© 2013 Zenta E. Gomez Auyong
To Rutha, who is smart, kind, compassionate, beautiful, and strong. You can do anything you dream of, and all I dream for you is happiness. I love you.
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THE COMPARATIVE UTILITY OF MAINSTREAM CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES IN EXPLAINING OFFENDER LIFE-HISTORIES

By

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Major: Criminology, Law, and Society

Using retrospective longitudinal data of both female and male individual's life narratives, this study explored the comparative utility of several mainstream criminological theories. The research utilized a real world sampling methodology, and included 44 (24 female and 20 male) participants who were over the age of 40. The principal interest was to compare the explanatory capability of selected current criminological theories when applied to individual life-history accounts of the development, continuation, and cessation of criminal involvement. The analysis considered four major theoretical branches: Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/ Life-course Theories of Criminality. Further, the study incorporated women's life-histories; an area of continued neglect and underdevelopment in Criminology. Specific analyses examined whether the development, continuation, and cessation of delinquency and crime differs in the life-histories of male and female respondents.

The results show that Social Control theory and Developmental/ Life-Course theory indicators had the greatest explanatory capabilities for understanding the full
process of crime in real lives for both female and male individuals and also accounted best for specific stages from onset, to continuance, to desistance. Further, the researcher concluded that while female criminal pathways had observable differences to that of male pathways, for example in the role of a significant other, the overall process of crime can be explained with the same theoretical constructs.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

Interest in understanding and explaining criminal behavior has an extensive history involving many disciplines that far precedes the emergence of Criminology as a recognized field of study. Therefore, it is not surprising that Criminology has generated numerous competing theories to explain the phenomenon of crime and criminality. Many of these theories share basic suppositions about criminal behaviors and offer explanations rooted in shared assumptions, thus forming or allowing for general categories and groups of theoretical schools of thought. While these approaches may vary on what aspect of crime and criminality is of central importance and focus, whether explicitly stated or barely implied, each of these theoretical categories presents an explanation for the emergence or etiology of crime, the factors necessary or reasons for the stability and continuation of criminality, and the possible or eventual cessation of criminal behavior.

Criminal activity, even when executed by organized groups, is ultimately the responsibility of individuals (Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, and Visher 1986). Therefore, in order to explore the comparative utility of criminological theories, it is appropriate to apply the life-course perspective and focus on individual life-histories. That is because, in order to understand individual's criminal behavior and to test the viability of theoretical explanations, it is necessary to fully consider individual lives. While criminological theories propose that certain factors should be present or absent in the formation of criminal outcomes, empirical tests of these theories are often conducted using cross-sectional data measuring variables limited to present individual conditions or some
rather narrowly defined portion of a full life course, limited focus or time bound risk or protective factors, or on a single criminal form or phenomenon. In short, most research on criminal behavior has some combination of slices of life and slices of behavior which we then are left to interpret with regard to relationships with one or another crime or criminality dependent variable. Criminal outcomes in individual lives are preceded by and nested in a life’s worth of events and changes that occur continuously throughout time. To actually unravel a single social phenomenon, such as criminal behavior, the past should first be explored (Elder, 1994). To fully examine the comparative usefulness of criminological theories, it is valuable to employ a life-history methodology that permits the assessment of theoretical propositions of the conditions related to the emergence, continuation, as well as the end of criminality (Frazier, 1976 and 1978; Irwin, 2002; Laub and Sampson, 2003).

According to the life-course paradigm, individual pathways are shaped by a sequence of interlocked trajectories, transitions, and adaptations which lead to the creation of long-term patterns, as well as changes and redirection, occurring during a life span (Sampson and Laub, 1992). Life-course criminology is a paradigm of thought – and does not in itself offer any explanation for crime. Therefore, while the life-course approach can serve as a manner of thinking about crime or framing it for analysis, criminological theories are required in order to explain criminological facts.

However, not all criminological theories are ideologically compatible with the life-course’s “long-view” approach to analysis, and some directly debate the utility of exploring crime in a disaggregated and longitudinal format (Osgood, 2005; Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2003). At its core, a main aspect of the controversy is based
on whether a theory assumes that the correlates of individual offending and crime are variable across individuals, time, and place; or, whether it is assumed that the correlates of individual offending and crime are the same for all individuals regardless of sociodemographic conditions. In a simplified form, a life-course perspective necessitates longitudinal research designs and the exploration of numerous life conditions, while other perspectives argue against the usefulness or necessity of longitudinal research and view the criminal process as a static and stable function (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Osgood, 2005; Blumstein et al., 1986; Piquero et al., 2003).

Focusing on timing, duration, and ordering of events through life-history methodology, although compatible with the life-course paradigm, nevertheless allows for exploration of the permanence as well as discontinuity of behaviors (Sampson and Laub, 1992; Simons, Johnson, Conger, and Elder, 1998) and does not exclude testing the assumptions of static criminological theories. It is not possible to fully or adequately test life-course compatible theories using cross-sectional methodologies. By examining criminal offending as a general process (Laub and Sampson, 2003), and including data on childhood, adolescence, and adulthood experiences, it is possible to test theories that are both compatible with longitudinal data and research designs as well as some theories that argue against the utility of this methodology.

Using a life-history approach, the central purpose of this study was to explore the comparative utility of several major mainstream criminological theories. In other words, the principle interest was to compare the explanatory capability of selected current criminological theories when applied to individual life-history accounts of the development, continuation, and cessation of criminal involvement. The analysis
considered four major modern theoretical branches: Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/ Life-course Theories of Crime and criminality. Multi-theory comparisons are less common than single theory tests in empirical research, yet the knowledge gained from evaluating various theories “with each other and with empirical results” is valuable for the furthering of and development of life-course theories in Criminology (Farrington, 2002). Further, this study aimed to incorporate a focus on women offender’s life-histories; an area that continues to be neglected and underdeveloped in criminology.

**Life Narrative Methodology**

Retrospective longitudinal data of individual’s life narratives was collected using a semi-structured interviewing methodology. Although it has been scarcely utilized to compare the utility of modern criminological theories, a life-history method has many strengths and advantages (Frazier, 1978; Gadd & Farrall, 2004; King & Chambliss, 1972; Kлокars, 1974; Laub, 1984; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Shaw, 1930; Snodgrass, 1982; Steffensmeier, 1986; Steffensmeier & Ulmer, 2005; Sutherland, 1937). For example, life-history approaches allow researchers to thoroughly examine the process of initiation towards criminal behaviors, the involvement in analogous activities related to criminality, and the progression towards either minimal or serious involvement in crime. It permits the researcher to explore the offender’s personal perspective, along with the situational and sociohistorical context of the circumstances. Further, because the “order” of events and circumstances are actually observable, life-history methods allow for the robust exploration of “process”; a term often used, but rarely truly observed through many other research methodologies (Becker, 1966; Laub, 1984).
Further, life story methods have a deep, lengthy, and beneficial history within social science research focused on deviance (Frazier, 1978). In the 1920’s and 1930’s, life story or oral history methodologies were of primary importance in Criminological research (Laub, 1984). For example, life-history methods can be traced back to Thomas and Znaniecki’s 1918-1921 *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1958), and the “own story” approach was refined in prominent example works by Shaw’s (1930) *The Jack-Roller* and (1938) *Brothers In Crime*, as well as Sutherland’s *The Professional Thief* (1937). This form of life story methodology remained a principal methodology in many of the early University of Chicago sociological studies, but faded after the 1940’s when the culture of social sciences began to place greater emphasis on quantifiable methodologies (Frazier, 1978; Goodey, 2000). Although an interest in individual lives and life events was revitalized within Criminology largely due to Blumstein et al.’s (1989) research on criminal careers and the subsequent emergence of life-course criminology (Farrington, 2002; Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2003), most research efforts continue to orient toward the use of quantitative methodologies (Piquero et al., 2003). The use of qualitative methods, including “life stories,” particularly for testing theory, continues to be an infrequent choice by researchers within the discipline.

While the contemporary use of life-narrative methodology within the field of Criminology is rare, there are a few notable exceptions. For example, the current research effort was modeled after and inspired by Frazier’s (1976) work examining the explanatory power of different theoretical approaches for addressing the etiology, patterning, and cessation of deviance. Frazier examined “the socialization approach,” “the societal reaction approach,” and “control theory.” The research utilized a
methodological approach similar to the “own story” technique of Shaw (1930), however different in both the assumptions regarding the validity of personal accounts rather than official records, and that Frazier personally interviewed the participants while Shaw collected written accounts from delinquents. Frazier also used official records to guide respondents when they could not recall specifics regarding the length of incarceration at a certain point in time, the number of arrests, or other chronological or numerical facts. In total, Frazier explored the ability of theoretical approaches to explain deviant behaviors from fifty life-histories of imprisoned men who had engaged in at least one episode of significant deviant activity in their life span. The findings result with the most support for control theory, followed by limited support for the societal reaction approach, and the least amount of evidence to support the socialization approach. At the conclusion Frazier (1976) noted that factors consistent with each theoretical perspective may emerge as significant and then disappear from an individual’s life at different points in the life-span. Therefore, because different factors surface based on a variety of conditions, scholars should look at “deviance as a process that goes through different phases and changes…” (p.221). While prominent theories at the time were theories of the “middle range” using cross-sectional data, Frazier advocated for a more general theoretical approach focusing on the life-course and process of deviance in that context. Frazier concluded that a general theory of deviance using whole lives should be formulated. Although life-course perspectives in criminology did not officially emerge until the 1980’s, Frazier (1976) seemed to be laying part of the groundwork for the later popularized, and officially coined, “way of thinking” about crime.
More recently, Laub and Sampson (2003) utilized a life-history interview methodology, along with longitudinal data, to explore both persistence and desistance of crime over the life-course. This important study, Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70, is considered by many to be the longest longitudinal study available in criminology (Piquero, 2004). They located public records for the 500 original subjects from Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency, a part of the three wave study from Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1950). After locating death records and official criminal records, Laub and Sampson located and conducted life-history interviews with 52 of those men. The researchers stated that life-history methodologies “uncover new ideas and challenge conventional wisdom” (p.277). They highlighted five main advantages: 1) “the life-history method uniquely captures the process of both becoming involved in and disengaging from crime and other antisocial behavior,” 2) “life-histories can uncover complex patterns of continuity and change in individual behavior over time” 3) “life-histories reveal the complexity of criminal behavior” 4) “life-histories are grounded in social and historical context” and 5) “life-history method shows the human side of offenders” (Laub & Sampson, 2003: 58-59). By using both quantitative as well as qualitative data, Laub and Sampson (2003) were able to explore both patterning of behavior, as well as provide a comprehensive view of individual criminal lives.

Similar to Frazier (1976), Laub and Sampson’s central goal was to understand persistence and desistance of crime across the life-course, as well as the “zig-zag” of behavior that can occur in between those two situations (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Piquero, 2004). The primary purpose of their research was not to test full criminological theories, but instead evaluate the applicability of commonly proposed explanations for
onset, persistence, and deistance such as formal and informal sources of control, peer influences (social learning), human agency, situational events and routine activities, and maturation; and ultimately propose an expanded version of their age-graded theory of informal social control.

To conclude, Laub and Sampson emphasized that, while historical context matters and needs to be taken into perspective when discussing individual pathways; the most important influences on persistence and desistance from crime appear to be “more general than specific with respect to place, historical time, gender, and race” (p.283). Based on their findings, Laub and Sampson concluded that the process of desistance and persistence is formed through a dynamic, interactive individual life experience. Criticizing developmental and typological criminology, Laub and Sampson argued that childhood characteristics, adolescent characteristics, and individual differences do not alone explain long-term patterns in the life-course. Instead, they argued that the interaction between “turning points” throughout the entire life course with factors such as human agency and choice, community and historical context, routine activity, aging, and other life-course events is what really matters in the course of an individual life.

**Current Focus**

The current effort aimed to explore the utility of selected mainstream criminological theories through the use of life-history methodology. The analysis considered four prominent theoretical branches: Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/Life-course Theories of Criminology. The interest was to compare the explanatory capability of these criminological theories when applied to interviews focused on individual’s lives, including information on
criminal development, continuation, and cessation. The present study employed methods similar to that of previous research utilizing life narrative methodologies (Frazier, 1976; Laub and Sampson, 2003), and extended past research by incorporating women’s life stories in the analysis.

**Inclusion of Female Participants**

The analysis included women offender’s life-histories, an area which continues to need further development in criminology. This lack of empirical attention has led to a gap of knowledge, and female deviance is much less understood than that of males (Bottcher, 2001; Caulfield, 2010). The majority of life-course research continues to explore male offenders (Farrington, 2002), and more specifically, recent studies applying life narrative methodologies (Frazier, 1976; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Carlsson, 2013) have yet to include female offender’s life-histories. Research providing comparisons of the development, continuation, and cessation of delinquency and crime among female and male individuals, as well as studies exploring whether the comparative utility of criminological theories differs with regard to male and female life-histories is an important and necessary addition to the extant literature (Farrington, 2002; Kruttschnitt, 2013).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Learning Theories

The underlying assumption of social learning theories is that the same learning processes occurring within social frameworks, interpersonal interactions, and other situational contexts generating conformity in individuals, also produces deviance (Akers & Jensen, 2006). Further, according to this theoretical perspective, the factors accountable for the commencement of criminal and deviant behaviors are, in turn, the same variables explaining what ends criminal activity in an individual’s life course (Laub & Sampson, 2003). The focal point and predominant emphasis of this branch of theories is the content and process of learning in itself, and much less weight is placed on the structural backdrop (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). This theory branch incorporates general concepts from behaviorism to a sociological theoretical framework (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosевич, 1979). Social learning theories do not solely focus on the causes of crime, but also include factors that are “facilitating as well as protective and preventive” towards criminal or other “novel” behaviors (Akers & Jensen, 2006). Criminal and deviant behaviors, according to social learning theories, are learned through the same process that other behaviors are learned (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Conforming or deviant behaviors are a result of the ratio of exposure to life-long socialization and situational influences, as well as those influences “predictive of future behavior,” that are either favorable or unfavorable to law abiding actions (Akers & Jensen, 2006). In addition, other factors of the learning process, such as anticipated consequence, imitation, and reinforcement, have also been included in social learning theories (Akers, 1996; Haynie, 2002).
History

The fundamental idea underpinning learning theory is neither new nor novel. If recognition that the source of human knowledge is learned in social settings is seen as the departing point, one can trace this idea back more than 2000 years. For example, Aristotle (384-322 B.C) held that, instead of being intrinsic or innate, all knowledge is learned through experience and association. Jumping to modern times, the roots of learning theories may be seen in many elaborations by philosophers and scientists; - In its application to crime and criminal behavior, the history of social learning theories probably begin with Tarde’s “laws of imitation” (Tarde, 1890) and his rejection of the Lombrosian theory’s biological explanation of crime (Tarde, 1903; Wilson, 1954). For purposes of this review, we will start with Tarde.

Laws of Imitation

According to Tarde, behavior is an outcome, or what follows, the ideas learned by associating with other individuals (Vold et al., 2002). His theoretical approach to understanding criminals and their behavior emphasized incorporating psychological as well as sociological perspectives. However, Tarde placed the greatest importance on the role of the social environment (Wilson, 1954). The theory he developed was based on his observation of three repetitive patterns emerging from his examination of criminal behavior, which led him to argue that there are three “laws of imitation.”

The first “law,” according to Tarde, is that individuals imitate others based on the proportion of exposure they have to other people. Tarde argued that the scope of imitation is larger and faster in cities, where people are frequently associating, and less common and slower in smaller, rural areas. Based on the differences of opportunities for interaction and activity, the amount of change in what is being imitated is greater in
larger cities, and much lower in stable, smaller communities. He defined this law around the concepts of “fashion” and “custom,” and the continuous interaction occurring between these two variables. According to this first law, fashionable actions eventually become “custom,” but with time, these customs change as new “fashions” materialize and create new customs (Wilson, 1954).

Tarde’s second “law of imitation” is that the ideas and behaviors of the “superior” are imitated by the “inferior.” According to the theory, many crimes were first committed by royalty and subsequently imitated by lower social classes. Similarly, Tarde argues that most crimes originate in large cities and are later imitated by those in smaller, rural towns. In general, this second law is concerned with the direction of imitation (Wilson, 1954).

The third and final “law of imitation” is that new ideas and customs replace older ones, “when two mutually exclusive fashions” of criminal behavior “come together” (Wilson, 1954). For example, the behavior of committing murder using a knife as the weapon was largely replaced by the introduction of guns. For this reason, this law is often referred to as the “law of insertion” (i.e. the gun is “inserted” to replace the “knife” for the same underlying crime). The way a crime is more likely to be committed, or the popularity of certain forms of illegal behaviors, change and are replaced by new “fashions” (Wilson, 1954).

Tarde’s theoretical proposition that social environments were more influential in the molding, imitation, and development of criminal behavior than biological or psychological factors weakened and opposed the Lombrosian perspective popular at the time. Further, his theoretical principles laid the groundwork for more modern
criminological social learning perspectives that continue to impact the discipline. For example, Tarde’s influence is noticeable in the basic principles of Sutherland’s differential association theory (Wilson, 1954).

**Differential Association**

Responding to a general critique of the theory and research available in criminology, Sutherland formulated and created a general theory of crime known as *Differential Association Theory* (Sutherland, 1934). The theory was first published in 1934, was elaborated and formalized in 1939, and was expanded to its current state by 1947. The core components of Differential Association, both “what” behaviors are learned (content) as well as “how” they are learned (process), are often considered as based on Mead’s theory of Symbolic Interactionism¹. The theory, devised around these two central elements (content and process) and consisting of nine key points, has remained relatively unchanged from the 1947 version published in the fourth edition of *Criminology* (Adams, 1973; Sutherland, 1947). Further, it has arguably held varied but continuous, influence within the academic discipline, both in the development of social learning theory as well as a source of theoretical debate and criticism (Tittle, Burke, & Jackson, 1986).

The theory aims to organize the known facts about criminality into a “logical arrangement” (Vold et al., 2002); and, is based around Sutherland’s observation that within one social system, conflicting cultural patterns both favorable and unfavorable to criminal behavior exist. Individuals within society are exposed to cultural messages

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¹ Frazier (1976) believes the Differential Association connection to Mead’s Symbolic Interactionism is not perfectly aligned; his position is that Mead’s view of learning was far more dynamic and subject to change than Sutherland’s. For example, Mead’s actor could change easily and relatively often. Sutherland’s actor, on the other hand, is more set in learned behavioral patterns and changing is more difficult and occurs less often.
through interactions with others, and, are exposed to these two conflicting cultural messages in varied degrees, lengths, and frequencies. In turn, those individuals who are exposed to higher rates (an “excess”), intensities, and lengths of cultural definitions favorable to criminality, as opposed to the definitions unfavorable to crime, are argued to learn criminal behaviors and thus become “criminal” (Cressey, 1952).

Sutherland identified the following nine key points (Sutherland, 1947): (1) “Criminal behavior is learned”; (2) “Criminal behavior is learned” during interpersonal communication and interactions with others; (3) Interactions within intimate personal groups are the most influential component of learning criminal behaviors; (4) Learning criminal behavior includes learning about techniques to commit crime as well as the “motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes”; (5) The particular drive towards behavior is learned from the cultural definitions a person is surrounded by that are either favorable or unfavorable towards criminality; (6) As previously mentioned, the principle component of Differential Association Theory is that people learn and adopt criminal behaviors “because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law”; (7) The “frequency, duration, priority, and intensity” of differential associations, both favorable and unfavorable to criminal behavior, vary; (8) The process and components of learning are the same for both criminal and normative behaviors; (9) Although criminal behavior, like normative behavior, may be expressing needs and values (such as needing monetary wealth), it is not explained by those general principles.

Although Sutherland’s theory holds an important role and popularity in the field of Criminology, it has also been substantially criticized (Adams, 1973; Tittle, Burke, &
Jackson, 1986). Central to the critiques, is the claim that the theory is “un-testable,” – a position eventually supported by the theory’s later co-author, Donald Cressey (1960). In particular, it has been often argued that the concepts of Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory are not clearly defined, making operationalization a challenge (Burgess & Akers, 1966). The indefinite nature of its core concepts, “association,” “excess,” “definitions,” “favorableness (or unfavorableness) to law violation,” as well as connotations to ideas like “direction of attitudes and rationalizations” (Tittle, Burke, & Jackson, 1986:406) makes it vulnerable to wide and varied interpretations, a difficulty to compare theory research results and interpretations, and an obscurity to the applicability of available test results (Adams, 1973; Burgess & Akers, 1966; Cressey, 1960; Tittle, Burke, & Jackson, 1986). However, although the theory has faced a large volume of criticism, it has also received its own very significant share of empirical support (Burgess & Akers, 1966; Matsueda, 1988; Vold et al., 2002).

**Cultural and Subcultural Theories**

Another group of theories, often called “cultural deviance” (Akers, 1996), “Culture Conflict” (Frazier, 1976), or/and “subcultural” theories, are a logical subsequent focus in a summary of Social Learning Theories because they emphasize the “content” or “source” of learning, or the structure within which values and customs are formed, and not the “process.” In other words, while they are sometimes argued to be completely separate theoretical branch, Cultural Theories place weight on the importance of the structural backdrop. They also address and explain ways in which culturally grounded ideas or precepts are transmitted causing criminal behavior, independent from social and environmental learning conditions. Unlike Social Learning Theories, Cultural theories do not address individual deviance and crime, and instead direct focus on the
culture that transmits deviant values and the rates that vary from one culture to another (Akers, 1996). However, at their core, Culture Theories and Social Learning Theories share the fundamental assumption that deviant and criminal individuals continue their behavior because they have internalized ideas (whether culturally transmitted or socially learned), which encourage and affirm their actions (Bordua, 1961; Frazier, 1976).

Although there are a number of culture conflict and subcultural theories of criminal behaviors, one of the most influential Cultural Deviance theories is Walter B. Miller’s examination and explanation of lower-class culture as a “generating milieu” for delinquent behavior (Miller, 1958). While Miller first focused on explaining gang delinquency, the principal idea is that lower-classes have a distinct and separate culture from that of the middle class, with different values and other cultural definitions. The valued achievements, qualities, and points of concern for individuals within a lower class culture are often different, or directly in conflict, with the values of the middle and upper class culture. Therefore, lower class individual’s pursuing outcomes defined as positive within their own culture (i.e. masculinity, pride, autonomy from authority, toughness, etc.), may find that behaviors intended to result in culturally valued and desired outcomes, are instead defined as deviant and undesirable by the larger culture. In other words, based on the definitions of the generating lower-class culture, the behaviors are not “deviant.” However, once measured by the standards of the middle-class and dominant culture, the actions are then defined as delinquent. For Miller, this is why the rate or delinquency was higher in the lower classes. Significantly, his measure of delinquency rates was official delinquency statistics.
Another important cultural theory (Deutscher, 1963), is Cloward and Ohlin’s (1961) theory of Delinquency and Opportunity. Like Miller, this theory first focused on youth’s gang delinquency, and in general, the theorists limit their focus to examining youth subcultures emerging in lower socioeconomic classes and urban areas. The interest is in explaining collective deviant and delinquent behavior among youth. Cloward and Ohlin (1961) base the idea of an illegitimate opportunity structure generating “adaptive” behaviors from Merton’s Strain theory, and the concept of differential opportunity from Sutherland’s Differential Association theory, and are interested in the stipulations that must be present in order for groups to succumb and adapt to subcultural conditions that are either promoting or detracting from law abiding norms. Similar to Merton’s concept that individual’s adapt to anomie (discrepancy between achievement of culturally valued goals and legitimate means to access these goals) through conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion; Delinquency and Opportunity theory argues that three subcultures develop in response to the differential access to success and goals by forming into “conflict” (the “fighting” gang), “criminal” (the criminal “gang” that gains culturally defined success through criminal means), and “retreatist” (the drug gang) subcultures.

Another important cultural theory, a general theory of violence known as the Subculture of Violence thesis, was developed by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967). The theory was generated after Wolfgang’s mid 1950’s research on homicide in Philadelphia led to the observation that, among the lower classes, “trivial” events would often take of great importance and lead to violent outcomes (Wolfgang, 1958; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967). The Subculture of Violence Thesis explains homicides of “passion” (homicides
that were not premeditated or manifestations of severe mental illness). While both Miller’s *Class-Culture theory* and Cloward and Ohlin’s *Delinquency and Opportunity* theory provide theoretical explanations on how the subcultures emerge; - Wolfgang and Ferracuti’s (1967) *Subculture of Violence* thesis does not speculate on the origins of the subculture, but instead places focus on the existing patterns and ideas that continue to transmit and sustain a “subculture of violence” which exists alongside the dominant culture. The subculture of violence is argued to vary across race, social class, gender, age, region, and level of urbanism. However, it is most typically found within lower socioeconomic classes and among males, and Wolfgang and Ferracuti seemed to suggest they expected a large “black subculture of violence” to exist. In general, the dominant culture of the majority and the subculture of violence have underlying conflicting values and normative realities. While many cultural values may also be similar and shared between the dominant and violent subcultures, the theory argues that, in certain social situations, the subculture may both value and legitimize violent behavioral reactions under those particular circumstances. Therefore, based on certain social situations, individuals within the subculture of violence may respond in a violent manner because they are following cultural norms. However, regardless of whether they approve of the violence, when faced with the interaction of a social circumstance and prior socialization, they may respond with violence to guard their own safety because they *expect* the other person to respond violently.

**Differential Reinforcement/ Social Learning Theory**

Following Sutherland, the next most important development for Social Learning Theories was first proposed by Burgess and Akers (1966); and later advanced by Akers (Akers et al., 1979; Vold et al., 2002). Akers theory, *Differential Reinforcement/
Social Learning Theory, is a revision, reformulation, and significant expansion of Differential Association Theory. Burgess and Akers (1966), wanting to address the central theoretical flaws in Sutherland’s theory, use modern learning theory’s principles of differential reinforcement and operant conditioning to expand and clarify “the process by which criminal behavior is learned” and make the theory more suitable to empirical testing (Burgess & Akers, 1966).

Using a behavioral reinforcement framework, Akers asserted that the primary means of social learning is through operant conditioning. In other words, learning takes place due to the consequences (reinforcing or discriminative) following a particular behavior (Akers et al., 1979). Behaviors are reinforced and strengthened when they are followed with positive stimuli (such as rewards), and they are weakened when followed with aversive or negative stimuli (such as punishment). However, anticipated consequences formulated from past experiences and from our interactions with others where we learn what is “good or bad” (definitions) are also a large part of the learning process (Akers et al., 1979). In general, according to Differential Reinforcement/Social Learning Theory, criminal behavior can be expected when it has been differentially reinforced over normative and conforming behaviors, and, it has been defined by the individual as desirable (Akers et al., 1979).

In the learning process described in the theory, individuals learn the meaning to their own behavior, both in terms of “general” definitions (morals, values, etc.), and “specific” definitions (drug use, robbery, etc.). Through “differential reinforcement,” these behaviors are supported or discouraged due to either actual consequences or “anticipated” results, which can either be social approval/disapproval or nonsocial
(effects of drugs). While Akers continues with Sutherland’s assertions that the most important mechanism to learning is “differential association” occurring within the interactions through communication that either favorable or unfavorable to law violation and criminal actions, particularly with peers and family (Vold et al., 2002); he added that learning also occurs in “nonsocial” situations that reinforce behavior, such as imitation and modeling (Akers et al., 1979; Vold et al., 2002). This is a significant contribution to the theory. Akers included observing others in the learning process, and imitation of what others do. However, imitation and modeling loses some importance after the behavior is imitated, because the “effects of definitions should continue… (and) the actual consequences… of the specific behavior come into play to determine the probability that use will be continued and at what level” (Akers et al., 1979:638).

Summary

Social learning theories maintain that criminality and deviance, like any other behavior, is subject to a learning process and is rooted in social interactions and experiences (Akers & Jensen, 2006). It is mainly concerned and focused on the etiology of criminal behavior (Frazier, 1976), although work in the last two decades also address the maintenance of behaviors as well as change.

In summary, this theoretical branch assumes that in order for criminality to be present, a few factors must present themselves. First, before any criminality occurs, the individual must be exposed to definitions favorable to criminal behavior. According to this theoretical tradition, the opportunity to learn or absorb a behavior must first take place. Second, internalization of the meanings (definitions) of those behaviors should occur. Finally, third, these definitions must be reinforced or face discriminative
consequences – and the ratio of favorable to unfavorable (actual or anticipated) consequences should be in proportion to the continued behavior.

Additionally, the theory implies that the interactions with peers and family are most influential, followed by, but also including other sources of learning such as religion, schools, and other groups (Akers et al., 1979). From this, particularly when examining the etiology of criminality, one would assume that in most cases, the initial learning and reinforcement of behavior would be most prominent within interactions with family and other primary groups. Once an individual is exposed to definitions against criminal behavior, in order to justify that criminality continues, a presence of a stronger, more influential reinforcing agent, or a higher frequency or length of exposure to sources of definitions favorable to criminal behaviors should be present. Further, if criminal definitions and behaviors are to stop, some form of formal or informal “intervention” should present itself (Frazier, 1976). Since the process of learning brings about beliefs and meaning, these values should be abandoned and new definitions internalized in order to change criminal behavior to normative or conforming behavioral patterns.

In general, social learning theories have received a good deal of empirical confirmation and testing (Akers et al., 1979); and, are arguably one of the most “consistently” supported criminological theories (Akers & Jensen, 2006). However, this is not to say that this theory branch has not undergone its fair share of criticism (Hirschi, 1996), or, that it is not in need of continued examination and evaluation. Much of the empirical data on social learning theory, as most other modern theories, is cross-sectional or quantitative. One important recent work however has used qualitative
techniques and longitudinal type interviews and observations. This study by Steffensmeier and Ulmer’s (2005) *Confessions of a Dying Thief* is the most obvious recent qualitative study to strongly support social learning theory.

**Control Theories**

The basis of all control theories is that individuals are naturally capable of committing acts of deviance and crime. Therefore, when considering this theoretical branch in Criminology, the interest is to investigate the reasons people *do not* participate in criminal behavior, rather than why they do engage in crime. In other words, control theories seek to explain human social conformity (Hirschi, 1969; Frazier, 1976; Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981). According to this theoretical tradition, there are “controlling” forces within societies and groups preventing and restraining criminal behaviors, leading individuals to “obey the rules of society” (Hirschi, 1969:10). However, when these forces are weakened or limited, individuals are then “free” to engage in criminal and delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969). For that reason, for control theories, it is not the presence of crime-generating influences that cause criminal outcomes; but instead, the lack of controlling forces, and the weakening of societal bonds, that make crime possible (Frazier, 1976).

**History**

The groundwork for control theories can be traced to Thomas Hobbes’ position that human beings are inherently selfish and unrestrained (Hobbes, 1651); and, as a theoretical position, control theories have a long history in the social sciences (Frazier, 1976). However, the base for modern control theories of crime and delinquency is commonly attributed to Emile Durkheim’s study of suicide (Hirschi, 1969; Frazier, 1976). Durkheim posited that societies sometimes lose their ability to successfully regulate
behavior. This occurs in periods of sudden change or enormous social transitions. Durkheim called this stage of relative deregulation “anomie”. Anomie was mainly descriptive of a society’s (when suddenly disrupted) inability to act as a moral authority and to regulate behaviors. In this anomic state, individuals within society, feeling frustrated and confused, will engage in unregulated behavior focused on satisfying personal interests. In this societal condition, deviance increases. Although the classic study’s focus was suicide and its relation to societal anomie – the essence of this theoretical framework is applicable in a much broader and generalized manner. An early explicit application reflecting Durkheim’s perspective is found in work by Albert J. Reiss.

**Failure of Personal and Social Controls**

According to Reiss (1951), delinquency and deviance are the behavioral consequences of the absence of internalized personal controls and broader social controls which, when present, result in conformity to the legal norms and rules of the social system. This early control theory highlighted three main sources of control; (1) primary group controls, (2) community and institutional controls, and (3) personal \`\`controls. To Reiss, families are the most important, if not the only, source of primary group controls. The theory places responsibility for the social control of children as well as the development of personal controls within the primary group. Delinquency is the result of the primary group’s failure to present the child with all they need (e.g., adequate social control over the child, providing them with proper social roles, and meeting their economic needs) to fully accept non-delinquent social norms and rules. Therefore, the family’s income, style of parenting (“ideal” vs. too harsh or too lenient), parental marital status, quality of parent’s relationship with each other, and experiences of primary care outside of the family domain (e.g. foster care or institutional care) are all
important components in the development of personal controls and of the full
acceptance of non-delinquent social roles.

Community and institutional sources of control are presented as influential for
groups as well as from the personal perspective. For groups, the importance of
community and institutional control is based in the disposition and strength of
institutional norms, and the effectiveness of institutional rules to realize behavior that is
in accordance with the norms. From the individual perspective, community and
institutional controls are based in the acceptance of and deference towards their
authority, as well as the institutional control’s reinforcement of existing personal
controls. According to Reiss (1951), important factors to measuring community and
institutional controls are the type of community a person resides within (urban vs.
suburban), integration within the community both in terms of investment (rent vs. own
home) and mobility, regular attendance to school, and within classroom disciplinary
behavior.

The manner and strength of personal controls are symbolic of how a person will
behave under a given circumstance. Reiss’s theory assumes that personality is a large
component in whether or not an individual will conform to non-delinquent norms;
although, the strength of the environmental social control that a delinquent individual is
placed within can serve as a moderating variable to recidivistic delinquent outcomes. To
Reiss (1951, p.203), the key personality factors are 1) “mature ego ideals and non-
delinquent social roles,” and 2) the ability to consciously guide behavior in agreement
with non-delinquent group expectations.
Reiss found general support for his theory using data from 1,110 juvenile probationers. In general, he noticed juveniles who were psychiatrically diagnosed with weak egos (low personal controls) and those who were recommended to intensive psychotherapy within the community or to a closed institution were more likely to recidivate. He also found weak evidence that delinquent recidivism was more likely among juveniles who did not go to school on a regular basis and for those who were identified as disciplinary problems by the schools. However, most family and community controls were not predictive of delinquency in his investigation. While the findings seem to suggest that personal controls are more fundamental to delinquent outcomes than social controls (Frazier, 1976), Reiss argued that the measures of personal controls employed also explained acceptance of social controls (Reiss, 1951).

Based on his research findings, specific support for Reiss’s theory of *Failure of Personal and Social Controls* is weak. The theory has also been criticized by other scholars. For example, Hirschi (1969) argued that the theory is tautological, and requires unquestioned acceptance of psychiatric classifications and conclusions regarding norm internalization. Regardless of the criticism, Reiss’s theoretical work has been influential in the development of social control theories (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002).

**Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior**

F. Ivan Nye (1958) contributed to the advancement of control theories by proposing a theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of family; but, equally as important, he also defined and operationalized control mechanisms and presented an empirical test of control theory by examining the effects of family on delinquent outcomes (Frazier, 1976; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). According to Nye, family is
the principal mechanism of social control for adolescence, and this assumption is reflective in the variables used for his research (Nye, 1958).

The theory presented in the published study, Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior (1958), recognizes two main and divergent assumptions within most theories of delinquency; the first, that “deviant behavior is produced”, and the second, that “deviant behavior occurs in the absence of control” (p. 3). Nye’s theory argues that both factors exist, but have disparate involvement, in the formation of delinquent behavior. Nye contends that a small, but rare number of adolescents may “learn deviant behavior patterns,” and other delinquent behavior may be a result of a “combination of positive learning and weak and ineffective social control.” However, for the most part, delinquent behavior is the result of “insufficient social control” (Nye, 1958:4).

Nye distinguished between four sources, or mechanisms, of social control: direct control, internal control, indirect control, and control through the availability of legitimate means for need satisfaction. Direct control is exercised through measures of restriction and punishment, and is imposed on the individual through external mechanisms such as parents, teachers and schools, police, etc. Internal control is self-regulation, at times in the absence of external (direct) controls, through a “conscience” that restrains impulses. Indirect control is exercised through the extent of identification and affection with authority figures and non-criminals, and most importantly parents. And finally, control through available “delivery of the goods” through various legitimate means of satisfying needs so that temptations towards nonconformity are minimized. (Frazier, 1976; Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2006; Nye, 1958)
Conformity of an individual ensues from the effectiveness of these controls. To a certain extent, these four sources of social control operate concurrently and reinforce one another throughout social life. However, the importance of a single source of control will gain precedence based on circumstance and context. In this sense, while the four mechanisms of social control are all essential for effective control, a single source of control can also function independently and supersede an inefficient mechanism of social control (Frazier, 1976; Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2006; Nye, 1958).

In general, Nye’s test of the theory using over 300 relationships between 9th to 12th grade youth and their parents was supportive of control theory. Both the methodology and the finding’s applicability to delinquents have been criticized. For example, the results were drawn from a sample of youths who “would be considered nondelinquents by many criminologists” (Toby, 1959). Though, Nye’s research does seem to suggest that the causal process would be the same for serious youthful delinquents. Further, others have presented concerns about the questionnaire Nye used (Toby, 1959; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). Regardless of the criticisms, Nye’s theory and research (1958) was an early statement in American criminology and sociology of social control theory and certainly offered a framework for later developments in control theory.

**Delinquency and Drift**

David Matza’s (1964) *Delinquency and Drift* builds upon and extends earlier control theories. This modern control theory both addressed criticisms of previous control traditions as well as challenged the assumption of an existing identifiable difference between delinquents and non-delinquents accepted by most scholars (Frazier, 1976; Velarde, 1978; Vold, Bernard, and Snipes, 2002). Matza contends that
subculture theories, by determinately separating delinquents from convention, overestimate juvenile delinquency.

At its core, Matza’s *Delinquency and Drift* proposes that delinquents are not fully committed or bound to illegal and unconventional acts. These individuals continue to hold conventional beliefs, and often describe delinquency as morally wrong or undesirable. Delinquents are also involved in the conventional aspects of life – but, because of “loosened” social control, may *drift* from convention to delinquency (Matza, 1964; Velarde, 1978). In contextual conditions that break down the moral bind to conventional society, delinquents will neutralize the sense of responsibility, allowing them to *drift* to unconventional behaviors. However, the general acceptance of conventional beliefs is not removed – rather, it is only temporarily neutralized permitting the individual to behave against conventional norms without wholly committing themselves to a criminal lifestyle.

Nevertheless, loosened social control and the ability to neutralize controls do not guarantee an outcome of delinquent behavior. Addressing criticisms made about earlier social control theories that the removal of social controls is not an adequate explanation for the causes of deviance – Matza introduced a need for motivation to drive the individual towards engaging in delinquent or criminal behaviors. According to the theory, motivation can be found with a sense of injustice or feelings of desperation. The presence of a form of motivation, when combined with a context lacking social control, permits the individual to both neutralize responsibility and engage in deviant behaviors. Thus, an individual who is without sufficient social control to maintain conformity and
who also harbors a sense of injustice or who feels mood of desperation has both freedom from control and motivation to commit a nonconforming act.

Therefore, delinquents are the same as non-delinquents in many respects, including participation in conventional acts and beliefs. However, drift to non-conventional behaviors occurs when the conditions of loosened or broken social controls make these behaviors an option, when the motivation is present, and when the individual has a capacity to rationalize or neutralize responsibility (Frazier 1976; Matza, 1964). Further, to demonstrate that not even hard core gang delinquents are as fully committed to delinquency as non-control theorists would assume, Matza argues neutralization goes both directions. An individual within a deviant subculture (for example, a gang) may and does behave in selective conventional behaviors. Sometimes they must engage in reverse neutralization in order to free themselves to do conventional acts (Frazier, 1976). Neutralizing conventional and nonconventional values alternately, and at will, creates a drifter. When a drifter is motivated by feelings of injustice or desperation, and is skilled at rationalizing and justifying behaviors, she or he is capable of balancing conventionality and deviance within contexts of loosed social control.

According to Delinquency and Drift, delinquents and non-delinquents are not distinguishable by a distinct and important psychological, social, or biological factor that causes deviance. Instead, delinquents and non-delinquents are normally engaged in similar behaviors, and accept similar beliefs about conventional norms. Consequently, the theory suggests that instead of exploring the “accidental or unpredictable” causes
and deflections of and from delinquent behavior, focus should be placed on the “conditions that make delinquent drift possible and probable” (Matza, 1964:29).

**Containment Theory**

Containment theory developed from an effort to explain “why and how,” when faced with conditions conducive to deviance like that of social disorganization or blocked opportunities, some people avoid deviant outcomes while others give in to such behavior (Frazier, 1976; Dodder and Long, 1980). Similar to both Reiss (1951) and Nye (1958), the theory proposes that there are both internal as well as external sources of control. This theoretical assumption was the result of research by Walter C. Reckless and his colleagues suggesting that the role of self was an important factor in explaining deviant outcomes (Dinitz, Scarpitti, and Reckless 1962; Frazier, 1976; Reckless, 1973). The theory is considered an essential component to the development of control theories (Hirschi, 1969), and the Reckless and colleagues series of studies provided additional empirical support for this theoretical tradition (Frazier, 1976; Dodder, 1980).

At its core, Containment theory assumes that strong inner control combined with reinforcing external outer containment, results in a protective force against deviant outcomes (Reckless, 1973). The key components in the theory are inner containment, outer containment, pushes (physiological and psychological), and the stratosphere of pressures and pulls (Reckless, 1973). However, the central focus of the theory is on the role of inner and outer containment (Dodder, 1980).

Outer, or external, containment is the ability of society and small organizations (for example family, nuclear groups, neighborhoods, and other supportive groups) to maintain individual’s behavior within the realm of social acceptability (Dodder, 1980; Frazier, 1973; Reckless, 1973). In other words, it serves as a “structural buffer” holding
individuals within the bounds of expected norms and laws (Reckless, 1973:56). Outer containment consists of presenting individuals with reliable, reasonable, and consistent limitations and expectations, the reinforcement of these norms and goals, supervision and consequences, as well as available “alternatives and safety-valves” (Dodder, 1980; Reckless. 1973:56). Further, outer containment necessitates opportunities for a sense of belonging, acceptance, and integration, which increases the likelihood of compliance with norms, laws, and expectations (Dodder, 1980; Frazier, 1976; Reckless, 1973). For this reason, the theory proposes that the smaller groups, such as family and neighborhoods, perform a larger role in preventing deviant behavior than broader society (Frazier, 1976).

Inner containment, the “inner regulator,” represents the ability of individuals to have control over their own behavior through internal elements:

- such as self-control, good self-concept, ego strength, well-developed superego, high frustration tolerance, high resistance to diversions, high sense of responsibility, goal orientation, ability to find substitute satisfactions, tension-reducing rationalizations, and so on” (Reckless, 1973:55).

While Reckless identified a plethora of sources for inner containment, the highest level of interest is on four internal components that strengthen the individual’s ability to resist delinquent and criminal activity – 1) a favorable self-concept, 2) a focus on acceptable goals, 3) frustration tolerance, and 4) a commitment and retention of societal norms (Dodder, 1980; Frazier, 1976; Kelley, 1996). Internal controlling agents become more important in modern, industrial, technological, and urban societal systems. In these types of societies, unlike in traditional or folk societies, individuals are further alienated from primary and supportive groups who serve as sources of external containment.
through societal diversification, loss of integration, and a greater impersonal system (Dodder, 1980; Frazier, 1976).

According to Containment Theory, external and inner containments serve as a “buffer zone” between physiological and psychological pushes and the stratosphere of pressures and pulls. Physiological and psychological pushes include circumstances and characteristics such as aggressiveness, psychiatric or other organic impairments, anxieties, and so on. These pushes attack “the self.” On the other hand, pressures and pulls also work against inner and outer containment. For example, pressures include conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and adverse living conditions. Pulls, leading the individual away from their socially acceptable way of life, include influences such as deviant peers, media (for example, advertising and propaganda), and gangs (Frazier, 1976; Kelley, 1996; Reckless, 1973).

When an individual is confronted with pressures and pulls, sources of external containment (family, organizations, etc.), when strong enough, defend the individual from these influences. However, if external containment is not fully effective, then the individual must turn to inner containment (the self) to deal with the pressures and pulls. If both outer and inner containments are not strong enough, and ineffective, then violation of norms, laws, and expectations occurs. Similarly, when faced with physiological and psychological pushes, the individual’s effective inner containments can defend against the influences. If the pushes are not deterred by inner containments, external containments can also function to defend the individual. However, like with pressures and pulls, if both outer and inner containments prove ineffective, behaviors can give way to deviance and criminality (Frazier, 1976; Reckless, 1973). In general,
deviance emerges only after both the inner and outer containments are either ineffectual or neutralized. However, Reckless argued that the greatest “buffer” comes from inner containment, as it reflects internalization of societal norms and expectations.

Reckless was careful to note that Containment Theory explains the “large middle range of offenders,” and not the “extremes in the spectrum of crime and delinquency.” Even strong inner and outer containment can be ineffective against overpowering social and psychological pressures, pulls, and pushes. For example, Containment theory does not claim to explain delinquency from overwhelming inner pushes like that of psychiatric impairments, brain damage, or compulsions (for example, compulsive shop lifting, fire starting, etc.). It also does not explain criminal and delinquent activity within criminal subcultures, such as criminal families or communities, where the behavior is “normal and expected.” These “abnormal” circumstances are “uncontainable” through the normal sources of control (Reckless, 1973:55-56).

In general, while Containment theory does not explain the “extremes” of norm violation, it does seek to explain the large middle range of offending and proposes that both outer and inner sources of containment are of central importance in the process of insulating individuals from criminal outcomes. The theory assumes that a strong outer containment reinforces an effective inner containment and enables individuals to shield themselves from violating sociolegal norms (Reckless, 1973).

**Hirschi’s Social Control Theory**

One of the most important contributions and developments for control theories was proposed by Travis Hirschi (1969) in his book *Causes of Delinquency* (Frazier, 1976; Greenberg, 1999). Hirschi’s Social Control theory was considered the most comprehensive and empirically supported of those within the control theory tradition;
and after its publication, Hirschi became the theorist most closely associated with this theoretical branch (Frazier, 1976; Vold, Bernard, and Snipes, 2002).

The theory is based on control theories general assumption that there is no need to explain “why” individuals commit criminal acts because people have “animal impulses” that drive them. Therefore, explaining crime is not the problem. Instead, the interest is to answer “why don’t” individuals commit criminal acts (Hirschi, 1969: 31-34; Costello & Vowell, 1999). Also, it builds from the control tradition’s assumption that norm violation occurs when individual’s bonds to society are never formed or become either weak or broken. Rooted in this, Hirschi proposed that strong and close bonds with social groups like family, the school, and peers reduces the likelihood of deviant behaviors, and that the elements of these bonds are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. These elements are collectively referred to as the “social bond” (Hirschi, 1969).

The first element, attachment, is reflective of the internal source of control proposed by theorists such as Reiss and Nye, but Hirschi clearly emphasizes its distinction. Unlike many previous control theories, Hirschi’s Social Control theory does not place great importance on personality or internalization, but instead focuses on the socially-based consequence of attachment to other individuals. Instead of explaining internalization of values and norms as an indication of “conscience,” Hirschi explained that if a person is attached to another, they will not want to go against the “wishes and expectations” or those individuals (1969: 18). This difference changes the concept of internalization of norms and values from a measure of more or less enduring personality to a measure of more or less transient or changeable social bonds to others. Hirschi
clarified the advantage of his socially observable definition of attachment by highlighting the problematic nature of defining internalization of norms as an aspect of personality, - he explains:

For example, the divorced man is more likely after divorce to commit a number of deviant acts, such as suicide or forgery. If we explain these acts by reference to the superego (or internal control), we are forced to say that the man “lost his conscience” when he got a divorce; and, of course, if he remaries, we have to conclude that he gets his conscience back. (p.19)

The second element of bonds in Hirschi’s Social Control theory is commitment. This concept is based in the idea that people accumulate both conventional social and material investments such as an education, social reputation, businesses, general goods, etc. When contemplating violating social norms and expectations, the person must also consider the risk of jeopardizing those investments.

Involvement is the third element of bonds. This component of assumes that the degree to which an individual is involved in conventional behaviors influences the extent that the individual is restrained by conventional expectations; - thus, limiting opportunity to deviate. Clearly stated, “… a person may be simply too busy doing conventional things to find time to engage in deviant behavior” (Hirschi, 1969: 67).

The final factor is belief. Hirschi argues that there is disparity in the degree to which individuals accept the validity of social rules. Moreover, the less a person accepts that they should comply with society’s rules, the more likely they are to violate those rules. This conceptualization of belief is different than that of social learning/socialization theorist like Cressey or than that of Matza (1964) in that individuals do not have to neutralize their beliefs to commit a single deviant act or to engage in deviant behaviors.
in general. Instead, there is no need to explain motivation to violate conventional rules because individual’s variation of belief in the moral validity of social rules addresses this concern.

According to Hirschi’s Social Control theory, it is not necessary to focus on internal controls, conscience, or other “special” motivators to explain deviant behavior. Instead, Hirschi focuses on observable social components of bond such as attachment to others, commitment to investments, involvement in conventional activities, and belief in the validity of social rules. When the elements of bond are weakened, a person is free to deviate. On the other hand, an individual is less likely to deviate when involved with conventional social groups and the four elements of bond are strengthened.

Following its publication, Hirschi’s (1969) Social Control theory was given considerable attention by scholars (Costello & Vowell, 1999; Greenberg, 1999; Matsueda, 1982), and was subject to a large amount of empirical testing, support, and also criticism. While many studies found support for the “attachment” and “commitment” elements of bond (Costello & Vowell, 1999), fewer studies supported “belief” and very little empirical support has been provided for “involvement in conventional activities.” Scholars also questioned the strength of the relationships presented by Hirschi (1969), and have argued that the theory has limited explanatory power (Greenberg, 1999). Criticism that the empirical support for the elements of social bond are “essentially separate studies which have little relation to each other” (Kempf, 1993) diminished the strength of the multitude of studies that had found correlations between delinquency and one or more of the elements of social bond. These mixed results, concern that the theory could not address serious delinquency, and the inconsistency in the
operationalization of the elements of social bond led to many scholars, including Hirschi, to move away from Social Control theory.

**A General Theory of Crime**

Along with Michael Gottfredson, Hirschi developed a new theory, *A General Theory of Crime* (1990). Unlike Hirschi’s 1969 publication focusing on four socially derived elements of control, this theory is centered on the single and internal concept of “self-control.” While its roots continue to be in classic control theory, and assumes that crime is dependent on opportunity presented through weak external bonds and control, the *General Theory of Crime* focuses on differences in individual vulnerability to the lure of deviation from conformity. The theory also claims to address all types of crime, delinquency, and other analogous behaviors (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Although the semblance of previous control theories are noticeable in the General Theory of Crime; - for example, the importance of internal controls (Reiss, 1951; Nye, 1958; Reckless, 1973) and the crucial role of families (Reiss, 1951; Nye, 1958) – this theory also redefines and veers away from previous theoretical assumptions.

For the most part, traditional control theories assume that individuals do not have any “special” propensities towards crime, and instead, all individuals are driven by a desire towards pleasure or at least self-interested behavior. For traditional control theories therefore, the main difference between criminals and non-criminals lies within the awareness of social norms and strength of strength of individual and external social controls. While susceptibility to criminal behavior may vary based on the levels of social control at different points in time, there is no unique characteristic of propensity that differentiates between those who would or would not criminally offend. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), on the other hand, continue to explore elements of “social controls” to
explain their influence on the development of self-control; but, unlike previous control theories, they argue that criminal propensity does vary among individuals. Also, unlike earlier forms of control theory, the theory is mostly static, allowing for little or no individual change in the propensity towards criminality. In part, the theory responds to the observation that individuals who commit criminal acts also tend to engage in criminally “analogous” behaviors (smoking, drinking, gambling, etc.) throughout their lives, and the inability for traditional control theories to explain this phenomenon in a simple and straightforward manner (Pratt & Cullen, 2000).

Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) *General Theory of Crime* claims that self-control is “the individual-level cause of crime” (p 232, emphasis in the original). Self-control has six elements that combine within a particular person; (1) seeking immediate gratification, or impulsivity, (2) a preference for easy, simple tasks, (3) partiality towards thrill seeking, risky, and exciting behavior, (4) an inclination for physical rather than mental tasks, (5) insensitivity towards others and a self-centered orientation, and finally (6) a low tolerance for frustration. While self-control is composed of these six elements, the theory maintains that these components create a single, underlying propensity.

Individuals with low self-control will overlook the long-term consequences of their behavior in order to seek immediate gratification within the current circumstance. But, low self-control results in criminal outcomes only when the opportunity is present. Opportunity however is not a problem for Gottfredson and Hirschi because the social world is filled with opportunities for criminal, deviant, and analogous behaviors. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) hold that the role of self-control is essentially all one needs to understand to explain individual differences in criminal outcomes (Gottfredson
& Hirschi, 1990; Pratt & Cullen, 2000). So, the question arises as to what accounts for different levels of self-control?

For Gottfredson and Hirschi, self-control is a relatively stable, life-long trait. It is established during the early childhood years and becomes more or less static at around ages 8 to 10 years (Turner & Piquero, 2002). Up until this point in life, parents are principally responsible for developing and determining the child’s ultimate life-long level of self-control. Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that effective child rearing, particularly through supervision and discipline, is the chief contributor to the development of self-control. Thus, the theory contends that “the major ‘cause’ of low self-control thus appears to be ineffective child-rearing” (1990: 97). Further, any demographic differences in offending can be accounted for through differential levels of self-control due to variations in group child-rearing practices (1990:153).

Since its publication, The General Theory of Crime has created a great deal of discussion, debate, and empirical attention (Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Turner & Piquero, 2002; Vold, et al., 2002). With little exception, most research has found at least some support for the theory. However, while largely popular and supported, the theory has also been target to criticism and controversy. For example, one of the main criticisms is that the theory is tautological. Scholars have argued that in order to determine self-control, behavioral measures are employed, but it is those behaviors that are explained by self-control – creating the problem of tautology (Akers, 1991; Geis, 2000).

Further, many of the controversial aspects of this theory stem from the “invariance thesis.” For example, the claim that individual's relative level of self-control is stable and a life-long characteristic from the ages of 8 to 10 has been controversial
both for the suggested bleak outlook on the ability to change, but also for the related consequence for the age-crime relationship often cited in criminology. Gottfredson and Hirschi claim that individual’s level of self-control, in relation to others, is stable. However, everyone’s level self-control increases with age, creating a biological reduction in the likelihood of engaging in criminal activity (Ojmarrh & Mackenzie, 2006; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1986; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1995). Further, and also based on the “invariance thesis,” the theory encourages the use of cross-sectional research designs rather than longitudinal methodologies, which Hirschi and Gottfredson (1995) argue are expensive, complicated, and generally not necessary. This theoretical assertion is contradictory to the age-graded approach of life-course studies, and it also has raised questions regarding testing the theories stability claims as well as the development of self-control in the first decade of life (Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Sampson & Laub, 1992, 1995; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Doherty, 2006).

Regardless, while controversial for many reasons, Gottfredson and Hirschi’s General Theory of Crime has been very well supported in the literature (Pratt & Cullen, 2000). Since its publication, the theory has been in the forefront of both empirical and theoretical interest within Criminology (Taylor, 2001; Turner & Piquero, 2002; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002).

Summary

First driven by Hirschi’s (1969) Social Control theory, and then followed by the popularity of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) General Theory of Crime; in general, control theories have been at the forefront of Criminology for close to three decades (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2001). As a whole, this theoretical branch assumes that everyone is capable of engaging in criminal and deviant activity, and is more interested
in why some people do not. In other words, this theoretical perspective aims to explain conformity.

In summary, according to control theories, the emergence of criminality occurs when sources of control (whether external or internal) are weak or absent, and the opportunity to engage in criminal or deviant behaviors is present. For example, Hirschi (1969) argued that weakened external sources of control, along with criminal opportunity was necessary for crime to initiate; while Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) contend that weak (or low) self-control, an internal factor, along with opportunity, is the cause of criminality. Further, continued weak or absent sources of control account for the continuation, or patterning, of criminal involvement. Finally, in order to see the end of criminal involvement, the control theory perspective argues that effective sources of control must be introduced, and the opportunity to engage in criminal or deviant activities must be eliminated (Frazier, 1976; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2001). Here, Hirschi (1969) would reason that individuals whose sources of social control increase through situations such as the establishment of attachments or engagement in conventional activities, would cease from criminal involvement. On the other hand, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) would argue that, unless it occurs before the ages of 8 - 10 years old, the most important source of control, self-control, has stabilized and cannot increase. However, because levels of self-control naturally change with age, individuals will reduce criminal engagement as they age; and as they face limited opportunities to behave in a criminal or deviant manner.

**Strain Theory**

Strain theories propose that delinquent and criminal behaviors occur when individuals within a society experience pressure from high aspirations and low
expectations of ability to achieve socially desirable goals. In classic strain theory, the pressure exists when socially acceptable means of achieving conventional goals are limited to certain people. Considerable focus was placed on societal expectations of financial success and middle-class values, and the often limited means to achieve these goals among lower-class persons (Agnew, 1985; Cullen & Agnew, 2003). However, as strain theory was revised and developed, the effects of other sources of pressure, like that of strenuous, upsetting, or depriving situations, were also of concern (Tittle, 2000). In general, the interest of strain theories lie in the adaptation and reactions of individuals to relieve or ease the pressure they experience from “goal blockage,” strenuous situations, deprivation, or upsetting condition, which may (or may not) include criminal behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2003; Tittle, 2000).

History

Emile Durkheim’s *Theory of Anomie*, which is notably recognized as the basis for control theories, is also the general beginnings and stimulate for strain theories in Criminology. Durkheim argued that during the process of rapid social change and modernization, social expectations and norms are deregulated, and deviance is likely to increase. To Durkheim, individuals have a “natural” and insatiable appetite for acquisitions, wants, and non-physical needs that can only be constrained by human society setting limits and clarifying what can be expected. However, when society is in a state of deregulation or anomie, the limits are weakened, and leave individuals feeling frustrated and confused. Therefore, they are also more likely to focus on satisfying personal interests, and engaging in deviance.
Social Structural Strain

While the broad foundation of strain theories may be Durkheim’s theory of modernization and anomie, it was Robert K. Merton’s acclimatization of Durkheim’s works to American society which actually embarked the theoretical branch and popularity of strain theories (Cullen & Agnew, 2003; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). Rather than individual’s having a “natural” appetite for things they want and need, Merton argued that this desire is derived from the culture of American society. Further, the focus was modified away from “social change” and placed instead on relatively stable social conditions, which Merton argued, were associated with higher levels of crime (Merton, 1938). Social Structural Strain has two major parts to the theory. The first component modifies and presents a new theory of anomie, and the second aspect of Merton’s theory is often considered the major groundwork of traditional “strain theory” (Cullen & Agnew, 2003; Featherstone & Deflem, 2003).

According to Merton (1938), American society places great emphasis on the achievement of economic goals, yet places relatively minimal focus on the rules and norms for legitimate achievement of these goals. Therefore, society lacks guidelines and controls for the methods of goal achievement, creating a state of societal anomie. In response, individuals within society will seek the most convenient channel, legitimate or otherwise, to attain these valued goals. To Merton, “…crime…becomes increasingly common when the emphasis on the culturally induced success-goal becomes divorced from a coordinated institutional emphasis” or readily available means. (Merton, 1938:676).

The response to anomie can come in the form of conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion; depending on the individual’s conformation or
rejection of “culture goals” and “institutionalized means.” The form of adaptation can change depending on a person’s current social situation, and are not part of an individual’s formed personality. Instead, the modes of adaptation are situational. Most common in all societies, is adaptation through conformity. This means that the individual has accepted and conformed to both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means within society. On the other hand, the least likely mode of adaptation is “retreatism,” in which the individual rejects both cultural goals and the institutionalized means to achieve them. In essence, these individuals have “dropped out” of society. However, for the remaining forms of adaptation – innovation, ritualism, and rebellion – there is a lack of agreement between acceptance of cultural goals and of the institutionalized means to achieve these goals.

If an individual conforms to the culture goals but rejects the institutionalized means to those goals, adaptation by innovation occurs. According to Merton’s Social Structural Strain, “Innovation” is the most common source of criminal behaviors. The individual accepts the value of achieving monetary success, yet reject the legitimate means to achieve the goals. They “innovate” the means towards the goal; and may steal, gamble, or burglarize to acquire monetary success. However, if the individual rejects the culture goals but accepts the institutionalized means, the adaptation is “ritualism.” These individuals have rejected the culture goal, yet continue abide and accept institutionalized means. These individuals may work lower paying jobs, and do not aspire to achieve the culturally valued financial goals. Finally, adaptation through rebellion occurs when an individual does not accept or reject culture goals or institutionalized means, but instead creates their own goals and means. Here, the
individual lives within society, but has their own substitute “culture,” with its own values, goals, and means.

Though Merton maintained that the urgency towards financial success is experienced by everyone through the culture of society, and is a “common symbol of success”, he also noted that lower-class individuals are particularly limited in their access to legitimate opportunities to pursue these highly valued forms of “success.” Consequently, lower-class individuals in the United States face a greater discord between the means and the expectation to achieve common cultural monetary goals than other socioeconomic classes, and experience greater pressures towards crime. The pressure produced from the discrepancy between culturally induced goals and legitimate opportunities may lead to adaptations through criminality. Therefore it follows that persons in lower social-classes with few opportunities are more likely to engage in crime. In this sense, Merton used the social structural aspect of the theory to explain correlations between crime and poverty in the United States (Cullen & Agnew, 2003; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002).

**Delinquent Boys**

Focusing on explaining gang delinquency, Albert K. Cohen (1955), largely applied and also adapted Merton’s *Social Structural Strain* to explore the formation of delinquent youth subcultures. In general, Cohen utilized Merton’s (1938) position that criminality and delinquency are the result of limited opportunities to attaining valued goals. Further, Cohen also applied Merton’s concept that in efforts to reduce pressures resulting from “goal blockage,” various modes of adaptation may present themselves. To Cohen, the degree of goal attainment that seems “just and reasonable” to an individual “will be relative to the attainments of others who serve as reference objects.”
However, Cohen argued that unlike Merton’s description of purposeful, individual, criminal behavior, delinquency among youth occurred most often in gangs, and the actions were “non-utilitarian, malicious, and negativistic.” Juvenile gangs do not necessarily commit delinquent acts with the purpose of achieving monetary success, and instead engage in behaviors such as vandalism and assault. To Cohen, these delinquent acts did not seem to have any purpose except to show rejection of the middle-class measuring rod and gain status among other delinquent youths. However, since these types of behaviors would not allow the youth to achieve an acceptable status among the individuals within the dominant culture, Cohen argued that delinquent gangs have a separate culture, or subculture, of their own.

Cohen applies Merton’s argument that certain segments of the population, like that of lower-class youth, are more likely to experience “goal blockage” due to limited opportunities towards middle class values and monetary success. Cohen modified Merton’s focus on financial success, and argues that lower-class youth are not simply seeking a monetary goal, but the expansive goal of “middle-class values.” However, Merton’s modes of adaptation do not allow for the achievement of middle-class values through illegitimate channels – because, unlike financial gains, it is not something that can be achieved through criminal or other non-institutionalized avenues. Therefore, to Cohen, lower-class youth adapt to the pressures of “goal-blockage” by either accepting a lower-status or by developing a group with new, achievable, goals (goals that are the inverse of middle-class values). Those that adapt through creating a new culture, rebel against broader middle-class values, and gain status by engaging in delinquent behaviors that are encouraged and supported by the gang culture.
Delinquency and Opportunity

Cloward and Ohlin’s (1961) *Delinquency and Opportunity* theory, which is further discussed as a cultural theory, also focuses on gang delinquency and the formation of subcultures. They use aspects of both Merton’s (1938) and Cohen’s (1955) theories, and argued that three separate delinquent subcultures emerge – criminal subcultures, conflict subcultures, and retreatist subcultures. Unlike Cohen, however, they re-align with Merton’s position that crime has purpose, and serious delinquency is rooted in the inability to acquire monetary success through conventional institutionalized means.

What differs from previous strain theories is Cloward and Ohlin’s position that, though youth’s enter subcultures as a method of adjustment to the pressure created through the disparity between cultural goals and the availability of legitimate means, the strain of goal-blockage does not explain the pattern of delinquency within the subcultures. Instead, it is the availability or deficiency of either legitimate or illegitimate opportunities that lead youth to particular forms of deviance. When illegitimate opportunities are present, criminal gang subcultures are formed and focus on monetary and material achievements. Conflict gangs are similar to Cohen’s depiction of youth gang culture as non-utilitarian, with a focus on defending status, “personal integrity and the honor of the gang,” and expressing their anger. These conflict subcultures emerge when neither legitimate nor illegitimate opportunities are available. Finally, similar to Merton’s “retreatist” individual, Cloward and Ohlin’s retreatist gang subcultures are likely drug users – who either fail at, or reject, both violence and illegitimate opportunities.

Further, Cloward and Ohlin also include the role of “perceived deprivation” of opportunities. They argue that individuals who perceive the social system as unfair may still accept general social values. However, because of their own life circumstances,
they question the legitimacy of those normative behaviors. They view delinquent and criminal behaviors as a necessary in order to compensate for what they perceive to be an unfair social system or life circumstance.

**Institutional-Anomie**

Strain theories popularity diminished after the 1960’s, after facing both theoretical and empirical criticisms (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). However, developments from Messner and Rosenfeld’s *Institutional-Anomie* (2001) and Robert Agnew’s *General Strain Theory* (1985; 1992; 2006) reintroduced this theoretical perspective to modern criminological theory.

Messner and Rosenfeld (2001) present *Institutional-Anomie* theory within the publication of “Crime and the American Dream.” Unlike previous strain theories, they revisit Merton’s focus on explaining crime in the United States. Further, to explain the high rate of crime in the U.S., they continue Merton’s original position that there is a strong cultural “achievement orientation” towards monetary success and a relatively de-emphasized focus on legitimate means towards those goals. The theory maintains that American culture encourages individualistic competition that has no “stopping point” to monetary achievement, and celebrates whether or not an individual “makes it” while paying little attention to the means they use to attain the goal.

The theory extends Merton’s (1938) *Social Structural Strain* by arguing that an “economic dominance” of other societal institutions has existed throughout the history of the United States. They contend that other institutions, including families, school, and politics, are all subservient to the economy. This economic dominance is observable through the “devaluation of noneconomic institutional functions and roles,” in the
“accommodation to economic requirements by other institutions,” and through the “penetration of economic norms” into other institutions.

Rosenfeld and Messner also added that as long as the current culture of the United States continues, the redistribution of legitimate institutionalized opportunities across social classes would not decrease criminal behaviors. They argue that if more individuals had opportunities to attain monetary success, those that did not, would no longer have the “system” to blame. Instead, they would have to blame their own inadequacies. As a result, these individuals would experience even greater pressure towards criminal means to acquire culturally emphasized financial and material goals, and the crime rate could actually increase.

**General Strain Theory**

While Rosenfeld and Messner (2001) present the most recent addition to strain theories at the societal level, Robert Agnew (1992) broadened strain theory at the individual-level with the presentation of *General Strain Theory (GST)*. Unlike Merton (1938) and Cloward and Ohlin (1961), who focused on strain as the failure to achieve monetary goals, or Cohen (1955), who explored the related pressure from the inability to attain middle class values; Agnew argues that generally, “strain” is broadly created by any situation that is “disliked by individuals” (Agnew, 2006). According to GST, there are several sources of individual strain, and the failure to achieve valued goals, monetary or otherwise, is only one of the many possibilities.

Strain can come from a variety of major sources; for example, the loss of something of value, being treated in a negative manner by others, the presentation of “noxious” stimuli, and the inability to achieve a valued goal (Agnew, 1992; 2002; 2006). Further, Agnew posits that strain can either be “objective,” and disliked by most people,
as well as “subjective,” because it is unpleasant or bothersome to a particular person. Additionally, GST proposes that while the majority of strain which leads to criminal outcomes is based on individual’s personal experiences, strain can also occur from either vicarious or anticipated experiences.

According to GST, only some “strained individuals” will commit delinquent or criminal acts (Agnew, 2002). This is because while there are many sources of strain, what actually leads to crime, is the way in which someone copes with the consequential emotional states that stem from experiencing stressors. In other words, strain creates negative emotions within individuals, like that of “anger, frustration, depression, or hopelessness,” and individuals feel pressure towards “corrective action.” Crime is only one way that individuals seek alleviation from negative emotions caused by strain (Agnew, 2006).

GST also addresses why some individuals may be more likely than others to turn to crime in an effort to ease the negative emotional states caused by stressful circumstances. According to Agnew, the ability to use legal coping methods are limited for some due to their personal traits like that of intelligence or a predisposition towards aggression, their social and problem-solving skills, and level of conventional support. Similarly, some individuals may be more likely to avoid illegal coping techniques because the social or personal cost of crime seem too high to them. For example, they may jeopardize familial relationships, employment, or feel guilt. More recently Agnew extends GST by arguing that, “…certain individuals experiencing certain types of strain in certain circumstances are likely to engage in criminal coping” (Agnew, 2013:661).
Summary

Though interest in strain theories faded after the emergence of empirical and theoretical criticisms as well as the failure of strain-based programs for juvenile delinquents in the 1960’s (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002); the more recent renditions have renewed interest. Further, modern strain perspectives, particularly Agnew’s General Strain Theory (1992), have been well supported in empirical research (Agnew, 2002; 2006; Cullen & Agnew, 2003; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002).

In summary, at the individual level, strain theories assume that in order for crime and delinquency to occur, the individual must first experience some form of stressor. This can come in the form of “negative relationships with others,” “goal-blockage,” the removal of positive stimuli, or the introduction of “noxious” stimuli. In order to remove the pressure from the strain, which is either caused directly from “goal-blockage” or from the negative emotions that various forms of strain can induce, the individual may then turn to crime.

If crime is to desist, the individual would either have to no longer experience the source of strain, have a new mode of adaptation to reduce the pressure from sources of strain, or have developed or acquired new coping skills to the negative emotions they experience from strain.

Developmental/ Life-Course Theories

The life-course perspective focuses on “the long way of thinking” by examining the life-course as an “interweave of age-graded trajectories… that are subject to changing conditions and future options, and to short-term transitions…” (Elder, 1994). The multidisciplinary perspective has four central premises: (1) “the interplay of human lives and historical times,” (2) “the timing of lives,” (3) “linked or interdependent lives,”,
and (4) “human agency in choice making.” The first premise, “lives and historical times,” argues that an individual’s life has both short and long term effects from the historical context in which they live. Both options and limitations are the consequences of the year in which one was born, the period of history, and the historical events that an individual lives through. The second premise, “the timing of lives,” refers to the social meaning of age. This perspective argues the importance of social, chronological, and biological age on the type of impact that social change or life events will have on individual lives.

“Linked lives,” the third premise, argues the importance of interdependent lives and of human interactions. The fourth and final premise, “human agency,” recognizes that individuals make choices throughout their lives. These choices, and their interaction with other factors, help to understand behavioral outcomes.

The principal argument of the life-course perspective is that individual's lives are formed by a continuous series of events, changes, and experiences that occur across a lifetime. Therefore, any current situation or phenomenon cannot be fully understood without examining the past (Elder, 1994). The underlying concepts which guide analysis from the life-course perspective are trajectories, transitions, and turning points. Trajectories are age-graded long-term behavioral patterns and sequences found within individual lives, and include life pathways such as relationships, education, and careers. There are three major components of trajectories: entrance, success, and timing. These dimensions influence trajectories, and how individuals develop. The “entrance dimension” refers to the idea that individuals may or may not enter certain trajectories. For example, since not everyone commits criminal acts, not all people enter a criminal trajectory. The “success dimension” acknowledges that the content and circumstance of
trajectories varies among different individuals. For example, the success of a marriage varies across individuals. Some people have happy long-term marriages, while others do not have “successful” marriage trajectories. The third dimension, “timing” refers to the normative time or age for certain events or transitions to occur in a lifespan. For example, having a child and entering a parenthood trajectory is “age-appropriate” in adulthood, but “off-age” in adolescence. Events occurring “off-age” can alter the life-course and lead to negative consequences for other behavioral or developmental trajectories (Thornberry, 1997). Transitions are marked events in life, such as a marriage, divorce, graduation, an arrest, etc. They occur within shorter periods of time, and are often single events, that are embedded within trajectories. Transitions form and provide meaning for life trajectories, with each state of a trajectory linked to the previous state by a transitional event. Many transitions are age-graded, and the timing, duration, and ordering of these events are consequential for the continuing development of the life-course. The interconnected nature of trajectories and transitions can lead to turning points, or significant changes, within the life-course. These turning-points redirect an individual’s life, causing adaptation, or change of trajectories (Benson, 2002; Elder, 1994; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

When the life-course perspective is applied to the study of crime and criminal behavior, the application of the central concepts from the life-course paradigm allow for a better understanding of the initiation or onset of delinquent and criminal behaviors, the continuation of criminality, and the desistance from criminal behaviors (Piquero & Mazzerolle, 2001). In many ways, Developmental and Life-Course Criminology enhanced research and knowledge of the Criminal Career Paradigm (Blumstein et al.,
1986) which also focused on onset, continuation, and desistance from crime. However, Developmental and Life-Course Criminology explores these concepts within three realms of interest: the development of criminal and antisocial behaviors, offending risk-factors across the life-course, and the effects of transitions and turning points on developmental trajectories (Farrington, 2002).

The life-course perspective has generated a number of Developmental and Life-Course theories of criminal behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2003; Piquero & Mazzerole, 2001). These theories adopt a wide longitudinal viewpoint and assume a dynamic description of criminal behaviors across the lifespan. Though some developmental and life-course theories of crime are unique in that they incorporate knowledge from other disciplines to the explanation of criminal behaviors; often, these theories stem from traditional criminological theories, like that of control, labeling, and learning theories (Piquero & Mazzerole, 2001).

**Age-Graded Life-Course Theory**

Rooted in control theory, Sampson and Laub’s (1993) *Age-Graded Life-Course Theory* emphasizes stability and change in explaining criminal behavior within the trajectories and transitions in an individual life. Though control theory is central to the *Age-Graded Life –Course Theory*, it also incorporates concepts from labeling theory, highlights the importance of structured routine activities, and the role of human agency and choice. Further, though the theorists assert that ontogenetic individual differences do hold a small role in explaining criminality, they pay much greater attention to external structural variables (Benson, 2002).

Following classic control theories, the *Age-Graded Life-Course Theory* starts with the assumption that deviance and crime are natural, and occur when sources of control
are weak or missing. However, the theory distinguishes itself from traditional control
theories by incorporating the life-course framework, a developmental approach, and
also by exploring the “dynamic” nature of social controls (Sampson & Laub, 1993;
1997). Further, it is also quite unique in that it places particular importance on adulthood
and adult social bonds (Sampson & Laub, 2008).

In explaining the causes of delinquency, the theory maintains that the most
influential forms of social controls are age-graded informal social bonds between
individuals (Benson, 2002). In childhood and adolescence, the most important informal
bonds are based from family, school, and peers. However, as an individual enters new
developmental stages in their life-course, they are subject to new sources of social
control, and this changes which social bonds are most influential to criminal behavior. In
adulthood, Sampson and Laub argue that employment and marital bonds become most
important in explaining adult crime. However, though the theory maintains that the
significant social controls in adulthood and childhood are different, they also view these
life stages as “linked” to one another both in terms of antisocial behaviors and in the
strength of social bonds. In other words, “Early delinquency predicts weak adult social
bonds, and weak adult social bonds predict concurrent and later adult crime” (Sampson
& Laub, 2008).

The stability of criminal behavior across an individual life is thus explained by the
“linked” nature of social experiences and social bonds, but also by the labeling effect of
interactions with others throughout time. In other words, individuals experience an
accumulation, or build up, of both the consequences to their own actions (cumulative
continuity) as well as established responses from others (interactional continuity).
Sampson and Laub use the concept of “cumulative continuity” to describe this process of accruing disadvantage throughout the life-course, which creates a “chain of adversity between childhood delinquency and adult criminal behavior” (Sampson & Laub, 1997). The accumulation of disadvantages may build from a vast amount of adversities, such as individual criminal propensity, reciprocally poor social interactions, weak social bonds in childhood, and early delinquency that may have lasting consequences into adulthood such as failure in school, poor marital relationships, and difficulties with maintaining employment.

Further, according to the Age-Graded Life-Course Theory, the same theoretical principles that explain persistence (or stability) of criminal behavior, also explain desistance (or change) in offending within a lifespan. In other words, the processes of social control, structure, and human agency can explain why individuals commit crime in the life course as well as why individuals desist from criminal offending (Sampson & Laub, 2008). Antisocial and delinquent experiences in childhood, as part of the process of cumulative disadvantage, weaken social bonds and increase the likelihood of continued criminal offending. However, establishing adult social bonds, particularly marital attachments and employment, can change criminal behaviors in adulthood. Though they recognize that cumulative disadvantage may make it progressively more problematic for an individual to establish strong social bonds, Sampson and Laub’s theory differentiates itself by arguing that social processes do allow for change in adulthood (Benson, 2002). The criminal trajectory for an adult individual can be redirected, regardless of previous antisocial behaviors in adolescence or childhood, when adult social controls are introduced. Therefore, according to theory, adult social
bonds have an inverse relationship with adult criminality (Sampson & Laub, 1993; 2008).

**Developmental Taxonomy**

Another important theoretical contribution to life-course criminology is Terrie Moffitt’s *Developmental Taxonomy*. This perspective, unlike general theories of crime, argues that explaining criminal behavior requires multiple theoretical processes to account for different typologies of offenders (Skardhamar, 2009). Moffitt claims that the *Developmental Taxonomy*, unlike the previous attempts to classify delinquent and criminal offenders (Blumstein et al., 1986; Hayner, 1961; Patterson, 1986), provides a theoretical basis for using offender typologies (Moffitt, 1993).

At its core, the *Developmental Taxonomy* is presenting explanations for what is commonly known as Robin’s paradox (1978): “Adult antisocial behavior virtually requires childhood antisocial behavior yet most antisocial youths do not become antisocial adults.” Moffitt uses epidemiological research on the prevalence of antisocial behavior within and across life-course stages, and argues that two key and distinct typologies of offenders can be identified; the *life-course persistent* (LCP) and the *adolescent limited* (AL) offenders. The two proposed typologies follow different antisocial and criminal trajectories through the life-course, and therefore, Moffitt proposes two complementary theories to explain criminal behavior among these offenders (Moffitt, 1993; 1997).

The first part of the *Developmental Taxonomy* presents a theory to explain the small group of adolescents who exhibit antisocial behaviors early in childhood, actively participate in a variety of crimes throughout their adolescence, may participate in violent crimes, and who continue to engage in criminal activity and antisocial behaviors in
adulthood (Moffitt, 1993). These individuals, whose life-course is marked by antisocial continuity and the “cross-situational consistency” of behaviors (i.e.; antisocial behavioral problems at home, school, work, etc.), are called life-course persistent (LCP) offenders. However, although the theory projects a “bleak” life for these individuals, according to Moffitt, the LCP individuals only represent 5-8% of the population (Piquero & Moffitt, 2008).

The etiology of LCP offenders comes from the combination of neuropsychological deficits and an inadequate environment. Moffitt argues that LCP offenders either inherit or acquire neuropsychological deficiencies which then manifest as early childhood antisocial behaviors, which can include impulsivity, irritability, a difficult temperament, being overactive, as well as inattentiveness. Further, the neuropsychological deficits are also associated with difficulty learning, poor cognitive skills, and impaired verbal abilities and comprehension. In short, LCP individuals are both “difficult infants” and troubled children (Moffitt, 1993). Although some individuals with neuropsychological deficits and neurological damage do not become LCP offenders, those born into environments that are not equipped or capable to deal with their problems are at risk of continuing LCP antisocial, delinquent, and criminal behaviors. Unfortunately, children with neuropsychological deficits and neurological damage are often born into underprivileged environments. Moffitt explains:

Vulnerable infants are disproportionately found in environments that will not be ameliorative because many source of neural maldevelopment co-occur with family disadvantage or deviance. Indeed, because some characteristics of parents and children tend to be correlated, parents of children who are at risk for antisocial behavior often inadvertently provide their children with criminogenic environments (Moffit, 1993: 681).
The maintenance or continuation of antisocial behaviors through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are explained by interactions with others. First, the “difficult” child evokes negative, irritated, neglectful, and other “distinctive” and “failed” encounters with others. These evocative interactions are likely to intensify and promote further antisocial behavioral outcomes from the child. Further, individuals at-risk for an LCP outcome, because of their neuropsychological issues, are likely to have reactive interactions with others and misinterpret intentions as harmful. Therefore, the individual is more likely to react aggressively or generally inappropriately to their incorrect assessment of other people’s intentions during interpersonal interactions. Finally, these individuals have proactive interactions with others, where they are choosing peers and environments that correspond with their antisocial style. In other words, the at-risk individual selects delinquent peers, and later, delinquent spouses (Moffitt, 1993).

These interpersonal and environmental interactions lead to both cumulative and contemporary consequences. The individual experiences the cumulative effect of their childhood and adolescent antisocial behaviors, which makes it increasingly more difficult and unlikely that the individual will be able to escape from an LCP offending adulthood. Further, the individual, who continues to exhibit the variety of antisocial behavioral traits they displayed in childhood and adolescence, will create contemporary consequences based on those behaviors. For example, the individual who is irritable, impulsive, and aggressive, will likely show those characteristics as an adult and have problems with employment, marriage, etc. (Moffitt, 1993).

The effects of the correlation between the individual’s traits (neuropsychological deficits) and the environment, evocative and proactive interactions, and the cumulative
and contemporary consequences from those interactions during an individual’s first 18 – 20 years of development leads to the LCP “syndrome.” The LCP individual continues antisocial and criminal behaviors past their adolescent development and into adulthood (Moffitt, 1993; Piquero & Moffitt, 2008). The possibility of desistence for LCP offenders in adulthood, according to the Developmental Taxonomy, is virtually eliminated because the individual has been “ensnared” by antisocial consequences. They are likely to have few, if any, pro-social peers, limited verbal and mathematic skills, a criminal record, and a poor employment history, among other barriers (Benson, 2002). Further, the individual has also greatly restricted opportunities to learn and practice pro-social alternatives. Therefore, LCP offenders are limited in their ability to follow a new life pathway, even when they are provided opportunities to “change” their antisocial behaviors (Benson, 2002; Moffitt 1993; Piquero & Moffitt, 2008).

The second part of the Developmental Taxonomy presents a theory to explain the large number of adolescents who participate in acts of juvenile delinquency, yet do not have a history of any significant involvement in childhood antisocial behaviors, and do not continue to any notable criminality in adulthood (Moffitt, 1993). These individuals, who only participate in crime and delinquency during their adolescent development, are Adolescence-Limited Offenders (AL). According to Moffitt’s theory, these AL offenders are “normal” adolescents who are responding to transitional events within the life-course (Moffitt, 1993).

According to the Developmental Taxonomy, AL offenders begin engage in antisocial and delinquent behaviors during early adolescence (Benson, 2002). Unlike LCP offenders, these individuals tend to participate in relatively minor infractions, rarely
instigate violent offenses, and often partake in delinquent acts with groups rather than individually (Piquero & Moffitt, 2008). Further, AL offenders are usually not antisocial in all social contexts. These individuals may use alcohol or illegal drugs with peers, but will still behave “normally” with their parents or at school. They only engage in antisocial behaviors when it serves an “instrumental function.” In other words, they manage their prosocial and antisocial behaviors, applying the behavioral style that is most beneficial to them within a particular social circumstance. Therefore, unlike LCP offenders, AL offenders display little continuity of behavior (Moffitt, 1993).

Adolescent Limited Offenders begin participating in antisocial and delinquent acts through the “social mimicry” of Life-Course Persistent Offenders. Their interest to imitate LCP offender’s behaviors is motivated through the AL individual’s experiences with the “maturity gap.” The AL individual begins to feel biologically mature, yet society continues to deny them access to personal independence and adult privileges. They observe that the LCP individuals, although they are the same stage of development, appear to “make their own rules,” have sexual experiences, drink alcohol, and engage in a variety of behaviors that resemble “adult” activities. Therefore, the AL individuals model the observable behaviors of LCP youth, and by doing so, begin to involve themselves in minor forms of delinquency (Moffitt, 1993; 1997).

However, as the AL offenders grow older and no longer feel the maturity gap, they also begin to desist from antisocial and criminal activities. They now have the adult responsibilities and social access they were originally seeking. Further, AL offenders have the benefits of both a “normal” pre-adolescence as well as new “options for change” (Moffitt, 199; Piquero & Moffitt, 2008). In other words, as AL individuals begin
to exit the adolescent years, they are expected to graduate from high school, join the military, get a job, or go to college. With these new options, their perception of the benefits and consequences of antisocial behaviors also change (Benson, 2002; Moffitt, 1993). Though some AL offenders face “snares” from criminal records or other consequences from their adolescent years that slows the desistance process, for the most part, the desistence process for AL individuals is “easy.” They have pro-social skills, they only have minor infractions on their official records (if any), and they do not suffer from the effects of neuropsychological deficits. In general, the negative and cumulative consequences from their experiences with antisocial and delinquent behaviors are relatively minor, and do not stop these individuals from having a normal adulthood.

Though the Developmental Taxonomy presents two complimentary theories of LCP and AL offenders, it does not renounce the existence of individuals who completely abstain from antisocial behaviors. According to Moffitt, a very small number of individuals do not engage in any form of delinquency during their adolescent development. These individuals either have “pathological characteristics” that prevent them from having normal relationships with peers, “structural barriers” that avert them from observing and learning about delinquency, or a lack of experience with the maturity gap because of either delayed puberty or premature access to adult roles.

**Interactional Theory of Delinquency**

Thornberry’s *Interactional Theory of Delinquency*, like other integrated control theories of crime and delinquency, argues that the central causes of crime are weak or absent social bonds (Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, & Jang, 1991). However, the theory also incorporates the importance of interactional and reciprocal component of
human behavior, developmental factors across the life-course, and variations across structural positions. These three concepts, which differentiate the theory from traditional control perspectives, are central to the *Interactional Theory of Delinquency* (Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry et al., 1991).

First, the theory proposes that delinquency should be approached from an interactional model (Thornberry, 1987). In other words, when examining the causes of crime and delinquency, the reciprocal nature of the independent variables and delinquent behaviors should be taken into account. While factors in an individual's life (peers, family, employment, etc.) may influence delinquent and criminal outcomes, in turn, those delinquent behaviors also have an effect on those life factors. The theory proposes that causal factors are not necessarily unidirectional, and instead, the relationship between causal factors and delinquency is often bidirectional (Thornberry et al., 1991). It is a theory of “mutually reinforcing causal loops” (Thornberry & Krohn, 2008).

Second, Thornberry proposes a theory that considers life-course influences. The theory argues that “causal influences vary at different developmental stages and at different stages of criminal careers” (Thornberry et al., 1991). While the theory proposes that a strong attachment to parents, commitment to school, and belief in conventional values greatly reduces the likelihood of delinquency, it also argues that these individual attributes are not stable over the life-span. Instead, the causal importance of these factors adjusts during the developmental process (Thornberry, 1987). Therefore, the theory provides causal models of delinquency for three stages of development, early, middle, and late adolescence (Thornberry, 1996).
In early adolescence, around age 11-13, attachment to parents has the strongest influence. Children who have strong bonds with their parents will be more invested in conventional values and actions, more committed to school, and less likely to engage with delinquent peers or behaviors. In other words, in the stage of early adolescence, attachment to parents influences delinquency, but it also interacts and influences other social bonds. In middle adolescence, which occurs around ages 15-16, the central source of social control changes from inside the home with family, to peers and school. Interactions with friends become particularly important during middle adolescence, and delinquent peers are associated with delinquent values and behaviors. Finally, in late adolescence (ages 18-20), Thornberry argues that commitment to conventional values and activities through employment, military service, and college become most salient to individuals. These variables “largely replace” the former influence of school, and a young adult’s commitment to their own children and families, replaces attachment to parents in terms of forming bonds to conventional society (Thornberry, 1987). These changes, from school to work and also marriage, leads to less time with delinquent peers. Consequently, and mirroring the age-crime curve, this also leads to a reduction in delinquent activities. On the other hand, those individuals whose developmental transition into later adolescence does not include acquiring social bonds which increase their stake in conformity, are more likely to continue on a criminal trajectory (Benson, 2002; Thornberry 1987; Thornberry et al., 1991).

While the importance of certain sources of social control varies through the developmental stages, the general structure of the Interactional Theory of Delinquency
does not change. Though a particular variable emerges as most salient during a stage of the life-course, all the variables of social control continue to reinforce each other and interact in all the developmental stages. Further, the first key element of interaction and reciprocity applies. While these factors may lead to delinquency when they are weak or missing in each life-stage, delinquency can also deteriorate the quality of these elements of social bonds. For example, “… while the weakening of the bond to conventional society may be an initial cause of delinquency, delinquency eventually becomes its own indirect cause precisely because of its ability to weaken further the person’s bond to family, school, and conventional beliefs” (Thornberry, 1987: 876).

The third and final concept of the Interactional Theory of Delinquency is consideration of “structural effects” (Thornberry, 1987). Though the theory is largely “social psychological” in its focus, it does highlight some external structural influences, particularly that of socioeconomic class on the “interactional variables and behavioral trajectories” of individuals (Benson, 2002; Thornberry 1987). Thornberry notes that children born into lower class families are more likely to immediately face barriers to “initial values”, like those stemming from “disrupted family processes and environments,” poor school preparation, economic instability, and delinquent neighborhoods, all which limit the bonds they create with their family, school, and to conventional values. As an individual moves upward in social class, these barriers to “initial values” are reduced (Thornberry, 1987). In general, Thornberry uses structural effects as an external framework for the interactional and reciprocal processes of the theory (Benson, 2002).
Summary

Contemporary life-course theories of criminology were highly influenced by the criminal career paradigm (Blumstein et al., 1986). They have been prominent in the field since the 1990’s, and were popularized by the timely availability of the longitudinal research and data needed for the developmental and life-course perspective. In general, these theories address three main areas: 1) “the development of offending and antisocial behavior” 2) “risk and protective factors at different ages,” and 3) “the effects of life events on the course of development” (Farrington, 2008:1). Though there are still controversial and unresolved issues (Farrington, 2008; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1986), life-course theories have found substantial empirical support (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Osgood, 2005; Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2003; Piquero, 2004).

In summary, at the individual level, life-course theories propose a variety of explanations for the “onset” of delinquency. Individuals may have weak social bonds to conventional society (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Thornberry, 1987), neuropsychological deficits, or a desire for adult roles and privileges (Moffitt, 1993). However, what distinguishes the life-course perspective is the longitudinal and “linked” approach to understanding this phenomenon. Although these factors must be present for the initiation of crime, they occur in conjunction with developmental and life-course factors. The continuity of criminal behaviors is explained through the accumulation of consequences from previous life experiences, that not only keep an individual on a criminal trajectory, but that may also introduce traps and barriers for an individual’s future. Finally, if crime is to desist, the life-course perspective suggests that age-appropriate events in the life-course, or turning-points, must occur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical branch</th>
<th>Criminal onset</th>
<th>Continuance</th>
<th>Desistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Learning Theories</td>
<td>Exposure to and internalization of definitions favorable to criminality; particularly in primary groups.</td>
<td>Differential reinforcement of criminal definitions, strong frequency, duration, and intensity of exposure to definitions favorable to criminal behavior</td>
<td>Formal or informal “intervention,” which allows for exposure, reinforcement, and internalization of new socially conforming values/beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Theories</td>
<td>Sources of control (external or internal) are weak or absent, and the opportunity for deviant behavior is present. Learning is not necessary</td>
<td>Continued weak, broken, or absent sources of control</td>
<td>Effective sources of control are introduced, social bonds are present, and the opportunity for engaging in deviant behaviors is eliminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strain Theories</td>
<td>Individual experiences strain, and the individual attempts to remove the pressure they are experiencing through crime.</td>
<td>Source or sources of strain continue/ individual does not acquire alternative coping skills</td>
<td>Source of strain is no longer present, or the individual acquires a new mode of adaptation or new (non-criminal) coping skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLC Theories</td>
<td>Weak or absent age appropriate social bonds, “off-age” life events, neuropsychological deficits, or a desire for adult privileges.</td>
<td>Accumulation of consequences and accruing disadvantage, creating barriers and traps which limit an individual from redirecting a criminal trajectory. Human agency in choice making is observable.</td>
<td>“On-time” turning points, redirecting the individual’s criminal trajectory; human agency in choice making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Participants

The participants included 44 persons recruited from the immediate and surrounding communities. The 44 individuals recruited to participate in this study included 24 females (54.5%) and 20 males (45.5%). When the respondents were asked to report their race, 4 (9.1%) identified as Black, and the remaining 40 (90.9%) participants identified as White. The average age of a respondent was 58 years old, with a range of 40 years old to 80 years old. When asked about official encounters with the criminal justice system, including all arrests and incarcerations, 23 (52.3%) participants reported having one or more arrests, sentence in a juvenile institution, time in jail, or/and time in prison. Undiscovered crime or delinquent behavior was reported by 38 (84.1%) participants.

Procedures

Three non-probability sampling procedures were utilized. First, participants were recruited through the classified sections in North Central Florida and Central Florida newspaper circulations. The newspaper advertisements were available on both the paper circulations as well as the online versions of the newspapers. Second, a posting was placed in the Gainesville, Florida and Orlando, Florida sections of Craigslist.com. Third, posted invitations to participate were placed on the informational boards at a free medical clinic and woman’s group for low income, homeless, and at-risk persons. The newspaper advertisements and online classified postings were appropriate in order to recruit participants reflecting a broad range of socioeconomic status, race, and gender. The informational board invitations were posted in order to recruit individuals who were
less likely to have access to newspapers or the internet, and who were also less likely
to seek out unpaid research participant opportunities. At the time of data collection, the
researcher was employed at the free medical clinic where the advertisement was
posted, which provided access and familiarity with some of the respondents. While the
post was an open invitation, after the first participant was contacted, a chain referral
sampling technique was used to recruit 7 (16%) of the 44 participants. The posted and
newspaper advertisements invited the individuals to share their life stories for a
research project. It read:

"Share your own life story. Participants over 40 years old are needed for
research testing behavioral theories on real lives on all real behaviors –
those that are normal, good, legal, and illegal.

Information to contact the principal investigator was also posted. Individuals who
have both had interactions and experiences with the criminal justice system as well as
those who have not had those experiences were likely to be found within the posting
locations and from newspaper advertisements. Approximately 133 calls or emails were
received from potential study participants. This is an approximation because incidents of
unlisted phone numbers making repeated calls to the listed number did occur. In
addition, an individual left a series of messages without providing contact information.
Of those contacted, who were over the age of 40 years, and were interested in
participating, 17 either did not show to the interview or called the interview off at the last
minute without rescheduling. The process of communication from initial contact to a
scheduled interview appointment usually included an average of three emails or phone
calls between the potential participant and the researcher. However, in a few cases, the
researcher and participant communicated through phone and/or email six or seven
times before the time of interview. In total, 45 interviews were attempted, with one being cut short and discarded because the individual was too intoxicated to provide informed consent.

For the present study, after an initial interview, individuals who are male and female and over the age of 40 years were selected as study participants. The age criteria of 40 years or older was selected in order to focus on individuals who are more likely to have either reduced involvement in or desisted from criminal involvement. Though some individuals continue criminally offending long past the age of 25 years old (Farrington, 1997), for the majority of individuals, the research indicates that the peak age of desistence from criminality is between the ages of 20 to 29 years of age (Farrington, 2002).

**Methodology**

Data for this study was obtained from structured life-history interviews, with open-ended questions framed with the intention to elicit data on the etiology, continuation, and cessation of criminal involvement, and also to allow for broad inquiry of theoretically relevant information. The average length of the interviews was 1 hour and 24 minutes, with a range of 35 minutes to 2 hours and 46 minutes. The participants were interviewed about their own life-history. Broadly, the interviewer asked about the participant’s childhood through present day and life events, personal experiences, social circumstances, relationships with significant others, perceptions and feelings at several life stages. Specific questions were used when a participant indicated delinquent or criminal involvement to get more precise indicators of time of the onset, patterns, changes, termination of criminal behaviors, and involvement with the criminal justice
system as well as to indirectly probe for theoretically relevant information for each of the four groups of theories.

When questions were asked about experiences with the criminal justice system and criminal behaviors; respondents were told to omit precise references to location, names, exact dates, or other identifiable information about criminal cases, accomplices or victims, as well as any other unnecessary detail that could link the participant or other individual to a particular crime. Such information was always discouraged within the interview process and participants were interrupted when it occurred during the interview and told to please leave out those details.

The use of a loosely formatted interview is utilized to protect the validity of the personal data by allowing the respondent to freely recall their own life-history without imposing suggestive frames or categories with specific questions or fixed response categories. For example, aside from loosely guiding the interview to gather general theoretically relevant categories of information, asking the respondent to elaborate or describe conditions surrounding specific theoretical factors will only take place after the individual has already personally implied significance to that aspect of their own life story. To preserve the quality of the data, it is important not to impose or imply significance of certain aspects of the life-history or distinguishing features of competing theories through regularized direct questioning (Frazier, 1976).

For safety reasons, meetings and interviews were scheduled to take place in public areas that still allowed for some level of privacy (79.5%), or they were conducted over the phone (20.5%). For example, the researcher often met the participant at a coffee shop or a local restaurant. Some participants did not show up to scheduled
interview times and did not re-schedule. If the potential participant did not show up for a
scheduled interview or cancelled a total of three times, the researcher no longer
pursued that individual’s participation in the study. In total, 17 potential participants were
either “no-shows” or cancellations. Interviews were recorded on audiotape using the
“Zoom H2 Handy Portable Stereo Recorder” and then transcribed and then the original
recording was destroyed. The transcriptions of the interviews were tracked with code
numbers and never with the participant’s names or other identifiable information.

Analysis

The recorded life-history interviews were transcribed by this researcher. The
average interview took 4 hours to fully transcribe with many rewind and replay episodes
on some sections that were not clear before repeated listening. The written
transcriptions were then utilized as the raw data for qualitative analysis (See examples
in Appendices B and C). The analysis is a multi-theory comparison, which considers
four prevalent theoretical branches: Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain
Theories, and Developmental/ Life-course (DLC) Theories of Criminology. There are
distinct or unique features in each of these theories that set them apart from the others.
These theoretical indicators can be found in Table 2-1. Each case was examined and
re-examined to determine which if any theory well explained onset, continuance and
patterns of criminal behavior, and desistance -- if that occurred. For the purposes of this
study, although indicators of multiple theories may be present within some individual’s

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1 The theoretical indicators for criminal onset, continuance, and desistance are identified as general
themes and assumptions of each broader theoretical branch. Within each prevalent theoretical branch, a
particular theory may vary or deviate from the general approach of its theoretical family. In these cases,
while theoretical deviations are discussed in the literature review, those variations will not be included as
indicators for the analysis. In other words, the central and root form of the theory is what is examined
here.
stages of criminality, the analysis identified the theoretical branch that was most able to explain a stage of criminality. In other words, the analysis identified the predominant theoretical branch within a stage of criminality. The unit of analysis then shifted from stages of criminality to the overall life-course. Each case was then examined in a global sense (the full life-history) to determine if one theory explained the entire case standing alone. In a few cases, when the researcher thought the theoretical indicators were unclear or that a second researcher’s perspective would be beneficial, Dr. Charles E. Frazier also examined those full life-histories.

For example, a life-history best explained by Social Learning Theories, may begin with criminal parents exposing a child to crime or delinquency, which fits the theoretical branch’s etiological feature of exposure to favorable definitions towards criminality (particularly in primary groups). The internalization and reinforcement of crime and delinquency may present itself by the individual being rewarded for deviance by their peers and family. Further, the individual may be encouraged and praised by their family for bringing home stolen goods or illegitimately obtained money, and added reinforcement by delinquent peers. They may also be discouraged from normative behaviors by delinquent peers who may ostracize involvement in school, religion, or employment. In a “Social Learning” life-history, the continuation of delinquent and criminal behaviors would be explained by life factors reinforcing criminal definitions, and also a strong frequency of exposure to definitions favorable to criminal behaviors. However, the cessation or desistance from criminality would be marked by either a formal or informal “intervention” which allows for both primary exposure to and internalization of socially conforming values and beliefs. For example, the individual
may be removed from their criminal home and placed in another family and school environment. In this situation, the new social condition exposes the individual to a higher frequency of definitions unfavorable to crime (law abiding guardians, religion, new normative peers, etc.), he or she may be rewarded for socially acceptable and normative behaviors and punished for deviance, and may then internalize the new values and beliefs. In general, a “social learning” criminal life-history is characterized by learning, and human agency is not a factor in the process to deviance.

Distinctly, a life-history best explained by Control Theories may begin with permissive, absent or incapable parents, who do not provide adequate supervision or discipline. The individual may not form strong social bonds, weakening a sense of attachment and commitment to pro-social individuals. Since control theories assume that all individuals are naturally inclined towards deviance, onset of crime is explained by sources of control (external or internal) being weak or absent. If the individual’s sources of control continue to be weak, continuation of delinquent and criminal behaviors will continue because, as Hirschi (1969) argues, there is no good reason not to engage in crime or delinquency. For example, if the individual who has weak internal controls, or/and few sources of external control or social bonds (employment, commitment to school, marriage, etc.), then criminality will continue. In order for crime and delinquency to cease, life factors where effective sources of control are introduced would have to be present (marriage, employment, etc.), or/and, the opportunity for engaging in deviant behaviors would to be eliminated (limited mobility or ability due to age or illness, incarceration, etc.) In general, a “control theory” life-history would be
characterized by constraint (or lack of constraint), and human agency would play a minimal role in the process towards deviance.

If we look at the distinct features of the *Strain Theoretical Branch*, a criminal life-history which best corresponds to the theoretical propositions may first include an individual experiencing strain, and that individual attempting to remove the pressure they are experiencing. For example, an individual may experience an impoverished, or unstable home life which makes them feel angry, frustrated, and depressed. In order to cope with their feelings, the individual then may turn to delinquency and crime. To explain continuation of criminal behavior, the source(s) of strain remains in an individual’s life, and no new coping skills are acquired. As the individual in this circumstance moves through the life-course, they continue to experience actual or perceived strain. Then they may perceive that they are blocked from attaining wealth or success, they do not like the status they hold among their peers. Since these sources of stress create negative emotions, and if the individual has not acquired non-criminal coping skills, they may continue to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior in an effort to alleviate the pressure. Desistance from crime is marked by the elimination of strain or acquiring non-criminal coping skills. For example, the individual may move away from the family or acquire a higher level of social status among their peers. The individual may also have acquired new non-criminal coping skills. Cognitive and social development may lead them to have increased communication skills, or success in work or employment may be a new alternative to achieving status among their peers. A life-history best explained by strain theories is characterized by pressures and strains, and human agency may be observed in individuals’ use of coping skills that remove strain.
Finally, a life-history best explained by *Developmental and Life-Course Theories* (hereafter referred to as DLC theories) may begin with neuropsychological deficits developed at birth or in early life, or/and, weak bonds with parents (age appropriate social bonds). For DLC theories, the factors associated with the onset of delinquency and crime are associated with the “appropriate timing of lives” and significant events (turning points) that place an individual on a criminal trajectory. The factors associated with criminal onset may first appear like the features of other theoretical branches. However, DLC features become apparent when the rest of the life-history is examined. The continuation of delinquency and crime occurs through the accumulation of consequences from previous life events, which may create barriers and “knife-off” the individual from alternative life pathways, and also makes it more challenging for the individual to acquire social bonds which are “on-time” for their next phase of life. For example, an individual may have failed out of primary school, and have a criminal record, which makes it challenging to find employment in young adulthood. According to DLC theories, continuation of crime is also partly explained by “human agency in choice making.” While the individual’s “linked” life-history may create an accumulation of challenges, the individual also has some choices, regardless of how limited they may be, to make along the way. The factors necessary for criminal desistance are “turning points” which can change an individual’s life trajectory, such as developmentally appropriate social bonds like marriage and employment in adulthood. DLC life-histories are characterized by the effects of historical context, “social embeddedness” through interpersonal relationships, age, and human agency (Elder & Giele, 2009).

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2 Many of the participants in this study are likely to share sociohistorical context and birth cohort. Therefore the effects of these indicators, if any, will not be a focus of this study.
It will be argued that the features of each theoretical branch are unique in precipitating and sustaining criminal behavior and must be effectively ameliorated or neutralized before cessation is possible. Real lives of course may fit one theory or another with few or no signs of factors supported by competing theories. They may also represent a mix of factors fitting two or more of the theoretical streams, and the presence and impact of any such set of factors may vary in time and stage of life.

Identifying these unique theoretical indicators allows for the comparative evaluation of these four distinct theoretical branches, in their unique or partial ability to explain the life-history data. The analysis assessed the utility of these theories to explain criminal outcomes in individual lives. Specifically, the analysis examined the presence (or absence) of central theoretical propositions in explaining criminal development (or onset), continuation, and desistance from criminal behaviors in individual’s life-history data. The analysis also examined how completely particular theories account for the complete process of crime from inception to cessation in the cases in which they apply. It also considered the extent to which some theories are more fully explanatory of archetype cases than others.

Table 3-1. Demographic and descriptive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic/ Descriptive</th>
<th>Participants (n = 44)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and delinquency</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official criminal record</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undiscovered crime/delinquency</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>
### Table 3-2. Female participants

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime and delinquency</th>
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<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official criminal record</td>
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<td>41.7%</td>
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<td>Undiscovered crime/delinquency</td>
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<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>25%</td>
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### Table 3-3. Male participants

<table>
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<th>Race</th>
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<td>Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Crime and delinquency</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS: THEORETICAL INDICATORS OF CRIMINAL ONSET

Criminal Onset

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings on the initiation or onset of delinquent or criminal behaviors. While extant research often measures criminal onset as the first encounter with the criminal justice system (DeLisi et al. 2013), the current research utilizes the respondent’s first memory of an illegal act (delinquent or criminal behavior). For example, in the following interview with “Susan”, a 60 year old White female, delinquent onset was established in the following manner:

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time that you did something wrong or delinquent?
Susan: I remember being in a store stealing something.
Interviewer: Do you remember how old you were?
Susan: Ten

Susan’s first encounter with the criminal justice system did not occur until she was 16 years old. However, between the ages of 10 and 16 years old, Susan continued shoplifting and had also gone joy-riding in a stolen car. The inaccuracy of utilizing official encounter with the criminal justice system to mark the age of delinquent or criminal onset and the ways one might be misled in attaching a theoretical explanation to that official point of contact are apparent throughout the cases included in this study. Of the life stories that included delinquent or criminal activity, there was only one case in which the individual’s initial encounter with the criminal justice system was the same as their recollection of initial delinquency.

In the following section, theoretical indicators of delinquent or criminal onset are presented in four sections: (1) criminal onset best explained by Social Learning Theory indicators, (2) criminal onset best explained by Control Theory indicators, (3) criminal
onset best explained by Strain theory indicators, and (4) criminal onset best explained by Developmental/Life-Course theory indicators.

**Social Learning and the Initiation of Delinquency and Crime**

Social Learning theory was the primary indicator of delinquent or criminal onset in one case. In this case, exposure to and internalization of definitions favorable to delinquency or crime were clearly observable. The respondent's name (a pseudonym) is Vito.

At the time of interview, Vito was 66 years old. He is a White male who was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York by both his mother and his father. Vito was exposed to crime early in his life, and it is also apparent that he internalized values and beliefs favorable to criminality. His father and his godfather were both openly involved in a criminal lifestyle, and they encouraged Vito to do the same.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your relationship with your mom and your dad.
**Vito:** I know my father was involved with the wrong people through the years; I know that.

**Interviewer:** Did you know that when you were young too?
**Vito:** Oh yes. Deep down inside he wanted me to be involved with people; I know that. My godfather in particular was involved with a family in New York and he wanted me to follow suit. And my godfather kind of took me under his wing for a while

Vito joined a neighborhood gang when he was 12 years old. He reported his first delinquent activity as stealing soda bottles from a local factory, marking the beginning of regular involvement in delinquency and crime. Vito indicated that he knew that not pursuing a life within a criminal family would disappoint his father. His father and godfather's involvement in a criminal lifestyle as well as their encouragement for Vito to follow the same path fits the theoretical branch's etiological feature of exposure to
favorable definitions towards criminality (particularly in primary groups). Vito’s life continued on a criminal trajectory and he was actively involved in various criminal behaviors until he was approximately 60 years old. His continuation and later desistance from crime will be discussed in later sections.

**Control and the Initiation of Delinquency and Crime**

Control Theories start with the assumption that all individuals are naturally inclined towards deviance. It is only when adequate social controls are present and effective that conformity may be expected. Therefore, the emergence of delinquency or crime is indicated by sources of control being weak, broken, or absent. Social Control theory indicators were best in explaining the onset of criminality in 26 of the 38 cases examined for this study. Many of these cases are marked by domestic violence, child abuse, and/or alcoholism in the originating family, which then translated to weak or absent sources of control and limited or absent bonds.

An example of this can be seen in Jimmy’s story. Jimmy, a 61 year old White male, was raised in an upper middle class household with an abusive father and an emotionally detached mother who had not recovered from the death of his sister when Jimmy was 6 years old. His mother did not provide supervision or discipline, but he described his father, who was often absent, as physically abusive when he was home:

> When my dad was around, it was punishment dealt out, you know? The punishment wasn’t stand in a corner, we’ll talk to you later. It was physical, you know? And uh, my father was, you know, I know what a leather whip must have felt like because my father beat me a lot with a leather belt. One time, you know, the beating was so bad that I had to re-spackle the bedroom that I lived in to close up the dents on the wall and then re-paint the room.
Jimmy’s attachment and bond with his parents was weak, and his parents did not provide adequate supervision. He was smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, skipping school, and hitchhiking when he was an 8 year old. Jimmy described his early delinquent onset:

   We could get away with things because she was in this mourning of her own and my father traveled a lot with the company and so, like I said, it was an independent kind of upbringing.

Some of the other cases in this section are examples of “natural” inclinations towards deviance when there was opportunity or/and when there was a change in the available sources of control. For example, George, a 61 year old White male, described his relationships with his mother and father in a very positive way and he said he “lived in a nice community and went to nice schools.” However, when he was 10 or 11 years old he began shoplifting baseball cards. He described the situation in the following manner:

   … I suppose not unlike many kids, you know, there’s the old “there are some baseball cards there and the clerk is looking the other way”

George described shoplifting in his youth as something he did simply because there was an opportunity available. Outside of this incident, George engaged in few other delinquent behaviors and did not develop a pattern of delinquency during his youth. He was a well regulated child with strong attachments to pro-social individuals and was highly committed to school.

   Some cases displayed delinquent onset after a change in the available external sources of control, leaving an individual with opportunity they did not previously experience. For example, Bill, a 67 year old White male, was raised in an orphanage
from age 7 to 18 years. He described himself as a “loner,” and explained that he did not develop any social bonds with available staff members or teachers at the institution, and he also had limited memories of friends. When he turned 18 years old and he had to move away from the institution he was raised in, he had not developed any bonds or attachments to pro-social individuals. Once the institutional setting was removed, which had been previously providing an external and institutional source of control, Bill described starting to engage in drinking alcohol, “partying,” and having relationships with women. He also failed out of technical college within the first semester. When explaining what he thought happened during this point of his life, Bill says:

I just, I wasn’t used to freedom, I think. I got into drinking and looking for women.

Bill had limited social bonds and attachments in his childhood; however, he also had little opportunity to engage in crime while living in an institution. When he was 18, he found himself without social bonds or attachments and with limited external sources of control.

Similarly, Ben, a 56 year old Black male was raised on a working farm with 7 sisters and 6 brothers. When describing his childhood he says:

I didn’t have the opportunity to really get in any trouble because somebody was always there, always correcting me. And uh, my parents had some very high hopes for me. I felt special, and therefore I was.

Ben’s criminal onset did not occur until he was 17 years old and he enlisted in the army. He was away from his originating family for the first time. When he described his first time drinking alcohol he said:

Couple weeks of basic training, cut you lose on post, got a few dollars in your pocket, came out on the parade field with
cases of beer that could not go back to the company area, so we had to drink it all, and we did.

He was describing a situation where he found himself with new opportunity (had money of his own) and weak inner controls (a sense that he “had to drink it all”).

In another case, a lack of adequate supervision was present. Rose, a 43 year old female, described having a good relationship with her father until she was 13 years old and her parents go through a divorce. At this point, Rose lived with her father who she described as being depressed after the divorce, and who was providing little to no supervision. She drank alcohol for the first time around 13 or 14 years old and described spending days away from home without consequence. She said, “I remember there was one summer when we literally were not home, not one night, in the summer.”

Soon after Rose’s initial delinquent act, she began using various drugs and using fake identification cards to get into nightclubs. When she was asked to describe how she felt about the behaviors she was engaged in, Rose describes an upbringing where she had limited external and internal sources of control:

   You know, I never thought about consequences, never. And I think that’s because of when I was growing up there were no consequences for anything.

   Another example is Mike’s story, a 63 year old White male who created a “shoplifting club” with his friends when he was around 11 years old. His sense of attachment to his parents was weakened through their strict parenting style, and he described his relationship with his parents as “tense” and said they are “very strict, you know, dictatorial type.” When Mike discussed his onset to delinquency, he described a situation where he was testing societal controls and also personally experiencing a “thrill.” He described his behaviors by saying:
And we would go into various... see if we could steal things. And the things that we stole were uh, um, not uh, we didn’t get it for like, we did it just for the thrill. To see if we could get away with it.

Strain and the Initiation of Delinquency and Crime

Indicators of Strain theory would include life-histories where an individual is experiencing strain and they attempt to remove the pressure through delinquency or crime. Strain theory propositions best explained the emergence of delinquency and crime in one case.

Maury was a 66 year old White male who first began engaging in what he calls “rule breaking” around the time he was 8 years old. Maury’s father died when he was 5 years old and he was raised by his single mother who was a seamstress. When discussing his childhood up until the point of delinquent onset, Maury described feeling strain, primarily from school teachers that he described as being “horrible.” He felt labeled by teachers and friend’s parents as a “trouble maker” and made to feel “like trash.” He recalled a sense of strain (wanting a more positive image but having no means for achieving it) and that this made him experience what he called “a very bad feeling.” Maury explained the emergence of his delinquency in the following manner:

You know school, it was so, I was so so not liking school, that you know, I wanted to lash. It was almost as though they were making me go to school and I didn’t want to go to school, so I was lashing back. Um, at the whole establishment in terms of making me go to school and stuff like that.

Maury described his initial “rule breaking” behavior as using a sling shot to shoot BB pellets at cars. What Maury described was utilizing delinquency, like the sling shot, as a coping method for the pressures he was experiencing as a young child.
It is important to note that while Strain theory indicators were most capable of explaining Maury’s initial act of delinquency, Maury’s subsequent delinquent and criminal behaviors, although within the same time frame of his life, indicated the role of Development/ Life-Course theoretical indicators.

**Developmental / Life-Course Theories and the Initiation of Delinquency and Crime**

Developmental / Life-Course Theories (DLC) propose that the factors associated with the initial emergence of delinquency and crime are the “appropriate timing of lives” and significant events (turning points) that place an individual on a criminal trajectory. In the present study, delinquent or criminal onset was best explained by DLC theory indicators for 10 cases. DLC theory indicators associated with the initiation of crime may first appear like the features of other theoretical branches (e.g., weak or absent age appropriate social bonds). However, DLC features become apparent when the rest of the life-history is examined. Therefore, for this section, cases are presented where DLC factors associated with the emergence of delinquency or crime were apparent at the point of onset. For example, cases where “off-age” life events, neuropsychological deficits, a desire for adult privileges, or/ and an accumulation of consequences and accruing disadvantages were already present at the point of delinquent of criminal onset.

Sherry, a 49 year old Black female (see appendix C), had an extremely difficult childhood. Her initiation to crime started when she was 14 years old and began using drugs and alcohol. By 15, she was involved in shoplifting, gasoline theft, and breaking and entering into houses. She recalled having a close relationship with her father before he died when she was 6 years old, but the relationship was age inappropriate. He was an alcoholic who would take her to bars when she was a toddler and young child, and it
also seems he had sexually abused her sister. Her mother was an alcoholic, physically and emotionally abusive, and she was also largely absent. Sherry described being left alone every night as a child. She had weak social bonds and little supervision. Further, there was indication that Sherry might have neuropsychological deficits. She says that since the age of 6 years she heard “real” voices, “feels things,” and saw (dead) people. Sherry also mentioned having dyslexia, which added additional challenges for her at school. In addition, around the age of 10 years old, Sherry described being severely “withdrawn.” She recalled the situation in the following manner:

You know where your heating vents are in your house? On the floor; I used to get my blanket and cover myself up and I used to sleep there, all day, all night. Sometimes a week at a time and stuff like that. And uh, I didn’t have no friends, I was withdrawn. I was withdrawn and that’s why my mom took me to the psychiatrist because my grandma said, she said, “Something’s wrong with that fool. She going to be sitting and laying day in and day out.” She say, “There’s something wrong with that girl, you need to go and get her mind tested.”

In addition, Sherry’s early life was marked by a series of “off-age” life events and general disadvantage. For example, she loses her father at a young age, she was molested by a neighborhood drunk at 12 years old, her mother makes her responsible for her older siblings who were often drunk or high when she was in her early teenage years, and she was often alone in her house from an early age. Sherry also described wanting what she saw as adult privileges, wanting to do the “fun things” (drinking, drugs, general criminal activities) her siblings, for a time, stopped her from doing because she was the “baby sister.”

Other theoretical indicators were present, for example, Sherry was exposed to and internalized definitions favorable to criminality, often referring to crime and
delinquency as “fun.” However, the strongest and most present theoretical indicators are DLC propositions. Sherry’s criminal onset occurs in a setting of weak social bonds, age inappropriate timing of life events, neuropsychological deficits, and expressed desire for what she perceived as adult privileges. DLC indicators became even more apparent when Sherry’s full life story is examined.

Another example of criminal onset best explained by DLC theory is seen in Mitch’s life story. Mitch was a 54 year old White male who recalls his initial criminal act as setting fire to a high school field when he was 10 years old. He said that he was a pyromaniac as a child and was brought to a psychologist following this incident. This seemed to suggest possible neuropsychological deficits in early childhood. Mitch did not elaborate much on his relationship with his parents, describing his relationship with his father by saying “it wasn’t the best” and with his mother as “typical.” Mitch did not recall many friendships in his childhood and described himself as overweight and says, “I wasn’t the type of person that anyone had anything to do with.” Mitch seemed to have weak social bonds with his parents and few friends. His parent’s divorce when he was 15 years old, and his mother then remarries. At 15 years old, Mitch also quit going to school, moved out on his own, and began working. These “off-age” events correspond to the same time he began using marijuana, and experimented with LSD and cocaine. As Mitch’s life story further develops, accruing disadvantage is evident.

**Summary**

This chapter focused on the emergence of criminality and explored the explanatory capabilities of Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/ Life-Course Theories. Each theoretical branch was able to explain
criminal onset for at least one life-history. However, Control Theory propositions explained criminal onset for 26 of the 38 life-history interviews that included reported delinquency or crime. Although criminal continuance will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important to note that in the cases where Social Control theory propositions explained criminal onset, the frequency, severity, and length of further criminal involvement varies significantly within each life-history. In other words, Social Control theory indicators were observed to have explanatory capability for the criminal onset of many different life trajectories; single incident offenders, adolescent limited offenders, adult onset offenders, and life-course persistent offenders. Further, while Social Control theory indicators explain criminal onset in a large proportion of the cases examined, this does not necessarily suggest that Social Control theory can account for the complete process of crime (initiation through cessation). In some of these cases, further examination of the full life-history reveals that Developmental/ Life-Course Theoretical characteristics hold better explanatory capabilities. Other cases reveal multiple theoretical streams present in explaining the full process of crime. These cases will be further discussed in later chapters.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS: THEORETICAL INDICATORS OF THE CONTINUANCE OF CRIME

Continuance of Criminality

After the initial delinquent or criminal behavior, some individuals do not engage in any further illegal activity. Out of the 44 life-histories included in this study and the 38 that had any criminal activity reported, 6 individuals reported only one-time incidents. For the remaining 32 cases, respondents reported subsequent and sometimes very extensive illegal behaviors. This chapter discusses the findings on the continuation, or patterning, of delinquent and criminal behaviors and the comparative explanatory applicability of the four theoretical approaches.

Social Learning and the Continuation of Delinquency and Crime

According to the Social Learning Theoretical branch, the continuation of delinquent and criminal behaviors would be explained by life factors reinforcing criminal definitions and also a strong frequency of exposure to definitions favorable to criminal behaviors. When examining the patterning of crime, 3 life-histories were best explained by the Social Learning Theories. The most archetypical case is discussed in this section.

Returning to Vito’s story, which was first discussed in the previous chapter, like his criminal onset, Vito’s continuation in crime was also marked by Social Learning theory indicators. Vito began his criminal trajectory by stealing soda bottles and joining a gang at the age of 12 years. He continued with an active criminal lifestyle from an early age until he was 60 years old. Vito was regularly involved in theft and robbery, gang activity, and gang violence throughout his youth. He was sent to a juvenile institution to serve one and a half years for burglary and vehicle theft when he was 14
years old. He described favorable reactions from his peers when he was released on bail.

…It was a way of growing up. It wasn’t uh, you know, you had to do what you had to do, they say. They said when I came out on bail and everything, all the guys praised me, for you know, “Next time you just be a little more careful.” They never criticized you in our neighborhood; you were never criticized for it.

Vito also described his father’s reaction to the same incident. While the reaction from his father was rooted in punishment and disapproval, he described that the dissatisfaction his father was feeling towards him was not because of the criminal behavior but rather it was based on the fact that Vito had been caught.

...But the old man? “How do you get caught? You stupid bastard! What were you thinking?” And then you’d catch a beating in between it. “I got to go put money up to get you out of jail?” Pissed him off. But he eventually, uh, he and I, I was still his boy.

He went on to describe how his involvement in criminality was looked upon as a source of “power” in his family. This further emphasizes the continued reinforcement of criminal definitions and that he had internalized values and beliefs that were favorable to criminality.

Out of the brothers I was the only one that got in trouble, so, I was the problem child. But it wasn’t a problem child; it was like showing you had balls. Excuse my French. You were going to be in a life of crime, which was, in them days, like I said to my father; I was the more power in the family of the brothers. I had the guts to go out and do these things, take my chances in life, where I was looked upon like number one. Not number three bad boy, but number one. That was the way in them days of life.

Before he was 19 years old, Vito had already served two prison sentences and had also been held at a juvenile reformatory school two different times. After his last prison sentence, Vito reported having a 9 year “break” from crime between the ages of
19 years old and 28 years old. This temporary desistance will be discussed in a later chapter.

When he was close to 30 years old, Vito joined a criminal gang in Las Vegas and continued an active criminal lifestyle. He was involved in what he refers to as “collections” of debts utilizing assault, stealing, and burglary. He also mentioned involvement in a separate financial scam. Vito also began smuggling and selling prescription drugs that he acquired in Mexico. In total, Vito had a high frequency, long duration, and strong intensity of exposure to criminal behavior and people who rewarded his own criminal activity.

The other two cases where Social Learning theory indicators are most capable of explaining the patterning of criminal or delinquent behavior are unique in that both of the life stories are of individuals whose criminal continuation is rooted in having internalized values and beliefs corresponding to subcultural groups in society. For example, Addy, a 65 year old White woman, started her criminal trajectory shoplifting as a teenager. At that point in her life story her criminal onset was best explained by Social Control indicators. In her late teens, however, she attended a political protest which she described as changing her.

…That completely changed my life from that point on. I became extremely political. I became involved politically in everything I could find, that was anti-war and that was pro community development.

The patterning of her behavior was now embedded within her strong political beliefs. She described herself as being “the anarchist-fringe.” Addy became a leader of a communist and anarchist group, she was first arrested with all the members of her political group under suspicion of drug possession (the charges are reduced), she was
then arrested during a political protest, she experimented with drugs, and she operated an illegal boarding house.

I tried not to work a lot of the time! I was too busy working for the movement, so I had a lot of periods of kind of marginal work. I had a boarding house, kind of illegal boarding house, actually; unlicensed. …I rented out rooms and used my food stamps to feed people.

Similarly, Bill, a 67 year of White male who was first discussed in the previous chapter, started his criminal trajectory with general “partying” and drinking. His criminal onset was marked by Social Control indicators. However, after Bill leaves the military and entered college, he described himself as feeling “alienated from all sorts of stuff” and being in “some kind of bubble.” He regularly used marijuana and he moved out to live separated from society on a mountain. He described himself as a “home-stayer,” and he associated with other people who chose to homeschool their children. Although the initial source of learning was not clear in Bill’s life story, he had clearly internalized a sort of drop out belief system that affirmed his drug related behaviors. For example, Bill was arrested two separate times for felony possession and growth of marijuana charges. When he was around 48 years old, he served 6 months in jail for that crime. When he described his thoughts on the arrest and charges, it is clear that he had a belief system that supported his criminal behavior.

I felt that I had every right. You know, a man in his own castle. It was a victimless crime, you know? I was doing it for my own self. I wasn’t applying my trade for anybody else, so to speak. So, yeah, I was pretty much offended. I felt that they didn’t have the right to do it, that it was an immoral law, etc. etc. They had no right to tell me what I could put in my body, what I could use for medicine, or anything else. The same with the home schooling! They have no right to. I didn’t give them authority to educate my kids, you know? They
were going to take me to court over that stuff! You know? Cause it was illegal when I first started doing it in Virginia.

Bill was incredulous that anyone other than himself could have the authority to tell him he could not grow and use marijuana. It might be illegal but not by his consent.

**Control and the Continuation of Delinquency and Crime**

According to Social Control Theories, for crime to continue, internal and/or external sources of control and social bonds must continue to be weak or absent in an individual’s life. Human agency, or choice, plays a minimal role both in the process to criminality as well as in the continuation of criminal behavior. Control Theories best explained the patterning of criminal behavior in 15 life-histories.

Russ, a 55 year old White male, began his criminal career when he was 15 years old by selling alcohol and cigarettes at his high school. He was raised by his grandparents in a strict and emotionally distant environment, creating weakened social bonds. Russ continued in a frequent and involved criminal career. He was using and dealing drugs, shoplifting, involved in car theft, identity theft, failing to appear after posting bail, and at one point in his life story, he implied that he murdered a woman but does not go into detail.

Russ: I guess I made that women, that girl, pay for it.
Interviewer: Oh, you did?
Russ: Yeah.
Interviewer: Well, how?
Russ: Uh, I’m going to be vague.
Interviewer: Ok.
Russ: In my testimony, I try to kind of breeze through this, kind of quick. Some of you all know, heard of the ten commandments, know what the ten commandments are and I’m guilty of every one of them. But, I stand before you today, forgiven, by God. Maybe not by my fellow man, but forgiven by my Lord and Savior, God. So, is that close enough for you?
Interviewer: Ok. That’s fine. So, then, what happened? Any repercussion around that area?
Russ: Oh, no, all the bases were covered. And, I had my satisfaction and you
live to regret it later on. Can’t change things.

In his life, Russ was on juvenile probation, had multiple arrests and jail sentences, and went to prison four times. Russ did well in school as a child and teenager, and he often talked about his “work ethic.” He seems to take pride in the fact that could get good grades with minimal effort and that he often had conventional jobs while also being involved in crime. What seemed to drive his criminal behavior was what he referred to as “always living for the moment.” Russ had weak sources of external control and badly broken social bonds with guardians and others as he grew up. He also seemed to have weak inner controls in that he has showed no indication of having any core conventional values. He described some of his earlier criminal involvement by indicating that he had done it because the opportunity was available and for the “challenge.”

Uh, it’s nervous and scary cause you don’t want to get caught, but the challenge of doing it and getting away with it is so neat. I mean, I know it’s wrong, but there’s that that “I bet I can get away with doing this.” And then you want to see if you can.

Russ had a series of relationships and one ten year marriage. The women he became involved with were all drug users, and his wife went to prison at the same time he did during their marriage. The relationships do not seem to provide a source of control in his life. In general, until Russ’s criminal desistance when he was 38 years old, which will be discussed in a later section, Russ’s criminal patterning was primarily marked by absent social bonds and weak inner sources of control.

In a different example, Jerry, a 57 year old White male, had a life characterized by a lack of commitment, broken social bonds, inadequate sources of external control,
and also weak inner controls. The role of weak or never formed inner control seemed to play a large role in Jerry’s life-history. As a child, Jerry reported having a poor relationship with his father, a “good” relationship with his mother who was often absent, and he had difficulties in school both in terms of academics and in developing friendships. Jerry began his criminal trajectory by smoking marijuana in high school. From that point forward, he continued regular use of drugs and he was arrested multiple times in his adult life for loitering, open container, public intoxication, and indecent exposure. Jerry’s weak sources of inner control are made evident with his description of having difficulty with effort and long-term planning. There are examples of this during his school trajectory when he talked about not being able to participate in sports because he “couldn’t take the training,” couldn’t continue past a quarter in college because he “wasn’t able to concentrate on school,” and also when he discussed his difficulties with projects.

I had a big problem with projects. You know, science projects. And then, you know, science really set me back. It came at me in the 4th grade. There was this table, the table of elements that we were supposed to memorize, and I never did, and I started leaning more towards watching the baseball games.

Jerry also had a very limited work history. In his life, he worked jobs that only lasted a day or two, two newspaper routes that lasted “a few weeks,” and a work study position at a community college. He described not being able to commit himself to work with some of the jobs that only lasted a day or two.

So what happened out there that day in the watermelon field, my endurance was not sufficient.

And, uh, I got to work there one day, in the freezer, but I couldn’t hang out with that too long.
The last time Jerry was employed, outside of a short work study position, was when he was 24 years old. Jerry also lived with his mother until three years before the interview, and had a limited history with romantic relationships. He does not develop attachments or social bonds through his adult life, and he had no commitments to any institutions. In his 20’s Jerry seemed to search for something to belong to. He visited communes, farms, and joined protests. However, he does not join any groups, commit himself to any beliefs or values, and always just passed through, never staying at these places for very long.

To provide an example of a female life-history, we can look to Susan who was one of the two female cases where Social Control theory was most applicable when explaining the continuance of criminal behavior. Susan, a 60 year old White female, was raised in a chaotic household when she was growing up. As a child, she often lacked supervision because her mother was ill and in and out of the hospital or a rehabilitation center. Her father was violent, and he was having an affair with another woman throughout her childhood. Susan first remembers shoplifting when she was 10 years old. In her childhood, she had broken social bonds through her strained relationship with her father and inadequate supervision from her parents. Her continuation of criminal behavior included shoplifting, joy-riding in a stolen vehicle, and drug use. She was arrested twice, once when she was 16 years old and was joy-riding in a stolen car and another time when she was 19 years old and was pulled over while driving and she had marijuana in her car. Her use of LSD continued into her 30’s, and her marijuana use into her late 50’s.
Susan’s teenage and early adult years continued to display weak social bonds. She began doing better in school when she moved in with an aunt at 16 years old, and described that the school and friendships she developed are different than they were in her originating home. This suggests that school began serving as a source of external control, which seemed to have allowed her to do better in school during the end of her high school years. However, in terms of available supervision or social bonds to caregivers, the situation does not seem to improve for Susan. She described not “really having much of a relationship” with her aunt and explained that her aunt “wasn’t there all the time.” As she gets older, she expressed feeling of being disconnected from the “external world.” It seemed she was well aware that she had limited attachments and bonds, and she searched to fill those voids.

As we stay more and more in what I call the external world, we lose that internal part. Now, I think, looking back is a lot of why I stayed addicted to drugs. It kept me in touch with the internal world, which meant more to me than the external world.

One of the things I really really liked about marijuana, when I got in my twenties I was with the crowd, the group, that was looking for the meaning of life, what’s it all about.

In her adult life, Susan got married to a man for eleven years and described that the relationship “deteriorated rather quickly.” Her husband drank often, had a different “lifestyle” than she did, and eventually had an affair. The relationship to her husband was a continuation of weak social bonds to others, and while Susan eventually had successes in academics and work, her continued drug use appeared to be explained by her lack of available social bonds and attachments as well as weak inner controls.
Strain and the Continuation of Delinquency and Crime

Strain theory indicators of the patterning of delinquency and crime would include an individual experiencing strain, or having a continued source of strain present in their life, and not having acquired non-criminal coping skills. Therefore, the individual continues to both experience discomfort and also attempts to remove the experience of pressure through criminal behaviors. In the life-histories examined for this study, strain theory indicators were not able to explain the continuation of criminal behavior. While some participants recalled experiencing sources of personal strain, the delinquent or criminal behaviors they engaged in were not attempts to remove the pressures they were experiencing from sociostructural conditions. Instead, it was observed that the individual was often acting without any apparent utility. For example Greg, a 40 year old White male from a low socioeconomic background, described that feeling slighted by someone would “trigger rage” in him, and he had two serious fights at school. While he expressed frustration at his family’s poverty, the fighting he reported was not connected to a sense of blocked opportunity. Instead, Greg’s school fights and earlier shoplifting were better explained by weak inner controls.

Developmental / Life-Course Theories and the Continuation of Delinquency and Crime

Developmental/ Life-Course Theories propose that crime continues when an accumulation of consequences and accruing disadvantage create barriers which limit an individual from redirecting a criminal trajectory. When exploring the patterning of criminal behavior, the current study found that 14 cases were best explained by DLC indicators. Some of the most representative cases of this finding will be discussed in this section.
We will start the discussion with AJ, a 50 year old Black male. AJ’s criminal onset was best explained by Social Control theory indicators. He began stealing money from school at 8 years old, and had broken social bonds and weak external and internal sources of control. He was raised by his great aunt, and rarely saw his mother. He had a weak sense of attachment to his mother, and said that as a child he “played with her” but “didn’t respect her.” Further, he received harsh discipline from his great aunt who also provided inadequate supervision. Even though AJ seemed to have felt close to his aunt, the instability in his home life and the use of regular corporal punishment seemed to have weakened his commitment to conventional societal norms.

(My mom) asked me if I wanted to leave my auntie, I say no. All the time, I wanted to leave, but I didn’t want to tell her that, I didn’t want to hurt her. She was so good to me, I wasn’t going to leave. My mom know I wanted to come be with her. She didn’t even want to take me from her because she was attached to me. If summer time, the weekends spent with, ah she cry. She’d cry when we were gone three days. And I used to get so many butt whippings, it about even out things. So I should have been a better person than I am today, I knew better. My background, where I grew up, the stuff I knew now and I knew then, It wouldn’t of occurred to me.

When asked if he remembered how he felt about stealing when he was eight years old, AJ's weakened commitment to conventional norms is further emphasized.

I felt bad I was doing wrong because every time I'd get a whooping. I didn’t care. I care and didn't care. Yeah.

However, as AJ’s story continued to unfold, DLC indicators became more prominent in AJ’s continuation on a criminal trajectory. AJ was arrested once as a juvenile for shoplifting, he estimated having been to jail more than 20 times, and he had served two prison sentences. After AJ’s criminal onset at 8 years old, he began smoking
marijuana at 11 years old. He described many “off-age” life events. For example, AJ was sexually active before he was in high school, he began working when he was 14 years old, he failed out of the 11th grade and decided to quit school, and he became a father at 17 years old. Further, the accumulation of disadvantage creating barriers and limitations were also evident in AJ’s life story. For example, after AJ quits school in the 11th grade, he said that he tried to return 9 months later, but that he was not allowed re-enroll and continue. As an adult, AJ began his involvement in drug trafficking and started using crack cocaine. In his mid to late 20's he was sentenced to prison for possession and served 7 months. When AJ described his prison experience, it seemed he enjoys it because he had access to work and also had enough money for the things he needed.

Oh boy, first time I went to prison. It was so good man. I worked in the cafeteria; I was making money in the cafeteria. I had five dollars in the canteen. And I didn’t spend a lot of money in the week. The only reason I spend money in the week is because I had to buy ice cream. Everything else, if it came in the cafeteria, we stole it.

When he was released, he recalled wanting to “settle down” but that finding work that paid him “enough money” was sometimes difficult.

Talk of doing things the right. But a job is hard to come by sometimes, when you know you working, but you working but you ain’t making enough money. From that point, I need money, quick money, and I said “hell with it.” When you make 2 or $3,000 a day man, that’s a lot of money. Especially when you have somebody taking part of it, taking the money, give my mom money and she never pay me back.

AJ’s inability to find work was an example of a created barrier from an accumulation of consequences. He does not have a high school diploma and he had a
criminal record, which made it difficult for him to find work outside of fast food and day labor. Further, human agency in choice making was apparent, as AJ then chose to return to drug trafficking after encountering difficulty finding a legitimate source of income.

AJ returned to prison 20 years later, charged with possession and sales of a controlled substance and he served 25 months. His release from prison was only a few months before the date of the interview and when asked if he was still involved in crime, AJ revealed that he continued to use crack cocaine. Therefore, desistance was not observable in AJ’s life story.

In a different example, Dee, a 41 year old White woman was raised in violently abusive foster homes until the age of 9 and then was adopted to a family where she experienced emotional and physical abuse from her adoptive mother, an absent father who “started to drink all of the time,” and a general lack of stability as she was moved back and forth between her adoptive parents once she was 13 and they had divorced. Dee’s accruing disadvantage was evident from the onset of her life-history. Dee’s initiation to crime began around the time of her parent’s divorce, when she started to run away from home, smoke cigarettes, and smoke marijuana. Dee had a series of age inappropriate life events. For example, Dee failed a few grades in school, making her older than other students in her grade. At 16 years old she quit school in the 9th grade, and she moved away from home and into an Independent Living Program. She attempted suicide at 18 years old, and became pregnant at 19 years old. In the Independent Living Program Dee worked at a fast food restaurant from ages 16 to 19 years, however, she was kicked out of the program when she became pregnant and
she did not work again until she was 24 years old. She had an unstable relationship with her daughter’s father, she had another child with a different man, and then a third child with her first daughter’s father in a five year time period. The accumulation of consequences and life disadvantage began to further trap her in her current life trajectory. At 27, Dee began a relationship with an abusive man and she started using heroin and crack cocaine by 30 years old. At 34, she lost custody of all three of her children because her boyfriend was physically abusive towards her son. She was arrested 3 times for failure to pay traffic tickets, which she described as receiving while on her way to see her drug dealer. After having lost custody of her children, Dee moved with her boyfriend and they became homeless for the first time. She seemed “trapped” by her situation. Dee was homeless, with an abusive partner, using drugs, had a ninth grade education, a limited work history, and a criminal record. Dee was arrested at 40 years old for shoplifting with her boyfriend.

One was for the shoplifting. He had uh, put some stuff in the cart or whatever and told me to put them in the bag; in my backpack. Not this one, I had a red and black one….I had a bad feeling, but you can’t argue with him, you can’t tell him no. No is not in his vocabulary. It’s like he don’t have to follow rules or anything either he thinks. That’s what he thought anyways. So like stupid me, I put that in. It was last year, the end of last year or something. … I put it in my bag. And then he tried to come back in and warn me before I went out the door. Well, ok, now it’s a little late. What am I going to do? Pull it out and just put it on the counter? So I got arrested.

After the arrest, she did not fulfill the requirements of her sentence, and a warrant was issued for her arrest. This was another example of accumulated consequences creating traps which limit a change in trajectory. Dee was homeless and unemployed, and said she could not pay fees associated with her sentencing requirements.
And they let me out, the judge let me out the next day for ROR and I went to court, and I did most of what I had to do. The only thing, the community service I had to do, I did that. The only thing I couldn’t do is pay the $50 for court costs. And they also wanted me to take this class or whatever that cost $50. And I couldn’t figure out how I was going to pay that, so I couldn’t take the class. So I didn’t do it.

Dee’s accruing disadvantages and consequences continue to accumulate. She participated in check forgery when someone offered her money to cash checks that they write out in her name from a payroll system. She agreed and was later called to appear before the court. However, because she was homeless, she does not receive the notice.

Yeah, they put a warrant out for not completing the stuff and then they told me that I had missed a court date for the felony charge that I got, which was the checks. And I didn’t even know I had one because I was in the woods at the time. I didn’t get the mail.

At the time of the interview, Dee had recently been released from serving 45 days in jail associated with the two warrants that were out for her arrest.

**Summary**

This chapter explored the continuation of criminal behavior and examined the explanatory capabilities of Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/ Life-Course Theories. The Control Theoretical branch and the Developmental/ Life-Course Theoretical branch were shown to have the greatest capability to explain the continuation of criminal behaviors in this sample. Social Control theory indicators explained continuation of crime for 14 of the 32 life-history interviews that reported a continuation of delinquency and crime, and Developmental/ Life-Course Theoretical indicators accounted for 15 of the 32 life-history interviews included in the
analysis. Six cases had been removed from the analysis of continuation of crime because those life-histories only reported a single incident of delinquency or crime, and therefore continuation was not observable.
CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS: THEORETICAL INDICATORS OF DESISTANCE FROM CRIME

Criminal Desistance

A disruption in the continuity of delinquent and criminal behavior, for an extended period of time, indicates a change in the behavioral patterns of that individual. Although permanent “desistance” cannot be observed with data from life-course interviews, as it is unknown if the individual will re-offend at a later date, life-histories provide an opportunity to explore disengagement from illegal behaviors for a “subjectively significant period of time” (Frazier, 1976). This means the individual has not engaged in crime for a period sufficient to: (1) trigger personal recognition of a change; (2) cause the individual to perceive him- or herself to be non-criminal; and (3) to recognize he or she has no forward looking plans to reengage in crime. The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings on change, or desistance, from delinquent and criminal behavior.

To provide an example, Vito described having stopped all criminal behaviors for over six years.

Interviewer: When was the last time you were involved in something illegal?
Vito: 2004, before I left.
Interviewer: You’ve stopped all ties?
Vito: Completely.

Further, Vito no longer has a criminal self-concept and did not foresee reengaging in crime. When he was asked what he saw for himself in the future, Vito starts by saying that he saw himself as “getting old” and further described a future that included visiting his wife at a nursing home and hoping that his kids visited him every once in a while. He described himself as a “mellowed out old man” without any plans to participate in any further criminal behaviors.
The decision to use a “subjectively significant period of time” is important because there are incidents where a subject reports having desisted from criminal activity, however, when further questioned you see that the last incident occurred relatively recently. For example, when Dee is asked if she can see herself re-offending, she responds with a strong “no.”

Interviewer: And do you see yourself in any way offending, getting arrested, or going to jail in the next five years?
Dee: No!

However, when asked to elaborate on the details of a crime and jail sentence, Dee reported that she was released from jail in the same month as the interview and that the criminal incident occurred five months before the interview.

Interviewer: When did the checks happen? Tell me about that.
Dee: In March. … We went downtown and a couple of people came up to us and asked us if we wanted to make money. I’m like, doing what? And they explained to me that if I have an ID they could put two payroll checks into my name and all I have to do is cash them and they’d give me a hundred dollars out of each one. At first I was like, “I don’t know.” I should of never did it, but unfortunately, they persist and persist. They kept going at me at me so I said, “Why not, I’m in the woods, I’ve got nothing.”

In the following section, theoretical indicators of criminal desistance are presented in four sections: (1) criminal onset best explained by Social Learning theory indicators, (2) criminal onset best explained by Social Control theory indicators, (3) criminal onset best explained by Strain theory indicators, and (4) criminal onset best explained by Developmental/ Life-Course theory indicators. Of the 32 cases where continuity of criminality was observed, 23 of those individuals reported that they ceased all criminal activity and met the definition of desistence used in this study.
Social Learning and Desistance from Delinquency and Crime

The Social Learning theoretical branch proposes that in order for desistance from criminality to occur, an individual would need to be exposed to and also internalize socially conforming values and beliefs sufficient to replace or overpower criminal values and beliefs. This is done through an intervention or change in social environment, which can be formal or informal. Social Learning theory indicators fully accounted for the desistance from crime in two cases.

Russ, a 55 year old White male who was first discussed in an earlier section, began his criminal trajectory when he was 15 years old. He had an active criminal “lifestyle” that was best explained by Social Control theory indicators. Russ described himself as “always living for the moment” and he had weak sources of both external and internal controls. His desistance from crime, however, was best explained by Social Learning indicators. When Russ went to prison for the fourth time, he described it as “the best thing that has ever happened to me” because he began following the Christian religion. After serving 14 months in prison, Russ continued to stay involved in religion and became a Stephen Minister at a Methodist Church, went to college, began to associate with friends from his church community, and began providing testimonies at jails and prisons. Russ did not report any additional criminal behaviors in the 17 years between his last prison sentence and the date of the interview. Russ was exposed to religion in prison, and through this, internalized new socially conforming values and beliefs. When asked if he could foresee future criminal involvement, Russ emphasized that he was a “different person.”

I’m not, - there’s a verse in the first Corinthians, the oldest path to a new creation, I’m not the same person. In fact, I’ve tried to, I’m a big defender of women now. Maybe because I
probably haven’t done some so right in the past. I just, I look at things totally different. Totally different.

Another example where Social Learning theory indicators provided the best explanation for an individual’s criminal desistance was seen in Greg’s life story. Greg first reported delinquency when he was 9 years old and stole a candy bar from a store. Greg’s initiation to crime was best explained by Control theory indicators. His criminal onset seemed to show a “natural” inclination towards crime when an opportunity was present. Greg described himself as being often “in trouble” and “not believing in the future.” Greg’s continuation of criminality was marked by weak sources of control, in particular, weak inner controls (impulse control). He got into two fights at school, one in which he used a knife on the other student, cutting them near their eye. When Greg left high school, he began harboring runaways in his home and picking up hitchhikers. He did not get in any other fights but recalled a situation when he was driving a 14 year old runaway home and he threatened to cut a man’s throat with the knife he had on him.

Greg’s desistance from criminality occurred at 23 years old. He reported that he was living alone and began going to church. Greg attributed religion to the changes in his life.

When I lived out there by myself, I started going to church. I got saved, it’s what you call it, I don’t know if you’re a Christian but you know, accepted the Lord, and you know, that was definitely the life changer.

By going to church, Greg internalized new values and beliefs and began surrounding himself with religious people. For example, a year later, he met and married his wife within his church community. Interestingly, Greg continued to describe himself as having trouble with “boundaries.” For example, he violated policies as a volunteer at a
crisis center when he allowed a caller to come inside the call center, and he also reported that he continued to pick up hitchhikers. However, his new socially conforming values and beliefs seem to limit his ability to “push the boundaries” within situations that he considered to be part of his “ministries” to help the “the traveler (and) the marginalized.” He also reported that he continued to feel the same “rage” he felt in his youth however, Greg explained that he handled those feelings differently when he was younger because he was not a Christian.

I mean, I wasn’t a Christian then, so I was a little less refined to say the least.

Both of the cases where Social Learning theory indicators best explained criminal desistance were examples of individuals who became deeply involved in religion. While other individuals within the study expressed that they belonged to a church or identified with a particular religion, what made these two cases different is that the internalization of the values and beliefs associated with their religious association played the primary role in their desistance from crime. Religion was in effect a source of intervention, it exposed the offenders to individuals who reinforced pro-social values, and the offenders ultimately internalized the beliefs.

Control and Desistance from Delinquency and Crime

Social Control theory indicators of criminal desistance include the introduction of effective sources of control, the existence of social bonds, and the removal of opportunities for criminal behavior. In the Social Control Theoretical branch, individual choice is not present in the process of criminal desistance. In the present study, Social Control theory indicators best explained criminal desistance in 10 of the 23 cases where criminal desistance was observable.
Vito’s criminal onset and criminal continuity were both best explained by Social Learning theory indicators. He participated in a frequent and active criminal trajectory from 12 years old until he was 60 years old. He had internalized and reinforced definitions favorable to criminality from a young age stemming from his frequent exposure to criminal individuals throughout his life. Vito’s criminal desistance, however, was best explained by Social Control theory indicators. Vito reported having stopped all illegal activities six years before the interview, beginning when his wife started having health issues that required him to stay home and care for her.

My wife was pretty sick at the time, getting pretty sick as we went on. I was kind of staying close to home, taking care of her.

He also expressed that he had his own health related concerns. They moved to Florida from Las Vegas to be closer to family, and his wife’s health continued to decline.

Uh, then Chrissie got sick on me really bad, where she was falling down. Take her to the doctor, they tried this, they tried that. I took her to four or five doctors a week trying to get her straightened out. There was no hope for the kid, unfortunately.

Vito desisted from crime because he was confronted with caring for his ailing wife, creating a source of external control. Further, because his time was occupied with arranging for his wife’s care, his opportunities to engage in crime were reduced. When he was asked if he had stopped all criminal involvement, Vito expressed that he had “no choice” but to stop.

Completely. You come to a point you have to realize, hey, too old to go to jail, ain’t got enough medicine to take care of me, is part of my concern, and uh, you know when you have to stop. Comes to an end, you realize you have no choice. And now you learn to live, the way I live now.
While Vito’s criminal onset and continuity were best explained by Social Learning Theory, his desistance does not indicate “learning” of any kind. He did not experience any form of intervention which would have allowed him to internalize new beliefs. Instead, Vito first is bound to caring for his wife, creating a new source of social control. Then, once his wife had to go to a nursing home, he described having “aged out” of crime. Vito described his life at the time of the interview:

Getting old. Still carrying my affair on, still visiting my wife three times a week, at least. And, hopefully my kids come and see me once in a while. And whatever money I can make on the side, I have to live with. And that’s about it baby doll. I don’t see, I don’t see me starting up any affairs with any young girls. I don’t see me getting into the banking business, no going out and buying a mask and a gun; - I don’t want to be a banker. I see just a mellowed out old man.

Susan, a 60 year old White woman who was first discussed in an earlier chapter, began her criminal involvement when she was 10 years old. Her criminal onset, continuity, and desistance are all best explained by Social Control theory indicators. In her youth and teenage years, Susan shoplifted, went joyriding in a stolen car, and was arrested for possession of marijuana. In her adult years, Susan continued to use drugs. She continuously used marijuana and used other drugs (LSD, opiates, speed) on occasion. For example, Susan described using speed to study in college and using LSD into her 30’s. She shoplifted from a store once in her late 40’s when she had an easy opportunity to do so. Susan’s involvement in crime seemed to decline (but not abate) as she aged and as effective sources of external controls were introduced into her life (college and work). By the time Susan is in her 50’s, she had desisted from all criminal activities except marijuana use. She stopped using marijuana two years before the interview after she was diagnosed with COPD. In general, Susan’s life was marked by
weak social bonds, inadequate sources of external sources of control and weak inner controls. She often expressed that she felt like she had a “wall” up and general feelings of being disconnected from her “inner world.” She described using marijuana because she “felt like I had met somebody I was lacking all my life” (referring to the marijuana). Susan described the marijuana as being what connected her to her inner psychological world. While it was difficult to decipher what Susan intended to express when referring to her “inner world,” it seemed she was referring to not having the ability to self-reflect or think things through. For example, Susan recalled being confused when people who meditated said they got “silence of the mind” by saying “I don’t have anything up here.”

In total, Susan’s desistance from crime seemed like a “natural” decline. She completely desisted from all illegal behaviors, including marijuana use, because she was diagnosed with COPD and was told marijuana use would kill her.

In some of the cases where Social Control theory indicators best explained criminal desistance, the individual was only involved in crime or delinquency during their youth or adolescent years. For example, George, a 61 year old White male shoplifted baseball cards for the first time when he was 10 or 11 years old. George described shoplifting the cards because “the clerk was looking the other way” and the “other guys were instituting (the situation).” He described a situation where the sources of control were temporarily weak (no available supervision and willing peers) and where there was an opportunity to engage in crime. After the initial incident, George shoplifted approximately 3 more times. He described his desistence from shoplifting as occurring because a shopkeeper caught him and he felt like their behaviors were “stupid” and that they “shouldn’t of done that.” He found validity in social rules, and sources of control
were strengthened. He also recalled drinking and driving once in his adult years. George attempts to neutralize, or reduce his responsibility in the action, by discussing how the perception of drunk driving was not as severe then as it is now and how it was a one-time incident. George’s desistance from his relatively limited involvement in crime was best explained by Social Control theory indicators. George has strong social bonds and sources of control across his life story. His adolescent involvement in shoplifting occurs because he sees opportunity to participate in crime when he is unsupervised and with peers who are willing to engage in the same activity. His sources of external control and his commitment to conformity were weakened, and George continues shoplifting for a brief period of time. However, he desisted from shoplifting when he was caught by a shopkeeper. George’s belief in the validity of social rules (inner controls) was strengthened when he was confronted with the possibility of consequences when he was caught (external controls).

**Strain and Desistance from Delinquency and Crime**

Strain theory indicators were not able to explain criminal desistance in any of the cases included in this study. While Strain theory indicators were best able to explain criminal onset for one life-history included in this in this study, the theoretical propositions of Strain theory were not able to account for criminal continuance or criminal desistance.

**Developmental / Life-Course Theories and Desistance from Delinquency and Crime**

According to Developmental/ Life-Course theories, criminal desistance occurs when an individual experiences “on-time” (age-appropriate) turning points that can redirect a criminal trajectory. Human agency in choice making, however limited those
choices may be, is also observable. In this study, criminal desistance was best explained by DLC theory indicators in 11 cases.

Randy, a 61 year old White male, was raised by his mother and grandmother. He began stealing from other students at school when he was around 9 years old and then continued on his criminal trajectory by shoplifting and skipping school throughout his childhood. Randy also had multiple sexual partners during his teenage years and described that he was always trying to “game the system.” He provided few examples. He was physically abused by multiple step-fathers and emotionally abused by his mother and grandmother, who often told him that he was useless because he was male.

I wasn’t allowed in the kitchen. I remember the first time asking why…and my grandmother said, “Men are essentially useless. You’re only good for screwing and having children. And you’ll never hold down a job and you’ll never be worth anything, so this isn’t the place for you.” Now, my grandmother loved me, I had no question that she loved me, but that was a brutal assessment of the worth of male children.

Indicators consistent with Social Control theory were present as Randy had weak social bonds and limited supervision. However, Randy’s home situation also created accruing disadvantage which began to create barriers in Randy’s life. He had to move often because his mother was trying to escape relationships or leave what Randy referred to as “some situation.” Due to this, Randy attended over 30 schools while growing up and remembered skipping or missing months of time in a school year.

I had blown scholarship opportunities both academically and athletically when I was in school.

Randy’s desistance from crime began when he was caught by a grocer shoplifting and said he, “decided that it wasn’t worth it anymore.” While this at first appeared as a
Social Control theory indicator, upon further examination of his full desistance, it became apparent that Randy’s desistance was better explained by the “social embeddedness” of interpersonal relationships and human agency in choice making. Randy described his teenage girlfriend and future wife and realizing that life could be different.

She was a Christian and she had strong beliefs, she had a stable family, she had a mom and dad that loved her to death, (and) she was an only child. And for some reason or the other, her dad liked me. And uh, he died when she was fifteen (crying). So I kind of missed the opportunity to have a father, who liked me. … I was already beginning to see that not everybody grew up in situations like I did. There were people that loved you and cared about you and protected you.

When Randy was asked to describe important events in his life during his teenaged years, Randy explained how meeting his wife re-directed his life trajectory.

Randy: …There is no question in my mind that had there not been a turning point in my life in high school, I would have gone to jail. And it wouldn’t of been because I would have gone out and murdered somebody it would have been because I would have robbed a bank or I would of defrauded a bunch of people or I would of done something to game the system in some significant way.

Interviewer: What do you think that turning point was?

Randy: When I met my wife.

After High School Randy enrolled in the military and then married his wife immediately upon returning from Vietnam. He used the GI Bill to attend college. Human agency was also observable when Randy was asked if he did anything illegal or “wrong” during his college years.

By the time I was in school I wasn’t really gaming the system. I was trying to find a place that I could have in it, what I could do in it, and where I could be in it.
At the time of the interview, Randy had been married for 41 years and had 3 adult children. He worked as a Director for a nonprofit organization and reported no criminal activity since his teenaged years.

Another example of criminal desistance best explained by DLC theory indicators was observed in Lorrie’s life-history. Lorrie, a 56 year old White female, began with general delinquency at an early age. By the time she was 12 years old, Lorrie regularly took and drove her family car, she was skipping school, running away, and hitchhiking. The beginning of her life story was marked by Social Control theory indicators. Lorrie’s mother had serious mental health issues and attempted to burn the house down while Lorrie and her sister were still inside, her father was often absent, and she was placed in foster care for a short period of time. She then lived with her grandmother in an environment without “guidance.” She had limited sources of external control and she had weak bonds to her family. However, as her life story unfolded, DLC indicators became more apparent. In particular, Lorrie’s accumulation of disadvantage and consequences seem to trap her within a life trajectory of hardship and crime. Lorrie described having a reputation as a “bad girl.” She left High School in the 10th grade after having missed too many days. And, she was raped and became pregnant from the attack at 16 years old. She began working low wage jobs and “trying to find a dad” for her daughter. She became pregnant again within thirteen months, and had two children by the time she was 19 years old. She met a different man who was involved in drug dealing, motorcycle theft, and various other crimes and they married. At this point in her life, Lorrie began using drugs. Lorrie’s desistance from crime stemmed from a
combination of appropriate social bonds, a “turning point,” and clear human agency and choice. She found a job that paid her well and realized “that lifestyle just didn’t fit in with what I was doing.” Lorrie began the process of desistance on a day when she found a prostitute (a friend of her husband’s had brought) in her house at a time when her older daughter was at home.

Lorrie: And actually what made me want to clean up, change, or when I realized where I was heading - one of his friends brought over a girlfriend and she was sitting on my couch and I had my daughter. And I said, “Oh, well, what have you been doing all day?” Oh, do you want me to use profanity?
Interviewer: Oh, whatever. It’s fine.
Lorrie: She goes, “Fucking.” And what she was to this guy, with bikers, she was a prostitute making $3,000 a day. Well when she said that, and she said that in front of my daughter, I said “No.” there is no way was I going to have this example for my little girl.

Lorrie stopped using drugs at this point of her life. Her relationship with her husband ended soon after this incident, and Lorrie’s life trajectory began to change. Lorrie became a single mother and described her life after that point as “survival.” Lorrie eventually went to college and became involved in real estate. At the time of the interview she was working on a graduate degree and looking for a job in her field.

Ben, a 56 year old Black male, was first discussed in a previous section. His emergence and continuation in crime were best explained by Social Control theory indicators. Ben began his criminal trajectory with underage drinking when he was 17.
He continued criminal behavior while in the military during special operations (describing having few consequences and broad opportunity) and later using drugs and stealing within a work environment. Unlike his onset and continuation of criminal activity, Ben’s desistance from crime revealed human agency in choice making. Ben reported
that he “saw the writing on the wall” and decided to move and seek treatment for drug abuse.

I was becoming more and more crooked. This guy was embezzlement, money, and uh, you know, all kind of products and stuff at my disposal and I had the opportunity to take stuff and I did. And uh, you know, this is going nowhere. The writing was on the wall or something. I just said to my wife, “Look, you know what? I’m going to get myself into treatment.”

Although Ben does not have any changes in his sources of control, opportunities, or social bonds, he reported making a decision to change the criminal behaviors he was involved in.

So anyways, for whatever reason, I had this realization, or this awakening, or whatever you want to call it, and I got myself into this treatment program.

Ben realized he needed to actively make changes away from crime. Without formal or informal intervention, and without acquiring a new set of values or beliefs, Ben decided that he needed to quit the job he was stealing from, move to a different city, find drug treatment, and change his life. ¹ At the time of the interview, Ben was married for 35 years with 3 adult children. He had recently started attending college to seek another degree and was highly involved in a church (a change that occurred after his desistance from crime).

A reduction in criminal activity

It is important to note that while 23 cases included in this study had observable desistance from criminal behavior, there were cases where the individual greatly

¹ It is important to note that Ben first decided to make changes in his life and then he started drug abuse treatment. Social Learning theory indicators did not best explain Ben’s criminal desistance because Ben had never acquired criminal values or beliefs, and therefore his movement towards desistance was not prompted by exposure to or internalization of non-criminal beliefs.
reduced their criminal involvement but had not fully disengaged from all illegal activities. In this study, 4 cases were found to have a significant reduction in criminal behaviors without full disengagement from all illegal behaviors. Interestingly, all of these cases are examples of individuals who continued to use marijuana after desistance from other criminal activities.\(^2\) In most cases, the individual seemed to believe marijuana use was different than other illegal behaviors. Jimmy was one of these individuals. Although he recognized marijuana was illegal (mentioning the use when asked about illegal behaviors), he clearly differentiated marijuana from other drugs.

I of course abused drugs, (and) that was illegal. And I continue to smoke marijuana. I’ll smoke until the day I die.

The same was true for Lee, who described himself as not engaging in any criminal activities “except for continuing to use recreational marijuana.” In both cases, the individual appeared to believe the behavior was socially acceptable, did not foresee future legal problems, and they did not have a criminal self-concept.

On the other hand, Jerry and Bill continued to use marijuana but recognized that the behavior could lead to them being arrested again in the future. Jerry reported that he could foresee being re-arrested at a protest over the legalization of marijuana or for “drinking, smoking, having a little bit too much of a party.” Bill, who had served a six month sentence for cultivation and possession of marijuana 19 years before the interview, and who subscribed to a “drop-out” subculture (home-stayer), recognized he could get re-arrested in the future for marijuana use.

\(^2\) Although not the specific purpose of this study, this finding may be a result of sociohistorical impact.
“Zig-Zag” Desistance

Many cases in the study included short periods of temporary desistance and intermittent reductions in the individual’s criminal involvement. However, in two cases the individuals reported a significant period of time without criminal activity within their criminal trajectory. These extended periods of temporary criminal desistance were observable in Vito and Lee’s life stories. These periods of time without criminal activity are significant, although in the end, temporary.

Vito’s criminal onset and continuation were best explained by Social Learning theory indicators. He was raised in an environment where he was exposed to and internalized criminal values and beliefs that were continuously reinforced throughout most of his life. His general desistance, on the other hand, was best explained by Control theory indicators. Vito seemed to “age-out” of crime, stopping his criminal involvement because he was “too old” and he was occupied with his wife’s illness and his own health concerns. However, for approximately nine years (20-29 years), Vito recalled that during his first marriage, he stopped all involvement with criminal activities a year after moving to Florida from New York. When telling his life story, Vito explained that he said “that’s it” and “straightened out” his life right before marrying his first wife.

Yeah, I was getting involved with a woman; really involved with my first wife. And I decided that, uh, you know, I have to straighten my life out. I’m looking forward to my future and I don’t want to be involved for the rest of my life stealing and possibly hurting people along the way. Stuff like that. I figured I was, you know, told me it’s time to, that’s it. You had your fun and let’s get our life on the right track.

Vito bought a home, had children, coached his children’s sports teams, and worked as a plumber during this time period. Although he reported being accused of buying a stolen
rifle from a minor during this time, he asserted that he did not know the circumstances and he was found “not guilty” in court. When he divorced his first wife, he moved back to New York, got a job through a “well connected” friend, and was immediately involved in organized theft.

This temporary desistance is best explained by DLC theory indicators. Vito expressed making a choice to stop criminal activities because he wanted to straighten out his life. He does not stop criminal activity because of bonds or controls provided through his relationship or marriage, but instead, he makes a choice to change his behavior because he was getting married. He got married and had children, both of which are age appropriate turning points that moved him off of a criminal trajectory. However, his re-entry to crime was again best explained by Social Learning theory indicators. He was re-exposed to criminal peers, criminal behaviors were reinforced and rewarded, and he continued to have beliefs and values favorable to criminality.

Lee’s life story provided another example of an extended period of temporary criminal desistance within a criminal trajectory. Lee, a 57 year old White male, first engaged in delinquency as a teenager by purposefully littering. He described the behavior as being a “rebel without a cause.” Although this behavior seemed trivial, Lee subjectively saw his criminal onset as beginning with littering and progressing from that point. His criminal continuance included shoplifting, underage drinking, smoking marijuana, and a single incident of heroin use between his teenage years through his mid 30’s. Lee’s criminal onset and continuance were best explained by Social Control theory indicators. He had a broken bond to his father and weak external and internal sources of control. Lee continued to regularly use marijuana at the time of the interview.
However, for a seven year period in his late 30’s and early 40’s, Lee stopped using marijuana and all other illegal activities. He attributed his temporary desistance to having a relationship with a woman who he described as being “very beneficial” to him.

Because Daisy didn’t smoke pot and we enjoyed other activities; walking, and you know, working out, walking, foodies, and I didn’t ingest alcohol at that time if I recall. It was health supplements, and it encouraged me to live a healthier lifestyle.

His temporary desistance continued to be best explained by Social Control theory indicators. Lee was with a partner that, unlike his previous and future partners, did not engage in marijuana use. She provided him with an effective source of control, which limited his criminal opportunities. When the relationship ended and Lee married his current wife, the source of control was eliminated and Lee immediately began to smoke marijuana again.

In both cases, the theoretical indicators that best explained participation in crime after the temporary desistance (re-entry to the criminal trajectory) were not changed from the factors that had explained the individual’s criminal continuance before the provisional desistance. These periods of time without criminal activity were noteworthy and significant, however, in the end impermanent in the individual’s life-history.

Summary

This chapter explored the desistance of criminal behavior and examined the explanatory capabilities of Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/ Life-Course Theories. In total, 23 of the cases included in this study had desisted from participating in criminal activities. Further, four cases were observed to have eliminated all criminal behaviors with the exception of marijuana use. This chapter also addressed temporary desistance from criminal activities within the life-
course. While most cases had short periods of minor change (i.e. a year without drug use), two cases in this study had extended periods of temporary criminal desistance.

Social Control theory and DLC theory indicators were best at addressing criminal desistance in the real lives of men and women included in this study. In some cases, the individual seemed to follow a natural decline away from criminal activities, and in other cases the individual encountered social controls associated with adulthood (work, college, marriage). It is important to note that DLC theory indicators were prominent in explaining desistance from crime because the role of human agency in choice making was found to be an important factor in the process towards desistance. The individuals in this study often made choices to move away from a criminal trajectory and purposefully made changes to their conditions, even when faced with limited choices and options.
Table 6-1. Theoretical indicators best capable of explaining stages of criminality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical branch</th>
<th>Criminal onset</th>
<th>Continuance</th>
<th>Desistance</th>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLC Theories</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tbody>
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CHAPTER 7
FEMALE LIFE-HISTORIES

Findings: The analysis included the life-histories of 24 female participants. The average age of a female respondent was 57 years old with an age range of 40 years to 80 years old. When the respondents were asked to report their race, two (8.3%) identified as Black and 22 (91.7%) identified as White. Of these 24 women, 10 (41.7%) reported official encounters with the criminal justice system, and 17 (58.3%) reported participating in undiscovered delinquent or criminal behavior at some point in their life-history. Only 6 (13.6%) of the 44 total participants (male and female) did not recall any involvement in criminal or delinquent behavior. All six participants that reported having no involvement in any criminal or delinquent behaviors were female. Further, of the six cases where only single incident delinquency or crime was reported, four of those cases were female life-histories. The female life-histories, as a whole, were discernibly less delinquent. This finding was expected, as most extant research suggests females are generally less criminal than males (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). Further, when the 32 cases that included continuation of criminal behavior were examined, the average self-reported age of onset was higher for the female cases (13.3 years) than it was for the male cases (11.8 years). This too is consistent with extant research.

Female criminality is much less understood than that of males (Bottcher, 2001; Caulfield, 2010). Research in Criminology has largely focused on boys and men, and this has created a “gender gap” in our knowledge of crime and delinquency. In particular, research providing comparisons of criminal pathways among female and male individuals is lacking, as are comparisons of the ability of major criminological
theories to explain female and male life-histories (Farrington, 2002; Kruttschnitt, 2013). Further, research applying life narrative methodologies (Frazier, 1976; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Carlson, 2013) have yet to include female offender’s life-histories. The current study included 24 female life-histories, and was one of the first modern day life-narrative research projects to have included female offender life-histories and to have compared of the full process of crime, from onset to desistance, among female and males.

**Theory Applicability**

This study explored the development, continuation, and cessation of delinquency and crime among females. Further, it looked at whether the comparative utility of criminological theories differs with regard to male and female life-histories. The following section will discuss female onset, continuation, and desistance from delinquency and crime.

**Female Onset of Delinquency and Crime**

Of the 18 female life-histories that included delinquency and crime, criminal onset was best explained by Social Control theories in 11 cases and by Developmental Life-Course theories in seven cases. Not unlike the male cases, many of the women expressed that they participated in the initial act of delinquency or crime to “test” available sources of external control within available opportunity or/and to experience excitement or thrill.

Lorrie began her criminal trajectory by running away and “wandering” the streets for weeks at a time when she was 13 years old. Lorrie described this period of her life as lacking “guidance” and in effect lack of control. Her mother was in and out of a rehabilitation center and her father was often absent.
I’d stay out running the streets. I mean literally, I’d stay out running barefooted with other kids that didn’t have guidance. And, we stayed out and hung out all night.

Addy described her criminal onset as a way of testing sources of external control within available opportunity. She began breaking into abandoned houses, smoking, and engaging in sexual behaviors when she was 14 years old. She described her initial delinquent involvement by saying it “Just was kind of fun to see if you could get away with it.” She had weak bonds with both of her parents and was moving back and forth between her parent’s house and her aunt’s house as she was growing up.

Similarly, Fanny stole a beer bottle when she was 14 years old from a convenience store. She described her relationships with her parents as “difficult” with her mother and “loving” with her father. Fanny also described her initial act of delinquency as “excitement” seeking.

It was the excitement of doing it and not getting caught, I think, and then I felt like I shouldn’t of done that kind of thing.

DLC theory indicators were more often observable at the time of criminal onset for the female cases than for the male cases. In particular “off-age” life events, like moving out of the primary caregiver’s home before reaching adulthood, and accumulating disadvantage, often stemming from childhood abuse, was often an early component of female life-histories. While abuse in childhood was observed for both male and female cases, childhood abuse was a more prominent experience for the female cases in this study. This was particularly true for childhood sexual abuse.

Kate’s life story provided an example of an “off-age” life event observable at the time of criminal onset. Kate’s parents divorced when she was 10 years old and she then lived with her mother, who was an alcoholic. Kate began working at 14 years old, took
full responsibility of her younger siblings, and also moved out of her family home at 15 years old. Her initial delinquent act began the same year when she began “partying” by using illegal drugs and drinking while underage.

Cases that included childhood abuse were common in the female life-histories. For example, Renee’s childhood and teenage years were marked by severe sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

My mother, excuse my language, was a witch and a bitch. When she was drinking she was cheating on my father. Make her own daughter, five years old all the way up to sixteen, make me watch her have sex with other men. And my father sex abused me from five years old to sixteen. And everything that my mother done to me and my father done to me, was wrong. But, I learned history effects. My mother use to take me to the backyard to beat me. I have marks on my back and all that.

Renee’s criminal onset was at 14 years old when she started using methamphetamines and drinking alcohol.

The most common initial acts of delinquency were similar among male and female cases. Shoplifting and underage drinking were both common initial acts of delinquency for both females and males in this study. However, smoking marijuana as the initial act of delinquency was much more common among females (27.8%) than males (5%).

In this study, female criminal onset was best explained by DLC and Social Control theory indicators. Out of all the female life-histories that included at least one incident of crime or delinquency (18 cases), Social Control theory indicators best explained criminal onset in 11 cases and DLC theory indicators best explained onset in seven cases. In the 20 male life-histories that included at least one incident of crime or
delinquency, Social Control theory indicators were best in explaining criminal onset in 15 cases. The remaining male life-histories included three cases where DLC theory indicators best explained criminal onset, one case where Social Learning indicators best explained onset, and one case where Strain theory indicators best explained onset. It was noted that female life-histories were more likely to have “off-age” life events and accruing disadvantage, particularly from childhood sexual abuse, observable before or accompanying the age of onset.

**Female Continuation of Delinquency and Crime**

In 14 female life-histories, criminal continuity or patterning was reported. This continuation of delinquency and crime was best explained by Social Learning theory indicators in one case, by Social Control theory indicators in five cases, and by DLC theory indicators in eight cases. This is similar to the male life-histories where Social Control theory indicators and DLC theory indicators best explained criminal continuation in most of the male life-histories, with the exception of two cases where Social Learning theory indicators were most applicable.

Many of the female life-histories included a continuation of underage drinking and drug use, as well as relatively minor crimes such as shoplifting and general delinquency (in adolescence). Further, for most of the cases, the criminal behavior is clustered during adolescence and emerging adulthood (which was expected and the same for male life-histories). For the women who continued participating in criminal behaviors past their mid-twenties, the involvement was mostly drug and alcohol related with infrequent participation in other minor crimes (petty theft, shoplifting). This is not unlike male life-histories that follow similar patterns. However, the male cases that are characterized by minor adult persistence included a broader variety of minor crimes.
(including criminal threat, suspended license, and cultivation of marijuana) as well as drug use.

The female and male life-histories also differed in that the female life-histories often included a male spouse or partner who played a role in influencing criminal activities. While the male participants often had female partners who were involved in frequent alcohol use and/or drugs, none of the male participants reported the female partner as a motivating or influential source for criminal behavior. However, female life stories often included the description of a male who influenced their criminal behavior in some manner. For example, Rose described her relationship with a man as part of the reason she was involved in criminal activities.

But then after that, it was just a lot with Ken . . . that was the name of the game with him. He was also the one who introduced me to drugs the first time.

Another respondent, Renee, described being arrested because she lied to the police for her partner.

I did not know he had a warrant out for his arrest. And if anything else, I just came back from the grocery store and cops were standing at my door and they were looking for Derreck. I said, "no, he don't live here." But Derreck does, and his friend is in back.

In four cases, the female respondent indicated that their spouse or partner encouraged or coerced them to engage in criminal activities. For example, Judy, a 56 year old White female described starting to use cocaine with her husband.

And then he wanted to start doing drugs, and that was cocaine. And I had never done that. And, um, I said, "Gabe, why do you want to do these things? We have a family. We have children." And he just got very, kind of very more forceful about things, and I was afraid to lose him.
Similarly, Lorrie reported that she began using drugs because her partner encouraged her to do so.

And he just turned, he turned, I think that with the drugs and you know, he smoked pot. I never, -I didn’t smoke I was a very innocent. No drinking, no smoking, no promiscuity, it just wasn’t a part of me. But with him, he did smoke the pot, I had friends smoke pot, and it was just one day sitting on the couch he says, “You know, if you would smoke this, I would stay home more.” And that’s what got me smoking pot.

In another case, Sherry, described a relationship with a man where he would “tease” her with drugs and control how much she would use.

That’s his way of keeping me, and I met him, I bet to this day he still has some hid in his house. He hide it everywhere so I wouldn’t overdo it, and he would get drunk and tease me with it.

Sherry also described a relationship in her teenage years where her boyfriend would “steal, rob, anything.” Sherry was also involved in robbery and various other crimes at the time of this relationship, but Sherry described times when he would “let her” and “wouldn’t let her” be involved in certain crimes.

While in most of these cases the female respondent described a forceful influence of a male co-offender and drug use. In Dee’s life story, the concept of a male prompting criminal behavior was reported for shoplifting.

He had uh, put some stuff in the cart or whatever, and told me to put them in the bag. In my backpack! Not this one, I had a red and black one. What? I had a bad feeling, but you can’t argue with him, you can’t tell him no. No is not in his vocabulary. It’s like he don’t have to follow rules or anything either he thinks. That’s what he thought anyways. So like stupid me, I put that in. It was last year, the end of last year or something.
Although many female life-histories included reports of male-offenders playing a facilitating, instigating, or encouraging role in female criminal involvement, this finding does not imply that the female offender’s human agency was mitigated through coercion. While some extant research suggests that the “mental and physical” coercion of male co-offenders can explain a “substantial amount” of female crime (Jones, 2008), this was not the case for the females included in this study. While the introduction of a manipulative male co-offender may have created an additional barrier to choice, the role of human agency continued to exist. Further, the female individuals had participated in illicit behaviors before (and most cases after) the incidents of male influence or persuasion. In this study, the role of an influential or persuasive male co-offenders provides an example of how different factors are present in the unfolding of female lives, it does not, however, change the overall theoretical indicators explaining female criminal involvement.

The male life-histories included a greater number of persistent offenders and, in general, were marked by a broader range of crime and higher frequency of offending. Of the male life-histories, four were of high frequency and persistent offenders who might be described as “career criminals.” Only one of the female life-histories fits that description. Sherry, a 49 year old Black female, began her criminal trajectory at 14 years old and continued with regular involvement in illegal activities. Her criminal continuation included burglary, ATM fraud, drug use, shoplifting and theft, child abuse, domestic violence, and check forgery. Sherry’s criminal continuance was best explained by DLC theory indicators. She moved out of her home by 16, quit high school, and became a teenage mother. She experienced an accrual of consequences and
disadvantage at an early age, and demonstrated human agency by making choices within her limited opportunities for change. Her pathway in crime is similar to the male persistent offenders in this study. However, accumulation of disadvantage was observable earlier in her life story. The criminal continuation of the four male persistent offenders was best explained by DLC indicators for two cases, by Social Control indicators in one case, and by Social Learning indicators in one other case. However, one difference in Sherry’s life story was that she did not have any encounters with the criminal justice system until she was in her 30’s. The male life-histories following similar criminal trajectories all included multiple encounters with the criminal justice system starting in the juvenile years.

Two female life-histories were unique in that they exhibited offense “switching” in their adult years. Both cases were of female participants who were only involved in drug use at the point of criminal onset and through the beginning of their criminal trajectory. However, they expanded or differentiated their criminal behaviors once they were close to 40 years old. The unfolding of their criminal pathways was interesting because extant research suggests that the peak age of desistance from crime is between the ages of 20 to 29 years (Farrington, 2002), and that diversification of crime generally slows after age 20 (Monahan & Piquero, 2009). Their stories provide examples of individual level deviation from these more common patterns of crime.

Similarly, Dee, a 41 year old White female, began smoking marijuana and running away from home at 14 years old. She continued to use marijuana, but did not begin using other drugs (heroin and crack) until she was in her 30’s. She desisted from using illicit drugs when she was 38 years old, and stated that she stopped because she
was “tired of having no money.” However, her criminal involvement did not stop, but instead, differentiated. She shoplifted for the first time when she was 39 years old and was involved in check fraud when she was 40 years old. Dee’s continuation, and increase in the severity and range of her criminal involvement, was best explained by DLC theory indicators.

Dee had a difficult childhood, failed multiple grades, and quit school in the ninth grade. However, her behaviors and criminal opportunities were limited because she entered an independent living facility from 16-19 years old. She began to accrue additional hardships and consequences when she had to leave the program after becoming pregnant. Once outside of the program, Dee had limited employment opportunities, she had three children by the time she was 25 years old, and she was in an abusive relationship. Once she began using heroin and crack at 30 years old, she describes the following years as “messed up times.” She lost custody of her children when she was 35 years old because her boyfriend physically abused her son. She and her boyfriend moved to Florida together and they quickly became homeless. Her partner was diagnosed with a heart condition and he died when Dee was 40 years old.

Another female life-history where the type and variation of criminal involvement changed in the adult years was found in Judy’s story. Judy, a 56 year old white female, smoked marijuana when she was 15 years old and did not report additional crime or delinquency until she was 28 years old and started using cocaine. She stopped using drugs within a few months, but she was an alcoholic all of her adult life. She reported that when she was approximately 41 years old and going through a divorce, she had financial struggles related to having failed to pay taxes for their business. In her 40’s,
she assaulted her husband’s new girlfriend, assaulted her husband and broke his nose, and also punched her ex-husbands car. Her cocaine use also returned in her 40’s. She was arrested for a second incident of assault on her ex-husband the same year as the interview. Judy’s increased criminal involvement, particularly the inclusion of assault, was best explained by Social Control theory indicators. Judy married at 16 years old, and her life seemed to be focused on her husband’s military career, raising her two children, and later working at her family owned business. Although her husband was what she described as “distant,” “abusive,” and “unfaithful” throughout their marriage, it seemed as though the marriage and children provided Judy with a source of social control through the attachments to her family. When she used drugs during her marriage, the opportunity was available because her husband was also involved in drug use. When they divorced after 25 years, Judy’s sources of control diminish and her opportunities for criminal involvement expand. Further, Judy appeared to have low impulse control (weak inner controls). Her explosive behavioral tendencies were also observable in non-criminal incidents throughout her life. For example, she recalled yelling at a military recruitment officer after her husband was not placed where he had hoped for, and also leaving a job she was doing well in because of one incident where she got “mad” when someone “told her what to do.”

The continuation of crime among the female cases included in this study can be explained by the same theoretical indicators as the male life-histories. However, female life stories, as a whole, include fewer and more minor crimes than the male life-histories. The female life stories also included reports of male co-offenders who either influenced, instigated, or encouraged their criminal behavior. While only one female life-
history was of a high frequency offender who engaged in more serious crimes, the indicators of criminal continuance for this case were similar to the male life stories of persistent offenders. Further, two female cases were unique in that their criminal involvement increased in the adult years.

**Female Desistance of Delinquency and Crime**

Of the 11 female life-histories where criminal desistance was observable, seven cases of desistance were best explained by DLC theory indicators and four cases of desistance were best explained by Social Control theory indicators. Three female cases had not desisted from criminal activity at the time of the interview. The general theoretical indicators explaining desistance were similar for both female and male accounts of criminal desistance, with the exception of two male life-histories where desistance was best explained by Social Learning theory indicators.

While marriage or a "good" relationship played an important part in many of the male participant's desistance from criminal behavior, this was not the case in female life-histories. As discussed in the previous section, the role of romantic relationships and spouses in female life-histories was mostly of crime facilitation. Instead, female desistance from crime was often led by a choice to change the direction of their life. In some cases, the choice to change was related to having children to take care of.

For example, Rose, a 43 year old White female, recalled desisting from drug use and "partying" when her two daughters were toddlers and she realized she needed to change her life trajectory. She described moving away from “that crowd” and "away from the drugs and alcohol" by moving her family to a different state.
I think I kind of realized, this is your life, you have two daughters who are depending on you, you can’t continue to do this.

In other examples, female participants indicated making a decision to change their life trajectory after experiencing a tragic event, like the loss of a friend or loved one. This was the case for Kate, a 52 year old White woman, who had a series of “off-age” life events throughout her early life. Kate described having “a lot of friends” from her social group die from drug related incidents, and that she realized that “it’s not very good to be rebellious to the point that it ruins your life.” She described making a decision to change her life trajectory.

But I had made a pretty conscious decision to get away from all that. I was tired of all that. And I saw a lot of my friends die. And I said, “you know, this can’t be.”

While male life-histories also included descriptions of desistance from crime prompted by human agency, the choice was often embedded within meeting a spouse, or, the individual credited the spouse for sustaining their desistance from crime.

Female desistance from crime, like male desistance, was also often a process of “aging-out” of crime. In these cases, there were no differences between male and female life-histories in the general process of decline and eventual cessation of criminal behaviors. In these cases, the individual seemed to naturally conclude their criminal career without any noticeable turning points or decisions. For example, Susan’s involvement declined throughout her life until two years before the interview, when she desisted from smoking marijuana. Susan described stopping because she was diagnosed with COPD and was told marijuana might kill her.
In the broadest terms, the process of criminal desistance was similar for both the female and male participants in this study. The majority of cases were best explained by either DLC theory or Social Control theory indicators. What was different in the process towards desistance for female cases was the exclusion of marriage or romantic partners playing a pro-social role that supported or facilitated criminal desistance. While marriage was often a pro-social factor which facilitated criminal desistence in male life-histories, for females, it was more common that leaving a marriage or relationship played a part in the process towards criminal desistance.

Summary

This chapter presented findings on female development, continuation, and cessation of crime and delinquency. Further, it provided comparisons of criminal pathways among female and male individuals and explored whether the comparative utility of criminological theories differs with regard to male and female life-histories. The findings in this study suggest that the same theoretical constructions are capable of addressing both male and female criminal trajectories. DLC theory and Social Control theory had the greatest explanatory capabilities for both female and male criminal pathways. However, the indicators may manifest differently for female and male individuals. For example, as extant research has shown, females participate in fewer and more minor crimes than males. Further, female life-histories presented DLC indicators earlier in the life process. Factors such as “off-age” life events and childhood sexual abuse were often in place before the onset of criminality in female life-histories. Further, the role of a spouse or romantic partner influenced female and male criminal trajectories in different ways. In female cases, male spouses or romantic partners were often described as facilitating criminal continuance. Further, while marriage was often a
factor towards criminal desistence in male life-histories, in female life-histories, it was more common that leaving a marriage or relationship played a part in the process towards criminal desistance.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS

Research Summary

Utilizing retrospective longitudinal data of individual’s life-histories, this study explored the comparative utility of selected current criminological theories when applied to 44 individual life-history accounts of the development, continuation, and cessation of criminal involvement. The analysis considered four major theoretical branches: Social Learning Theories, Control Theories, Strain Theories, and Developmental/ Life-course Theories of Criminality. This study included 24 female life-histories, an area which continues to need further development in Criminology (Farrington, 2002; Kruttschnitt, 2013). The incorporation of female participants allowed for the comparisons of the development, continuation, and desistance of delinquency and crime among female and male individuals. Further, this study explored whether the same theoretical constructions are capable of explaining female criminal trajectories as well as whether, and if so how, the empirical realities of female criminality and male criminality differ substantially.

Stages of Crime

Social Learning theory indicators were found to best explain criminal onset for one male participant. This individual, Vito, was an archetypical case of a “mobster” or “gangster” who was born into a family involved in organized crime. Social Learning theory indicators were able to explain criminal continuation for three total cases, one female and two male. Vito’s extensive and long term involvement in criminal activities continued to display Social Learning theory markers. However, the other two cases in which Social Learning was indicated were examples of individuals who had internalized
values and beliefs of subcultural groups. When examining criminal desistance, Social Learning theory best explained the desistance of two male individuals. Both men desisted from criminal activities once becoming highly involved in religion. While many individuals reported involvement in religion at a basic level (attending church), these two cases attributed personal change to having new beliefs and values rooted in Christianity.

Strain theory was found to have the least explanatory capability in this sample. However, Strain theory indicators were able to best explain the delinquent onset of one male participant. Maury described feeling structural strain from school and “the whole establishment.” He described wanting a more positive image but not having the means to achieve it. He reported that his initiation into delinquency and crime was a way of “lashing back” at the “whole establishment.” When exploring criminal continuation and desistance, Strain theory indicators were not found to have explanatory capabilities for any of the life-histories included in this study.

Social Control theory indicators had the greatest explanatory power when examining criminal onset. This result is similar to findings on the emergence of criminality from Frazier’s (1976) research utilizing life-history methodologies. In this study, Social Control theory indicators explained criminal onset in 26 cases, including 11 female and 15 male life-histories. In these cases, many described weak or broken family bonds and a general lack of adequate supervision. These cases also often included examples of an “inclination” towards crime when controls were weak and an opportunity was available. The respondents often described the initial act of delinquency or crime as “thrilling” or “exciting,” and reported that they were testing sources of control
by seeing if they could “get away with it.” In these cases, there were also some indications of weak inner controls (perhaps low self-control).

Social Control theory indicators were best in explaining criminal continuance in 15 cases, including the continuation of crime in five female and 10 male life-histories. These cases often included observable weak inner controls, with individuals describing “always living for the moment” or never considering consequences. Further, many cases were of individuals who displayed a general lack of bonds to others or to institutions. Some of these individuals seemed to wander through their lives and seemed to describe life as happening to them (instead of being an active participant in their life).

Desistance from crime and delinquency was best accounted for by Social Control theory indicators in 10 cases, including that of four female and six male life-histories. In many cases, the individual “aged out.” They became ill or described being “too old.” In three cases of juvenile limited male offenders, these individuals seemed to have a natural transition from adolescence (or emerging adulthood) to adulthood responsibilities (college or work). In these cases, human agency in choice making was not observable.

Developmental and Life-Course theoretical indicators held the most explanatory capabilities of criminal onset for 10 cases, including criminal initiation for seven female and three male participants. In these cases, some of the individual expressed a desire for adult privileges. For example, Kate described her teenage years as “trying to be more grown up than I was” and Sherry expressed frustration at being “baby sister.” These cases sometimes reported neuropsychological deficits, for example one female
participant describes having motor and learning difficulties stemming from epilepsy. Most of these cases displayed “off-age” life events combined with accumulating disadvantage and accruing consequences. It was found that DLC factors were often present in female life-histories before criminal onset. In particular, the female participants in this study were more likely to have moved out of the home at an early age and have experienced sexual abuse.

Criminal continuation was best explained by DLC theoretical indicators in 14 cases, including the continuation of crime in eight female and six male life-histories. These cases had observable accumulation of disadvantage and accruing consequences, as well as off-age life events. Further, human agency in choice making was also present. These individuals often expressed actively making a choice or recognizing the presence of a choice that could change their life trajectory.

DLC theory indicators best explained desistance in 11 life-histories, including seven female and four male cases. These cases exhibited choice and often reported making conscience movement away from a criminal trajectory. Future projection was also observable in some of these cases. For example, Randy, who attributed his desistance from juvenile criminal behaviors to meeting his future wife, described realizing things could be different and simply deciding to change.

**Full Process of Crime**

In total, the findings suggest that Social Control theory and DLC theory indicators were most capable of capturing the full process of crime, from emergence to desistance. Social Control theory indicators were able to explain criminality over the full life-course for nine cases, including the life-histories of four female and five male participants. DLC theory indicators were able to explain the full process of crime for five
life-histories, for four female narratives and one male narrative. However, when the cases where DLC theory indicators became apparent after criminal onset are included, an additional four life-histories were best explained by DLC theory indicators (two female and two male life-histories). DLC theory indicators were more prominent in female life-histories.

In this study, Social Learning theory and Strain theory were not able to fully explain the process of criminality over the full life-course. However, Social Learning theory captured both the onset and continuation of crime in one case, Vito’s life-history. However, desistance from crime in Vito’s life story was best explained as an aging-out process. Vito did not acquire and internalize socially conforming values or beliefs; instead, his desistance from crime appeared to be a natural decline rooted in his health and age. In three other cases, both Social Control theory and Social Learning theory indicators were best in explaining the full process of crime. In two cases, while Social Control theory indicators best explained both onset and continuation, desistance from crime came when the individuals became Christians. In another case, Addy’s life-history, Social Control theory indicators were able to best explain both onset and desistance; however, her continuation was rooted within having internalized “anarchist-fringe” values and beliefs. She identified with a subcultural group that encouraged her behaviors.

This study’s inclusion of female life-histories allowed for the comparison of female and male life-histories. Not surprisingly, the female participants in this study were found to have fewer and more minor involvement in criminal behaviors than the male participants. It is generally considered a criminological fact that men offend more
often and in more serious crimes than women (Becker & McCorkel, 2011; Kruttschnitt, 2013; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). This study also found that the role of a romantic partner or spouse in criminal continuance and desistance is different for males and females. The female life-histories in this study often involved a male co-offender who instigated criminal continuation. However, this researcher does not conclude that the role of the male co-offenders diminished female responsibility or ability of choice. While some research has found that male co-offenders often remove female offender’s human agency through coercion (Jones, 2008), in this study, the findings suggest that the role of a forceful co-offender may create a barrier or additional disadvantage, but the women still appeared to have and show human agency in choice making. The women in this study who reported an instigating male offender had all participated in crime before the male co-offender’s presence and most continued to do so afterwards. Further, most also describe situations where they did not comply with the male co-offenders, although there was no change in their circumstance (i.e. the spouse continued to victimize them through domestic violence). This study also found that the role of a spouse or romantic partner differs for female offenders in the process towards criminal desistance. While many male participants reported that a spouse played a direct role in their criminal desistance, the female participants were more likely to have reported that leaving a spouse or partner was beneficial in the process towards criminal desistance. This finding supports extant research that suggests marriage does not have a beneficial effect for female criminal trajectories (King, Massoglia, & Macmillan, 2007), and Sampson and Laub’s (2003) conclusion that women marry “down.”
Strengths and Limitations

The life-history method utilized in this study, although rarely used to compare the utility of modern criminological theories, has a number of strengths and advantages (Frazier, 1978; Gadd & Farrall, 2004; King & Chambliss, 1972; Klockars, 1974; Laub, 1984; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Shaw, 1930; Snodgrass, 1982; Steffensmeier, 1986; Steffensmeier & Ulmer, 2005; Sutherland, 1937). Applying a life-history approach allowed for thorough examination of the process towards criminal onset, the progression towards either minor or serious involvement in crime, and in some cases, also allowed for observation of the process towards and accomplishment of desistance from criminal behaviors. The sequence of life events and circumstances were observable, and this research method truly allowed for the exploration of both process and timing in real lives. It also provided an opportunity to explore individual’s personal perspectives on the events occurring in their lives, along with the situational and socio-historical context of the circumstances they regarded as significant.

Of course, life-history methodology (like all methods in the social sciences) also has limitations. For example, some researchers have argued that in life-history methodology the participant is “selective” in what they reveal, they cannot recall every detail of their life, and can be contradictory in the information they present (Ceballo, 1999; Presser, 2009). In addition, the individual’s gender, age, and personality may influence the characteristics of memory and the social function of sharing those memories (Alea & Bluck, 2003; Bluck, 2003). For example, research has suggested that women may recall life events with greater clarity and detail than men (Alea & Bluck, 2003). Some scholars also suggest a concern over the “authenticity” of life-history narratives (Polkinghorne, 1988; Presser, 2009). On the other hand, it has also been argued that individual’s
behaviors are embedded within what they perceive to be important (Presser, 2009). Further, even if the recollection includes some inauthenticity, this methodology allows the researcher to explore the context for life events, the individual’s actions within the context, as well as the perceptions of the participant regarding the context and their own behaviors (Burgess, 1966; Presser, 2009; Shaw, 1930).

This study also utilized a real world sampling technique, putting out an “open-call” for participants. Hence, the participants are not representative of general criminal offenders. While this non-probability sampling technique was useful in locating individuals with a broad range of experiences with criminality and the criminal justice system, those with and without criminal records, it also likely reduces the chances of finding and gaining the inclusion of high frequency and serious offenders. While indeed a limitation, this is not one unique to life-history methods. It is also possible that a certain type of individual is more likely to respond to publicly solicited research opportunities, creating unknown sample bias.

The inclusion of female participants in this study did allow for investigation of a relatively underexplored subject in Criminology. There is a lack of empirical attention when it comes to female offenders, and this has led to a gap in knowledge. This relative inattention to female offenders is even more accented in life-history type research. In fact, the majority of life-course research utilizing life-narrative methodology only includes male offenders (Farrington, 2002; Frazier 1976; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Carlsson, 2013). As a result, female deviance is much less understood than that of males (Bottcher, 2001; Caulfield, 2010). This study aimed at contributing to this under-researched area by the inclusion of female life-histories.
Discussion and Direction for Future Research

This study found that Social Control theory and Developmental/ Life-Course theory indicators had the greatest explanatory capabilities for understanding the full process of crime in real lives for both female and male individuals and also accounted best for specific stages from onset, to continuance, to desistance. This is broadly consistent with Frazier (1976) but quite divergent from Steffensmeier (2005). Steffensmeier (2005), while looking at life long career criminals finds Social Learning theory is fundamentally important and the most useful framework for understanding these criminal types.

The role of choice: An interesting development was the distinction between individuals who displayed clear human agency in their life-histories, and those who did not. There appeared to be a distinction between individuals who spoke of their lives as happening to them rather than making things in their lives happen. This division had theoretical consequences, as traditional Social Control theory only allows for minimal inclusion of human agency in choice making. However, DLC theories, like Sampson and Laub’s (2003) Age Graded Theory of Informal Social Controls not only includes it, but assumes a role of human agency in the development of criminal trajectories. Further research should continue to explore the role of human agency in real lives, and perhaps explore an individual's perception of locus of control.

Men and Women are the same, except when they are not: This researcher concluded that while female criminal pathways had observable differences to that of male pathways, the overall process of crime can be explained with the same theoretical constructs. In short, there is no evidence in this research that explanations of female
crime require any different theories or special additions to existing theories. The sample of women in this study included one female “career criminal” and a few other more active offenders, but the majority of the women in this study were involved in less crime and more minor crimes than the men in the study. However, the process of criminality for the female “career criminal,” and for the women who were higher frequency offenders, was explained by the same theoretical indicators than male life-histories.

Consistent with existing research, female offenders in this sample also appeared to experience onset later than their male counterparts, and female offenders also had lower incidence and lower offense severity. Later onset is interesting especially given the relatively unchallenged presumption that female youth mature earlier than their male counterparts. Lower incidence and severity is consistent with research that shows female youth are more closely supervised and more rigorously socialized against acting out. Research on women and crime continues to be an underexplored area in the field of Criminology (Claufield, 2010), and future research should explore the unfolding of women’s criminal trajectories and the ability of current criminological theories to explain onset, continuation, and desistance of criminal women.

Future researchers should not discount the importance of studying low to mid-frequency female offenders, as their actions still have impact in society. For example, two of the women in this study were involved in check fraud and many were heavy drug users. Their criminal activity was equally impactful in their immediate surroundings as well as broader social contexts as was that of a number of male offenders in this study. Of course, future research should also explore the full process of criminality for high frequency and serious female offenders, an area this study was not able to investigate.
Men as an obstacle out of crime: This study found that the role of a spouse or partner within a criminal trajectory is different for women and men. The women in this study often reported that criminal continuation was facilitated by their male partner or/and that the male partner coerced them into crime. In essence, the men were an obstacle trapping the women within a criminal trajectory. The men in this study, though at times reporting a romantic partner who was involved in drug use, never attributed their own criminal involvement to a female partner. This is an interesting result that poses a number of questions. First, are women involved with criminal men because of a poor “marriage pool” created by a low number of high self-control men as suggested by Sampson and Laub’s (2003)? Is it simply a numbers game? Are women involved in crime socially perceived as less redeemable to noncriminal males than are male offenders to noncriminal women? Or is the reality of women’s lives much more complicated? For example, this study found that a large number of the female participants had been sexually abused in childhood (a consistent finding in extant research) and that “off-age” life events were often apparent before the age of onset for female offenders. Since research on childhood sexual abuse indicates that victims are more likely to be both re-victimized (Arata & Lindman, 2002) and to criminally offend (McCartan & Gunnison, 2010), it could be possible that female offender’s accumulated disadvantage lead them to poor marriage and relationship choices (regardless of available options). Of course, it is also critical to keep in mind the general role of patriarchy in society and how that in itself creates differences between the role of men and women within relationships, and the discrepancy of power in interpersonal relationships. It is also important to keep in mind that the average participant in the
current study was born in the 1950’s and exposed to different societal expectations of gender roles. It will be important to continue to explore the role of marriage and relationships on criminal trajectories on younger populations of men and women. Extant research has suggested a difference among men and women in terms of the marriage effect on crime (Giordano, Cernokovich, & Rudolph, 2002), finding that marriage is less beneficial for women than men (King, Massoglia, & Macmillan, 2007). Research should continue to investigate marriage, but also the role of general romantic relationships on female criminal trajectories.

**Women do better without men:** Another interesting finding on the role of male partners in the trajectory of criminal women was found in the process towards desistance. While many of the male participants in this study attributed their criminal desistance to meeting their wife, the female participants were more likely to describe leaving a relationship with a male partner as benefitting their process to desistance. No female participant described a “good marriage” as part of the process to desistance, although many of the participants were “happily” married at the time of the interview. The “good marriage” came once their involvement in crime ended. Taking account the finding that men influenced and coerced crime, this result was not surprising. However, in these cases, the female participants emphasized their role of human agency in choice making when ending the “bad” relationships. Again, this emphasizes the importance of continuing to investigate the role of men in female offender’s criminal trajectories.

**Knowing the road:** Finally, an interesting addition to this study was that many of the participants who had avoided the criminal justice system reported a sense of
“knowing” how their life could have easily taken a different route. The interconnectivity of life events was mentioned in a few circumstances. To conclude, Lorrie, a 56 year old White female elaborated on her response to having never been arrested.

That’s what’s so strange because of the life that I led and the people that I associated with. I never, I never got caught, I never. I walked right through it. You know? And changed from it. And some of them, all those people in my life, are still doing that or in prison. I mean I’ve got friends from that life that are serving life sentences. You know, for drug dealing, shooting cops, and murdering people, or robbing banks. I don’t know what made me walk through that life. What is it about a person that turns and goes?
APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

I. Introduction of Investigator, Reason for Research, and Institutional Affiliation

II. Description and Purpose of the Study
   a. Interest in exploring the utility of criminological theories. Explain that most research testing theory uses official records and information from data not directly gathered from those who have had involvement with the criminal justice system.
   b. Explain current research wants to test utility of theories against individual life histories – told by the individual – rather than looking at official records or other “second-hand” knowledge.
   c. Research would contribute to scientific research, and would increase our knowledge of criminality. Explain that changes in policy or process are often based on the accumulated scientific knowledge and understanding of crime gained through research projects such as this one.
   d. Tell participant not to include any full names, dates, or precise details (such as addresses) in their story.

III. Invitation to Participate and Assurance of Anonymity
   a. Assure the participant that aside from me, as the principal researcher who is interviewing them, their identity will not be disclosed to any other individual or within any report.

IV. Description of Interview Process and the Use of Data

Informed consent process

V. Begin Interview
   a. General Questions (Establish Comfort/ General Chat if needed)
      i. Demographics: Age, Sex, Race
      ii. Originating Residence, Subsequent Residence (s), and Relevant Details
         1. Place of birth, “hometown,” Longest residence, etc.
      iii. Originating Family Circumstances
         1. Primary Caregiver(s)
            a. Changes, Length, Age(s) of change
            b. Occupation(s) of Caregiver(s)
         2. Siblings/ others in residence
            a. Gender and Ages
            b. Time in subject’s life, age of change(s)
   iv. Education History
      1. Highest Education
2. Reasons for change (i.e. GED rather than Diploma, quit college, or any other educational “turning point.”

v. Work History
1. Main occupation (if applicable)
2. Times unemployed in adult life (if applicable)

vi. Marriage and Own Family History
   a. How long, cohabitiate, etc.
2. Previous Marriages/ (Longest Relationship if longer than or no marriage)
   a. How long, divorce? Separate?
3. Children
   a. From marriage?
   b. How old? Gender?
   c. Lives(d) with?

vii. General Incarceration/ Official Criminal Sanction History
1. Number Juvenile Institutions (for what/ length)
2. Number of times in jail (for what/length)
3. Number of times in prison (for what/length)
4. Number of times arrested (for what/length)

b. Early life, prior to Criminal Onset (Childhood – or/and if relevant, Adolescence and Adulthood)
   i. Recollection of earliest memories, description of significant events up to first delinquent/criminal act.
   ii. Recollection of self (feelings, emotions, perceptions) during stages from earliest memory to first delinquent/criminal act
   iii. Description of significant relationships (parents, siblings, friends, teachers, etc.) from earliest memory to first delinquent/criminal act.
   iv. Description/Evaluation of general life circumstances and institutions from earliest memory to first delinquent/criminal act. (Family, School, Church, Neighborhood/Community, Job (if relevant), etc.)

c. Initial Criminal/ Delinquent Act, Age of Onset
   i. Description of first delinquent/criminal act
      1. Age of onset, year in school (if relevant)
      2. Description of “act” – what type of crime, where, when, planning (if relevant), alone or with others, etc.
   ii. Evaluation of first delinquent/criminal act
      1. Personal feelings directly during/after behavior
      2. Reaction/knowledge of significant relations
         a. If act not discovered, assess likely reaction from those significant relations
      3. Legal and social reactions to act – (legal authorities, school, church, community, etc.)
d. Evaluation of Official/Unofficial Sanctions to Delinquent/Criminal Act
   i. Describe official/unofficial reaction/sanction to delinquent/criminal behavior
      1. At time, did the sanction seem fair/unfair?
      2. Currently (in reflection), does the sanction seem fair/unfair?
   ii. Effects of official/unofficial reaction/sanction

e. Immediately Following Initial Criminal/Delinquent Act
   i. Significant events and circumstances
      1. Any changes in circumstances attributable to act?
      2. Any significant events directly after act?
   ii. Residual reactions from significant others
      1. Noticeable changes/behaviors from others?
      2. Any changes in significant others?
   iii. Residual appraisal of self
      1. Self-perceptions change after act?
      2. How?

f. Life Circumstances, Patterns, Points of Significance, and Events
   i. Description/Evaluation of time from first delinquent/criminal act to subsequent
      (if relevant)
      1. Life circumstances?
      2. Turning points/significant events?
      3. Time (length) to next act (if relevant)

g. Next reported (and subsequent) Criminal/Delinquent Act
   i. Repeat (c), (d), (e), and (f)
   ii. Did a pattern develop or was there a significant number of offenses or was the
      one or a few offenses so involved and serious it constitutes behavioral
      criminality?

h. (IF RELEVANT - more than 5 years since last “offense”) Perceptions, Conditions, and
   General Circumstances of Desistance
   i. Life conditions/circumstances from last delinquent/criminal act to present
   ii. Significant events, “turning points” since last delinquent/criminal act to present
   iii. Perceptions of desistance
      1. What changed (if anything)
      2. Self-evaluation of what influenced desistance
   iv. Perceptions of self

i. Current Life Circumstances, Patterns, Points of Significance, and Events
   i. Current life condition/circumstances
   ii. Perception/Evaluation of current condition
   iii. Projection to future
      1. See self in next five years?
      2. May offend in next five years?
APPENDIX B
EXAMPLE INTERVIEW – JAY’S STORY

Transcript: 028, Length: 2:14:18
Male, 55 years, White

(Inform consent process)

028: I have read the procedure described above, I voluntarilly agree to participate in the procedure.

Interviewer: Great.

028: Question… what ethnic background are you?

Interviewer: (I explain)... Ok, we’re going to start with some general questions, to establish some basic information, and when we’re done with that, we’ll get into your childhood and then move forward. So just so I have it on the record since this will eventually be transcribed, if you could please state your age, your sex, and your race.

028: I’m male, Caucasian, and I’m 55 years old.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

028: Iowa City, Iowa at University Hospital, the Hawkeye Campus.

Interviewer: Is that your hometown? Did you grow up there?

028: I didn’t grow up there; we moved a lot as I was young. Soon as my dad finished school we moved, I was six.

Interviewer: Is there a place you would consider a hometown or were you constantly moving?

028: Constantly moving pretty much about every four years after that until I got to Winter Park Florida, and that’s where I call home.

Interviewer: And how old were you when you got there?

028: Thirteen.

Interviewer: Ok. Is that your longest residence? In Winter Park?

028: Yes.

Interviewer: Who were your primary caregivers growing up?

028: Mother and father.

Interviewer: And what did they do for a living?

028: Well, let’s see. My mother, well I think she worked when I was real young, but she was at home raising the kids. I had a brother and a sister, younger. And my dad was going to school until he got his
job, when he left school, a plant manager color company; they made paint pigments in West Virginia. After four years, “CT” Corporation bought them out and they liked my dad and they moved him to Holland, Michigan, where we lived another four years. And during that time my dad had been promoted up through the corporate chain and now he was like “CT” Corporations gun slinger. Whenever a plant went out on strike they’d send my dad to negotiate for the company or whatever. Then he was, let’s see, then he went to, well, after my parents split up, divorced, we came here, he went to Louisville.

Interviewer: So you were about 13 when they split up?

028: Actually he moved out a year before that, yeah, I was 13….. and then after 20 years with “CT”, “C” industries offered him a job, and he was the vice president of “C” industries after that.

Interviewer: You mentioned two siblings; it was a brother and a sister? How much younger are they than you?

028: My brother is two years younger and my sister is five years younger.

Interviewer: And did they grow up with you the entire time?

028: Yes.

Interviewer: Anyone else in the household?

028: Just mom and dad, and then mom, and for a while grandmother.

Interviewer: … How long did she live with you?

028: About a year I guess. That was when we first came down to Winter Park, until my mom got situated and all that.

Interviewer: And what is your highest level of education?

028: I have five years of college.

Interviewer: What were you studying?

028: Well, I changed a lot. First sociology, then psychology, then philosophy and religion, then back to psychology.

Interviewer: And, let’s see, did you finish your diploma?

028: No. But I did make honors every single term. I’m just not very good at following programs!

Interviewer: Did you go straight from high school to college?

028: No.

Interviewer: What did you do in between?

028: Oh, in between! Well, I got kicked out of public high school half way through the junior year. And uh, then I went to an adult school and finished up, I had a lot to make up that year, but I managed it. And
then I just kind of bummed around for a little bit, you know, and then I went back to school. I don’t even remember how long it was. It was probably a better of four years before I went back to school.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember the reason that you decided you should go back to college? How you made that decision?

**028:** Well, school always bored me, up until, up until I went to that adult school and then I got interested and then I started doing good and once I got into, when I went to college, I just enjoyed learning. I’d be a professional student if I could get somebody to pay me.

**Interviewer:** What would you consider you main occupation, if that’s applicable. Like what have you worked in during your life?

**028:** I’ve done all, mostly physical work. Construction work, over the road trucking, um, let’s see, I’ve done… that’s pretty much it, that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** So tell me a little bit about your work history. When did you start working?

**028:** 13…. Well actually I had a summer job picking blueberries up in Michigan, but yeah, I started in construction at 13. After school, on weekends, and during the summer.

**Interviewer:** And then after that? How did it kind of go?

**028:** Well, about that time I was getting interested in other things. Drugs and music and all that kind of stuff, so…

**Interviewer:** Have there ever been times in your adult life that you’ve been unemployed?... How long have you been unemployed?

**028:** I’m unemployed right now. … Since December 15th, ’06. That’s the last time I worked. I couldn’t do it physically anymore because the pain was just too much. I’ve been pursuing disability and getting turned down, and turned down, and getting very frustrated ever since.

**Interviewer:** And how about before that? Any times that you were unemployed?

**028:** Yeah, but uh, I was unemployed legitimately… with a legitimate straight job, but I was doing other things to make money, so.

**Interviewer:** Are you currently married?

**028:** Nope.

**Interviewer:** Do you currently have a girlfriend?

**028:** I have a significant other, she’s not my girlfriend. She’s a very good friend, and we stay together.

**Interviewer:** How long have you been in this current… well, partnership or friendship?

**028:** Not that long. We knew each other previously, but since uh, since about the first of October.

**Interviewer:** Were you ever previously married?
028: Yes, I was.

Interviewer: And how long was that marriage?

028: Well, she and I lived together for about four years before we got married and then we got married and we were divorced within another year and a half.

Interviewer: Is that your only marriage?

028: Yes.

Interviewer: And what about other significant relationships? How long were those?... And what time in your life, how old were you?

028: I’ve had a few…. Ok, let’s see, Laura was probably the first real one that wasn’t puppy love, and that was about two years I guess, and that was about 16 or 17. And then there was Pam, the next one, and that was about 19 or 20, and, then there was Cindy. When was that? I’m going to say around 29 or 30, somewhere around there. And then there was my ex-wife and that was from about ’82 to ’87, somewhere around there. And then there was Sheryl, and that was kind of on again off again, but I was head over heels over her. But uh, that was a couple… about a year, a couple of years, on and off there. And that was 35, 38 maybe. Somewhere around there. And that’s about the most significant ones.

Interviewer: And what about children? Do you have any children?

028: Yes. I have uh, a son. July 9th he’ll be 21.

Interviewer: Is that from your marriage or another relationship?

028: From my marriage. Then I have two daughters, both of them, they are a month apart, they are, I guess they are about 16 now.

Interviewer: What relationship was that from?

028: Well, young ladies that were very close friends of mine that we had a working relationship with.

Interviewer: … Who do they live with? Like your son, did he live with you and your ex-wife?

028: Well, I had custody of him for a while but they took custody away from me because I was driving for UPS at the time and I was putting in tremendous hours and they used that against me. So I lost custody. The two girls I never, I’d been locked up for a year, and the one girl brought me the baby to see, and that’s the one that I seen that one. The other one I’ve never seen.

Interviewer:… How many times, if ever, were you in a juvenile institution?

028: By juvenile institution do you mean just arrested? Or arrested, convicted, and held in some kind of underage detention center?

Interviewer: Well, let’s answer both. How many times as a juvenile were you arrested?

028: … Uh, three.
Interviewer: And then how many times were you placed in a….

028: Never. I was threatened to, but…

Interviewer: And then how many times if ever, have you been in jail as an adult?

028: I don’t know. Quite a few.

Interviewer:… If you had to give a ball park number, what would you say?

028: Including overnight stays, and then months or years… oh my, at least 20.

Interviewer: Ok, well, I know you are saying you can’t remember exactly. But, for the ones you can remember, what were they for and how long did you stay?

028: Ok. All the ones up until about fifteen years ago were just overnight, you know, drunk and disorderly or public intoxication or just smarting off to a cop, you know, and they find something… hitchhiking, stuff like that. Let’s see, my mother passed away, I inherited a good chunk of money, I was already involved in drugs and then, I had the connections and so I was doing a lot of selling of cocaine and along, came with that, came a lot of girls. Hence, the working relationships that we had. Ok. So, let’s see, I was arrested for felony prostitution and possession of drugs and some other minor charges. That was in ’93, I believe.

Interviewer: And how long did you stay in jail?

028: Like I said, I had lots of money and stuff, so I got out. And during that year I was arrested five more times, 4 or 5 more times, From everything from, let’s see, I had another drug possession, I had an automatic weapons charge, I had… hell, I don’t even remember. The last one was violation of probation after about 10 or 14 months or so they caught up with me and they put me in jail. After that first court appearance they had lumped the two possession charges and all the prostitution charges together and we had a deal, two year probation withhold adjudication, and all that. But I couldn’t make that. I couldn’t make five minutes of that. So I went and did a year in Orange County.

Interviewer: So, one year in jail. How about prison?

028: I’ve never been to prison.

Interviewer: So your longest stay was a year?... And then, this might be… we can go with a ball park again. How many times do you think you’ve been arrested in your adult life?

028: (laughs) Well, that goes right along with uh, the question of … at least 20.

Interviewer: When you think of staying in jail, other than the over nights, is the one year the only significant time…

028: Five, six, seven, eight… about eight times….. Anything from 10 days, 2 weeks, up to the year… there’s been five and a half months, four and a half months, 44 days, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: ….. So let’s start with your recollection of you earliest memory, and maybe some significant events in your early childhood.
028: Well, I guess my first real memory, I can remember being given a bath in the kitchen sink. I guess that’s my earliest one. Let’s see, at about four years old, I guess, I was literally picked up and kicked, picked up and kicked, for about, oh I’d say, from here to the courthouse. About 150 yards.

Interviewer: By whom?

028: By a neighbor down the road who had a reputation for having a real hot temper. You know, being a little kid, and we’re playing by this hillside in the dirt and stuff and I saw a little wooden matchbox thing, and I picked it up. Well, this other little girl just all of a sudden went running down the street and told her daddy and the next thing I know I see this blur coming by and I see this blur coming by and I feel myself being picked up and kicked and kicked and kicked and then up the stairs and left at this door and the door slammed in my face. That was at about four or four and a half, something like that.

Interviewer: So this is an adult that did that?

028: Yes, an adult. Let’s see, other things. I can remember me and my buddy next door taking the kid’s bicycle and out of spite we were taking apart, I can remember the wrenches were as big as my arm. We were out there trying to disassemble this tricycle. You know.

Interviewer: whose tricycle was it?

028: Another kid that we were mad at…. I can remember the apple trees in Iowa and in the back yard, and the lagoon. And uh, I can remember when my dad took me and my brother fishing down there, my brother caught a little sun fish and I didn’t, I was real upset about that. And, let’s see, I can remember the setting, I can remember climbing trees… I think I was part monkey at the time, I could climb anything. Yeah, that’s about it.

Interviewer: Well tell me a little bit about how you felt about yourself or how you would have described yourself as a child? Before 10 years old, like when you were little, younger.

028: Well, my mother said I was a sweet child and complete opposition to my later self, you know. I don’t know, I thought I was just average back then. I didn’t have an awareness. I can remember not being invited to a party, a birthday party down the street, and feeling real bad and left out about that. And I think my mom went and bought me a little birthday hat or something for that. But yeah, other than that, you know, I had my friend Bobby and I don’t know how many friends you’re supposed to have at that age, but a couple, I guess.

Interviewer: And how were your relationships with your mother and your father, your siblings?

028: Oh, my brother and I… I can remember when my sister was born and back then the woman stayed in the hospital for a while and me and my brother and sister and I going and waving at my mother in the window holding the baby up. Let’s see, I don’t really remember way back then how my brother and I got along but later on my brother and I, I think we fought every day of our lives, until we were way up in age then. That time when we broke beer bottles in the middle of the street, that was the last time, I think we both figured this ain’t no good because somebody is going to get hurt.

Interviewer: How was your relationship with your mother when you were little?

028: Just fine when I was little. I turned into a rebellious… kind of ran wild in my teens.
Interviewer: And how about with your father when you were young?

028: I was scared of him.

Interviewer: Why?

028: Uh, well, he was pretty heavy handed with us, especially with me. He was raised real stern, and I know now because I’ve been through counseling and stuff, that it was real abuse, but then I thought that’s how everybody was treated, you know?

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time that you did something wrong? Not necessarily illegal, when you were little, but you know, the first time that you did something wrong?

028: I was apparently always doing something wrong! Oh, I couldn’t tell you that, but I can pick out a couple of incidents. I can remember when, I guess I was about 8, I used to collect newspapers to sell because I was in cub scouts and me and my buddies were down there and we played in them and messed the stacks all up and I got beat pretty good for that. I can remember back then 7 or 8 my brother and I used to have to take baths together, and I can remember, you know, we liked to fill the tub up and play in the water and dad coming in and holding me under the water until I thought I was going to die, you know, a few times, you know, for wasting water. And I can remember the time, about the same time, um, when I got out of the bathtub and I’m still naked and I went to the bedroom and my brother had fallen after I got out of the bathtub and dad went in, checked him, and came in and grabbed the belt that I grew up with and wore out. But uh, and then beat me for it, and then went and checked on him again and found out I didn’t do it, and he came back and he told me, “Well, you’re always doing something.”

Interviewer: What else were you involved in as a child? Did you go to church, a community center, anything like that?

028: Nah, I don’t ever remember going to church the first six years, and I don’t remember at our first house in Huntington downtown, I don’t remember that. When we lived up on the hill, in Huntington, the last few years, I remember they sent me one summer to bible school and I’d gotten a bible with my name on it, going to that. And then I remember us, down the street, some bible class I had to go to one time. And other than that, it’s really… well I know that my father was raised Lutheran and my mother Baptist, so they compromised on Methodist. Anytime we did go to church we went to a Methodist church. But pretty much the only times we went were like Easter.

Interviewer: So how was elementary school for you?

028: Let’s see, I went to kindergarten in Iowa. I don’t remember too much. I remember how it looked, but I don’t remember …and I remember the teacher’s name and I remember the name of the school. Then first grade, first grade, I remember is when we were living downtown and uh, I can remember I was real shy and I had to go to the bathroom. I waited and waited trying to hold it as long as I could. By the time I just couldn’t wait anymore, I went to the bathroom but I didn’t make it and I had an accident, and I remember hiding in the hall and they sent someone to find me and then sending me home and all that. The teacher came to talk to my mom about that. But I was real shy as a child. After that, let’s see, I started second grade at the same school, it was a Miller School in West Virginia, downtown. Then we moved up on the hill, so I changed schools, and apparently I was put in a class that was ahead of where… we didn’t have four second grade classes at the school I went to, we had one. Well apparently that class was behind where they put me in this class, which I guess was the number one class, so they took me out of that and put me in the average class, I guess. Ok. I remember that. I can remember the fourth grade, writing this nasty note about some girl that I probably had a crush on, so I was writing something nasty about her and
then somehow she got hold of it, took it to the teacher, and I was punished for that. I remember the teacher broke a ruler over me. Ok, then we moved, between fourth and fifth grade we moved to Holland, Michigan and I started there. That was kind of, you know, I was shy still… painfully shy, I couldn’t talk to a girl to save my life. I had no idea what to say to a female. So it was pretty much the guys, but moving up there, they were all calling me a hillbilly because I came from West Virginia at the time. And so I had to fight every day of fifth grade. I remember that, that wasn’t fun. My brother had some problems too. So pretty much I stayed away from school people until the next summer, and then I started hanging out with one guy, and he was kind of popular with the girls back then but he was also like and outcast kind of person then. And there was another person, a couple other people I hung out with, but they were kind of outcast people too. And, uh, not all… I didn’t hang with my kids in my neighborhood; I didn’t get along with those. So after, you know, we had this little group of people, my brother and myself, and Mike, and Dale, and all that, we always hung together all the time and we’d argue and fight with the kids in my neighborhood and stuff. So.

Interviewer: Would you say that during this time, this pre-teen time of your life, you had one good friend or a couple…

028: I had a couple of good friends. Yeah, about… from 6th grade, once I got into 7th and 8th, I still had those same good friends from the neighborhood, well, not my neighborhood, but that we hung around together. Well, Dale was in the neighborhood I guess. But I didn’t have any friends from school really. I remember meeting a Spanish kid, and we hung out a couple of times, but he was way downtown and everything and transportation being a problem, so we didn’t hang out that much.

Interviewer: Are there any times during these preteen years that you would say you did something delinquent, or wrong?

028: I would skip school a lot. Band practice was right after lunch, and EFL Junior High which is enormous compared to the high schools they have down here, even back then in the mid and late 60’s, we were allowed to go downtown to have lunch and we could walk downtown to hang out and do whatever we wanted. Well I ended up taking a two hour lunch every day.

Interviewer: Take me from this time to high school. How was life? What was going on with you?

028: Through that time? Ok. In band, when I started skipping and stuff, then I was falling behind on my, cause I’d been really good at band, but then I wasn’t paying attention, and wouldn’t practicing, so you know. I was getting in trouble with band and also I learned that I could get attention and laughs if I cut up and made smart remarks behind our papers and stuff like that. That’s when I first discovered that kind of thing and that kind of got me, you know, recognized with some of my peers. Not the ones my mother would probably want me to be recognized by, but you know, that was probably my first time that I was recognized for something, you know. It just happened that it wasn’t a positive thing. And let’s see, after that, ok, that was around that time is when we first started introduction to alcohol and that kind of thing. By 9th grade we were doing all kinds of drugs and stuff.

Interviewer: How did that happen? What was the first thing you did? Where? With who?

028: Ok, well, there was pot and there was pills like speed and barbiturates. I remember the first week of junior high, which was 7th, 8th, and 9th grade we had the police or the FBI or somebody come in and they had this big case set up with all these drugs and everything and everybody is standing around going , “Ok, that?” We’re looking at things, you know. That was the first time I’d seen any of these things. Once they showed them to me, then we were interested in them. They said “Don’t do these” but they made it sound kind of cool. We saw those movies, “Go ask Alice” and it was about that time that was when Art
Linkletter’s daughter flew out a window and Jefferson Airplane had White Rabbit and we saw all these things, commentaries, on TV and stuff like that, and the things going on out West and everything. By the time we moved over here, I was 13 and I was full blown in the rock and roll and drugs and everything else. In fact, the first time that we got here there was a festival in West Palm Beach. A July 4th Festival at the International Speed Ramp, and we arrived then, and I said, “Ok, this is where I live? Take me back out to the highway.” And I hitchhiked down to the festival, and that’s the first thing I did in Florida.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time you used drugs? How old you were and who you were with?

028: Uh, including alcohol?

Interviewer: Yeah, maybe both, let’s do alcohol first.

028: Alcohol would have been, well, tobacco would have been like 5th grade, alcohol would have been sixth grade, I think, it might have been 7th, probably the summer between there. Ok, who was I with? First cigarette I smoked I was with Syro. First alcohol…

Interviewer: Was that just like a friend of yours?

028: It was a guy that moved in down the street and we kind of hit it off and he was smoking and he introduced me to it. And then later, I got him into the Boy Scout troop I was in, and he was one of our patrol leaders, and we’d smoke cigarettes and drank and stuff. Good boy scouts!

Interviewer: …. How was your relationship with your parents and your siblings at this point in your life?

028: Uh, didn’t really pay much attention to my sister then, there were five years between us, you know. Uh, my brother and I we hung out a lot together but it was always with somebody else, a third person, you know, involved… or two. I got along ok with my brother, we still fought most every day you know, but we also still hung out and did things together. Um, my mom was mom, you know? We had arguments and stuff I was becoming a teenager then and starting to fill my oats and wanting to do what I want to do, and we had arguments. I wasn’t afraid of mom, I can remember hitting me with metal vacuum cleaner pipes, breaking brooms over me, stuff like that, but I was scared of my dad. But he wasn’t around a lot because, by this time, we were up in Michigan and they were sending him out on the road all the time to all these "CT" Corporation…. It’s a multinational corporation with their finger in hundreds of kinds of pies. They are sending him everywhere, he’s on the road 3, 4, 5 weeks at a time, so. But when he came home I could expect to get beatings and stuff like that, so, I was still afraid of him.

Interviewer: That lasted through these years too?

028: Yeah… but when he was around and stuff, Sunday was the day that me and my dad and brother would wrestle in the living room until somebody got hurt. Let’s see, my dad and I went skiing, I learned how to snow ski. I was first and then I taught him some stuff and then we used to go skiing together. That’s about the main things we did. He used to be a cub scout, a troop leader at one point, you know. He, the reason I didn’t quit band long before was because of his expectations and stuff and I was just afraid to go completely against him. But I wasn’t interested in it at this point.

Interviewer: And how would you have described yourself at this point? I know you said as a young child you were really shy, …

028: I was still shy at that point, but, I could make friends with guys. I still couldn’t talk to a girl.
Interviewer: How would you have described yourself?

028: I always felt odd. Like the odd man out, different from everybody else. Yeah. I always was self-conscious and everything and I never felt comfortable around people and stuff and I was always guarded around, you know, not revealing a lot about myself.

Interviewer: …. Take me from this time period; I know you said you were arrested a couple times in your youth, from that point to the first time you got arrested. What was going on in life?

028: Well, the first time I got arrested in Florida, was uh, I was hanging out on the streets already. Hanging out with older people, you know, I was 15, 16, but I’m hanging out with guys, 18, 21, 23, stuff like that. You know, we’re doing drugs, THC, acid, smoking pot, whatever. Anything that came around, we did it all, you know. Ok, I lost my train of thought…. So this group of people, we had this old rambler, that a friend of mine who was staying with these two elderly ladies. Now, he was friends with their grandson that lived with them, but he was in Vietnam, so the room was vacant. He was renting a room. Well, they had this ancient rambler, then after a while they would allow him to take it to get downtown under the guise of going to work or something like that. And so we would disconnect the odometer so it wouldn’t run up any miles and all that. We’d jump in that, pile in that, and go all over the place. Well we were, my buddy, was the valet at (a club), a topless bar kind of thing. He was underage but he had an I.D. Well, me and him were riding in the rambler and a bunch of guys were piled in the dune buggy, Denny’s dune buggy. And they were following us, and we were all drunk and we got pulled over going up to the topless bar. I was 15, yeah, 15. Um, I got out of the car and threw up all over the sheriff’s car’s hood. And that was the first time I had to call mom to come get me out of jail, and she did, in the middle of the night she drove all the way up to Sanford. That’s in Seminole county, right there, and we lived in Orange County. That was quite a thing. She came and got me. The second time I called her she said, “Well, you’re going to have to wait until a decent hour. I’m not coming down in the middle of the night.” So she came down the next morning. The third time, “Well, you got yourself in there, you get yourself out.”

Interviewer: Take me back to that first time. Do you remember how you felt about the situation?

028: I didn’t really care, you know. There was no big deal; I wasn’t scared about it or anything like that. Of course, I was pretty drunk too.

Interviewer: How about after that? Do you remember what the reactions were from your mom?

028: Oh, well, my mom, by this time I was doing what I… I’d take off for a couple of days and mom may not see me for two or three days, you know? I was doing whatever I pretty much wanted to. Didn’t have a dad around or anything, and you know, I’m into drugs and by this time… hey, I’m not condoning drugs or anything like that, but there are some things I got out of it that were good experiences. One of them was, that’s how I got rid of my shyness, and I could talk to girls after that. You know, so that was a plus thing. Now I’m interested in drugs, and girls, and rock and roll. You know? I’m doing all the sex, drugs, and rock and roll now. I didn’t really care that I got arrested. You know mom gave me the, she actually bailed my buddy out too and he came home and spent the night at the house. You know, she gave us the disappointment speech and all that. You know, in one ear and out the other. Doing the same thing the next night.

Interviewer: Reactions from your friends? They were doing the same things?

028: Yeah.
Interviewer: I know you said sometimes around this you had your first significant relationship, right?

028: Yeah, a year or so later… a year and a half or so later.

Interviewer: How are you doing in school through all of this?

028: Ok, let’s see. 9th grade I was starting to… I told you before the move in 7th and 8th grade, I was starting to get in, getting smart with teachers and that kind of thing. Cutting up and getting attention and stuff. By the time I got to ninth grade, I’m doing all kinds of things. I’m being a little bit slyer about it, not trying to get in trouble. But then, we did steal the keys to the bus and we were going to steal the bus one time, the school bus. Got suspended a couple of times for doing things, you know. Didn’t really skip too much back then, until 10th grade. 10th grade came along and I wasn’t interested in school at all at that point. And uh, about that time is when I got my first apartment and paid for that with amphetamines.

Interviewer: So you moved out of your mother’s house?

028: Not really. I had two places to go.

Interviewer: So you were dealing at the time?

028: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And how did that come about? Do you remember how you started doing it?

028: Sure! I liked drugs and I didn’t have a lot of money coming in but I knew if I bought 100 tabs of acid for $25 dollars and I’m selling them for 2$ a piece I’m making a good profit, and I’m doing it in one night, you know? And back then that was pretty good money in 1970, ’71. So that’s how I did it. I did it to pay for my own stuff. You know?

Interviewer: Was your mom aware that you had the second place?

028: No, she didn’t know about that. I didn’t know if she ever did or not. My older cousin came to it. We had this huge on-going party. The apartment didn’t last that long. We had this huge party that went on for a couple of weeks. People just floated through and out, I didn’t know half, most of the people you know. But it was wild! The police shut it down after a while. Let’s see…

Interviewer: Were your grades holding up?

028: Oh, my grades. Not good. And back then you needed 16 credits to graduate high school, public high school. And I only got three and a half. I needed four to get out of 10th grade; I only had three and a half. So I had to go to half a term of summer school to get another half, which I did. In 10th grade I got kicked out of school half way through. I argued with them and I did manage to get half a credit for typing, you know, so I had… I left high school, public high school, with four and a half credits. I hung out the rest of that year, and summer, dealing, and getting high and drunk, and doing hitchhiking around and all that kind of stuff. When I did come back to school I went to an adult school. By this time I was hooked up with Laura. And she was going to the adult school, so a bunch of us from that group went to the adult school.

Interviewer: Was that a decision you made on your own or was it…
028: Yeah. I couldn’t go back to public school and I did want to finish high school, get the paper, you know? I don’t know why nothing else really mattered to me, but I thought it was a good idea. But then, when I went out there, I had really good teachers and professors and I got interested in school, you know? And I did really well. The reason I got kicked out of public high school, well they suspected me of selling drugs and they suspected me of… I had a tremendous amount of absences, but they were all with excuses and stuff because we had all the passes that the school had and we would write them out and all that kind of stuff. But I was, me and another guy were writing and publishing an underground newspaper, this started out as a joke, but they reacted so outrageous to it that we had to keep on doing it.

Interviewer: What was it about?

028: Oh we called it “The Winter Park Liberation Front” and we did things like, well, back then at the festivals they did things that they called weather reports and they told you which drugs were good and which ones were bad and we did the same thing, you know, with the drugs around town. And then we did stupid stuff, like demanding the immediate resignation of H.B. who was the Orange County Schools superintendent. All these outrageous accusations, these crimes that we accused him of, this stuff that started off as a joke. And then, “Hey, they don’t like this” so we were going to keep doing it and we got into a lot of trouble for that.

Interviewer: So you went to the adult school in 10th grade or after 10th grade?

028: Half way thought. I took the rest of the 11th grade off and all that summer and I went back, I don’t know if it was the beginning of the actual school year or later on, it might have been later on.

Interviewer: And during the time that you went to the adult school were you still dealing and using drugs?

028: Sure. Lots.

Interviewer: When was the second time you got arrested?

028: Oh that was… God, these are so long ago. I can remember, I don’t know if it was the second time, but I can remember being locked up in the Winter Park City Jail and I was tripping and I remember sitting there watching the play of the lights on the bars and the shadows and hallucinating and all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Is this before you left public school or after do you think?

028: This was right around that time, … before, yeah. I was still a minor at the time.

Interviewer: You said you liked the adult school better, that you had good teachers,…

028: Yeah, yeah, I actually got into it and liked it. I turned into an excellent student. You know? In fact, that’s how I, I still managed to graduate high school after only having four and a half credits for the first two years. The adult school you needed 20 credits to graduate, and 4 of those would be a shop class that you had to take 4 hours of shop every day. Ok, I got that. But also, back then they had… you could CLEP a class, you could take the final for the class and if you passed that, you could pass, you get credit for taking the course. Well I took every CLEP test they had and scored 100% on every one of them except for the math test which was actually three different tests and I had two 100 and a 98. I think I took 6 or 7 CLEP tests, I took every one they had. That’s how I graduated high school on time.
Interviewer: Were you living at home or was this a school that you stayed at?

028: No, I was living at home. Back and forth between places, home mostly, yeah. I mean I still had clothes at home and I’d still come home and … and, honestly, I was only home maybe half the week.

Interviewer: So tell me what was going on in between the time that you remember being in jail, when you said that you were tripping, to maybe the third time that you were arrested. What else were you up to? What significant memories do you have from that time period?

028: I’m going to lots of concerts, uh, hanging out with… we were pretty much what they called back then “freaks” or “hivies” back then, you know, and we were all into that thing, you know? We would hitchhike around, we did drugs, and drank, and pretty much hung out in the park. Did that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: What happened that led to that third arrest in your youth?

028: I don’t even, to be honest with you, I don’t even remember. I can remember the first one and what probably was the second one. I can remember getting disorderly intoxication and stuff like that, but I really, that whole area through there is kind of a blur. I didn’t attach a lot of significance to them at the time, you know?

Interviewer: Probably drug related?

028: Yeah, or alcohol related.

Interviewer: So you graduated the adult school, right? And tell me what happened. What did you do in your life then?

028: Yeah… well, I continued to do what we’ve been doing, you know. Hitchhiking around the country, going to concerts, that kind of thing. Selling drugs and partying all the time. Pretty much a pretty free lifestyle, you know.

Interviewer: Any work at the time?

028: Eh, I might work every once in a while. My uncle had a construction company so I might go and ask him if he can use me and I might work for a few days or a week or something like that. Pretty much though I wasn’t interested in working because I could make plenty of money selling pot or acid, THC, whatever.

Interviewer: You were making enough to support your lifestyle?…. And I know you told me you went from shy to a little bit more outgoing… now as a young adult, how would you have described yourself and how did you feel about yourself at that point?

028: Yeah… I started to realize, and I don’t know how to say this without sounding conceited or something, I started to realize that I might be a little smarter than a lot of the people that I hung around with. A lot of people, as a matter of fact. I found out that I do have a very high IQ. I use to play chess a lot. In fact, when I went to the adult school I joined the chess club there, I beat their best guy in this like three and a half hour match, so, I didn’t bother to ever go back to the chest club, you know? But we played chess all the time, in fact, the drug hangout on the north side of town and the drug hangout down here, we’d have chess contests between us, you know. But we’d all the high and playing chess. I remember Nick and l, we’d play chess all night long while we were tripping, we had this big chess board with big pieces like this and we’d play chess all night while we were tripping and stuff. I liked to hang out
at his house because he had a, what was a music conservatory room, but it was this huge high ceilinged
room on this old mansion on Lake Sue. His mom was real cool and all that and our curfew was like, “If
you guys can’t be in by dawn, wait for a decent hour to come in.” So, we pretty much did what we wanted
whenever we wanted.

(END TAPE 1 of 3)
(Respondent needs to take a break, comes back and continues to tell his life narrative while
researcher is setting the recording device back on)

Interviewer: Ok, so we’re going to backtrack a little bit. Is that ok with you? … I know you had left high
school…... At some point you had told me you had met your girlfriend Pam, right? …. Let’s talk again
about Pam and your decision to go into college.

028: I kind of met Pam, or she kind of had designs and wanted to meet me, so she was coming down
hanging out where we hung out. There was a core of us that hung around at the park and at a certain
apartment and all that. She was coming down to hang out and wanted to meet me. We started dating;
we’re still getting high and all that at this point. After a while though we started, I don’t know what
happened, but we just started doing less drugs at the time. We were still going out to bars all the time and
drinking. And, uh, we both went to school. I don’t know, maybe that’s what first, you know… I liked
school like I did real well when I went to the adult school and I liked it. And I wanted to go back and I
guess she was the deciding motivation, you know.

Interviewer: So you entered college and I know you said you were doing really well, right? During this
time period you were going to school and you eased up on drugs and you weren’t dealing at the time?
You had started working at the UPS?

028: Well, yeah, but I was doing a little dealing now and then, you know. If people would ask me to get
them something, I had the connections, I could do it. Especially guys at work, you know, older guys and
stuff you know, they would ask me.

Interviewer: …. Take me to the point where you stopped going for a little bit. Tell me what was going on
with you at this point in your life.

028: Ok, ugh. Pam and I drifted apart after a year and a half or two years, whatever. And we separated; I
will still going to school but uh… I don’t remember now, but uh, after about two and a half years I
stopped going to school. I was back into drugs at that time. Back into dealing again. I kept that job at UPS
part time, you know, it was few hours and good money. I was also doing other kinds of jobs and during
that period I had also started my own business too. And uh, …

Interviewer: What were you doing for your own business?

028: I had a janitorial service. Because one of my many part time jobs, one time I had like five part time
jobs, and uh, including the UPS. I was casual part time laborer at the Orlando Stadium, Tangerine Bowl,
Tinker Field. And I started out parking cars for the Minnesota spring training that use to take place down
there. And then at the concerts, you know, I was doing security work at the concerts. And since I had
inside connections there, I was always stage security and backstage and through that I got onto the staff at
the T-bowl for all the major events and everything. Then I realized, “Well, hey, the T-shirt, the security
people were already taken but what about those restrooms?” Cause we were cleaning it ourselves. So I
just wrote up a proposal to a city official and went in and talked to them and I got the contract to take care
of all the major events in the city and it just started from there. And then I got some small offices and all
that kind of stuff.
Interviewer: So you were out of college while you had your small business?... So what inspired you to go back in?

028: Oh, like I said, I got into a drug program that I was trying to manipulate myself into and out of but it didn’t work out exactly like I planned. Instead of six months it ended up being a year and a half and that got me involved with vocational rehab and I got back into school through them.

Interviewer: … Go ahead and tell me again what you were picked up for and why you were in front of a judge, how this this come about?

028: I think that was a drunk and disorderly, and I said, you know, I didn’t but I played it off like, “Hey I got a little bit of a problem.” I was thinking a couple of classes and I’d be out of there, but, he told me six months and the condition of completing this drug program.

Interviewer: So tell me about the first time you were arrested as an adult?

028: …Other than the overnight stuff, well, that would have been the time with the high speed chase… well, we’d gone down to Eatonville to buy booze at 2:30 or 3 in the morning, cause you could do that there and I knew a girl that lived in an apartment complex not far from there so we went looking for her but I couldn’t find the apartment. The guy that was with me, his name happened to be Jay also. We were riding in my old Doxen… he started talking to this girl he said, and her husband or something came out and they had some words and he threatened him and he said that he’s not really afraid of you, a black belt, and the guy said, I’ve got something for that and went in and came out with a pistol. So there was a bottle thrown so we could make them hesitate because they were trying to block us off with a car. And we got away, and there was a high speed chase, which I totaled out my car into a car lot… did damage to a lot of other vehicles. And, I had a lot of pot and seeds in the glove compartment. It ended up, I couldn’t, I got sentenced to ten days because I lost a court battle. I was upset about that because the guy had shot at us, threatened us with a gun and shot at us, and because he didn’t hit my vehicle, I couldn’t… I couldn’t prove that he shot at us. I had asked that they test his hand for residue and they looked at me like I was crazy. So I had no proof and I lost. I did ten days, that was the first time I was in jail other than overnight.

Interviewer: How did you feel about this circumstance?

028: I was angry. The injustice of it, I got screwed.

Interviewer: A little bit later, the second significant time you were in front of a judge, ….. you said you were trying to, you said manipulate, so I’ll use your words, manipulate so you would get a different sentence. And you got this drug treatment. Tell me again a little bit about what you thought about the drug treatment?

Interviewer: Oh, I liked it. In fact I looked forward to going down to my counseling sessions and the group sessions because, you know, at this point I don’t have any inhibitions or anything. I can cut up and all this and they liked me because I wasn’t the typical person they had down there that has to be there. I wasn’t real resentful and antagonistic or anything. They knew they had to keep an eye on me, but the director of the place at this time told me that I was wise to their treatment methods and they had to keep an eye on me. I mean I studied sociology and psychology at this point and uh, I even did the chairing of group therapy a couple of times. That’s cool. I enjoyed it; it was like fun for me, going there and cutting up and everything. I did it; I didn’t cut up in a way that was upsetting to them. It was more I’d cut up to get them laughing and stuff like that. So they liked me but they knew I was playing games with them too.
They were wise to that. But yeah, I liked it. It just drug out for a year and a half instead of a six month thing. Once they had me, they weren’t letting me go!

**Interviewer:** And you said that they paid for you to go back to school?

**028:** They got me involved with vocational rehab and they were paying me to go to school, which was great, I loved that.

**Interviewer:** How did that second round of school go?

**028:** Just like the first. For another two and a half years, you know, I kept the same GPA and, you know, at the very end… I think my GPA is still something like 3.44 or something like that.

**Interviewer:** Why did you stop attending?

**028:** I was estranged from my wife. We were getting separated and probably getting divorced and a lot of crazy stuff was going on. She had left and then she came and wanted to try to work things out and I moved in with her and she was doing a lot of drugs behind my back and at this point I’m pretty, - I’m straight. I’m not doing drugs anymore but she still is and it’s insane and you know, she called the sheriff to come throw me out because it’s “her apartment now.” She did that and I couldn’t take any of my stuff, you know. I even had a photography class, but I couldn’t take my camera I couldn’t take anything other than my toothbrush and my clothes. Everything else I had to get in civil court, so, I pretty much had to leave school right then because all my stuff was there.

**Interviewer:** Let’s talk about meeting your wife and your relationship – how that was before you got married. Let’s go back to that point.

**028:** … I had met her years before, we didn’t like each other. My cousin that was a friend of hers had me go pick her up at the topless bar where she was working, but I wouldn’t come unless she promised me gas money and beer, which I got, so I went and got her. You know, blew her off after I took her where she was going. Our paths crossed here and there because, you know, we had a lot of friends in common and stuff. Later on, I’m selling cocaine again, she’s dancing at a different place, and she’s coming by after work with all this cash buying cocaine from me and hanging around doing it. And then I’m probably giving her some too, because it’s the middle of the night and I’m doing cocaine and it’s a female here, you know. Next thing I know her clothes are in my closet, we’re living together, you know, and it was fine and great for I guess a year, year and a half. And then things, you know, started, started to fight. We had good times and bad times, it was kind of pretty dysfunctional. Then she got pregnant. I was working at UPS and if I married her they would pay for everything. She was also a high risk pregnancy so it was even more expensive than it would have been. But they paid for everything, doctors, hospitals, the whole bit. So that’s the reason I married her, which was a big mistake.

**Interviewer:** And then how long did the marriage actually last at that point?

**028:** Another year, year and a half after we got married.

**Interviewer:** And then you guys had your son?... So tell me about the situation, after, when you were getting divorced, what happened then?

**028:** Yes, we did. ….. Well, she was, loony toons. She was doing lots of drugs and smoking crack and doing other things too and, and she was just off the deep end and getting worse. And I was still straight at the time, and we’re not hanging together at all because we’re not seeing eye to eye on anything now. Her
parents noticed that I’m the stable one and I’m doing all the things that I’m supposed to. They actually spoke up to the guardian at litem and recommended me over their own daughter to have custody of the child. Guardian at litem monitored me for everything I did for six months, and then I was awarded custody. Later on, because … she’s a Jewish grandmother and they are the way they are and her in particular, would always end up flip flopping on Laurie after a little period of time of being mad at her. Then that’s what happened. I was working tremendous amount of hours, it’s full time now, they used that against me and again, I felt unjustly, you know, screwed.

Interviewer: You lost custody of your son to the grandparents?

028: Right. About this time my mother passed away and I was left a significant amount of money. I kind of remember even saying it, “You want to see outlaw? I’ll show you and outlaw or bad guy!” And I got involved heavily with trafficking and cocaine and prostitution, running girls, all that kind of stuff. For a couple of years there I was doing really… hundreds of thousands of dollars, money, in dealing and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Before you decided to I guess change your life, I don’t know how else to put it, you were saying that you were seeing your son pretty regularly at the time?

028: Yeah, until things started changing on me and every time I’d come see my son, he’s not available. You know? I’m supposed to pick him up at ten o’clock Saturday morning, I get there, he’s not there, he’s out with his aunt, this and that, and this kept happening over and over. I’m feeling like I’m being brushed under the carpet and pushed away. Finally got tired of it, you know? I’ve always been the type of person, you know, I don’t care what I have to do, you know, how it’s going to hurt me if I feel like I’m standing on my principles, and I’m right, I’m going to suffer anything for my cause. Which is why I quit UPS and thrown… you’re not going to get another dime from me, and I don’t think you can find me. But you’ll have to to get anything. And so, then I was doing all that for a couple years until I got arrested. I got arrested a bunch of times that last year there, like five or six times. The sixth time was for violation of probation. I’d been arrested a couple of times…

Interviewer: What was the original charge that you were on probation for in the first place?

028: Oh, that was for the felony prostitution charges and the possession charges.

Interviewer: So is this the same time that you served your year?....

028: Well, I was put on probation. But being cocky and big headed, you know, I had a female judge, a female prosecuting attorney, and they gave me a female probation officer that I never saw anyways. I went to report and hung out, but since they were out in the car doing my drugs while I’m waiting for them, I didn’t even make five minutes of my probation before I was getting high.

Interviewer: You were using on your way in, is that what you’re saying?

028: Using on the way to court and I was in court for a couple of hours, and they are out there doing my drugs while I’m waiting for them, I didn’t even make five minutes of my probation before I was getting high.

Interviewer: Your officer was?

028: No, no, no, my friends! I had a driver at that point because I couldn’t drive, I very rarely drove. I had somebody who would drive me around, and of course there were a couple of girls in the car and they are all getting high at my expense while I’m in court…. Ok, I had two different possession charges from two
different arrests. I had the felony prostitution charges, so, I was given a sentence of two years’ probation and withhold adjudication upon completion of doing that satisfactorily. Like I say I may… from the time I left the court room until I got into my car, I broke my probation. However, I did go to the probation officer to check in but they kept me waiting for about 45 min or 1 hour, and my big head, ‘I’m too important for this. I’ll just come back some other time!” And I left and never did come back. Until, uh, about a year later they caught up with me. By that time I had been arrested for everything from, you know, uh, automatic weapons, and cookies, and all kinds of things, you know? So uh, violated the probation so they gave me 11 months on the felony prostitution, we cut a deal it was originally three felony prostitution charges and a felony possession, and a bunch of minor charges. Then there was a separate arrest with, uh, possession charge, so, I had like six felonies but with the plea bargain I’m down to 2 felonies and a misdemeanor charge. So, they gave me 11 months on each of those and on the first felony prostitution and possession and 11 months for the second one. They were running concurrently, but overlapping. They didn’t start at the same time, so that’s how I ended up doing a year in Orange County. After that I was shipped up to Seminole county because they wanted my presence there also for something, uh, couple more… two or three weeks to do up there to satisfy them.

Interviewer: Tell me, I’d like to talk a little bit about that jail experience, but first,… two things we’ve missed, first of all… tell me about the time that you were in the bounty hunting business. You had talked about it before the tape cut-off, so please tell me again.

028: Oh that started out, I met Joey R., he was a friend from back in the Miami days, with my ex-wife and them. They’d known each other for years. He came to visit in my apartment when she was living with me. We hit it off. We had a common interest in firearms and stuff and uh, we hit it off. Then me and Laurie kind of broke up for a little spat of time but he showed up at my house, needed a place to stay, I took him in and uh, and then he came over, he needed some help he had a license to bounty hunt and I had a familiarity with firearms and was kind of big and in shape because I used to do martial arts too and had done a lot of fighting and stuff before. So he used to take me with him whenever he needed help.

Interviewer: So are you really a black belt?

028: No.

Interviewer: Ok. I thought you were saying that was just something your friend said…

028: You know, I have a lot of experience in martial arts. I’ve done tai-kwon-do and various forms of karate, I could have a black belt, but just like school, those things didn’t really mean anything to me. It’s just a skill I wanted to have, knowledge.

Interviewer: …. So he would call you up to help with a job sometimes?

028: And I loved it because I’m kind of an adrenaline junky. Into racing motorcycles and I used to do that. Jumping out of planes, you know, firearms and danger, that’s right up my alley. Kick in a door and look for, go get somebody, great stuff!

Interviewer: How long did you do that with him?

028: About a year.

Interviewer: The other thing I wanted to ask you, you were dealing, and we got a little into that, um your drug use and things like that. But you mentioned prostitution, the felony prostitution charge – describe that a little bit to me. How did you get into it?
028: Ok, well, anytime you’re in, well, I guess that goes along with… in the drug world, cause the way the girls tell me the way they get into it is that guys are always propositioning girls and I guess the ones that are kind of wild, you know, go for that. Quickies? Need money? Why not. You know? Later on when you become involved in expensive kind of drugs, that stuff doesn’t really go on for pot, acid, and stuff like that – but, cocaine, and heroin, and narcotics and stuff, there is a lot of that involved. Since I’m running around, spending, in that time I spent $1,000 out of my pocket every single day because I was making bookoo money and I had all that money that I had inherited, I’m spending all that money a day and I’m doing about $400 wholesale of cocaine myself a day and giving away $400 worth of cocaine to the entourage for those couple of years I stayed at motels. I had two rules, never put the room in my name and never stay longer than two days in the same room. Both times I broke my own rules is when I got arrested. So, but, ok when you’re running around doing all this – you have money, you have drugs, you know, what appears to be to people that are using, an unlimited supply of both, you become very popular. I had to always have two motel rooms so I could have some semi privacy, you know, “Everybody get the hell out and go to the other room!” You know. But there was always girls around and pretty soon they started coming to me with their problems and asking me to do favors for them, and I would do it because I liked the attention, I liked the girls, ok. So word started getting out that not only was I a good dealer with the best dope and all that, and a fun guy, I’m a pretty nice guy and can handle some problems for them occasionally. Ok, I would do that, and pretty soon the girls and just hanging out with me and now I’m thinking, well, you know, it kind of goes hand in hand. Alright, “you girls, I won’t give you all this stuff”… I didn’t, at first I might have done it a little differently, later on when I got here I did it like that, you know these girls are staying around, they are going out and making money, they are coming back to the room, they are spending the money, you know? So it’s like one hand… it’s like a hand and glove relationship you know. So pretty much they would just run with me from motel to motel and they would do their thing and they were bringing a lot of money and when they would “entertain” I always had an extra room. They would “entertain” people, have a guy come in there, spend 5, 6, $800 dollars in a night or something. I’m getting all that money.

Interviewer: In exchange they are getting drugs and a room, right?

028: Well, they are spending his money and helping him do it all up as quickly as possible, and then I’m taking care of them on the side, and you know, after all his money is gone he has to hit the road, you know, they got money, I’ve gotten all this guy’s money. The money that they got, I end up with that too. You know?

Interviewer: And you said before that you were considering turning it into an official escort business, right?

028: Yeah, my lawyer at the time, did the… I had the same lawyer as a guy with a Columbian individual that I use to work with… get cocaine from. Also Walter had 11 escort services, the three of us had the same lawyer, and he sat down with me one night and explained the whole business. Cause he did all the legal work for that guy, for Walter, with the escort services. And his wife, who was divorced from him, was the brains behind the business. She was a friend of mine. So my lawyer sat down with me and explained how to do everything, set up a three tier corporate system up with the middle one being offshore, how to lose the money so it never comes up against me, and how to do the phones with the roll overs and all that. So you know I was going legitimate with it. Walter became a multi-millionaire doing this, so, so that’s what the plan was. Ok? About that time when I got arrested, Uriel got arrested because, well, Uriel told Joey one time that he had the power of life and death.

Interviewer: I’m sorry, who is this guy?
028: Uriel was the Columbian guy. He told Joey, the guy that I bounty hunted with and did drugs with and we worked for Uriel together, we would drive… pick up a car in say Orlando, or Jacksonville, or Tampa and it would be full of money. And we’d drive it, with dealer plates on it, down to Miami. Pull in through the garage, the door would come down, and we would get out of that car and get into another car. That car is loaded with, the door panels, the trunk, everything, has got cocaine in it. There’s Columbian guys on catwalks in this big garage and stuff, they got oozies, machine guns, and everything. So we started doing that. It would take like a day, and we’d get back, and they would hand us an envelope with $5,000 cash in it. So we’d do that once or twice a month, me and Joey. That went, that went, got me in entrusted with the Columbian guy and I had, that’s when I got all that money inherited too, so I … I had credibility with him, I had plenty of money, I could buy it, if I didn’t have the money on me I could get it credited, no problem, whatever I wanted. So that’s how I was getting all this cocaine and everything, and that’s how everything just snowballed… I was making bookoo money, hand over fist.

Interviewer: So this eventually leads to the arrest, tell me how you felt about that jail sentence.

028: Well, I knew that I belonged there. I was upset with myself for ruining that cake probation thing, but, you know, “eh.” I got bookoo money, you know, that’s not going to be a problem anyways. But then I spent so much money that year on bailing my… I had a bondsman on call that I didn’t even need money for, I had thousands and thousands of dollars in my lawyer’s safe that I could go and access, so, I didn’t even need cash to get out of jail. But I always bonded out my driver, and I always bonded out, I had a warlocks… or a motorcycle club, wear colors, and they use to work for me doing security work, that kind of thing, somebody was always with me to protect my back when I was doing this. So I would always bail this person out. It was usually Chemo, you know, a warlock, one of the original warlocks. That money went… I think the first time I bonded out of jail, it was about $50,000 of money I had to spend that I wasn’t getting back.

Interviewer: So how was your life in jail? What happened in there?

028: I don’t know, well, other than the one time, unjustly again, went to the lockdown, and then I was protecting another guy when I got jumped on by three guy’s and they beat me up really bad and left me in a pool of blood, and the guy that I was standing up for sat there and ate his lunch. Little guy, I guess I can’t blame him. So I went to the infirmary where, uh, had words with a CO because he was being real obnoxious and insulting and I’m not the type of person to take that, so I went back to lockdown. But other than that, everywhere I went I was kind of a celebrity in jail because I was known far and wide around orange and Seminole county and lots of different drug area and lots of dealers knew me and lots of customers knew me. Everywhere I went people knew me. I got favors and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Were you still using in jail?

028: In jail? I think I got high once or twice, in jail. Not too much.

Interviewer: So tell me about life afterwards. What happened when you got released?

028: Oh, they had shipped me from Orange county to Seminole county, I finished that little bit they wanted and…. Another charge that I had blown off, I don’t even remember what it was… but I went there, I left there and walked, because I couldn’t get anyone on the phone. I mean, after a little over a year, you know, phone numbers change and I couldn’t get anybody. So I walked to the nearest house I knew. It was a good little walk but I got there and I said, “Well, I ain’t got no money, but I want to get high.” He said, “I’ll take you out and get you high.” And that’s what we did. The first night I got out, in a couple of hours after I got out, I got high. Then I, oh, Sheryl and I had split up. This was the last really significant relationship.
Interviewer: Had you been with her before you went to jail?

028: Yeah, but we had split up and we had gotten back the night that she got arrested, and was coming back. She was a call girl, beautiful girl. And she got arrested that night with $900 coming over. We were going to party and get back together again. She never made it, and then she got arrested and I would send her… I took care of all her checks and stuff that she had written, hanging paper all over two counties. So I paid all that stuff off for her and all that. But by then, I was doing what I got arrested, … so she went off to prison, she got into work release. I got, she called me from work release, then I got arrested, locked up. When I got out, fixing to get out, I called her out. The first thing I did was break up with her, when I got arrested because I didn’t want to think about a girl while I was, you know, “what’s going on?” Ugh, break up. I did that. But then when I got out I called her up and she told me she had, was HIV positive. I guess it was kind of a god send or something that we didn’t hook up then because during that three months that we had broke up and she was doing escort service and all that, she acquired this… this HIV. Which, luckily, I didn’t acquire by the skin of my teeth. So she told me she had that and I was kind of thunder struck for… she says, “Are you there?”, talking to her from the phone in jail, I go, “Yeah, wasn’t expecting to hear that, you know?” Well she was in a relationship with a girl at that time and she was bi, anyways, that didn’t bother me. I was use to that kind of thing, cause when you’re hanging out with prostitutes you can have anything you want, you know? And a lot of them are bi-sexual, dancers, and all that, you know? So I was used to having all that kind of stuff, and when Sheryl and I were together she shared that kind of stuff with me. It wasn’t a problem, so I felt like a hypocrite, I can’t say anything, it worked against me, you know? But then she broke up with that girl and came back to me, you know. That’s how I got to Gainesville. She had family up here after we both were out, hooked up together, we came up here to be close to her family.

Interviewer: When you say you were talking to her from jail, is this a sentence outside of that one year or during that one year sentence?

028: That was that one year sentence.

Interviewer: So you guys moved down here together, to Gainesville?

028: Up here, yeah. That’s what brought me to Gainesville.

Interviewer: How long ago was that?

028: Middle of October, ’96…. And then, after being here… that’s when I stayed in St. Francis and she was staying at her sister’s house. I stayed in St Francis for four months, you know. And being a single guy, you know, because I was a good talker I could play their game and tell them what they wanted to hear. I knew what they wanted to hear before they asked me, you know! Ok, I hold the record except for some lady with a lot of kids at that time for staying at St. Francis. Four months before they kicked me out! At the 11th and a half hour I finally got a job and I moved to the north side of town.

Interviewer: What kind of work were you doing?

028: I started with North American and was on the docks and worked locally for, eh, about a year. Then I started going over the road. All this time I’m still getting high and stuff like that, you know. And Sheryl and I broke up then, but I had a job and all that, so I stayed here and I got a place.

Interviewer: You weren’t dealing?
028: Eh, just very minor. I didn’t have any connections here or anything, so, it was just street level dealing, middle man, stuff like that. If somebody came over, I’d make a call and get them something, I’d skim some off, some money or some dope. It was very small time. Nothing like I used to do.

Interviewer: So then you got your job and you have a place….

028: Yeah, and then I started going over the roads. I didn’t like Gainesville, but I was going places, you know, all over the country and seeing things and I loved that, you know, I loved that. I used to hitchhike all over the country when I was a kid, for free, when I found out they’ll pay me to do this, that’s great. And they used to say, “Jay doesn’t care where he goes as long as he hasn’t been there before.” It was great, I loved that.

Interviewer: So how long were you working with that?

028: I did that for six and a half years, over the road. Then uh, I didn’t have a driver’s license, I lost my driver’s license, so any driving I did, I would partner up with a guy that had a license, and I would usually take care of the loads and I would help drive, you know? Between check stations and stuff like that, I would drive. But, uh, I was doing great then until I left there, and I needed a job and the guy I use to live across the street in this old trailer park, you know, I getting him high and selling him drugs all the time, every Friday, and he got me a job where he worked at quality glass and mirror. And I did glass work and mirror work for about three years until I told them, I told them I had to have more money and insurance like everybody else that worked there because I’m running jobs for you and I know more than the people that have been here for fifteen years because I… Sammy couldn’t work with the guy that had been there for fifteen years cause he was an idiot and didn’t know anything. And the first day I worked there, by lunch time I was doing more than him, you know! I’m running jobs for them and the next day they fired me after I told them that because it was a “family” nepotism kind of business. The grandmother and the sister didn’t like me at all, I didn’t get along with them, I didn’t, you know. I wasn’t rude or anything, you know, I just wasn’t afraid of them, you know? They didn’t like me at all.

Interviewer: And were you and Sheryl still together?

028: No, we broke up shortly after we got here. And I was into drugs. Spending all the money I could get on drugs and drinking and then, that’s when I left Quality Glass. And I kind of, well, I was hanging out with prostitutes again and they were coming by my house, hanging out, and I was doing things to help them out. Taking them in for a while and stuff, maybe if they need some place to take a date, they’d rent a room or something, stuff like that. So it started again, you know? Then I got a chunk of money from uh, unemployment after they fired me when I asked for the same thing everybody else got, they fired me and I got this unemployment money. So I started dealing again. I had all these girls hanging out, and working out of my place. It went great again, I was off and running. You know, I wasn’t on the level where I was down in Orlando making, handling big volumes of money. But I’m still doing a couple thousand dollars a day now, not near what I used to, but, you know, I started to build it up, I was doing great. I was staying high for a week at a time, you know, and got money and dope, you know, and then I got arrested.

Interviewer: What were you arrested for?

028: I was pulled over at the Quality Inn. I was driving because the girl I was with was so drunk I had to get in and drive for her. I had rented a vehicle for this guy that I had put in a motel room, so I could have his car for the night. An officer stopped me, but he had made an illegal stop. I stayed in jail for five and a half months, but I spent all my time that I could get there in the law library. I ended up firing my lawyer, when they finally brought me down there and they told me… after I had done all this research, I had 350
cases, 75 of which were the exact same circumstances, and I told them, “I’m not.” They had two possession charges for some narcotics and I had a bottle of crack all cut up, and it was like 2. Or 3.7 grams of crack… and a bottle of Percocet. So I had those two charges and I had the girl that dropped her stem that’s loaded with crack and it’s on the floor, they gave me that charge. Her beer is on the, in the little dash thing, they gave me that charge. They gave me a charge for driving with no license, and I ended up doing all my homework and I knew they had nothing because it was an illegal, what’s called a Terry stop; it was an illegal Terry stop. So the state, the public attorney, they gave me came and said, “Oh I got you a good deal. You can go home tonight.” This is after 5 and a half months. You know they like to hold you for a long time and then offer you a deal, and most everybody jumps on that. I’m not going to go for that, especially after six months, 180 days is all they got to bring me to trial on that. And when we went in front of the judge I fired him and said, “I want to represent myself because he’s an idiot.” So, then the… I said, “No, I’m not going to take his deal of pleading out to one cocaine charge and I could go home, I’m not interested in that.” I said, “I got a counter charge for you. I’ll plead out to misdemeanor driving with a suspended license and you throw everything else out and we can call this quits.” They laughed and put me back in the holding cell, they brought me back a second time, they hadn’t brought anybody back a second time. After they let me stew for an hour and a half, you know, they brought me back and asked me if I was willing to take the deal. Well now I said, “No, I’m ready to go to court.” And he started, “Well, we’re going to get DOC time for habitual driving upgraded to habitual.” I said, “No, you can’t do that because you need three of those in a five year period of time, and I have three but I have three in like a 25 year period of time, so you’re not going to get that either.” They took me out and brought me back after another hour and a half, two hours, stewing up there for the third time and I was very sure of myself. They asked me again if I’d take the deal and I said, “No. I’ve offered my deal.” And the state’s attorney started hollering, he got all blood red in the face and his veins poking out and he got real mad, raised his voice at the judge, and then he slammed his stuff down and sat down. His assistant sat down and asked, “This time we’ll accept Mr. S’s offer.” And the judge asked him, “How long does misdemeanor driving with a suspended license carry?” They said 60 days. So, they had to let me go, you know. That’s the first time I beat all that charges, that time. The second time I did the same thing when they picked me up for drugs again, possession again. I was dealing again and this time running girls, this time on the other side of town. I actually had, I helped a friend of mine get a house cause he was getting really screwed, his mother was being screwed by his brother who had power of attorney and had been stealing her money for 13 years. That irritated me, so I got involved and got his power of attorney revoked, got his mother to, I read the will and said, “He stole all this money, you bought the house next door for him, but the will says that, you know, he’s only going to get less than half this house and Robert is going to get the rest of it.” So we went down, we did a quit claim deed, and got Bruce the house. Well, that was the right thing I did but I did make one little mistake on that. Instead of getting Bruce co… I got the court, a lady that’s connected to the court, that monitors and looks after elderly people, you know, because I knew Bruce didn’t have the smarts to run… to take care of his mother and all that and all this. So, instead of having him co-power of attorney, or not power of attorney, but control over it. Instead of Bruce having co control with them, I made that mistake and then that turned into a nightmare. And then Bruce, like I say, he’s not a rocket scientist, but he use to have a great heart and he was my buddy. I did that for him but then, he’s an alcoholic, and he wasn’t drinking but he started drinking with one of my customers. This guy got him drinking and the guy was smart and he started getting him drunk and started talking, “You don’t need Jay, you don’t need Jay.” I’m paying Bruce $100’s of dollars a day in crack, getting him to drive, I’m paying all the bills. You know? I’ve got three or four girls living in the same room with me, in this house, Bruce’s mother is in a home by now. So I’ve got all these girls here, I’m paying for everybody’s cigarettes, food, gas, everything, everything. But, I’m making boookoo money again with the girls and the dope I’m slinging all over town. I got arrested again. I knew…

**Interviewer:** This was possession again?
028: This is possession. I had been over at this house where a lot of drugs were done. A very pretty young lady over there, and I had run out and I went back out…. I was standing there with the ashtray, cut dope in my pocket, and I had a cookie… about an ounce of cookie on the seat underneath a shirt, and all the windows rolled down. Bruce was in jail now and I’m driving. Well, this cop pulled me over. I took off running, I tried to be sly and talk my way out of it, but when that didn’t work I took off running. I turned the corner and by that time I’d emptied all my pockets and I’m waiting for him. Well, and then he went and searched the truck and he came back and said, “Well, I found your drugs.” I said, “What do you mean my drugs?” He said, “The drugs in the truck.” I said, “I have no drugs in the truck. What? Did you put drugs in the truck?” he said, “You know they are your drugs.” I said, “look, we’ve been sitting back here where you, where you sprayed me with this whole can of mace, pepper spray or whatever it is, and now the emergency people looked at me from where you tackled me into the stones and broke my ribs, and nobody has been around that truck for 45 min. All the windows and doors are open, it could be anybody’s, probably yours.” So I knew that, again, doing my research in the law library and all that I knew that constructive possession, which is what the charge was, wasn’t going to hold up because there are three things that have to prove that you have immediate access to it, that you have control over it, but the third thing that they can never prove, is if you have knowledge of it. I said, “it’s a borrowed vehicle. I’m not looking through other people’s stuff, you know, I don’t know what’s in the truck.” So, again, they had to throw that out and I got out of it again.

Interviewer: Did you serve any time for that at all? Even waiting time?

028: Well, yeah, I had to wait until it went to court, and I think it was four months that time. Well, you know, I used my time properly again, and although I’m getting into lots of trouble in jail, you know, I spent more than half of that four and a half months in the box. Because I couldn’t, I had these two CO’s one and his buddy who really had it in for me, you know, because I’m smart and I’m doing things to cut corners to make myself more comfortable. Like I build a cooler, cause at lunch time they bring a thing and it’s got ice and they dump the ice. Well, I go and get the ice and I build a Styrofoam cooler, you know. And that’s illegal because I use tape that the maintenance guy’s left, duct tape. And I was making dice and selling them, I have nobody to give me any money for commissary, they’ve taken all my money, you know. So that’s what I’m doing. I also wrote poetry for guys and charged them, you know, that kind of stuff, to get my commissary. Well, I ended up going to the box three different times. The third time I was man handled and beat up by the one guy and I had bruises all over me. I wrote Sadie Darnell, the sheriff, a letter saying, “You know, if it says in the report here, the DR report, the Disciplinary Report, that I didn’t resist, why do I have bruises all over me?” Well, ok, she sends it back to the jail to do an investigation, only they wait three weeks before they come to investigate. By this time the bruises are gone. So they make it out I’m a liar. But I try to tell them, again I don’t have the bruises by the time I go to DR court, so I’m screwed. But by this time I’m so used to being in solitary confinement in this little room, I could care less as long as I have something to read.

(Interrupted by someone asking for money…..)

Interviewer: So we were talking about those 4 and a half months, and you said you got used to it…..

(END TAPE 2 of 3)

(Jay receives a phone call and recording device is turned off.)

Interviewer: Ok, we’re on. If I remember correctly we had talked about…… Let’s kind of start from there, if you want to recap a little bit on the last one, and then we’ll go on from there.

028: Ok, the first one was an illegal terry stop. The second one was when I was stopped and they found a cookie laying on the seat and all that but I knew that uh, constructive possession won’t hold up because they can’t ever prove that you have knowledge of it, especially because it wasn’t my vehicle. When I was
doing all those things that I told you about down in Orlando I used to buy cars, throw aways I’d call them, and leave them in somebody else’s name so I could always claim obstructive possession.

**Interviewer:** And you learned that on your own?..... And that here in town, how many years ago was that?

**028:** Yeah…. I guess that was about four years ago the last time.

**Interviewer:** So what has been going on in your life since that point?

**028:** Trying to get my disability and uh, I’ve been homeless off and on during that time, a lot. I was inside for about a year, but that was almost the same as being outside because we didn’t have electricity for a while and it was winner.

**Interviewer:** Is this the first time that you would consider yourself homeless in your life?

**028:** Pretty much, you know. When I was young and used to hitchhike around the country and stay in communes and stuff like that, I always had somewhere I could go if I had to. I was homeless by choice at that time, which isn’t the same thing.

**Interviewer:** What do you think changed for yourself in these last four years?

**028:** Not being able to work. I’ve always worked except for when I was doing those illegal things and even that is like a full time job, even more than a full time job. All the time, 24 hours a day.

**Interviewer:** If you don’t mind me asking, what’s going on that you’re applying for disability?

**028:** I have a number of serious back issues that’s affected my feet. This is kind of embarrassing but I’m having incontinence problems now and that’s why they did the MRI to see if there is some kind of nerve pinched there or something cause it’s started out very occasionally and over a four year period of time it’s been getting worse.

**Interviewer:** So it stopped you from being able to work and…

**028:** Well, that’s, at first I quit and I applied for disability and I got frustrated and went back to work and then I just couldn’t work through the pain anymore, “I can’t do this.” I was practically in tears one night talking to my friend, telling her “I just can’t do this anymore.”

**Interviewer:** So you’ve been trying to apply for disability and struggling on where you are going to live for the last four years, what else is going on?

**028:** That’s pretty much it. They’re trying to get me to go through voc rehab but they say I’m not trainable, you know? Maybe I’m just too old to be trainable, I don’t know, but they don’t want to pay for the expense to train me. I say, “But I’m a very good student!”

**Interviewer:** Who is they? Who’s asking you to go through vocational rehab?

**028:** Well, uh, my counselor there sent me to be evaluated and they sent me to be evaluated at Santa Fe here on (says address)… and they did some testing and all that and this young guy said that I could work as a sandwich sign carrier, or flip burgers at McDonalds, or be a parking lot attendant. And I said, “How many jobs have you seen for sandwich sign carriers? And how many parking lot attendants in Gainesville
are there? And being on my feet all day is a problem, I’ve already told you that.” But, they don’t hear
that. They just want… you’re just a number and they want to pass you through your system so they can
say that they were successful at employing you, they don’t care what they stick you in.

Interviewer: How did you get hooked up with a counselor?

028: I think it was my lawyer at three rivers legal said that I might want to go there and get there
evaluation and all that to help with my disability claim. It seems to me it’s worked against me.

Interviewer: In the last four years have you been arrested again?

028: Uh, one time, for something I didn’t do.

Interviewer: What were you charged with?

028: Sexual battery.

Interviewer: What was the story behind that?

028: Me and this guy were sitting behind big lots and he was drinking. I don’t drink that much, so I was
sitting there talking with him, and this girl came by and sat down and she wanted a place to stay for the
night. She was wheeling a shopping cart with her stuff. And we were talking. Joe left and I started doing
what I was doing and she followed me and caught up with me and hollered at me. I was going to take a
shower actually, behind the white apron. And uh, she went over there, with me, was sitting on the bench
across the street at uh, it’s a closed business, it used to be a restaurant around the corner. And I asked for a
blow job. And she gave me one. I went and then took a shower, and came back, and she wanted to come
back and stay with me but I didn’t want to take her back where I was camping. I didn’t really know her,
you know. While the favor was appreciated and all that, I didn’t want to bring her there. So, but she did
ask for something to eat, so I did go fix her a plate of food and bring it back. I must have taken longer
than she thought because I heard her wheeling her cart down the alley way. I said to myself, “Ah, problem
solved.” So the next morning, it’s a Sunday morning, and I have library books that have to be, that’s the
last day I have to return them. So I’m sitting there waiting for the bus, and officer Kennedy comes by,
who knows me, he’s arrested me a couple of times. And uh, he pulls over and says, “Hey Jay. Detective
Victoria, or something, wants to talk to you.” I said, “Oh yeah?” You know, I haven’t done anything
wrong, so I’m not nervous, so I had to go to the library, it’s on the way, no problem. Next thing I know
I’m sitting in this little room with the holes cut out with the camera and the mike and she comes in and
like the first question out of her mouth is, “When’s the last time you had sex?” You know, first off all I’m
talking to a woman that I don’t know, and it caught me off balance, now I’m leery, so I lied to her, I said,
“A couple of weeks ago.” You know? I’m thinking, “what’s up?” Before I tell her, I’m going to find out
what’s going on. She keeps asking me these questions and I say, “wait a minute, am I suspect in
something?” She says, “Yes, you’re a suspect in sexual battery.” I say, “Wait a minute, wait a minute,
what is it that you want to…” She says, “do you know so and so?” I say yes, she shows me the picture,
and I tell her the complete story, details and everything. Well, that’s fine, they took me back to the camp,
I gave them the shorts I had on, the shirt I had on, so they could test all that. I gave them a DNA sample
and all that. Then the next thing I know, they are taking me to court, or jail. I sat there for 44 days, she
disappeared, and I never heard from her again. So now I have this charge, this horrendous charge, on my
record. So everybody that looks at it looks at me like, “Oh, yeah.” Even though I’m not convicted, I’ve
been exonerated, it’s been dropped… it has been dropped. I had to wait 180 days for it to be officially
dropped, I sat in jail for 44 of them, you know? And uh, even the officer who put the cuffs on me,
Kennedy, he apologized to me. He said, “I told her it was bullshit Jay.” I said, “yeah. You know my MO,
my MO has always been drugs and prostitution. You know all about me.” I’m the guy that helps these girls!

Interviewer: I mean, I can just imagine, but how did you feel about this whole situation?

028: To tell you the truth, it’s the first time I’ve ever been worried or scared about, I mean, I’m looking at fifteen years for something I didn’t do. To lock me up for fifteen years, I’d rather be shot. I’d be insane by then, I couldn’t do fifteen years. I don’t know how people do that. I guess you’re there and you have no choice, but I’d go insane, locked up like that.

Interviewer: What was your longest sentence again?

028: A year. … He pulled over, Kennedy pulled over and asked me after he saw me over by the police station by the bus stop, and he asked me what happened. I said, “The charges were dropped.” You know? He said, “I told her it was bullshit, but she said to put the cuffs on you and I have to do it, you know.” I said, “Yeah I know, but…” … And it’s already worked against me. Just being charged with that, and I thought this was America, and you’re not supposed to use something … I mean anybody can say something against you, but, just being charged with that crime has prevented me from getting housing in certain places, it’s ridiculous.

Interviewer: So in these four years, you haven’t really lived in… except for that one time that you didn’t have electricity?

028: Yeah. Well, we did get electricity finally.

Interviewer: And how long did living in that place last?

028: About a year.

Interviewer: Where do you stay, normally, now?

028: In the woods.

Interviewer: Do you stay in one place or move around?

028: No, I like to stay in one place. I guess, accumulated so much junk, I have so much junk out there with me. It would take me two days and pickup truck to move my camp. But I had to do that recently. That camp has been in existence for three years straight that we were staying at, you know? I wasn’t there for three years, but my buddy was. When I left that house I went back there because I couldn’t go back to where I was before because a guy that was living there now is in charge of those woods, and I stopped him from beating up his girlfriend a few years ago. He pulled a knife on me and he is still holding a grudge about that, so I had to defend myself, and he’s still holding a grudge. So he found out where we were camping and went and made an anonymous call to the codes people and here they come and run us out of there. Been there for three years, no complaints, got permission from the businesses to use the water and everything, we carried our trash out, have actually cleaned up the woods from where people had camped there in the past and thrown garbage everywhere, cleaned it, it doesn’t matter.

Interviewer: Is this recent then?

028: Yeah, this was Christmas, a few days before Christmas.
Interviewer: Anything in the last four years that you weren’t caught for? But things that you did that were illegal or that you probably shouldn’t be up to?

028: Naw, no, I’ve pretty much straightened up my act. Staying out of trouble.

Interviewer: So what else is going on in life in your everyday existence today?

028: Well, I’m trying to help this friend of mine. She needs a lot of help. She’s agoraphobic and I think you’ve talked to her. I’m helping her out, and she’s helping me out. Between us we’re probably going to get a place pretty soon, you know? She gets her disability check now, she wants me to go with her. Because of her disability and her stroke its affected parts of her brain, her reading, her language, her speech. And uh, mathematics. She can’t really read or do mathematics anymore. So I do all that kind of stuff for her, you know. And I’m trustworthy. You know? I’m like the robin hood criminal.

Interviewer: Yeah. How would you describe yourself? How do you feel about yourself today?

028: Despite of all society says is wrong, I’m a good person and I like myself. Yes, I’ve been involved in drugs and prostitution and all that, but, first of all, prostitution should be legal. There are two types of crimes, those that everybody knows are inherently wrong, beating up old ladies and stealing, killing somebody, raping, those are inherently wrong crimes. The other ones are moral judgments. And it’s ridiculous to tell somebody else what they can do with their body, it’s absurd. I don’t think drugs should be illegal, I don’t think prostitution should be illegal. I think there are better ways to handle it instead of wasting tax payers money on something prohibition has shown is not going to work, you know? And there are other examples. Other countries do much better than we do. So yeah, I don’t feel guilty about those things that I’ve done because I’ve always been the good guy. Yes, I sold drugs, but I always sold the best and gave the best, fairer deals. I never robbed anybody or ripped anybody off. I’ve never made a girl go out and turn tricks or anything. They come to me and ask me if they can be on my crew, you know? It’s always been like that, I don’t know why, but they trust me. I help them fix their problems and stuff like that, they just trust me, I don’t know why. But that’s the way it’s always been. I’ve never made anybody do anything. So. I feel like I’m a good guy. I like myself, I’m a good guy. Even people that, I may look rough and I may have done things, but even the kind of nasty things I’ve had to do… the bounty hunter and I did some collections at one point, not the kind that you call on the phone and harass people but the kind where you collect illegal money, so I’ve done some mean things. But to me, if you give your word to somebody, that’s your bond, you know? And if your word doesn’t mean anything, you’re nothing, so you deserve what you get. I’d borrow a $100,000 from you, and you don’t pay when you say you’re supposed to, your word is nothing and you’re nothing. So you deserve what you get.

Interviewer: When were you doing the collections stuff? I don’t think we covered that?

028: Back in Orlando…. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of those specifically?

028: Yeah, but I really don’t want to talk about those.

Interviewer: That’s ok. So then tell me what you see for yourself in the next five years.

028: Hopefully I can get my disability and use the large check that I’m going to get to maybe buy some property somewhere and maybe put a little trailer on it, maybe, you know, have something of my own for a change. I’d like to go back and get some classes and stuff, but it’s hard to go to school when you’re
camping out. I’d like to continue going to school, I told you I like that. … Maybe I can find somebody to pay me! Uh, I don’t know, I’m 55 years old. I don’t know.

Interviewer: What do you think the chances are of you doing something illegal in the next five years?

028: Well, if… to be honest with you, if I was it would be running an escort service, but I would go the legal route. It might start off on the smaller scale where I could get it rolling, but I would go the legal route and run an escort service.

Interviewer: Is that something you still think of doing?

028: Yeah because I’m good at that kind of thing. I, it’s, it probably has to do with the adrenaline involved in it, I told you I’m an adrenaline junky. I’ve always seemed to be attracted to the left side of the fence, the quote unquote, the darker side, the bad thing, that’s always been fascinating to me, ever since I was a kid. I don’t know. But I don’t like, you know, I don’t like things that hurt people. I’m not going to go out and hurt anybody, I’m not going to rob anybody. I’ve never done anything like that.

Interviewer: What about drug use?

028: I don’t see that, I’ve kind of done it all already.

Interviewer: And what about, … what do you think the chances are of you getting arrested again in the next five years?

028: In my current situation it seems to go with the territory. You’re always getting stopped and harassed. Once they find out you’re homeless, then you’re marked. It’s like, I try not to look like I’m homeless, I try to dress proper and clean. But once they find out you’re homeless, then they want to stop you every time they see you and ask you “what’s going on?” and “where are you going?” … It’s none of your business where I’ve been, it’s none of your business where I’m going, here’s my ID, check it out, I’m not wanted, “Goodbye.” Then they start looking for things, “Well, did you cut across the corner of that yard? I could take you to jail for trespassing.” It’s stuff like this, you know? The chance are, as long as I’m outside, I can get picked up for something. And from my experience, I can get picked up for just about anything apparently. Like another time, well I was bailed out and it cost me money, I was walking back I just got into town off the road and I was walking back from Munnigan’s from where I parked the tractor trailer and I’ve walked by JR’s lounge and I went by and I saw police cars and people by the parking lot, and I’m walking by and I cut by the railroad tracks and here comes a cop car, “Hey you, come here.” I say, “What do you want?” He says, “I want you to get in the car and come back here for identification.” I haven’t been in this place so I’m not worried, so I go back, and this guy goes, “yeah.” He’s drunk, falling down, and he says, “yeah, that’s him. That’s him.” And I’m off to jail again for uh, supposedly I helped beat this guy up. I said, “I wouldn’t need any help beating you up, you know?” So, come on.

Interviewer: What came out of that?

028: That? After six months got dropped too. You know. But it still costs me the money to bail out.

Interviewer: You didn’t spend any time in jail?

028: No, I called my partner on the road, and he came down with money and bailed me out. I’ve learned that at any time I’m subject to go to jail for anything. It doesn’t matter if I did something or not. You know?
Interviewer: …. Is there anything that we missed in your life that you want to make sure that we include?

028: I told you I was physically abused, beatings when I was a kid, I told you most of my legal stuff, and… yeah, pretty much, I guess.

Interviewer: And pretty much, in general for this type of interview, are there any questions that I didn’t ask that you think I should have asked?

028: Uh… no. I use to play a lot of music, that probably got me through a lot of my younger life, I immersed myself in music. No, I can’t think of… you’re the doc, you ask me!

Interviewer: No, I’m not a doc! So you listened to a lot of music when you were younger, what do you do now to get you through?

028: I put it all down. I listened to, but I also played a lot of music in my life…. (tells of the various instruments he played)…. Harmonica is the only instrument I have now.

Interviewer:… Thank you so much.
Transcript: 035, Length: 1:45:54
Female, 49 years, Black

(Informed consent process)

035: I have read the procedure described above, I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure.

Interviewer: Like we talked about, I’m going to start with some pretty general questions before we start with your life story. Since I have this on tape and I’m going to later transcribe it, if you could please state your age, your sex, and your race?

035: Not my name?

Interviewer: Not your name.

035: I’m 49 years old! I am 49 years old, I’m a black female.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

035: … Wyoming

Interviewer: Would you consider that your hometown?

035: No, I consider Northtown, Pennsylvania my hometown.

Interviewer: Where was your longest residence in your life?

035: I’m going to say Northtown.

Interviewer: When you were growing up, who were your primary caregivers?

035: My mom.

Interviewer: What did she do for a living?

035: Nothing. She was a homemaker

Interviewer: Was your father in the picture at all?

035: My father was in the air force and that was his job.

Interviewer: Were they still married?

035: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have any siblings?
035: Yeah, I have two brothers and one sister.

Interviewer: How much older or younger than you are they?

035: I’m 49, my brother is 50, and my sister is 51, and my brother is about 60.

Interviewer: Anybody else live in the household with you while you were growing up?

035: Yeah, my mom’s boyfriend, he was like there for like a long time.

Interviewer: Did your parent’s divorce at some point in time?

035: My father died when I was six. And my mom took up residency with Mr. NAME and he was my father. He raised me.

Interviewer: What did he do for living?

035: He worked at the NAME Steel Company, he was a nice man too. You know to this day I still call him my father, cause I mean, my father died when I was six so he was the only other permanent man in my life.

Interviewer: What is your highest level of education?

035: I only did to the 12th grade.

Interviewer: Ok, so you graduated high school?

035: No, I only did until the 11th grade, I only did a little bit of the 12th grade, then I left.

Interviewer: What prompted that decision?

035: First of all I was pregnant. Second of all, I got dyslexia, and I didn’t want to keep doing that. See when I was in high school, they didn’t know nothing about dyslexia and stuff like that. So they would put you in these special education classes, I wasn’t going to do that. You know by being black, you too cool for that, you know what I mean? So I just dropped out.

Interviewer: What would you consider your main occupation in your life, if there is one, if not, what kind of jobs have you had?

035: Yo. My main job is… I love food, I love food. I’ve been a deli worker for like 20 years. I love to cut the meat, I just love the meat, I love the cheese, I love making party trays. I love doing seafood. I love cutting open the fish and find out what they ate and stuff like that. Yeah man, I do all of that, I love that. And it’s not that bad, you might stink when you go home from the fish, but oh my god, the adventure! Oh my god, it’s just… I get goose bumps; it’s just a rush to me. I loved it.

Interviewer: You did that for more than 20 years? Did you ever have any other kinds of jobs in your life?

035: Yeah, now my second best job was… I was a firefighter. Let me tell you about that, yeah. Uh, I lived in Virginia, and you know the naval bases? They bring the ships in for overhauling, uh, the welders would have to go all the way down into the engine room and stuff like that to weld, we had to go with them with our little fire extinguishers and make sure that they didn’t burn up nothing. Like if they, look, while
you’re welding you only have this little thing like that big, and you can’t see, so we’re their eyes. As soon as a spark goes and it’s on fire, we got to put it out. Yes! Yes, yes, I loved it. I loved it.

Interviewer: What was your first job ever?

035: Deli working.

Interviewer: How old were you?

035: 17… no, 17 I was working at the hospital, in their cafeteria, that’s when I first started. That was uh, a job core job. Do you remember that? When you were 15 you got your working papers and you could work and stuff like that. That was my first job.

Interviewer: Are you currently married?

035: No.

Interviewer: Are you currently living with anybody or have a relationship?

035: No.

Interviewer: Have you been married in the past?

035: Uh, …. Ok. Uh, technically, I don’t know, I was with my boyfriend for ten years. So in our state, 7 years you are legally married. So I don’t know…

Interviewer: Ok, so you had a very serious relationship for ten years?

035: Yup, yup.

Interviewer: What part of your life was that in?

035: Oh I was young. He died. It’s ok, he died. But uh, I was 15 when I met him and uh, 26 when I left. How long is that? That’s a long time….

Interviewer: Did you leave because he passed away?

035: No. I just left because I wanted to bring my daughter up in a different environment. I didn’t want her to be grewed up in the city, so I took her to Virginia where it was country. She’s a good girl too.

Interviewer: Is that your only daughter?

035: Yeah

Interviewer: You had her when you were 16 or 17?

035: 17 years old.

Interviewer: Any other serious relationships besides that one?
035: Yeah, my uh, well, it’s not a relationship it’s a friendship. Um, uh, it’s with Matt. I’ve been with him for 20 years. Yeah, I just don’t let go. But we’re not, I’ve known him for 20 years when I first dated him, but now we’re like best friends. Whatever you need, I got you, whatever I need, he got me.

Interviewer: You’re no longer romantically involved?

035: Sometimes. Sometimes. I’m human. Sometimes. But, no, we just talk to each other. We talk 2, 3 times a day cause he’s going through a lot with uh, trying to get his disability, he got back problems, he broke down. You know what? When you be running the streets and all that, we be wearing our bodies down. And then when we get old like we are right now, then we get aches and pains, and it hurt, you know? And that’s what he’s going through. Yeah, poor thing.

Interviewer: No children from this relationship?

035: No.

Interviewer: … these are kind of yes/no questions, and if it’s a yes, we’ll talk about it a little bit. How many times if ever were you in a juvenile institution?

035: Never.

Interviewer: How many times if ever in jail?

035: 3 times.

Interviewer: What for?

035: Domestic violence.

Interviewer: All three times?

035: Yes.

Interviewer: How long were you in jail those three times?

035: The longest I ever stayed was 33 days.

Interviewer: The other two times were a little bit less or the same?

035: They were like a week, or, you know, he would come and get me out because he knew he was wrong.

Interviewer: Was it always with this last relationship?

035: Mmmhmmm!

Interviewer: How many times if ever in prison?

035: Never.

Interviewer: And how many times if ever arrested? Aside from those three times…. 
035: About 6 times… 3 was for domestic violence, 4 was for domestic violence, cause I... I... you know... two, I have bi-polar, and a lot of people don’t understand what bi-polar entails. So, when uh, when someone be messing with you so much, I just snap. And, and, if you look at a person who snap, our eyes are completely dark. They are completely black. And I would just do stuff and not know I was doing it. Man I tore up his whole house and I didn’t even know that I did it. I tore his clothes up, TV’s, like big TV’s dumped them over... I’m just a little person. You get strength like the hulk. And I just tore up his whole house. So that was 4 times. One time I went to jail because my daughter... I stole a laptop computer because she wanted money, so I stole for her. She was spoiled.

Interviewer: Were you convicted of that?

035: No, because when I stole the computer they didn’t read me my rights. He was like, “Yo, just let her go, you all messed up.” And that’s it. That’s only 5, that’s all, 5. I’m a pretty good girl.

Interviewer: Ok. Let’s start with your early life then, ... what is your earliest memory?

035: Let me tell you, my earliest memory was uh, when uh, my moms, she -we were in New Mexico because my father was in the air force and we would travel a lot. And my moms, she worked at this nursing home, and there was this monkey looking lady, and she was sitting over there. And I couldn’t take my eyes off of her! And my mom said uh, “Don’t be staring at her because she will come and get you at night.” So I couldn’t, I couldn’t take my eyes off the lady. It was like she was saying something to me. Anyway, so when I got to the bed that night, I saw her sitting right up there, up there, and she was talking to me! And, that’s, ever since then, believe it or not, I see people... I hear real voices, I feel stuff that um, that um, normal people don’t feel, you know? And people think I’m crazy, but I ask you, you know, if um, um, when Lazarus died, I mean when Jesus died, and Mary and them went to the tomb and saw the angels, why can’t I see angels? Because it just... I mean, our lives do revolve around what happened back then, right? And let me tell you what, I be trying to tell these people that I be seeing this stuff, because I don’t know how to handle it. Ain’t nobody helping me with it, so you know what they did? They upped my medication when I told them. They think that if you use drugs, and if you see things that aren’t humanly possible, they think that you crazy. Or if you’re in and out of jail, they think you crazy. But you know what? You that, let’s say that 45% of the people in jail are mentally ill... and they don’t address that. They dope you up, and they let you go. Or they dope you up and hold you for a little while. And I don’t think that’s right. I don’t think that’s right.

Interviewer: How old were you when you had this memory?

035: 6.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about who you were as a child. How would you describe yourself?

035: Yo man, I was a fun child. I was a fun child! Man, I used to love to do everything, go everywhere, I loved to travel. I lived in South Carolina, Northtown, Virginia, and Florida... I lived in four cities, girl, I loved to travel. Yeah, yeah, and my dad used to travel and take us on a lot. But I was a fun kid. I was, ‘What’s happening!?!” I was funny, I was all that.

Interviewer: Is that how you saw yourself too when you were little?

035: Mmmhmm, well, I just thought I was a princess. And I was, cause my dad he... I looked just like my dad. And he, “Princess! Red bone! Come here!” He loved me, he really did.
Interviewer: How was your relationship with him, before he passed away?


Interviewer: How about your relationship with your mother when you were growing up?

035: Oh, please. My mother hated me. My mother still… she don’t like me to today. She love me cause I’m hers, but she don’t like me and uh, um, I had to go to the psychiatrist when I was 14 years old and that’s what the psychiatrist told me cause when we went to the psychiatrist, I wouldn’t say nothing. My mom would talk and talk and talk. And uh, the psychiatrist came up with that scenario, that my mother will always love me but she’ll never like me. The reason she’ll never like me is she’s mad at me, because I look like my father. My father beat her, my father abandoned her, my father loved me more than he loved her, my mom didn’t play that. And two, my mom, her grandmother, my mother’s mother… abandoned her, and her cousins would always treat her bad. She didn’t have no one to call her own, you know what I mean? And then, when it kept on going, she just finally lashed out at me, cause I looked like my dad and he was supposed to be there to take her of her. And then he died! You know.

Interviewer: Your relationship before your father died, was it different?

035: No. She didn’t like me, she didn’t like me. Yeah. Let me tell you what they would do. My father was an alcoholic, and what he would do is he would get drunk and he would want to take me with him to the bars and stuff like that. And my mom, they would fight. I remember this one time, we was in Japan, I was four years old, and uh, we were in the Jeep. The military police Jeep, and my mother was pulling me one way and he was pulling the other way talking about, “You’re not taking my baby, I’m taking my baby with me.” Like I was some kind of… I was his. I wasn’t hers, I was his. And he, and that’s the way it made me feel. He just wanted me, he just had to have me. Cause when I was six, he would take me to the bars in New Mexico, we were in New Mexico, that’s where we was when he died. He would always take me to the bars with him. My mom would get so mad. He wouldn’t take none of the rest of the kids, but he would take me. My sister she resented me too, because me and my father had that relationship, and he didn’t have that kind of relationship with her. But, my mom she never did like me. She never did like me, she still don’t like me today. This what she say, I’ve asked her three times, “Mom, you know, I ask that you forgive me for all my sins that I did to you.” Because when you become a Christian you have to ask people for their forgiveness, the ones that you hurt. I’ve asked her three times. Still, three times, she still brings up the same thing. Like I just asked her for $150 cause, so I could get a washer and dryer. Now, mind you, I don’t ask her for nothing unless I really really need it, unless I really want it. And she was like, “Well you now you didn’t do this for me”… “You didn’t do that.” You know? If I ask her to forgive that, you need to forgive that. But two, my mother always remember what all I’ve done to her. She ain’t never remember what she done to me. You know? When I was 17, she told the doctors, give that girl a hysterectomy, she don’t need no more kids, her and that boy. She took away my womanhood at 17. “Oh, I don’t remember none of that.” But that’s a very important thing in my life. You know? And, she is the reason why I have bi-polar. When you have bi-polar it just means that you go through a serious trauma in your life. When I was young, that’s my bi-polar; I went through a serious trauma in my life with my mom and dad fighting over me. My mom she would beat me just because I was watching commercials. She used to come and just beat me saying, “Buddy, you don’t need to be watching them commercials.” Buddy’s my father. “You don’t need to be watching them commercials. Get off your butt and stop watching that TV.” I wasn’t doing nothing. Just sitting there watching TV, you know what I’m saying? … What were we talking about?

Interviewer: Just your relationship with her. What about your relationship with your siblings when you were little?
035: My sister never liked me, never. She never did like me because he liked me. And I don’t know, but I think my father did something bad to my sister. I really do, cause she just got pure hate for him. She don’t like his mother, his brother… I know my oldest brother, he used to molest her. But, uh, I don’t know, I think my dad did something to her. She’s just got pure hate.

Interviewer: How about your brothers? How did you get along with them?

035: I was the baby. My oldest brother, he had to take care of me, you know? And then my younger brother, he’s not younger, I just say that, but he uh, he used to take me everywhere, everywhere with him. Everywhere. He was like…after my father died, he was like my father, he took care of me. If I needed $500 I would call him and it would be there in 2 days, he was good to me. He still is, but, he was good to me. As a matter a fact? Guess what my grandchild’s name is!

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about school when you were a kid, like elementary school, how was that for you?

035: I loved it. I had a good childhood. I had a good school, good teachers, everything. Everything. I liked being young. I really did. And then when I was like 7, no, I think I was still 6. When I wasn’t in school, I used to go to school with my brother, they used to let me do that. I had a real good school in childhood.

Interviewer: Any teachers that stand out to you?

035: No, no.

Interviewer: What about friends? Anybody stand out?

035: I don’t know… Becky, Valerie, Curtis… they were our next door neighbors when we lived in New Mexico. This all happened when I was like six years old. You know? We went there when I was five, and then when I was six, we were still there and Becky, Valerie, and Curtis, they were my friends. They were our next door neighbors and they were close friends with my mom and dad. And then it was this girl who lived down the street who had this dollhouse or something, but it was like a little house! It had a pretend stove in it, a bed, everything! I used to go down there and play in her dollhouse while she was at school. I remember all my friends…. I had a good childhood. Yeah, I didn’t mess up until I was 14. That’s when my life went downhill.

Interviewer: Before we get there, let’s keep talking about when you were young, let’s say before 10 or so. Tell me maybe 5 significant memories of your childhood?

035: The first thing that I always like to remember is seeing that lady. That was big, that was major for me. Another thing would be when my father died. My uh, I don’t know what it is, my mother.. somebody was knocking at the door, and soon as my mom passed the room, something just said, “Get up.” And I stood right behind her. I didn’t hear no one knocking I just saw her walking by, and I got up, and I went to the door with her, and that’s when they told her that he had died. I remember that like yesterday. And uh, I remember New Mexico. I loved it, I loved it. There was no fire, it was beautiful. I like playing in the girl’s dollhouse, I loved it. And what else? That’s about it.

Interviewer: Before you were about 10 or younger, do you remember doing anything wrong or that you shouldn’t of done?
035: No. When I was 10… this is what I used to do. You know where your heating vents are in your house? On the floor, I used to get my blanket and cover myself up, and I used to sleep there, all day, all night. Sometimes a week at a time and stuff like that. And uh, I didn’t have no friends, I was withdrawn. I was withdrawn and that’s why my mom took me to the psychiatrist because my grandma said, she said, “something’s wrong with that fool. She going to be sitting and laying day in and day out.” She say, “.. There’s something wrong with that girl, you need to go and get her mind tested.” Before a long time my mom, “no, no no.” But, something was wrong with me, I was staying over the heat hole… “where’s Sherry? Over the heat hole.” “Ok” And everybody act like that was my house, like I belong there. If I wasn’t on the heat hole, then, “Where’s she at?”

Interviewer: Do you remember why you were doing that?

035: I was withdrawn, I was suffering from depression…. All of it in general, all of it in general. Like I told you, from 4 to 6, I gained… with my bi-polar tendencies, were hitting me hard then. It’s from all that trauma, and from my mother too, it’s hereditary too. So, like I got it real bad. That’s all it was, I was withdrawing.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about life from when your father died to when your mother started dating the man you mentioned?

035: My life was horrible. My life was horrible. My mom didn’t treat me right at all. She would beat me, she’d call me by my father’s name, and then what she would do to me… my mom would always go to Bingo, I was 12 years old, my mom would go to Bingo. My brother’s and sister’s they were 13, 14, 15, they could go outside and… my mom would leave us, leave the house at 7 o’clock at night, every night, and go to Bingo. And leave me, in that house, all by myself. She know I was scared, I wouldn’t go outside or nothing, I would just lay over that heat hole like I was crazy. And she just left me, constantly left me. So then when she started going with Mr. NAME, what he would do, is he liked playing cards, so what he would do is he would invite his friends over to play cards and um, that way he be with me at the same time. That’s why how come I have a real connection with him. My mother left me, my mother abandoned me, but he was always there.

Interviewer: What was your relationship with him like?

035: Like he was my father, I would listen to everything he said. I would do a lot for him. I could tell him anything. And what he used to do sometimes, when the boys wouldn’t come over and play with him, he would play dice with us!

Interviewer: That’s nice.

035: No, it’s not, cause he would take our lunch money! (laughing). He’d say, “I ain’t giving it back, I ain’t giving it back, cause you had no business coming.” And he was right, you know, he was right. He was always there for me, he was always there for me. He would let me sometimes deal the cards, sit and you know, all of that, all of that. He was good.

Interviewer: How old were you when he was in your life?

035: I don’t know, I was like 8 or 9, about 9.

Interviewer: Is he still with your mother?

035: No.
Interviewer: When did he separate from your mother?

**035:** Oh, I don’t know, about a couple of years ago when she was 50 I guess. I don’t know, she caught him cheating on her with another woman. You know they say you’re not supposed to buy a man a pair of boots? Because he’ll walk out on you? She bought that man a pair of boots, and the next week, he was gone. I kid you not. I kid you not, he was gone. That’s funny when myths come alive like that. That is so funny. But he’s still in my life, but what I do, but his kids… all of his kids are alcoholics and stuff like that, and they don’t talk to him that much, but I’m the only one that call him and say, “I love you.” And stuff like that, that’s my boy.

Interviewer: How was life for you in junior high and high school?

**035:** Let me tell you what my mom did. My mom would leave me at home, and there was this drunk man that used to come over to the house, his name was Nathaniel, and he would smoke cigarettes. He used to call me string-line, cause I was so skinny. “String-line, get me some coffee so I can sober up.” That’s when I started taking care of the household and people in the household… from them… but I remember him being the first person. He was drunk and I remember him trying to feel me up. I was 12. And my mother left me in the house with this drunk.

Interviewer: Did she know what he was doing?

**035:** Well, no, … but two and two together, you know? Then after that, when I was 14 or 15, my mom used to start to call me and tell me to take care of her kids. I took care of my brothers and sisters, cause my brother and my sister, the one who right before me, they alcoholics like my father. They used to like to get drunk and … and my mom didn’t want to be bothered with them, so she used to tell me to take care of her kids. I took care of them kids for a long time. And no matter… and then, by that time, she started hating me more because um, because um, … I forget. Anyways, anyways… oh, ok, she started hating me more because uh, I would have to take care of her kids. You know what I mean? And I was happy. I was a good girl. I was a good girl. I never got nothing, I was a good girl. And her daughter, and her sons, she crazy about them. But, they weren’t doing good, and I was, and that made her hate me more. Because I wasn’t, I wasn’t broke down like them and emotionally scared. And then, she used to make me, she used to… I moved up the street with my boyfriend.

Interviewer: How old were you?

**035:** 16… cause she, she would leave me all day all night with no “How you doing?” whatever. Only time she would talk to me would be to yell at me, and stuff like that. So when I left, then my brother and my sister were still living there. She would call me, this one night, she would call me down, and my sister’s boyfriend had a gun after her and my mom told me, she said, “Go in there and get that girl out of there.” And I went in there and got her. I went in there and got her. I could have opened the door and he could have shot me, killed me, or whatever, but I wanted to please my mom so much (crying)… that I walked into a situation like that. And then, her boyfriend’s brother’s girlfriend flipped out or whatever, and this girl was big, you know what I mean? And you got mental issues and you big like that? My mom made me go in there and get my sister cause she and the girl were fighting. I’m real skinny and I had to go in there and get my sister, and it was nothing for my mom to put me in dangerous situations like that for her kids. Did you hear that? For her kids, not I’m her child too, just for them (crying). But it’s alright, you know, it’s alright. I think, because my brother and my sister… my sister was uh, the manager for Dairy Queen… no, Friendly’s, that’s what it is. Her and my brother, they were on drugs, him and her would go over there and rob the safe. They would do fun things like that together, get high, them two
thick as thieves. But I was the baby sister. They never included me in anything. Then, when I started… I felt like if I started doing wrong stuff, my mom would like me a little bit better.

**Interviewer:** What kinds of things did you do?

035: Yo, I would steal. I would steal…and today, I still have that habit, I steal, I just can’t help it. It’s like, I just have a compulsion to steal, because it feels good. I don’t know. It gave me, it gave me… I don’t know what I was going to say.

**Interviewer:** You said it felt good? Or that it still feels good?

035: Yeah, because, that’s the only attention I was going to get. And, and, and,…

**Interviewer:** How old were you when you first did something like that?

035: 15, or 16. My boyfriend… he’d steal, rob, anything.

**Interviewer:** Was your boyfriend the same age?

035: No, he a year older than me…. And they would rob and do all that kind of stuff because they were into snorting that cocaine, and smoking on the reefer. I wasn’t allowed to do that, because I was baby sister, they didn’t let me do none of that. Even him, he didn’t let me do none of that. And my mom, she would go to Bingo, they would leave me downstairs, and they would go upstairs and smoke their reefer, snort their coke, drink their beer, and they wouldn’t let me upstairs. They were “protecting” me. Don’t protect me! I want to have some fun to do! You know what I mean?

**Interviewer:** So when you were stealing and stuff, you were doing it on your own?

035: Yeah, yeah. Like sometimes they would tell me to do it and I would do it for acceptance, you know? Like this one time, they wanted to go across town, something like that, and they didn’t have no gas in my boyfriend car, so they gave me a piece of hose and told me, “keep sucking on that hose until the gas come up.” We were stealing gas. And they made me do that, I was feeling, “yeah!” You know? I liked doing bad things because it made me feel accepted. I was one of them then, you know? Cause my brother tell you know, my brother won’t get high with me, he won’t get drunk, none of that. “You my baby sister, you ain’t allowed.” I mean, he let me more now than I was back then, but that boy, uh uh, cause he was like my father. So, he didn’t let me do stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** When you were a teenager, you never got caught for any of these things?

035: No. No, I was good. Let me tell you. Are you Puerto Rican? Mexican?... This is what we did. Our town was all Mexican, and everybody know that Mexicans go to work from 6 o’clock to 6 o’clock, it wasn’t nobody house I couldn’t get into. Girl, I used to love to rip and rob. They ain’t going to tell! Then they got to ID, are you legal, and this and that. Girl, I made good money. And there ain’t no place I couldn’t get into. I be all up in that shit.

**Interviewer:** How was school for you during these years?

035: I don’t know. After the ninth grade, you know, after the tenth grade, it was like I just gave up. We would get on the bus to go to school, and the bus was right across the street. We would get on the bus to go to school, and never make it to school. We would get off the bus and go to the state hospital, and go on home.
Interviewer: Who were you with?

035: Addy, she was my best friend. She was my best friend. And uh, I was small and stuff like that. I couldn’t fight, I couldn’t fight at all. But this girl Addy, she was a lesbian, she was a bull… she was a bully. And I became friends with her and nobody messed with me. I could say anything I want to you, do anything I want, and she had my back, you know what I’m saying? We would walk home from school, we’d go to Kmart, stealing. We’d go to the grocery store, steal food and stuff like that. Nah, we ain’t never got caught. I started experimenting on pills with her, I didn’t like that.

Interviewer: When was the first time you used any kind of drug?

035: I would say 14, when I was 14, it was my birthday. My mom was at bingo, and my brothers and sisters got me so drunk I peed the bed. They got me so fucking drunk. “Yeah, you want to hang with us? You want to be like us?” They got me so drunk. So high, we were smoking reefer. That was fun, that was fun. But I think that’s the last time that the four of us got together like that. It was fun, it was real fun. My mom thought it was funny, you know? “Oh you got my baby drunk, heee hee hee hee.” When I peed in her bed, it wasn’t too funny then, she got really mad. She blamed it all on me, cause she’s right, I should have known better, I’m her “Knows better” child. Yeah, so I should of….

Interviewer: Let’s again do the five significant events in your life, from the time you were 12 or 14 years old up until the time you left high school. What was going on?

035: I remember, every day we played hooky. Every day we got off at school and we would go to the state hospital. Every day, me and Addy. And sometimes we would get her boyfriend’s car and ride out to uh, Kmart, steal, we were good. We were good! I mean we got so many clothes, everywhere. And then we were with this boy, he was a mama’s boy, and what we did, we told him, if he was going to put on the sneakers, put them behind the boxes. He put it in the box, and so then, we uh, he got caught. We walked out first and then they caught him because he had the brand new sneakers on, cause they saw it. And uh, they caught him; we walked right out the door. We left him, we left him. When his mom came, his mom beat him. That was funny, that was funny. And he still was our friend, you know what I mean? I remember that biggest day. And I remember that friend’s meeting in this big house, we was getting high, and I remember in the cellar, we were smoking reefer, we only smoked reefer back then. And uh, we used to abuse that boy. The one that got caught with the sneakers? We use to abuse him. It was this thing called… uh,… Chinese shotgun or something like that? You had to get down and someone would blow smoke in your face? Somebody blow it in your face and you would raise up and get a big old rush. And the boy, he weighed every bit of a hundred pounds, and Addy she was big, she was manly, and as soon as he got to the top like that, she just punched him in his chest. He “boooooo.” And he just fell out, that was funny. It was funny. It was funny, that was a good time. He was alright, and he forgave us, as usual. That was funny. I remember that like it was yesterday. And that’s all I really remember from back then.

Interviewer: Tell me about when you got with your boyfriend and had your daughter.

035: He was a truck driver. I loved him. I really did, I loved him and he loved me because we understood…. His mother and father left him all the time, my mom and dad left me all the time. He wanted to have dinner at the table like the Brady’s and so did I, you know what I mean? We understood each other, it was like we was each other sometimes, you know? He was alright, he was alright. He had bi-polar, and he… it wasn’t pretty. Sometimes when things wouldn’t go right in his life he would just beat me up for nothing. Man, that boy beat me up just because. But I stayed because he needed me, nobody know you better than me. I would always wait for him, I would always make sure that he was alright, I would always make sure that he was taken care of, everything. I loved him, he was very abusive, but I
loved him. Just because he needed me. You see a little pattern here? I’m a needy person. I love people who need me, I love to help people. That’s my calling in life. God put me here to help people, and I do, I love it. I love helping people, mentally, physically, emotionally, I love to help people.

**Interviewer:** So when you had your daughter at 17, all three of you lived together? Where were you living?

**035:** Mmhhm, we were living in his house where his mom lived at. He didn’t stay with us most of the time. He was a whore. But I was ok with that, you know? I was ok with that. He would mess with a whole lot of girls and stuff like that, and me and Mary, we would just be there. I was cool. I was cool, I had my baby. I didn’t need nothing else. But he, he died of AIDS. Yup, he sure did.

**Interviewer:** So you left high school? What was going on in your life after that?

**035:** Yeah, yeah… my baby was small, she could walk,… she was the best little girl in the world, nobody could beat her, she was the best little girl. Then I started working at Sacred Heart hospital, the food department. She would be going to the babysitter, and um, she loved her babysitter. Things was good then. I wasn’t ripping and robbing and none of that, cause I had my little girl. She was a good girl, she still is. She ain’t doing to good but, she was a good girl.

**Interviewer:** Did you stop using drugs too?

**035:** Yeah. I would drink. I was an alcoholic then, but I ain’t doing them drugs cause my baby… you know what happen? This one time this boy had… oh man, I just remembered,… anyway, this boy had this plate of cocaine, and my daughter, she was three years old, I’ll never forget it, and when I left the room, the plate was full and when I came back in the room… it wasn’t so full no more. And uh, my daughter got in to it. She must have been high as a kite. And you know? I beat her. Yeah. I mean, at the time it seemed right because she ain’t got no business touching my mess, but when I thought about it over and over, she didn’t know what was going on. She was high as a kite, and here I am beating all over her when it ain’t her fault whatsoever. I shouldn’t of had it there in the first place. I really felt bad about that, I still do. I probably still do. She didn’t know, it wasn’t her fault. After then, I started drinking a lot, I wouldn’t do more drugs. I was real sorry. I was real sorry for that, I was. But somebody called Children and Youth on us, ain’t nobody do that but my mom, but called Children and Youth on us and told them I wasn’t taking care of my kid.

**Interviewer:** What happened from there?

**035:** They would come and see that me and my kid were ok. I think it was either my mom or somebody, jealousy. Cause she ain’t call it on my sister, my sister was smoking crack, drinking, doing drugs, leaving her kids at home… ain’t no child youth going to her house. So I do sometimes think it was my mom. But I don’t know. Then, when my daughter got up some size, you know I had three jobs for her? Yeah man, I was working three jobs at one time and she still wasn’t happy. My daughter just wanted stuff. Cause I used to try and spoil her, cause her dad wasn’t in the picture so I used to try and spoil her a lot.

**Interviewer:** Is this when you already moved to Virginia?

**035:** No. I was still living in Northtown. I, no. When I had three jobs I was in Virginia, my daughter was 8 years old. And uh, we had left her father cause he just totally went off in another direction. And uh, and I remember, my daughter when she was little, we gave her everything cause her grandmother and me we would like try to get her everything cause her dad wasn’t with us like that. I’m going to tell you something I ain’t never told nobody. Her father, her father was gay. I guess he was bisexual or gay and
didn’t want to face the fact. But I knew it. And so, by him being out there, I figure he would get his plate full…. And you know how you don’t want to accept it? I figure while he was out there getting his plate full, you know, I take care of me and Mary. That’s how we moved to Virginia. I just figured, you go get yourself together, I take care of me and the kid. And I got her everything she ever wanted. You know what I did one time? I’m such a good criminal, knock on wood, that I never did get caught. But what I would do was, I would give this boy my ATM card, and that’s before when you could take the envelopes and put them in the ATM machine, and um, if you tell them that you put $200 in there, they don’t know nothing but you put $200 in there. I put blank envelopes in there and this get back all sorts of money. All you had to do was put the envelope blank right then and withdraw the money right back out. But we didn’t put no money in. Anyway. Me and my friend had did this to the tune of $800. I was smoking and drinking real bad then, I smoking crack then. Yeah, my baby was 8 years old. Anyway, to make a long story short, even though we had $800 to smoke and drink and all that, I made sure that I saved $200 and took my daughter on a shopping spree. Her butt was spoiled. She was spoiled. I had to just do that. It kind of made it right, you know what I mean? It kind of made it, “I didn’t do so bad, I didn’t smoke it all up. I did take her shopping.” It was like me saying, “Ok.”

**Interviewer:** When did you start stealing and using drugs again? I know you said there was a little while that you stopped?

**035:** Oh, when my daughter was… from about… I know she was 8 years old, she was 7… and we moved to Virginia at 8, and then from about 8 years old to 10, 11, I say 11, no 12 going on 13 cause she was getting womanly then. You know she told me one time, I said if you don’t get your ass in the house and do something I’m going to whoop your ass. She said, “I ain’t scared of you.” I’m telling you they do this, they do this! And I took a 2x4 and I beat the shit out of her. I beat the shit out of her. She wasn’t no little girl. My daughter was built. She was thick and I guess I was skinny, and I guess she thought she could come up against me, I whip the shit out of her. Don’t be telling me that. I mean I felt bad and stuff, but, what made it even worse, she wouldn’t cry, she wouldn’t cry. She’s like, “Bitch”…. Excuse my language, she was thinking, “Bitch keep on hitting me.” Is this your first child? Let me tell you what. If you beat a child, and they don’t cry, it’s the most frustrating thing in the world. It’s like that child is just about sick of you, you know what I mean? And my daughter would not cry. She was just pure evil. Right then, it was pure evil. All her daddy came out of her.

**Interviewer:** So when was the first time you got arrested?

**035:** You know what, I didn’t get arrested until I started being with Matt.

**Interviewer:** So this was much later. Ok. Let’s just talk about your time in Virginia for now. So you were working three jobs?

**035:** Yeah, one at Farm Fresh, and then at the weekends I would work at the mall, and then Monday through Friday at night I would work at a Submarine Shop, and I would close them up. What did you ask me?

**Interviewer:** Just tell me about life in Virginia. How long were you there?

**035:** Oh, that was fun… but I don’t know, I don’t know. All together I say about 10 years. Because I just went back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, cause I remember at 14, when my daughter was 14 we went back cause her father was dying. Then we went back, and then we came back, and we just stayed. I love Virginia, let me tell you about Virginia. They always say it takes a village to raise a child, well, that’s what happened to my child. That’s why I love Virginia and that’s why she’s a good girl like she is today. She is a good girl. I would work all the time but I didn’t care because the people up the
street, the boy who I came to Florida with, Matt, they were his relatives. Everybody that lived down the street was one. And so they took my child to be one of theirs – they knew I was working all the time, so they took her to be one of their childrens. She was raised by them, and I thank them for that every day. That’s why I didn’t mind having all them jobs. And Matt, he didn’t work, so he would basically be there if she need someone to touch base with. That would be him. He would iron her socks, iron her shorts, that boy was Susie homemaker! I would send him to the bank and he would get the food for him and her, he was Susie homemaker.

Interviewer: How old were you when you met Matt?

035: I think I was 26… all I know is my daughter was 8 years old. She was 8. And he was so good to her, he would do her hair and she loved him so much. He came back to me one day, and she say, “Can I call him daddy?” Cause he was really good to her, he really touched her little heart. And he been good to her ever since, you know? What was I saying? Oh, me and Matt, no a village raising a child. That is very very important, cause my child? Still, to this day, she is family with them people. She go down every summer. In fact, I’m going to meet her July 4th so we can all be together.

Interviewer: So tell me, have there ever been times in your adult life that you’ve been unemployed?

035: Yeah… yeah, when I was like, I don’t know, for a year… or like seven years ago until now, I ain’t have no job.

Interviewer: So is this the first time?

035: Yeah. That’s when I got to ripping and a robbing, but I didn’t get caught! I still don’t get caught, but I really need to stop that.

Interviewer: Take me from when your daughter was 14 years old, to use it as a marker, to the first time… well, I guess when you moved to Florida.

035: Oh, I didn’t move to Florida until I was older. But I remember in Virginia, and my daughter was about 13, and her friends are Kaya, Toya, and Grace, they was like the three girls that hung around together. And then my sister, who wasn’t my sister, but I call her my sister. She lived over here and I lived over here and the kids would come down to my house every day after school. And uh, I would always make sure the door was open, 3 o’clock, the door had to be open and the screen door had to be open, because every day when my daughter came home she had to go to the bathroom. She would have to pee and she’d be running and struggling with the door. So what I would do is every day at 3 o’clock I had the door open and the screen door open, and she would just, “thanks mom” and run in the house. She was funny. But then uh, I was taking care of my girlfriend more so, cause she was with an abusive man, Julio. Do you know she… she would work all day, at Farm Fresh, a cake decorator, and when she came home, she had four kids, she had to make sure that all the homework was done, make sure they was clean, “Hi, how you doing?”, she had to have dinner, make sure everybody had dinner and make sure everyone did their homework and stuff, but when her husband came home, he came home, he wanted dinner hot, dinner on the table hot. Then he wanted her to run his bath water, and then, when she… she had to wash him, and when she was done washing him, she had to put the lotion in the microwave! So it wasn’t cold! Plus she did all of that with the kids. I said, ‘Tell that boy to kiss your ass.’ He was so pretty, and he was pretty, he was pretty… I couldn’t see her go through all of that. And like a couple of times I had to get in a couple of altercations with him, cause he was using her, she was my best friend. So they asked, um, we took this questionnaire one time… she took a questionnaire one time, and it said, “How much does your best friend love you?” “Would your best friend die for you?” And uh, she said then, right then and there, she realized I was her best friend, cause that boy almost killed me one time. He had his hand… she
wanted her to go home, and we were pulling her, and then I pulled her into my house…. And he had his hands… yeah, I would, I would die for her. And and, we’re, we’re still good friends today. I love Virginia because it gave me so much sense of love and family, togetherness. Virginia was it for me. It was it. I mean, my daughter was raised real good, I’m still friends with these people today, we still see them. And they, they raised my daughter right, you know? And my best friend, I used to always take care of her kids. I love Virginia, I love Virginia. It was good, we worked non-stop. Nothing, nothing. I really liked Virginia. I really did and my grandmother, she had this house, and she only had a living room with a wood stove in it, and then she had a bedroom with a king size bed and then she had a couch over there and she had a kitchen and a little bitty bathroom… It was (counts all the people)… 8 people use to stay in that house.

**Interviewer:** So is that where you stayed in Virginia? The whole time?

**035:** Yeah! Yeah, but I mean, we didn’t live with them, but we would have sleepovers, the whole family would come over and sleep. The point I’m making is the whole house was so small, but we would all fit on it.

(talks about mother visiting, adding tent to sleep in for extra people)

My life was on a role then. Even though I was an alcoholic, it was ok. I wasn’t ripping, robbing, nothing. I was cool, I was cool. And a lot of people loved and cared about me. Isn’t that a big difference from my mom and them? You know what I mean? They loved me.

**Interviewer:** When did your daughter move out?

**035:** Let me see, she moved out… she was 15. She was getting checks from her dad, so I was spending checks from her dad, that’s how I didn’t have no job. And uh, I would take the money and just spend it all on crack cocaine. I was doing crack cocaine then. Eh, and uh, boy, and then my daughter, she just got mad at me cause I was always spending up the money and I wouldn’t give her none and our bills wouldn’t be paid or nothing else like that. And I forget what you asked me, but… 16, cause, she wanted to move out, so she, I moved out… she was 16 and what I did was… she had the apartment and I left her the apartment, and I left her the money, and I took her son, cause she had a baby by then, and I took her son and I told her, uh, “since you’re… I’m going to do this for you, cause you’re 16, and every girl needs a 16 summer all by yourself.” So I took her son and me and him moved to Virginia and I let her have the whole summer to herself, no baby, no nothing like that, so she could get that out of her system. Cause, you know, now times I think that girls resent that they didn’t get to have a childhood, you know? I didn’t want my baby to be like that so I took her baby and me and him went to Virginia. I left her there for a whole year. And then when I came back, I was drinking real bad, smoking dope, and she said, “Well, mom, we don’t want you here no more because you’re fucking up.” Excuse my language, but that’s what she said. I said, “Alright.” So, then they wanted me to leave and give them the apartment… “You all must be stupid.” Where am I going to live at? So what I did was, what her boyfriend did was, … then they moved out, and I was ok with that. I was ok with that. As a matter of fact, that’s what I was telling her now… my daughter is real sick, she’s got lupus. You know what lupus is? She has lupus real bad, and now she has the water in the lungs, and her chest is filling up, and uh, she worried… she more worried about when she dies, “What you worried about that for? You ain’t going to die! Shut up!” Well, anyways, she more worried about when she dies who’s going to take care of her children. Who’s going to love her children the way she does? You know? And I, I finish telling her, just today, you got to understand, when I let you go at 16, I didn’t worry about you. I gave you knowledge of family, I gave you knowledge of God and who he was, she went to Sunday school every day, … plus, I gave you morals, you know? Butt whippings weren’t doing the thing. If you give your children that, they’ll be fine. So at 16, I wasn’t worried about letting her go.
Interviewer: What were you doing then?

035: I was living by myself in the apartment. Then in like 6 months I stopped paying the bills.

Interviewer: You weren’t’ working at the time?

035: I was smoking that crack cocaine. So then I lost the apartment cause I wouldn’t pay for it.

Interviewer: What happened from there? Where did you go?

035: What I did was, building 50. CSU. You don’t know what that is? Crisis Stabilization Unit? I was on building 50, that’s what that was, you go in cause you say you crazy. I go up there and stay.

Interviewer: Where you on the streets otherwise?

035: Yeah.

Interviewer: In Virginia at the time?

035: No, I was in Northtown. Me and my baby came back. As long as I was taking care of the baby, I didn’t drink or, I drank a little bit, socially. But I never did drugs or nothing. That was my baby. But then uh, … ok, yeah, or I would stay with this faggot. And he would do dress up as projects or whatever, he was real crazy. …. After I left town, then Matt called me in Florida, and he said, “Come on down here and spend some of this money with me.”

Interviewer: How old were you when you moved to Florida?

035: I don’t know, 35? 36? Cause you know, I was 30 for 5 years, did you know that? (Laughing) When I hit thirty, didn’t want to go no further. That was funny. My girlfriend used to always say to me, ‘Are you still thirty? It’s been four years, are you still thirty?” I just lost track of how old I was, you know? That’s why, when the man, I told him I was 48 the other day, he said, “No, you’re 49.” I said, “Really?” I didn’t know I was 49! But, I’m ok with that.

Interviewer: What happened when you came to Florida?

035: Yo! Matt was my boyfriend, I had just moved from South Carolina, Greensborough North Carolina, cause I went to stay with my sister Jewel cause I had no place to stay. So I call her one day and ask her for a bus ticket to come stay with her, and I stay with her in Greensborough North Carolina, we had good fun. Then I got a job at Wal-Mart. And then Matt, he call me up, he say, ‘I’m making all this money! Girl, come down here and spend some of this money with me.” So, uh, he came and got me, and I went down here with him. That’s when it goes downhill, with him, you know? I mean, he was cheating on me, and you know, I was in the prime of my life! I wanted to be with me and my man, cause I already went through all of that. Now this point of my life I’m ready for...man, we had a nice trailer, out where… you know where (location) is? When they were real nice. We stayed out there and uh, he was cheating on me, and I was working at night time. Because in Greensborough North Carolina, I got a job at Wal-Mart, and what they did was, they let me transfer, to Florida. So I had a job and everything. Me and him, we’re making good money. But he kept cheating on me and blah blah blah. So then I had all this money, started using drugs again, started acting up, and, lost my job.

Interviewer: Were you still stealing?
035: Yeah, yeah, that’s the first time I went to jail! When uh, I went to his house, cause he… I went to his house, I just had it, and I tore up everything in his house. I went to jail

Interviewer: Tell me about that? How was that time in jail?

035: Yo, it was ok. It was alright cause they didn’t look at me like a criminal. It was just like, ‘Oh, you’re boyfriend… he did you wrong.’ Cause what I did, it was raining, and when I walked on the table, I slipped, and I got this big big bruise… they felt sorry for me, I told them that he had beat me up. That’s why they felt sorry for me. I had this big hematoma on my leg, that’s what they call it, like that. So I stayed mostly in the nurses office. Cause that was my first offense they let me go, you know? They felt sorry for me and it was my first offense, they let me go.

Interviewer: How long were you there?

035: Overnight. Overnight and they let me go the next morning cause you have to go to first appearance, and then they let you go. But I haven’t been in jail a lot!

Interviewer: I know. It was 4 times.

035: Yeah, and I only did as much as 33 days. That’s because, uh, as you keep going on and on and on, they give you more time. That’s the only reason I spent those times in jail, cause I kept going on and on and on, and they like, “We’re just sick of you.” I remember the last time I went to jail, Matt was beating up on me, cheating on me, I mean, any other man I could of handled, but, he was my boy! I know you all this time, took care of you, cause I had three jobs, you took care of the household, and he just went slap crazy on me. You know, like cheating, and it just hurted me more. And I remember, I was standing, I was sitting in the chair, and he just kept talking talking talking, and all of a sudden, I just, I just went blank. But, I feel myself, get up, and go in the room, and I grabbed him by his neck. Now, while I was doing it, I was sitting there watching me. I was watching me do this. And I grabbed him by his neck and I had a knife to his neck and uh, he said, I don’t know what he said. I had him up like this, off his feet, and he’s a heavy guy. He slapped the knife out of my hand and in two seconds, I had another knife up against his… he said, “You damn crazy.” He hit the knife out of my hand and he ran out of the house. So then I started getting stuff of his and burning it in the grill. Then I called the cops and I said, “Please, you all need to come and get me. Please come and arrest me.” Because I, I don’t know what I felt, but I didn’t feel safe with myself. So I called them up and I said, ‘yo, you all have to come and get me.” Then after that, that’s when I stayed in there. That was the worst, that was the worst one.

Interviewer: So after the first time, when you went to jail for a night, did you go straight back there or did you separate for a while?

035: No, I didn’t have nowhere to go! I’m all by myself in Florida. I ain’t got no family, I ain’t got nobody, where am I going to go? So I had to go back to him.

Interviewer: How long did you work at Wal-Mart?

035: About 2 years. We had a good life, me and him, we had a good life. He was uh, the manager at Winn-Dixie, so he was making good money and I was making good money. But, what did you ask me?... 2 years.

Interviewer: Did you stay at the trailer? What happened when you left Wal-Mart?
035: He got a girl pregnant, and he wanted me to leave, so she could come and stay with him cause she was pregnant. He was just being mean and ignorant for a little while, so I just started using drugs. Then one of his friends told me about this place called ACT 2, in Ocala, and so I went down there and stayed. And him and her just set up house with the baby, and all, you know, so I was in Ocala for a little while. But I wasn’t using drugs or nothing like that.

Interviewer: Were you working?

035: Yeah. We had to go to this temporary place… temp agency and uh, … we would get jobs through that. Act 2 is a place where girls go, and boys, and we go and get clean and sober. In one house you have three girls in one room, three girls in this room, and two girls in that room, and we would live together and take care of each other. But, we had to pay to stay there. So we had to, go to, to uh, get jobs. And yeah, I had good jobs. I worked in the Kmart distribution center, I was making $10 an hour! That was, that was like, my daughter was 25 years old then and I was making that kind of money back then, that was a lot of money back then! I was making $10 an hour back then, I had a good job. But then we lost the contract, and then I had to go work at this other store. It was where they made brackets and stuff like that. You know when you go to the checkout? And they have these items and they are on these little brackets? We made those! We made those! And I loved that job.

Interviewer: You were clean and sober the whole time?

035: Yeah, we had to be. I was living… I had left ACT 2 when the Kmart distribution stopped, and I came back to Gainesville with this old man. He was an alcoholic, he used to keep dope, he used to buy all this dope for me and keep it for me. That’s his way of keeping me, and I met him, I bet to this day he still has some hid in his house. He hide it everywhere so I wouldn’t overdo it, and he would get drunk and tease me with it. He the one that made me go into rehab. He was like 60, 65 then and I was looking at him and I wonder, “Do I want to be like that when I’m 65?” So that made me go to rehab.

Interviewer: Did you go to a different place or the same one?

035: I went to, uh, a different place. I went to Marion County Mental health. And right next door they have this place called SARS, and it is so good. It is real good, yeah. Yeah because, I’m going to say 50% of people who have addictions have mental afflictions. What they would do is make us concentrate on our lives, not on our addiction, our lives! When we straightened that out, the addiction would be straightened out because we understood it. I loved that. I never… when you go to another rehabilitation place, they talk about the drugs, talk about what you did… but this one made you think about your life, not just the addiction. I really liked that, it was good. And then, when I was there, I had my car… I had a car! I was making $10 an hour, I bought me a car. One day I kept dreaming and thinking about my grandma, and every time I think about her, I would throw up. And I tell the man, they wouldn’t let me go at first, and I said, “look”, and I was telling him how and he didn’t believe me, and I said, “Look, my grandmother needs me.” And he had sandwich right here, and I said, “My grandmother really…” blahhh….and he said, “Ok, yeah, I think you need to go.” Cause when I was thinking about her I would get physically ill and not many people knew that. He said I was just ready to go because I had money, and a car. But, no, my grandmother needed me. And when I went there to Virginia, I only had $85, I only had $85…. I’m saying I don’t know where the money came from, but I made it to her house. So anyways, when I got there, the next day my cousin died, she was in a car accident. And then, uh, three days later, my uncle had a stroke. So, it was meant for me to be there. My grandmother had already had a stroke. Nobody was there to take care of her, so I had to take care of her. See how God puts you where he needs you to be? I went right there and took care of her and four days later my uncle died. That was her last son, that was her last son, she don’t have no more brothers, sisters, mother, father, cousins, children… I was it.
Interviewer: How long were you in Virginia taking care of her?

035: I don’t know… a couple of years…

Interviewer: Did you get a job and stuff while you were there?

035: No, I had to take care of her. She was hard headed. It was winter and what I had to do… she had the wood stove, and uh, if the fire went out or something, she would have to bend down and open the hatch with her foot… and she didn’t want to stop that. I was afraid she was going to burn the house down, so I had to stay home with her. But, from time to time, that’s when I got the job for the fire watch. So, you know, I could go if I wanted to and I didn’t have to if I didn’t want to. She took good care of me. She didn’t have a lot of money, but we had enough to eat and all of that.

Interviewers: What about you with drugs or alcohol? Stealing? Where you doing anything like that when you were back in Virginia?

035: Yeah, yeah… I was uh, I got back into drugs because I was afraid. I was afraid. My grandmother was everything to me. She was my mother, my grandmother, she was all of that. I didn’t want her to leave me. She was getting sicker an sicker, and I started using drugs because I didn’t want to face that reality that she was going to die. Then she told me, “Sherry, don’t be nervous. I’m not going to leave you until you are able to take care of yourself.” That’s why I kept on messing up and using drugs and stuff like that. I didn’t want her to leave me, I didn’t want her to leave me. She was the only person who love me, the only person who loved me. And then, when I got… then one time she went to the hospital… I was still getting high and stuff like that, you know, she went to the hospital this one time, and she was telling us how she saw heaven. She saw all of heave, she said it was real bright, flowers, and all of this. Then she said that she was ready to go but she came back because she heard me calling her. Isn’t that sweet? If that ain’t love, I don’t know what is. Yeah. I wasn’t ready for her to go and I guess, subconsciously or something, I was portraying that to her…. All this feeling people and seeing people I got that from her. Let me tell you, let me tell you, she would sit in a chair like this. I say, “Grandma what are you doing?” She say, “That’s how I talk to dead people.” She, she could talk to dead people. She say to us one time, “John” That’s her son, her last son, “John is coming over to my house at 11 o’clock so I can see him. I need to be on the porch at 11 o’clock.” And you know, we paid her no mind, and she didn’t have no clock in her room whatsoever, and she got up at 11 o’clock and she went outside. We say, “Grandma, whatcha doing?” She say, “Well, John’s outside.” I told the nurse, “Go see what time it is!” We look outside and she was talking to him. And uh, I had no choice but to believe it, right? Right? And that’s where I got that from. Finally, I came back to uh, um, Florida.

Interviewer: What made you decide to go back?

035: I wasn’t doing good for my grandma. I was stealing her money, and she didn’t have money for her stuff. I was real bad. I guess cause she was close and I didn’t want her to be close. So I came on back to Florida and got my hallelujah praise on. She said, ”Why don’t you come back here to see me?” So I went back to see her, but I took too long cause my cousins didn’t want me back down there because they were afraid I was going to steal her money and stuff. They didn’t know I had the Hallelujah praise on. So then um, finally, she just went into like a coma, and I knew it was time for me to go back down there. I would lay in a bed with her, she was in a coma, talk to her, you know, joke and giggle. Anyway, to make a long story short, I told the nurse, “Grandma, she going to look at me. She going to look at me and she is going to be happy that I’m here.” And she did. She opened her eyes, I said, “Hey grandma, I’m here.” And she smiled at me and she went back to sleep. I said, ‘She’s going to die tomorrow.” She did. She just wanted to see me. She just wanted to say goodbye or whatever. She knew I had my hallelujah praise on and stuff like that.
Interviewer: Did you find a church in Florida, or what happened?

035: You know what? I was hanging out with sister Sarah, I used to work with her at Wal-Mart. And uh, she was a good friend of mine, you know, and she liked to go to church, and I wanted to, you know, I really just knew her. So I was just in to what she was in to, so that’s how I got in to it.

Interviewer: When your grandma passed did you stay there or come back here?

035: I stayed for week and came back home. I mean what, she ain’t there.

Interviewer: Where was home in Florida? Where were you living?

035: With Matt. Yeah, down on uh, down on (says address). Staying with him I think. And then all that other stuff happened, all of that, then I left him. Cause I couldn’t live with him. You know Dr. Smee? You don’t know him? He had this program in the jail. If you say you’re mentally ill, you have to go see him. And he was the suicide doctor, that’s what we called him. If you were on suicide watch you had to see him. He’s the one that told me what was going on in my head and stuff like that. I was telling him about seeing me do that, and he’s the one that started telling me about it, that most people in jail are mentally ill. You know? He was schooling me about that. And then he just left. He started a program about men who are mentally ill and keep going into prisons. And then he was trying to start a program where he could catch them before they went in and rehabilitate them.

Interviewer: So when you left Mark, what was going on in your life?

035: I don’t know, staying in the woods for a little while. I was staying with the man…. What time is it? Can we wrap this up? With you pregnant, I don’t think we should sit this long.

Interviewer: I’m fine. It’s 12:45.

035: I got to go.

Interviewer: That’s fine.

035: But look, I was staying with the man, that hid the dope all over the house?... (Lists people she stayed with)

Interviewer: tell me one more thing before you go. Are you pretty much drug free now?

035: Yup. Cause I was something. As of last month, I was, but not this month. I was spending too much money, I need my money. So, no, no more drugs or nothing for me.

Interviewer: What about stealing?

035: yeah. Yeah. That’s like a compulsion or something. I just go into Wal-Mart and I know I can get away with it. And I steal stupid stuff, like air fresheners. The biggest thing I stole was a remote control. I can’t help myself, I have to do that. I guess I’m giving away all my other bad habits, I got to keep this one. But I really want to get rid of that too, I’m going to end up in jail.

Interviewer: What do you see for yourself in the next five years? What do you think is going to happen?
035: Let me tell you what, I’m going to one, have a washer and dryer, ok? And um, I just want to be able to bend down and speak in tongue. That’s all I want to do, speak in tongue and I’ll be alright.

Interviewer: What do you think the chances are of you using drugs again?

035: I ain’t going to lie to you. I get a drink every now and then, cause I worry about my daughter. That’s just an excuse, I drink cause I want to. But as far as the dope, no, no because I mean, I look at it and I spend all that money, and I get high for one hour. I could have a washer and dryer forever. Know what I’m saying?

Interviewer: You have a place?

035: Yeah, yeah, two years ago I got my disability. They pay first month, last month… all I had to do was bring my stuff! And I could move in. So yeah, I have my own place and stuff like that. I love that too, I love that.

Interviewer: One more question and we’ll wrap it up… to continue with the next five years, - what do you think the chances are of you being arrested in the next five years?

035: If I don’t stop… if I don’t stop stealing, I might be arrested next week. Yeah.

Interviewer: So you think that there is a chance.

035: Yeah, yeah. But I need to get that under control. I don’t know how, but I will. I don’t want to go back to jail, I don’t want to go back to jail so I have to get that under control. And uh, just bank stuff under control, that’s federal!

Interviewer: Are you doing the same thing as before?

035: No, these people came to me, I knew they didn’t have the money in the bank, and they wanted me to cash a check on my account. And what I thought the people in the bank were going to do was send an insufficient funds to their bank, they made me pay for it! So I need to take care of that, or I’ll be in jail for that. I need to take care of that like tomorrow. So the stealing and the bank, if I get that together, I’m good. I’m good.

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much.

035: Thank you!
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Zenta E. Gomez Auyong was born in Santiago, Chile but has spent most of her life in the United States. She earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Sociology from Stetson University in Deland, Florida. Upon completion of her degree, Zenta went on to the University of Florida where she earned a Master of Arts in Criminology, Law, and Society. Zenta continued her doctoral studies in Criminology, Law, and Society at the University of Florida.