasn't consistent, it was a job here and there, but you know. But it wasn't the money I was used to making, that's the only thing that was getting on my nerves. But yeah, it's like, tsh.*

***Me:** So, why did you go back to hustling?*

***Carlos:** Why? Why I went back to hustling? [...] I think it was stingy. I think I was selfish to the effect, like you know, I like to take my girl out when I want to take her out.*

Sal's (age 21, incarcerated persister) girlfriend also tried to keep him out of trouble, but he said he was too attached to the street and did not trust her sincerity.

***Me:** Did your life change much after you started seeing her?*

***Sal:** That's what I'm saying. She used to like try to so hard to keep me away, and I used to think it was all because like she was just like, I don't know, just trying to break us up. Like I [would think,] my homies love me, they going to be there for me. But like she seen something I didn't. You know, [she'd say] just, "be with me, I really love you, I want to be a family." She tell me on the phone all the time, like, "I really wanted to be a family. I wanted to marry you." And things like that. I be like, man, like—And I used to think about it like sometimes when I was home. Be like, "nah, she just—"Because I been in other relationships and I'd think that she just trying to play games.*

Crime-involved partners. Though most of the men described their girlfriends and wives as uninvolved in crime, or at least having never been arrested by the police, the partners of some persisting men (and one desister who said he actively sold drugs) were crime-involved. For example, Isaac (age 25, desister) said that he and his former girlfriend committed crimes (other than selling drugs) together and that she stole money from him.

***Isaac:** We was doing things and we was making money together, so it just so happened that some of the money that we made together was mine. She ended up, you know, not giving it to me.*

Yusef (age 24, incarcerated persister) said that he wanted to get married when he became more involved in Islam when he was 18. When he was lived in the Midwest, he soon found a woman who was willing to convert to Islam to marry him. Yusef's new wife, who was a ten years older, was involved in crime as well and she provided him with access to drug connections. He said he felt manipulated by her at times, however. He said, "She pimped me and I didn't know it. . . It was crazy, man. I was really, really, really was out there chasing paper, like more than any other time in my life." Asked whether his wife ever encouraged him to avoid crime, Yusef said:

Yusef: *Actually (laughter) it's like the opposite. Like, the only thing she cared about was murder. That's all. She like, 'No, don't kill nobody.' She frowned on that, like. But everything else was like, 'Oh yeah, that's what's up!' You know? Because she's sold drugs, like. And I think she—like she only accepted Islam for me."*

Later Yusef added:

Yusef: *I didn't know there was women out there like this... What I mean by this is like—she is a vicious woman, you understand? ... Man this girl is vicious. Like, she like a mob boss, for real for real. She'll put you in a position to play your part. Like her brain, the way she put me on certain things—she was puppeting me, right?*

Tommy's wife was also crime involved (she was his codefendant in his current case), and their marriage was tumultuous by his account. Asked how long he had been married, Tommy said, "Two years. Just on paper. [. . .] My marriage is a joke." He met his wife shortly after being released from jail when he was 19. At the time, they both had open criminal cases and both were homeless; they married the next year. Tommy said, "I pushed the issue. I wanted to marry her because I loved her. [. . .] I felt that if I felt this way about her, that I was committed, that I should honor that by marrying her." When asked whether he expected changes after they were married, Tommy said, "I thought we'd just get tighter like they were. [. . . Instead], they got worse." Indeed, Tommy's marriage was marked by violence.

Me: *How do you think things have changed after you started seeing each other until now?*

Tommy: *[. . .] A lot of fighting. I've been stabbed seven times by her. Like these scars are all from her. She's crazy, too. Fighting, abusing, abusive relationship, you know what I mean? Like I was abused physically. I don't hit women [but] I'm really abusive with my mouth, like verbally abusive, but she know I didn't hit her so she took advantage of that and just went to town.*

***Me:** What kinds of stuff do you guys fight about?*

***Tommy:** Everything. I was really possessive. She was a very beautiful woman and I didn't want no other man to be around her, so there were a lot of fights about that.*

In spite of the verbal and physical abuse, Tommy was free from incarceration for most of the two years after meeting his wife (this was the longest period he had been out of jail or prison since he started in the Pathways Study) and he described this period as “the highlight of my life, them two years. It’s not much but it’s what I got.” Tommy also indicated that his involvement in crime changed qualitatively after he got married, at least in part because his wife gave him an ultimatum regarding residential burglaries (his crime of choice): “Her or that life. I chose her.” Later in the interview, Tommy told me, “I calmed down and stopped doing [burglaries] when I got married and stuff and I started selling drugs.” He stayed away from burglaries for a year, but ultimately he returned to burglaries after he and his wife broke up. Though he said that he did not miss it when he was not doing it, he returned to burglary “because I needed that fulfillment my wife gave me. [. . .] My wife—that fulfilled a hole in my life. I didn’t care about burglaries. I’m gonna give up burglaries for her.” Ultimately, even though he saw his wife’s influence on him as positive, Tommy was mistrustful of attachments to others as a result of his experience.

***Me:** In what ways do you think you would be different right now if you hadn’t met [your wife]?*

***Tommy:** Uhh... I don’t know. I don’t know if I’d be worse or better or what. I honestly don’t. I wasn’t there for no straight life, [but] if anything she scared me to—she domesticated me. Like, I was different. I don’t know. I’d have to say... with all the extra stuff that came with it, I still think she impacted me in a positive way because I’ll never let myself get so attached to another person like that.*

Which is good because it's dangerous. It's not good to be attached. Because before [my wife] I wasn't like that, woman possession and stuff. [...] All that—once you become like that, like there is no relationship. It's just demands. It's not healthy for either part.

Incarceration and romantic relationships. Romantic relationships suffered when men were incarcerated. Dean (age 24, persister) was briefly married to his long-term girlfriend, but the marriage was annulled. He said, “I kept going back to prison, and we were too young to get married.”

Many of the men said that they did not expect others—romantic partners as well as family, and friends—to put their lives on hold while they were incarcerated.⁴⁶ For example, Lee (age 23, incarcerated persister) had been incarcerated for nearly four years. About a year in, he told his baby's mother that he did not want to hold her back.

Lee: *I told her, I said, 'Look man, we ain't going to play no games with this. There's a strong possibility I could get life, you know what I mean? And the death penalty, I mean, it's a possibility man. So, come on, like, there's no way you're going to wait. [...] She like, 'Man, I know that, but, you know, I guess I'm going to still ride with you. At some point I'm going to let go and, you know, do me. But it's just going to be so hard.' So I'm like, 'Look, put it like this: Like, we cool. Come see me whenever you want to come see me, whatever. But I ain't going to hold you back, man.'*

Though William (age 23, incarcerated desister) spoke highly of his girlfriend—he described her as trustworthy, honest, and understanding—he said that he ended his relationship with her recently, about a year after he was arrested on a homicide charge.

William: *She a good person, you know? With the circumstances, this—this place, it drive people apart sometimes.*

⁴⁶ The women in this sample also said that their lives do not go on hold when their men are locked up; I return to this below. LeeAnn agreed: “Hey, he's in jail for life and I'm on the streets, so you move on.”

Later William added:

William: *Like, I told her to go ahead and move on with herself. Locked up, you can't have no girlfriend or like, can't have no relationship... and expect it to be all right. No. So me being the man that I am... I just cut it all off [to] alleviate us both problems. Her stressing me out and me stressing her out.*

Jack's (age 24, desister) experience with his girlfriend over the six month he had been in jail illustrates what those problems might be.

Jack: *She tells me how she goes out drinking and is with her friend, you know, which is cool, but she's out there getting into fights, you know? Fighting guys. And it's just like, man, you know, I'm in here. I don't need you getting locked up too. What good does that do either of us? That's why I say, [she's] only, I think, half way.—she's still half doing her and the other half is like, "Oh, I miss you, blah blah blah." And yesterday she's sitting right there, come to find out—I don't know how it came up—the word 'celibacy' came up. I don't know how—I asked her, like only half seriously, I said, 'Can you look me in the eyes and tell me you've been celibate the whole time?' And then she looked at me and said, 'I been celibate.' I said, 'The whole time?' She looked to the left and couldn't look me in the eyes. She didn't look at me for another two minutes at least. [...] How am I supposed to react to something like that, you know? [...] I mean, she basically, she just told me she cheated on me. And now—now what?*

Ending relationships or putting relationships on hold seemed to protect both those who are incarcerated and their partners who are left behind. Adam (age 24, incarcerated desister) and Kenneth (age 24, desister) said that their romantic partners changed when they were incarcerated. Adam said his girlfriend started using crack cocaine. Kenneth said his first baby's mother broke down when he was incarcerated.

Kenneth: *She just lost her mind. Like—she was lost. [...] She let herself go. I mean, she was still pretty and all that, but she ain't dress how she used to dress, act different, started hanging out with the wrong crowd. She changed. That's why she don't have her daughter now. Started stripping, all types of stuff.*

Even those relationships that survived at least short-term incarcerations were strained. Raymond (age 23, desister) had been married for three years. While he was serving six weeks on a probation violation, he said:

Raymond: *Me and my wife, like we kind of grew a part a little bit in the little bit of time I went in there. [...] When I came home, like, she was like basically meeting new friends or whatever.*

Me: *[...] Do you think she cheated on you.*

Raymond: *I don't—no, I don't believe she cheated on me. I just believe she just met another new friend or whatever.*

Me: *And it wasn't really on the up and up, altogether?*

Raymond: *Yeah*

Women: Similarities and Differences

The relationships described by the women in this sample complement the men's accounts of their own relationships in some ways—some evidence that supervision and monitoring and social support are related to periods of abstinence from crime—but they are unique in others. For those women who persist, their involvement in crime is at times shaped by their partner's criminal behavior, consistent with the qualitative literature that females' offending is tied closely to their men's crime (for example, see Daly, 1994; Maher, 1997). Due to the small sample, it is difficult to detect themes that are specific to the women, especially since their level of involvement in crime was much lower than the men's involvement to begin with.

The desisting women's relationship statuses and recent experiences were very different—Anne (age 22) was divorced from the father of her two children. Ramona's (age 24) boyfriend (and father to her youngest child) was in jail on a technical probation

violation. Princess (age 20) was in a long-term relationship with her baby's father. Camille's (age 21) long-term boyfriend had recently died and she was in a casual relationship. LeeAnn's (age 22) long-term boyfriend was incarcerated on a life sentence.

The persisting women's relationships were just as varied as the desisting women. Only one woman—Rita (age 21), a persister—was in a long-term stable relationship and lived with her child's father. Of the remaining persisting women, Galatea (age 22) was single when we met. Frankie (age 21) just broke up (again) with the father of her daughter the day before we met. Teresa (age 21) recently received a "promise" ring from her boyfriend who was in jail on a technical probation violation, was intermittently involved with her children's father, and was financially supported by older men. Rosie's (age 21) long-term boyfriend had died a few months before we met.

Supervision and monitoring. Anne (age 22, desister) was divorced from a Muslim marriage and she was living with her children and her mother. They married the night they met, and marriage lasted just over a year; it ended when her husband started seeing one of his employees at a fast food restaurant. When asked whether her husband did or said anything to encourage her to stay out of trouble, Anne's commitment to her role as a wife, she said, kept her out of trouble.

Anne: Umm... I never really got into any trouble, but he... he kept me out of trouble most of the time anyway.

Me: How so?

Me: Umm, basically, in our relationship I'm very respectful wife. I asked my husband before I go anywhere, and things like that. He took care of me, so I tried my best you know to be respectful to him. And like, if—if I wanted to go and see like one of my old friends when I was younger, stuff like that, he'd let me go but he wouldn't let me stay out late at night, stuff like that, so. Kept me out of trouble.

Camille's (age 21) long-term boyfriend died suddenly of sickle cell anemia shortly after they signed a lease on an apartment together, the year before we met. Her new boyfriend was recent, and she said he helped her keep her "attitude problem" in check when they were out together

***Me:** Does he do anything to help you or encourage you to stay out of trouble?*

***Camille:** Yeah, like, he be like, because I, I do got like a attitude problem, so like, he knows, like if we at the same like party or something and somebody say something smart, he just be like "do not say nothing". Like get out of here bye. He's like, "alright, it's time for us to go. It's time for us to go".*

***Me:** Does that help?*

***Camille:** Yeah.*

Social support. Ramona (age 24, desister), was a mother of four children and a fifth child on the way. Her current boyfriend was the father of her youngest child and the child she was pregnant with. She said he generally stayed out of trouble (he was currently in jail on a technical probation violation) and provided her with instrumental and emotional social support. She described her boyfriend as "being there" for her and said that he helped her care for her children, cook, and clean the house.

Princess's said that her relationship with her boyfriend, Jason, ended while he was locked up and started again when he was released from jail or prison. While he was locked up, she said, she would get into fights, but when he was on the street Jason kept Princess out of trouble by keeping her in the house when she lived with him. Regardless of his involvement in crime, Princess said that Jason was a source of social support and informal social control.

***Me:** Do you feel like he's a positive or negative influence in your life?*

***Princess:** Positive.*

***Me:** Yeah? How so?*

***Princess:** Because I know what he does is negative, but Jason don't do it around me. I know what he do, but he just don't do it around me. And I say positive because... the way I look at it, everything, like... that I have accomplished so far, or you know from the time that I had been arrested to now, I have Jason as like help.*

Later in the interview, Princess added:

***Princess:** He gets in my way. And that's—that's like, I—that's something I have to have. If I don't get my way, I'm real... bitchy, naggy—yes, very. If I don't get my way. Another good thing... like I said, I have a well-educated young brotha. (laughs)*

***Me:** Yeah? And that's good?*

***Princess:** (Overlapping) Yeah. So that's good. Yeah, because like everything. I don't know, just like how you had—Okay, when you said something about influencing, you had like put it in a different way—Jason would do it for me also. Like because I have umm... I can read, I can read real good, but I just have a problem comprehending. I can read a whole book to you right now and can't remember what I read to you. And Jason is type of person where it's though he got to help me out. Like the words that I don't understand, like if I see a big word I can pronounce it but I won't understand what it means. He tell me what it means, like that. So I got somebody that's going to help me... in any way, in any way possible.*

Only one woman—Rita (age 21), a persister—was in a long-term stable relationship and lived with her child's father. With him present during the interview, Rita described their relationship as mutually supportive.

***Me:** Does he do anything or say anything to encourage you to stay out of trouble? I know you said his mom does.*

Rita: *Yeah he does to you know like sometimes. When I'm like, "I don't want to go to work, I'm not going to work today, I'll call out," he's like, "you better stop calling out. you got to go to work" [...] Like when I was supposed to go to school, like push me to go to school and stuff like that instead of like, 'Oh I'll just stay home and be here. Yeah, come chill with me.' You know how some people are. But it shows that he do care about my education, care about where I go in life. So, yeah I would say he's an influence. When I'm slipping, he's there to push me up and the same for him—when he's slipping, I'm there to push him up. So yeah [...] you know, we both take turns helping each other out.*

Crime-involved partners. As with the men, some of the women's romantic partners were involved in crime. Also similar to the men's accounts of their own incarceration experience, women said that their men's incarceration affected the stability of their romantic relationships. As noted above, when Princess's (age 20, desister) boyfriend was incarcerated, she saw other people; when he was released, they got back together. LeeAnn (age 22, desister) did not want to discuss her romantic relationships with me in general, but her experience with her last romantic partner supported the accounts of the incarcerated men: The relationship ended when he was incarcerated.

Me: *So was he your boyfriend for a while before he got locked up?*

LeeAnn: *For like two years. Hey, he's in jail for life and I'm on the streets, so you move on.*

For at least two of the women—Galatea (age 22, persister) and Rosie (age 23, persister)—involvement in crime was shaped by their partners' criminal behavior in terms of the kinds of crimes they engaged in, but in both cases, the decision to become involved in crime or return to crime stemmed from other factors.

Galatea's (age 22, persister) account illustrates how boyfriends might play some part in a woman's involvement in crime as well as how structural changes associated with the dissolution of a relationship relate to changes in offending. Galatea said that she did not blame her old boyfriend, Shawn (whom she referred to as her "old head"; see Anderson, 1999), for her adolescent involvement in crime. Shawn was older than her, and she started seeing him during a period when she was having problems with her mother.

Galatea: *I was going through family problems at the time. My mom and her boyfriend was going through it, so it kind of like neglected me and push me out the way, so I had the time to go ahead and get the experience and see what it's like to being with a older man.*

Galatea said that though Shawn taught her some of the techniques of hustling, she chose whether and how to be involved in crime.

Galatea: *It's like he showed me how to hustle for just a couple years of being with him, but I took it upon myself to learn the code of the streets, pretty much, and how to hustle. It's not what you do it's how you do it. [...] I mean this is small [referring to timeline], this is small to what I can really be doing. Like I can really be doing like I was doing. Like I said, Shawn [my first boyfriend] was a robbing and stealing type dude. He would rob a corner store in a heartbeat, you know what I mean. I'm not that type of person. I got a li—I got a heart. My heart is bigger than my guns, for real.*

Ending her relationship with Shawn was a pivotal factor in Galatea's period of abstinence when she was a teenager. The decision to end the relationship emerged, she said, as she started to think differently about her involvement in crime, build new ties (including one with her baby's father), and reestablish old ties with her family.

Me: *Did something happen that made you realize that the things [Shawn] was teaching you and showing you were not things that you wanted anymore? Or did you just sort of come to the realization at the time?*

Galatea: *What happened was I started coming to my senses. Like I said, started meeting new people. God opened up new doors for me, and I started building relationships back with my mom. So it was like—it was time to let him go and time to get back right with my family, which I did. So I got counseling with my family [...] when I was like 16, 17. Got away from him. My mom got rid of, you know, what she was going through. [. . .] So it was like once her little problem started drifting and my problem started drifting, we started coming back together. We started bonding. So, I mean, it's better now. It's way better now.*

Galatea largely abstained from crime for a few years after her relationship with Shawn ended (he was later shot and killed while committing a robbery). During this

period she started a new relationship with Tony, with whom she had a daughter. When she met Tony, she told him she was trying to get away from her past experiences and she stopped for a couple of years. She was also employed and attended school to be a nursing assistant during this period. Eventually, though, she returned to crime, about three years before the qualitative interview, as her relationship with Tony was ending. She also lost custody of her daughter.

***Me:** [referring to the timeline] Let me see if I can verify this a little bit. (inaudible) so like you were staying out of trouble and you were working a lot, and then like in 2005 it looks like, you started getting into trouble again where you reporting getting involved in like alcohol and stuff like that again. Did something happen in 2005?*

***Galatea:** [...] That's when I was going through it. Like this is 2005 [referring to the timeline]. I gave birth in '03. I moved out by '04, '05. I was living with—me and my baby dad went half of apartment, and between '05 like—from '03 to '06, I say really, it was like I was going through a whole bunch of this. It was like, I was on my own and I was living with my baby dad and we was going through things so, mm (I don't know). It's like, like I said me, dealing with—he got another baby mom, so the fighting started playing a role. And when he started dealing with another girl and our home wasn't right so, you know what I mean.*

***Me:** Ok. So it's about the time that you guys broke up and—?*

***Galatea:** (overlapping) mm—hm, yeah*

***Me:** Things went bad and... you didn't have his support?*

***Galatea:** Exactly. So, it was like, I was doing what I got to do, he was doing what he got to do. He was bringing trouble to the relationship, to home. Then I had to move, I had to get back—and I came back here [to my mom's house] pretty much when I got kicked out—evicted from my house, I had to sell drugs and dance and ss—you know?*

Rosie (age 23, persister) also abstained from crime—specifically fighting, breaking and entering and credit card fraud—around the time that she became involved

with her long-term boyfriend. She described her boyfriend as someone she could confide in and talk about her problems with. Rosie also described how her activities changed after they met.

***Rosie:** Because when I was—when I met him, I was still, I wasn't into like any illegal things besides, I mean, I did smoke weed. But I was always ripping and running the streets and the bars and I wasn't going to church or nothing. But when I met him it was like I calmed down a lot. I stopped running in the streets and going to the different clubs and stuff. I stayed in the house [...] Then he, we got, we got into church together. He got baptized and from then on, I just stayed in church. [...]*

Rosie's boyfriend also abstained from crime during the early stages of their relationship, but started selling drugs when they had been together for around a year.

***Me:** So, if you had to identify a problem in your relationship with him, what would it have been?*

***Rosie:** Mm...only thing that I didn't—only problem that I really had was when he started selling drugs again. [...] That was—that was my only problem. And I kind of somewhat blame myself, because I mean, he was working and it was—he was always working overnight and I wanted him home with me. And being as I was always complaining, he wind up quitting his job. And that's the only reason why he turned to the streets. So sometimes, that's another reason why I—it just, that be a burden on me because I knew he wouldn't have never of sold drugs if he would have kept his job.*

Nearly two and a half years into their relationship, her boyfriend was shot in the stomach and died sixteen months later (and five months before the qualitative interview). During the period between when he was shot and when he died, Rosie self-reported to the Pathways study that she was selling drugs, fighting, and destroying property, and was arrested for disorderly conduct. She was also arrested for aggravated assault the night before we were first scheduled to do the qualitative interview; she said she cut a man she had been seeing on the arm during an argument. When I asked Rosie about when she

started selling drugs again, she said she did it to support her boyfriend while he was in the hospital and to prepare for him to come home.

***Me:** But in spring of 2007—Was that the first time that you'd done it in a while? Or was that the first time just reported it?*

***Rosie:** No, that was the first time I had done it in a while because it—Spring of 2007, that's when he was in the hospital, so I started helping—No he was, no he, he, well, he was getting ready to come home so I started helping selling his drugs a little bit so he could have some money when he come home and stuff like that, because I wasn't—Was I working at that time?*

***Me:** (overlapping) The calendar [timeline] says that you were.*

***Rosie:** (overlapping) No, I was working, I was working at that time, so I still was just helping. Helping him out while I was working.*

***Me:** [...] Were you afraid that you were going to get caught when you were doing that?*

***Rosie:** I was scared, I was scared. It was just that I cared about him so—and loved him so much, it wasn't nothing that I wouldn't do for him. And that's how it was.*

Rosie and Galatea accounts of their past significant relationships and their involvement in crime highlight two themes. First, both women said they largely abstained from crime while they were in stable romantic relationships as young adults. Second, both indicated that they returned to crime during periods of instability in those relationships—Galatea when her partner became involved with another woman and Rosie when her partner was hospitalized.

FAMILY SUPPORT DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

The transition to adulthood is marked by increasing independence from parents and other caregivers that are expected to supervise and monitor behavior and provide

financial and emotional supports during childhood and adolescence. Young adults are expected to acquire these resources through work and by starting their own families. Though the informants in this sample had these same expectations, many continued to draw from their families for social support, and others seemed to suffer from the lack of such supports. These supports take the form of social capital (social ties that, in this case, provide access to employment opportunities, see above) as well as emotional and financial supports.

Where many of those who said that they received social support and supervision from their romantic partners were desisters, the men and women in the persister group were more likely to say they relied on family for social support (and supervision). Some of the informants, like Raphael (age 21, persister) and Yusef (age 24, incarcerated persister) said their mothers provided them with social support in the form of money as well as advice

***Raphael:** [My mom] gives me advice. She always talks to me, you know, she's always there to listen. Always there for help, you know, financially. Always there for me, you know in every way you can name or think about. So, you know, that's how she helps me.*

Though at one time he had his own apartment, at age 20, Remi (persister) lived with his father who provided both social support and some level of supervision and monitoring. In the past, Remi's father helped him get his first apartment and his car; he also helped Remi meet the conditions of his probation by threatening to call Remi's probation officer. More recently, Remi said of his father,

***Remi:** He helps me maintain myself.*

***Me:** What do you mean?*

Remi: *If I start slipping on paying car insurance, he lets me know. I got to get on it all, he's always busting my balls, like, "you got to do this, you got to do that." So I do it.*

Me: *So you do it?*

Remi: *(Overlapping) Yeah.*

Me: *Because he says so?*

Remi: *Not really because he says it, just because I know I got to do and he's busting my balls now and I'm kind of lazy, so alright I'll do it.*

Rosie (age 24, persister) derived largely material support and social capital (see above) from her uncle.

Me: *Can you give me an example of a time where he had a positive influence on you or a situation?*

Rosie: *[...] Just, everything. (laughter) Everything. Just everything as far as me getting this apartment, far as me finding job after job and just me living, anything that I need he's always there for me. If I was to need my hair done, I needed some money to eat or food in the house, he just always there.*

Me: *How did he help you with the apartment?*

Rosie: *Oh, right now, being so I just lost my job in May, he, he pays, my rent and he give me, he gives me money like on Sundays and with my money every Sunday I try to manage to pay my cable bill and my electric bill.*

Jack (age 24, incarcerated desister) struggled with drug addiction and felt largely abandoned by most of his family. Before his most recent incarceration, however, Jack's sister conceded to help him one last time in a last-ditch effort to get him on track.

Ultimately, Jack let her down.

Jack: *I mean... my family thinks of me as a lame piece of shit ... like, pshh. Like, you know, they—they—they won't like abuse me and say, 'oh you're a fuck up,' but I'm a fuck up. I've fucked up a lot, you know what I mean? So that's how they look at me. Like you know, 'He fucked up again.'*

Me: *Does it bother you to know that that's how they view you?*

Jack: *Yeah. I hate—I hate that they—yeah, like. There you go, especially more recently, you know, ever since—ever since uhh, I guess the last time I got out of here [jail], my sister said that she didn't want me to come live with her. And then she wound up letting me come stay with her, and I was just like, man... This is it, you know what I mean, I got—I got—I got to do good, I can't, you know what I mean, this is my last option really. Other than her, I'd be on the street, you know. And I wound up doing pretty—pretty fucking good, you know. Staying out of trouble for—for a year. A year until I got locked up in Philly for something that I didn't do, you know.*

Me: *So it was sort of her saying that this is it-*

Jack: *Yeah, she gave me a second chance, you know.*

Me: *Do you think you'd have that kind of chance again with her?*

Jack: *No, no, not at all.*

As Jack's account suggests, if social supports from family members to at-risk young adults are intended to help them “get on their feet,” these efforts can fail.

Lacking Social Support

Many of the persisters and incarcerated men associated social support—material and emotional—with their own involvement in crime: Either they were lacking it in the present or thought it would help them to avoid crime in the future. For example, Galatea's (age 22, persister) said that she returned to crime as a last resort after she lost custody of her daughter and was evicted from her apartment. She said that lacked the basic social supports to help her avoid returning to crime, including support from her parents.

Galatea: *It's like I'm struggling asking people can I use their computers to better myself to stay out of trouble or, to look for a school that I can use a—you know, go to school and take up like I'm a CNA [certified nursing assistant], I have a*

certificate to be a CNA also when I was 17. I want to pursue that career too [...] but I can't. It's like, I'm not fortunate enough like everybody else is to be able to say, ok, let me, let me stop selling drugs and go ahead and pursue this career, because like financially my mom got money or my dad got money. No, it's not like that. It's like OK, let me start hustling for two months, stack up my bread, which is my money, so I can go ahead and put myself in school. But that shows you, me trying to do that, I might get arrested, might get killed, might get shot, might have to shoot somebody, might have to kill somebody in order for me to stack my little bit of money hustling just to get to school. You see what I'm saying? If I had a dad—If I could call my dad or if I could call somebody or a counselor or you know what I mean somebody that could [say to], 'look I need help. You know, guide me.' I'm not the type of person, if I need help I'm going to ask for help, but evidently I don't have enough resources to get help you know what I mean, positive help. So it's like I resort to what I have to. If I got to dance for two months straight to stack up for my car insurance or a car, that's what I'm going to do if I don't have it, you know what I mean. It is what it is.

Some of the informants, including those who were involved in crime or incarcerated at the time of our interview, said that they thought social support would help them go straight. For example, Isaac (age 25, desister) said that social support and having something to look forward to is a key aspect of trying to abstain from crime. Indeed, some incarcerated men thought social support and connections to others would help to change in the future.

Tommy (age 22, incarcerated persister): *I'd have to have—I wouldn't give it up for myself. It'd have to be for somebody else that I care about. I realized that. There's no way I'd give it up for myself because... I don't know. It's what I like to do, it's for me. If there was somebody else that I really care about, I would—I know that I would because I done it for my wife. But I don't see nobody taking my wife's place. [. . .] I don't see nobody ever having that type of status with me. Like she's tattooed on my neck. Nobody would ever get that. You know what I mean?*

Allen (age 22, incarcerated desister): *I mean, I think one of the reasons [I feel disconnected from others] is because I'm in here and I want somebody to attach to or love because I have nothing in here and I want someone to attach to. Even though I have my mother and my father and my sisters, but I also want other people that maybe that I cared about when I was out there.*

Warren (age 24, incarcerated desister): I just want that somebody you go home to every night, to see your problems. Like who you can talk to.

CHANGING OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

Many of the persisters and desisters said that in order to stop committing crime, a person has to change their “people, places, and things”—who you spent time with, where you went, and what you were around. Others were more specific: in order to change, a person must leave Philadelphia and knife off their criminal past from the present (Kirk, 2009, 2012; Laub and Sampson, 2003). In either case, the goal was to change opportunity structures for crime. However, for many persisters, the missing element in their restructured routines was structure. Though they avoided the people and the places that got them into trouble, they often did so without structured replacement activities and they became bored, which set them up for failure.

CHANGING ROUTINE ACTIVITIES: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Some of the persisting men recognized that changing their routine activities could help them avoid crime, either in the future or in the past during (usually brief) periods of abstinence. For example, when asked what steps he could take to stay out of trouble, Dean suggested that the time he spent skateboarding could help him. Raphael (age 21), a persister who had abstained for brief periods in the past, said that changing how he spent his time and who he spent his time with was the main way he was able to avoid crime in the past.

Me: You said before that you didn't [quit] cold turkey. You started backing off and pulling away.

Raphael: Definitely, yeah.

Me: How did you do that?

Raphael: *Oh, by going less to the bars, because that's where mostly people would go at that I deal with. And things like that. Or see-and start hanging less with the normal people I would. I started like, you know, meet more girls. Trying to meet a girl, [would help me] fall back. And things like that. So, you know, I start thinking about getting a job. I got a job, and that really cut time short. I come home, be tired. Things like that. And ... slowly but surely, you know, getting away from it.*

Me: *Ok. So you did other things with your time, it sounds like?*

Raphael: *Yeah.*

Me: *You said that finding a girl would sort of help you fall back. How—*

Raphael: *Oh, by getting a girl—a nice girl, you know. Trying to find a nice girl to be chilling, and hopefully, you know, get to meet her or whatever. And things like that. Because it's different than just a girl you—a one night stand, you know what I mean? You meeting a girl to chill with, to get to know her and chill with her or whatever, she get to know you. And that takes time. And usually when both of them people like each other a lot. [. . .] You know, so when they like to see each other, they get all jolly to see each other (laughs). Things like that. So, you know, I'm really an affectionate person, so I be chilling. I go fall back on a Sunday and then she under the blankets, you know, watching movies all day, order out. You know, do the regular "I'm your baby" thing. So I would think that would help me, but I ain't find no nice girl. Every girl I found was—she was getting high, not going to school. Got the kids, and things like that, you know? So I ain't find a nice girl.*

For many desisters, especially those in the community, the structure for avoiding people, places, and things was already in place and they associated it with their ability to stay out of trouble. Asked what he could do to avoid crime in the future, Cody (age 23, desister) responded:

Cody: *Stay on the road I'm on now, you know what I'm saying? Devote my time to family, my kids, my baby mom.*

Gregory (age 25, desister) said he did less "dumb stuff" as an adult than he did as a teenager, which he associated with spending less time with his friends (Warr, 2002).

Instead of hanging out with friends all the time, Gregory filled his time with work, going to the gym, and being home with his girlfriend and their daughter.

Me: *Do you think you act differently than you did when you were a teenager?*

Gregory: *Yeah, I got to. I guess I act differently.*

Me: *How?*

Gregory: *...I don't know. How do I act differently? ...Umm, I still do a lot of stuff, I still do whatever I want for the most part, you know, whatever I want. I still do spur of the moment type stuff...well, yeah, I don't—I don't just be involved with a lot of dumb stuff like I used to. I don't drink as much. I don't smoke. I just don't hang around with a lot of people I used to. That's what it is.*

Me: *Yeah? So do you think you spend less time with your friends or more time with your friends or just different-?*

Gregory: *(Overlapping) I-I-I spend less time. I work, then go to the gym, then come home for the most part. I'm never it's never I don't really have enough time to be around a lot of people. And when I am, I just go play cards and I don't I don't really do a lot.*

Lack of a Replacement Structure

One theme in the persisting narratives is boredom and a lack (or loss) of structured daily routines. Sal's experience with having a job and then losing it illustrates what can happen when daily routines change and lose their structure. At one point, he was trying to stay out of trouble and work a straight job. When his brother stopped showing up for work at his uncle's construction site, his uncle offered the job to Sal. Eventually, his brother came back to the job. Sal started selling drugs again after that.

Sal: *I gave my brother back the job, put myself in a hole. That's how I kind of fell back into crime. Like, I was doing good. I was in nothing. I had a job before that [and] I was chilling. I wasn't getting high or nothing, man. I didn't get a job after my brother. I felt bored, like I didn't have anything to do. I just talked to a couple*

of people, got a couple bundles of drugs. It just started up, buying my own. Just right back at it again.

Though he was technically a desister, Neal (age 24) struggled with alcoholism, which consistently landed him in jail. He recalled how lack of structured routines contributed to his involvement in crime during a period when he was out of jail on a detainer for a few months.

Neal: I didn't drink or nothing. I was doing good as hell. And just one day I was all depressed and shit, mad, nothing to do because I was sitting at my house. Like, there's nothing to do. I was buying a movie every night, watching it by myself while I was trying to stay out of trouble. But like, shit gets real boring to me, you know? Real, real boring. So I'm like, what the hell can I do? So I went out and I was like, alright, I'll have a couple [of drinks]. And the next thing you know, I was drinking [like] crazy.

Carlos echoes this point when he discussed how he tried to avoid crime when he last returned home from jail:

Carlos: It seem like when you been in jail for so long [and] then you go home, you can be in the house for a week, but the house starts feeling like a jail cell. The whole house. Not this room you in in the house. It's just the house. So you go outside, you run with bulls [and] what not, dumb stuff happen.

Remi (age 20, persister) said that when he returned home from his juvenile placement, he found that his father had moved while he was gone and everything he returned to seemed different. Moreover, a lack of legal structured routines allowed room for Remi to return to crime.

Me: How were things different when you got out?

Remi: (pause) Where I was living. They moved when I was gone, so I had no clue where I was going to. It was like, damn, man! I ain't got no friends around here, which is kind of a good thing because my dad kind of moved me out of the neighborhood [for that reason]. So I was going back and forth to the [old]

neighborhood every day. I had no job. I just came home, so like none of my clothes fit me because I was like two-fifty [pounds]. I just came back from playing football. I was all cut up and shit. And I had no money in my pocket, and I can't keep asking my dad for money—I felt as though I was a man and shit. So I was going out and grabbing weed and pills [...] for my buddy [who lived next to a gentlemen's club...]

Me: *So even though you were in this new neighborhood, you went back looking for old people [you knew]?*

Remi: *Yeah! I mean, I had no one to hang with [and] I wasn't working. I wasn't sitting around this house with my dad's girlfriend's kids. [...] So I had to get up and go out. And I kind of feel though I was showing up like I had a job because I'd wake up every day and have to be out by ten o'clock in the morning. Strip club opened at eleven, you know, so we'd be at the house by like ten-thirty, got everything bagged up. [...]*

Me: *So that was sort of your job then?*

Remi: *I made a lot of money.*

Me: *And you did that because you wanted—*

Remi: *(overlapping) Needed money. And needed something to do. I was bored every day, and that was just like hanging with the boys and a lot of girls coming through.*

RESIDENTIAL CHANGE

Persisters and desisters said that leaving Philadelphia in the future would help them stay out of trouble. For example, Henry (age 21, desister) struggled to stay away from selling drugs, especially when his legal income fails to meet his needs. When he successfully abstained from selling drugs, he said he accomplishes it by avoiding people in his neighborhood.

Henry: *I stopped hanging out. I stopped hanging around them, period. So that's the way I, by me hanging with them and stuff, it probably give me the idea to try to get back out there.*

Ultimately, however, Henry said that he wanted to move away from Philadelphia, or at least his immediate neighborhood in the future but he lacked the resources to do it.

Me: *Is there anything else you'd like to change [about your situation]?*

Henry: *I would like to change where I live because... I don't want to live around there no more. [...] I just want to move out of Philly, but can't do that yet. Got to have some money. So I stay here. I just got to be in a better part [of Philly] than where I'm at. Like, I can't be around the same stuff.*

Me: *Like the streets and stuff?*

Henry: *The street—yea. That's everywhere over Philly. But I guess in my part of town... I got to change. I can't be around that no more.*

Allen also viewed leaving Philadelphia as the main thing he needed to do to stay out of trouble.

Allen: *I mean, I got to! (laughter) I got to get out because so many things in here that you can just jump right back in to. Because, like I said, the streets don't change, you know what I'm saying? You might change in that period of time. But like, the way I've been going, the life I took, you know, is a big influence on me. Like part of the streets or part of that—that life for me is probably always going to be there because I chose that life. So at any time—not saying that it couldn't happen, but it could. I could just change and go right back to where I was and don't stop. Feels like I got to get out of Philly. Take a different route. Whole new life and a new start.*

Like Henry and Allen, who were trying to change and to maintain abstinence from crime, some persisters who intended to stay involved in crime in the foreseeable future said that if they wanted to change, they would have to leave Philadelphia in order to knife themselves off from opportunities for crime. For example, George (age 23, persister in jail) said that he would not be able to take crime with him to a rural area if he left Philadelphia because the pace of life outside of the city would not support it.

Me: *Can you ever see yourself stopping completely? [...] [or] falling back for a long time?*

George: *[long pause]. Personally, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. Yeah, I see myself leaving this shit alone, doing something different. But it's a matter of getting out of the city, though. This city is the worst—trapped in this motherfucker. I mean, this city is the worst. Being from the city, just not that nice—NY, Philly, all that. [...]*

Me: *So what would getting out of Philadelphia do to help you stay out of trouble?*

George: *I mean, go to a different environment. I couldn't—you couldn't per se have a gang from Philly in rural [areas]. They take over the whole place because it's a different, slower—you know what I mean? It's smaller. Guys [here] are a bit more faster.*

Indeed, some persisters cited their embeddedness in crime as a challenge to their ability to go straight, and that leaving Philadelphia would be the only way they could successfully abstain from crime. For example, Stan (24, persister) said that he would have to leave Philadelphia because he was at risk of receiving retaliation otherwise, and retaliation would demand that he respond in kind.

Stan: *I'm really trying to get out of this whole situation. I think if I move from Philly—because like when I go home, no matter how good I try to make this shit, I hurt people. So if somebody family see me that I hurt, they might want to hurt me. And if they miss, I'm going to hurt them, know what I'm saying. So, it's like I'm always going to be involved in some shit. Like I [need to] go where nobody knows my name. Like Cheers and some shit, you know what I'm saying? (laughs)*

Me: *So you feel like you're looking over your shoulder when you're on the street?*

Stan: *Yeah! I look over my shoulder in HERE! You seen me keep looking and shit. (laughs)*

Later Stan added, “If we go out to, say, Jersey? In a nice little area? I think that's the only way how to be right. Other than that, I'm going to get found out.” He later added:

Stan: *When I leave—If I leave here [a correctional treatment facility]—If I go to Cheers, where people don't know my name [I can stop]. But if people know my name and they know my past—It's hard to erase that shit.*

Many of those who thought that leaving Philadelphia would help them to abstain from crime cited at least two challenges to doing so: leaving their family behind and lack of money. Carlos (age 24) a persister who was largely involved in street-level drug sales, said repeatedly that moving out of Philadelphia would help him avoid crime. But to get out of Philadelphia, he has to have money.

Carlos: *If I get right, I'm moving down to Georgia [to live] and what not.*

Me: *What do you mean, if you get right?*

Carlos: *If I get my money and my situation right and what not.*

Me: *What's in Georgia?*

Carlos: *Georgia? No hate, no envy no—ain't really no killing down there. You know, it a whole lot of fun down there. [...]*

Me: *Do you have friends down there, or family?*

Carlos: *Oh, no. That's the best thing. I'm trying to get away from friends and family and the ties I got with the street and the 'hood. See, I always come back and the hood, you know—I do me in. But this ain't like—I'm getting fed up with the game now, on some fact of too many haters and killers out there. They want to set people up. They want to snitch and what not.*

Two persisters, Dean (age 24) and Yusef (age 24), actually left Philadelphia for the Midwest for at least a year. Both men said that the “revolving door” between prison and criminogenic environments contributed to their decision to leave Philadelphia, and both moved away for approximately a year before returning. In each case, residential change provided them with an opportunity to knife off from their delinquent and criminal pasts, though it also allowed them to avoid arrests or violent victimizations that might

result from that past. In each case, leaving Philadelphia failed to result in desistance from crime, though they did experience a number of other changes. For example, Yusef viewed his move to the Midwest as an opportunity to fall back from serious offending and make changes in his life upon his release from prison. He described his experience in detail.

***Yusef:** When I came home from [jail]—I told you, 18 is when I really took Islam. I started reading my own books, not off other people information [but] my own information. So when I came home I wanted to get married. I had my mind right, you would say, but I went right back into that same environment. Long story short, I changed the environment and went out [to] the Midwest, and when I was out in the Midwest I was a brand new person, man. I really rehabilitated myself.*

One thing that made the Midwest attractive to Yusef was the availability of legitimate employment. He explained:

***Yusef:** The Midwest had a big effect on me because, you know, where I come from there's only like—ain't no jobs, you understand what I'm saying? Like, you getting either the Coca Cola factory, the SEPTA Union, the construction union, and if you don't get with none of them, ain't no regular job to work at and get some money. ... But out in the Midwest they got—I don't know about now, but they got the GM, Chrysler, Ford plants, starts you off at twenty an hour. Then if you can't get them, they got stuff like Tom Products and different places where they start you off at—the minimum wage was seven-fifty while it was still five-fifty [in Philadelphia].*

In spite of the complete change in environment and presence of legitimate employment opportunities, Yusef sold drugs with his wife when he first moved to the Midwest.⁴⁷ That changed, however, as he met and established relationships with members of the Muslim community. These changes were both structural and subjective. First,

⁴⁷ This is a qualitative shift in offending relative to his involvement in crime in Philadelphia, which Yusef said was largely robberies.

Yusef worked a few different legitimate jobs, some of which he obtained through his connections in the Muslim community. Second, Yusef became more sensitive to the spiritual implications of his involvement in crime, at least some crime, through his interactions with other Muslims.

***Yusef:** Abdul introduced me to Rashid and he was just for real Muslim. Like it wasn't no half-stepping. Like, he was for real Muslim, so it made me want to be like that. So I left alone, you know, the drugs, because he started making me realize—he didn't say it per se, but I started realizing myself that if I indulge in good things, hopefully God won't lock me up. Even though I'm on the run, even though I did what I did, if I'm doing what I'm supposed to do in life, hopefully they won't get me. I can't do that [sell drugs] because if I do that He might get mad at me and He might come and get me. That's how I'm just thinking, seriously.*

Later in the interview, however, Yusef drew on his religion to justify breaking some laws:

***Yusef:** Now hear me out. Now I was working—because we going to keep it real with each other. Is saying a gun—a sword is not considered a illegal issue-ment or, you understand? And the selling of swords is not considered illegal. Now of course, you got to live by the laws of the land, BUT... I didn't care. All I care about was in God's eyes, you understand? ... At the end of the day, I cared about what God was thinking about this right here, and why make it a—a forbidden thing when it can be... a halal thing, a—a—a good thing. It could be a blessing. So that's why I did that.*

***Me:** So you were selling guns, then, while you were in the Midwest? Is that what you're saying? (laughter)*

***Yusef:** Yes. That's, you know, that's what I was doing on the side.*

Despite these cognitive shifts and qualitative changes in offending that occurred after Yusef left Philadelphia, is unclear whether he made the move in order to change his behavior or to avoid an arrest. Eventually, Yusef returned to Philadelphia to meet a

woman whom he expected to marry in a Muslim ceremony (his first Muslim marriage had dissolved by then), and upon his return he was arrested at the bus station on a homicide charge stemming from an incident that occurred just before he left town.

Dean also left Philadelphia for the Midwest. He said that he left in the middle of the night shortly after being released from prison and during a period in which his friend was shot and he feared for his own life and future. Dean said that when he moved from Philadelphia to the Midwest, his outlook changed, and that was when he started reflecting on his involvement in crime and caring about what others knew or thought of it. He laid the groundwork for this shift before he left Philadelphia as indicated by his decision to move in the first place (see *crystallization of discontent* below).

Me: So why did you start caring?

Dean: I moved out of Philly! I got to see—you know? You don't got to walk around every fucking... giving everybody [dirty looks]. [...] Midwest, man, they're just so kindhearted. Like, I didn't have nowhere to go one time, like some dude I don't even know is like, 'Dude, you can stay in my basement.' He's like, 'It's all cleaned up and shit.' You know? He's like, stay there for a little bit 'til you get yourself together. I was like, all right, you know what I mean? I didn't even KNOW the fucking guy. [...] You get out of the city for a while and you see, like, there's actually good people out there, you know? I don't know. Just, it changes you because you're not in the environment no more. I'm not in it, around crime and everything like that anymore. I was into skating and [amateur organized] fighting and shit.

For both Yusef and Dean, changing people and places as the result of a cognitive shift (and change in preferences) seemed to facilitate a period of abstinence and a move toward desistance. Without the support of structured routines, however, both struggled to maintain abstinence.

Moving, But Not So Far Away

Three desisting men who moved to avoid crime did not go nearly as far as Dean or Yusef: Two of the three men left Philadelphia for the nearby suburbs; a third moved neighborhoods in the same area of Philadelphia. Even though they remained relatively close to where they started, each man said that residential change allowed them to sever ties with their delinquent and criminal peers.⁴⁸

Kenneth (age 24, desister) left Philadelphia four years before the qualitative interview and had not returned since his last arrest. Unlike Henry, who said he lacked the resources to move away from Philadelphia, Kenneth's mother provided him with an opportunity to move, as did his now-wife.

***Me:** Why did you decide to leave Philadelphia?*

***Kenneth:** It was just too much stuff. I knew from the top of West Philly to the bottom of West Philly, I was just a known person, you know? Like my name was just out there too much. Then my mom wanted to move out of Philly. Too much stuff was going on. She was just tired of Philly, period.*

Along with his wife and his children being born, Kenneth listed moving from Philadelphia among the factors that helped him avoid involvement in crime. Later Kenneth added:

***Kenneth:** It ain't like we was living that far away. I mean, I could have easily just ventured back there or whatever.*

***Me:** But you didn't?*

***Kenneth:** Yeah.*

⁴⁸ This is contrary to what Kirk's (2009) finding that the further away parolees moved from their neighborhoods in New Orleans after Katrina, the less likely they were to be reincarcerated.

Like Kenneth, Raymond (age 23, desister) moved away from his old neighborhood, which reduced his interactions with those he knew when he was selling drugs.⁴⁹ Raymond also severed contacts with family members who were involved in selling drugs.

***Me:** In the last year, has anyone asked you to take part in a crime?*

***Raymond:** Mmm mm. [...] No. Plus I took myself out of that whole environment so I don't have to listen to their stupidity.*

***Me:** Yeah? How did you do that—take yourself out of that environment?*

***Raymond:** When I moved [to a different neighborhood]... When I moved, I moved away from all that. [...]*

***Me:** So you made, like, deliberate decisions to avoid those sort of situations? And people too?*

***Raymond.** And people. Certain people that I had on my number [phone] like I either delete it or I don't even call no more. Even like my cousins and uncles, because I know what they do. So it ain't—what we gonna talk about besides old stuff?*

COGNITIVE SHIFTS

In addition to the structural features of the transition to adulthood and continuity and change in offending (including markers of adulthood, social supports, and opportunity structures), many informants described changes in how they think, including becoming more concerned about other people and a growing wariness of their involvement in crime and its implications for the future.

⁴⁹ Raymond he said he had been abstaining from selling drugs for 18 months when we met.

CONCERN FOR OTHERS AND REFLECTED APPRAISALS

Peter (age 24, persister) was by all measures a high-rate, chronic offender involved in selling drugs and violent offending over the entire 84 months of the Pathways Study. When we met, however, Peter said he had taken himself out of “the game” (selling drugs) nearly a year before. He already had two children and a third on the way, and he said he worked two part-time jobs as a nurse’s aide. The summer before our interview, while he was still selling drugs, Peter mentored young adolescent boys at a church day camp (until he was let go for having a felony record). The kids in the camp knew him from the neighborhood and knew what he was about, and they asked him why he was spending time with them rather than making money. It was about this time, he said, that he started to pull away from the streets.

***Me:** About when do you feel like you were really pulling away from the streets?*

***Peter:** Hmm... honestly... maybe when I started working with the kids.*

***Me:** So like last summer?*

***Peter:** Yeah. Because it was like I ain’t wanna be a hypocrite, I was trying to keep them from doing illegal stuff, so if they see me doing it, it was like it was alright for them to do it.*

Peter came to the summer camp to help one kid in particular—the brother of a friend going down a hard path but who had the skills for something else. Peter said he felt partly responsible for turning the older brother out onto the street and he wanted to make up for it by helping the younger brother who was already developing a reputation for violent behavior. An added bonus for Peter, he said, was that he helped other children at the same time.

Later in the interview, as we discussed what his life was like since giving up crime, I said that it sounded as though Peter was concerned about his children following in his footsteps. Peter was quite clear that he wanted to get out of “the game” because he felt he had an influence on his children *and* the children he mentored at a church summer camp. They looked up to him, and he did not want them to follow in his footsteps. The community children in particular knew what he was about—selling drugs. Peter gave this account about the sense of generativity he felt toward children in the community, not just his own biological children, step-children, or godchildren (Maruna, 2001); it also suggests that Peter was responding to reflected appraisals from those children (Matsueda 1992; Matsueda and Heimer, 1997):

***Peter:** Yeah, that’s what really got me out of the game. And then when I was working at the [church day camp], it was like, yeah, I can’t be a hypocrite. Like I’m telling y’all what not to do because they eleven and twelve and thirteen. And my oldest kid was fourteen. And I had all boys. So it was like [. . .] I used to sit there, I used to tell them everything. Like a couple of kids already know me from the neighborhood, so they was like, ‘Yeah, we already knew what you were about,’ this, that and the third. [They] asked me, ‘Yeah, why you here? Why you ain’t out getting money?’ [I told them], ‘Because I’m here with y’all.’ And, like half of the trips and stuff—like half my kids can’t afford them, so I paid for them. I had the money, so it’s like, ok, we’re gonna go on a trip. We’re gonna go as a unit, you know what I’m saying? [...] so now I’m teaching them things; we had put up a little basketball court in front of the church and everything so they could play ball. We was having fun! I was trying to teach them how not to be me. Like, ‘Ok, you know what I’m about, but you don’t have to be like me. You know, you can do better. There’s a whole lot more out there for you all now then there is for me.’*

Though on a much smaller scale, Princess also said she reconsidered her involvement in crime—drug use and fighting—because she became increasingly aware of how her younger sister perceived her and of the influence she had on her sister:

Princess: *But I just had to cut a lot of that out because I was worried about school... and like... I was doing something that I wasn't supposed to be doing at that age. And I looked at it like it's really going to affect my little sister. Ok now, my 17 year old sister... This [self-reported offending on my timeline], this can't even compare to her. No.*

Me: *She's worse, you mean or—?*

Princess: *Worse. [...] Fighting, would go straight across [the timeline]. Alcohol, drugs, straight across. [...] Actually, the reason why I stopped is because... my 15 year old sister, like I noticed how she used to look at me. My little sister used to look up to me. And then once... like once I got arrested and everything, it's like, it start fading. Then, around the time when I quit, it came back and she be like—she be like you so pretty and you always got money, I want to be like you and get a job and she look up to me, so that's another reason why [I quit].*

Some of the incarcerated desisters also indicated that had obligations to other people—including their families-of-origin and the larger community. For example, when asked whether he felt he had more responsibilities now compared to when he was a teenager, Allen (age 22, incarcerated desister) said he felt he had a responsibility to his community, especially the children in his community.

Allen: *I have a lot—I think I have a lot of responsibility. Not just my son, but also for like the community now. Because like there's a lot of things I want to do when I get out there. If it's like joining a church and helping kids, you know what I'm saying? It's a basketball league or a football league, I mean, any extracurricular, you know, it's something that these kids would do [to] stay out of these things that's in the street. [...]*

Me: *So you feel responsibility to sort of help with that?*

Allen: *Yeah, I feel as though I have a big responsibility.*

Me: *OK. Why do feel like that that's your responsibility?*

Allen: *I mean, I love kids. I love people. I'm a people person. I mean, it's something I destined to do. That why I feel like, that's why I want to get into youth counseling and I want to be interacting with a lot of things that got to do with people.*

CRYSTALLIZATION OF DISCONTENT

Many of the informants described an accumulation of negative events that they said made them rethink their involvement in crime (Baumeister, 1994; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Some events were related to a perceived inability to escape from one's criminal past, either with respect to the criminal justice system or on the street. Others described frustration and exhaustion with the revolving door of the criminal justice system and nonlegal risks related to criminal involvement.

Unable to Escape a Criminal Past

For some of the informants, past involvement in crime limited their perceived chance of abstaining and desisting from crime. Stan (age 24, persister) said that even if he changed, his criminal past on the street will haunt him, though not just with respect to getting a job.

***Stan:** When I go home I might be a changed man. I might have my GED. I might [say], 'I don't want to do crime no more. I don't want to do this and that.' But then I'm going to see that motherfucker that I shot and he might want to shoot me back. And if he miss, I'm going to want to get him back. Or if he—you know what I'm saying? It's—with the shit that I've been doing... It's—it's fucked up.*

Others said that the criminal justice system itself that made it difficult for them to abstain from crime. Asked what might make it difficult to stop hustling, Carlos (age 24) said, "The only people I see is being hard—not letting me out of the game—is the cops. [...] They know my background." He said that the police had experience with him and his family (also drug dealers) and that they harassed him when he was on the street. He elaborated:

Carlos: *My history will hunt me down, [...]. There's a saying, like [...] everybody in the 'hood got the same mom. The block is our mom but the father is the penitentiary. That's what they say in the hood. So the cops is like the judges—they know what's going on and what's not, who people [are] ok with doing or not. And they want to extort us. So [when they arrested me] they was like, 'Yeah, when you get back to work with us, we let you go. We ain't going to book you.' But they booked me.*

When is Enough Enough?

Where Stan and Carlos seemed resigned to their fate, others started to think differently about their involvement crime as their criminal justice system experiences increased in number and as they became increasingly aware of the consequences of their offenses on others. For example, Raymond (age 23, desister) described crime as a revolving door or treadmill: “It’s the same results over and over.” The experience of being arrested and sent to jail yet again was a rude awakening—a jarring experience that opened Raymond’s eyes to the violence and to the consequences of the drugs for other people. Notably, however, this realization had little to do with concern for the safety of his wife and children; instead, he expressed concern for the families of his drug customers. He also describes imagining a feared future self and a feared future for others (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009).

Me: *So, when you got out last year before you were arrested why did you, why did you quit? Why did you feel like you had to pull out?*

Raymond: *Because like my last time in the jawn—well I ain't gonna say my last time, but like when they came in that time and got us, that's when like a whole lot of thinking about. Like, nigga, you about 21, 22, you still doing the same thing and it's the same results over and over. I got to pay fifteen hundred to get the hell out, then I got to go to court, get a lawyer, and it's the same thing time in and time out. Eventually you gonna get tired. I was actually talking to myself like, when is enough is enough? You gonna end up dead or gone for forever. And it's I just got fed up and, and like all—all the drama that come with it. Like all the*

shootings and people dying around you and just—just continuing to, to, to feed poison into the people that sick. Like you is destroying people's lives. I just had a rude awakening like, this not for me no more. I'm killing people, you know I'm saying? Left and right with that stuff.

Me: *What were you selling?*

Raymond: *Crack.*

Me: *Okay. So it was this arrest that really sort of shook you up and...*

Raymond: *Just had me, like, just thinking, like and then it's the whole society period. Like we got people stealing from their family members, who are stealing from their neighbors, you know what I'm saying, just to go out and get what we selling them. Like y'all—y'all depriving y'all kids, y'all babies. Y'all selling Pampers, formulas, stealing, you know, just to come and get what we got. You know what I'm saying? Like for—, earlier I didn't care about that. Look, that's more money for me. But after a while I started thinking, like damn, that could be my moms or my grandmom's, and they could be robbing from me or taking from my kids. Like, that's—that's harsh, you know what I'm saying?*

This theme is also illustrated, albeit differently, by William (age 23, incarcerated desister), who said he “fell back” (decreased his involvement) from selling drugs because so much was going on at once.

Me: *Why did you stop selling drugs?*

William: *I don't know. I just... just too long [of] just bring in too much stuff. Trying to lay low. A lot—I was just moving too fast, [I] was trying to slow down.*

Me: *What do you mean, you were moving too fast?*

William: *I was doing too much. Too much going on. It's a bunch of stuff. Not just illegally and legal. It's other stuff. [. . .] Just a bunch of stuff at all—everything at one time. People getting locked up, I'm losing money. Bunch of stuff. [...] It was going too fast, so I had to slow down.*

Me: *So you slowed down? How did you slow down?*

William: *I just stopped selling drugs and I—I just stopped for a while.*

Others said they were exhausted by their involvement in crime and dealing with the criminal justice system. When asked whether she felt she benefited from an anger management class she attended, LeeAnn (age 22, desister) said that she that she now considered the consequences that might result if she “snapped out” on someone who aggravated her, but it was not the anger management class that taught her this.

LeeAnn: *[I learned that from] experience. If you keep getting locked up all the time, you just be getting tired of dealing with the system. Like, the system is easy to get in but it's hard to get out.*

Cody (age 23, desister) said he started trying to better himself when he was in a juvenile residential facility because he was “tired of it.”

Cody: *When I was in court the judge said, “You started getting in trouble at the wrong age. You like seventeen. One more year and you going to be in adult court.” I know how adult—I’m like, I’m not... Like I didn’t have to do it in the first place, why the hell am I doing it now, you know? That’s—like, ain’t no point no more. Plus my cousin, he working at Target, he said when I come home he got a job guaranteed for me. So that’s why I do it [better myself]. Like, I’m tired of it.*

Me: *So that was just it, you were tired of it and you were ready to give it up?*

Cody: *Mhmm. because ain’t no—when you get to court, ain’t no fun no more. Even though I hadn’t get caught on the major things. But that’s what—sometimes that what it takes. The pettiest things, you know what I’m saying?*

Sometimes informants expressed a desire for change associated a cognitive shift or an accumulation of negative events and situations, but they said that opportunities for change were blocked by lack of access to desired services or by past mistakes catching up with them in the present. Damion’s (age 25, incarcerated desister) experience when he was last in the community best exemplifies this convergence of themes. He was released

from a youth development center at age 20 but was locked up again a few months later; he had been incarcerated for five years at the time of our interview.

Me: *So when you got out of the youth development center [when you were 20] you were trying to stay out of trouble. What was going on at that point that you were [wanting to change]?*

Damion: *At that point, it was real hard on me because I had a little bit of money saved up, but I got kids to take care of. And at the youth development center you can get a little bit of money saved up, so I'm spending a little bit of money. [But] then when I come home, I [had gained] weight so my old clothes don't fit me, I got to go re-shopping. It was a burden on me. Then me trying to go legal—don't no one want to hire me. It was—It was real tough, and it seemed like the only way I'm going to get by for the time [was] to go ahead and sell these drugs. I really—I really didn't want to do that.*

Me: *So what was different about getting out of the youth development center that made you feel like you wanted to go straight?*

Damion: *My past. I'm tired of being locked up. Like, I really don't have no fun at home and, tsh, you come home—your kids. When you first come home [from being locked up, your] kids don't dig you. They like really don't know you. And that was the main issue, because it's like you got to rewrite yourself to them. Like you got to reintroduce yourself to your kids, and that's an uncomfortable feeling.*

Me: *So this wasn't just—this was like a long-term goal for you, it sounded like, at that point. Ok. Let me just get a sense for what else is going on. You were 20 and this is just—you didn't really get a good chance to sort of do that [go straight]?*

Damion: *I was only home by myself for like four and a half, five months.*

Me: *So when you were trying to stay out of trouble, how did other people react?*

Damion: *They encouraged me on. [...] But even though I was trying to change there, I was still only half-stepping because by the second—like after two and a half months, I like really—it broke my spirit. I kind of gave up. My drive wasn't there no more, so I was slowly but surely slipping into my old ways until I got my house arrest [because of my old cases]. And then it clear me back up because I started hearing like—when I got on house arrest they told me about little programs, like parole, probation programs, that [could] get me a job. And I'm*

like, all right, well, this might be that extra little step I needed. Before that was actually done, I got locked up.

In spite of his intentions and efforts to change his behavior, however, Damion said that he was still the same person.

Me: *Did you see yourself differently when you were trying to stay out of trouble compared to when you were involved in selling and stuff like that?*

Damion: *I did, but not too much. Because I—I changed on the way I would see the things, but it—me and me personally, like the inner me didn't change at all. So it was just my whole way of getting money was changing but the person I was never changed.*

Me: *Can you describe for me what you mean by that—like, the person you were?*

Damion: *(overlapping) All right, umm... It's like living a double life. [For example], like you got this person in the corporate eye. He the best businessman and his thrive is real strong at being the boss. But when he's home, he's a junky. He's at the bottom of the barrel and he's a step away from dying. And there [are] only like a select few that actually know both halves of me. But it was, I don't know... It was like he, the junky side of him, want to do better, but in the same tense he don't. He don't want to change. He like his high, but he want to better himself at the same time. The other half of him is pushing for a better person, but still is carrying on this—this bad side.*

The Feared Self

Though many informants described experiencing cognitive shifts similar to the crystallization of discontent, only Dean (persister) gave an account that clearly involved crystallization, a feared future self, and the decision to make a change. At 24, Dean had been in and out of jail since he was a teenager, always returning to selling drugs, destroying property, and violence when he was back out in the community. For the last few years, however, he had been living in the Midwest, where he said he was trying to

stay out of trouble. For Dean, staying out of trouble meant avoiding the myriad consequences of crime, a sentiment many of the informants shared.

Many of the informants said they abstained from crime or wanted to abstain from crime because they “can’t afford it” or “it’s not worth it,” suggesting that the costs of crime outweigh the benefits. Frequently, when the informants said that crime was not worth it, they cited an accumulation of costly or dangerous events or possibilities rather than just one signaling the costs of crime. In Dean’s case, this accumulation of events built up to the decision (and action) to leave Philadelphia and everything behind. As he told it, this decision started when he spent a year in prison on a parole violation (he failed a drug test) and then returning to the same neighborhood and circumstances when he was released.

Dean: *Man, I mean—It’s a revolving door. What the hell? You’re putting me back in the same place. It’s just, there’s no excuse for it, but I don’t know. I lost [my long-term girlfriend] because of that. I got fucking people wanting to kill me because of some shit I did. My man got shot seven times with a fucking AK for something I did... He’s alive, thank God, but I mean—I don’t know. Like every time I would come home I would be cool for a couple of weeks [. . .] and then it’d just all go downhill. I couldn’t find work, and fuck, I’m selling drugs forever, you know what I mean? Fuck—if I got to eat. I can’t find a job. I end up hanging with the same people. People, places, and things. That’s why I moved. I had to change my people, places, and things. I packed my shit at three-thirty in the morning, got on a bus at five o’clock. I left my apartment and everything. I just said, fuck it, I’m out. I can’t do it no more. I’m in debt. I’ll die, end up in jail for the rest of my life, or ... I could be a junkie. I had to get the hell out of there. I left my whole family, everybody I love. I fucking move somewhere where I know nobody. You know what I mean? If anybody fucking thinks that’s easy—shit.*

Me: *Did something happen, or was it just because it was building up?*

Dean: *I couldn’t take it no more. [...] I was a fucking crack head. I went from being on top, driving a twenty-five thousand dollar car, to smoking rock in a fucking crack house. What the hell?*

Dean's account highlights a number of different mechanisms at work at the front end of what might be his desistance process. First, he described cumulative negative events that he connected to his own involvement in crime, including his friend being shot and a threat on his own life "because of some shit that I did." Second, Dean indicated a "feared self"—if he did not change, he could end up "selling drugs forever," "I'll die, end up in the jail for the rest of my life, or I could be a junkie." Finally, he took action to change by leaving Philadelphia to knife off from his "people, places, and things" and moving to the Midwest. These stages reflect the process Paternoster and Bushway (2009) describe in their identity theory of desistance. Though by his own account Dean's time outside of Philadelphia was turbulent, he reported far fewer kinds of offenses to the Pathways study during the year before the qualitative interview (a DUI and a fight) than he did in the period before, even though he was incarcerated for much of that period (selling drugs, carrying a gun, fighting, armed robbery, destroying property and entered a building to steal something).⁵⁰

Change in Perspective, But Still the Same Person

Contrary to those who described a process akin to the crystallization of discontent, Peter (age 25, persister who said he was abstaining) did not say he felt

⁵⁰ In spite of reporting fewer and less serious types of crime during this period, Dean's life continued to be unstable while he was away from Philadelphia. During the qualitative interview, he described how he lived in at least two different states before returning to Philadelphia. The job and home his buddy had promised where not what he expected and he left his friend's home after witnessing domestic violence between his friend and his friend's wife. He continued to drink and use drugs. When Dean returned to Philadelphia after a year because his grandfather became sick, his situation remained unstable, moving in and out of jobs and living arrangements. When we met, he had been with his girlfriend for three months, was between living situations (due to a disagreement with his girlfriend's family), had won a small sum from the lottery and spent it all immediately, continues to sell marijuana, and was unsure of his employment status because he had not shown up to work for a few days.

exhausted with his involvement in crime. This might be because he spent so little time incarcerated relative to many of the other informants; as an adult, he had largely avoided serious formal sanctions and as well as injury. Regardless, Peter acknowledged that though he was the same person, he could see himself, his involvement in crime, and the impact he had on those around him more clearly, suggesting that perhaps his preferences had changed (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009).

***Peter:** I ain't even gonna say that I'm a better person, because I've always been the same person. It's just I chose to do other things. But I just see clearly; I see everything better. I think about everything I do.*

***Me:** Yeah? Even more so since—I mean, you said before that you sort of shifted gears when you were younger and started having kids. But you feel like you're more clear now?*

***Peter:** Yeah. Like now, right now, like today—I'm... I know everything that I want to do. I know how I'm gonna get there to do it. Like, I'm—I see every clear. Ain't nothing clogging up my head at all. I'm very focused.*

***Me:** Ok. How do you think being involved in selling and stuff like that clouded [your head]?*

***Peter:** Because, umm... I'm gonna say it's the glamour life. When you in the glamour life, it's like nothing else don't matter. Nothing. So it's like, now, I ain't in it, it's like I see everything. See the world for what it is.*

In spite of seeing through “the glamour life,” Peter was not entirely settled with his new life.

***Me:** How do you feel about being home all the time now?*

***Peter:** Honestly, I feel funny. I do. I be—I be feeling funny. Like I be feeling like I ain't got no life. That's why I said I might as well go ahead and get married.*

***Me:** Because it's all over now?*

***Peter:** Yeah.*

Crystallization, Turning Point, But No Desistance

Lee's (age 23, incarcerated persister) turning point experience was not toward desistance but it was toward more caution. He said that with the accumulation of negative experiences, he came to appreciate the effects of violence, which made him appreciate his own mortality. He also said that it reduced his level of trust in others. The result of these changes was that he did not kill the man who shot him, nor did he retaliate against the man's family, which, in the context of Lee's environment and experiences, could be interpreted as a change *toward* desistance.

***Me:** So during the time that we've been talking about, so like since fifteen on, does anything stand out as changing the direction of your involvement in crime? Like a turning point? I don't feel like you've really expressed that you felt like there's a point where things changed for you.*

***Lee:** I think the point where things change is when I got shot. . . When I got shot, I—even when I forgave my friend. And like—like the turning point would have been like when he shot me, [if] I immediately just went and killed his brother or his mom, and killed him too. Like [if] I was just all the way in. But when I got shot, I seen that it was real, like. I'm like man, like I could get taken out. Like I almost got checked out, it was almost done here for me. I was almost done. So I'm like, you know what? Fuck that. I'm not going to let nobody just kill me, man. Fuck that like. And I still like sometimes, I be thinking about like, damn, man. People look at it like I won. I won because I forgave him. But I look at it like, man, I fucking lost, like. I mean this dude shot me! Like, what the fuck, know what I'm saying? But I don't know man. After he did that shit, I was like, man, you know what? I'm not taking shit for granted, like. I ain't put my trust in nobody no more, know what I mean? It is what it is.*

***Me:** So changed your perspective on stuff?*

***Lee:** Yeah.*

SUMMARY

This chapter presented evidence that the men and women in this study associated crime and criminal justice system involvement with nearly every aspect of the transition to adulthood. According to these accounts, involvement in crime disrupted education, blocked opportunities for meaningful legal employment, and ended romantic relationships. At the same time, access to social capital networks and instrumental support from family members did not seem to help those that had access to it. These themes were most prevalent for persisters, but they were also reflected in desisters' accounts of qualitative change in crime or intermittent periods offending.

On the other hand, those who abstained from crime—either for a year or more like most of the desisters, or for intermittent periods of abstinence—said completed their education, found steady, meaningful employment that could support themselves and their families, and found social support and a source of informal social control in their romantic partners. Moreover, desisting men (and to a lesser extent the women) credited their romantic partners with helping them to avoid crime and for fostering a sense of mutual obligation and a stake in, if not conformity, then doing better.

In addition to these structural supports, this chapter also presented evidence that most of the informants recognized the importance of avoiding the people and places that provide temptations for crime, and many had some level of success with this strategy. However, without a new structured routine to take the place of old ones—or when structured routines disappeared with the loss of a job or, to a lesser extent, the loss of a romantic relationship, many struggled with boredom or loneliness and eventually returned to their old habits. This cycle was especially prevalent among the persisters, though some desisters experienced it during periods of intermittent offending as well.

Moreover, though residential change—specifically getting out of Philadelphia—was seen as the best way to avoid offending, moving far away did not guarantee success, since opportunities for crime are everywhere if they are sought out. Those desisters who had the greatest success were those who left their neighborhoods, followed family or girlfriends (providing some social support), but stayed in the area.

Finally, this chapter presented evidence that subjective changes—cognitive shifts such as a developing concern for others, a crystallization of discontent, and a shift in preferences—were also associated with change in offending for some. For others, changes in preferences came without the accumulation of negative life events, and for other still, the accumulation of negative life events reduced trust in others and a qualitative change in crime.

CHAPTER 6: PARENTHOOD AND CRIME IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

In this chapter, I address the central research question of this dissertation:

Whether and how parenthood relates to continuity and change in offending. If transitions to adult social institutions are somehow important to redirecting criminal careers, it makes sense to capitalize on the transition serious offenders are most likely to experience, but the empirical evidence linking parenthood to change in offending is mixed. There is some evidence that parenthood reduces involvement in antisocial behavior, including crime, but the relationship seems to be conditioned by gender or by structural context (for examples, see Kreager et al., 2010; Savolainen, 2009). Additionally, we know little about how parenthood relates to crime, and such knowledge might shed light on why the relationship is conditional. To better understand how parenthood relates to crime, we need to understand the experience of parenthood for formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults.

Many of the informants discussed children during the interview. In addition to biological children, some of the men (with or without biological children) also claimed responsibility for “stepchildren” (for example, their girlfriend’s children), and some expressed fatherly concern and care for nieces and nephews. These analyses focus on the informants 25 with biological children, who were expecting children, or who claimed stepparent status for the children they lived with. Table 6.1 presents demographic and life circumstances for these informants.

Table 6.1 Demographic and life circumstances of parents

Name	Age	Age at first birth	Race/ ethnicity	Number and ages of children	Living situation	Location of interview
<i>Desisters</i>						
Anne	22	17	black	2 (ages 4 ½ and 2)	with children, mother	community
Princess	20	na	black	pregnant	with her mother	community
Ramona	24	16	Hispanic	4+ (ages 8, 6, 3, and 1, pregnant)	with children, homeless	community
Allen	22	16	black	1 (age 5)	not with child	jail (15 mos.)
Cody	23	19	black	2 (ages 3 & 4)	with children, girlfriend	community
Damion	24	19	black	1 (age 5)	with child, girlfriend	prison (5 yrs.)
Gregory	25	23	black	1 (age 19 mos.)	with child, girlfriend	community
Henry	21	19	black	1 (age 2)	with child part-time	community
Kenneth	24	19	black	2 (ages 5 and 8 mos.)	with children, wife	community
Raymond	23	17	black	3 (ages 6, 4, 20 mos.)	with children, wife	community
Rollo	23	22	black	1 (age 1)	with girlfriend	community
Warren	24	20	black	2 (ages 4 and 2)	not with children	jail (10 mos.)

Table 6.1 Demographic and life circumstances of parents, continued

Name	Age	Age at first birth	Race/ ethnicity	Number and ages of children	Living situation	Location of interview
<i>Persisters</i>						
Frankie	21	17	black	1 (age 2)	with child, mother	community
Galatea	22	17	black	1 (age 4 ½)	not with child; with mother, sibling	community
Rita	21	16	black	1 (age 5 ½)	with child, boyfriend	community
Teresa	21	18	Hispanic	2 (ages 3 and 2)	not with children; unstable housing	community
Dean	24	na	White	2 (ages 3, infant)	with stepchildren, girlfriend	community
George	23	17	black	4 (ages 6, 2, 1, 3 mos.)	with younger children, girlfriend	jail (5 mos.)
Gerard	23	17	black	1 (age 7)	unknown	prison (21 mos.)
Lee	23	18	black	1 (age 5)	with child, girlfriend	prison (3 yrs. 8 mos.)
Peter	25	20	black	2 (ages 5 and 3)	with children part-time	community
Sal	21	20	Hispanic	1 (age 1)	n/a	jail (12 mos.)
Stan	24	17	black	4 (ages 7, 5, 3, 8 mos.)	unknown	jail (3 mos.)
Tommy	22	18	white	1 (age 4)	not with child	jail (7 mos.)
Yusuf	24	18	black	1 (age 6)	not with child	prison (3 yrs.)

Seventeen of the 30 men and six of the ten women had at between one and four biological children. Additionally, one woman, Princess, was 8 months pregnant with her first child and one man, Dean, claimed his girlfriend's three children as his stepchildren. Their children ranged in age from three months to seven years. Informants first became parents between ages 16 and 23; mothers tended to have been a little younger (16 to 20, median= 17) than the fathers (16 to 23, median = 18.5), and persisting fathers tended to be slightly younger than desisting fathers (median age at first birth was 18 for persisters and 19 for desisters). Ten of the fathers were incarcerated at the time of our interview, including three desisters and seven persisters).

Persisting and desisting parents talked about their sense of commitment to their children and described different mechanisms by which they thought their children kept them out of trouble. These mechanisms included the amount of time spent taking care of children (structured routine activities), but informants also expressed the need to be a role model for children, appreciating their role in the lives of their children, and having to put their children first (supervision and monitoring). Finally, the perceived impact of having kids on offending was not instantaneous. Instead, the informants accounts suggest that the perceived implications of having children and the extent to which children were factored in to decision-making evolved over time, both as the children grow and develop and, perhaps, as the informants aged, suggesting that children may help maintain desistance rather than (as well as?) operate as a catalyst for change.

CRIME AFTER KIDS

In this section I address the question of whether parenthood was related to involvement in crime for the men and women in this study. Many of the parents from

both groups said that parenthood affected their involvement in crime. In some cases parents slowed down their involvement—sometimes right away, but usually sometime after their first child was born. As Peter (age 25, father of two and a persister trying to abstain from crime) described his life and himself before taking care of his children:

Peter: *Like, looking at it now, it was a mess. But back then I would tell you my life was fine, but... I was a mess... like I was... whew, I don't even know how to explain it. Like... I used to do stuff just because. Like, it wasn't no reason, it was no purpose for it. Wasn't no kind of outcome I was looking for.*

Many parents described how, after they had children, they experienced changes in how and where they spent their time and changes in how they saw themselves. Anne, age 22 and mother of two, said she decided she had to change when she got pregnant.

Anne: *Before I had kids I just pretty much did what I wanted to do, when I wanted to do it. And I really didn't care about too much. And once I got pregnant—my son was actually planned; all my kids were planned—once I got pregnant I was like, all right, I'm about to be somebody's mom. I need to change my life.*

For other mothers, the changes in crime after becoming a parent emerged over time. Ramona (age 24, desister, and mother of four) also said did whatever she wanted before she had children, but she continued to do whatever she wanted even after her first two children were born because her mother would take care of the children for her.

Ramona: *I used to get up and leave, and then not come back for weeks.*

Me: *Where would you go?*

Ramona: *I'd be everywhere. I'd leave with my friends and I wouldn't come back 'til I feel like it. And then leave again.*

As Ramona had more children, however, her mother's willingness to care for the children waned, as did her perceived freedom.

Ramona: *[The first] one, I left them with my mom and leave. The second I used to leave on my mom. Third one, there was no leaving. And fourth one, definitely not, because she doesn't stand all them kids (laughs).*

With her third child, she said, Ramona's mother refused to take the children anymore, forcing Ramona to stay home. "Now I got to be home all day, every day ... Take them to school, make sure they got everything, they ate, they did this... pssh."

Even though her quantitative self-reported offending suggesting a persisting pattern of crime, Rita (age 21, persister and mother of one) viewed herself as trying to stay out of trouble. She and her child's father had left Philadelphia, they were still together (she was the only mother still with her child's father), she was steadily employed, and she said that her son was "biggest influence on my life changing, because it was once that parenting thing hit me and I knew I was about to become a parent, I had to change." Rita discovered she was pregnant while she was in a juvenile residential facility and was in a facility for most of her pregnancy. Her son was born two months prematurely and he was hospitalized for the first month and a half. "And just by me visiting him and seeing him there," Rita said, "I guess that kind of changed me too." Rita described her life before her son was born as "rough, wild, and crazy." After he was born, she said:

Rita: *It slowed down more. Maturing, more of a mother, and more responsible, and that was it. I learned a lot of responsibilities. What I had to do for him. Plus, I had that he was sick and that he needed that extra care, so it was either up to me or, you know, all or nothing. I'll give all or nothing, so it affected him, what I did.*

As with Ramona and others, the changes Rita experienced did not occur immediately, and it is difficult to disentangle the role of parenthood in her behavior from other factors. Primarily, the first year of her son's life coincided with her placement in

foster care, where she was “on punishment for a year,” which, by design, restricted opportunities to engage in crime.

Rita: *I really couldn't go out anywhere. Family could come visit me there, but I couldn't go out. I couldn't do much, you know. Probably take him to his doctor's appointments. That's the only time I really be able to get out. [. . .] I didn't really [like] communicating with the family that much. I just pretty much stayed in my room myself and just spent time with [my son] and everything. So I guess within that one year period of time, that's when I guess I matured, because I wasn't in the streets as much as I was. So that punishment for a year, grounded for a year, does something to you.*

For at least one father, parenthood came *after* he had started to desist from crime.

Gregory (age 25, desister) said that he was already doing well when his daughter was born.

Gregory: *Because like I didn't have no kid when I was younger ... Like when she was born I was, like I had a car, house, I mean, car, apartment, and I'm situated, you know what I mean? It wasn't like I had her and I was scrambling, or I had her and I didn't have a pot piss in, window to throw it out. I had her when I'm doing good. It was better than having her around this time [referring to early years on timeline] like when all this was going on.*

This aspect of his narrative (and others) suggests more of a change in preferences occurring before having a child (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). However, in another part of his interview, Gregory described how before he had her, he felt free to blow his paychecks on trips to Atlantic City as long as his rent was covered. His first thought when he learned he was going to have a child was about money, but he suggests that because he was already set up, he didn't have to worry about this as much as others do (he often answered my questions with a comparison to how things *could* have been if he was not “set up,” if he was younger, if he was more involved in crime). In a sense, the timing was right for Gregory to have a child, but the groundwork for abstinence (and

perhaps an enduring desistance maintenance) was already laid down before she was born. Her arrival in his life just put things in perspective for him.

Stepchildren might also operate as a catalyst for change. Dean (age 24 and a persister who was trying to stay out of trouble) reported that his life was different now that he spent time parenting his girlfriend's children; not only did his daily activities change, but it changed how he saw himself.

Dean: Listen, I was going to the bar every night, you know what I mean? I was single—I broke up with my ex about a year ago. Moved back to Philly so ... I don't know. I don't go out to the bar anymore. Like, I'm not out all the time, you know what I mean? I'm in the house, I change diapers and shit, I feed them. Like, I don't know. It's just making me into a man, I guess. Like, it feels good.

TRYING TO MAKE IT WORK: PERSISTING BUT SLOWING DOWN

Most of the fathers in this study said that they factored in a sense of responsibility for their children into decisions about their involvement in crime. In particular, commitment to children increased the weight of the threat of sanctions and other risks of crime (I return to this theme below; also see Maloney, 2009). For most fathers, however, this cost-benefit analysis did not lead them to forgo crime altogether, at least not at first. Instead, they responded to their responsibilities by selling drugs. Some returned to selling drugs after a period of abstinence when money ran short, others maintained their involvement in selling drugs. Generally, the men who had children initially tried to make their previous involvement in drug markets “work” with their new father role.

In addition to the qualitative efforts to ameliorate the risks of drug market involvement, some fathers made quantitative changes that did not quite add up to

abstinence from crime.⁵¹ That is, they remained involved in crime but they “slowed down” and took fewer chances. Moreover, the fathers slowed down when they started to consider the implications of their actions for their children. Raymond said that he started slowing down and taking care of his children after his first son was born, upon returning from the juvenile facility, he did not get out of drug dealing until sometime later. Asked how he thought having children related to his involvement in crime, Raymond, age 23, said:

Raymond: *Like I said, it slowed me down a whole lot, and knowing that I’m not—that it’s not for me no more, but for my kids too. My mistakes will fall back on them, because if I’m locked up they can’t see me at all, you know what I’m saying? So that slowed me down a whole lot. Matter of fact, when I first had my son, that’s when I started slowing down, for real for real, as far as the out there all day selling or whatever, fighting or, you know, like carrying guns and all that. I had to stop. It’s like, ok, I’m bringing a seed into this world. Now I gotta like smarten up, go ahead [and] finish school, get a job, and take care of my responsibilities. So they definitely slowed me down a whole lot.*

Damion (age 24, desister) had been incarcerated for over four years and was a father to a five year old boy and stepfather to his baby’s mothers other child (he initially believed the girl was his). He described how he thought about his involvement in crime differently after his son was born.

Damion: *It made me think about things way more than two times. Because before, my whole thing was, anything happen it just happens to me. Now I know, it—like I said, it’s not about me no more. So instead of just [thinking], ‘Alright, the cop’s a block and half away. By the time they get down here I’m going to run.’ Taking that chance, I wouldn’t take that chance no more.*

⁵¹ For example, taking a hands-off approach, to selling drugs, working within their legitimate routine activities, changing customer bases, as described in the previous section on offending patterns, see Chapter 4 for more on this theme.

Me: So how did it actually—I'm trying to think about this because you're still involved in stuff.

Damion: Yeah, I was still involved in it. It just—it cut down from 100 to 30 percent. And it be—I had to think, basically go to Plan B on everything, because I got to make sure I'm there. Especially when they was young. I had to make sure I was there.

Me: What do you mean? Can you give me an example of what moving to Plan B would be?

Damion: Alright. Before I had the kids, [if] me and a person was having a problem, whether we going to fight each other, stab each other, or shoot each other, I wouldn't think about it. I'm just going to do it. After I had the kids, I got started thinking, especially once I actually had my own son. I don't want my son growing up without no father under any circumstances, unless it's for a reason that's really, really justified, where even though I'm not there, he'd be proud of me. [...] It was a real big change for me.

Me: So you feel like you played it safer, generally.

Damion: Yeah.

Some persisting parents also said that even though they did not terminate their involvement in crime, they “slowed down” their involvement as a result of having children, as noted by Stan (age 24, father of 4).

Stan: Kids, man. Kids will do that to you, if you care about them. Some motherfuckers love friends more than kids. That's where they fuck up.

Me: You think your kids have made you slow down?

Stan: My kids is the best thing that ever, EVER happened to me. Ever happened to me. I'm telling you, they make me cry. Yeah! Like when I see them Wednesday, I'm going to fucking cry. Like a fucking baby, man. Damn. That shit—yeah. That's some real shit right there, I'm telling you.

GOING HARDER DUE TO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Not all parents slowed down in response to parenthood. At least two parents said that rather than take fewer chances or curb their involvement in crime, they responded to parenthood by “going harder” after their children were born—putting more time and energy into selling drugs and other illicit opportunities to make money. This seems to parallel the empirical research indicating that men spend more time in legal work after their children are born (see Knoester and Eggebeen, 2006). For example, when I asked Warren (desister, age 24, incarcerated, father of two) whether anything stood out to him as having changed his involvement in crime, he said that he increased his efforts to earn money through crime.

Warren: *Jail and my kids. See, my kids—my kids didn’t change me or make me want to change. My kids made me change and make me want to go harder.*

Me: *What do you mean?*

Warren: *Like, wanted to make me hard. I got to—I’m doing this, but now I got to work harder to get more money to help feed them. Like even though I didn’t have to work harder, my mind says I got to think of the future for them. And once they was born, I forgot all about myself. I’m not worried about me no more.*

Gerard (age 23, incarcerated persister) echoed this sentiment. Like Warren, his involvement in crime increased after his daughter was born. Having his daughter, he said, kept him out of trouble because he was spending time with her and had less time to engage in “dumb stuff” (less lucrative crime).

Gerard: *I stopped doing a lot of the dumb stuff I was doing. That’s when I really got focused. Like, man, like I’m not going to be out there [with] y’all just standing on the corner, just doing nothing, just waiting for the cops to come. I mean, I got to—I try to be here for my daughter, you know what I mean? That’s another reason why I commit crimes, too. Because like a regular job—like, I got a couple felonies. A regular job just ain’t going to do. Like it’s just not.*

MECHANISMS

Since there is some evidence that parenthood is related to changes in crime—both positively and negatively—the next question to address is *how* parenthood might contribute to desistance from crime and why it might not be related to desistance for everybody. In this section I review themes from the interviews that represent the subjective and structural mechanisms linking parenthood and crime.

Differences in how persisters and desisters experience and engage in parenthood emerged from these accounts. First, desisters seemed more likely to describe cognitive shifts as they settle into their new roles as parents, including changes in their sense of concern and responsibility for others. Desisting parents not only had a sense of responsibility to care for their children, they also said that they monitored their own behavior because they knew their children were observing them and learning about the world through them; thus, their children served as a source of supervision and monitoring. Finally, desisting parents (and persisting parents trying to stay out of trouble) described changes in how they spent their time in terms of structured daily routines. Moreover, most desisting parents claimed the social and emotional support of their children's other parent, were steadily employed, or both (Laub and Sampson, 2003).

In contrast, most persisting parents experienced parenthood differently from desisters across a number of domains. First, even when persisting parents saw themselves as parents and acknowledged that they had a responsibility to their children, they tended to ignore or otherwise misplay the opportunity to employ parenthood as a hook for change. Second, persisting parents often saw themselves as failing to fulfill their parent role. In spite of this, some persisters, especially those who were incarcerated at the time of the interview, continued to hold on to the idea of parenthood as a hook for change they

could turn to in the future (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). Finally, persisting parents were less involved in the daily routines of childcare, were less likely to be in a relationship with their children's other parent, and were more likely to be unemployed in legal work.

DESISTING AND COGNITIVE SHIFTS

Perceptions of Self and Identity

For the parents in this study, parenthood represented an important source of a new identity, and this new identity was woven with their commitment to their children. With a new identity as a father comes a sense of responsibility toward someone else, an obligation to provide for them financially, ensure their safety, and model appropriate behavior.

Henry (age 21, desister and father of one) explained to me that having a child made him feel like a parent in a way that extended beyond his obligations to his daughter. It seemed to foster a sense of obligation and authority to look out for other children in his community.

Me: *Do you feel differently about yourself now that you have a daughter?*

Henry: *Well, yeah, I feel like a parent.*

Me: *What does that mean?*

Henry: *To other kids, I feel like a parent ... Like before I couldn't—well, I could tell them I was older, but I know how it feel to tell another kid what to do. They ain't mind, but they better listen.*

Me: *You feel like you have some authority now?*

Henry: *Yeah, authority, that's what you get. ... I try to help all the kids out if I can. Like if they out playing in the streets and stuff, and cars coming, you know.*

Like Henry, Lee (age 23, persister and father of one), a persister who has been incarcerated for more than three years, felt empowered by his experience of becoming a father. Unlike Henry, however, this empowerment did not appear to be focused on children in the community. Asked whether he saw himself differently when he took on the father role, Lee described how becoming a father made him feel like he could do things he did not think he could do before:

Lee: *Yeah, because I felt like, damn... I took this role on real fast and like got all the way in, like what else can I do? Like, you know what I'm saying? But I never really sat back and thought about what—"what I could do?" and did it. I was real good at that time with doing what I was doing. It might not be looking like what I was doing good in other people's eyes. But I'm doing what I only know, and I'm doing the best at it, like, know what I mean? So, I just said, man, take it as it is.*

Some of the men, like Raymond (age 23, desister and father of 3), said that they thought other people saw them differently now that they had children.

Raymond: *If anything, like, I don't want to say they respect me more, but they respect what I'm doing for my family, for my kids. Because like, already being young, you know what I'm saying, and not having that much, but basically struggling to survive—I mean, they give me a lot of respect, you know what I'm saying. Like, "Alright. Well, he might not be the best, but he's done a dang good job of what he doing." So, they look at me a little different for what I'm doing for my kids and for my family, and for me as of right now, so.*

Indeed, Raymond sees himself as a successful father:

Raymond: *If anything, we teach our kids respect and to love one another. And, I mean, like, they just carry that out with them [through] everything in life, so. Even people at school, like, they teacher's is like, "Wow! Y'all did a good job with these kids. Like they respectful, they loving, they kind." So yeah, it's definitely noticeable.*

When asked whether he saw himself differently after having children, Raymond responded:

Raymond: *I feel a whole lot different, for real for real. Not just as—Like, I wouldn't picture me as being a father. I couldn't picture this in a million years. I really couldn't. But like, I don't know. Like I said, it made me grow up more quicker. Like, I had to grow up faster. I had to, you know, be on top of a lot of stuff. I mean, for my sake and for they sake, you know what I'm saying? So I definitely had to grow up faster and take care of business.*

Peter (age 25, persister and father of 2) said that one of the benefits of being a father was the positive way his children perceive him. When asked what he liked most about being a parent, Peter responded:

Peter: *What do I like most about being a parent? I say... I don't know. Probably—I think it's probably the way they look at me. Like, they look at me for everything, like I'm their shield, like I'm their armor. Like... like, I don't know. I just think, the way they feel about me.*

However, Peter said that did not see himself differently as the result of children. Nor, he claims did anyone else. He said, “Like in my mind, I was still the same person, but my actions were different.”

Warren (age 24, desister) was a father of two children (ages four and two) and he had been in jail for the 10 months before the interview. He said that what he liked most about being a father was the time he put into his children as well as the opportunity to be seen as a good person through his children's eyes.

Warren: *Just, to know that you got somebody that you got to put more ... of your time into. Yeah. You can't just ... chill and do what you want. Like, all my time go to them now. I got somebody I really got to support and look up to. I got ... somebody who actually want to look up to me, like, “Yeah, my daddy do this.” And I get the chance to do that. When I was little, like I never had the chance to do that. Now I got the chance to do that.*

In the recent past, Princess's (age 20, desister) main involvement in crime was getting into fights; she had been in two fights in the year before our interview, both

involved situations where she felt she was defending her sisters. Though Princess had not yet given birth to her first child (she was eight months pregnant when we met), she said that now that she was a mother she would have to walk away from potential fights in the future.

Me: *Can you see yourself ever being faced with the decision to get into a fight and not doing it?*

Princess: *Yeah, I could see myself [doing that] because now I'm a mother, so like, a lot of that I just got to let fly past me. Just don't act on it, walk away. It's going to be hard, but then at the same time, it's not going to be hard because ... if I walk away I know I was being mature about the situation, for one. For two, I know I'm going to be able to see my son later on. So I'm not worried about it. But if I don't walk away, I'm stooping to somebody's level, I won't be able to see my son because I'm going to get arrested for seriously beating somebody. So I could see myself stopping.*

For Frankie (age 21, persister, mother of one), having a child changed how she spent her time and money, as well as how she saw herself.

Me: *So how is your life different now compared to before you had her?*

Frankie: *Because I could just do anything I want, spend my money on anything. I could just go anywhere and stuff. And now you can't just get up and do everything. Like if I want to buy me something, I got to buy her everything before I even get to buy me something. And it's hard. You got to buy—it's crazy. You got to get her hair done. Just everything. Parties. It's like seven hundred dollars for a party. Everything. She's just good. She made me better.*

Me: *She made you better? How did she make you better?*

Frankie: *Because I love her. She made me nice.*

Me: *You think she mellowed you out?*

Frankie: *Yeah, a little bit. A LITTLE bit. When I first had her, yeah, because I was working, I was going back to community college. I was working and*

community, and I had her. So I was trying to be like this person—Like this nice person. Like good girls. It ain't worked out.

Not all parents saw themselves differently or acted differently after their children were born. George (age 23, incarcerated persister). Asked whether he felt different about himself now that he has children, George responded, “No, the same.” Asked whether he thought others saw him differently, he was adamant that they did not, in large part because he took steps to protect kids from his involvement in crime:

George: *They—no, uh-uh. I wouldn't want nobody to. My kids is really like segregated. So it's like they don't be—where I live at now it's more of Caucasians, like working class people [. . .] I would never live in North Philadelphia because it's like you're going to have to kill somebody, you're gonna have to do something that you don't want to do. [. . .] So my kids is like—I keep them segregated so people don't even see my kids, you know what I mean?*

Whereas other parents, like Raymond and Peter, located successful parenting identities in the specific ways they influenced their children, Dean (age 24, persister) focused on how he thought being a father to his girlfriend's children influenced *him*. By taking on the father role, he says, others see him differently and he sees himself differently. Fatherhood was “making [Dean] into a man,” an opportunity for him to emulate the men that he looked up to in his life, and to “carry on the name.” Even though he had been a stepfather for only a few months when we met, playing the father role made Dean “feel good about himself.”

Dean: *I always wanted to be a father. That's what—I mean, that's the only thing I think I'm here for, honestly is to—I like I said my grandpop and my steppop, they were both great men at raising kids, you know what I mean? Like, and I don't know. That's the only thing I'm here for, is to carry on the name.*

In addition to making him into a man, his participation in childcare also made him feel like a parent:

Dean: *Like, I'm always making—looking out for them. Make sure make sure their cool [and that] they don't get hurt. I let her sleep. I watch them and shit, you know what I mean? Take them to the park and everything. Take them out places. . . But like, I don't know. Yeah, I take care of them like they're mine. For sure. Definitely.*

When asked to identify whether he thought helping his girlfriend with her kids affected his involvement in crime, he agreed that it was, but went on to discuss *his* influence on *them*, rather than the other way around.

Dean: *They changed that. I mean, like, they're good for me and, like, I'm good for them, you know? They need a father figure in their life, and their father's not going to be around for like another six years, so, you know.*

It's Not Just About Me Anymore: Commitment, Responsibility, Stake In Conformity

Most of the parents in this study tended to put their children at the forefront of the interview, and many discussed their commitment to their children and changing sense of responsibility at length. One common thread among desisters (and persisters who said they were abstaining) is that children provided an opportunity for them to think outside themselves and to consider the perspectives and needs of others—their preferences changed—which in turn related to their involvement in crime (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Children became a “side bet” that they could lose if they got into trouble (Becker, 1960; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Raymond (desister, age 23, married and father of three), illustrated this shift as he discussed an uncle who helped nurture Raymond's sense of spirituality, which in turn contributed to his commitment to his family.

Raymond: *He's really helped me get my spiritual life together, you know what I'm saying? So I can't thank him enough for that, because that right there kept me out of trouble. That right there kept me on my feet a lot when times was crazy and I wanted to just do me. I know I can't just do me because it's not just me. It's my kids. It's my wife. So my uncle definitely had a big impact.*

Parents also described how having children fostered their sense of responsibility. When asked how his life was different since having his kids, Cody (desister, age 23, father of two and living with the mother of his children) said he had a greater sense of financial responsibility, but he also was aware of his responsibility as a model for his children's behavior.

Cody: *It helped me learn responsibility. Usually I get money and spend it, spend it, spend it. Now I got to, you know, [put] them first, me second. Well, actually, me third.*

That sense of responsibility was reflected in the narratives of those who struggled to abstain from crime as well. Allen (desister, age 22, father of one, and in jail for 12 months) was on a desisting path but had not fully abstained from crime for more than a few months at a time. Though he said that he thought having a child had no immediate impact on his behavior, he did feel and act on his sense of responsibility to his son, and that he viewed his responsibility to his son as a potential catalyst for abstinence in the future.

Allen: *I think I cooled out a little bit [after my son was born]. I think I chilled, you know, I got a responsibility. See, even though I was—it's kind of hard to say that I was doing things for him because I was doing things for myself. Even though I was out there, I did try to take care of him. I bought him the things he needed.*

Some of the informants expressed a sense of parental responsibility toward children that were not their biological children—not only stepchildren but nieces and nephews, children they know from the community, and the children of romantic partners. For example, Peter (age 25, a persister who was abstaining from crime when we met) cared for four children in addition to his own and Neal (desister age 24) was childless but

said he felt he had to step into a father role for his sister's daughter because her biological father was not around. Both men said they considered (or in Neal's case, knew he should consider) the implications of their actions of these non-biological children. Dean (age 24, persister), who had no biological children of his own, referred to his girlfriend and her children as his family and listed them as important people in his life, even though they had been together for just three months. Though it was difficult to gauge from the interview whether his proclaimed commitment to his stepchildren was similar to what he might feel for biological children, he seemed to take this commitment seriously and said that this helped him stay out of trouble.

***Dean:** I don't have any kids of my own but, like, it's helping me because it's keeping me away from bullshit. Because I got to think about them before I think about me, you know what I mean? I got to take care of them like they're my own. I mean, Similac and diapers and all that shit's not cheap.⁵²*

Many parents said that this sense of commitment and having to think of someone other than themselves gave them a reason to change their involvement in crime. Though he did not get out of "the game" until a few years later, Peter (age 25, a persister who was abstaining from crime when we met) said he started thinking differently when his first biological child was born when he was 20.

***Peter:** When I first found out he was born, it was like, ok, now I got someone to live for. I can't do as much as I was doing. Because when I was just living for me it was like, if I live, I live; [if] I die, I die. It is what it is.*

⁵² A skeptic might ask how these words translate into deeds. According to the Pathways Study data, Dean reported no involvement in crime for more than a year prior to the qualitative interview, suggesting that the desistance process started before he took on his girlfriend's children. To the extent that we accept the validity of his self-report, we have to accept the validity of his account.

Peter's investment in his children and having to think of someone other than himself ultimately led him to get out of selling drugs. Later in the interview, Peter again described a stake in his children that outweighed the benefits of crime.

Me: So are you still involved in selling, or are you just—have you totally—

Peter: (overlapping) No, I'm done. I ain't—

Me: (overlapping) So you're out of it?

Peter: I can't afford it now. Like, now I got three of these little bad rascals that's really mine, and then I got the four other ones I take care of—because I got the three step-kids and my godson.

Kenneth (desister, age 24) echoed Peter's sentiments. Not only did the birth of his first child change the way he spent his time (a theme I return to below) but it also changed how he thought.

Kenneth: Before I had my daughter, I used to. . . I say I used to just be on the streets more, a lot. I ain't have no curfew to come in the house, I ain't have nobody to look after, I ain't have nobody to make sure this right and make sure that right, so it was just anything goes before my daughter came. And I found myself getting in a lot more trouble. And putting myself in jeopardy to get in more trouble before I had her.

Me: Were you staying home more [after you had your daughter] or what?

Kenneth: When I had her? Yeah, I stayed home more and I just started thinking more. Now I got somebody in the world that I got to look after and bring up.

Henry described how having his daughter has improved his life and encouraged him to change:

Me: How is your life different now compared to before you had your daughter?

Henry: Umm... I think it's better. It's better because when I'm with—before I had her, I wasn't nothing. I was out there in the streets. So she another reason I had to

get myself together, because I didn't want to be locked down. I want to be there in her life, take care of her and stuff. Because she's a girl, I know she need her dad. So yeah, I want to be there. So she a reason too. Yeah, a big reason.

Henry also highlights how children can bring change across life course dimensions and sometimes those changes do not lead to abstaining from selling drugs and other crimes, at least not right away.

Me: *Do you feel like [the changes you've made because of your daughter are] generally good or bad?*

Henry: *I think they good. They good because, I don't know... I think before—if I ain't have her, I wouldn't like—I ain't going to say I wouldn't have nothing to—a reason to better myself. But it was all that, everything at one time. I was moving—well, I moved before I had her [because] my girl was pregnant. She was pregnant when we moved so I had to move because [my girlfriend's] mother didn't want her bringing no kids in. So I had to move them out her mom house so they could have a place. But that's not about—I was working. I was working and I was on the streets at the same time then.*

Desisters also considered the collateral costs of their behavior—that is, they said they thought about how their involvement in crime might affect their children as well as their ability to be there and to provide for their children (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). For some parents, the threat of not being there for their children was a central concern in choosing whether to continue involvement in crime. That threat came directly from the government agencies like the criminal justice system, but it also operated through informal channels. For example, Raymond (age 23, desister), said that they were concerned about the consequences of their own incarceration on their children, especially with respect to being there for their child.

Raymond: *... My mistakes will fall back on them, because if I'm locked up they can't see me at all, you know I'm saying?*

Ramona (age 24, desister) said that the omnipresence of her four children was one factor that slowed her involvement in fights and her marijuana use—“They don’t let me go outside,” she said—but she said she stopped selling drugs at age 18 because the state was trying to take her children away from her.

***Ramona:** Oh, they told me when I had got locked up the last time—I was like seventeen [when] I had my daughter—that they was going to take her if I had got arrested again. . . And all the kids that I would have, they would still come and take them. So I was just trying to stay out of trouble, stop fighting.*

Without this threat, Ramona doubted she would have stopped selling drugs when she did. Between the ages of 12 and 20, Ramona spent more time in juvenile and adult detention centers than she did on the street.

***Ramona:** I got used to jail. Like, I got used to it, being there, in and out, and I was just at the end. I used to—I didn’t care. But then once I got pregnant and then they started saying they was going to arrest me again, that’s what stopped me.*

Anne (age 21, desister) also said that her experience with the juvenile justice system and the threat of more severe sanctions deterred her from further crime before she had children, when she was still a juvenile. However, though she joked about it, the possibility of her children being raised by their father continued to deter her from crime. Asked whether she could see herself ever returning to crime, she answered, “Heck no! (laughs) You locked up, my kids would be stuck with their father all the time *and* his girlfriend. And that wouldn’t be good.”

Cody said he took his girlfriend seriously when she invoked the threat of informal sanctions and formal sanctions. She reminded him that another man would raise his children if Cody should land in prison. When we talked about whether he thought that his

girlfriend influenced where he was at the moment, Cody responded, “Yeah, her and the kids, because if I mess up, I don’t want a dude raising my kids. So it, like—she keeps me on my p’s and q’s and keeps me knowing that like, ‘If something happen to you, like, somebody going to help raise your kids.’ And I don’t like that. So it was, like, keep constantly being on my hair about it.” Later, he reiterated this point:

***Me:** I know you started reporting involvement in crime around the time of the birth of your second son. Didn’t having kids affect your involvement in crime at all?*

***Cody:** Hmm... (long pause) Yeah. Yeah, it did, in a way, because that was something that [my baby’s mother] used against me, you know what I’m saying? “You got kids.” And plus, it was like I don’t want nobody raising my kids, because I see how a lot of girls that I know—their baby father locked up, you got a lot of other men around your kids. I don’t like that. I don’t like that at all.*

EMERGING COGNITIVE SHIFTS

The association between having children, cognitive shifts, and involvement in crime is not always instantaneous. The implications of parenthood for other areas of life, including crime, can emerge and accumulate over time, carrying greater weight as children develop and become more aware of their parents, as parents themselves develop as adults, and with the addition of more children (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002).⁵³ Persisters and desisters described how commitment to parenthood and the subsequent implications for that commitment on crime emerged over time. For example, Peter described how when his stepfather, a man Peter loved and admired, saw that he was deeply involved in “the game” (selling drugs and engaging in violence) and advised him

⁵³ This cumulative investment is similar to what Laub, Nagin, and Sampson (1998) found when they looked at marriage and desistance.

to slow down. Initially, Peter thought his stepfather was “just talking out of his ass,” but Peter said, “As time went on, it was like, ahh! I understand. I see what he was talking about.” Though he did not get out of “the game” until a few years later, Peter said he started thinking differently when his first biological child was born when he was 20. Peter later explained that he willingly sacrificed the money he made from selling drugs in order to be there for his children:

***Peter:** It wasn't hard to get out the game, but it was. Like, I miss the money. Like, I do miss the money. But it's like, I can go without cause I don't want my kids growing up with that shit. Like, I did all that already, I don't need to do it. I got better plans now, so.*

When I asked him whether he missed anything about crime, Peter responded:

***Peter:** I'm going to say sometimes I do. I miss it a lot. It's just, I don't know. I really—I think it's my kids that's really keeping me out. Like that's what I think it is, my kids. . . . Because I don't know how would I be able to bring it down [sell drugs]. Like it ain't even so much as my son, it's mostly my daughter, like... I don't even know how I'd be able to sell. Like she—it's her.*

***Me:** What do you mean “it's her”?*

***Peter:** Because it's like, with my son, okay, I've been locked up twice since he's been born. Like to him, daddy on vacation. [But] she can't go without seeing me. She'd have a fit. Like, to her just, daddy on vacation, her—she [says] “I want my daddy, I want my daddy, I want my daddy.” She be like, she in school [and] she do that [act out].*

George (age 23, incarcerated persister and father of four) illustrated this theme differently in an important way. When asked whether he was sacrificing anything by staying involved in crime, George responded:

***George:** I'm missing my baby. I miss my son—he took his first steps, he's starting to talk, my new baby. My daughter's running around; she's potty trained now. You miss a lot of things that you want to be there for, as far as birthdays, shit like*

that. I mean, far as I can say, it's different now because I never—At first I was like, I don't give a fuck about nothing. Whatever it's going to be, it's going to be. I'm going to run these fucking streets, you know what I mean? [...] At one point, I didn't care about nothing...

Me: *Now you care a little bit about something else?*

George: *Yeah. You got something that you got to slow down for now. It's different. I didn't give a fuck about no coming to jail, get into a shootout with somebody, hurting somebody, doing something. I could care less about any of that shit. But now, I got to. [...] I be—I grow up [...] Like I say, you don't want your kids to grow up doing the same things that you did, living in the same way I lived. You got little girls—you don't want your girls—I know girls that got to work in a strip club because of the, fuck, they ain't got no family, you see, the way they got to eat. I know girls that can't pay college tuition so they strip. They do whatever they got to do. So you don't want your kids to grow up like this. You got to be there, to do something, you see what I'm saying? You got to provide for them. So I don't want them to grow up no type of way, which they wouldn't because, you know, they mom side of the family is, they well—they all right, you know? But I just—I miss them. Mainly I just miss my kids. Everybody else, I don't really.*

Where Peter seemed to take on the cognitive and material responsibility of his children as well stepchildren and godchildren, however, George's emerging sense of responsibility to be there for his children appeared to be moderated by the presence of others people in his children's lives who had the resources to ensure that his children have a good life whether he is there or not.

DESISTING AND SUPERVISION, MONITORING, AND REFLECTED APPRAISALS

Some of the parents' accounts suggested that just as parents socialize children to norms and values, eventually developing "virtual supervision" over their children (Hirschi, 1969), children also could supervise and monitor their parents. When children vocalize or reenact observations of their behavior, it provides an opportunity for parents (and adults generally) to reflect on their own behavior and how their behavior might be

perceived by and interpreted by children. These parents acknowledged that their children watched and learned from them, and because of that they considered how their children would see (and possibly model) their behavior. Though modeling is a way for children to learn appropriate behaviors, for parents, being a model for good behavior provides a source of indirect informal social control through a process of reflected appraisals (Matsueda, 1992; Matsueda and Heimer, 1997).

When asked what he liked most about being a parent, Raymond responded, “I know I can give them love and ... show them how to do things right.” When I commented that it sounded like he was pretty involved in raising his children, he responded:

Raymond: *Yeah! Got to be. Got to be. Like, they all getting big and they like—Oh man, they all smart as—Like they was smart since they was real little. Like, they just want to know about everything, inquire about everything, and tell you this, tell you that. Talk your head off, like, yeah.*

Cody also explained that he had to show his children how to behave and how he has changed his behavior as a result:

Cody: *They teach me how to, like, save money and, like, talk better to people. Because you got to be real ignorant of people, but I can't do that because I don't want them to do that to people. Like, I got to go to daycare and all that, and they got to see how I talk and interact with people. So they made me become a little bit more of a people person.*

Peter (age 25, a persister who said he had abstained from crime for at least a year) described an experience that suggested the consequences of ignoring the monitoring children do of their parents. He claimed that this experience made it easier for him to get out of the drug market, even though it was hard to give up the money. As he described it,

even though he tried to reduce his family's exposure to his illegal activities, he still put them at risk because young children observe and imitate their parents' behavior.⁵⁴

Peter: *[My girlfriend's] son found some of my weed bags, and he was stuffing toys in the weed bags, like [as] if he seen my do it before. And I asked him, when she bring it to me, like I say to him, "Where did you get that from?" Because I don't do none of that nowhere near nobody. I don't even be in the house—I'm somewhere else. ... He tell me his dad be doing it in front of him. So it was like, to her it was like, "You ain't no better because you got the shit laying around. You got the baggies here. You ain't got no drugs here actually, but you got the paraphernalia." So it was like, "Damn. Like, I'm wrong!"*

PERSISTING AND NEGLECTING PARENTHOOD AS A HOOK FOR CHANGE

Where desisters described different ways in which having children changed the way they saw themselves and the costs of crime, some persisters said that though becoming a father was an opportunity for change, it was an opportunity they chose not to take, at least not right away. For example, Tommy (age 22, persister and father of one) had been in jail for seven months and was the father of a four-year-old daughter.

Me: *So what did you think when you found out that she was gonna be born?*

Tommy: *I was ecstatic. I wanted to give my whole lifestyle up [when she was born], stop what I was doing. And I kept telling myself that for four years. I haven't done it yet because I enjoy my lifestyle.*

Me: *Yeah? But it's mostly for her that you think about that kind of stuff?*

Tommy: *Yeah. Only for her. Because I really enjoyed my lifestyle. Stupid and fucked up as that sounds, I do. It's all a game and it's sick. It is. But that's... the juvenile system, that's what raised me and bred me into this.*

⁵⁴ Peter also identified the monitoring of other children as a deciding factor when he got out of the drug market; see chapter 5 for more on his experience.

Similar to the desisters, Lee (age 23, persister) an incarcerated father of a five-year-old girl, said that he considered “what he had at home” even when he was in the community: without his daughter, he said, he might be dead. Lee said that he saw himself in the father role, but he opted out of the hook for change. Asked to describe some characteristics of a good father, Lee said described himself this way: “I was a protector. I made sure they was always fed, clothes all the time.” In spite of his identity as a father and the encouragement of others that he take advantage of fatherhood as a hook for change, Lee he felt his involvement in crime was “too deep in” at that point.

Me: Did other people see you differently when you took on this father role?

Lee: Yeah, like, it was like—like trying to, like, I be like, it was a relief type thing, like, “Alright maybe this baby will calm him down a little bit.” like, you know what I’m saying? ... But nobody can really stop me and really get in my head the way my mom and my baby mom does. So they like, maybe the baby might just do it for me. The baby might just cut all this shit out, just start chilling and falling back, you know what I’m saying? And I wanted to be like that but it was just too hard, man, I was just too deep in.

Some of the persisters indicated that the meaning and salience of crime did not change for them after their children were born (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Like many of the men, Sal’s first and only child—a one-year-old son—was born while he was in jail awaiting trial on gun and homicide charges, so he never lived with or had regular contact with his son.⁵⁵ He did say that his involvement in crime did not change when his girlfriend became pregnant, while he was still on the street, even though others told him it should. For example, when his

⁵⁵ Actually, Sal’s baby was born while Sal was in hospital recovering from 70 stab wounds he had received in jail.

grandmother learned that Sal was going to be a father, she told him to slow down and to start doing things right.

***Me:** What did you think when she told you that at the time?*

***Sal:** ... I thought about it. I just-I don't know. I was just wild. I wasn't really trying to hear it. I understood. I was just (laughs) thinking I'm going to have my son with me while I'm chilling out in the streets. Like that's how I was thinking, but it can't be like that though.*

Stan (age 24, incarcerated persister) also illustrates how the meaning of crime did not change when he became a father. Stan's account also illustrates how complicated the relationship between parenthood and crime can be for crime-involved fathers. He had four children with two different mothers; his children ranged in age from 8 months to 7 years. When we met, he had been in jail for three months and was in a correctional treatment facility at the time of our interview. Stan saw himself as being there for his children. Asked what he did to try to be there for them, he said, "I rob people so they can get shit that they can't get if I work. . . I sell drugs to get them shit." In the same breath Stan described his other responsibilities as a father.

***Stan:** Be around them. I teach my daughter how to read. I teach them-I teach them that-I teach them about respect and loyalty and not to lie. I teach them a lot of shit that's going to help them in life. I just got to be around them for a long time so I be able to do all in there.*

Asked whether he thought his children had any impact on his involvement in crime, Stan said,

***Stan:** Um, yeah. It made me want money more. Yeah, but they calmed me down too, so.*

***Me:** How did they calm you down? In what way?*

***Stan:** I probably—you see this right here [referring to the timeline]? I would have did way more. I would have did three times this shit if I ain't have kids. I probably—my life would have probably stopped around [this time].*

***Me:** Like at [ages] 20, 21?*

***Stan:** Yeah. They kept me pumping. Yeah, especially my first daughter.*

Though his children were an impetus to crime, Stan said, they were also an impetus to qualitative changes in his offending. The changes, however, appear to be situational. For example, when he was with his children he stayed away from violence and avoided telephone calls from people who might ask him to engage in violence on their behalf.

***Stan:** I can't be violent with them. I can't do shit like that with them. I didn't have my phone, so my friends couldn't call me if they was in trouble. I didn't call them because I was with my kids. Like I don't want to leave them to go do something else. I love them. . . . But when I ain't around my kids, I'm a whole n'other person.*

George (age 23, incarcerated persister) had four children ranging in age from three months to 6 years. At the time of our interview, he had been in jail on a probation violation for five months. George has regular contact with his children when he is in the community and was in a relationship with their mother. George said that his children had no effect on his involvement in crime. Instead, qualitative changes in crime (i.e., the type or seriousness) depended on his status on the street, which was something he worked to protect. As a result, he kept his children segregated from his “crime life” because he did not want people to see him differently. Later in the interview, George seemed to reconsider whether his involvement in crime changed after having children. Asked whether he ever tried to stay out of trouble, he said, “Maybe when my kids was born...

I'd try to stay under them as much as I can. I wasn't really trying to go to jail [because] you're responsible ... you got to be around."

Some persisting parents did not see themselves as fulfilling the parent role—either they did not see themselves as parents or saw themselves as bad parents (Lee was an exception). Yusef's (age 24, incarcerated persister) son was born as he was returning home from jail in 2003. He was not present for the birth (it was not clear whether he missed it because he was incarcerated or for some other reason) and though he said he had regular contact with his son early on, Yusef left Philadelphia for a Midwest state while his son was still young. In the Midwest, he was "a brand new person, man. I really rehabilitated myself." His son, however, was not a part of that rehabilitation. Asked whether he felt he ever served as a father to his son, Yusef said he did not meet his own expectations for what a father does. Primarily, to be a father to his son, Yusef said,

***Yusef:** All the way. Like all the way be there, all the way. It's no such thing as half-stepping with parenting. Like all the way. But I can't blame myself when she [his baby's mother] crazy. (laughs) You know what I mean?*

Asked whether he thought his son had any influence on his involvement in crime, Yusef explained that for his son to have had an impact on his behavior, he would have had to have an emotional attachment to his son. The attachment he described was something that should develop over time. "It has to be built up," he said. He did not have that attachment, though he said he could in the future.

Some of the other parents were estranged from their children to varying degrees. Tommy (age 22, incarcerated persister) was clearly emotional about it. When his daughter was conceived, he was not in a relationship with her mother ("It was more just a sexual thing") and he was incarcerated when she was born. When he told me that the first

time he saw her she was more than a year old, he initially refused to go on with that line of discussion, saying, “I mean, if you want to talk about her, I will, but I really don’t want to talk about her. I don’t want to get all emotional, but if you want to—if you absolutely need to, I will.” I pressed a little bit, promising him that I would ask a couple of questions and see how he felt. He responded:

Tommy: *Alright, that’s fine. . . Like I’m not saying I don’t want to do the interview, but that—I’ll talk about my daughter if you have to do it for your study. But it’s—just really it touches stuff that—if there’s one thing I get emotional over it’s her, because I’m a piece of shit as a father, like I don’t know. It is what it is. I’m not in denial about it.*

For Sal (age 21, incarcerated persister), being incarcerated when his son was born made it difficult for him to feel like a father.

Me: *Do you feel like a parent to him while you’re locked up? Does that make sense?*

Sal: *It’s hard. I understand. Because I remember when I tried to hold him [the first time], I looked at it like, ‘yeah, I’m a father. That’s my son, it’s just he don’t know me yet.’ Like, I grabbed him, he started crying and all that, and I was like, ‘Damn.’*

Still a Chance for Change

Though they had neglected or missed out on fulfilling their parenthood role in the past, many of the incarcerated parents, persisters and desisters, viewed their children and their role as a parent as an opportunity to abstain from crime in the future. For example, Allen (age 22, desister) had been in jail 15 months awaiting trial on weapons and drug charges. He said that after the birth of his son (who was five at the time of our interview), his involvement in crime did not change initially. Though he had been in jail for 15 months awaiting trial on drug and weapons charges, he viewed himself as having “chilled

out.” He said that he planned to obtain custody of his son when he returned to the community, and he expected that having custody of his son could make a difference in his life because he would not be able to “rip the streets” like he did before. Having custody of his son gave him a sense of responsibility and represented a “huge step.”

Me: *What steps do you think you can make towards making that change?*

Allen: *Ahh, I think being close with my son. I mean, we talk on the phone every day and—just being with him, I think it’s gonna help me. Because I made the decision—me and his mom made the decision, since he’s been with her so long, that he needs to stay with me because he’s been acting up and all that.*

Me: *So he’s going to stay with you when you get out?*

Allen: *He’s going to stay with me and I think that is going to help me a lot because I can’t rip the streets like I want to get high or whatever I was doing out there before. I can’t do it no more because I had—I mean I can do it [but] I feel as though I have responsibility not to do it. I can’t do it no more because I got not just myself to look after, I got him to look after. I mean, he’s living with me and I mean, I got to take a huge, a very huge step so.*

Damion (age 24, desister) was the father of a five-year-old son. When he went to prison five years earlier he had no intention to change but he said he felt differently now.

Damion: *When I first got up here that was my goal: just let history repeat itself. Whatever happens happens. But it’s not about me no more, though. I got a son to take care of and I know how hard it was for me without a father. So my whole thing, I don’t want his life to be nothing like mine. I don’t want him to have to go ahead and sell drugs to get some sneakers, or I don’t want him to do none of this stuff and wind up messing his life up. And I just don’t want his life being nothing like mine.*

Some of the incarcerated men cited “being there” for their children and their families as reasons to stop offending in the future. Gerard (age 23, persister) had a seven-year-old daughter and had been incarcerated for 21 months. He said that though he did not terminate his involvement in crime when he became a father, his daughter did

influence his decision-making. Specifically, he said he avoided “getting revenge” because of her: “It’s not worth it; [it’s] only material stuff, so I let it go.” Of stopping in the future, Gerard said he had to be there for his daughter and for his family of origin.

Gerard: *Oh yeah, I’m going to stop. Like, I mean, I’m not—these people keep coming back and forth to jail, they doing life on the installment plan.⁵⁶ [...] I’m not trying to be one of these dudes [that] do life on the installment plan. Like, I’m trying—I got to be there for my daughter. And my mom, you know what I mean? And my little brothers. Like, they always know, whatever they need or whatever, they always can come ask me, whether it’s paying for prom or whatever the case may be. ... I’m very family-oriented. Whatever my family need, like if I got it, they got it. But if I ain’t got it, I’m going to go get it.*

RESTRUCTURED ROUTINE ACTIVITIES

Another parenthood-related theme that emerged from the interviews was that having children takes up a lot of time in the lives of these men, and that time is structured around the needs of the children. Desisters and persisters said that their daily routines changed after having children, but each group described how they spent time with their children differently. Desisting mothers and fathers (and some persisters who said they were abstaining from crime) said that most of their time was spent with their children, as Ramona (age 24, desister) illustrates:

Ramona: *From when I get up, they under me. I go to the bathroom, they chase me to the bathroom. I go outside, they chasing me—one crawling, one chasing. They holding on to my shirt. They be around me all day. Pssh. I can’t do nothing. Going to the store, they go. They just be there.*

⁵⁶ Gerard referred to his cellmate’s repeated incarcerations of two or five years that added up to 20 years. To him, this is serving a life sentence “on the installment plan,” which is an allusion to Louis-Ferdinand Celine’s 1938 novel, *Death on the Installment Plan*.

Fathers, too, described how much of their time was devoted to childcare. Kenneth (age 24, desister), father of two who was married to the mother of his youngest child, said that one of the things he did not like about being a parent was that it “take up all your time.”

***Me:** They take up all your time? (laughter) Yeah? You don't like that? Or that's just the hardest part?*

***Kenneth:** I mean, that's just the hardest part. I mean, I always want to spend time with my kids though. They just take up every, every second. You can't do nothing really without them, especially while they're young.*

Other desisting fathers echoed this theme. When asked what he liked most about being a parent, Raymond (age 23, desister), an otherwise devoted father, admitted that he did not really like being a parent because the time he spent caring for his children cut into his time for other activities.

***Me:** So why don't you like being a parent?*

***Raymond:** Like, basically, because I don't got time for me no more. I mean, or time for my wife. We rarely like, you know, have that one-on-one time unless they all sleeping and we can just chill, talk, whatever. But they definitely keep all your time. ALL your time.*

***Me:** Yeah, it sounds like you're pretty involved [based on our previous discussion].*

***Raymond:** Yeah. Got to be. Got to be.*

Cody also expressed mixed feelings about the sacrificed time associated having children. When I asked him about the first thing that when through his mind when he found out he was going to have his first son, Cody said, “Hmm... damn.”

***Me:** Damn? What does that mean?*

Cody: *It was like—Because I knew I couldn't do what I wanted to do no more. It was—it was kind of like a happy damn, then, not because I couldn't do what I wanted to do no more but [because] I'm having a baby, you know what I'm saying? So it was like, "Okay it's another challenge," you know what I'm saying? That's how I feel—another challenge.*

The tone was different among incarcerated desisting or persisting fathers, who explained that “you have to make time” for your children. That is, children had to fit into other daily routines rather than “take up all your time,” suggesting that children have to adjust to the routine of their parent and not the other way around as it seems to be for the desisters. Damion, age 24 and father of a five-year old, was a desister who had been in prison for five years when we met. Prior to his incarceration, he lived with his girlfriend and their child. When asked how his life was different after his child was born, he said first that the value of money changed because it was required for clothes and diapers. He added:

Damion: *And then you got to make sure you got your time for your kids. At least, I would say, if not a straight eight hours or a straight ten hours, just at least there was time in the day that you got with your kids. That's even eating times, bedtime, and especially when they wake up. So it was a lot. It was a whole lot.*

Childcare, Living Situations, and Crime

Though many of the parents described unstable or nonexistent relationships with the co-parents of one or more of their children (Giordano et al., 2011), desisters were more likely than persisters to live with their children *and* their co-parents (See Table 6.1). Of the desisters, both mothers and four of the six non-incarcerated fathers lived with their children; a fifth father had partial custody of his daughter and one of the three incarcerated desisting fathers lived with his child when he was last on the street. Of the persisting parents, however, two of the four mothers lived with her child, and only one,

Rita, also lived with her child's father. Of the persisting fathers, the two (including a stepfather) who were not incarcerated lived with children at least part-time; they also said they were abstaining from crime. Of the seven incarcerated fathers, two said they lived with their children when they were not incarcerated, two lived apart from their children, and two did not mention whether they lived with their children; one father, Sal, never had the chance to live with his child because he was born after Sal was incarcerated.

Whether parents live with children appears related to how parents spend their time with their children, which in turn might be related to whether caring for children interfered with involvement in crime. Each of the fathers who lived with their children at the time of the qualitative interview described days structured around childcare. When I asked Raymond (age 23, desister) how his life was different now compared to before he had children he said, "It's a lot busier," and when on to describe a typical day as structured and routine:

Raymond: *Get up early. Cook breakfast. Get them dressed. Either if they're going to school, drop them off at school or day camp. I mean, after that, it's pretty much the school hours, but I be at work or whatever. But come home, maybe help them with their homework, study for a little bit. Try to go out to the park or somewhere with our kids, have a little fun. Come in, wind down, wash up, get them dressed, put them to bed. It's like we got things on a routine, so it makes it a little, a little bit easier.*

Cody echoes Raymond's description of a typical day:

Cody: *Well, because I'm not working now—get up seven-thirty, wash them up, get them dressed, get them to school by eight-thirty. Pick them up by six, play with them, play with them some more, feed them, wash them up, play with them some more, let them watch a movie, and it's bedtime. We probably go out somewhere.*

Kenneth also described a typical day as organized around childcare. When his first daughter was born, her mother worked a lot and he was her primary caregiver most days.

Kenneth: *When I had my daughter, I was in the house all day feeding her, changing her, just watching her. And she was sleeping or whatever, that's when I would get my little time to myself. My son, basically he the same way, but I got a little help with him though.*

Most of the mothers who lived with their children also described their time with their children in terms of a structured daily routine.⁵⁷ Ramona's account above reflects this theme, as does Anne's (age 22, desister), who described a detailed schedule of what a typical day is like with her kids.

Anne: *Well, my kids, they love to eat so soon as they wake up, they eat. And then they brush their teeth. I let them eat first because it tastes funny. [...] After I make breakfast, usually me and my son, we'll go over Arabic. I need to teach him his English alphabet because he doesn't know (laughs). We go over his Arabic. And my daughter, she pretty much just sits there and watches. She's two but she's very smart, she's been speaking in full sentences since she was six months old.*

Me: *Wow.*

Anne: *So she sits and she soaks it up. And we'll maybe do a half-hour of that, because my son has a short attention span. And umm, I'll them watch some Dora. They watch TV maybe twice a week; I don't like them watching TV a lot. And umm, basically from there we just play all day. They learn at the same time.*

Rita's (age 21, a persister who said she was trying to stay out of trouble) life is much different from the two desisting mothers (Anne and Ramona) as well as from the other three persisting mothers. She works full time and lives with her son's father, and

⁵⁷ The exception to this was Frankie (age 21, persister) who was freed from the burden of childcare by her family network of social support. I return to this point below.

she said that her day-to-day routines were very structured during the week: School, work, meal preparation all happen according to schedule and make for long days. Rita complained about how tired and how bored she feels at the end of the day.

***Rita:** I don't cook all the time because I get pretty tired, so we'll order out for whatever he's going to eat that day. I used to be more playful when he was younger, like, you know, play around, roll around, jump around. Since I'm young, you know, I can actually do that... [But now, after dinner] it's just like boring, besides him playing, watching cartoons, and helping him write and stuff like that. Besides that, it just be seeming like I have no life, until we started traveling like we just did. That's the only thing that's draining at the end of the day. At the end of the day [it's like], 'Ok, what do I do now? I'm sick of sitting in this house. What's next?'*

By contrast, parents who lived apart from their children described time that was less structured and less focused on childcare.⁵⁸ Warren (age 24, incarcerated desister) and Stan (age 24, incarcerated persister) lived apart from their children, but both said they thought that their children loved them more than they loved their mothers. Both men also described a typical day with their children in terms of leisure activities rather than in terms of specific childcare activities they participated in. This departs from the narratives of Cody, Raymond, Kenneth, and others, who lived with their children and described all the major child-care duties that occur in a typical day. For example, though Warren acknowledged that “you can’t just chill and do what you want,” one of the things he liked best about being a father was the time he invested in his children and the fact that all of his time went to them. However, he had his children mainly on weekends, and asked what a typical day is like when he has his kids, he reported “fun and games” rather than

⁵⁸ In this case, only fathers—the mothers who did not live with their children, Galatea and Teresa, did not talk about how they spent time with their children.

routine childcare. Fun and games involved, “Chuck E. Cheese, the corner store, go to a little a basketball game, take them to the park, watch them play with each other.”

Similarly, when asked what he did with his children when he had them for the day Stan said,

***Stan:** Take them to the parks. We watch TV, anything they want to watch, you know what I’m saying? Mostly, uh, color shit though, you know—not really cartoons. More learning shit. They got a lot of learning shit for kids now. I buy them shit. I really like that shit.*

Henry, age 21 and a desister who struggled with legitimate employment and sometimes sold drugs to make ends meet, shared custody of his daughter with his ex-girlfriend and had his daughter three days a week (after his work and until his baby’s mother got off of work) and two weekends a month. When he spends time with his daughter after work, they sit on the step and go to the store. When asked what a typical day is like when he has his daughter, Henry said, “Umm... like, it’s fun to me.”

Me: What do you do?

***Henry:** Well, my daughter, she comes home from school, she want to watch Dora and Elmo (laughter), play the games. Of course she got learning games, computers and stuff. She likes learning. She’s real smart so like, she be in her own world. You give her a couple of toys and TV, she ain’t no problem. She just sit there.*

Allen, age 22, a desister in jail awaiting trial on drug charges, said that though he did not live with his son when he was in the community, he saw his son for roughly four hours every day or for a couple days at a time. Asked what kinds of things he did with his five-year-old son when he was with him, Allen said, “Go to the park, go swimming, take him shopping. Just things I thought was important.”

On a typical weekday day with his daughter when he was home (not incarcerated), Gerard (age 24, incarcerated persister) explained that he would pick his daughter up from school and take her to McDonalds and to a toy store. “Then,” he said, “I take her to my mom house, I help her with her homework or I get my brother to help her with her homework and, boom, we’ll just chill.”

Persisting fathers seemed to still find time for crime, in spite of their childcare responsibilities. Peter (age 25, persister) said that when he was involved in crime in the past, the time involved in caring for his kids did not influence the time he spent on crime. Similarly, Lee (age 23, incarcerated persister) said he structured his involvement in crime around “baby-sitting” duties.

Lee: I was around. I mean, I might have been doing my little dirt in the morning, but at night I was there. And I baby-sitted always from eight to like three o'clock while my baby mama go to school. And when she came home from school, all the time my daughter playing around with her. When she come home from school, I went out to do my thing. So I mean, I had a lot of time in, up until [I was incarcerated].”

Damion (age 24, incarcerated desister) said that after his kids were born, he adapted his drug market participation to maximize his limited time. He also said that parenthood affected how he spent and invested the money he earned selling drugs.

Me: [. . .] Did it affect how you sold drugs?

Damion: Yeah, because for one, I stopped being in the open, and I ain't got as much time to do it as I used to. So dealing with the time and the predicament, I got to be smart about it. So the time I am out there, I got to make sure it's going to be well worth it. And then, like—you can't spend money like that, so all that money I [was] making—if I'm making all this cash, and I spend it on a pair of sneakers and I still got another hundred dollars to cop me some more drugs to flip or whatever. I can't do that no more. So I know when I make this first

hundred dollars, I'm going to go ahead and pay fifty to the kids and fifty to my reinvestment in the drugs, to keep the flow.

Losing Custody

Galatea (age 22, persister) was a rare example of someone whose movement in and out of parenthood corresponded to her movement in and out of crime. Her last self-reported offenses occurred around the time she became pregnant. While she was pregnant she briefly worked and went to school, and she returned to school after she had her daughter. Galatea abstained from crime and was living with her daughter's father for nearly two years after her daughter was born. Then, suddenly and over a six-month period, Galatea self-reported fighting, selling drugs, shoplifting, driving drunk and high, and other offenses. Around the same time, her relationship with her baby's father dissolved (she said he got another woman pregnant), and at the end of the six months, she lost custody of her daughter to her baby's father and was evicted from her home. When we met, Galatea had been living apart from her daughter for two years. Galatea told me, "She should with her dad." The specific reason for this was not made clear during our interview. At one point, when asked what she liked about being a mother, Galatea said:

Galatea: *I know I'm a good mom, so. I just miss being there with her, yeah. (crying)*

Me: *I'm sorry.*

Galatea: *It's cool. (crying) I'm sorry. I just miss being there. Like, I know I'm supposed to be there for her, [be] a mom for her, but I'm go—go going through something with him [the father], and it's like I can't be there right now so. It—that's about it.*

Regardless of the reasons for the separation, Galatea's account a typical day with her daughter when they lived together is similar to the accounts of other parents in this

study who lived with their children. And as with the parents who did not live with their children, without her child, Galatea had more time on her hands.

Me: *What was a typical day like when you did have her? What did you spend your time doing?*

Galatea: *(overlapping) Typical day was going—coming home from work, going to get her from school, get her from her grandparents, or wherever she at, you know, day care, school, her aunt's, my peoples. Come home, chill with her, do her hair, make sure her hair done, and her toes and nails. Make sure we good for the week. Make sure I read a book with her every day, make sure I instill something good in her. Nothing—nothing negative so.*

Me: *So how is your life different now? I know you don't live with her, but you're still a parent. How is your life different now compared to before you had her?*

Galatea: *It's different because it's like I have less responsibilities than I had—*

Me: *When you had her with you—?*

Galatea: *Exactly. Because it's like I—I got more time on my hands to chill with my friends and do stuff that. I—that, you know, I didn't have time for so, well.*

PARADOX OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

For those parents who persisted in offending, the social support they received in relation to their children seemed to make it easier for them to stay involved in crime. Persisters and those desisters that did not participate in the day-to-day care of their children (for example, Rollo, Henry, Teresa) indicated that other people provided instrumental support for their children: someone else to take care of their children all the time, to babysit when they are engaging in crime, or to step in if they get locked up. For example, Gerard's mother had custody of his daughter, and though he sometimes stayed at his mother's house, he had his own place and did not live with his daughter full time.

On the days he spent time with his daughter, he was free to leave his daughter with his mother when he had to “handle something I got to handle then come back.”

Ramona illustrated this above when she described how her involvement in crime and the streets essentially ended with her third child, when her mother refused to take the children for her anymore (Campbell 1999). Frankie (age 21, persister) also left her daughter with different members of her family so she could spend time with friends and go “boosting”—shoplifting for items she could sell in the neighborhood.

***Frankie:** It [parenthood] don’t seem different to me. Just that I got a daughter. But I still could do anything that I want to do. I got a lot of family, so I could just pass her off to like so many people.*

***Me:** So before you said that you couldn’t do anything that you wanted to do now that you had her—*

***Frankie:** Yeah, because I had to live with my grandmom. She used to have me on lock, make me do that stuff. And then my dad, my dad used to get my daughter every weekend. See, like after this period [referring to the timeline, indicating a return to crime after a period of abstinence] my dad started getting my daughter every weekend, so that was my free time. And I had to work on weekends because she went away. [...] And plus my mom did it, and my aunts and them do it. Because there’s a lot of us, there’s always somebody to watch her. If I want to go out tonight, I can go out tonight.*

Frankie elaborated on how this social support made it easier for her to engage in crime.

***Me:** So, what’s a typical day like when you’re taking care of her?*

***Frankie:** I would wake up, I lay in the bed. My mom makes breakfast or give her cereal or something. I get her hair redone. I get her dressed, take her outside. Give her to [my little cousin or my little sister] and then leave. And they all go together to the playground. Or do whatever they want to do today.*

***Me:** Ok. Ok. So what do you do while she’s at the playground?*

Frankie: *I go boosting. Steal clothes. Make some money. Andrea [her best friend] sell drugs. We ride around. We do whatever we want to do. [...] We do whatever we want to do, girl.*

Me: *So a typical day before you had her was not much different?*

Frankie: *Mm-mm. No. A typical day is the same thing. Usually my grandmom's making breakfast for me or something. But now they be making breakfast for her. The typical day for me is really like—I dress her and leave her with [my cousin], and then I give them twenty dollars and then I put five dollars in her book bag, her pampers and all that. I go to the mall, do everything I want to do. Come back, sell all my stuff. Ride around. Smoke some weed sometimes. Get some money from some niggas I mess with. Um. . . I be coming in the house at like three o'clock in the morning. Come in the house, put all my money up, and go to sleep.*

George's (age 23, incarcerated persister) contribution to the care of three of his children was largely monetary rather than a daily childcare routine. Even though George expressed a need to be there for his kids, other people were also there for his children, specifically his girlfriend's family, whom he described as being "alright" and having money. George explained:

George: *I mean, honestly, like [if] I wanted to be a nut, I wouldn't have to take care of them at all. My girl... come from like a lot of paper, as far as money and all that. I wouldn't really have to, you now, take care of them or nothing if I was one of them dudes. But it's just, you know what I mean. Sometimes crime pays and sometimes it don't. Just unfortunate as far as what I do. You know, always make a little bit of money for myself, so it's nothing really hard. So I do do my part, you know. Birthdays, whatever. Every day. My new one, though, I just didn't really get a chance to do nothing for him because, unfortunately, I've been incarcerated.*

A NEGATIVE CASE

At least one desisting father, Rollo (age 23) did not appear to experience a cognitive shift or a change in routines related to parenthood; indeed, his account of being a father had more in common with the persisters than the other desisters. Asked how his life was different now that he had a son compared to before, Rollo said, "It take money

out of my check every week. That's about the only thing [that's different]." Asked whether being a parent made any difference, he responded:

Rollo: *Not too much of a parent. It's just like I stated [. . .] he's grandmom's baby, not really mine. I have ultimate say over what happens with him, but he's really my mother's child.*

When Rollo lived with his mother, he said that his son's presence there few direct implications for him. Later, when asked whether he thought people treated him differently, Rollo said no, then acknowledged, "But I got to act differently. Yeah, can't be all wild and reckless like I want to, because then if I get locked up or killed or something, then he going to miss out on that money that he need." Rollo's main concern, however, was with maintaining his freedom generally:

Rollo: *For the most part, I'm married to this outside world, you see? I'm married to this freedom, and I don't want to do anything that's going to jeopardize my freedom. So I think about that a lot. I treat this outside freedom like it's my wife, and I don't want to lose her, so I do whatever I can to make sure that I can stay out here.*

Me: *Ok. So staying out of trouble because of your son is part of that? Or sort of secondary?*

Rollo: *Yeah, secondary.*

Me: *But you do think of him in terms of some of that stuff?*

Rollo: *Yeah, because I figure he's mine to mold. [...] my son is fresh. I can—his way of thinking is whatever way I mold it to be. So, you know, that's my little chance to mold somebody into being exactly how I want them to be, without flaws.*

Me: *You think you can do that?*

Rollo: *Nope, because I'm flawed myself.*

ACCOUNTING FOR THE ACCOUNTS: INCARCERATION AND REFLECTING ON THE PAST

Some of the apparent differences between persisters and desisters parenthood experiences might be due to the prevalence of incarceration among persisters. It is possible that incarcerated fathers reflected on their time with their children differently than non-incarcerated fathers, choosing to remember and discuss the good times and the fun they had with their children rather than the day-to-day routines, especially if they had limited contact with their children while incarcerated. Incarcerated fathers have few opportunities to interact with their children while they are incarcerated, but there is some evidence to suggest that visitation and phone calls with children might be important to how incarcerated fathers discussed time spent with their kids (Visser, 2013). All three of the desisting but incarcerated fathers had some regular contact with their children while they were incarcerated. Allen was in contact with his son's mother, with whom he said he discussed his son coming to live with him upon his release from jail; Warren's father regularly brought his son to visit him in jail; and though Damion had been incarcerated hours away from Philadelphia and had been upstate for five years, he said he talked with his child and her mother at least twice a month and received pictures and drawings from his child in the mail. Of the persisting fathers, only two did not receive visits with their children—Tommy and Yusef, who said they were not on good terms with their children's mothers. The remaining five incarcerated fathers received visits from their children, including Lee and Gerard, who had been imprisoned upstate for two to four years. Together this suggests to me that the differences in the accounts are not due to incarceration and the time spent separated from children and childcare responsibilities.

SUMMARY

The findings presented in this chapter indicate that the transition to parenthood is associated with a change in offending, but not always in the direction of desistance, at least not at first. In order to provide for their children, many of the parents, especially the fathers (abstainers and persisters) said that at some point after their children were born they tried to make crime work, especially selling drugs, as the drug market provided a viable means of supporting children and being available for childcare. The difference between abstaining and persisting fathers, however, is that abstaining fathers described the specific strategies they took to reduce the risks of selling drugs before selling drugs ultimately became incompatible to their fathering role and responsibilities. Persisters also described thinking differently about their involvement in crime after becoming a father, but they described their efforts to reduce risks in more general terms (slowing down) or they said that after having children, they increased their involvement in crime in order to provide for their children.

Cognitive shifts are one mechanism linking parenthood to change in offending, and desisting and abstaining parents were more likely to experience a cognitive shift. These parents described how they started to consider the needs and concerns of others after they became parents, and they considered how their children might incur the costs of their own involvement in crime. Rather than starting with the discovery of pregnancy or with the birth of a child, however, these cognitive shifts came slowly for most. Persisting parents, by contrast, described themselves as having failed to fulfill the parenthood role and as having ignored parenthood as a potential hook for change (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002), either because they did not want to change or because they saw themselves as too involved in crime to get out of it. Regardless, even

incarcerated and persisting parents viewed children as a potential hook for change that they might grab on to in the future.

Parents also experienced changes in how they spend their time when they have children, but desisters and persisters described these changes differently. Desisters and abstaining persisters were more likely than persisters to live with their children and they were more likely to describe their time with their children in terms of childcare activities. By contrast, persisters still had time for crime. They were more likely to live apart from their children, and they described the time spent visiting or babysitting children in terms of leisure activities rather than childcare. For those persisting parents who lived with their children (or when desisters were more active offenders), social support in the form of childcare duties. In either case, when parents were freed from the structural constraints of parenthood, they continued regular involvement in crime.

ABSTINENCE AND THE PACKAGE DEAL

For the desisters and abstainers, children were a reason for avoiding crime, but kids were also part of a package that other parents did not seem to have (or at least, they did not want to talk about it with me). This “package deal” included long-term cohabitation relationships with their children’s other parent (Kenneth and Raymond were married, Gregory, Cody, and Rita cohabitated) and steady employment (Raymond, Gregory, and Rita had multiple years of steady employment; Peter had trained and become employed as a Certified Nursing Assistant).

Steady employment and relationships in addition to parenthood seemed somehow protective. For example, Peter had been one of the most active offenders in the qualitative study and spent very little time incarcerated, but his children, his investments in his

community, and his steady job as a nursing assistant supported the year of abstinence he had under his belt when we met. And although Kenneth had gone straight three years before, he had been in and out of jail on technical probation violations, even in the months just prior to our meeting. Still, he abstained from selling drugs and other offenses.

DISCUSSION

Becoming a parent seems to have some kind of relationship with continuity and change in crime—the quantitative and qualitative studies reviewed in chapter 2 lend some support for this conclusion, as does the findings presented here. Part of the reason the relationship between parenthood and crime is so difficult to assess quantitatively, however, is because it is so qualitatively complex. What emerges from these accounts is that change does not occur immediately upon becoming a parent, and some offenders make attempts to reconcile parenthood and crime for a while before going straight or getting locked up—perhaps whichever comes first. These attempts at reconciliation as well as the other uncertainties and challenges faced by these parents—income and employment opportunities, criminal justice system entanglement—were related to intermittent offending.

Most of the parents who remained involved in crime seemed to recognize that parenthood was incompatible with crime on some level (Sal was the lone exception). Children presented an opportunity to desist from crime, but for some it was an impetus for crime or respite from a criminally involved lifestyle.

Reviewing the analyses presented in this dissertation, a pattern emerges with respect to the two main mechanisms explored: subjective themes, including *cognitive shifts* and identity as a parent, are dominated by the narratives of incarcerated and

persisting parents, while *structured routine activities* is dominated by the narratives of desisting or abstaining fathers in the community. It is difficult to distinguish whether this pattern is an artifact of the interview processes; it is possible that those interviews with incarcerated men focused more on identity and subjective changes simply because it was impossible for children to be a part of their daily routines. Further analyses will likely illuminate this apparent pattern.

It also appears that the relationship between parenthood and crime might be sensitive to local life circumstances like access to employment and social support, and success might be related to having a “package deal.” Whether this is the respectability package described by Giordano and colleagues (2002) or whether parenthood encourages or facilitates other social bonds to romantic partners, employment, or the community, is not clear from these analyses.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Transitioning to adulthood is messy business across a variety of domains for most people. Involvement in crime is just one of the domains that young people must contend with as they figure out how to grow up. For formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults, the transition can be even messier. As I collected, coded, and analyzed the forty in-depth qualitative data for this dissertation, I was troubled by the fact that it was often difficult to distinguish between the persisters and desisters identified by the sampling criteria. Indeed, though I have argued and presented evidence that these two groups are significantly different with respect to their self-reported involvement in crime, even during the period most proximate to the qualitative interview, I found that these long-term patterns obfuscated dynamic criminal careers characterized by short-term changes in the amount and qualities of crime as well as intermittent offending.

PATTERNS OF OFFENDING

The patterns of behavior presented here reflect the dynamic nature of crime during early adulthood that present theories of desistance and persistence fail to adequately to address. There is really no theory of intermittency or qualitative changes in offending as yet, but it is time to bring intermittency more firmly into the desistance-persistence discussion. One of the strengths of this study is that we can examine the transition to adulthood as it unfolded among a subsample of formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults. In doing so, this study revealed that early young adulthood—the period of the life course when, in the aggregate, involvement in crime peaks and begins to decline—offenders move in and out of crime repeatedly. Moreover, this study suggests, they do so in response to changes and challenges in local life circumstances—school,

work, romantic relationships, and parenthood (Horney, Osgood and Marshall, 1995; McGloin et al., 2007; Piquero et al., 2002). This study also suggests that the accumulation of positive and negative events and transitions are also important for understanding perhaps more lasting changes in offending.

Many of formerly sanctioned, at-risk young adults in this sample were embedded in crime as adolescents and they drew from their experiences and criminal capital to adapt to the challenges presented by transitions to adult social roles (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). This was especially true for transitions to work and parenthood, which, for men especially, were intractably connected once children came to the scene.

CHANGE DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

This dissertation also presented evidence that many of the processes and mechanisms of continuity and change identified by both theory and previous research seem to be at work in the lives of nearly all of the formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults in this study. Though desisters appear to arrive at young adulthood better prepared (with high school diplomas or GEDs) and better supported (by family and romantic partners) than persisters, desisters and persisters faced many of the same challenges and setbacks as they negotiated early young adulthood in Philadelphia. Falling back or shifting from more serious crime to less serious crime was related to cognitive shifts, supervision and monitoring from socially supportive others, and restructured routine activities. When persisters and desisters returned to crime after a period of abstinence, it was often because these processes and mechanisms failed or were discarded.

CHANGE EMERGES OVER TIME

Though there were many perceived and actual obstacles to successful transitions to adulthood, desisters *and* persisters had opportunities to engage in adult social institutions, including parenthood. For both groups, and especially for the men, the full implications and demands of being a parent emerged over time, and at first, many drew from the human and social capital—their criminal capital—they accumulated on the streets to meet those demands by selling drugs (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; Sullivan, 1989). When the formal or informal costs became too high—when they started to think differently—and if they had the social support to do so, they changed their involvement in crime.

SUBJECTIVE MECHANISMS

The accounts presented in this dissertation support the proposition that subjective factors are important to the desistance process, especially an increasing concern for others—including one's own children but also concern other children in one's life, romantic partners, younger siblings, and in at least one case, the community. This growing awareness was associated with a shift in how one sees oneself, which was easiest to observe among parents. Many men and women desisting from crime said that they started seeing themselves differently after they had children, and this identity shift was interwoven with commitments to children. Their commitment to their children engendered a side bet—something that they did not want to put at risk—and as a result, they altered their behavior (Becker, 1960; Laub and Sampson, 2003). By contrast, persisters did not experience the same identity shift, even if they recognized that parenthood provided them with an opportunity to change and they neglected to grab on to

a hook for change (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). Some persisting parents were not involved in their children's lives and saw themselves as bad parents or simply not really parents at all.

STRUCTURAL MECHANISMS

There was also evidence that structural mechanisms are important for understanding continuity and change. Parenthood, romantic relationships, and, to a lesser extent jobs might have served as catalysts or blueprints for change subjective change, but they also provided opportunities for supervision and monitoring by prosocial other and structured routine activities.⁵⁹ Though the present findings regarding supervision and monitoring conditioned on social support largely accord with the Laub and Sampson's (2003) predictions—especially with respect romantic partners—two findings from the present study suggest mechanisms of continuity and change that have been neglected by popular theories of desistance: the nature of the package deal and children as sources of informal social control

The Package Deal

This study found that romantic partners can help formerly-sanctioned at-risk young adults avoid crime (and perhaps eventually desist from crime) by providing a source of supervision and monitoring as well as a source of instrumental and expressive social supports (Laub and Sampson, 2003, Cullen, 1994). Being in a romantic relationship, having partners that encouraged prosocial behavior, discouraged crime, and

⁵⁹ Few of the informants had steady employment, and it is possible that employment becomes more salient as young adults approach age 30 (Uggen, 2000).

restructured time, reordered short-term inducements to crime, but they did not reorder long-term inducements to desistance, at least not on their own. Instead, romantic partners seemed to matter most with respect to crime when they were a part of a package deal that included children.

Steady employment and long-term romantic relationships are still abstract concepts in to young adults as they negotiate adulthood, and they are even less reliable expectations for those with a criminal past and present. Felony records and periods of incarceration can and do interfere with the acquisition and retention of both legal work and stable, healthy romantic relationships (Western, 2006; Edin, Nelson and Paranal, 2004; Edin and Reed, 2005). For the men and women in this study, however, children, represented perhaps the first stable element of adulthood—someone to be concerned about, someone to be responsible for, and someone to encourage them to think about the future. Involvement in parenting restructured daily routines as parents became entrenched in childcare and employment. Parenthood differs from romantic partners and jobs in that, though at times it can seem difficult to unburden oneself of an unwanted romantic partner or job, they can and they can and do go away. Indeed, this was the experience of many of the men and women in this study. Babies, however, were more difficult for the informants in this study ignore. Even those who said they wanted little to nothing to do with their children also said they worked to pay child support, and others who had no contact with their children lamented this fact (McMahon, 1995).

In this study, parenthood appeared to best facilitate periods of abstinence and the desistance process when it was accompanied by employment as well as by a romantic partner that provided supervision, monitoring, and social support. When one of those

elements was removed, the at-risk young adults were more likely to return to crime. For the men (and to a lesser extent, the women) providing for and parenting children with a partner for did not represent a *respectability package*, as suggested by Giordano and colleagues (2002). The informants in this study did not say that they felt more respectable when they had all three elements lined up, though some said were aware that others might see them that way. Instead, what the desisting and abstaining parents in this study emphasized was their sense of responsibility and being held accountable to their children. Employment and partnerships with co-parents functioned as parts of an interdependent package deal in which the different parts supported and reinforced the other (Townsend, 2002). Together this package appeared to the desistance process. Not only did it seem to completely change and structure daily routines and provide supervision and monitoring and social support, the interdependency linking the three domains increased one's commitment to all three.⁶⁰

Parenthood was also associated with qualitative changes, periods of abstinence, and movement toward desistance, and many of the mechanisms linking other adult role transitions to crime were present in transitions to parenthood. Parents said that when they became parents, they became increasingly concerned with their responsibility to provide

⁶⁰ Parenthood creates a lasting connection not just to a child but also to the co-parent of that child, whether that connection is wanted or not. Parenthood can force individuals to reconsider what might have been an casual relationship (especially during late adolescence) and recast it into a potentially more serious, lasting relationship they choose to see through, a choice some of the men and women in this study made. When one element of the package deal falls through, however, the mechanisms linking the package deal lose salience. For men, parenthood was entangled with the provider role and with romantic partners. Without legal employment, fathers who lived with their romantic partners returned to selling drugs to provide for their families. If the romantic partner left, the children also left (in this study, men and women experienced losing custody children to former romantic partners), and such departures are associated with returns to crime. It is important to note, however, that it was difficult to discern whether involvement in crime contributed to relationship dissolution or the other way around; it could be that involvement in crime emerged while the relationship was already ending but was not quite over.

for, protect, and nurture their children. As a result, many turned to selling drugs and other forms of illegal income to provide for their children and themselves. Soon, however, parents came to recognize and experience the consequences of their involvement in crime on their children. Having children introduced opportunity to reflect on a feared future and feared future self—not only for oneself but for one’s children as well (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Sometimes the consequences (or potential consequences) of crime was seen as profound and structural—the threat or reality of losing children due to incarceration, violent victimization, or, to a much lesser extent, the dissolution of a romantic relationship. At other times, the possible consequences were more subtle and subjective, as when parents recognized that children observe how their parents act and model those behaviors. In response to this reflected appraisal, parents altered their actions in an effort to model the behaviors they wanted their children to learn (Matsueda, 1992; Matsueda and Heimer, 1997). Sometimes these actions were related to crime, as when Peter’s stepson modeled loading plastic bags with drugs, but parents were sensitive to non-criminal behaviors as well, as when Cody said he tried to show his children how to interact with others in a positive way. In this respect, contrary to what other criminologists have asserted, children *can* supervise and monitor their parents’ behavior, and parents respond to this form of informal social control. In either case—whether criminal behavior is feared to result in negative structural outcomes or subjective outcomes, when crime-involved parents started to connect their actions with these very real possibilities, they found that preferences and commitments were stronger for their children than for crime, and they chose to change (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009).

Structured Routine Activities

The findings here also highlight the importance of structured routine activities over and above “knifing off the past and the present.” Though both are means of controlling opportunities for crime, Laub and Sampson (2003) have asserted that knifing off the past from the present and structured routine activities present two separate mechanisms linking adult social institutions and crime. In this study, persisters and desisters identified residential change (a form of knifing off the past from the present) and “people, places, and things” (avoiding criminogenic people and areas) as essential for abstaining from crime. Both residential change and changing “people, places, and things” were general strategies to limit or avoid opportunities for crime, but on their own they provided no clear guidance on what to do once a person excised the criminogenic features of their lives. A third type of opportunity change is structured routine activities. This study found that structured routine activities were associated with fewer opportunities for crime by inducing order to the timing, tempo, and rhythm of everyday life in (Cohen and Felson, 1979).⁶¹ Structured routines can reduce opportunities for crime by filling time with regular scheduled prosocial behaviors (Osgood and Anderson, 2004). Without this replacement, opportunities for crime are still accessible, a point Dean confirms.

Dean: *It doesn't matter where you go, you can find them. If you're a drug addict, you can find them. Whatever the hell it is that you want, you know what I'm saying? But when you move people away from people, places, and things, further enough, like, you get into a different lifestyle, you know? Like you can become a different person. You can let all that shit go. You can still be a dick, you know,*

⁶¹ Though some informants like Raymond and Gregory said still found time for crime, either at work or on the way to and from work.

and do the same things you did where you were at before like I did. Or you can get out of that.

The findings presented here agree with Dean's assessment: opportunities for crime are ubiquitous (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). However, moving "further enough" away can make opportunities for change seem unreachable for those sensitive to the financial cost of such a move as well as to the loss of important pro-social ties that might be left behind, concerns many of the men and women in this study expressed. Instead, changes to opportunity structures can be best managed by restructuring routine activities around prosocial institutions like work, childcare, and community.

I leave romantic relationships off of this list for one reason—on their own they are not enough to restructure routines in a positive way. Many of the men and women described spending time with their romantic partners at home watching movies or out shopping and going to restaurants and bars, but the theme of spending this kind of idyllic time with romantic partners without also engaging in legal work or childcare was more prevalent among persisters (and periods of persistence) than among desisters. Though engaging in activities with romantic partner can be pleasurable and is not inherently criminogenic, it is still unstructured time (see Osgood and Anderson, 1996).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN?

It was difficult to arrive at firm conclusions about the relationship between continuity and change in offending and adult role transitions for women. This is in large part due to the small sample of women in the study, which made it difficult to reach a saturation point with respect to their accounts. The ten women had varied experiences with crime and the transition to adulthood when compared to each other, it was difficult to identify emergent themes that were specific to them. The women's accounts affirmed

or elaborated on some of the themes identified in the men's accounts, but they appeared to diverge from the men on other themes. The main points of apparent divergence in themes were related to their accounts of their patterns of involvement in crime, their romantic relationships, and their parenthood experiences.

With respect to patterns of involvement in crime, the central theme of women's offending highlighted in chapter 4 was their sporadic, episodic offending, especially engaging in fights. Most of the women who self-reported any offenses after the first 36 months reported getting into physical altercations, either with other women or with boyfriends; even those women who otherwise reported no other offenses during that period. Women differed from men in that they did not discuss qualitative changes in offending, including changes with age or with respect to how drugs were sold during adulthood. This may be due to their generally lower involvement in crime relative to men, so there was less "room" for qualitative change than there was for men.

Women were similar to men in that they seemed to benefit from romantic relationships, but women differed from men in the types of supervision, monitoring, and social support they said their romantic partners provided and in the conventionality (non-criminality) of their partners. The supervision and monitoring partners provided to the women in this sample was less direct than it was for men. Where the men said that their partners asked them to stop participating in crime and attempted to manage the men's time to limit opportunities for crime, the women said their partners helped them maintain ongoing patterns of abstinence by avoiding minor arguments that could escalate into violence. Moreover, the men in this sample said that their wives provided emotional and moral support—their partners had their backs and stuck by them. By contrast, the women

were more likely to describe their partners' support in instrumental terms—their partners took care of them and helped them with children or at home.

Men and women also differed with respect to the relationship between their involvement crime and that of their partners. Generally, women appeared to have less access to conventional partners than did the men. Those men who identified their partners as crime-involved said that they engaged in crime with their partners and, in at least one case, a romantic partner orchestrated involvement in crime. By contrast, women said their involvement in crime might have been shaped by their partners' involvement in terms of techniques and opportunities, but that they made deliberate decisions to engage in crime on their own. Finally, both men and women said that romantic relationships were disrupted (and sometimes terminated) when men were incarcerated.

The experience of parenthood differed for men and women, but the relationship between parenthood and crime appeared similar across groups, but there were some small differences. Men and women said that having children influenced involvement in crime, but unlike men, women did not describe qualitative changes in crime in an effort to balance the demands of parenthood with crime as the men did. Both men and women who abstained from described cognitive shifts in how they saw themselves as parents and their commitments to their children. Men and women described how the structure of daily childcare routines cut into their time for other things, including crime, and when parents did not live with their children (or stopped living with them) they were more involved in crime. Finally, though the paradox of social support with respect to childcare was more apparent in women's accounts, this might be because more of the women had sole (or primary) custody of their children without the immediate childcare support of a partner.

None of the men had sole custody of children without the support of a partner, so in a sense, those men who did not live with their children were also freed to engage in crime because someone else was caring for their child. For men the source of childcare assistance came from the co-parent, while women generally turned to grandparents, aunts, or uncles.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND RESEARCH

This dissertation presented three themes that pose interesting problems for theories of continuity and change in offending as well as for future research: The role of indirect supervision and monitoring through the reflected appraisals of children, the paradox of instrumental support from family, and the relationship between intermittent offending and the emergence of change over time.

SUPERVISION AND MONITORING THROUGH REFLECTED APPRAISALS

Giordano and colleagues (2002) and others have argued that small children cannot operate as sources of informal social control over their parents. The findings from the present study contradict that assumption. A number of desisters described a process changing their behavior in response to reflected appraisals (Cooley, 1922; Felson, 1985; Matsueda, 1992; Matsueda and Heimer, 1997). They became aware that children monitored their parent's (or older sibling's or camp counselor's) behavior when a child in their life vocalized or reenacted observations of their antisocial behavior. When this happened, it provided the informant with an opportunity to view their behavior from the perspective of that child and recognize that the child watched and learned how to behave from them. As a result, they took steps to change their behavior—either dramatically (toward desistance) or less dramatically by changing how they treated other people. As

Erikson noted (1950: 69), “Babies control and bring up their families as much as they are controlled by them.” The whether and how reflected appraisals by children control parents’ behavior and contribute to cognitive shifts should be explored further in future research.

THE PARADOX OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Another theme that emerged from these accounts that contradicts current criminological theory and research (to my knowledge) is the paradox of instrumental social support from families. Cullen (1994: 538) said that “the more support a family provides, the less likely it is that a person will engage in crime.” The idea is that social supports reduce criminogenic strain, thereby reducing pushes toward crime. However, persisters more than desisters described reliance on the instrumental social support they received from members of their family, especially in the form of money and childcare. There are at least two possible explanations for this. One explanation is that persisters might arouse sympathy from their family members, That is, active offenders might be more likely to be targets of social support from family members who provide them with money, a place to stay, or childcare to help the offender avoid engaging in crime to meet daily needs. This explanation is a variation on one posed by Penninx and colleagues (1998: 556) in the health psychology literature, who found that instrumental support was associated with more depressive symptoms among older persons (aged 55 to 85) with chronic diseases. Alternatively, instrumental social support might inhibit desistance, either by reducing an offender’s earning imperative with respect to legitimate employment (Uggen and Thompson, 2003), by reducing structured routines oriented around work and childcare (Laub and Sampson, 2003), and/or by reducing the overall

costs of engaging in crime. Alternatively, or perhaps concurrently) instrumental supports from family members might reduce the incentive to transition into adult social roles and to take advantage of prosocial hooks for change (for example, see Hamilton, 2013).⁶² Future research should examine how different kinds of instrumental support in early young adulthood relate to continuity and change in crime.

INTERMITTENT OFFENDING AND CHANGE OVER TIME

Most informants engaged in patterns of crime that can best be described as intermittent patterns of offending rather than a clear trajectories of desistance and persistence. Some criminologists have conceptualized intermittency as a kind of “false desistance”—a temporary suspension in offending that may represent ambivalence in the decision to desist (Burnett, 2004; Kazemian, 2007; Piquero, 2004) and have argued that for the need to minimize the identification of false desistance in quantitative analysis (for example, see Ezell, 2007). The findings presented in this dissertation force me to disagree with this assessment. Rather than minimize intermittent offending in search of “true” desistance, I argue that short-term changes and intermittent patterns of offending can help us to identify the mechanisms that might be at work in the larger desistance process, and to observe how these mechanisms operate and why they might fail over the short-run and the long-run. Change—in crime, in role transitions, in growing up—emerges over time.

⁶² Recent research on parental financial aid in higher education indicates that this finding might not be unique to the present study or unique to at-risk populations. In a study of parental financial investments during college, Hamilton (2013) found that though parental financial aid increased the odds of graduating from college, it also decreased students’ GPA, suggesting that young adults who receive family financial support (and perhaps other forms of instrumental support) are insulated from the risks of adulthood. As a result, they may behave in ways that are incompatible with the goals of those who provide the support (Hamilton, 2013: 73-74). That is, the support provides a disincentive for achievement. At the same time, however, the students in Hamilton’s study did not go so far as to drop out of school all together; instead they do just enough to ensure that the support continues.

Persisters and desisters described how commitment to parenthood and the subsequent implications for that commitment on crime emerged over time, and some persisters that children presented an opportunity (hook) for change that they could take advantage of in the future. A similar theme emerged among persisters and incarcerated men with respect to romantic relationships. Moreover, persisters and desisters described retrograde experiences—periods of abstinence that they associated with new social roles and relationships that subsequently ended when those roles or relationships ran their course. It is possible that these experiences were simply false starts—abstaining from crime without committing to desistance, perhaps. Regardless, these patterns provide insight into how offenders initiate change over the short term and how it can go wrong.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Parenthood can facilitate desistance when it is a part of a package deal that includes employment and romantic partners as co-parents. It is important to support and facilitate engagement in parenthood for those at-risk youth and young adults who already have (or are getting ready to have) children. There are at least two broad areas of policy that can serve these needs: First, provide opportunities for employment that pays a living wage and fosters commitment on behalf of both employees and employers; such opportunities will benefit at-risk young adults in general and parents in particular. Second, support the development and maintenance of social bonds between co-parents as well as between parents and children in the community and during periods of incarceration.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Opportunities for employment that facilitate desistance should include jobs that pay a living wage—a wage that can support a family—thereby reducing inducements to sell drugs, and reducing the likelihood further entanglement with the criminal justice system. However, a living wage must be accompanied by good work conditions and employment benefits that support family responsibilities. Wadsworth (2006) found that the subjective experience of having a good job might deter criminal behavior—violent and property crimes—more effectively than higher wages or job stability. When young adults feel they are being invested in by their jobs, they feel more committed to their jobs in return, as Remi illustrated in this study. Accomplishing this means removing the structural barriers to employment such as employment hiring policies and legal restrictions that automatically disqualify former felons as applicants from some jobs, like working with adolescents, that might not pay well but that can be rewarding nonetheless.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SOCIAL BONDS

Many of the incarcerated men in this study had children, and even more men (and at least two women) became parents for the first (and sometimes second) time while they were incarcerated in the adult or juvenile justice systems. It is important to implement policies and programs both in the community and during incarceration that prepare and support young adults as they become parents. Parent training programs can operate in both settings. Programs that teach emotional communication skills, positive interaction skills, and that require parents to practice these skills with their children during program sessions encourage more effective nurturing behavior and disciplining skills for parents (Centers for Disease Control, 2009). For incarcerated parents, it is important to encourage

and facilitate prison visitation to preserve interpersonal bonds and parent identity. This means housing inmates where family can easily visit and creating programs that encourage visits from children. Visser (2013) found that fathers who had regular contact with their children while they were incarcerated and who reported good social supports did better in the months after release from prison. They felt more strongly attached to their children, and fathers who were attached to their children worked more and were less likely to engage in crime. These findings support the idea that parenthood encourages work and reduces crime, and it is a promising direction for policy.

And of course, the long-term benefit of supporting parents is that it can improve children's wellbeing and chances of success, including avoiding crime as they reach early adulthood.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

This study benefited from longitudinal quantitative data with respect to selecting a sample whose self-reported involvement over time was well document. These data were also instrumental for anchoring the qualitative accounts within these long-term patterns of offending and soliciting valuable, thick descriptions of how these informants experienced and perceived the transition to adulthood, parenthood, involvement in crime, and experiences with the criminal justice system. From these descriptions emerged a number of theoretically derived mechanisms, thereby providing evidence that these mechanisms link parenthood (an under-explored adult social institution in desistance research) to continuity and change in offending. Moreover, these themes emerged from the accounts of a contemporary sample of predominantly black and Hispanic formerly sanctioned at-risk young adults who were asked to reflect on a relatively short window of

time and, importantly, were experiencing the transition to adulthood at the time of the qualitative interview. This is a criminologically important population and period of the life course that desistance research is still working to understand. This dissertation advances that body of research.

Regardless, these interviews still represent a cross-section of the informants' perceptions of their experiences; it is difficult to discern a *causal story* from this study. Specifically, we do not know how these young adults came to parenthood, and there may be processes underlying the transition from biological parent to provider, protector, and nurturer that are associated with desistance from crime, processes that could not be detected from these qualitative narratives. Future research should examine this selection process and how it relates to continuity and change in offending.

Though I think the findings presented here advance our understanding of continuity and change in offending, there is still much to learn. In this chapter, I have made some suggestions for future theory and research, but I want to affirm that to best understand these processes and mechanisms, we need to continue to look to the experts: the men and women whose lives we are trying to understand. To that end, I leave you with Damion's view of why and how people change. At the time of our interview, Damion was a 24 year-old desister and father of a five-year-old son and had been incarcerated for more than four years on gun and drug charges. Wrapping up our interview, I asked Damion a question I asked every informant.

Me: So I'm trying to understand why some people stop being involved in crime and some people don't. I'm here talking to you because I think you're an expert on something like this, because this is your experience. What do you think? [...] Why do some people stop and some people stay involved [in crime]?

His response seemed to summarize the findings of this dissertation:

Damion: *Well, it's because some people just—they just—they get stuck with the idea of once you mess up, it's a wrap. That's how they basically make it seem: once you are failing, like there's no hope for you. Some people still will fight the whole thought and the whole—the whole rumor and everything of their situation, will fight against it because they still, in their heart, feel [they] are different. A lot of people change, they got good reason for it. Like, it just—it's not about something that's in their physical self. They got other people or family to uphold or whatever. And then, another reason why people go with [crime that] they downplay is that they—they comfortable where they at. They comfortable with the lifestyle they have.*

Me: [...] *The people who don't get stuck—*

Damion: *They just believe that it's just nothing that going to hold them back.*

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

RESEARCH ON PATHWAYS TO DESISTANCE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FACE SHEET

Study ID#: _____

Date of Interview: _____ / _____ / _____

Location of Interview: _____

Time Interview Began: _____ : _____ (military time)

Time Interview Ended: _____ : _____ (military time)

Interviewer: _____

remove completed face sheet from interview guide

Introduction

Administer and review consent form.

I'm working on a project about what happens to kids who have had contact with the juvenile and criminal justice systems, especially as they become adults. I'd like to learn about your experiences with crime and the criminal justice system, and how you think these experiences have affected any positive and negative changes in your life. To start, let's make up a name for you, so your confidentiality will be protected.

Nickname _____

How old are you? _____

Gender _____

I know a little bit about you based on what you've reported in your last interview with [name of staff interviewer] _____, but I want to hear your story. You are the expert here. I am the learner. I'll ask some general questions, but you can talk about anything you feel is important, even if I don't ask about it. And, if you don't like

some of my questions, you don't have to answer them. One more thing—if you want to answer “off the record,” we can turn the tape recorder off and then turn it on again later. Just let me know. Are you ready to get started?⁶³

WARM-UP

I'd like to start by getting to know you a little better.

1. What are the good things in your life just now?⁶⁴

POSSIBLE PROBES

- a. *For example, work, relationships, kids, friends, etc.*
2. What are some of the bad things going on?
3. What do you most enjoy doing?

Introduce calendar here as a way to jog memory and to figure out what kinds of things were going on at the same time, etc.

RELATIONSHIPS

Before we talk about your experience with the justice system, I want to learn a little about some of the people that have been important to you in the past few years.

1. Is there anyone in your life you feel is important to you now?⁶⁵
 - a. Describe this person

POSSIBLE PROBES

- (1) Who are they?*
- (2) How do you know this person?*

⁶³ Adapted from Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas (2005).

⁶⁴ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁶⁵ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

(3) *How did you meet?*

- b. Do you think this person has had a positive influence on you and where you are now?

(1) *If not*—Looking back over the last [3-6 years], is there a single person (or group of people) that had the greatest positive or good influence on you and where you are now?⁶⁶

(2) Describe this person

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *Who are they?*

(2) *How do you know this person?*

(3) *How did you meet?*

- d. How has this person influenced you and where you are now?
- e. Where would you be if you had never met this person?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *Worst case scenario*

(2) *Best case scenario*

- f. Is there anything else you'd like to say about _____?
- g. *If person reported above was not reported as a caring adult or peer in the regular interview, repeat sequence in reference to:*
- *Caring adult*
 - *Prosocial peer*
 - *Antisocial peer (replace “positive” and “good” with “negative” and “bad”)*

⁶⁶ Adapted from McAdams (1995).

2. Children

Now I want to talk about your children. Based on what you told us before, it looks like you have _____ children.

- a. Do you live with your child/children? *If yes, skip to part b.*
 - *If not*—Who is raising your child?

POSSIBLE PROBES

- (1) *How often do you see your child?*
- b. How is your life different now compared to before you had children?⁶⁷
 - What do you like most about being a parent?
 - (1) What do you like least?
 - (2) How did your expectations about becoming a parent compare with the reality?
 - *If lives with child or sees child most days of the week*—Now that you have a child to take care of, what is a typical day in your life like?
 - (1) What was a typical day like before you had children?
 - Has having children affected your involvement in crime? *(Tie to calendar if possible)*
- c. When you found out you were going to have a child, what was the first thing that went through your mind?
 - *If participant is a mother*—What happened when you told the father you were having the baby?

⁶⁷ Parts *b* through *g* adapted from Edin and Kefalas (2005).

- How did other people (friends, family, PO) respond when they found out you were having a child?
- d. Do others think of you differently now that you have children?
 - Do others treat you differently?
 - Do you feel different about yourself?
- e. What would your life would be like now if you never had children?
- f. Tell me about your relationship with your [youngest child's] parent.

POSSIBLE PROBES

- *Are you still with your child's/children's other parent?*
- *What was your relationship like before you found out you were having a baby?*
 - (1) *How about now?*
- *Is he/she a good parent?*
- *If he/she is the custodial parent—How does he/she contribute to caring for the child?*
- g. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your children or your children's other parent?

5. Romantic relationships

Let's spend a little time talking about your romantic relationships.

If it looks like this person has been involved in one person over time, focus on him or her.

If it looks like there has not been one consistent romantic person, try to single out a main or recent person.

- a. How do you feel like things are going with your relationship with _____ so far?⁶⁸
 - What are the good things about your relationship?⁶⁹
 - If you had to identify a problem in your relationship, what would it be?
- b. How have things changed since you first hooked up or started seeing this person?
 - What is your life like now that you are with your partner compared to before?
 - In what ways would your life be different if you did not have your partner in your life?
 - Does the relationship affect how you get along with your friends?⁷⁰
- c. Do you see yourself in this relationship a year from now?⁷¹
- d. Does your partner know about your past [some of the stuff you have done, like when you were arrested, etc.]?
 - How does your partner feel about your offending?⁷²
 - (1) *If upset*—How does that make you feel?
 - What would your partner say or do if you got arrested now?
 - Does your partner do anything to help you or encourage you to stay out of trouble?
- e. *If incarcerated*—What was _____ reaction when you were locked up?

⁶⁸ Adapted from Aronson (1999).

⁶⁹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁷⁰ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁷¹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁷² Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- Does _____ come see you?
 - How are things different between you since you've been locked up?
- f. Has your partner ever been in trouble with the police?⁷³

POSSIBLE PROBES

- *When?*
 - (1) *Was this before or after you got together (or both)?*
 - *What happened? Or What kind of stuff did your partner get in trouble for?*
- g. *If married or cohabitating*—How did you decide to [get married/move in together]?⁷⁴
- h. Will you and _____ get married some day?
- *If they say “no”*—In general, do you want to get married some day?
 - What kind of wife/husband will _____ be?
 - What kind wife/husband will you be/do you want to be?
- i. Do you want to have children with _____ (*if not already*)or more (*if already have a child*)?
- What kind of parent will _____ be?
 - What kind of parent will you be?
- j. What's the best thing that could happen in with _____?
- What's the worst that could happen with _____ in the future?
- k. Is there anything else you'd like to say about _____ or your relationship with her/him?

⁷³ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁷⁴ Adapted from Aronson (1999).

If incarcerated

- j. How do you think things will be with _____ when you get out of prison?

ASK EVERYONE

- l. Looking back over the last XXX years, would you say the relationships you've been in have had an effect on your offending? ⁷⁵

(a) In what way?

- m. Do you want to be married someday?

- What are the characteristics of a good partner?
- What kind of partner do you want to be?
- What do you think it will be like to be married? Do you think it may be different?

- n. Do you want to have children someday?

- What are the characteristics of a good parent?
- What do you expect it will be like to have children?

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ONE'S OWN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Now I want to talk with you about your experiences with being arrested and doing things that could get you in trouble with the police.

1. Being arrested

- a. First let's talk about the last time you got in trouble with the police. What happened?
- What did you do?

⁷⁵ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- How did it come about? ⁷⁶

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) Did you talk it over with others first?

(2) Why did you pick that target?

(3) How did you use the money or item you got?

(4) Did you know your victim?

b. When you decided to do _____, what did you think would happen?

c. How did you get caught?

- Where were you when you got caught (at the scene, etc.)?
- Were there other people around when you got caught?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) Who?

(2) Did it matter that there were other people there?

(a) If yes, why?

d. Were you arrested?

- What was the first thing you thought when were arrested?
- What happened when your parents (or another significant person) found out you were arrested for _____?
- Did a lot of other people know that you'd been in trouble for _____?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) At the time that you were arrested, what happened when others found out?

⁷⁶ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

(2) *Thinking about where you are in your life now, what happens when others find out you've been in trouble with the police?*

- e. How do other people in your life feel about your offending? ⁷⁷ [*Refer to individuals mentioned in "relationships section"*]
 - How does that make you feel?
- f. Is there anything else about the last time you were arrested that I didn't ask you but that you'd like to talk about?

2. Not being arrested

Now I want to talk about some of the things that you've done that you could have been arrested for but were not.

The interviewer will identify the most recent time in the calendar where they were doing a number of antisocial acts and bound this time period.

- a. What kind of illegal stuff were you involved in during this period?
 - What usually happened when you did _____?
 - What did you do?
 - Why did you usually do _____?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *Was it to get money? Revenge? (Be sure to allow for "I just felt like it.")*

- What usually happened leading up to _____?
- How did it come about? ⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁷⁸ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

POSSIBLE PROBES

- (1) Did you talk it over with others first?*
- (2) Why did you pick that target?*
- (3) How did you use the money or item you got?*
- (4) Did you know your victim?*

- b. When you were doing this stuff, were you afraid that you might get caught?
 - What would have happened if you got caught?
 - Do other people (other than those directly involved) know that you did/do this?

POSSIBLE PROBES

- (1) If yes—What is their reaction?*
 - (a) Do different people react differently, such as your friends compared to your family or coworkers?*
- (2) If no—What would happen if they found out?*

- c. Is there anything else about the times you were not arrested but could have been that you'd like to talk about?

3. Staying in or getting out

If currently or recently involved in crime:

From what you've told us in your past interviews, it looks like you still do things that could get you arrested, or have done them recently.

- a. Has there been a time in the last xxx months/years where you haven't offended? ⁷⁹
 - What happened?

⁷⁹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- b. Do you think you are committing fewer or more offenses in the last xxx months/years than before? ⁸⁰
 - Are you committing different kinds of offenses than before?
- c. Can you ever see yourself stopping completely? ⁸¹
 - How do you think it might happen?
 - Do you feel like you can stop?
- d. Have you tried to stop committing crimes before?

POSSIBLE PROBES

- (1) *What happened that made you want to quit?*
- (2) *What happened when you got involved again?*
- (3) *What did you do to try to stop?*
- e. What is it about crime that keeps you involved in it?

POSSIBLE PROBES

- (1) *To get money, for the fun of it, to fit in with friends, to feel better about yourself, because there was nothing better to do?* ⁸²
- f. If you stopped offending, is there anything you would miss about offending? ⁸³
- g. What would your life be like if you weren't doing stuff that could get you in trouble with the police right now?

⁸⁰ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁸¹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁸² Adapted from Adler and Adler (1983).

⁸³ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *What's the worst case scenario?*

(2) *What's the best case scenario?*

c. What would have to happen for you to stop committing crimes?

- What sorts of things make it difficult for you to stop? ⁸⁴

OR

If it looks like it has been a while since the last arrest or SRO while on the street

Did something happen to make you stop doing things that could get you in trouble with police?

a. What happened?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *Did you quit "cold turkey," a little at a time, or do something else instead?*

(2) *Did someone help you to stop doing crimes?*

b. How did your friends react when you stopped committing crimes?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *How did other people treat you when you stopped committing crimes? Any differently?*

c. How do you see yourself now that you aren't committing crimes? Any differently?

d. What would have happened if you did not stop committing crimes?

⁸⁴ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *What would be the worst case scenario?*

(2) *What would be the best case scenario?*

- e. Can you see yourself starting again?⁸⁵
 - What would have to happen for you to start committing crimes again?
 - What steps can you take to avoid this?
- f. Since you stopped offending, do you think your life is more or less normal?⁸⁶
 - Happy? Exciting? Stressful?
 - What makes you think this?

4. Avoiding offending (ASK EVERYONE)⁸⁷

- a. Have there been any times in the last xxx months when you nearly committed an offense or intended to but did not?
 - *If yes*—Tell me more.
- b. In the past xxx months, has anyone asked you to take part in a crime and you have said no?
 - *If yes*—Tell me more.
- c. In the past xxx months, have you made any deliberate decisions about trying not to get into situations where you might end up getting into trouble?
 - For example, going out with some particular friends, avoiding particular places, etc.?

⁸⁵ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁸⁶ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁸⁷ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

5. What are the costs of crime?

- a. By continuing to commit crimes, are you giving anything up?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *What is it that you are giving up?*

(2) *Why do you have to give that up if you continue committing crimes?*

OR

- b. By not committing crimes anymore, are you giving anything up?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(3) *What is it that you are giving up?*

(4) *Why do you have to that up if you stop committing crimes?*

6. Shame and regret?⁸⁸

- a. Do you see yourself as an “offender,” or is that just a label other people apply to you?

○ How do you feel about that?

- b. Do you think much about offenses you have committed in the past?

○ Why is that?

- c. Do you think about why you committed offenses in the past?

- d. Do you feel shame or regret for any offenses you have committed in the past?

○ Can you give me an example?

7. Is there anything else about your involvement in crime that I didn’t ask but you’d like to talk about?

⁸⁸ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM—SANCTIONS AND SERVICES

1. Criminal Justice System

Now I want to talk about your experiences with the criminal justice system generally.

- a. Are there times when you think you were treated unfairly by the criminal justice system?⁸⁹
 - Can you tell me about those instances?
- b. Are there times when you think you were treated fairly by the criminal justice system?⁹⁰
 - Can you tell me about those instances?

2. Incarceration

Now I want to talk about your experiences with jail, prison, and other “official” responses to your involvement in crime.

If incarcerated or other residential sanction

Let’s start with the last time you served a sentence in jail or prison as the result of being convicted for crime. The most recent incident I know about occurred _____ and you were locked up in _____. Is that the most recent time?

If no, ask about most recent incident.

- a. How long were you locked up the last time?
- b. What was it like to be locked up the last time?
 - What was the place like in terms of safety?
 - What was the place like in terms of activities?

⁸⁹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁹⁰ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

(1) What was a typical day like?

- Was it different from other times you were locked up (if there were others)?

c. Did you make new friends in prison?⁹¹

- Tell me about that.

(1) Are you still friends?

- Did anyone you were locked up with offer you any advice or protection?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) What did they tell you or do to help you?

(2) Do you still know that person?

d. Did anything happen to your relationships with people on the outside (for example, family, friends, romantic partners)?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) Did anyone come to visit you?

(a) Did anyone you wanted to see NOT come to visit you?

(2) Did you lose contact with anyone, either while you were locked up or after you got out?

(a) Why did you lost contact with _____?

e. Did anything happen to you while you were incarcerated that you would consider a major event (i.e. had some kind of lasting impact on you)?

- What happened?

f. When you got out what was it like to be back in the community?

⁹¹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) Were there things that were different in your life when you got out?

(2) How were you or things in your life different?

Now I want to ask you some questions about your experiences in prison or being locked up more generally.

- g. Are there any good things about being in prison? ⁹²
- h. What is/was, for you, the worst thing about being in prison? ⁹³
- i. People say sometimes that prison makes them think hard about their lives. Is this the case for you? ⁹⁴
 - o Can you say more about that?
- j. Some people say that when they are in prison they feel they can't be themselves, that they have to put on an act. Do you feel this is true for you? ⁹⁵
 - o Tell me a bit more.
- k. Do you think prison has made you a better or a worse person? ⁹⁶
 - o Can you say why that is?
- l. People say that, as they get older, the thought of prison puts them off more than it did before. Would you say that applies to you? ⁹⁷

⁹² Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁹³ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁹⁴ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁹⁵ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁹⁶ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

⁹⁷ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- A little or a lot?
- Why?
- m. How would things have been different if you had never been locked up?
- n. Is there anything else about your experience in prison that you'd like to talk about?

OR

If probation or other community sanction

3. Community sanctions

I also want to ask you about being on probation (or some other community sanction). Tell me about the last time you were under community supervision, either as the result of being convicted for a crime or when you were on parole after being released from prison.

- a. How did you feel about being involved with probation/parole?
- b. What did you have to do as a condition of your probation/parole?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) Did you have to go to school or get a job as a condition of probation/parole?

(2) Did you go to school and/or get a job?

- c. How much did this restrict what you would do otherwise?⁹⁸
 - How were you or things in your life different?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) Did you keep committing crimes while you were on probation/parole?

- Did you want things to be different?

⁹⁸ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- d. Did you have any problems meeting the conditions of your probation/parole (for example meeting curfew, attending counseling or other programs, meeting with your PO)?
 - What happened?
- e. Do you think it helped you? ⁹⁹
 - If yes, in what way?
- f. Would a different kind of punishment have been more helpful in keeping you out of trouble? ¹⁰⁰
 - If yes, what?
- g. Would other programs have been more useful? ¹⁰¹
- h. In general, did you find your probation officer useful? ¹⁰²
 - Why?
- i. Is there anything more that you think they could do to help you? ¹⁰³
 - For example, some people have suggested help getting work, help with housing, more home visits, more programs for drug or alcohol problems.
- j. Is there anything else about being on probation/parole that you'd like to talk about?

⁹⁹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰⁰ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰¹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰² Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰³ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

4. Services and interventions

Now let's talk about some of the programs you've been involved in that were supposed to help you in some way, for example, a program that was supposed to help you find a job or just stay out of trouble.

From your previous interviews, I know that you've participated in _____ different programs over the past 3-6 years.

- a. Were any of the programs helpful to you?
 - Which ones?
 - Describe what it did for you or helped you do for yourself.
 - When did you know it was helpful?
 - (1) What happened?*
 - What would have happened if you never had this program?
- b. Did you learn anything from this program that you think still has an effect on you or that you still use/do?
 - What have you learned?
- c. Were there programs that you thought were just not helpful at all?
 - Which ones?
 - Tell me about why they weren't helpful for you.
- d. Were there any programs that you thought did you more harm than good?
- e. Is there anything I didn't ask about these programs that you'd like to talk about?

CRITICAL EVENTS

Some of these questions can be skipped if they have come up already.

Now I want to spend some time talking about things that might have happened to you that have had a big impact on you. I want to focus specifically on events that might have affected whether you did things that could get you into trouble or things that happened that kept you out of trouble. To help us do that, let's look at your calendar and talk about what might have been going on at different points in the last few years.

1. During the time that we've been talking about, does anything stand out as something that changed the direction of your behavior? That is, can you think of an event or situation that you think is related to being more involved or less involved in crime? Some people might call this a turning point.

a. Is there an event or situation that you think is related to some other change in your life?

2. How is your life different now from where you thought you would be when you were a kid?¹⁰⁴

a. Why did things turn out differently from what you expected?

THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD, AGENCY, AND FUTURE ORIENTATION

1. Adulthood and responsibilities

I want you to talk about your life now compared to when you were a teenager/a few years ago.

a. How do you see yourself now compared to a few years ago,¹⁰⁵ when you were a teenager?

¹⁰⁴ Adapted from Aronson (1999).

- In what way?
- b. Do you feel you have more responsibility for things and yourself now compared to xxx months ago? ¹⁰⁶
 - If yes, what?
- c. People around your age sometimes say they behave and think in a different way than they did when they were 18. Would you say it is like that for you? ¹⁰⁷
 - If yes, in what ways would you say you behave differently?
 - In what ways would you say you think differently?
- d. Do you feel like an “adult”?
 - What does it mean to be an adult?
 - (1) What makes someone an adult?
 - What does it mean to be a man?
 - (1) *Ask men and women.*
 - What does it mean to be a woman?
 - (1) *Ask men and women.*
 - *If incarcerated:* What is it like to reach this age where you are considered an adult but because you are locked up, you can’t do some of the things that might be expected of an adult?
- e. Thinking about your situation right now, does the possibility of getting caught affect your decision about whether you are going to offend? ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰⁶ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰⁷ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- Does the punishment or sentence you might get affect your decision?

skip if discussed

2. Future identities and Expectations for the future

If incarcerated, keep sentence length (what is left for them to serve) in mind and change accordingly (for example “when you get out”).

Now I want to talk about what you want for yourself in the future.

- a. Do you think much about what your life would be like in the future? ¹⁰⁹

Possible probes

- *What are your goals?*
 - *What is your best case scenario?*
- b. Is there anything you would like to change about yourself? ¹¹⁰
 - What things would you like to change about your life?
 - What steps can you take to make those changes?
 - Is there anything else you’d like to change?
 - c. What kind of person would you like to become? ¹¹¹
 - What steps can you take to be that person?
 - d. Is there anything you would like to change about your circumstances? ¹¹²
 - *If yes, prompt jobs, kids, partner...*

¹⁰⁸ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹⁰⁹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹¹⁰ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹¹¹ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹¹² Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- What steps can you take to make those changes?

Now let's talk about your goals for the future and where you think you might end up.

- e. How would you like to see yourself living in say 18 months' time? ¹¹³

POSSIBLE PROBES

- *Kind of house?*
- *Area live in?*
- *Hobbies?*
- *Do you want to be married?*
- *Do you want to have children?*
- *What sort of job do you want?*
- *(1) How do you go about getting a job like that?*
- What about in 5 years' time?
- What do you think you might accomplish, realistically?
- What if any of these things don't happen?
- What is the worst case scenario for your future?
- What do you hope does not happen to you?

3. Agency and influencing the future

- a. Are there things that you think might get in the way of the future you would like?

¹¹⁴

- What are some of the obstacles to achieving your goals?

(1) Probe for school, work, family, crime

¹¹³ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹¹⁴ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- How easy or difficult do you think it will be to get the kind of life you want?
(1) Can you say more?
- b. How much control do you feel you personally have over getting where you would like to be? ¹¹⁵ That is, what kind of “say” do you have over where you will end up?
- c. What can you do to make sure you get where you want to go?

POSSIBLE PROBES

- *What are the steps you need to take to get the kind of job you want?*
- *What are the steps you need to take to finish school?*
- *What are the steps you need to take to be a good partner?*
(1) *What makes a good partner?*
- *What are the steps you need to take to be a good parent?*
(1) *What makes a good parent?*
- *What are the steps you need to take to be a good person?*
(1) *What makes a good person?*
- d. *If incarcerated* How is your experience in prison preparing you for when you get out?
- Do you think you have what it takes to succeed on the outside?
- e. How long will you be involved in crime and other things that might get you in trouble with the police (or will you become involved again)?
- f. What kinds of things make it difficult for you to go straight? ¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹¹⁶ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

- g. What will help you stay straight or to get straight?
 - What can others do to help? ¹¹⁷
 - What can *you* do to make sure you to stay out of trouble?

POSSIBLE PROBES

(1) *For example, going back to school or finishing school, getting a job, living with someone else or living somewhere else.*

(2) *Deep probe—don't let this get shrugged off*

- h. I'm trying to understand why some people stop being involved in crime and other people don't. Help me out with this—you're the expert. What do you think?
- i. In general, what would you say is the very best way to help people who want to stop offending? ¹¹⁸

THE WRAP-UP

That pretty much covers what I thought we would talk about. Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you'd like to tell me?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. One of my goals is to hear your story about your past involvement in crime and about any positive and negative changes in your life. Do you feel like you were able to do that?
2. Did you find any of my questions confusing? For example, were there any questions where you didn't understand what I was asking you?
 - a. Where there any questions where you get why I was asking you that question?

¹¹⁷ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

¹¹⁸ Adapted from the Bottoms and Shapland (2008), with permission.

3. Given the kinds of things we talked about, was there anything you thought I was going to ask but didn't?
4. Was there anything you wanted to talk about but didn't because I didn't ask about it?
5. Did any of my questions surprise you?
6. Did you feel like you had enough time to answer the questions?
7. Did you find the calendar useful?
8. Did you feel comfortable talking to me?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Let me give you my phone number in case you have any questions about what we talked about today.

APPENDIX B: THE PILOT STUDY

The purpose of the pilot study was to field test the interview guide, become familiar with the interview process, and to work out the logistics of conducting a qualitative study with Pathways subjects in Philadelphia.¹¹⁹ The goal in field-testing the interview guide was to find out how the interview guide “worked” with actual Pathways subjects. This included trying to identify the areas in which the guide was over-weighted and redundant, and areas in which the guide was thin. It also included identifying whether the questions asked what they meant to ask, whether the subjects understood the questions, and whether the guide, as a whole, elicited a coherent story about how serious juvenile offenders view themselves and their experiences as the transition to adulthood.

Another reason for field-testing the interview guide was to practice conducting interviews under conditions similar to “real world” conditions. This helped me to become comfortable with the interview guide as well as the interview process. It also helped me to evaluate and refine my skill in conducting qualitative interviews with serious juvenile offenders. Finally, the pilot study helped to identify potential logistic issues with regard to communicating with the Pathways staff in Philadelphia and traveling from Washington, DC to Philadelphia.

Our initial goal for the pilot study was to test the interview guide with five Pathways participants who were not selected to participate in the qualitative study. Because there are so few female participants in the Pathways study overall, females were excluded from the pilot study in order to maximize potential candidates for the qualitative

¹¹⁹ For the purposes of this document, I distinguish between the pilot study and the actual qualitative study by referring to them as “pilot study” and “qualitative study.” Clearly, the pilot is also qualitative.

study. Because we anticipated that recruitment for the pilot would be difficult, we did not constrain potential pilot participants to any particular trajectory group membership.

Therefore, as the lack of financial incentive and lack of access to female participants made recruitment for the pilot study difficult, we took a convenience sample approach to recruiting pilot participants.

Pilot participants were approached at the end of their yearly Pathways interview by the Pathways interviewer assigned to their case. The Pathways interviewer explained the purpose of the pilot study to potential pilot candidates, and explained to them that they would not be paid for the interview. When pilot candidates were identified, the Pathways interviewer gained their consent to share information with me. The interviewer contacted me by telephone to report necessary information, including the candidates contact information, where the candidate's interview was usually conducted (in the field or at Temple), and whether the Pathways interviewer had any safety concerns with regard to the candidate or the candidate's neighborhood. I also asked the Pathways interviewer a few questions about what they knew about the candidate based on what they could remember (that is, without looking at responses to survey items, etc.), such as an estimate of the candidate's age, with whom he was living (parent/grandparent, spouse, etc.), whether the he was married or had a girlfriend, whether he had children, if he was currently working, and whether he reported recent involvement in offending or the criminal justice system. Most interviewers were able to provide at least some of this information, which helped me gain a sense for what aspects of the interview guide would be relevant to the candidate.

In all, the Pathways interviewers identified five potential pilot candidates between February and March 2008. Of those five candidates, interviews were scheduled with three candidates.¹²⁰ Of the remaining two candidates, one cancelled an interview at the last minute due to a family health emergency and was evasive about rescheduling in subsequent phone contacts. The second candidate seemed willing to participate, despite initially believing he would be paid for his participation, but cancelled his interview due to a death in the family.

I conducted pilot interviews with three informants from late February 2008 through the end of March 2008. Two interviews were conducted at Temple University, and the third was conducted in the informant's home. Each interview experience was different from the next with regard to contacting and communicating with the informants prior to the interview and the interview itself, as well as with regard to the "story" told by each.

The pilot study gave me a more realistic sense for the logistics of carrying out a qualitative study—what it is like to contact potential informants, schedule interviews, and conduct interviews. For example, informants cancelled their appointments with me after I had arrived in Philadelphia on two separate occasions, suggesting this would be a common occurrence in the qualitative study. In spite of such setbacks during the pilot, I anticipated that rescheduling interviews would be easier when I was able to be in

¹²⁰ When contacting subjects, I identified myself by my first name only, and introduced myself as being from Temple University and working with the interviewer that referred the participant to me so that they could immediately associate me with Pathways without my having to say it in order to protect the informants' confidentiality. When leaving a message, either voice mail or with a person, I identified myself by my first name and as calling from Temple University.

Philadelphia for longer periods of time (more than just a day), could provide an incentive to informants, and had a list of potential informants ready to go as back up.

With regard to conducting interviews, the pilot study allowed me the opportunity to review and get feedback on my own interview style. Professor Laub reviewed the audio recordings of the pilot interviews and identified some things to keep in mind over the course of an interview. He suggested that I try to minimize any potentially value-laded statements I might make during the interview (such as “cool,” “wow,” or “weird”), to allow the informant more time to fully answer the question, to probe more deeply, and to not let allusions or markers to important issues made by the informant pass by. He also suggested I should keep any identifying information at a minimum (for example, informants’ reference to spouses and children by initials rather than by name). Finally, he advised me to not adhere to the guide too rigidly, skip questions that seemed irrelevant or redundant, and incorporate knowledge I might have learned from previous interviews as it comes up.

The interview guide was edited over the course of the pilot study. Many of these changes were made because some items were awkward, redundant, or unnecessary. Additionally, we were granted permission to adapt questions from the Sheffield Study on Pathways Out of Crime, conducted by Anthony Bottoms and Joanna Shapland (2008). Questions from the Sheffield study were incorporated in one of two ways. In some instances, our interview guide had similar questions, but I preferred the Sheffield wording to my own. In other cases, the Sheffield guide questions addressed domains that were relevant to the study but that had not been specifically addressed in the existing interview guide. In these cases, adding these questions constituted a small part of a larger topic (for

example, prison experiences, desisting from crime). Generally, these questions address the connection between experiences and offending more directly than the original interview guide allowed.

There were a number of limitations to the pilot study and issues I was unable to address with the pilot study. One was that while we planned to use calendar data to help prompt the qualitative interview informants, I did not have this data for the pilot. As a result, I did not know how these questions might work with regard to bounding the responses to reflect a specific time period. One goal of the qualitative study was to record informants' perceptions of their lives during the three years after entering the study—the period captured in the trajectory analyses. However, at the time of the qualitative study, many informants had participated in the Pathways study much longer than three years, so I was not sure how realistic it would be to bind all the questions to this period. During the actual qualitative interviews, I made an effort to anchor some questions to the first three years of the study, but also asked informants to report and reflect on events that are more recent.

The other main issue that the pilot was unable to address was how the interview guide would work with regard to different populations, including women, prisoners, and members of the trajectory groups used to select the qualitative study sample. As stated previously, women were excluded from the pilot in order to preserve the pool of candidates for the qualitative study, and prisoners were excluded in order to satisfy IRB requirements. Additionally, we did not try to recruit pilot study informants exclusively from the trajectory groups of interest. As a result, each of the men interviewed for the pilot claimed their only offense since entering the study was the one that got them into

the study as teenagers, making them unlikely to have been potential candidates for the qualitative study. Therefore, sections of the interview guide regarding repeat offending, or even desistance, were less relevant for them.

APPENDIX C: CASE STUDIES

This appendix presents two case studies, one man and one woman, that highlight the difficulty of identifying pure persistence or pure desistance within this subsample.

Raymond, Desister, Age 23

Raymond is a good example of someone whose involvement in crime was difficult to classify according to “persister” and “desister” categories. He was distinct from many of the other men in that, in addition to having three children, he was married and maintained steady legal employment. His Pathways study data and his qualitative account document his long-term involvement in selling drugs (and few other crimes) during late adolescence, qualitative changes in how he sold drugs that coincided with local life circumstances and role transitions, and a long period of abstinence from selling drugs and other offenses in the 16 months prior to the qualitative study. Moreover, the Pathways study data suggests he might have returned to selling drugs in the months *after* the qualitative interview.

Local life circumstances. When I met Raymond, he and his wife had been together for eight years and married for four. Together they were raising four children, including three children they had together (ages one, four and six) and his wife’s nine year-old daughter from a previous relationship. His first biological child, a son, was born when he was 17 and serving a sentence in a juvenile facility.

At the time of the qualitative interview, Raymond was employed as a cook. He told me that he completed a 12-week certification course for food service and he considered cooking one of his “professional skills.” When he was initially contacted about doing the extra interview, he was on State Road for a probation violation he

incurred while on house arrest for a drug possession charge from the previous year. At the time of our interview, he was home and back under house arrest, but he was allowed to leave for work and community service. We met at Temple University for the interview.

Self-reported offending—Pathways data. By the trajectory analysis used to select cases, Raymond was a desister. At the Pathways study baseline, when he was age 16, he self-reported reported selling drugs, carrying a gun, driving drunk or high, fighting, and joyriding (see figure D.13 in appendix D). Additionally, he reported that he had been arrested three times, on property, narcotics, and offense charges. While he was in a juvenile facility, he self-reported near monthly involvement in crime, including fighting, carrying a gun, and shooting at someone. He obtained his GED while he was locked up and also missed the birth of his first son. He was released from the juvenile facility after 14 months at age 17.

After his release from the juvenile facility, Raymond self-reported carrying a gun nearly every month for eight months and then, in one month, reported fighting and injuring someone. That same month, when he was age 18, he was arrested and spent four months in jail for a property offense that was eventually dismissed. After his release, Raymond was engaged to be married. Over the next thirteen months, he reported working every month and self-reported no offending.

Four years into the Pathways Study (during wave 7), Raymond was 20 years old, had two children, was married, and was unemployed. He started to self-report selling drugs every month for the next 18 months, even after he started working at a legal job again. When he was 21, Raymond's third child was born and he attended vocational school (the food service certification program mentioned previously). A few months after

he started school, during wave 9 of the Pathways study, Raymond was arrested for drug possession. He was convicted of the charge and sentenced to drug treatment and house arrest.

Raymond's qualitative interview took place during wave 10 of the Pathways study. During this period, he self-reported getting into fights, selling marijuana, and selling other drugs.

Involvement in crime—Qualitative data. When I first received contact information for Raymond, more than six years into the Pathways Study, he was serving 45 days in jail for violating his house arrest (he said the house-arrest monitoring system malfunctioned; see Chapter 4 for more details). When we finally met at Temple University, Raymond was back at home on house arrest and was allowed to leave for work and for community service. He arrived to the interview about an hour early so that he could go to work after our interview.

During the qualitative interview, Raymond said that he had abstained from most types of involvement in crime, including selling drugs, for the preceding eighteen or so months. He also said that he sold drugs consistently from age 16 (the start of the Pathways Study) to age 22, but that he failed to self-report his involvement in selling drugs (or any other offenses) for the nearly two years, starting with the third wave of the Pathways study and ending about six months into the seventh wave. He said that his income from selling drugs supplemented his legal income during this period. Even though he continued to be involved in selling drugs, Raymond said that his role in the drug market and the method by which he sold drugs changed over time. He said that he stopped selling drugs on the corner and played more of a middle-man/distributor role. He

bought packages of drugs and had other people sell the drugs for him on the street. He also said that he fit his drug-market activities into his daily routine of going to and from work in an effort to hide it from his wife (see chapter 4).

Raymond said that eventually he did stop selling drugs and that he had been abstaining from crime for about a year and a half by the time we met. His decision to leave the drug market coincided with the birth of his third child and, shortly after that, enrolling in vocational school. During this period, he was working two jobs and even though he said he was not dealing any more, he said he still was spending time with a brother and cousin who were selling drugs, and the three of them were arrested at Raymond's home in front of his children. After that incident, he said that he stopped being around his friends and family who were involved in selling drugs.

Raymond: *So when we went down to the district, you know what mean, like I'm steady spazzing like, "Yo, that's crazy! I'm upstairs with my daughter, y'all come in putting guns up to me. Like, that's chaos! Like what's going on?" [They said], "Well, you intended delivery, we was watching y'all for this long." Like, y'all was watching who? When we went to court, y'all say y'all was watching my brother and was watching my cousin, for two weeks. Y'all never say that y'all seen me, you know what I'm saying, so how am I in it? So the judge broke us up. We all had one court date but the judge broke us up. Now everybody get different court dates, come there and fight they own cases, you know what I'm saying? And I still get stuck with possession, and y'all like knew that wasn't mine. It's like y'all basically getting me for nothing, and that's crazy. But that's why I got out. That, that's one of the reasons—like that friends and family stuff—like, that's why I kind of—It's me come over here 'cause y'all niggers are crazy! Like, y'all, man that situation was just crazy. I just got mad. I want to go fight them now. Seriously, because they got me—they got me wearing this brace, and going to jail and shit. I feel like fucking them up.*

Finally, Raymond's qualitative account of his involvement in crime contradicts slightly the self-reported offending he reported to the Pathways study during his final

interview with them ten months later. Raymond's self-reported offending included fighting, selling marijuana, and selling other drugs. As illustrated by his timeline in figure X.1, some of those behaviors corresponded to his time under house arrest, while others occurred in three of the 10 months after the qualitative interview. It is possible that he was lying to me about his most recent involvement in crime. However, his qualitative account of his abstinence from selling drugs in the 18 months prior to the qualitative interview largely corresponds with his timeline.

Galatea, Desister Turned Persister, Age 22

Galatea is also a good example of someone whose movement between persisting and desisting patterns of offending made it difficult to cleanly categorize her as a "persister" or "desister." Indeed, she changed groups altogether when her self-reported offending variety scores during the first 36 months are compared to her score at 84 months, and she reported intermittent involvement in crime during the years in between. Both her Pathways study data and her qualitative account document her movement in and out of crime, which she said was related to local life circumstances, including her romantic relationships, having her daughter, legal employment, and her participation in church.

Local life circumstances. Galatea and I met to do the qualitative interview at her mother's home in Philadelphia.¹²¹ She had a four-and-a-half year-old daughter who lived with the child's father. Galatea was 17 when her daughter was born. According to the Pathways calendar data, Galatea started seeing her daughter's father, who was two years older than her, about a year before her daughter was born; they were together

¹²¹ She did not live there at the time, but Galatea did not say where or with whom she lived.

approximately three years. At the time of the interview, Galatea was recently hired to work overnight at a grocery store and was working on getting a commercial driver's license. She was also enrolled in GED classes.

Self-reported offending—Pathways data. By the trajectory analyses used to select the cases, Galatea was following a desisting pattern of offending at the end of the first 36 months of the Pathways study (see figure D.5 in appendix D). She entered the study when she was 15 after she was arrested and adjudicated for theft and receiving stolen property and was sentenced to court-ordered supervision (probation). At baseline, she reported that in the past twelve months, she received stolen property, stolen a car, sold marijuana and other drugs, shoplifted, and fought. Over the first 36 months of the Pathways study, from ages 15 to 18, she reported occasional involvement in crime in five different months—three in the first wave (shoplifting, joyriding, and fighting), one in the third wave (selling marijuana), and one in the fourth wave (fighting and injuring someone).

It was at the start of the fourth wave that she started seeing her daughter's father and she remained in that romantic relationship for approximately three years, until she was nearly 20. The last fight she self-reported during this period occurred about six months into their relationship and she did not self-report any offenses for more than two and a half years after that. When her daughter was about eight months old, Galatea returned to school and started working at a legitimate job; she worked steadily for the next eighteen months. Three months before the end of their relationship (during wave 8), however, Galatea ended her period of abstinence and started to self-report fighting, driving drunk or high, buying or selling stolen property, shoplifting, and high to extremely high drug and alcohol consequences and dependence symptoms. She also

reported that she lost her long-term job the same month that her relationship ended, and she changed residences the month after that. In the two years since then, she reported a few different short-term legal jobs and she self-reported selling drugs as a source of income. In the year before we met, she had been arrested for marijuana possession and she self-reported selling drugs, driving drunk or high, carrying a gun, being paid for sex, and fighting. Her self-reported offending variety score for the most proximate Pathways study period to the qualitative interview (wave 10) was .32, indicating that she self-reported engaging in seven of twenty-two possible offenses in the last year of the Pathways study.

Galatea and her daughter's father had broken up two years prior to the qualitative interview, when her daughter was about two years old. She said they broke up because he got another woman pregnant and based on her account, it sounded as though the relationship was rocky for a few months before it officially ended. Galatea said that her daughter was doing well, was in school and going to church, and that she spoke with her daughter about once a month. She struggled to pay child support and had been arrested twice in the previous year for nonsupport of a child. Galatea said that she returned to selling drugs after her relationship with her daughter's father ended and she was subsequently evicted from their home; she also lost custody of her daughter during this period.

Involvement in crime—Qualitative data. Galatea's participation in the Pathways Study ended three months before the qualitative interview, so I have no record of her involvement in crime during that period. However, during our interview it became apparent to me that she was probably selling drugs from her mother's house while I was

there (her mother was not home at the time). Her mother's home was a tidy row house at the end of a row on a narrow, one-way street and it was bordered by an alley on one side. The house was about a block away from a busy street lined with small, locally-owned businesses; Galatea's regular Pathways interviewer described the neighborhood as "ok in the morning" but did not recommend I visit in the afternoon.

During the interview, Galatea received a few phone calls that she said were from her brother, but she also told me that her brother was locked up at the time. She excused herself during twice during the interview to go out to the back door. In the field notes presented below, taken during these brief interludes and after the interview, I described my immediate perceptions.

***During the interview:** Someone whistles outside, and she excuses herself and takes her handbag with her. Is she selling drugs?*

***After the interview:** On at least two occasions she excused herself to go out to the back door, and on the second time I realized that she kept her purse with her. I noticed right off the bat that she kept her purse close to her as we talked. At first I thought maybe it was because she kept her phone in it but her phone wasn't in the purse; she kept the phone out of the purse. But the second time she went to the back door I realized that somebody outside had just whistled [this can also be heard on the audio recording]; somebody rang her phone and then somebody whistled, and it occurred to me at that point that maybe she was selling drugs out of the back [of the house].*

Things that she said during the interview also suggested that she was actively involved in selling drugs at the time. Generally, she said she sold drugs and "sold her body" to pay child support and to support herself.¹²² Asked to describe what was going

¹²²I am unsure whether she was referring to prostitution or working as an exotic dancer; there is evidence that she had done both in the past

on when she was arrested for marijuana possession (a couple of months before she was arrested for nonsupport of a child), Galatea said,

Galatea: *Well, actually I was trying to sell drugs to keep child support off my ass, because me personally, being who I am, I don't think I should be locked up for no child support. Not when I want to be there for my daughter and I—I know that's where I want to be. But God puts us where we need to be and not where we want to be so.*

Me: *So you feel like these arrests are sort of related in that—in that way?*

Galatea: *Trying to better myself, not really trying to put myself out there. But included with dancing and s—selling my body for money—all that plays a perspective in this, you know what I mean? But my baby father, if he would have known that I—I want him to understand what I'm going through so he know that I was trying, like. He don't think I'm trying to pay for child support to take care of my daughter and I am, but this shit right here [crime reported on the timeline] is not good.*

Later Galatea added:

Galatea: *I'm not fortunate enough like everybody else is to be able to say, ok, let me, let me stop selling drugs and go ahead and pursue this career, because like financially my mom got money or my dad got money. No, it's not like that. It's like OK, let me start hustling for two months, stack up my bread, which is my money, so I can go ahead and put myself in school. But that shows you, me trying to do that, I might get arrested, might get killed, might get shot, might have to shoot somebody, might have to kill somebody in order for me to stack my little bit of money hustling just to get to school.*

Even though she seemed honest about her involvement in selling drugs and other income-generating offenses, Galatea was sensitive to being perceived as an offender by me. When I asked whether she made decisions about avoiding situations where she could get into trouble (a question on the interview guide), Galatea was adamant in her response.

Galatea: *I don't always go for the negative stuff first, miss. I just want to make that clear. So you could stop saying that, like I'm—making it seem like I put this stuff before I make a good decision. Nooo. I'd rather go to church than do this shit. I'm serious.*

APPENDIX D: TIMELINES

This appendix presents abbreviated timelines for twenty informants whose accounts are most prominent in the findings presented here. These timelines reflect much of the same data that the informants' saw and sometimes referred to as we were doing the interview. They represent calendar data collected by the Pathways to Desistance study as well as some of the events that were noted during the qualitative interview. The calendar data incorporated into the timelines presented here include the informant's self-reported offending variety score (indicated by the graph), periods of incarceration, employment, and school (indicated by color coding along the x-axis) and arrests (indicated by orange X's). I also made note, of some of the types of offenses captured in the self-reported offending variety score. The events drawn from the qualitative interviews are indicated with purple or pink X's and a note indicating the event; these are typically births of children, the start or end of a significant relationship, or the death of an important person that the informant talked about during the interview. They are best viewed in color.

I used these timelines throughout the analyses. Constructing the timelines allowed me to reflect on individual patterns of offending and what those patterns might mean with respect to life events and the themes that emerged from the interviews. They also allowed me to compare the accounts in the interviews to the timelines so that my evaluation of the accounts and themes continued to be grounded in the quantitative data, just as the interviews were at the time they were conducted. The abbreviated timelines are presented in this appendix in an effort to maintain the transparency of my qualitative data analysis process and so that the reader can compare them to the accounts for themselves should the need arise.

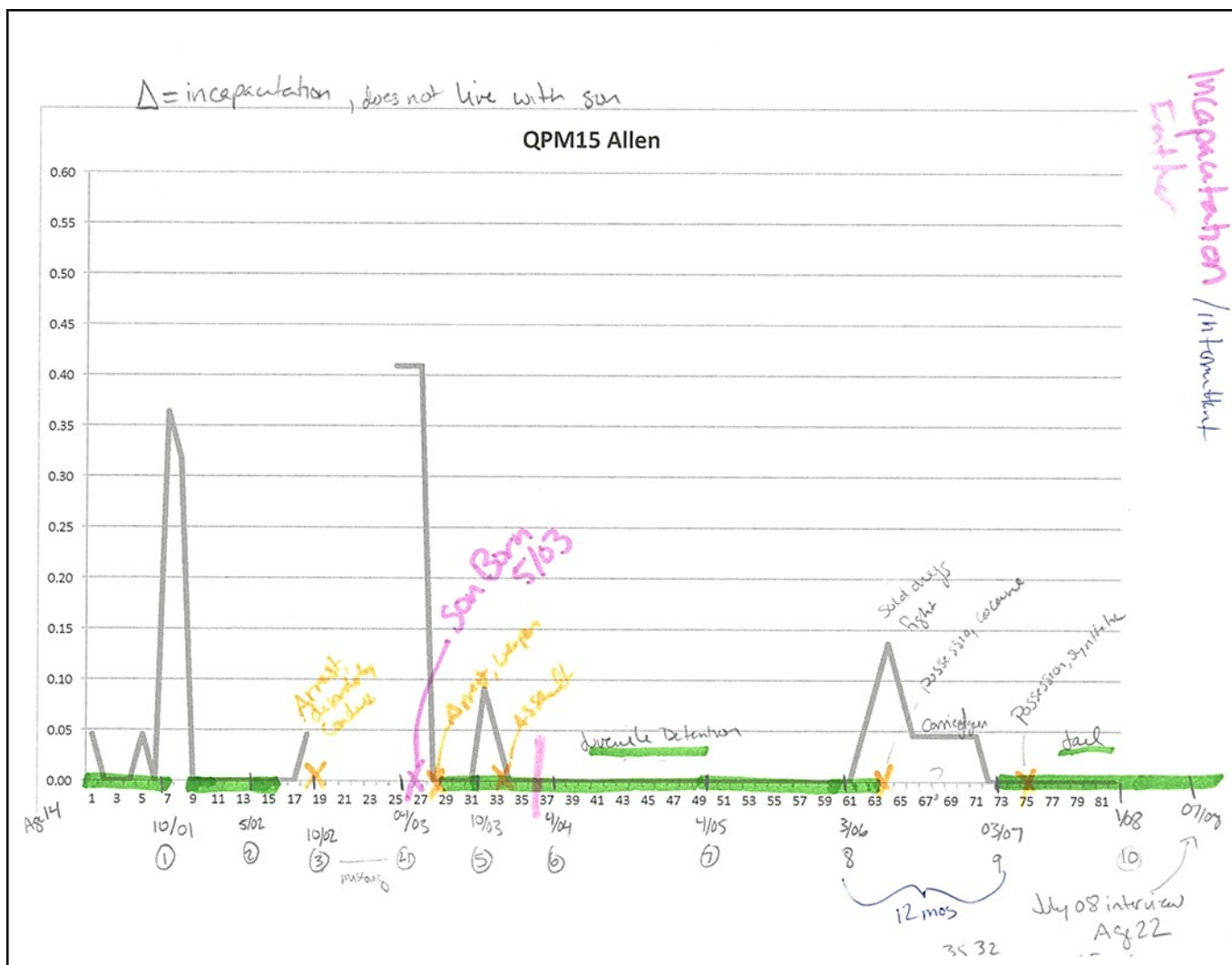


Figure D.1 Timeline for Allen, age 22, incarcerated desister

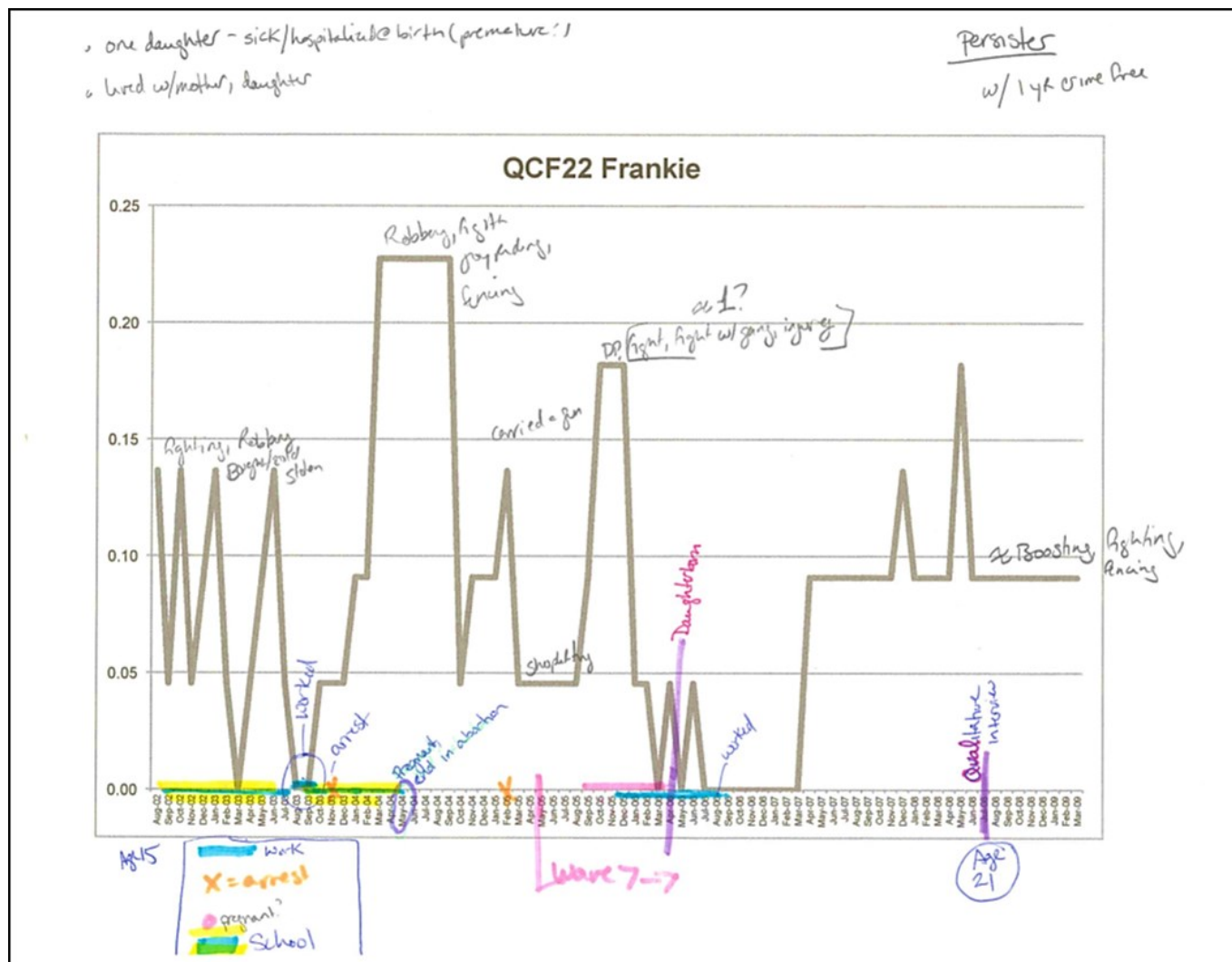


Figure D.4 Timeline for Frankie, age 21, persister

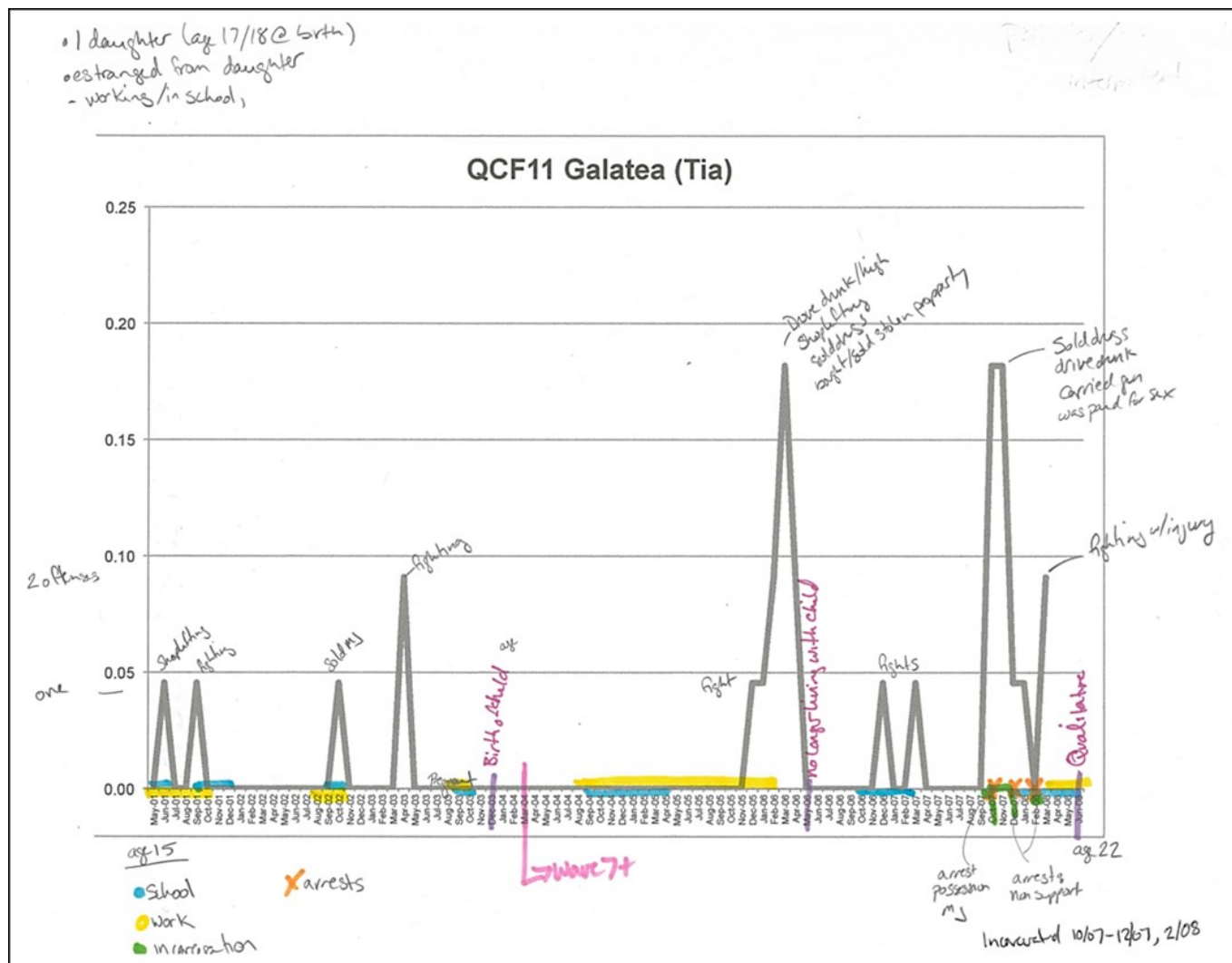


Figure D.5 Timeline for Galatea, age 22, persister

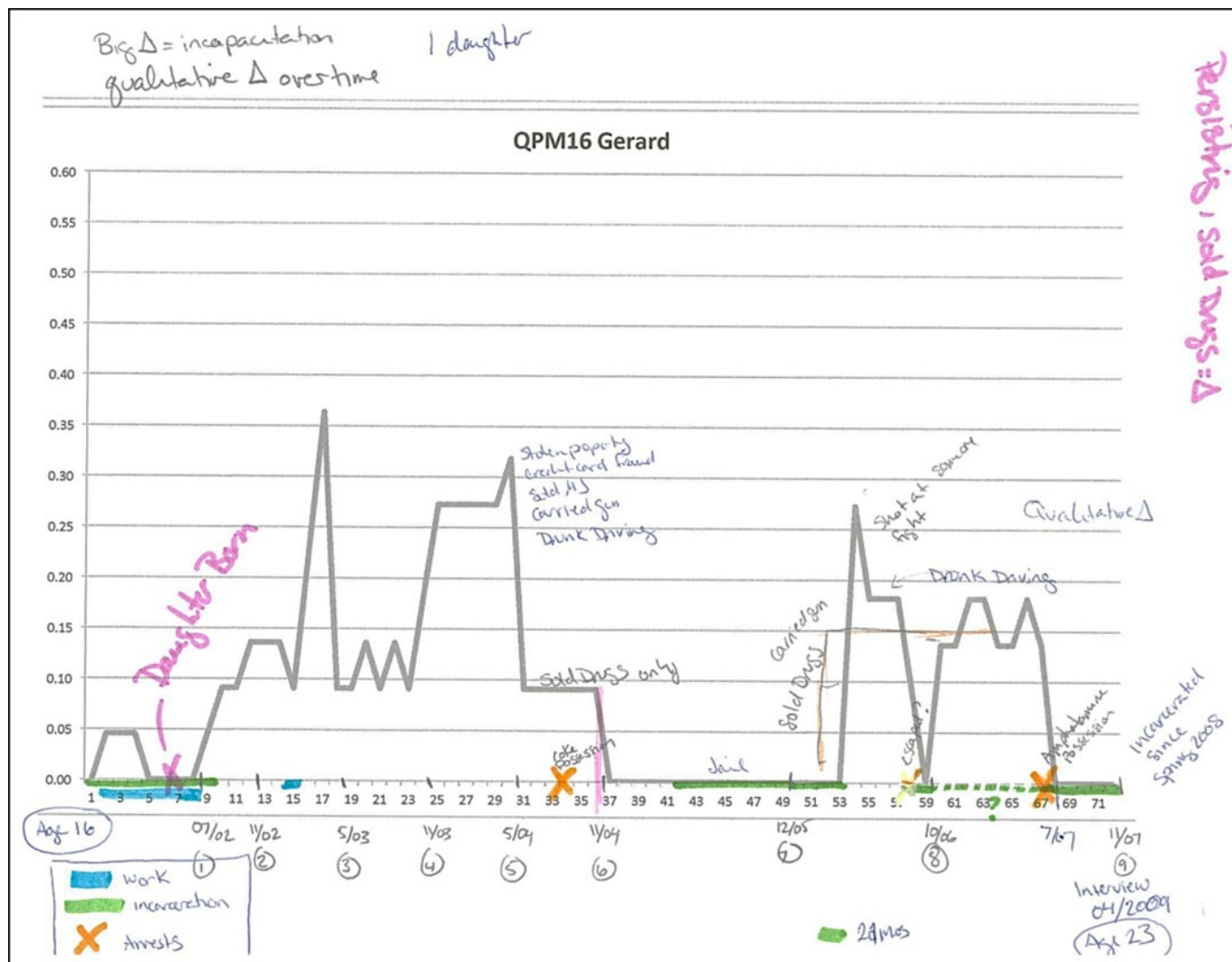


Figure D.6 Timeline for Gerard, age 23, incarcerated persister

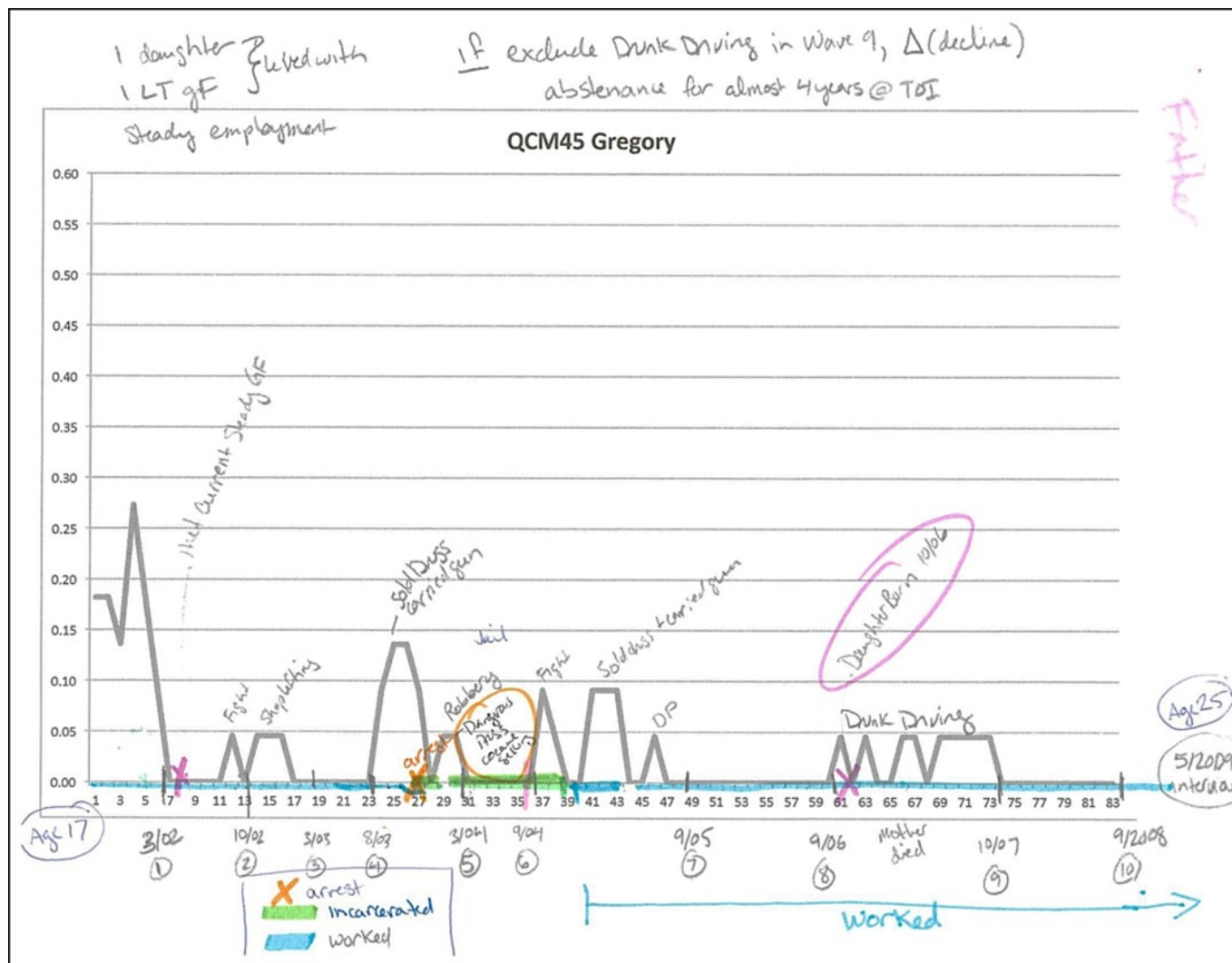


Figure D.7 Timeline for Gregory, age 25, desister

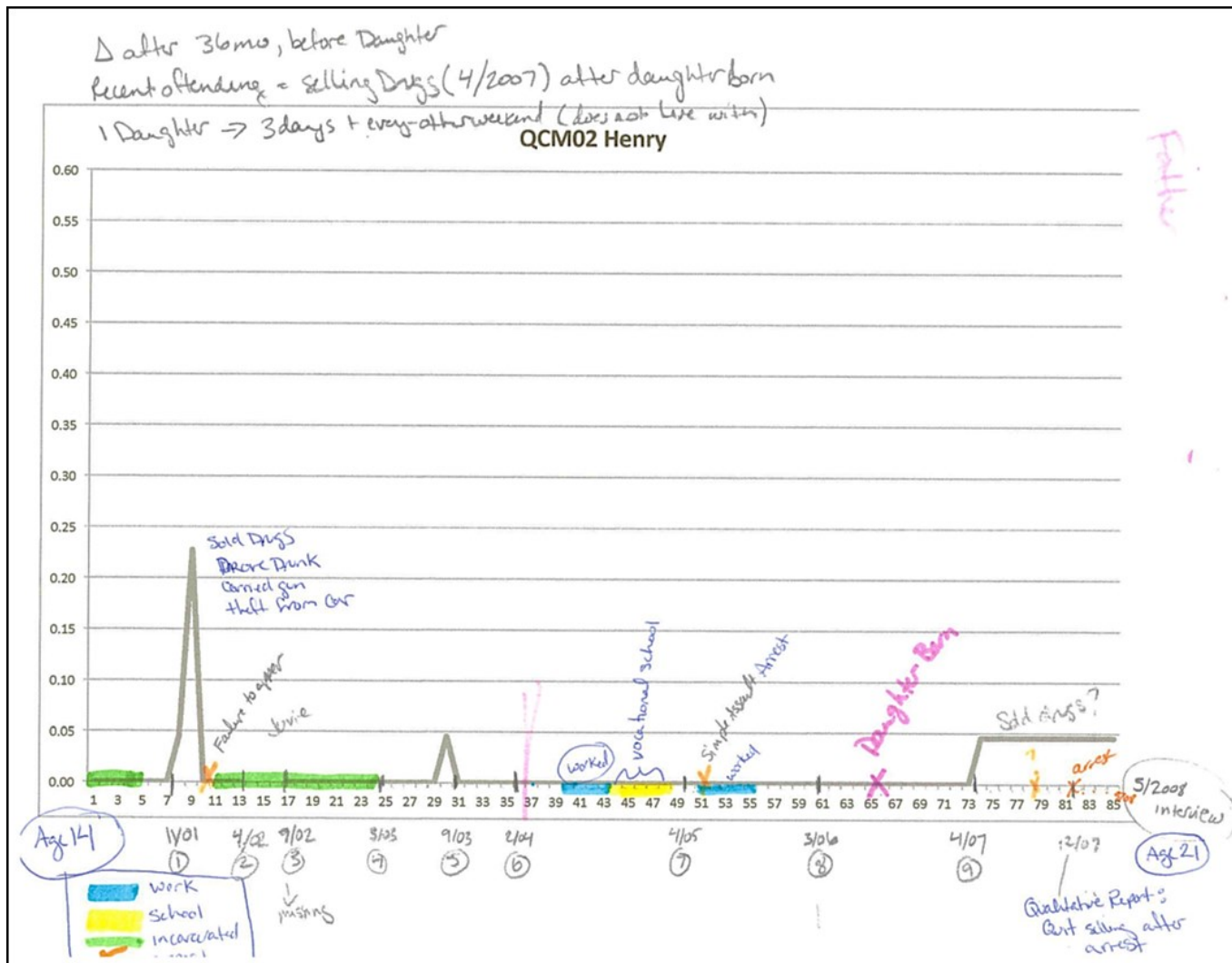


Figure D.8 Timeline for Henry, age 21, desister

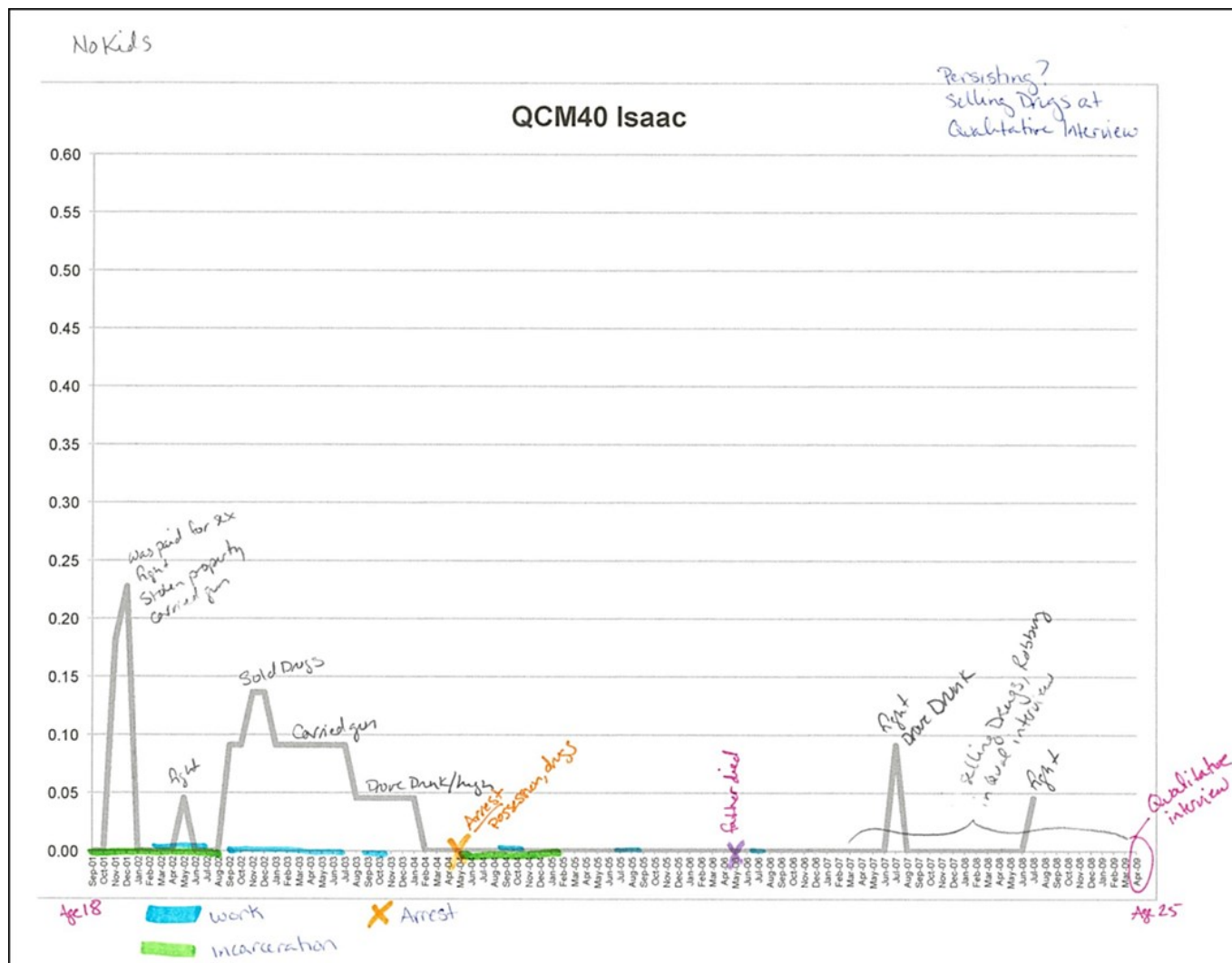


Figure D.9 Timeline for Isaac, age 25, desister

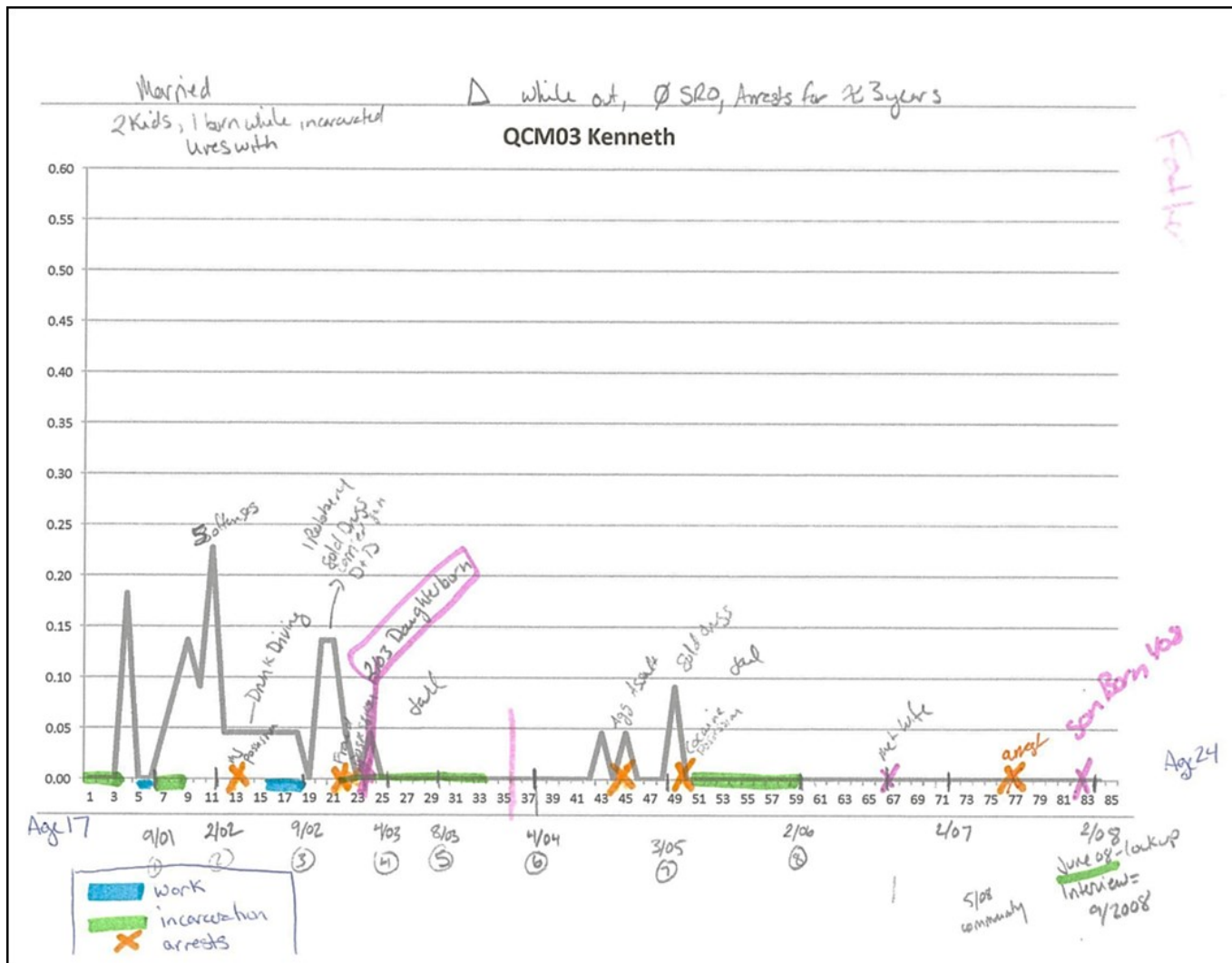


Figure D.10 Timeline for Kenneth, age 24, desister

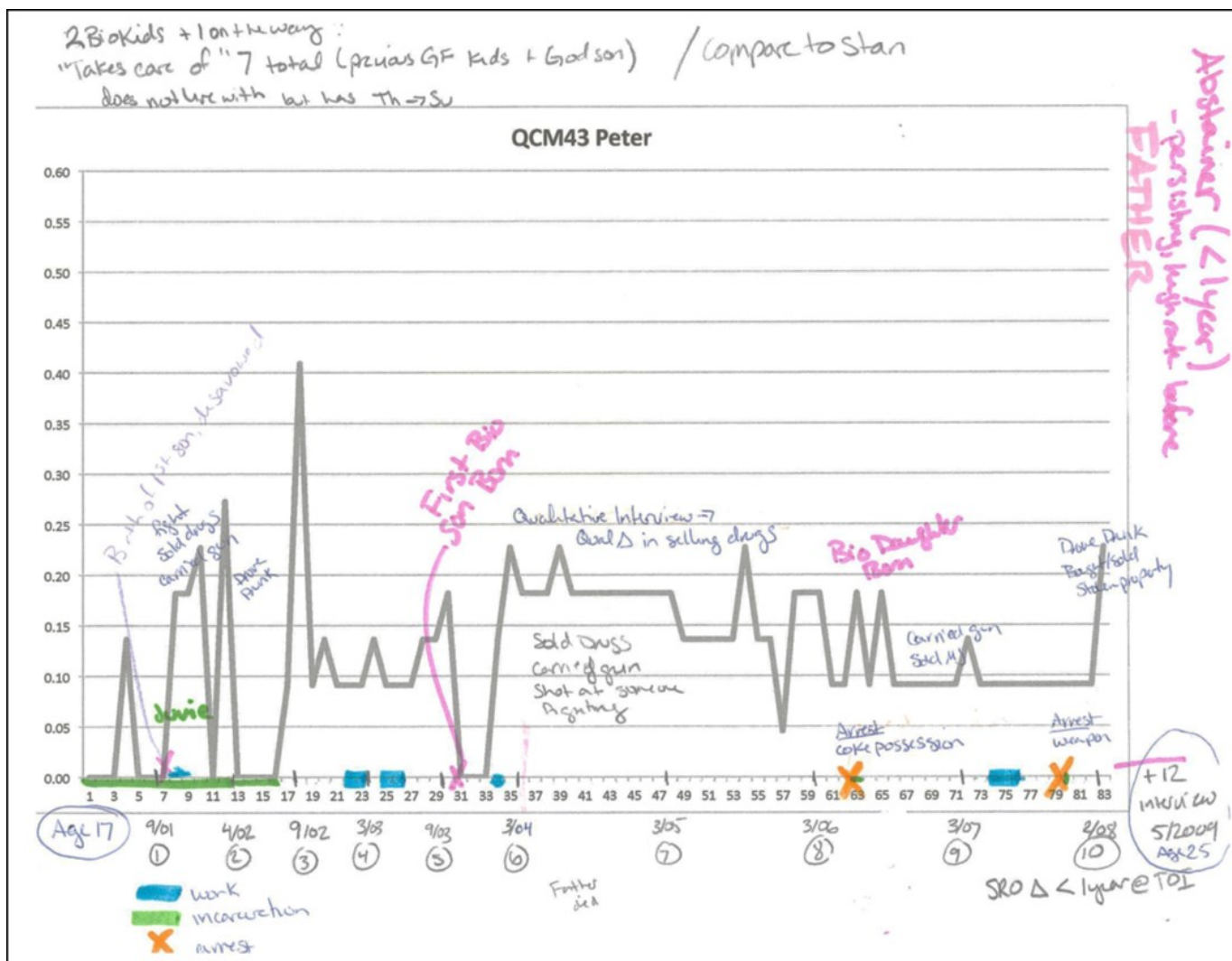


Figure D.11 Timeline for Peter, age 25, persister

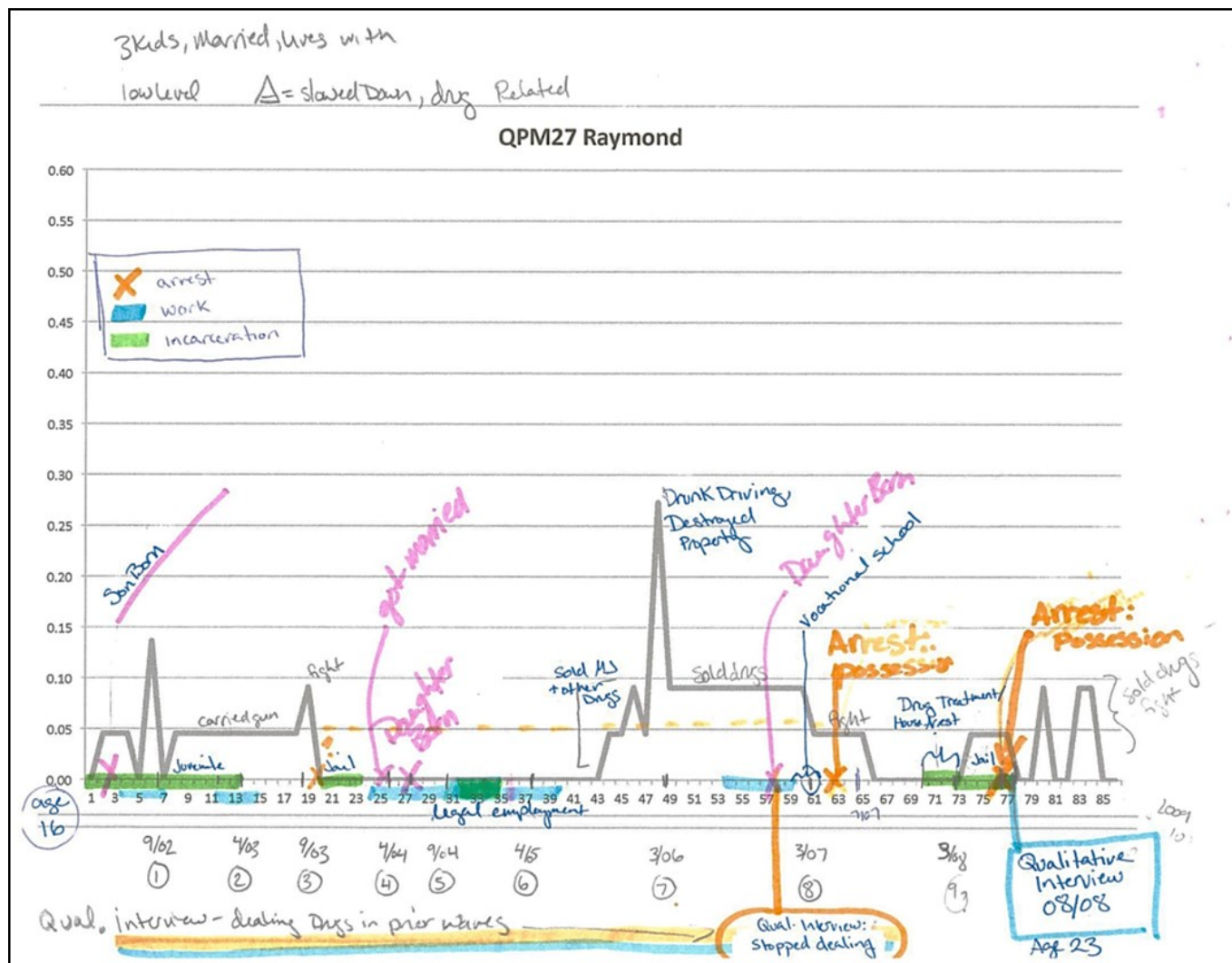


Figure D.13 Timeline for Raymond, age 23, desister

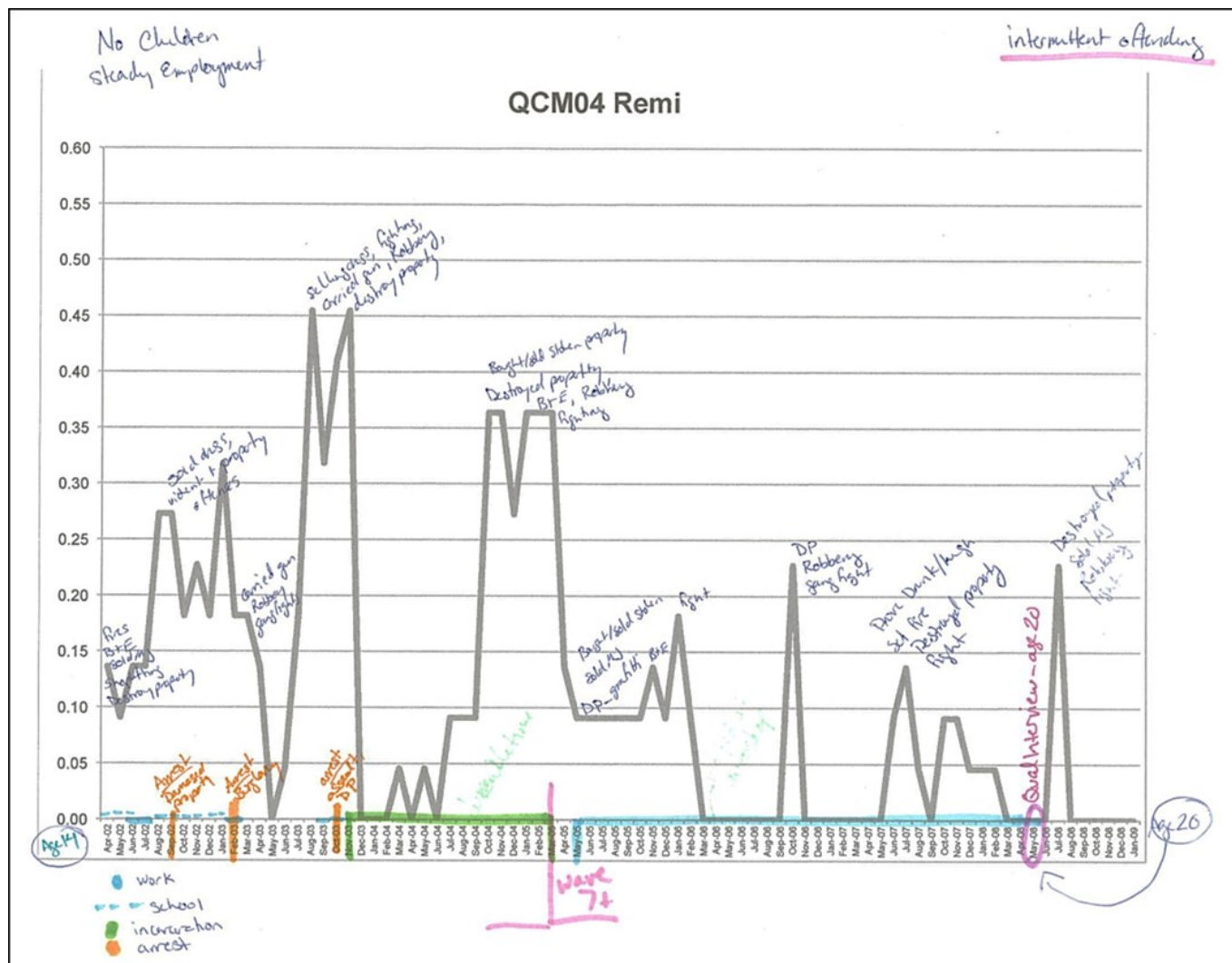


Figure D.14 Timeline for Remi, age 20, persister

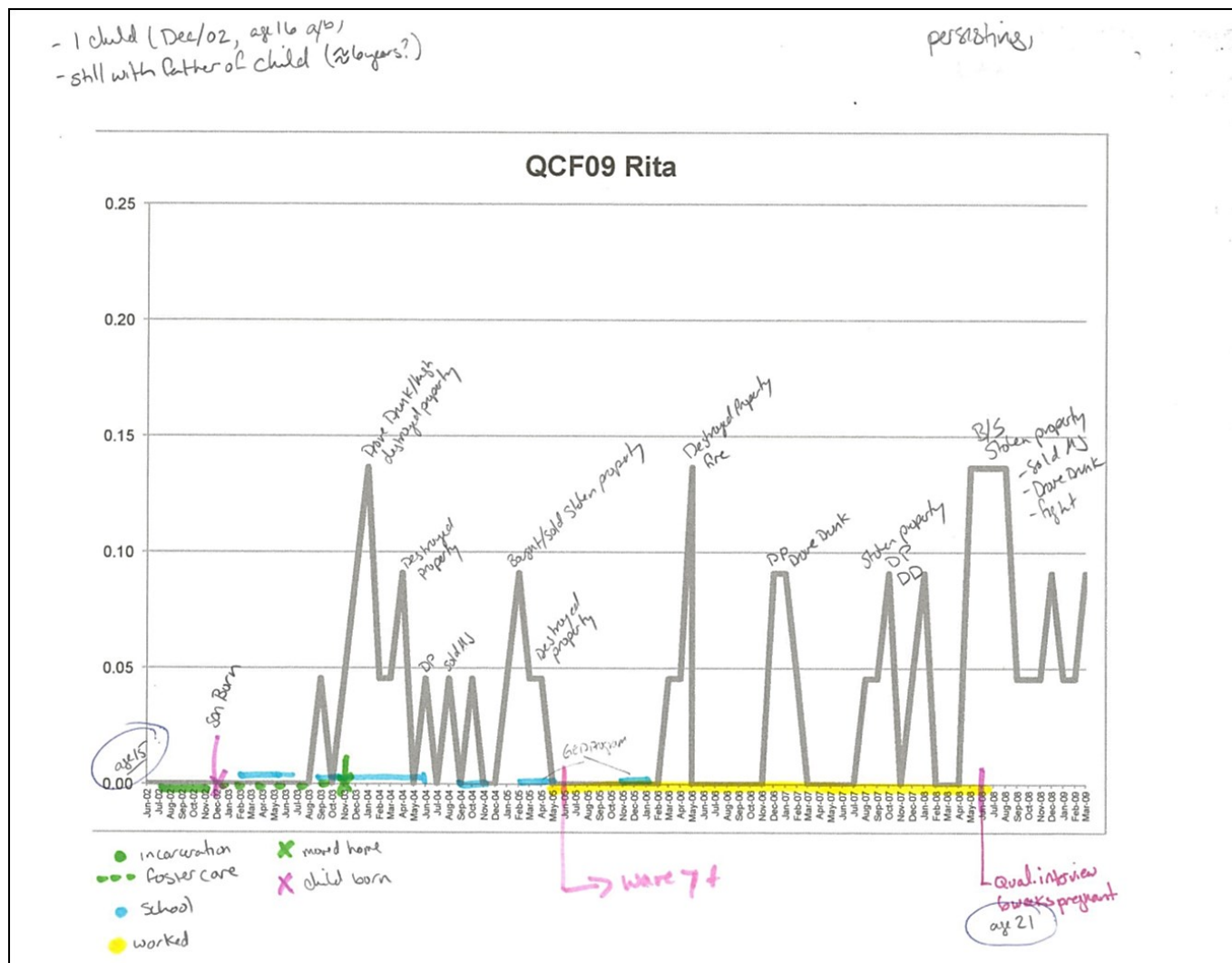


Figure D.15 Timeline for Rita, age 21, persister

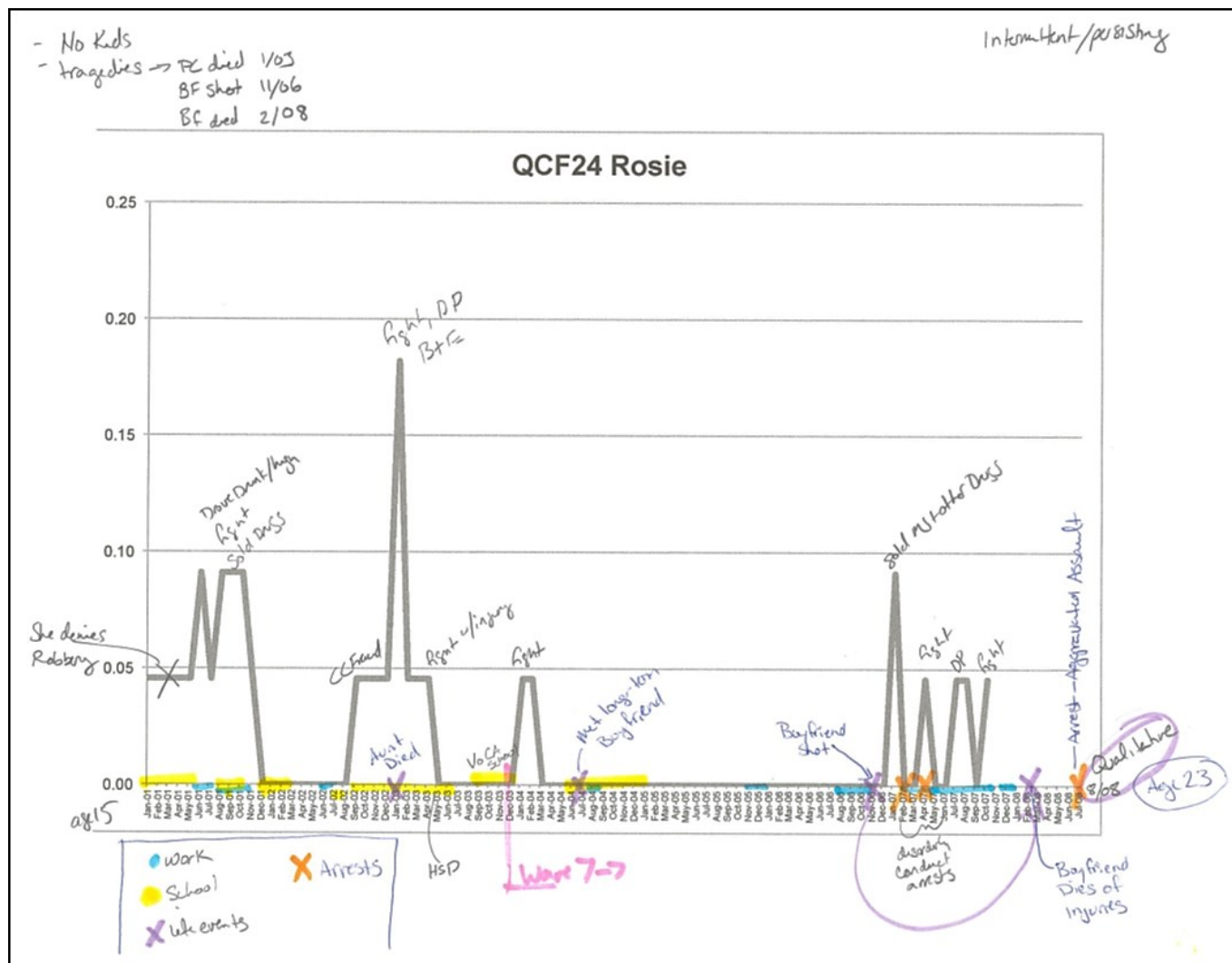


Figure D.16 Timeline for Rosie, age 23, persister

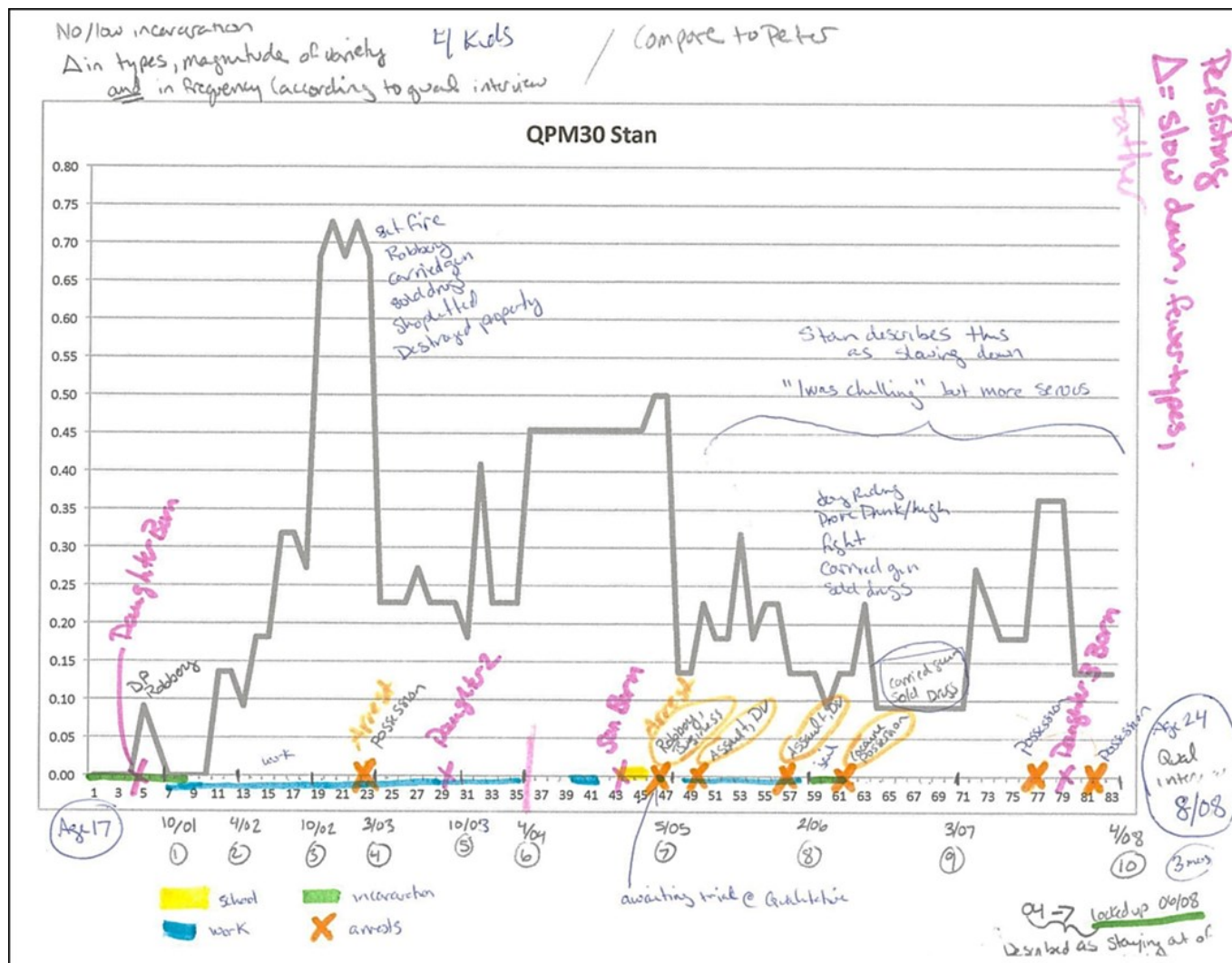


Figure D.18 Timeline for Stan, age 24, incarcerated persister

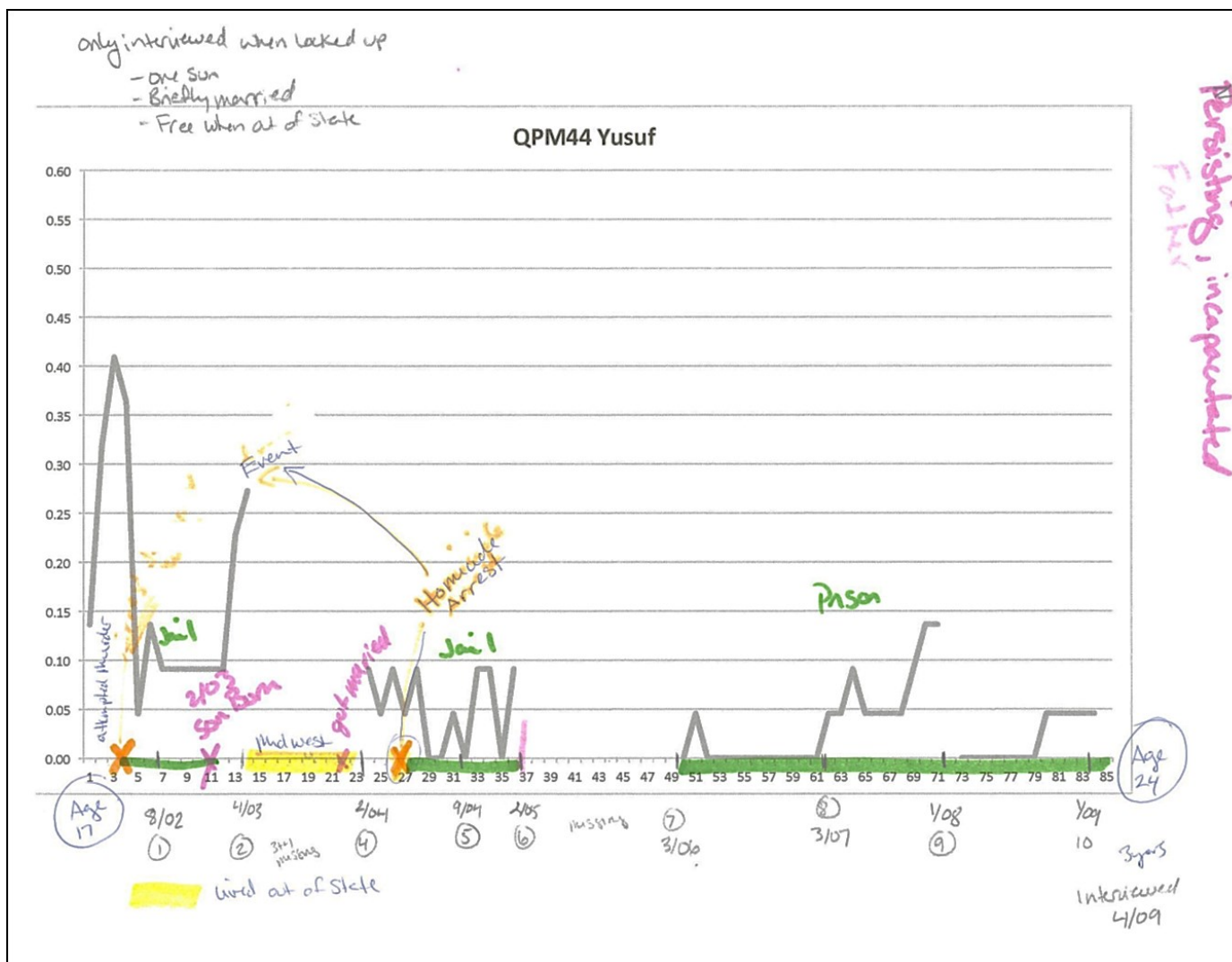


Figure D.20 Timeline for Yusef, age 24, incarcerated persister

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