

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES UNDERLYING LONG-TERM CRIMINAL
DESISTANCE AMONG FORMER CAREER CRIMINALS

By Sarah C. K. Bourget

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty
of the California Institute of Integral Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Psychology
in Clinical Psychology

California Institute of Integral Studies
San Francisco, CA

2011

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES UNDERLYING LONG-TERM CRIMINAL DESISTANCE AMONG FORMER CAREER CRIMINALS by Sarah C. K. Bourget, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Kaisa Puhakka, Ph.D., Chair
Faculty in the Department of Clinical Psychology

Robert Morgan, Ph.D.
University of Arkansas Little Rock

© Sarah C. K. Bourget 2011

Sarah C. K. Bourget
California Institute of Integral Studies, 2011
Kaisa Puhakka, Ph.D., Committee Chair

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES UNDERLYING LONG-TERM CRIMINAL
DESISTANCE AMONG FORMER CAREER CRIMINALS

Abstract

Convicted criminals are often punished with temporary detainment in correctional institutions. However, many do not have a corrective experience and come in and out of custody as though there were a revolving door, further entrenched in criminality upon release. Each time a repeat offender reenters the community he is at an impasse. The choices can be reduced to recidivism or desistance from crime. In other words, he can continue his criminal career, reoffend, and be remanded into custody or he can make a change, abstain from crime, and work towards maintaining a crime-free lifestyle. In order to promote the latter, this process of change must be better understood. The present study investigated the psychological changes that are associated with long-term desistance from criminal behavior. Grounded theory methodology was employed to develop a hypothesis about the psychology behind criminal desistance. The experiences of reformed career offenders were accessed directly using in-depth interviews inquiring about past and present experiences, ideas about transformation, and beliefs about criminal desistance. The participants consisted of 4 men and 1 woman who stopped engaging in illegal behavior for at least 3 years after an extensive criminal past. The findings demonstrated that long-term criminal desistance is accompanied by an increase in prosocial impulses. The

strength of the prosocial impulse is the product of other psychological phenomena including thoughts about change, self-reflection, psychological growth, feelings of connectedness to prosocial objects, and ongoing motivation to remain crime-free. Prosocial impulses refer to thoughts and feelings that promote the well-being of the self and humankind. Some basic examples of prosocial impulses include empathy, gratitude, honesty, accountability, hope, helping, curiosity, acceptance, and humor. The suggestion that prosocial impulses are positively related to long-term criminal desistance is unique to this research.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging my chair, Dr. Kaisa Puhakka, for allowing me to work at my own pace and for her warmth and rigorous feedback, a combination that enabled me to generate my best work. I want to recognize my external reader, Dr. Robert Morgan, who has been a pleasure to work with from our first email correspondence. His feedback has been invaluable to increasing the quality of my project. I have the utmost respect for both of my committee members and I thank them for making an overwhelming goal feel attainable.

I would like to give special thanks to Erik Bourget, my husband since 2003 and my best friend since 1997. He fills my life with love, support, and acceptance. He makes the sun shine more brightly every day.

I give my heartfelt thanks to my parents, Herb and Janet Kontio, for instilling the importance of education and for making me feel special just for being myself. I want to acknowledge my sisters, Noelle Scott and Marykate Kontio, for being irreplaceable.

I am grateful to Erika, Paul, and Douglas Bourget for being more than I could have ever wished for in in-laws.

I want to recognize Abner Bourget who was often by my side while I was writing, offering gentle encouragement with his presence.

I sincerely appreciate three gifted young clinicians with whom I've had the good fortune of working during my dissertation process: Michele Haley, Jeannie Chang, and Uwey Belletto.

I would like to thank United States Probation Officer Jennifer James for her assistance with recruitment. She is largely responsible for my sample of participants. Her dedication to her work is inspirational and she is an asset to her field and everyone under her supervision.

Thank you all for making me one lucky lady!

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to all the men and women with criminal pasts who are courageous enough to try to change their lives.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Dedication	viii
Chapter 1	13
Introduction.....	13
Statement of the Problem.....	13
Limitations	15
Chapter 2	18
Review of the Literature.....	18
Reentry	18
Challenges of Reentry	18
The Price of Failed Reentry.....	19
Recidivism	21
Recidivism Statistics	21
Factors Influencing Recidivism.....	22
Desistance	27
Theories of Desistance	29
The Role of Family	37
Support From Loved Ones	37
Marriage	41
Children	44
Conclusions About the Role of Loved Ones	46
The Role of Therapy and Rehabilitation Programs	47
Characteristics of Effective Treatment for the Forensic Population	47
Examples of Treatment in Action.....	50
The Impact of Treatment Put in Perspective	52
The Role of Work	54
The Role of Identity and Self.....	57
Recreating the Self.....	59
Making Sense of a Criminal Past.....	64
Integrated Discussion of Research.....	65
Unresolved Issues	72
Research Question	74

Chapter 3	77
Method	77
Operational Definitions of Research Questions.....	77
Research Design.....	78
Sampling Method.....	80
Inclusion Criteria.....	80
Exclusion Criteria.....	86
Interview Protocol.....	87
Procedure	87
Data Analysis	89
Chapter 4	91
Results	91
Participant Summaries	91
Participant #1.....	93
Background Information	93
Desistance Process	97
Participant #2.....	109
Background Information	109
Desistance Process	111
Participant #3.....	117
Background Information	117
Desistance Process	118
Participant #4.....	124
Background Information	124
Desistance Process	131
Participant #5.....	145
Background Information	145
Desistance Process	147
Open Coding.....	152
Early Life.....	153
Criminal History.....	154
Antisocial Thinking.....	154
Impetus for Change	155
Self-Reflection.....	155
Psychological Growth	158
Feeling Connected to a Prosocial Object.....	159
Incarceration Experiences	162
Obstacles	163
Motivation to Remain Crime-Free	165
Prosocial Behavior	166
Prosocial Impulses.....	168
Axial Coding.....	170
Selective Coding.....	172

Chapter 5	174
Discussion	174
Summary of the Findings.....	174
Comparison of the Present Findings With Previous Findings	177
Similarities With Other Studies.....	177
Differences From Other Studies.....	181
Social and Professional Implications	183
Limitations	184
Future Directions	187
Conclusion	188
References.....	189
Appendix A	
Interview Protocol.....	196
Appendix B	
Participant Information Letter.....	197
Appendix C	
Participant Informed Consent Form	200
Appendix D	
Bill of Rights for Participants	202
Appendix E	
Consent to Contact Probation/Parole Officer	203
Appendix F	
Consent to Allow a Legal Official to Disclose Criminal History	204
Appendix G	
Flyer	205
Appendix H	
Transcript Samples.....	206
Appendix I	
Axial Coding.....	212

The Road not Taken

Robert Frost
1915, Mountain Interval

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Hundreds of thousands of inmates are released into the community in the United States every year. Petersilia (2003) estimates more than 600,000 adult inmates are released annually from American state and federal prisons. This translates to approximately 1,600 former inmates sent back into the community each day. Other experts report even higher numbers. For example, Wilkinson and Rhine (2005) estimate that more than 700,000 adult inmates are discharged from U.S. state and federal prisons each year. Thousands will reoffend, sometimes violently, and commit a crime within months, weeks, days, or even hours after release from custody. For example, one study found that 67.5% of former inmates were rearrested within 3 years of release from custody (Langan & Levin, 2002).

Recidivism research is common because persistent criminal activity affects society on many levels. From an economic perspective, recidivism is hugely problematic. Supporting inmates is a burdensome fiscal responsibility, as is monetary restitution for damages caused by criminal activity. Also, money spent on building and maintaining jails and prisons could be used to fund generative causes. "Presently, California, arguably one of the most striking examples of prison growth in the nation, if not the world, spends as much to incarcerate inmates as it does to educate students in its public universities" (Paparozzi & DeMichele, 2008, p. 276). If this movement continues, in the near future more money will be allotted for inmates than for college students. From a

popular culture perspective, recidivism garners attention because the serial offender peaks curiosity and captures the imagination of the masses. From a public safety perspective, recidivism is a threat. The community must be protected from repeat offenders.

The alternative to recidivism is criminal desistance. Desistance is the less flashy side of reentry into the community that involves hard work, change, and growth. Understanding the process of desisting from crime is of vital importance. Many potential victims could be spared if the experiences of those who have transformed and desisted from crime were better understood. Understanding how people change, rather than how they do not, is critical to learning how to help people make changes.

The current research analyzed the stories of a sample of 4 men and 1 woman to understand how internal processes enable the former inmate to desist from crime. The primary research question is: What psychological changes accompany criminal desistance among former career criminals?

The psychological constructs that emerged as important included the experience of prosocial impulses, thoughts about change, self-reflection, psychological growth, feelings of connectedness to prosocial objects, and ongoing motivation to remain crime-free. Because the intent was to conduct an exploratory study to investigate known and unknown themes behind criminal desistance, a qualitative approach was chosen. In-depth interviews were conducted with 5 volunteers who have been out of custody for at least 3 years and had neither reoffended nor been violated for disobeying the conditions of supervised release.

To insure that criminal behavior was part of the lifestyle of all of the participants, each participant had an adult criminal history spanning 5 to 10 years or more. This criminal career was required to consist of a minimum of two separate crimes that resulted in conviction. These convictions included at least two felonies, or only one felony in addition to multiple misdemeanors. Also, every participant identified as a former criminal and expressed intent to avoid illegal behavior permanently.

Limitations

This research was limited by the usual constraints due to small sample size. The findings are suggestive rather than conclusive. The data was analyzed to uncover a central theme of change, namely an increase in prosocial impulses. Further investigation is required to determine if this theme is empirically sturdy or generalizable to other forensic populations.

The present study welcomed participants with a variety of criminal backgrounds, as the goal of this research was to uncover a universal theory of criminal desistance that underlies reform from chronic criminal behavior, the assumption being that there is a universal psychological element underlying criminal desistance regardless of the type of crime. One research team found just the opposite to be true when they observed that predictive variables for criminal desistance varied by the seriousness of the crime (Gunnison & Mazerolle, 2007), meaning that the process of desistance may vary by criminal history. However, all types of criminal desistors had predictive variables in common when compared to their persisting cohort. For example, desistors were more likely to expect

punishment for wrongdoing, less likely to use substances, less likely to have an antisocial temperament, less likely to have contact with criminal peers, and less likely to have negative relationships with other adults compared to offenders who chose to persist in criminal activity. Desistors have unique qualities when compared to persistors, but as a subpopulation desistors may not be uniform enough to lump together. It may be that the process of criminal desistance varies somewhat by criminal history.

In order to study desistance from career criminality, all of the participants were required to have established histories of criminal behavior. This means that the participants were older and had a history of being caught. People who desist from crime in early life, such as adolescence, were not included in this research. Arguably those who desist from criminality early in life are not as entrenched in a criminal identity, making them less suitable for this research. People that commit serious crimes without detection, but nevertheless eventually desist from crime, were not recruited for this research as they are a difficult population to access.

Permanent criminal desistance is not guaranteed until death. As the deceased cannot be interviewed, the second best option is to interview people who have abstained from criminal activity for a long enough period of time that it is statistically unlikely that they will offend again. A criterion for participation in this study is that the desistor believes he will never offend again. Even so, some of the participants interviewed for this research may recidivate in the future. The delayed recidivist's perspective is still valuable as a measure of long-term, if not permanent, criminal desistance.

Participants were offered a \$25 gift card redeemable at a local business for volunteering their time (2 participants refused the gift card and 2 participants expressed plans to share or give away the gift card). The sample consisted of self-selecting, motivated participants. Their stories may not be representative of the typical criminal desistor. It seems likely that only those who had legitimately desisted from crime and had a story to share would participate in a study offering minimal compensation. The possibility remains that a participant in this study has not truly desisted from crime. Illegal behavior and probation violations can go undetected.

Participants were asked to reflect on the changes that have occurred in their lives making the interviews retrospective. Some of the participants may still be in the process of consolidating these changes in their psyches. Although retrospective interviews have weaknesses, including a skewed memory of the events in questions, for this study in particular that skewed perspective is important. One of the goals of the investigation is to attempt to understand how people reconcile their past so they do not inhibit their possibility for growth in the future.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Reentry

93% of all prisoners currently in custody will be released into the free world (Petersilia, 2003). Very few inmates die in custody, less than 1%, and only 7% of convicts are serving life sentences or awaiting execution. Reentry is inevitable for the vast majority of the prison population.

Challenges of Reentry

Reentry into the community after incarceration is a complicated process that often involves rebuilding a life (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris, & Fisher, 2005). Many former inmates are not equipped for the task of recreating a life from scratch. It is common for newly released offenders to be struggling with substance addiction, homelessness, mental illness, unemployment, medical problems, hunger, and isolation (Petersilia, 2003). Even those who are educated, healthy, and supported by loved ones must live with the brand of ex-convict. In many parts of the country it is virtually impossible to keep one's criminal status a secret. For example, in half of the United States, criminal records are made public on the Internet and easily accessible to the layperson. Reentry poses challenges to all types of former inmates, rich or poor, young or old.

A study done on prisoners from Australia assessed short-term reintegration among 79 inmates (54 men and 25 women) by administering questionnaires 1-month prerelease, 1 to 4 weeks postrelease, and 3 to 4 months postrelease (Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). A description of the ethnic

backgrounds of the participants was not provided. The researchers divided the factors that effect reentry into three categories: intrapersonal conditions, subsistence conditions, and support conditions. Intrapersonal conditions are defined as physical and psychological health, substance use, education level, life skills, and mood and affect. Subsistence conditions consist of finance, employment, and housing. Support conditions involve social support, formal support services, and support from the criminal justice system. Significant findings include a reduction in reports of favorable psychological health at 1 to 4 weeks postrelease compared with more favorable mental health ratings prerelease and 3 to 4 months after release. This suggests that the challenges of early reentry take a toll on mental health during the first weeks of adjustment to the community.

The Price of Failed Reentry

Each former inmate that returns to custody is a financial liability. The following puts the cost of supporting an inmate in perspective “a year in prison costs as much as a year at Harvard” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 9). The price tag varies by age. Younger offenders, more likely to be healthy, can cost \$22,000 annually, while it can cost more than \$69,000 annually to maintain an older inmate (Petersilia, 2003). The operation of all U.S. prisons and jails combined with the funding required for probation and parole programs cost the U.S. government \$50 billion annually.

The U.S. government is heavily invested in successful reentry because of the aforementioned expenses. For example, \$100 million has been allocated for

the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, an initiative developed in 2001 by the U.S. Department of Justice and other federal agencies to fund reentry planning and programs in every state (Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005). Since 2001, funds have continued to be directed to this initiative. Former President Bush stated in his 2004 State of the Union address, “America is the land of second chances,” in reference to his opinion that more funds should be directed towards reentry strategies. If it was inexpensive to keep citizens in jail or prison or even profitable, one wonders if anyone would be offered a second chance. The reality is that “second chances” may not be sufficient. A third chance, a tenth chance, or a thirtieth chance may be required before reentry is successful.

Despite the obvious payoff of successful reentry, the government has made reentry even more challenging in the last 30 years. Since 1980, the number of laws that restrict the rights of ex-offenders has increased (Petersilia, 2003; Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005). Under these new laws, former criminals cannot work in certain professions. Men and women with criminal records have limited access to welfare and housing subsidies. It is more difficult for ex-convicts to retain parental rights and to vote. Punishment is extended beyond jail and prison in this way. Former criminals, particularly those that are impulsive and have a low tolerance for frustration, may find themselves tempted to offend again to access what they want or need, instead of trying to navigate through complicated legal obstacles. The government seems to be shooting itself in the metaphorical foot with some of these restrictions. Also, the maltreatment of the civil liberties of the

ex-offenders is morally questionable and one begins to wonder when the punishment comes to an end.

Reentry is a challenging process and much is at stake. What happens during the first few weeks can create a series of events that will lead to criminal desistance or, more likely, to recidivism.

Recidivism

Recidivism is a measure of getting caught. If a former inmate breaks the law and goes undetected, his offense will not contribute to recidivism statistics. Of course, the reverse is also possible; one who is innocent can be rearrested for a crime not committed. However, the former is more common. Offenders are likely to have committed more crimes than are listed on their Record of Arrest and Prosecution (RAP) sheets suggesting that recidivism is underreported (Langan & Levin, 2002).

Recidivism Statistics

Recidivism was studied in a large-scale project that followed 272,111 newly released American prisoners for 3 years (Langan & Levin, 2002). All of the formerly incarcerated included in this research were released in 1994 and served their time in one of 15 U.S. states. Four types of recidivism were evaluated: rearrest for a new crime, reconviction for a new crime, resentence to prison for a new crime, and return to prison due to a new sentence for a new crime or a technical violation of the conditions of release, e.g., parole violation.

Three years later, 67.5% of inmates released in 1994 had been rearrested (Langan & Levin, 2002). Only 62.5% of prisoners released in 1983 had been

rearrested within 3 years (Beck & Shipley, 1989). This provides some evidence that the frequency of arrest of former inmates has increased from the 1980s to the 1990s. However, there was no significant difference in the overall reconviction rates from the 80s to the 90s (Langan & Levin, 2002). This suggests that criminal activity itself may not be on the rise (assuming that conviction is a more accurate measure of criminal activity than simply being arrested), rather being arrested has become more common. There are many possible explanations for this, including the standards for arrest have been lowered and motivation to make more arrests has increased among police officers. Three years after release, 46.9% of the former inmates had been reconvicted, 25.4% resentenced, and 51.8% returned to prison. As only one quarter of the former inmates were sentenced for new offenses and approximately one half had returned to prison, clearly many were brought back into custody for technical violations of the conditions of their release from incarceration.

Factors Influencing Recidivism

Rearrest rates varied according to the type of crime committed (Langan & Levin, 2002). Those originally sent to prison for the following crimes had the highest rearrest rates (between 70.2% and 78.8%): motor vehicle theft, possession or sales of stolen property, larceny, burglary, robbery, and possession, sales, or use of an illegal weapon. All of these crimes have the potential to be profitable. If an inmate is a skilled burglar and knows how to support himself by burglarizing, it seems likely that he would continue to commit similar offenses. However, the rearrest was not necessarily for the same type of crime. Also, chronic offenders

are unlikely to specialize in one offense (Blumstein, Cohen, Das, & Moitra, 1988; DeLisi, 2001; Dunford & Elliott, 1984; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Piquero, 2000). Persistent criminals are typically impulsive and more likely to be enticed by any behavior, legal or illegal, that promises pleasure or benefit.

Those who had served time for the following crimes had the lowest rearrest rates (between 40.7% and 52%): homicide, rape, other sexual assault, and driving under the influence. Within 3 years of their release from custody only 2.5% of convicted rapists were rearrested for rape, and just 1.2% of perpetrators of homicide were arrested for another homicide. Despite the cultural fascination with serial murderers and rapists, very few of these perpetrators are serial offenders.

Demographic variables have an important impact on recidivism (Langan & Levin, 2002). Men, Black offenders, non-Hispanic offenders, younger prisoners, and prisoners with more extensive prior records are all significantly more likely to be rearrested compared with their respective subgroups women, White offenders, Hispanic offenders, older prisoners, and prisoners with shorter prior records.

Substance use also has a known relationship to criminal behavior. One study found that drug use is the best predictor of recidivism among adults (Ouiment & Le Blanc, 1996).

Prison populations are increasing, but sending more people to jail or prison is not reducing crime and recidivism (Blumstein, 1998; Mauer, 1999). The punitive approach to reform has not proven to be effective; punishment is not a

guaranteed deterrent. Additionally, there is no clear relationship between the length of time spent in custody and recidivism. A longer prison sentence is not a more effective deterrent on future criminal activity (Langan & Levin, 2002). It could be that longer prison sentences further remove offenders from attachments to the community and they reenter society after a long sentence ill-prepared to address life challenges without the help of criminal involvement.

A recent study explored the underpinnings of recidivism among boot camp graduates 5 years later (Benda, Toombs, & Peacock, 2003). The subjects were 572 males who completed a boot camp regime in Arkansas, United States. The ethnicity of the sample was 50.9% African American, 46.3% White, and 2.8% other. In this study recidivism was defined as arrest or parole violation. After 5 years, 61.5% of the sample recidivated, while 38.5% remained crime-free. The researchers compared this to data gathered from another study they conducted in which they assessed recidivism 3 years later (Benda, Toombs, & Peacock, 2002). When 3 years had passed 57.9% of their sample were recidivists. There is no significant difference between the recidivism rates of 57.9% at the 3-year mark and 61.5% 5-year mark postrelease. This suggests that if a former inmate is going to reoffend, he is likely to do so within the first 3 years postrelease.

While in the boot camp program, participants were administered a questionnaire that probed about four social learning variables including peer association (having close friends who get arrested, abuse substances, steal, and are violent towards others), modeling (being influenced by friends), differential reinforcement (do the rewards outweigh the costs of substance abuse, theft, and

assault), and definitions (the acceptability of substance abuse, theft, and assault when everyone does it and no one is *seriously* hurt) (Benda et al., 2003). Eleven personality traits were assessed using the Jesness Inventory (e.g., social maladjustment, value orientation, immaturity, autism, alienation, aggression, withdrawal, social anxiety, repression, denial, and asocial index). Other variables under consideration were attachment, caregiver monitoring, physical and sexual abuse, and sociodemographic factors. A Cox regression was used to derive hazard rates. A greater hazard rate indicates that the variable in question has a greater impact on recidivism.

The variable with the highest hazard rate was peer association (Benda et al., 2003). This means that having close friends who have been arrested, regularly use narcotics and alcohol, steal, and brandish weapons is a significant risk factor for recidivism. Differential reinforcement and definitions also had high hazards rates. Among the personality characteristics, the two with the highest hazard rates were social maladjustment and asocial, which describes a tendency to be indifferent towards social norms and customs. Having a history of being physically or sexually abused was also predictive of recidivism. Together these findings suggest that recidivism is the result of problems with healthy socialization. This includes having early experiences with dysfunctional socialization in the form of physical or sexual abuse, associating with peers who are engaged in substance abuse and illegal and violent activities, and possessing antisocial personality characteristics.

The Benda et al. (2003) research assessed a wide variety of personality and social learning variables that may influence criminal desistance or recidivism. The former inmates were in boot camp at the time the questionnaire data was collected. Five years later records were accessed to check for recidivism. However, the researchers did not contact the participants to assess for changes in personality traits and socialization. They missed the opportunity to investigate some of the internal changes that had occurred during the 5 years that accompanied desistance or recidivism. The current study will build upon this by investigating the qualitative changes that have taken place among successful criminal desistors.

The various factors that contribute to recidivism can be conceptualized as static and dynamic (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Static variables are impervious to treatment and include factors such as age, past criminal activity, and history of physical abuse. Dynamic variables such as cognitive distortions, substance addiction, and self-control can be improved in treatment. The relationship of recidivism to static factors, in particular age, gender, criminal history, childhood experiences in the family, and past associations with criminals, is well-known (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). However, dynamic factors have garnered comparatively less research, maybe because they are more difficult to measure.

Much research has been devoted to predicting the factors involved in criminal recidivism. If we can predict, we can prevent, and therefore control, criminal activity. Many instruments have been developed that are intended to assess for likelihood to reoffend. For example, “The most popular and respected

of the newer risk assessment instruments is the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R)” (Petersilia, 2003, p. 72). The LSI-R is a tool designed to measure the risk of recidivism and detect static and dynamic variables (Andrews & Bonta, 1995). This instrument has been confirmed as both reliable and valid.

“The time is long past when those offender risk factors that are dynamic in nature can be cavalierly ignored” (Gendreau et al., 1996, p. 588). After meta-analysis, Gendreau et al. found the LSI-R to be a significantly superior measure of recidivism when compared to several other similar measures. It seems that psychological variables are essential to understanding the recidivism process. It follows that psychological processes are vital to desistance too.

Desistance

Maruna defines desistance as “the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending” (2001, p. 26). Desistance is the opposite of recidivism on the criminal activity spectrum. For a former inmate, recidivism is associated with committing a crime while desistance is associated with abstaining from crime. Recidivism involves participating in one activity, crime, on one occasion, while desistance involves avoiding this same activity for a prolonged period of time. Because they are closely related concepts, there is overlap between the research on desistance and recidivism. For example, family support, marriage, and identity all can influence both desistance and recidivism. The way these variables affect criminal behavior is not always clear. It is not necessarily true that the absence of one variable will led to recidivism while the inclusion of this same variable will led to

desistance or vice versa, particularly concerning more abstract concepts such as self-esteem or motivation.

Both recidivism and desistance are measures of criminal behavior.

Recidivism research is focused on understanding what predisposes a criminal to engage in repetitive criminal behavior, while desistance research is focused on understanding what enables former criminals to abstain from criminal activity for a sustained period of time. Most research aimed at studying patterns of criminal behavior emphasizes recidivism over desistance. The present research will focus explicitly on desistance because the psychological phenomena underlying desistance may be different from the processes mediating recidivism.

To achieve sustained desistance from illegal behavior most former career criminals have to overcome a variety of challenges. Some of these hurdles are straightforward, such as finding housing, securing employment, and reestablishing relationships with loved ones. Other challenges are not so obvious. For example, each former inmate must learn to negotiate life in the free world with the burden of being labeled a convict. The consequences of this stigma may be far-reaching (Schnittker & John, 2007). For example, people who have been incarcerated for any length of time are significantly more likely to have serious health problems than the general population. There seem to be consequences of simply crossing the threshold of a jail or prison. One is stamped with the mark of criminal. This supports the idea that the stigma faced upon reentry may have insidious effects on those trying to rebuild their lives. The former inmate trying

desperately to change his life faces subtle and far-reaching obstacles, many of which are likely out of his awareness and the awareness of researchers too.

Theories of Desistance

“Desistance, the cessation of a pattern of criminal behavior, is one of the most persistent- but least analyzed- findings in the criminological literature” (Sommers, Baskin, & Fagan, 1993, p. 127). It has only been about 30 years since the word *desistance* started to emerge in forensic literature (Farrall & Maruna, 2004). Several general theories of desistance have been hypothesized and refined, most only within the last 20 years. Some of these theories include maturation, developmental, rational choice, social learning, life-course perspective, age-graded theory of informal social control, self-control, belief in a just world, medical model story, specific deterrence story, and rewriting the past and having control over positive outcomes in the present and future (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008; Gleuck & Gleuck, 1974; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Otto & Dalbert, 2005; Warr, 1993, 1998).

The theory of maturation conceptualizes criminal desistance as a natural process undergone as the offender matures (Gleuck & Gleuck, 1974). According to maturation theory, persistent criminal behavior in adulthood is the result of arrested development. The positive correlation between age and criminal desistance has been proven time and time again (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Morizot & Le Blanc, 2007). Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) described this phenomenon as the “age-crime curve.” The age-crime curve does not take exactly the same shape among all types of criminals. Perpetrators of murder and aggravated assault have

longer criminal careers as compared to property offenders (Blumstein, Cohen, & Hsieh, 1982). However, even most high-risk criminals desist from crime by 41 years of age (Morizot & Le Blanc, 2007). The theory of maturation provides little information about *how* aging causes criminal desistance (Gleuck & Gleuck, 1974). There is also almost no explanation for variance, aside from the aforementioned delayed development.

The reason for the plummet in criminal activity after early adulthood has not been thoroughly explained. Sampson and Laub (1993) explain the curve by suggesting that as people age they become more susceptible to the positive influence of social control in the form of bonds to spouses, jobs, etc. and abandon crime (social learning, life-course perspective, age-graded theory of informal social control are described in detail below). One researcher contested this theory of social control by postulating that men desist from crime at the same rate as they desist from creating works of genius (Kanazawa, 2003). “Unlike criminals, scientists are not subject to social control (by their wives or otherwise) since scientific activities are not illegal or deviant in any way” (p. 269). Instead he postulated that both acts of crime and genius are competitive displays driven by an underlying intention to secure resources and insure reproduction. This writer would argue that scientists are susceptible to social control and many of the social bonds that restrict criminal activity might also restrict the production of works of genius. For example, becoming a parent and caring for children are time consuming endeavors that limit availability for any activity, be it burglarizing a home or writing a novel.

Like the theory of maturation, developmental theory operates on the assumption that criminal desistance is a normative process. Developmental theorists build upon maturation and provide some information about the type of growth that enables criminal desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Barring neuropsychological deficits that result in persistent antisocial behavior, criminal desistance is a natural process for most offenders caused by the identity changes and improved decision-making skills that accompany aging.

Rational choice theorists postulate that offenders make a logical decision to abandon illegal behavior when it is no longer profitable or advantageous (Laub & Sampson, 2003). This theory relies on the assumption that the criminal makes a rational assessment, a sort of cost-benefit analysis, when making the decision to commit a crime. “Since crimes will be committed whenever the pleasures produced by them exceed the pain attendant on their commission, it follows that crime is caused or prevented by constellations of pleasurable and painful consequences” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 5).

Social learning theory highlights the role of mediating social variables in the process of criminal desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003). For example, Warr (1993, 1998) found that criminal desistance is related to a decrease in contact with peers. Marriage is a protective factor against recidivism partly because contact with peers decreases sharply after marriage. Spouses are prone to discourage impulsive, risky or high-risk behaviors such as substance use, while peers promote this type of behavior. Also, peer associations change with age. Social learning theory suggests that it is not simply maturity that accounts for the

decrease in criminal behavior with age; rather it is the decrease in social contact with criminal peers. Employment is another form of social control that contributes to successful desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Building on ideas from the previous theories mentioned, Sampson and Laub (1993) created an age-graded theory based on the power of social bonds to deter criminal behavior. This theory is a modified version of life-course theory. “Because of the life-course perspective’s explicit focus on lives in social context, we link it with a revised and expanded age-graded theory of informal social control as a means of understanding onset, continuation, and desistance from criminal behavior” (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 35). Life-course theories consider the relationship between offending patterns and age, the significance of the presence or absence of risk and protective factors at particular ages, and the impact of life events on development (Farrington, 2007).

Specifically the hypothesis of the age-graded theory of informal social control is that criminal patterns in adulthood can be explained by the impact of social control that form as a result of the bonds of marriage, employment, or military service (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993, 1996). As criminals age they typically become more obligated to social bonds and as a result they abandon criminal behavior. However, those that do not become encumbered by social bonds or form weak social bonds, such as a poor marriage or erratic employment, are more likely to persist in illegal activity. If the benefit of the social bond outweighs the cost of further criminal activity the outcome is desistance.

As Sampson and Laub (1993) used a sample of American men born during the Great Depression to develop their life-course theory, there has been some concern about the generalizability of this theory. A recent study from Finland demonstrated that social bonds deter offending behavior among Finnish criminals too (Savolainen, 2009). Savolainen noted that the type of social bond that facilitates criminal desistance might vary culturally. For example, Savolainen found that moving in with a romantic partner and cohabiting is more predictive of desistance than getting married among Finnish criminals. However, researchers have proposed that in the United States living with a boyfriend or girlfriend is predictive of recidivism (Horney, Osgood, & Marshall, 1995). Perhaps this is because cohabiting has a different meaning in Finland and in the United States. The present study is focused on internal change and psychological processes rather than social transitions and may have more cross-cultural applicability.

The ability to exert willpower over one's actions has a relationship to desistance. For example, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) postulated a theory of criminality that hinges on self-control. When self-control is high, recidivism is low, and vice versa. Self-control is learned and bolstered through healthy socialization. In order for children to learn self-control they need to be supervised. The supervisor must point out and correct inappropriate or deviant behavior. This is basic childcare. However, children of substance addicts or neglectful parents may not learn to exercise self-control.

This theory is consistent with the finding that recidivism decreases with age. Self-control typically increases or remains stable with age (Gottfredson &

Hirschi, 1990). One reason for this is because people have more and more opportunities to have healthy socialization experiences throughout the lifetime. “No known social group, whether criminal or noncriminal, actively or purposefully attempts to reduce the self-control of its members” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, p. 95). It is much less likely for self-control to progressively deteriorate with age. Self-control fluctuates somewhat throughout the lifetime and a brief loss of self-control might account for a single incident of breaking the law. However, a chronic offender is suffering from serious deficits in his ability to regulate himself.

Self-control has been empirically and repeatedly linked to criminal behavior (DeLisi, 2005; Pratt & Cullen, 2000). For example, “low self-control was overwhelmingly the strongest predictor of career criminality and far exceeded the impact of age, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, mental illness, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis, and trauma experience” (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008, p. 520). It may be that self-control issues underlie many of the factors mediating the desistance process. However, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) note that even convicts with low self-control desist from crime as they age.

The theories of both Sampson and Laub (1993) and Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) were recently put to the test (Doherty, 2006). Doherty found that individuals with more social attachments and higher self-control are more likely to desist from crime than those with fewer social bonds and lower self-control. In other words both theories were supported. However, life-course theory provided the most accurate prediction of desistance in this study. “It is clear that social

bonds predict desistance from offending independent of a person's level of self-control" (Doherty, 2006, p. 828). Even those participants with low self-control were more likely to desist from crime if they were connected to society.

Belief in a just world (BJW) has been found to influence cessation from criminal behavior (Otto & Dalbert, 2005). BJW operates on a variety of levels. Criminals with higher BJW, that is criminals who believe that the world is a fair place, are more likely to believe that their punishment is fair. They also feel guiltier about their wrongdoing. The higher the offender's BJW the more likely he is to follow the rules while serving his sentence in prison. Criminals with high BJW believe in their ability to succeed in life after release from custody. It seems that BJW is a worldview that gives one a sense of control. BJW suggests that when you do something wrong you get punished and when you doing something right you get rewarded.

At least one explanation, the medical model story, suggests that desistance is caused by therapy or rehabilitation (Maruna, 2001). On the other end of this spectrum is the specific deterrence story. The postulation of the specific deterrence story is that desistance is caused by punishment; serving time in custody is thought to be sufficient to deter the offender from future criminal behavior.

Maruna (2001) wrote, "to successfully maintain abstinence from crime, ex-offenders need to make sense of their lives" (p. 7). According to Maruna, desistance involves psychological gymnastics in the form of cognitive distortions. Maruna reported that desistors actively rewrote their understanding of the past. A

criminal past turns into a necessary trial that lead the ex-offender to become the success story he is today. Those men that had continued a pattern of crime were more passive, pessimistic, and accurate when describing their circumstances. They were victims of the system, unlikely to reform, and had a grim view of the past and future. Maruna later analyzed this same sample of men to study the role of “explanatory style” in desistance (Maruna, 2004). He discovered that men who have successfully desisted from crime understand positive life circumstances as caused primarily by their own efforts and likely to be long lasting, while the negative life circumstances are blamed on someone else and they are expected to be short-term problems. In other words, desistors understand positive events in their lives as consistently within in their control and they believe that they can create good long-term situations for themselves. For desistors, negative life circumstances are understood as brief events that are the fault of some external source. Criminal desistors also tend to generalize the effects of positive events to the rest of their life but they contain the effects of negative situations.

These theories have received varying levels of empirical support. All of the aforementioned theories contribute to understanding of some aspect of desistance, but the desistance process is far from completely understood. The aim of the present research is to add to what is already known about the desistance process. Below are several of the known factors that influence criminal desistance.

The Role of Family

Relationships with loved ones, such as spouses and other family members, mediate criminal behavior in a variety of ways. First, loved ones offer much needed support to the inmate while he is in custody. Second, loved ones can play a vital role in successful reentry by easing the transition from jail or prison to the community. Third, family members, a spouse in particular, can help the former inmate redefine himself and form a new, noncriminal identity.

It is important for inmates to maintain relationships with family members, including children, because at least one research team demonstrated that connection to family is the most significant variable in avoiding recidivism (La Vigne, Visser, & Castro, 2004). Family relationships are likely to deteriorate if the inmate has no contact with loved ones while in custody. It follows that maintaining strong ties with loved ones in the community while in custody may be an important component to long-term criminal desistance.

Support From Loved Ones

In a recent study done in Illinois, 247 family members of male prisoners were interviewed (Naser & Visser, 2006). All of the participating inmates spent at least 1 year in custody. Each prisoner was asked to select three family members to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted approximately 3 months after the inmate was released. Family members included blood or legal relatives, mothers to inmates' children, and partners or guardians with whom they cohabited before entering custody or with whom they would be living upon release. Approximately 90% of the sample of family members reported that they were African American.

Family members provide a significant source of contact to the outside world for inmates. For example, 95% of the family members interviewed were in contact with their incarcerated loved ones during their sentence (Naser & Visher, 2006). This includes mail and phone calls at least monthly, more than 70% and 58% of family members interviewed respectively. Only nine percent of family members interviewed visited at least once every month. Of the types of family members interviewed, it was the intimate partners of the inmates that provided the most frequent contact. Approximately half of the inmates in the study were in touch with minor children at least once monthly.

Once an inmate is released loved ones continue to have a vital role. Most inmates depend on family members for help upon discharge from custody (Naser & Visher, 2006). Family members largely respond to the needs of their relatives in custody. Eighty-three percent offered financial help and 76% permitted the newly released inmate to live in their home.

Family, friends, and other loved ones are a vital source of emotional support and practical assistance for the newly released inmate. One study found that loved ones offer ongoing support for at least several months after release as evidenced by the finding that there was no decrease in the number of supportive people in the lives of former inmates at 1 to 4 weeks compared with 3 to 4 months postrelease (Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). This suggests that loved ones are loyal to their newly released friends and family in the early stages of community reentry. Inmates reported having an average of three supportive people in their lives and most of these people were family. Taken together, inmates described

having few supportive relationships, but these relationships seem strong, and withstand the challenges of the early weeks and months of reentry.

Family members sometimes become very involved in the reintegration process. For example, 27% of family members reported having contact with their loved ones' parole officer (Naser & Visher, 2006). Family members are generous with their good will. For example, more than 80% of family members described that offering emotional support was "pretty or very easy." Family members carry hope for their loved ones with 78% reporting that it would be "pretty or very easy" for their loved one to stay out of custody. This may be naïve, as approximately 50% of people discharged from prison will return to prison within 3 years (Langan & Levin, 2002).

What precisely occurs that facilitates criminal desistance between former inmates and loved ones is still unclear. To help illuminate this relationship, in-depth interviews were conducted in dyads with one former inmate and one of his family members (Martinez & Christian, 2009). The researchers intended to investigate the way in which support is exchanged, what varieties of support are most impactful, and what about this support facilitates criminal desistance. In total 6 dyads were interviewed, five of the pairs were African American and one pair was Mexican. All of the former inmate participants were male, living in Chicago, and 60 to 90 days postrelease when the interview was conducted. They were recruited while living at an adult transition center and participating in the Illinois Going Home Program. After leaving the transitional housing and completing the Illinois Going Home Program, participants were contacted for

interviews. The primary interview question was: “For the next part of our discussion, I would like to ask you about your family. Please describe for me, in general, what your relationships with your family are like now.” The findings indicated that when family members provided information to the former inmate living in their home, such as details about potentially helpful resources or guidance surrounding healthier life choices, the newly released inmates viewed this as emotional support rather than simply relaying information. It seems that providing a home for a newly released loved one facilitates the former inmate’s positive appraisal of familial advice. It is not clear how this relates to long-term criminal desistance. Perhaps the gesture of opening one’s home makes the former inmate more susceptible to accepting the positive influence of caring family members. The sample was small, only six relationships were examined and not all of the former inmates were living at home.

In a study that followed 51 parolees, living with family members postrelease had no impact on adjustment to the community or recidivism (Bahr et al., 2005). These results suggest that simply living with family members is not enough to facilitate desistance.

Relationships with loved ones and family members are not always associated with criminal desistance. Having a higher number of conflicted relationships with family members and having family members who have spent time in custody exacerbates the likelihood to reoffend (Bahr et al., 2005). What was found to reduce illegal behavior in this study of 51 parolees 6 months postrelease was having a higher number of close relationships among family

members. Both the quantity and quality of family relationships seem to impact criminal activity.

That study made a distinction between family members and friends (Bahr et al., 2005). They found that participants who reported going out with friends four or more times each week were significantly more likely to be in custody once again 6 months after release. It could be that time spent with friends simply takes away from time engaging in activities that promote criminal desistance, or it could be that friends are a bad influence on the newly released, actively encouraging illegal pursuits. It might be the case that many or most of the parolees' friends have also spent time in custody. Perhaps this is why a common stipulation of probation is the prohibition of spending personal time with other felons or people engaging in criminal activities. In any case, contact with friends proved detrimental to criminal desistance 6 months postrelease.

Marriage

There appears to be a relationship between marital attachment and criminal desistance for some men. Several researchers have offered empirical support demonstrating that marriage is positively correlated to desistance (Beaver, Wright, DeLisi, & Vaughn, 2008; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Ouimet & Le Blanc, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1990, 1993). However, there is some debate about how marriage promotes desistance from crime and why some married men abandon crime while others never do.

Forensic researchers had access to a database of former male juvenile delinquents that had been assessed at ages 14, 25, and 32 (Laub & Sampson,

2003). In order to study patterns among offenders across most of the lifespan, the researchers continued this longitudinal research by conducting in-depth interviews with 52 men from the original sample when they reached age 70. The life experiences of over 50 men have been followed for more than 55 years making this study unique in the forensic world. Marriage was an important topic of these interviews. Although marriage or meeting one's future spouse is sometimes cited as a "turning point" (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 41), the protective effect of marriage appears to be more of a gradual process that occurs as attachment and commitment to one's spouse grows. Marriage works against criminal behavior in a variety of ways. Marriage impacts everything from the practical aspects of life, such as daily schedules, to the existential, such as changing one's identity. For example, some career criminals have their first experience of being loved and cared for when they get married. Beliefs about self and self-worth may shift.

Also, the choice of partner is important. "Some men married women who were smarter or more talented than they, and the partnership helped them enormously in organizing and managing their affairs as an adult" (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 137). Men benefited vicariously from marrying intelligent women with superior social skills. These men enjoyed more stability in their lives after marriage.

Kanazawa (2003) noted that marriage stifles both criminal behavior and works of genius among men. In other words, after men are married they desist from both extraordinarily good and bad behavior. Marriage dampens the productivity of brilliant scientists, jazz musicians, painters, writers, and

entrenched criminals. Kanazawa proposed an evolutionary explanation. “Both crime and genius are expressions of young men’s proximate competitive desires, whose ultimate function in the ancestral environment would have been to increase reproductive success” (Kanazawa, 2003, p. 265). He claims that if crime and genius are regulated by the same underlying mechanisms, then a theory hinging on social control (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993) does not adequately explain desistance. “Unlike criminal behavior, scientific activities are completely within the conventional society, and are thus not at all incompatible with marriage and other strong bonds to society” (p. 269). It should be noted that Kanazawa did not observe the same desistance effect of aging and marriage on crime and genius among women.

This writer would argue that although works of genius are not antisocial, it could be that marriage dampens productivity among the brilliant because social bonds are stronger and demand more time and attention after marriage. In other words, social control theory could explain both the decline in genius and crime after marriage because for both crimes and geniuses social bonds become more restrictive or time consuming after marriage. Alternatively this writer suspects that although the shape of the age-crime curve and the age-genius curve are similar does not mean that marriage must depress both crime and genius for the same reason. In any case it seems logical that both evolution and social control could play a role in the pattern of desistance from crime after marriage.

Marriage is still at the cutting edge of desistance research. For example, marriage was found to interact with specific dopamine receptor genes and a

monoamine oxidase gene to predict criminal desistance in men (Beaver et al., 2008). Never before had research demonstrated that a social variable such as marriage could interact with genes to anticipate abstinence from crime. This is important research because it may help to explain the variability in desistance among married men. Criminal behavior may only taper off among married men who have a specific genetic make-up.

However, not all researchers agree that marriage has a significant impact on criminal behavior. For example, being married or partnered was found to have no effect on recidivism in at least one study (Bahr et al., 2005).

Children

“The loss of relationships with family and friends is particularly severe for prisoners with children, whose sole reminder of their parenthood is an occasional photograph of a son or daughter who has grown markedly since the previous photograph was received” (Flanagan, 1981, p. 210). The number of inmates who are also parents has spiked. In 1991, 452,500 inmates in state or federal prisons were parents (Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005). This number jumped to 721,500 in 1997. In the late 1990s 1.5 million children had a parent in custody. The majority of fathers in prison had fathers who were absent from their own childhoods and the cycle continues for the next generation (Gosnell, 2007).

Children have a significant impact on recidivism (Flanagan, 1981). In a study that included 37 parolees who were also parents, the researchers observed that among parolees who had lived with their own children before serving prison time, recidivism was less likely 6 months postrelease (Bahr et al., 2005). The

researchers suggest that this might be because bonds are established during this time of cohabitation that provides motivation to curtail future criminal activity. However, it could also be that these parolees were more stable before entering custody and continued to remain stable upon release. In addition, taking responsibility for one's obligations, e.g., parenthood, takes time away from engaging in illegal activities. In any case, the parent subgroup was small and included 37 parent parolees, only 18 of whom lived with their children before serving time in custody, making the results tentative rather than conclusive. Also, living with children might mean living with a spouse too. The positive impact of cohabiting with a spouse should not be underestimated. For example, "becoming a parent was not a significant factor in explaining desistance from crime once marital attachment was taken into account" (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 135).

Bahr et al. (2005) also noted that reports of a positive relationship between parent and child among parolees might have an effect on criminal behavior. For example, only 1 of the 12 parolees who chose the word "excellent" to describe their connection with their child had returned to custody (8%). Among the 23 who rated their parent-child bond less favorably; 5 had been reincarcerated (22%). The rating is based on self-report, not on any objective measure of parenting or relationship quality. This suggests that it is the *perception* of a strong bond that creates a buffer against crime. Imaging oneself as an incompetent parent might lead to self-defeating behavior and eventual reincarceration.

Simply being a parent is not associated with criminal desistance, the quality of the relationship is important (Bahr et al., 2005). Perhaps this is why

fathering programs are becoming more popular in jails and prisons. These programs are designed to promote self-growth and shift one's focus away from the self and towards children (Gosnell, 2007). For example, in 1998 the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) established the Long Distance Dads program now offered in over 200 prisons in 26 states. Fathers participating in the program have shown statistically significant differences in their childcare knowledge and skills and, perhaps more importantly in terms of self-growth, report feeling closer to their children. In 2005, the next generation of this program was launched, InsideOut Dad. Like Long Distance Dads, InsideOut Dad promotes relationship skill building and cognitive change. This program addresses anti-social beliefs, unhealthy family relationships, anger management, impulse control, and failure to be empathic. InsideOut Dad has an action-oriented component to the curriculum. For example, fathers are instructed on how to communicate with children while in custody and to be realistic about receiving responses. The InsideOut Dad program still requires further outcome research to assess for long-term efficacy. Early research suggests increased contact with children, improved parenting skills, and decreased recidivism among men who have completed the treatment. The last finding is particularly interesting as InsideOut Dad is a program designed to strengthen parenting skills and does not provide training for criminal desistance. This suggests that strong family ties facilitate criminal desistance.

Conclusions About the Role of Loved Ones

There is no doubt that loved ones play a mediating role in criminal behavior. The aforementioned results suggest that quality relationships with

family members and ongoing support from loved ones are positively correlated with cessation from crime. What is missing is consideration of the psychological impact of a meaningful relationship on a desisting criminal.

The Role of Therapy and Rehabilitation Programs

“There is an inevitable trend toward providing psychotherapy in prisons that goes beyond the crisis management of the psychotic inmate” (Huffman, 2005, p. 320). The emphasis of treatment in jails and prisons has shifted from simply containing outbursts to helping the offender improve his long-term well-being and indirectly the safety of the community. Inmates become involved in a variety of therapeutic and rehabilitative programs both while in custody and after release. Note that treatment is rendered successful when recidivism is decreased (Whiteley & Hosford, 1983). Extensive research has been conducted to identify the qualities of effective treatment.

Characteristics of Effective Treatment for the Forensic Population

Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge (1990) proposed four principles that should be applied to maximize treatment efficacy by reducing recidivism for the forensic population. First, according to the risk principle, treatment will be most successful when tailored to the risk level of the particular inmate. This principle includes both the static and dynamic classes of risk factors mentioned previously. For example, an older non-gang member is considered lower risk than a young gang affiliated inmate. High-risk offenders require more intensive treatment while low-risk offenders respond best to minimally intrusive treatment or no treatment at all.

Applying the risk principle is also a cost-effective strategy because more expensive treatment is reserved for those who will benefit from it most.

Second is the need principle, which refers to criminogenic needs (Andrews et al., 1990). Criminogenic needs are the dynamic risk factors for reoffense. Therapy should be individualized to address the criminogenic needs or dynamic risk factors for the particular subgroup in treatment or rehabilitation. Examples of criminogenic needs targeted by treatment include association with criminal peers, poor affect regulation, cognitive distortion, and substance abuse. Thus problems such as anger management, excessive drinking, and gang membership all must be addressed to hope to make an impact on criminal behavior. The most successful treatments aim to reduce criminogenic needs.

Third is the responsivity principle (Andrews et al., 1990). This principle asserts that positive response to treatment is optimized when the unique characteristics of the client are considered. Examples of client characteristics in question are verbal skills, learning style, level of education attained, motivation level, need for structure, interpersonal skills, which will vary for each individual.

The final guideline is “professional override” (Andrews et al., 1990). Just as the American president has the power to veto a proposed law, the mental health professional should have the ability to modify treatment when necessary with the risk, need, and responsivity principles all in mind. Therapists should be prepared to be skillfully flexible in treatment planning. For example, the therapist will need to decide which subgroups of clients can effectively be treated in the same program.

Gendreau (1996) identified his own list of empirically validated requirements for successful forensic treatment. Note once again that treatment is considered a success when recidivism decreases. He reported that the best therapies are intensive and require several months of participation. A quick Band-Aid intervention will not suffice if the goal is desistance. The interventions that make the most impact are behavioral, place emphasis on implementing new social skills, and forming and maintaining healthier relationships.

Also not unlike Andrews et al. (1990), Gendreau (1996) recommended behavioral treatment that focuses on addressing the criminogenic needs of the higher-risk inmates with attention to the responsivity principle. Positive reinforcement was most effective in deterring future criminal activity. Some type of reward was offered to offenders at least four times as often as a punishment in the most successful forms of treatment. This is counter to the idea that punishment will be a corrective experience. Mental health professionals must facilitate treatment programs. It is unsurprising that the programs with well-trained, well-supervised, and sensitive therapists produce lower recidivism rates. Finally, offenders who were placed in prosocial communities and removed from their former criminal environments as part of treatment were more successful in changing their lives and avoiding reincarceration. Many of these criteria may seem intuitive, but it is essential to explicitly describe successful therapy to further understand the desistance process.

Empirically validated treatment guidelines for forensic populations are readily available. One major obstacle to implementing the above-mentioned

principles is the limited formal training opportunities for mental health professionals (Gendreau, 1996). As a consequence, many of the treatments that are currently used in custody have not been proven efficacious for the forensic population.

Examples of Treatment in Action

A recent study assessed the efficacy of treatment that employed the risk, need, and responsivity principles for gang member rehabilitation (Di Placido, Simon, Witte, Gu, & Wong, 2006). Risk level for reoffense, criminogenic needs, and obstacles affecting responsivity to treatment were all considered in the development of a cognitive behavioral therapy offered at a maximum-security forensic mental health hospital, the Regional Psychiatric Centre (RPC), in Saskatchewan, Canada. In both individual and group therapy the former inmates focused on topics such as relapse prevention and psycho education. This study followed a 2 X 2 format with gang membership status and treatment participation as the variables in question. The four comparison groups were treated gang members (TG), untreated gang members (UG), treated nongang members (TNG), and untreated nongang members (UNG). The 160 participants were carefully matched on a variety of potentially confounding variables including, but not limited to, age at time of most recent conviction, type of most recent conviction, length of custody for most recent conviction, previous violent and nonviolent convictions, marital status, highest level of education, employment history, diagnosis of mental illness, and ethnic background. The participants had all

served federal sentences of at least 2 years and were admitted to the RPC hospital between 1990 and 2000.

The findings show that treatment made a favorable impact regardless of gang membership status (Di Placido et al., 2006). The recidivism rates for the four groups 2 years posttreatment were UG=64.5%, TG=50.0%, UNG=61.1%, TNG=58.3%. Overall, both treated gang members and treated nongang members recidivated significantly less than all other untreated participants 2 years after treatment completion. Among those who did recidivate, it was the untreated gang members who received the longest sentences. The researchers view sentence length as a measure of severity of criminal activity and postulate that treatment can at least reduce, if not eliminate, criminal proclivity. One potentially confounding issue is that gang membership itself might influence the likelihood that one will be convicted. Also, demonstrating willingness to participate in treatment in the past might favorably influence sentence length.

One study examined the role of substance abuse treatment facilities (SATF) on recidivism 2 years after discharge from custody (Zanis et al., 2003). A total of 569 former inmates were followed of which 495 were placed in a SATF followed by parole and 74 were released into the community under the supervision of parole but without treatment. Inmates participated in either an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) or a Non-Hospital Residential (NHR) program; both programs were guided by the 12-step philosophy of recovery. Offenders were supposed to commit to at least 6 months of treatment, but only 37% did so. The average length of treatment was 4.7 months. Only 22% of the

criminals who participated in a SATF had a new conviction within 24 months of release from custody while 34% of those criminals who participated in no type of treatment reoffended within the same window of time. This is a statistically significant difference. Completion of at least 6 months of treatment also made a difference. Among those who completed a minimum of 6 months of treatment only 11.8% reoffended within 2 years. However, nearly one third (29%) of those who dropped out of treatment early received a new conviction within a 24-month time frame.

Zanis et al. (2003) present data to support the efficacy of substance abuse treatment facilities, but a closer examination yields less compelling results. For example, the analysis also revealed that younger age and a higher numbers of previous convictions were both significant predictors of new convictions. When age and history of convictions were controlled for, participation in treatment is no longer predictive of curtailing illegal activity. This means that people participating in treatment were older and had less extensive criminal backgrounds so naturally they were less likely to reoffend. The risk, need, and responsivity principles could all be implemented to develop a treatment tailored towards highly criminally active youth.

The Impact of Treatment Put in Perspective

Walters and White (1990) believe that treatment has the potential to affect desistance more than marriage, family, substance use, and other static risk factors and criminogenic needs. This is because according to their research crime is the result of criminal thinking and treatment can be designed to target and address

criminal thinking. The typical criminal exhibits “self-centered, irresponsible, and predatory” behavior (p. 159). They caution that treatment will only be effective when the offender is highly internally motivated to change. Because of this they warn against rewarding the offender for participation in treatment with early release or extra privileges. The motivation for participating in treatment becomes obtaining a reward, which is external rather than making lasting change, which is internal. The inmate will tailor his responses to insure timely completion of treatment and will direct less focus towards taking steps towards lasting personal change.

Treatment alone does not account for criminal desistance because all offenders do not undergo treatment. “In California, for example, which has nearly 160,000 inmates—the second largest state prison population in the nation—nearly 20% of all inmates have no assignment to a correctional program during their entire prison stay” (Petersilia, 2003, p. 6). Not all inmates are given the opportunity to participate in treatment and others are unwilling to attend. Also, the theoretical and political zeitgeist of the time influences what types of treatment are in vogue and will receive funding. Funding for treatment is a constant source of concern.

Research on the long-term efficacy of treatment undergone while in custody is limited. In particular the former inmates’ perceived efficacy of the treatment is not available. What in particular the inmates found helpful about treatment and how it affected their self-concept remains unknown. Plenty of statistics are available about how various treatment programs affect recidivism,

but there is little information about what internal changes are actually taking place as a result of treatment or rehabilitation that allow for the discontinuation of the criminal cycle.

The Role of Work

There is an association between successful reentry and stable employment. However, the modern ex-offender is likely to have difficulty finding work during his first months in the community (Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). The stigma of being a convict has been cited as a major obstacle to employment (Bahr et al., 2005; Pager, 2003).

Former inmates who have more extensive criminal histories and those who remain unemployed in the community are more likely to reoffend, and to do so more quickly, compared to offenders with less criminal experience and those who secure employment upon release from custody (Dejong, 1997). In Dejong's study, the participants' criminal behavior was tracked for 3 years and employment status was monitored. In this same study, so-called ties to society were evaluated using marital status, employment, and education. Those who had more ties to society, meaning they were married, employed, or achieved a higher level of education, were less likely to recidivate. The researchers admit that simply having a spouse, job, and high school education may not reflect social bonds.

Dejong's (1997) findings suggest that lawful employment facilitates desistance. Other researchers concur (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Ouimet & Le Blanc, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1990, 1993). In another study, 51 parolees were interviewed shortly after

discharge from custody and monitored for recidivism for 6 months (Bahr et al., 2005). Of the 26 parolees who were employed at the time of the initial interview, 3 had returned to custody 6 months later (12%). However, 7 of the 25 parolees who were unemployed when the first interview was conducted had recidivated after 6 months had passed (28%).

There is speculation about how stable employment affects criminal desistance. Farrall (2002) reported that maintaining a job seriously restricts one's leisure time. Recreational activities must be limited to activities that permit one to attend work everyday and function appropriately. Sampson & Laub (1990, 1993) found a meaningful relationship between stable employment and criminal desistance. Their hypothesis, much like Dejong (1997), is that work has the potential to create bonds to a prosocial community. Work can serve as a meaningful connection to the non-criminal world. They argue that employment is a form of social control that creates stability, routine, obligation, and the potential for prosocial connections to co-workers and supervisors. Also, full-time employment is a substantial time commitment that limits availability for engaging in antisocial behaviors and spending time with criminal peers (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Finally, supervisors, like probation officers, parents, or spouses can dictate the former criminal's behavior. Some inmates respond well to this type of authority figure. People often derive a sense of identity from their work (Maruna, 2001). It may be that work helps the former inmate create a different self-image that does not include criminality. By finding a job, the ex-offender can begin to identify as a contributing member of society rather than a miscreant.

If having a full-time occupation reduces recidivism, than other equally demanding and time-consuming pursuits could have this potential as well. For example, becoming a full-time student, childcare provider, or military enlistee could also provide a buffer against recidivism. Each of these roles demand responsibility, time commitment, and have the potential to reshape identity. For example, military service has been identified as a key turning point in the lives of some criminal desistors (Sampson & Laub, 1996, 2003). Laub and Sampson (2003) wrote about “structured role stability” and explained: “The men who desisted from crime shared a daily routine that provided both structure and meaningful activity” (p. 145). Perhaps having a consistent daily routine facilitates change.

In contrast to the consensus that employment is positively related to desistance, at least one study reported that unemployment predicts desistance (Gunnison & Mazerolle, 2007). This relationship between unemployment and desistance was found only among serious criminals. Desistance was defined as staying crime-free for at least 3 years. The researchers explained the counterintuitive findings by proposing that serious criminals are more likely to have contact with antisocial peers in the workplace. Thus avoiding employment may actually be a protective factor for some serious offenders. Examples of crimes considered to be serious include motor vehicle theft, aggravated assault, sexual assault, arson, and gang violence.

Although employment appears to be related to criminal desistance, it may not be the reason for criminal desistance (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). For

example, the type of person that is able to find and keep a full-time job might also possess qualities that make him more likely to break a pattern of criminal behavior. There could be a unifying underlying variable that explains both being capable of employment and long-term desistance.

The Role of Identity and Self

“Outside and inside transitions are not always in accordance with each other and therefore integration is marked by a conflictual, two-sided and multilayered dynamic” (Bereswill, 2004, p. 319). Successful reentry is impacted by many external factors already discussed, including relationships, housing, employment, and rehabilitation opportunities. Much less attention has been given to the internal experience of the former inmate and how he thinks and feels about himself as he attempts to negotiate life in the free world.

Both spending time in custody and engaging in criminal activity influence self-image and identity. In a study on the effects of long-term confinement, 59 male inmates who had been in custody for at least 5 years were interviewed about a variety of topics including most challenging problems in prison, relationships inside and outside of prison, family, advice for adapting to long-term sentences, treatment, and work (Flanagan, 1981). Over half of the participants identified as Black, 29% as White, and 15% as other. The median age of the interviewed prisoners was 31 years old and most had not graduated from high school. More than three quarters of the participants were serving time for homicide convictions. At the time the interviews were conducted the participants had served an average of approximately 9 years of their sentence.

An important theme that emerged from these interviews is the assault on the self that occurs in prison (Flanagan, 1981). Several participants identified the constant attack on their self-esteem as the biggest challenge of being in custody. Participants described disrespect from correctional officers and other inmates as commonplace. These men were also anxious about losing their belief in themselves as autonomous individuals capable of making their own decisions after being forced to abide by the rules of the prison for so long.

Inmates described feeling forced to always maintain a false persona to avoid appearing weak (Flanagan, 1981). This continuous posturing provides some safety, but prevents inmates from sharing genuine thoughts or feelings. In other words, they are never able to be themselves. The potential for the obliteration of self was a significant fear for many long-term inmates. These problems are aggravated by the amount of time spent in custody, but inmates with shorter sentences face problems related to self-concept as well. Returning to the community with a distorted, fragmented, or even lost identity, exacerbates the risk of recidivism.

“By recognizing the impact of negative behaviors on the self, an offender ultimately gains empathy for others. This approach draws on a global move toward more emotionally intelligent justice and, specifically, the successes of restorative justice in reducing recidivism” (Prelog, Unnithan, Loeffler & Pogrebin, 2009, p. 268). It is more difficult to do harm when an offender is fully aware of the pain and suffering caused by his actions. Restorative justice involves increasing self-awareness. The offender examines the repercussions of his

behavior on himself, his loved ones, his victims, his victims' loved ones, and the community. If a criminal is able to understand his own emotional experience then he is more likely to be capable of understanding the suffering of others. As he becomes aware that he is causing suffering it may become more difficult to commit crime. Restorative justice cultivates a shift from external punishment to internal correction.

Recreating the Self

According to Maruna (2001), "Sustained desistance most likely requires a fundamental and intentional shift in a person's sense of self" (p. 17). As previously mentioned, Maruna hypothesizes a causal association between criminal desistance and beliefs about the self. Maruna and his team are responsible for the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS), "an empirical analysis of the phenomenological or sociocognitive aspects of desistance" (p. 38).

"Narratology" was used to compare criminal desistors and criminal persistors and tease out the differences in their understanding of themselves and the world. The 30 desistors and 20 persistors were matched on variables such as "age, gender, types and number of crimes committed, age of criminal onset, parents' occupation, national origins, and high school completion" (p. 49).

Maruna encountered ambiguity when categorizing desistors and persistors. "To be blunt, most of the persistors one finds do not seem to really persist, most desistors do not seem to really desist, and, honestly, it is getting harder than ever to find any 'innocents'" (p. 43). He may have had an easier time deciding what constituted criminal persistence and desistance if he had been more methodical a

priori in operationalizing the concepts used in his research. Maruna decided that 1 year of abstinence from crime was enough time for an ex-offender to prove that he or she was a serious desistor. This writer is skeptical that 1 crime-free year is sufficient evidence that a former career criminal will never offend again. All of Maruna's desistors had gone at least 1 year without engaging in illegal activity, with many reporting that it had been at least 2 or 3 years since their last crime. Also, desisting participants had an intention of remaining crime-free. Maruna's desistors made substantial changes in their lives and their intentions were good, but it is statistically likely that some of his so-called desistors will offend again because of his minimal abstinence requirements (see Langan & Levin, 2002). Persistors were persisting in illegal behavior and reported plans to continue with crime in the future. The *intention* to permanently stop or indefinitely continue criminal behavior was the pivotal distinction between the two groups.

What constitutes a criminal past worthy of criminal desistance research? Maruna (2001) addresses the problem of defining "career offender." He wrote, "The question becomes one of where to draw the line. Do ten crimes constitute a career? Fifteen crimes? Twenty crimes? Fortunately, this impossible question never emerged in the sampling procedure" (p. 46). Maruna justifies his failure to formally operationalize career criminality in his research by essentially claiming that it was unnecessary to do so. He explained, "Every person included in the present sample offended on at least a weekly basis for some stretch of at least 2 years. This effectively solved the first problem of defining the 'career criminal' concept for the purposes of this study" (p. 46). He did not set inclusion or

exclusion criteria for participants at the outset of his research. Without a structured definition it is difficult to understand what is being measured and to whom the findings will generalize. Maruna's attempt to define the label of career criminal was done retrospectively once he realized what his participants had in common.

All of the desistors and persistors submitted to extensive interviewing (Maruna, 2001). Participants were asked to tell their life stories following the McAdam's Life Story Interview. This interview protocol was modified slightly to include questions about criminal behavior and jail or prison. Interviewees were directed to describe their life experiences as though they were writing an autobiographical book. The interviews were open-ended and digressions were seen as welcome opportunities for enriched data. Additionally, participants were administered measures of personality traits, criminal behavior, and social background.

Maruna (2001) was also informed by his "ethnographic field observations" (p. 50). He discussed theories of desistance and rehabilitation with various types of criminals, law officers, deputies, probation officers, case workers, therapists, etc. He stayed at an urban men's hostel for several weeks to collect data informally and make contact with potential participants. Maruna also remained in contact with most of the participants after the research. He met their loved ones and conducted interviews with two willing mothers. Maruna even reported that many of the participants became his friends. He gathered data long after the recording device was turned off.

The data collection uncovered several common themes. First, desistors frequently referred to a “real” or “true” self distinct from the role of criminal. The real self is the untouchable essence of identity. Criminal behavior did not stem from the real self; rather it was a depraved environment or heinous circumstances that led the desistor astray. The ex-offender may take accountability for his criminal behavior, but the successful desistor does not identify as a criminal or bad person. Second, desistors had an exaggerated sense of self-efficacy and overconfidence about their ability to control the future. Third, desistors wanted to contribute to society and make the world a better place, almost as a means to atone for past wrongdoing. In addition to abstaining from crime, desistors felt obliged to compensate for harm done.

These variables form a classic desistance story. The desistor is born essentially good and this good “true self” remains buried deep inside and untainted by criminal life. Illegal behavior, including drug use, is pursued to assert some control in an abusive, unhealthy, or otherwise dismal environment. The pattern of crime and custody has begun and is difficult to break.

The turning point arrives when the desistor is offered assistance from some type of benevolent figure. This person or force sees the goodness of the “real self” underlying the criminal exterior and reminds the desistor of this core goodness. This external variable is the *X* in the following equation: “If it weren’t for *X* (organization, new philosophy or religion, some special individual, God, etc.), I would still be involved with crime” (Maruna, 2001, p. 96). The role of *X* is to illuminate the real self and empower the offender; *X* does not to cure the

offender. *X* is not given all of the credit for desistance because the desistor also wants to take ample credit for his transformation.

Finally the desistor is in control of himself again and he seeks to enrich the lives of others in the community with some type of generative behavior. This newfound desire to contribute is intense. Desistors become “super-fathers,” “super-volunteers,” or “super-counselors” (Maruna, 2001, p. 97). When one has caused so much destruction, one has much more work to do to reach lifetime equilibrium. Sometimes the compensatory work is too much to achieve during one lifetime and the ex-convict must leave a legacy of good will. The desistor can present as narcissistic as he discusses the value of his current pursuits. This writer suspects that some degree of narcissism is required for the desistor to believe his own cognitive distortions about his past and to enable him to believe in the value of his new work.

According to Maruna (2001) this type of self-story is psychologically essential to successful desistance. “This redemption script allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life” (Maruna, p. 87). The story becomes a source of pride to share with the world. Interestingly, Maruna discovered that desistors do not typically decide that crime is morally reprehensible or “wrong.” Instead they must decide what was “right” about their criminal past. In the case of successful desistors, crime was a necessary prelude to a righteous life.

Although identity change is cited as crucial to the desistance process in recent research, other experts see it as less essential. “It seems that some, but by

no means all, men who desisted changed their identity as well, and this in turn affected their outlook and sense of maturity and responsibility” (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 147). The jury is still out about the role of identity and the self in criminal desistance, but compelling research about these psychological constructs has become en vogue.

Making Sense of a Criminal Past

A criminal past will always be part of the personal history of any criminal desistor. It follows that each criminal desistor has to find a way to reconcile his past actions. “The men who desisted from crime accepted responsibility for their actions and freely admitted getting in trouble” (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 143). The men in this research who were accountable for their actions also did not try to rationalize their behavior with excuses. Taking responsibility for the past seems to pave the way for living a responsible future.

This writer is curious about the process of resolving negative or destructive emotions about a crime or criminal past as a means for promoting desistance. Living with the knowledge that one has done harm can create intolerable feelings of guilt and shame that may perpetuate the process of reoffending. For example, “the more irrational the action, the more likely offenders may be to experience shame. Shame, along with free-floating anger at themselves (for their loss of control) and some obvious displacement onto various others (the victim, the ‘system,’ etc.)” (Prelog et al., 2009, p. 254). Prelog et al., building on the work of Harris (2003), make a distinction between guilt and shame in which guilt is “what I’ve done” and shame is “what I am” (p. 255).

Using this definition, guilt escalates to shame when the crime becomes part of one's identity. The guilty offender may believe that their crime is bad, but the shameful offender comes to believe that the criminal is bad and he is the criminal. Shame corrupts identity in this way.

According to Maruna (2001) the past is recast to fit the following formula: "If it weren't for X (me going to jail, my life of crime, etc.), I would never have realized Y (that there are more important things in life than money, that I was good at helping others, etc.)" (p. 98). A criminal past can be reframed as an invaluable step leading to insight about one's purpose as a human being. Reconciling one's past as a component of making long lasting change for the future is one important component of the present research. After reviewing the literature, the psychological processes underlying criminal desistance remain unclear.

Integrated Discussion of Research

Research on the topics of criminal desistance and recidivism has common characteristics that this writer observed repeatedly in the process of reviewing the literature. The common features of desistance and recidivism research include a variety of definitions for basic terms, small sample sizes, measurements of criminal activity beginning shortly after release from custody, minimal attention to cultural issues, a focus on men, misleading information, and difficulty accessing data due to constraints of the law.

The terms jail and prison often seem to be used interchangeably. Researchers sometimes state the length of time that the participants spent in

custody or specify whether the facility was federal. Distinguishing between different types of facilities could yield compelling research as different classes of correctional institutions may affect inmates differently. Few researchers directly address their decision to use the word jail or prison. However, Schnittker and John (2007) specify that they chose to use the word prison in reference to either prison or jail to be parsimonious.

Recidivism does not have a uniform definition. For example, recidivism is sometimes identified as the point of arrest (Dejong, 1997), while other studies require a conviction before using the label recidivism (Olver & Wong, 2009), recidivism could mean parole violation (Benda et al., 2003). Comparing recidivism rates from different studies may be like comparing apples and oranges. Some studies do not specify how they operationalize recidivism. Langan & Levin (2002) did an impressive job at breaking down recidivism. They included recidivism rates for rearrest, reconviction, resentencing, and return to prison. Recidivism rates were measured 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 3 years after release and the rates varied for each type of recidivism.

Even if the point of recidivism was universally agreed upon and well-defined, it is a legal event and does not always accurately reflect reality. Recidivism may go undetected if the perpetrator is never caught. This suggests that recidivism is a measure of getting caught rather than breaking the law. It may be that certain subgroups are more likely to get arrested as Dejong (1997) suggested of the Black and Hispanic communities. Also, an arrest, or even conviction, does not necessarily confirm that a law has been broken, just that the

accused has been found guilty. Being found guilty also has a subjective element. A parolee may face a particularly harsh judge or have an inept lawyer and return to custody as a result, while another parolee accused of the same crime may walk away with the proverbial slap on the wrist. Every stage of the recidivism process has a subjective element. Desistance seems easier to operationalize because it does not involve picking one point, it is the absence of all of the possible iterations of recidivism. Again there is the issue of getting caught. Criminal desistors may be falsely labeled as such if they commit a crime and go undetected. As previously mentioned, Maruna's (2001) desistors had abstained from crime for just 1 year.

Laub and Sampson (2003) raise important questions about operationalizing the term "career criminal," "chronic offender," or "life-course persistor" (p. 18). They write, "How many offenses, arrests, or convictions does one need to be called a persistent offender?" (p. 19). They caution against using the amount of time spent in custody as a measure of criminal persistence. For example, a perpetrator of homicide may spend 20 years in prison but never persist in criminal behavior again. "Our point is that persistent offenders can be defined by an assortment of relatively objective indicators such as arrest frequency, variety of offending, incarceration time, arrests in each decade, arrests in each phase of the life course, and so on" (Laub & Sampson, p. 19).

Sample sizes vary greatly from study to study. Large-scale forensic research is rare and difficult to conduct due to funding constraints and legal issues. One notable exception mentioned earlier is Langan and Levin (2002) who

tracked 272,111 American former inmates for 3 years after their release from prison.

Much of the research conducted on recidivism is limited to former inmates who have only been in the community again for a few months. Recidivism may occur after the research has concluded. To measure criminal desistance that is more likely to be permanent, former inmates should be assessed not months, but years, after release from custody. Laub and Sampson (2003) followed a group of men from age 14 to age 70 making their research “arguably the longest longitudinal study of crime in the world” (p. 8).

The cultural background of the participants is not always specified in the research. When culture or ethnicity is mentioned, it is often simply noted with no further elaboration about how this may influence the results. The participants in many studies represent predominantly homogenous groups, but how this might influence generalizability is rarely or never addressed in the research. On the other hand some researchers paid close attention to the subtle effects of ethnicity. For example, Dejong (1997) found that Black and Hispanic former inmates are more likely to recidivate than their White cohort members. However, she added an important caveat, it may be that Black and Hispanic men are more likely to get arrested than White men as recidivism was defined as being arrested.

Recidivism research is dominated by a male sample. Generalizing the findings to women may be problematic. For example, there is some evidence that women who commit domestic violence are more likely to come to the attention of law enforcement as recidivists when they have a history of inflicting severe

violence (Ménard, Anderson, & Godboldt, 2009). This recent study assessed recidivism among both male and female perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV). Arrest and court records from a city in Nebraska were used to monitor recidivism 5 years after release from custody for 516 male and 80 female perpetrators of IPV. IPV recidivism was defined by the researchers as any crime labeled by the police and county attorney's office as a domestic violence incident. Additionally, the perpetrator and victim had to be in an intimate relationship. For reasons that were not described in the article, same-sex couples were deliberately removed from the potential sample pool. Overall, women were significantly less likely than men to recommit domestic violence (19% vs. 48%). Both men and women were more likely to recidivate if they were not Caucasian and if they were drug users. For female perpetrators, if the original conviction was severe and the relationship with the original victim had dissolved, recidivism was more likely. Among male reoffenders, unemployment and a probation or parole history were related to IPV recidivism. Women have to participate in more extreme, relationship-ending domestic violence to come to the attention of the police. The present research is thought to apply to both men and women as the findings attempt to target a universal underlying psychological reason for criminal desistance.

Although the factors that predict recidivism may vary somewhat by gender, there is evidence to suggest that desistance is a similar process for both men and women. One study investigated desistance among women with a history of engaging in violent and substance-related crimes (Sommers et al., 1993). Each

woman participated in an open-ended, life history interview lasting about 2 hours. Both the turning points and the effects of social processes described by women as contributing to their desistance have been described by men in previous reports. The present study will welcome both male and female participants. However, it will be more difficult to locate women who meet the criteria for this study. This is because women are significantly less likely to become serious criminals than men. This writer will make no attempt to target men or women in recruitment.

There is monetary motivation to find a treatment method or rehabilitation program that can reduce recidivism. Everyone conducting a study wants to pinpoint what lowers recidivism and in doing so some details are minimized. For example, although Zanis et al. (2003) reported that participation in substance abuse treatment could lower recidivism rates, they later reported that when age and number of prior convictions are controlled for, treatment is no longer a statistically significant variable. While it seems there is no doubt that treatment has a role, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the outcomes will be best for particular subpopulations of the offender community (e.g., older inmates who are less entrenched in a life of crime).

Some of the recidivism data is misleading. In the abstract for the study done by Olver and Wong (2009), they write that they assessed “sexual and violent recidivism over a 10-year follow-up” (p. 328). However, in the results section it is revealed that the follow-up research was done an average of 9.9 years after release from custody. Some of the participants were assessed as early as 2.1 years after release while others were not evaluated for new charges or convictions until 18

years after being discharged. Had everyone been assessed at the 10-year mark the findings for sexual and violent recidivism may have been very different.

Some researchers are forced to make estimates about missing data that could skew the findings. Information about time spent in custody and precise release dates were not always recorded for the inmates studied by Dejong in New York (1997). For example, if a subject was held on bail, no details were available about if bail was posted and the subject was released. The only consistent data for each inmate was the time sentenced, but this doesn't necessarily correlate to time actually spent in custody. Amount of time served was estimated at one-third the sentence length for the purpose of this study. Dejong acknowledged the potential effects this could have on the data analysis and coefficients. A main objective of this research was to identify variables that affect the length of time between release from custody and rearrest among those who reoffended. Without precise release dates, it is impossible to determine the true amount of time from discharge to rearrest. All of the findings related to time spent outside of custody before reoffending are compromised. Also, the effect of length of confinement on recidivism cannot be properly studied; only the impact of the length of the sentence independent of how much of it was served.

Researchers have not been able to reach a consensus about how to define fundamental concepts in the criminological literature. Large-scale research is difficult to conduct due to funding, legal obstacles, and difficulty tracking ex-offenders indefinitely. Researchers must resort to a sample of convenience and do their best to compensate for missing information. Thus men are the focus of

criminal research. Issues such as the impact of culture are neglected when simply gaining access to participants of any type is a challenge. These types of challenges have created a need for ingenuity and flexibility among desistance researchers.

Unresolved Issues

The quantity and quality of desistance research continues to grow, but experts in the field report that the underlying reasons for initiating and maintaining long-term criminal desistance remain elusive (Kazemian, 2007). Many easily quantifiable variables that influence criminal behavior have been explored. The positive correlation between age and desistance, for example, has been demonstrated repeatedly. What is missing is more information about the psychological shift that allows the former career criminal to permanently change his life. The present study helps to add to the growing body of knowledge about what internal processes contribute to desistance.

Many concrete components of the ex-inmate's life are examined in an attempt to predict future criminal behavior. It may be that the ability to desist from crime may not be reducible to something that is easily quantifiable, such as number of prosocial contacts, financial stability, and employment. Behind all of these variables is a person who has thoughts and feelings about himself and his environment.

Researchers are calling for more self-report from desistors themselves in addition to continued research on concrete variables that are related to desistance (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007). The internal world of a former criminal is a fertile mine for research. Psychological processes are complicated and often difficult to

access. The present research is about investigating qualitative changes in desistors. Talking to reformed criminals and asking informed questions is an essential step towards greater understanding of criminal desistance. Participants were asked to thoughtfully articulate their experiences. It was this writer's job to reflect upon and try to understand the meaning of their responses, with as few presuppositions as possible, to uncover more data about the psychological processes behind criminal desistance.

If every person that a former inmate encounters, including family, friends, lawyers, deputies, police officers, and even mental health providers, believe that there is little to no hope for criminal desistance, the ex-offender will inevitably struggle to maintain hope for change. Hans Toch wrote in his Foreword to Shadd Maruna's book *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives* (2001): "But to say that recidivism rates are very high is a far cry from showing that future offending is inevitable or that the future inexorably replicates (or extrapolates) the past" (p. xvi). There is hope for change. People need to believe there is hope for change among career criminals to promote funding for research on criminal desistance and funding for rehabilitative programs. If hope for change does not exist, the money will go towards building bigger correctional institutions. Research should promote understanding of the desistance process and belief in the possibility that the career criminal can reform given the proper conditions.

Research Question

Researchers noted that the focus of desistance research has been either social structure (topics such as marriage, employment, or military service) or human agency (topics such as choices, decision-making, or will-power) (Farrall & Bowling, 1999). What is less clear is the underlying mechanisms of change that make desistance possible. With an ever-increasing understanding of the subjective and psychological processes involved in criminal desistance, researchers are beginning to disentangle the interplay between internal variables (for example, motivation, hope, agency, cognitive distortion) and external variables (for example, social bonds) (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008). What better place to start than to inquire about which is first, internal or external change? In a prospective, longitudinal study, LeBel et al. interviewed 130 men on the verge of release from custody and once again in the community 4 to 6 months after discharge. Ten years later the criminal records of these men were accessed to determine criminal status. Overall, their analysis revealed that mindset before release from custody and during reentry is related to future criminal activity. In other words, internal change predated external change. The men who expressed remorse for past criminal activity and self-identified as a “family man” were more likely to desist, while those men who reported feeling stigmatized or doomed were more likely to be reconvicted and return to custody. Also, high self-efficacy or hope proved to be fundamental to criminal desistance and was described as “a necessary if not a sufficient condition” (p. 154) for desistance. The researchers

argue that hope may enable a criminal to tolerate adversity and seize opportunities to develop social bonds.

The researchers pointed out that: “It might reasonably be argued, however, that a quest to identify the sequencing of cognitive and external influences is both impossible and pointless because these operate through a dynamic, interactive process” (LeBel et al., 2008, p. 153.) In other words trying to determine the order of types of change might be a foolish pursuit.

Rather than attempt to unravel the role of external and internal variables, the present research will prioritize internal change, such as changes in personality or motivation. This researcher believes that having a job, being loved by a spouse, attending therapy are all examples of experiences that can change a person’s psychological processes. The present research sought to access the underlying psychological phenomena that these external factors activate. The primary research question is: What psychological changes accompany criminal desistance among former career criminals?

This researcher investigated internal processes to answer this question. The criminal desistor was asked to share their story and explain how they make sense of their criminal past today. For a former career criminal, crime will always be a part of his history. Each former offender has to make a decision, conscious or unconscious, about how to understand their past motivation, decisions, and behavior. Past behavior may be retrofitted with new understanding. A criminal history may be denied or become a source of glory or shame. Maruna wrote: “I argue that to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, prosocial

identity for themselves. As such, they need to account for and understand their criminal pasts” (2001, p. 7). In order to know where to go, one must know where they have been.

The purpose of this research was to identify what is going on in the mind of a desistor that is vital to the process of desistance and remaining crime-free. The serious criminal desistor has transformed from chronic offender to law-abiding citizen. Respondents were asked to reflect upon their transformation. How they achieved this transformation, how they have sustained it, and how they believe this type of transformation happens. They were also asked to reflect upon how they have changed as individuals and what they believe about desistance in general. The interview (Appendix A) is designed to access the mechanisms of change that underlie the paradigm shift from criminal to law-abiding citizen.

Chapter 3

Method

Operational Definitions of Research Questions

The primary research question for this investigation is: What psychological changes accompany criminal desistance among former career criminals? “Psychological changes” are defined as any change in the internal world of the participant including, but not limited to, changes in beliefs about the self or the world, identity, motivation, awareness, thinking patterns, emotional reactions, or cognitive distortion. The definition of psychological process is purposefully broad to allow the participants to define what types of changes have occurred internally that may have been missed by previous research.

The terms *serious*, *career*, *habitual*, *persistent*, *repeat*, and *chronic* are used interchangeably to describe a criminal style defined by an established pattern of illegal behavior. A suitable participant for the present study is a former chronic offender with an adult criminal career lasting at least 5 to 10 years (meaning it has been at least 5 to 10 years between his first adult arrest and his most recent release from custody). During this period of criminal activity at least two separate crimes that resulted in convictions must be on record. These convictions should include at least two felonies or one felony in addition to multiple misdemeanors. For at least the past 3 years, the former criminal must have remained out of jail and prison, not committed any new crimes, and, if applicable, have no violations of the terms of probation or parole on record.

Finally, every participant must identify as a reformed serious offender who has the intention of staying crime-free indefinitely.

Research Design

“The real world is not a world of double-blind experiments” (Maruna, 2001, p. xvi). Research on recidivism and desistance has focused on measuring concrete, easily quantifiable phenomena, such as program participation and completion, sobriety, and contact with peers. What has garnered less attention is the underlying psychological phenomena that might link all of these factors together. Fortunately researchers have begun to understand the value of a closer, qualitative examination of the psychological aspect of criminal desistance. For example, Maruna (2001) used narrative methodology and explained: “The purpose of my research on ex-offender narratives has been to identify the common, psychosocial structure underlying these self-stories, and therefore to outline a phenomenology of desistance” (p. 8). His findings were described previously.

Theories of criminal desistance are emerging from various types of research. It is this writer’s belief that the voices of the criminal desistors themselves need to be the most important source of data in the development of a rich theory of criminal desistance. With this consideration, grounded theory was chosen as the methodology for this study.

The grounded theory approach is ideal because the aim of this research is to generate a theory about the psychological changes that take place within the reformed criminal. According to Strauss and Corbin (1994), “The major

difference between this methodology and other approaches to qualitative research is its emphasis upon theory development” (p. 274). The grounded theorist engages the data and uses inductive reasoning to create a theory (Borgatti, n.d.).

Grounded theory is closely related to quantitative research because it involves the formulation of a hypothesis at the end of the investigation, but grounded theory invites a more thorough analysis. “A case-oriented perspective tends to assume that variables interact in complex ways, and is suspicious of simple additive models, such as ANOVA with main effects only” (Borgatti, n.d.). Qualitative analysis, like grounded theory, may have advantages over statistical procedures commonly used in quantitative work. Grounded theory analysis takes into account the richness of the data in a way that is impossible with a quantitative approach.

Implementing grounded theory research is not without difficulty. For example, the researcher must be careful not to let personal theories interfere with the development of the final theory derived from the data (Creswell, 1998). Another caveat to consider is the role of culture in theory development. Strauss and Corbin (1994) acknowledge that “like many other kinds of knowledge, theories are limited in time: Researchers and theorists are not gods, but men and women living in certain eras, immersed in certain societies, subject to current ideas and ideologies, and so forth” (p. 279). Theories created using a grounded theory methodology are not divorced from the predispositions of the researcher living in the larger context of culture.

Sampling Method

A total of 4 men and 1 woman were interviewed for this research.

Participants were recruited with the help of various professionals who work with ex-convicts. For example, informational fliers were distributed to probation officers and to staff members at agencies that help ex-offenders. Probation officers, agency staff members, and other professionals were asked to offer fliers to any potential interview candidates that seem appropriate for this research.

Please see Appendix G for an example of this flier. The sample was self-selecting and one of convenience.

Inclusion Criteria

Adult men and women of any ethnicity, religious background, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation were welcome and encouraged to participate. An appropriate candidate for this research has a criminal record spanning at least 5 to 10 years (meaning it has been at least 5 to 10 years between his first adult arrest and his most recent release from custody) since the age of 18. Each participant must have committed at least two separate crimes that resulted in convictions. These convictions can include a minimum of two felonies or at least one felony combined with multiple misdemeanors. These criteria insure that each participant has an extensive criminal past. In addition, he must have remained in the community and both crime and violation free for at least the last 3 consecutive years. These are the minimum criteria, but individuals with extensive criminal histories who have been reformed for many years came forward to be

interviewed. Each participant identifies as a former offender who believes he will not commit crime again.

Deciding on parameters to define a serious criminal past was a major challenge of preparing for this research. The difficulty lies in deciding who meets the benchmark for career criminality. When has an offender established a pattern of behavior that warrants the label of serious, career, habitual, persistent, or chronic offender? There is no consensus in the research about what constitutes career criminality. “The career criminal label is usually used simply to refer to people who commit a lot of crime over a span of several years” (Maruna, 2001, p. 46).

DeLisi (2001) attempted to define a serious criminal history in his study on offenders convicted of murder, rape, or kidnap. He selected a cut-off point of 30 arrests with no specifics about timeframe after consulting with presumed experts. “The pretrial services supervisor, along with representatives from the local district attorney’s office and the judiciary, chose 30 career arrests as the applicable criterion for habitual offender status” (p. 243). Also, after reaching the 30 arrest threshold, the offender may become a candidate for more severe penalties in the western U.S. state in which this research was conducted. The “30 career arrests” includes both juvenile and adult criminal activity. Also, arrests do not necessarily reflect conviction or sentencing.

Blumstein and Cohen (1987) wrote an article entitled *Characterizing Criminal Careers*. They concluded that it is important to consider such factors as age at the time of onset and termination of criminal activity, length of criminal

career as determined by time between onset and termination, and frequency of criminal activity. They highlighted the need to consider multiple factors when operationalizing criminal careers. Kazemian (2007) outlined three points for modern desistance researchers to consider. First, “instead of focusing exclusively on the point of termination, it may be worthwhile to invest efforts in better explaining the mechanisms that come into play during periods in which offenders are in the process of desisting” (Kazemian, 2007, p. 19). Second, within-individual (as opposed to between-individual) research is preferable to learn more about the nuances of the process of desistance. Third, defining the criminal career of the research participants is important. This writer applied all three of these suggestions to the current research.

Reviewing previous research on criminal desistance did not provide much clarity about how to operationalize the population in question, but it gave this writer some important points to consider. First, arrests do not always lead to convictions or time spent in custody. In the United States the accused is innocent until proven guilty. An arrest does not necessarily mean that one has committed a crime. A history of arrest could have more to do with affiliation with criminals or minority status than actually committing a crime. Thus, conviction may be a better measure of actual criminal activity. However, arrest is the point at which a potential criminal first makes contact with the authorities and, in this way, marks entrance into the legal system. Second, the length of time that one is actively involved in illegal behavior is important to consider when quantifying a criminal career. One year of persistent criminal activity does not seem to be enough

involvement in illegal behavior to constitute a criminal career. For example, the criminal career of an offender who has murder, rape, or kidnapping on his criminal record is 25 years (DeLisi, 2001). Many years of active criminal behavior before desistance more closely approximates a typical criminal career. Third, age is a factor in recidivism. There seem to be differences in the constructs underlying criminal behavior in adolescence versus adulthood because most juvenile offenders do not continue to commit crime in adulthood, let alone become career criminals (Moffitt, 1993). Fourth, within-individual research is preferable for studying the underlying psychological process of criminal desistance (Farrington, 2007; Kazemian, 2007).

The United States Sentencing Commission (2009) defines a career offender as follows:

A defendant is a career offender if (1) the defendant was at least eighteen years old at the time the defendant committed the instant offense of conviction; (2) the instant offense of conviction is a felony that is either a crime of violence or a controlled substance offense; and (3) the defendant has at least two prior felony convictions of either a crime of violence or a controlled substance offense. (§4B1.1)

For the present research, the participants must have a criminal record including at least two separate legal incidents that resulted in convictions in adulthood. The criminal record can include either a minimum of two felonies or at least one felony combined with multiple misdemeanors. One adult conviction does not establish a pattern. However, requiring at least three felony convictions as minimum criteria will create a problem. In California and in many other U.S. states, offenders who commit three felony crimes are subject to the three strikes law which calls for more severe sentencing for a third felony conviction (Zimring,

Hawkins, & Kamin, S., 2003). Thus, many would-be desistors with three or more felony convictions may be serving out long sentences in custody and will not be available for interviewing in the community. Two separate legal incidents resulting in conviction is sufficient to establish a serious criminal past for the purposes of this research for three reasons. First, individuals who have multiple adult felony or misdemeanor convictions are likely to have an extensive juvenile criminal history too (Farrington et al., 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Paternoster, Brame, & Farrington, 2001). Second, this writer suspects that participants with even one felony conviction will also have abundant history of misdemeanor convictions. Certainly very serious charges can be pled down to misdemeanor status in the litigation process. In other words, misdemeanor charges are not to be taken lightly. Third, by requiring a minimum of two separate incidents of conviction and a criminal career spanning at least 5 to 10 years, participants in their late 20s, 30s, and 40s will be eligible to participate. The participants who completed the interview varied in age from 46 to 66.

The type of felony conviction was not be restricted to “a crime of violence or a controlled substance offense” as suggested by the United States Sentencing Commission (2009, (§4B1.1). Any type of felony conviction was included in the present research in an attempt to capture themes that are universal to a variety of desistors. Thus the specific types of crime committed are not as important for the purposes of this research as the severity of involvement in criminality. The goal of this research is to understand desistance among those who were previously entrenched in criminal behavior of any type.

All participants in this research identified as former criminals. In order to undergo a transformation from criminal to law-abiding citizen one must first acknowledge that he was a criminal and now he is crime-free and intending to remain crime-free permanently. Maruna suggested that it is important for participants in desistance research to self-identify as former serious criminals. “Importantly, though, the primary qualifications for inclusion in the matched samples were subjective. First, individuals had to identify themselves as long-term habitual offenders” (Maruna, 2001, p. 48).

Thus the definition of career criminal for this study meets the criteria for face validity and includes consideration of conviction, frequency of criminal activity, length of criminal career, and age. In addition, the focus of the research is within-individual change.

All of the participants have been out of custody for at least the last 3 years. All must have no known involvement in criminal activity and no probation violations on record since leaving incarceration most recently. Three years was selected as the benchmark because research has shown that there is no significant difference between recidivism rates 3 years and 5 years postrelease (Benda et al., 2002, 2003). This suggests that if a former inmate is going to reoffend, he is likely to do so within the first 3 years postrelease or not at all. Recidivism rates increase less and less each year after release from custody. For example, one research team found that 6 months after release from custody, 29.9% of offenders have been rearrested, after 1 year the rearrest rate has jumped to 44.1%, after 2 years the rearrest rate has increased to 59.2%, and 3 years post-incarceration the increase

from 1 year to the next is even lower as the rearrest rate is 67.5% (Lagan & Levin, 2002). The recidivism curve gradually flattens and begins to approach a flat line. Although recidivism rates do increase every year after release from custody, the difference in recidivism from 1 year to the next after 3 years in the community has been shown to be negligible (Benda et al., 2002, 2003).

All participants signed a consent that permits the researcher to contact his current or former probation or parole officer (PO) or another official in the justice system to confirm a long, documented history of criminal behavior (e.g., by accessing a RAP sheet) and abstinence from illegal activity within the past 3 years (Appendices E and F). All necessary consent forms were signed before the interviews began.

Exclusion Criteria

The one exclusion criterion was failure to meet all of the inclusion criteria. For example, 1 potential participant revealed, just as her interview was about to begin, that she had been criminally active multiple times within the last 3 years but had learned to successfully avoid detection by the authorities. This writer ended the interview shortly thereafter. Two former offenders contacted this writer eager to be interviewed and adamant about permanent desistance from crime. However, both men had been crime-free in the community for less than 3 years. Unfortunately, they were both excluded from the data analysis despite their apparent sincerity and commitment to change. They would be appropriate for similar research in the future should they remain crime-free. All 3 of these

excluded participants were given gift cards for coming forward (see earlier Participant Summaries section for further details).

Interview Protocol

The intent of the interview is to elicit genuine responses about personal experiences with criminal desistance. The interview protocol was informed by questions that emerged during the research process. While reading and writing for the literature review, this writer made note of missing information, areas in need of further investigation, and contradictory data. A running list of potential interview questions was compiled. This list was edited numerous times until only a handful of essential questions remained. The questions are worded to avoid prompting the participants to give particular responses. This is a qualitative study investigating an experience that is not presently fully understood so leading questions would sabotage the research. The intent of the interview is to create a nonjudging atmosphere in which the participants can feel comfortable communicating honestly. All of the questions are intended to spark some reflection about how change is achieved. Whenever possible, participants were asked to review the interview questions in advance to confirm that they are comfortable with the questions and so that they will have time to reflect on the topic before the interview. Please refer to Appendix A for the interview protocol.

Procedure

Prior to the interview, all participants were given copies of the Interview Protocol, Participant Information Letter, Participant Informed Consent Form, Bill of Rights for Participants, Consent to Contact Probation/Parole Officer, and

Consent to Allow a Legal Official to Disclose Criminal History (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and F to view copies of these documents). The Participant Information Letter provides detailed information about the inclusion criteria for participants, purpose of the research, what the interview entails, the role and rights of participants, confidentiality, potential benefits and risks associated with participation, and the course of action should the participant have concerns (Appendix B). The Participant Informed Consent Form provides information about the management of confidential data, confidentiality, potential benefits and risks, the voluntary nature of participation, and information about who to contact with a complaint (Appendix C). Potential benefits of participating in this research include enjoyment of the process and discovery of a new insight. Potential risks include experiencing distressing emotions. Although a reformed criminal is presumably more well-adjusted now that he has sustained a crime-free lifestyle, discussing a criminal past may trigger unpleasant memories and emotions. Participants were permitted to request information about therapeutic services or withdraw from this research at any time without explanation. The researcher was available to answer any questions before moving forward with the interview process.

All of the interviews were conducted face to face solely by this writer. Every interview took place in a confidential setting such as a private room reserved at this writer's school or the participant's home. All of the participants completed the interview in its entirety. Although the interviews were expected to last for approximately 1 hour, longer interviews were welcome when the

participant was willing. The interviews varied in length from 47 minutes to 2 hours and 21 minutes, with a mean interview length of 1 hour and 22 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed so they could be coded. The interviews were conducted following the interview protocol and probing questions were inserted at the discretion of this interviewer. Participant comfort was a priority of the researcher. All participants were thanked and offered the opportunity to provide contact information. If contact information was provided, the researcher will furnish an abbreviated version of the results.

Data Analysis

The data was coded using the standard procedure for grounded theory research (Borgatti, n.d.). The first step is open coding, which involves closely examining the data and identifying categories. Each piece of data, meaning each segment of each response, was scrutinized with the intent of uncovering the essential meaning of the response to generate both subtle and obvious categories. Thousands of lines of participant response were reviewed. Second is axial coding, which involves finding relationships between the categories identified in the open coding step. In particular, causal relationships are hypothesized. Finally is selective coding. Selective coding entails selecting one topic to be the central category. The other categories should be causally related to the central category. A hypothesis and a story emerge.

This researcher coded every line of participant response at the open coding stage. Also, two recent graduates of doctoral programs in clinical psychology assisted with the coding process to provide additional insight into the meaning of

the responses. Specifically, each of the five transcripts were reviewed and coded independently by a colleague at the open coding stage. Their codes were then added to this writer's codes and were under consideration for the development of larger categories. In deciding on the larger categories for the open codes, creating the causal relationships at the axial coding stage, and developing a hypothesis, this writer solicited the feedback of these two colleagues as they had a unique perspective due to being intimately involved with the data.

Chapter 4

Results

Participant Summaries

The final sample consisted of 4 men and 1 woman with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and criminal histories. The interviews varied in length from 47 minutes to 2 hours and 21 minutes, with a mean interview length of 1 hour and 22 minutes. All 5 of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Four of the interviews took place in private rooms at this writer's school and 1 interview took place at the participant's home. Some participants refused the gift card or accepted it but reported they had plans to give it away to a loved one or someone in need.

Two other interviews were completed but not included in the formal analysis because the participants did not meet the full criteria for this research. Specifically they were both very motivated to remain crime-free, but had been crime-free in the community for less than 2 years. However, the final hypothesis of this research applies to both of their stories.

One 30-something woman came forward that seemed to meet all of the criteria for the research. She had an extensive history of drugs charges, but her last conviction was in 2006 and she reported that she had been crime-free since. This writer's experience of her was different from the get-go. Before the recording device was turned on she explained that she had not been incarcerated for several years but added that she if she continued to spend time with her current friends and associates she expected that incarceration was the likely

outcome. This type of thinking was in sharp contrast to that of the previously-interviewed desistors, who were aware of risks but unwavering in their conviction that they would never put themselves in a position to be reincarcerated. The interview was abandoned once the participant admitted that she is still criminally active but had improved her ability to do so discretely and thus had not been caught in many years.

A description of each of the 5 participants is provided with basic demographic information, details about criminal history, and significant details from their descriptions of their desistance experience. The length of the summaries varies based on the length of the interview, the extent of participants' criminal history, and the extent of the information they shared that specifically pertains to criminal desistance. To protect their confidentiality, participants are referred to as "Participant #X." They were each assigned a number based on the order in which they were interviewed. The audio recordings were transcribed. Please refer to Appendix H for samples from each of the five transcripts. Excerpts that contained both probing questions and dialogue between this writer and the participants were selected to demonstrate what the interviews contained aside from the questions from the interview protocol. Filler words such as "um," "you know," and "like," have been omitted from the quotations as they pertain to conversational style but are distracting and not relevant to the meaning of the responses.

Participant #1

Background Information

Participant #1 is a 66-year-old Caucasian man who spoke with this writer for nearly 2 hours about his background and his process of becoming crime-free. He reported growing up in the Midwestern United States and described his childhood as “bucolic” and “Ozzie and Harriet.” He grew up in a stereotypical 1950’s home. He noted that he stole candy as a child and car parts as a teen, but insisted: “Really, though, there was no crime, never went to Juvenile Hall.” He seemed to minimize his early criminal behavior:

We’d go out stealing car parts for cars, we were into hot rods and stuff like that—it was called midnight auto supply and it was a game, we never took it very seriously but, you know, engines or transmissions, we’d go out and steal them.

Participant #1 identified problematic behavior as beginning when he was approximately 14 or 15 years old and started watching others in private moments without their consent. He explained that this drive to voyeur formed the basis for his adult criminal behavior. Participant #1 explained:

I had a hole I couldn’t fill up and that was doing something wrong all the time, and it was killing me, but I did it for so long. I couldn’t fill myself up, I couldn’t be—I was incomplete.

He added: “There was a hole in me. I couldn’t fill that hole up, neither love, nor sex, nor nothing. I was an incomplete person.” He explained that the hole was feeling bad about himself and stated, “If you’re doing something wrong and you’re lying to yourself that it’s okay, but underneath, psychically, you know it’s wrong, then there’s going to be dissonance.” He was incapable of managing his voyeur’s impulse with healthy behavior and he knew it. After having engaged in

35 years of therapy he was psychologically-minded and able to address the ambiguity of his desistance process.

He readily noted that he is a “sex offender” and explained his extensive history of voyeurism that escalated to breaking and entering and a rape conviction in 1980. He stated, “My convictions were legion, misdemeanors by the jillions, all of them trespassing, 314 PC’s, I had zillions of them,” and, “If I had probably a year for every time I committed a crime I’d have a million years.” He also noted, “I’ve been on probation steady since 1970.” Despite his multiple convictions he did not go to prison for the first time until he was in his late 40s. This writer inquired as to why he believed he was spared a prison sentence for so long given his criminal persistence. He stated frankly: “White, well-educated, middle class, noncriminal looking.” His “vener wore off” and his criminal history finally caught up with him in 1991 when he was brought into court as a “felon in possession of a firearm” because he was selling guns “legally” at gun shows, but was sentenced for his body of criminal behavior. He said the judge informed him, “I’m not giving you this time for what you did, I’m giving it for what you did in the past.” He had consistent outside social support from his sister during his incarceration.

While he was actively offending, Participant #1 rationalized his criminal behavior in the following way: “The lie that I told myself, I think that enabled me to act the way that I did, I told myself I never really intended to hurt anybody physically.” He stated: “I, by nature, am not a violent person, I don’t exude hostility, I’m not very hostile.” He did not externalize blame for his criminal

behavior or his lengthy incarceration because he knew he was responsible for the choices that led to his extended imprisonment. He stated, “I never blamed anybody for my shortcomings, so that made me peaceful, so I wasn’t bitter and blaming of other people.”

Participant #1 spent approximately 17 consecutive years in custody as he was detained for 2 years while awaiting his sentence and then served a 15-year prison sentence. He successfully completed his probation in 2011. He has been crime-free for 20 years and he has lived in the community for the last 3 years.

Participant #1 was defined by contradictions and contrasting life experiences. When describing himself as an adult he stated: “At my prime, young, thin and handsome, and a wild man, had no concept of anybody else’s feelings but my own.” He was a charismatic, self-centered, manipulative, thrill-seeker who was successful with women. He was married four times and adept at romance. He stated:

I was good about movies and gifts and going shopping. All the things that women liked, I liked to do all that too, and so I always tried to please them and do things that they liked to do. I was always interested in talking to them and understanding.

He seemed to always know how to present himself so as to be pleasing to his audience, perhaps even during the interview with this writer. He felt that failure to succeed with romance and sex was not driving his voyeurism:

I never had really a hard time with women. I’ve had some really nice ones and I liked them all. Some were extremely attractive and I never was one of those guys that could never get any. I had all I ever wanted, basically and more.

He explained that within the context of his romantic relationships with women he did not engage in any deviant or variant sexual practices. He stated, “I never had any really weird heterosexual behaviors in terms of anything really kinky.”

However, throughout his adulthood, regardless of his marital status, he was a clandestine voyeur. He described terrifying women “out of their minds.” During the interview he identified several important people in his life and interestingly they were all women: his mother, sister, his four ex-wives, various lovers, and his current girlfriend. He stated that his biggest regret was “Not doing more for my mother when she was alive,” demonstrating his longing to be a good son. There was a discrepancy between how he talked about his reverence for women and how much he targeted and hurt women. He observed, “It always was a puzzle to me, having liked women so much, why I would pick on them and my particular disorder would be aimed at women.” He was skilled at deception and never told any of his girlfriends or wives about his sexual deviance or criminal record. When he was caught engaging in voyeurism, his partner at the time was always flabbergasted. He explained, “I was so good at appearing normal that it didn’t enter their mind until I blew it completely and then they were shocked beyond belief.” His reaction to a partner’s “horror” and “disgust” was:

Oh it hurt—it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it did hurt. I see it in their eyes and I would suffer the pain of rejection, but everything in my life I ever did I brought upon myself.

By engaging in voyeurism, he saw others while they were exposed, but he never voluntarily revealed his true self. When he finally was exposed the pain was intolerable, one wonders if he was trying to inflict this pain on his victims.

He referred to the “splinter of my insanity,” the dichotomy between his successes in life, particularly with women, and his drive to voyeur. He identified a split in his identity that manifested at least as early as adolescence. He was a teenager with a wholesome Midwestern upbringing who had already begun to engage in voyeurism. He was a happily married adult who lived a secret life fueled by a drive that he did not understand to continue to voyeur. He was always hiding in some way. His lifestyle was simultaneously mainstream and deviant, he fit in and he felt he could never fit in. He was articulate about his struggle: “I had a ton of cognitive dissonance because I was at odds with myself all my life because I had no explanation for my behavior.” He lied to strangers, he lied to his friends and family, he lied to every one of his four wives, and he lied to himself about his identity, until his criminal behavior forced him to reveal the truth. He described how his lies served him:

I lied to them about what I was, but if I didn't lie I wouldn't have any relationship at all, so that way I fucked them over, but then I still had love of some semblance, and I did love them, some of them. I was crazy about them, man, I like girls, I really did love them, and besides being this perversion part, there was a part of me that's completely normal relationship-oriented. I have a relationship now, and we get along, I just love her dearly, she's just a treasure.

Desistance Process

Participant #1 conceptualized his criminal impulse as separate from other parts of his personality. He often referred to his criminal impulse in terms of the other. For example, he used phrases such as “crazy person living in my head,” “the voice,” and especially “Sméagol.” He said: “In religion they call it the devil, Freud called it something else, Jung called it something else, everybody has a

name for it.” In any case, it seemed important for Participant #1 to tease out this part of himself and distinguish it as different by using a name. He explained the evolution of “Sméagol:” “I would divide myself up into like two pieces. I got to where I could do that, the okay part and the un-okay part. Later on after I saw Lord of the Rings I’d named the un-okay part Sméagol.” He noted that Sméagol is still a part of him:

Every once in while the voice—it doesn’t really prompt me to do anything flagrant, it doesn’t prompt me to do anything wrong, it’s just that I hear the voice. I’m trying to think how to say it—if I’m not being patient enough or good enough or kind enough or decent enough, I usually know the reason why at that particular moment, I’m feeling that way because it’s usually something that is inside of me that is not being understanding, and that’s that voice. It’s just I’m not thinking clearly at that particular moment.

He uses a variety of techniques to manage Sméagol that this writer will address.

Participant #1 talked about being “split.” For example, “I was very split. I always thought I was rather schizophrenic behavior but I wasn’t schizophrenic, I wasn’t dissociative, but it just was a bizarre behavior pattern. Being normal and being—because there’s no middle, I had no middle.” He added, “I was a man of extremes.” This was a part of his personality he both relished and loathed as evidenced when he stated, “Along with all those terrible things it propelled me to great adventures.” He explained,

Because along with extreme behavior comes extreme thrills becomes extreme problems. You can’t just act that way forever and expect to survive; I’m lucky I did. I used to get on my motorcycle in L.A. and ride between the cars stoned on LSD!

When conjuring up advice for a hopeful criminal desistor he referred to the extremes and stated, “I would tell somebody, ‘Dude, if you can find the middle,

then you're okay,' and they probably wouldn't have any understanding what the fuck I was talking about.”

Participant #1 explained that the drive to commit crime is much less powerful today, but the same underlying energy that has propelled him towards taking risks is still present: “I was a thrill junkie, that’s what you’re missing, thrill junkie and it was wonderful—I liked the wire. Now you want to know the weakness in my personality structure, I liked being wired up. Oooh! It’s still there.” He has found alternative ways to indulge his love of risk-taking behavior. He satisfies this desire for intense stimulation by “riding my bicycle in traffic in San Francisco.”

Participant #1 referred to “character disorder” as a reason for his destructive behavior. This writer was not in a position to diagnose research participants, but Participant #1 described thoughts, feelings, and behaviors consistent with the Cluster B Personality Disorders including Antisocial Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Histrionic Personality Disorder, and Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Participant #1 was not particularly interested in diagnosis himself and stated, “The issue is not what particular symptoms or behaviors that are grouped together but what’s in your head that enables you to do that.” In any case, Participant #1 reported that he was no longer character-disordered:

But the issue is, and I was trying to think about this for you, if you are indeed character-disordered, which I was, you don't have a concept of what reality is, so your reality, you assume, is everybody else's reality, which is not true because your reality is not one of societal norms. I don't quite understand the nature, if I did I'd write a book and I'd be rich and I'd live in Tahiti or something. When you're disordered your reality is out of

sync with reality; when you're abnormal, you can't see normal; but when you become normal, you can see abnormal.

In this way, his character disorder went from egosyntonic to egodystonic.

Being free from character disorder allowed Participant #1 to access a different perspective:

It [the understanding that there is a real concept of basic human decency] was always there but when the fog of the character disorder... somehow the self-destruction faded, then what was left was the way I was raised. That is the answer! Because if you peel off the top part, which is rotten, you've got to look at what's underneath and what was underneath was just a kid that was raised in [note: name of state removed to protect confidentiality] in the '50s and in the '60s who basically was not really a bad person, he just had things stuck on him that he didn't ask for. I didn't ask for being a voyeur. I didn't ask to have that stuck on me. I mean, who in [note: name of state removed to protect confidentiality] in the '50s even knew what it was about, you know what I mean? Right, it just came, it was my cross to bear but then I understood that by looking at people who were born with birth defects or born with wheelchairs or spina bifida—I says, “Well, shit man, you know, I ain't the only one in life that ever had a problem.”

Participant #1 identified a core of goodness due largely to his stable upbringing and being afflicted with a problem beyond his control, such as a medical condition. He often referred to “human decency” when describing his change process. When asked to identify only one change inside himself that enabled him to become crime-free, he stated, “Understanding that there is a real concept of basic human decency.” He explained:

I understood that it was an indecent way to behave. Now that's putting it silly or simply, but I came to that understanding because I understood how other people saw my behavior, I understood how my sister saw my behavior, I understand how everybody saw it and they were horrified so when I saw it, I was horrified, you see what I'm saying? I was horrified that that was me. I had no explanation.

He elaborated,

There is a mainstream reality in our society, there are certain basically accepted behaviors, hypocrisy abounds of course, but there is basic human decency. If you treat someone bad it's more likely they're going to treat you bad. Something has to snap in somebody's head to understand that there is the basic human decency and that they want to be a basically human, decent person and that entails snapping into a reality where you treat people decently and act in a decent manner. Now what snaps you over from being insane to that? I don't know.

In reference to what has changed the most about his personality since he stopped engaging in antisocial behavior he stated quite concisely: "I quit being an asshole, quit having to have my way, learned to control myself." He explained the drive behind his burgeoning self-control, "getting it under control had to do with understanding how reprehensible that was." He also stated,

I was always reprehensible and was in denial that I was reprehensible and then one day I said to myself, "Jesus, you've really been reprehensible all your life," and it just kind of clicked and then I saw how I was and it was disgusting.

Participant #1 had to acknowledge and admit to himself that his voyeurism was "reprehensible" in order to change this behavior.

How was he cured of "character disorder" and "being an asshole?" Why did he adopt a policy of "human decency?" The answer is complicated. He gradually developed many skills. He learned anger management and self-control. He strengthened his observing ego and engaged in self-talk. He practices gratitude. He's able to be empathic. An excellent example of all of the aforementioned is how he negotiates his relationship with his current girlfriend, the first woman with whom he's been completely honest. When he feels frustrated with his girlfriend his internal monologue is as follows:

Sometimes she aggravates the shit out of me, but then all women aggravate the shit out of you, just like all men aggravate the shit out of all women, but then I back up and realize how awful I have been and how lucky I am to have her and then that makes me come back around to a better perception of reality. Does that make any sense?

He described having an internal debate in which he feels justified in cursing her and then attempts to take the perspective of “the other side.” He realizes the value of relationships in his life today: “I’ve been so lucky to have so many people that were good to me for me to be such an asshole.”

Participant #1 described “a fundamental change in perceptuality of interaction with others,” defined by trying “to understand their realities.” He demonstrated empathy as he began to imagine what others might be experiencing. He reflected on how his sister, his victims, and the larger community likely felt in response to his actions.

Participant #1 described his self-talk when he recalls his past criminal behavior:

This is what I got, “Dude, I can’t believe you did that, I just cannot fucking believe that you did that, that is so terrible, it’s unbelievable.” It was almost too unbelievable for me to wrap my brain around, I can’t believe that!

In some ways going to prison set him free because all the parts of himself were exposed, leaving him free to examine his personality. He did a tremendous amount of self-reflection and therapy while in prison. Participant #1 offered a raw description of his process of self-examination:

I’m distancing myself from it over here at the side, looking at it out of the corner of my eye, trying to bring my eyes around on it, the full extent of my craziness of a lifetime. You can’t look at the video straight on at first, you have to kind of turn slowly, and get a full grasp of the movie and when you do, it’s a horror movie, only problem is you’re starring in it and

I could see—I saw that as clear as I’m seeing you, I’m looking, “Holy fuck!” I mean, just like that, in the brain, I’m looking—“Wow! I can’t believe you did that!” I just can’t believe it, but I did and so I took responsibility for it, I did do all of those things, but it don’t hurt me now. It hurts me that I did those things and I regret it but I know that there’s nothing that I can do about it now.

The only thing I can do about it now is live the rest of my life as decent as I can be, that’s the only option that I have. Going to church or any of that bullshit, getting the magic water sprinkled on my head, that ain’t going to make any difference. I certainly don’t think I’m going to earn a great place in heaven on the throne of God. You live, you die, that’s it—I’ve been a shithead but I hope I made up for it in the end, I tried to put myself in perspective as a human being. Was I the worst human being that ever lived? I thought, “Well no, Hitler was worse, Stalin was worse” and then I got to myself and I says, “God damn! What comparisons are you comparing yourself to?” I says, “That’s a pretty—I mean, you weren’t that terrible,” and I said, “Well, how do guys who go to war and kill and rape, pillage and murder; how do they live with that?” I started wondering about all those things about how people do things and can live with it and I try to think, “Well, you’re going to have to find some way to be able to cope with what you done,” and the only way that I could figure out to cope with what I done was to quit and be decent so that would kind of heal it up.

Participant #1 revealed that a former psychiatrist informed him that the following should be engraved on his tombstone: “Here lies a man who managed to postpone adolescence beyond all known previous limits.” Participant #1 stated: “This may be the most accurate truth I ever had.” He noted, “I wanted what I wanted when I wanted it and I think that’s probably the hallmark of all immature people.” The therapist asked if he is still postponing maturity and he responded:

Still some ways, got my bicycle, like I still have all those boyish traits. I like nice things. I’m real picky about my things. I’m still self-centered. I haven’t achieved any kind of sainthood, but I do try to do the right thing. I know the difference between not doing the right thing and doing the right thing, and now I do the right thing—not always, I’m saying not always. Like in my relationship, I know if I’m taking a wrong tack—I can hear it, or if I get mad. If I’m mad it’s usually because I didn’t get my way, and if I don’t get my way then the first thing I’ll want to say is something that’s mean, but I don’t because I know that I’m wrong.

Now when he recognizes feelings of anger he is thoughtful about his reaction. He described one way he deescalates himself when he's experiencing anger:

I'll get in the bed and roll over and go to sleep, that's what I do, that's what I did in prison, if I was frustrated or pissed off or mad or angry, I just get in the bed, go to sleep, and that's what saved me, tomorrow's another day, tomorrow's another day, it'll be different tomorrow. Shit—today was a shit day but tomorrow will be different—and that's the same attitude I brought out with me and that's how it's worked, tomorrow's another day, another opportunity to be a better day, you have bad days.

Allowing himself to disengage and be hopeful about the future facilitated his sanity in prison and now in the community in dealing with relationships.

Some of these skills he undoubtedly learned from 35 years of therapy.

This writer asked him to identify his biggest learning from decades of therapy and he responded:

The doctor used to say to me when I was young, 30, he said, "I'm trying to teach you some things that someday you may understand," and I thought, "Oh, good" and then he would say to me, "There are different levels of understanding of human behavior, I hope you achieve a higher one than you have now." I always remembered that so I got to thinking about understanding human behavior all my life, my own included especially, and just how fucked up it was, and I grasped that. There are different levels—most people go through their whole lives and never have any concept of what the hell it is they're doing. I was a very unhappy camper.

He insisted that he knew who he was, but examining it and accepting it was a much longer, gradual process, facilitated by therapy. He stated, "I always understood I was an asshole, I just didn't want to believe it."

Religion was not a part of the desistance process for Participant #1 and he spoke to this directly:

After I read many books on the origins of Christianity I thoroughly understood the nature of the supernatural, at least I think I do, you know

what I mean, it was kind of a—it's a nice story, but the tenets of it are good, do unto other people as they would do unto you, treat people decently and I learned that growing up.

Participant #1 seemed to be implementing his ideals of human decency because he “saved” his girlfriend from alcoholism. He referred to helping his new girlfriend as “my opportunity to have done something decent.” He explained the logic and revealed his hope for atonement:

It's my turn to help somebody else because I owe that. . . . It's my turn to actually do something for somebody because if I redeem myself by helping one person then I can be forgiven for all my sins, but it's got nothing to do with spiritual overtones.

It seemed that he took helping her seriously from the start.

I'm not kidding, I told her, I called her a year and a half ago and I said “This is [*note: says first name*],” I says, “I'm going to change your life for you,” and I says, “I'm going to bring a little sunshine into it.” She said, “Oh, bullshit” and I said, “Well, wait and see” and I did. I'm a good companion; I'm fun to be with.

He explained further,

The syndrome of wanting to save somebody and all—I understand all of that intellectually, but nevertheless it was the right thing to try and she says, “Well, what if you fail?” and I says, “Well, if I fail, I tried and that was the right thing to do and if I succeed then that was the right thing to do.” I says, “I can't go wrong because trying is decent,” and I says, “and that's what I'm trying to do.” She's a very intelligent woman and I says, “You know, I'm trying to do the right thing, you either accept it and quit or you don't, but you can't have half drinking and half relationship,” I says, “because I won't—I'm not going to drink with you, I'm not going to go out with you and drink, I don't drink, you're not going to have it in the house, you make your decision.” I says, “I'll still see you if you want to drink, I just won't see you when you're drinking.”

He explained that these boundaries were necessary because:

She was an alcoholic and when I first met her I told her, “Look we can have a relationship, it'll be fine and I'll take care of you but we can never have a long-term relationship if you drink.” I told her that, I says, “Now you can make a decision on what you want to do, if you want to drink, you

can live by yourself and drink and we can see each other once in a while, if you want to live together, I am not coming home to a drunk old lady,” I says, “it’ll set me off and I’ll say or do something that I’ll be sorry for,” because I do—I hate alcohol, I have an unreasoning hatred towards alcohol.”

He gave his opinion about alcohol:

I never drank, I never drank, never smoked, guys I grew up with never drank, well there are a few. I just don’t—the belligerence, the nasty, the meanness that goes with alcohol. Nobody gets drunk on weed and wants to go out and fight in the bar, it’s just from my hippy days, I guess.

He described extensive experimentation with “hippy drugs:” “I never shot any drugs, I never used any heroin, I never used any—I’ve never seen any crack, but I sure did like acid and my hippy drugs and hash.” In particular, he described his preference for marijuana. He described heavy drug use, but insisted that substance addiction or dependence was never a problem for him:

I never got myself killed. Oh God, there’s a million times I should have been killed—motorcycle-riding when I was young, I was wild. I had a lot of motorcycles when I was young, fast cars, Corvettes, Porches, young days—I did enough drugs to kill everybody in San Francisco in my old days. We used to go to Winterland, ’70, ’71, ’72, ’73, ’74, see the Grateful Dead. I did enough acid to float everybody out to the ocean, not enough—the truth is I never really had a bad drug habit but I liked drugs.

In response to the inquiry about what motivates him to continue to stay away from crime today he stated simply, “That’d be crazy.” He then added: “I have no desire to die in prison.” The threat of reincarceration lingers as a deterrent for Participant #1. He explained that the time when he came the closest to reoffending or violating was when he felt tempted to steal shortly after he was released from custody. He described how he heard the antisocial voice urging him to take the item. He suggested that some people do not struggle with antisocial

impulses and described how he is now able to override his impulse with rational thinking:

The voice, I don't know if everybody's is that pronounced, some people seem to be perfectly normal, would never think of doing anything like that, some people seem to be perfect. I've known, I've had women who were like so normal I just marveled at them, such nice, normal people, and I don't think things like that ever occurred in their brain, or maybe they did and they didn't tell me, but I don't think so, I mean they were well-adjusted. I don't know, but I heard that voice and I thought, "Wow!" I says to myself, "Yeah, you'd have a hard time explaining this one wouldn't you?" I couldn't explain my ass out of it, see?

In particular he could not think of an excuse his probation officer would accept. In any case, Sméagol has faded more into the background as he's spent more time living prosocially in the community. He said, "The more you're immersed in normality, the more normality washes over you."

Although Participant #1 had many thoughts about contributing factors that led to his change in thinking, he was much more puzzled and hopeless about the process of criminal desistance for the masses:

I don't know how you ever pull them out of it, I don't know you ever pull the young ones because antisocial behavior is enshrined, is their lexicon of how to be. Antisocial behavior was never enshrined as my lexicon of how I should have been. I never hung around with anybody who reinforced that thinking pattern.

He added, "But it didn't make me better than them or less culpable or a better person, it probably made me worse because I knew better." Although Participant #1 was accountable for his criminal behavior, he distinguished himself from the general criminal population. He stated, "I didn't hate prison, I hated the people I was locked up with," and,

it [prison] did have a deterrent effect in the way that I didn't like my companions, I didn't make any pals, I didn't look for any pals, I didn't look for anybody, I came in alone, it was my fault, and I'll go out alone.

In this way he identified himself as special compared to the average criminal.

He addressed his skepticism about the role of aging in criminal desistance:

That's the big one that's in all the statistical manuals, but I don't seem old. I think that it's something cognitively has changed rather than age. There's the issue, you can't put your finger on what it is. If it's age, why are there people—look, I live in a place where people die one-a-month from crack and they're all my age, alcoholics.

Participant #1 described the complexity of the myriad of possible contributing factors:

Now each one of those variables is something, now you have that path, you run in the fact that you had therapy, you run in the fact that you had middle class upbringing, you run in the fact that you were able to cognitively sort it out, you run in the fact that you didn't want to die in prison, you run in the fact that you were horrified at... I mean you run all those things in, all those are contributing factors on path analysis.

Participant #1 has found a home where he belongs:

I probably could get my feelings hurt if somebody was to stop me and point me out as a person, but the wonderful thing about living in San Francisco is being anonymous and the wonderful thing about that is that in San Francisco, I'm way down the list of crazies.

Criminal desistance has been a gift for Participant #1. He no longer experiences the tension of living a duplicitous life and having to hide all the time. At the end of the interview he stated: "of all the realities that I've ever had, this is the best one."

Participant #2

Background Information

Participant #2 is a 51-year-old Caucasian man who grew up in a city in the Northeastern United States. His criminal history is varied but most of his convictions are related to drugs sales.

Participant #2 grew up in an environment where substance use and criminality was the norm so he was not aware that this behavior was problematic. He reported that he started to drink alcohol and use drugs at about the age of 12 or 13 and noted that he was “just kind of doing what I thought every kid did, that’s what we all did, so I thought that was all kids.”

Professionally he described extensive experience with construction work in conjunction with marijuana sales primarily to his co-workers and friends. He stated, “I always dealt marijuana and it was never a big thing, it was always with my close friends and it was just a natural part of life, it’s like I never looked at it as anything wrong.” He described being consistently employed and well-paid working in construction but continuing to sell marijuana because it was so profitable, “It was just some extra money, always an extra thousand bucks a week, and back in the ‘70s that was good money.” He also sold cocaine briefly when it first became popular, again because it was a convenient way to make extra income.

He explained that he married and had two children in his twenties but continued to use drugs and “party” until he had an explosive argument with his wife upon discovering that she had had an affair with one of his best friends. The

demise of his marriage combined with his father's recent death led him to act out until he went to prison. In his words,

My father died on a Sunday. I went down to the bar that day and got drunk and then I found out she had an affair with one of my best friends. I went home and I slapped her and I ended up getting arrested and that kind of dissolved our marriage right there; then I just kind of went on a bender after that, ended up getting in some trouble, did a prison sentence.

He explained that he developed a heroin habit while incarcerated.

Although he talked about abusing various substances, he clearly identified heroin as his substance of choice. He explained how his use escalated,

I ended up picking up my heroin habit in prison, it didn't seem like a habit in prison because you couldn't do it everyday, you didn't have the money to do it everyday, but after I got out, I got a job and I'm making good money again and now I can afford to do it everyday, at least I thought I could.

Upon his discharge from custody he returned to construction work but his heroin dependence eventually resulted in his termination. Selling marijuana became his full-time occupation. He talked about the life-threatening circumstances he put himself in while picking up and transporting huge quantities of marijuana from Mexico until the federal authorities arrested him. He recounted the following story:

The money's just rolling in and Christ, you go crazy, and then I ended up getting hooked up with a guy out here too and he wanted me to cut my partner out which, at the time, I thought I was doing all the work so I attempted to do that. It didn't end up working out, caused a little problem between me and him.

I had a full-blown heroin habit at this time. It was crazy. I mean, I'd be out here in California waiting to pick up a load and it's taking too long—or I'd be in El Paso, Texas going into Juarez to pick up a load, and I've got people flying up because I'm running out of heroin, right, and I don't want to go on the street there and cop heroin because I can't afford to get bagged. I've got all this money on me so I just got people flying me

out heroin just so I can stay straight, and then it started going south a little bit.

My buddy, he ended up ripping off the guy, the head guy for like, I don't know, half-a-million dollars worth of weed. I kind of got held responsible for it and so they get me out to California and they duct-taped me to a chair, beat me up for 3 days, and then I still wouldn't give up my partner because I really didn't know anything. I knew he just took off and so... I don't know why they didn't kill me, they didn't.

I cleaned up after that though. It's like I cleaned up after that and then I got involved with the guys here and then we tried to grow some weed and sell some weed, that's when the feds stepped in and—that's when the feds stepped in and they busted us all. This is the really condensed version of everything that happened.

He seemed emotional at times during the interview as evidenced by teary eyes and pronounced pauses. He stated,

I just cannot even believe that I came out of this with my life. I am so blessed. I tell you, some of the stuff that's happened, it's like I never should of came out of it alive, especially some of the deals we did down there in Juarez. You see Juarez, Mexico on the news and it's like you hear about the shit that was going on down there. I think it was actually even worse at the time when I was down there. I'm going down there, making deals, I got a couple-hundred-thousand dollars in my pocket—well, not my pocket but back at the hotel room and I'm down there doing these deals and it's like crazy, I can't even believe we came out of there alive, you know—it's like crazy.

Desistance Process

Participant #2 was released from custody over 3 years ago and he attributes much of his success in staying crime-free to taking Suboxone. He stated that Suboxone “takes away all your cravings to use” and “basically turned me into the person I always wanted to be.” Without cravings to use heroin, he has been able to avoid drugs and alcohol completely. He described the clarity of mind and the change in his priorities that occurred after he started Suboxone treatment. “When I first got on the Suboxone I couldn't believe the difference it made

because I'd get my paycheck and the first thing I'd do was go pay my bills." For Participant #2 the simplicity of the Suboxone treatment was essential:

Some people can do this NA thing and the AA thing and all that, and they have all this support, and that just doesn't work for me, you know, I need something cut and dried, it worked for them, that's great and okay, maybe when I tried it, maybe I didn't apply myself enough or whatever, or maybe I didn't do the things I was supposed to do, I don't know but it didn't work for me.

Although drugs sales was natural and lucrative for Participant #2, selling drugs without becoming dependent on heroin or getting into trouble with the law proved impossible. He explained his dilemma, "I can't work in construction if I got a habit because the habit supersedes everything, so the only other thing there is to do is deal weed, and that's considered a crime." Fortunately, he has marketable skills in the construction field and has been able to secure gainful employment.

Recently Participant #2 left his current job to accept a better construction opportunity, but after he quit the first job, the new job fell through. He had to return to his former employer and they could not approve unemployment because he quit. Instead they asked him to return as foreman, a more demanding position that he had hoped to avoid. This writer asked if even a part of him felt tempted to return to selling marijuana. He replied,

No, no, I was actually out of work last year for 8 months and it just didn't come around to that at all. I was collecting unemployment and I don't spend much. I don't spend that much money. I'm actually pretty frugal so not using for me has made such a big difference. It's like I have money. I can do things for my kids. I got a girlfriend. I do things for her and it's like, it's kind of all good.

He recognized that he is better able to help himself and his loved ones sober and unemployed than actively using drugs and employed.

In response to the question about identifying only one change inside himself that enabled him to become crime-free, Participant #2 stated that a spiritual connection was significant to his desistance process:

I'd say my spirituality. I got closer with God and I definitely think that's it. As I said, I've been blessed a lot of times in my life. Even this thing with the Suboxone, I basically chalk that up to God too, it's like somehow I got led down that path.

When asked what has changed the most about his personality since he stopped engaging in illegal behavior he described a newfound ability to confront life's challenges directly instead of avoiding his problems, which was his pattern in the past. He stated:

I think the biggest thing is I don't run from anything anymore. I was never good at dealing with problems before and I always ran. I don't care if it was a personal problem or a criminal problem, I was just gone, I was on the run. Now I just deal with it and it's not that bad, I don't know why I couldn't deal with it before, but I just deal with it now and no matter what it is I just deal with it, and I think it goes to spirituality again, it's like if I have a problem with dealing with it, I ask God for help. I don't really know how to explain it, it's like things I was never able to do or deal with before, it's just an everyday thing now, you just deal with it.

Previously, he wasn't just running away, wasn't aimless; on the contrary he "ran to drugs or alcohol or whatever." He explained how his substance use facilitated his pattern of avoidance:

The heroin was always my drug of choice. The reason why the heroin was my drug of choice was another escape thing. When I did the heroin, it suppresses all your emotions, you don't care where you are, what's happened in your life, it's like it just doesn't matter, it just numbs everything.

Participant #2 was also aware that emotional havoc while under the influence of substances was a major contributing factor to his destructive behavior and that his psychological development in general was derailed because of substance use. He reflected:

Every time I've gotten in trouble because of not being able to control my own emotions—whether I was out cheating on my wife, getting in a fight in a bar, or even stupid little things, driving fast or whatever—there was always the influence of drugs or alcohol, it impeded my judgment because I never got to grow up psychologically it seems, my mind never grew, it's like it got stunted. I was supposed to keep growing, my body grew, but my mind didn't. It's like I still had the mind of a 13-year-old, 14-year-old, when I started using.

He elaborated:

I just made so many mistakes. I couldn't even name them all. I think the bigger thing was—I started drinking and drugging at an early age. I've heard this, I don't know how true it is, but they say that it impairs your growth, your psychological growth or whatever, that you never really grow emotionally, so you don't handle things good in life, things that you should be able to handle better, you see other people handle stuff like that but you can't, you can't deal with it.

This interviewer inquired about how he resumed his psychological growth and he spoke about sobriety, self-reflection, and the perils of regrets:

When you actually get some abstinence from the alcohol and drugs, especially this last time in prison for me because I didn't use when I was in, and I got to think about it a lot with a clear head over a long period of time, and I started thinking about what I wanted in life. Yeah, and okay now you start thinking about things like that but now you're battling with all the stuff you've done in the past, your regrets and everything, you're always battling with that, and I think that was one of the reasons when I got out—still battling with the past, you want to move on but you're still battling with the past and you still got that monkey on your back and you end up giving into it, and it's just all bad after that.

Yeah, I was really lucky that it didn't go too far this time and I think one of the reasons it didn't go too far this time was I didn't let it, I didn't want it to get that bad again this time where I was going to end up doing more prison time.

He expressed his wish to be available for his kids and to avoid imprisonment. He also alluded to the unintended destructive ramifications and moral implications of dealing marijuana. When asked about his current motivation to continue to stay away from crime he stated:

My kids, doing more time. I wanted to do the right thing. I never really looked at dealing marijuana as a bad thing, but it's not as simple as that. The whole thing gets so much more complicated when you really think about it. Even the things that I've been through—I was lucky, I didn't get killed, and there's people out there that do get killed over stuff so you have to think about that, you have to look at the bigger picture, it's not as simple as selling a bag and making a couple of bucks. There's a bigger picture to it than that, but I really don't want to do anymore time. I've done like 13, 14 years probably, that's a long time totaled up.

Participant #2 also explained how incarceration is appealing. He admitted, “people like to get pretty comfortable in prison, I actually did and that's sad to say.” He observed that becoming comfortable in custody reduces the deterrent effect of incarceration.

Now that he is committed to criminal desistance, it's not enough to remain crime-free in the present and future, he also feels compelled to resolve outstanding legal issues from his past that he could potentially ignore without external punishment. He noted that he has pending charges in another state:

I really want to clean up everything in my life. There's a lot of stuff from the past that I haven't had a chance to clear up. I tried to clear up most of my shit when I was in prison, but just some stuff I wasn't able to. I owe 4 months to [*note: name of state removed to protect confidentiality*] on heroin possession. I don't really feel like going back there and doing 4 months, especially after you get out, you get your life together, it almost seems like it's counter-productive to go back in, and it actually scares me to go back in because—I ain't saying nothing bad about the people in there, but when you're around the criminal element it seems it's like the only thing people—it's all we ever talk about in prison is crime, what we've done or what we got away with, what we didn't get away with. I just don't want to hear that no more. I just want to start a new life.

Participant #2 described why he must actively atone for past wrongdoing:

I don't want anything hanging over my head anymore. It seems like all my life I've had stuff hanging over my head, whether it was an addiction or jail time or you know, there was always something hanging over my head, and that's an added pressure that I really don't need in my life anymore.

He explained that being free from all legal issues would "seem like a fresh start."

As he previously admitted, "I take everything to the extreme it seems when I do it," and it would follow that Participant #2 would take his criminal desistance to the extreme too.

When asked what question should be added to the interview protocol, Participant #2 suggested that this researcher include a question about experiences with probation officers. He explained that his previous probation officers did not give him the opportunity to succeed. However, he attributes much of his success today to his current probation officer:

I think she's a big reason why I haven't committed any crimes. She gives me room, she knows that I'm a grown man and I need to do certain things and she doesn't try to be too controlling. We've bumped heads a couple times but I backed off, she's backed off a little bit. It's like she's the perfect PO, she's not all about putting a person back in prison and she's willing to work with a person. I think she's made a big difference in me changing, I really do.

He explained how his probation officer skillfully works with him and does not trigger his impulse to resist:

She don't keep a tight rein on me, but not much escapes her neither, she's smart. I know I'm on a leash, but she gives me a little bit of room on that leash and enough where I'm comfortable, which is something I really like. She doesn't make it uncomfortable for me to be on probation. If she did I think it could be a problem because I'm just not that type of person, I'd probably say, "Screw this, I'll go finish out my time [in custody]," but she actually handles me pretty good, it's a little embarrassing to say that sometimes.

As the interview was coming to a close Participant #2 stated: “This was actually a little harder for me than I imagined it would be.” This writer inquired about what made this process difficult and he explained:

Thinking back on the damage that I’ve done—that’s probably the toughest. I’ve basically reconciled with most of it, with my kids and my family, it’s all good now and I think that’s a big thing. A lot of times you think it’s hopeless, but it’s really not, it’s really not.

Participant #3

Background Information

Participant #3 is a 60-something Caucasian man whose convictions are related to cultivating, possessing, transporting, and selling marijuana in the 1970s and 1980s. He is unique in the sample because he never committed a violent crime. He is passionate about “social, political, and environmental justice issues” and has been active in his efforts to make changes in the community by organizing and participating in various protests. He had a graduate degree from an American Ivy League university when he left a university teaching position to join the “back to the land movement” by moving to the southwest United States in the 1970s. Of his move he stated, “The economics of it were disastrous and I could barely make a living.” Thus he began growing and selling marijuana to support himself. He cited both “economic necessity” and “risk-taking and thrill-seeking” as reasons for starting and continuing to commit marijuana related crimes. His first conviction was in the mid-1970s, his final arrest was in 1989 leading to his final conviction and incarceration in 1990, and he has had no unfavorable contact with the law for over 20 years. He alluded to some leniency

from the legal system due to his background as evidenced by the following incident:

I caught a break from the U.S. attorney there who was kind of puzzled by my action because culturally, socially, educationally we were in a similar position and he was surprised, he asked me a few questions along the lines of what we're talking about here, "What motivated someone with your level of education, etc. to do this?"

Desistance Process

When asked to identify only one change inside himself that enabled him to become crime-free, he stated: "I came to realize that further cultivation would simply land me in prison." He knew more serious prison sentences were inevitable if he continued to cultivate marijuana, so he came up with an alternative plan. He made the decision to stop engaging in criminal behavior quite thoughtfully as he wanted to attend law school. He explained,

Stopping it, that's pretty easy for me, I identified, primarily in custody, identified the law as a career path for me, it's something I had deliberately avoided. I guess I just felt it was too much involved in "the system" and I was very strongly opposed to "the system," Vietnam protester, did some anti-draft organizing, and I just was one of those people who found "the system" so unjust, "the system" being the political, economic and social system in the country, I found it so unjust.

Participant #3 is unique in the sample in that he has personal experience on both sides of the law. In response to the inquiry about what has changed the most about his personality since he stopped engaging in criminal behavior,

Participant #3 responded:

Less of a feeling of being a renegade, an outsider, an outlaw, which I liked when I was younger. I still do kind of view myself as an outsider of sorts but that's very common to the criminal defense field. We are disdained by a lot of law-and-order types and I think to find the anger in the belly sort of a thing to be effective, you have to have. . . . If you really think well of the system and you're dealing with a client who you know has committed

the offense, I kind of think it might have an unconscious impact on your ability to really get in there and slug it out for the best possible sentence but yes, I definitely feel less of an outsider.

He described a picture taken of him at the time that encapsulated the outlaw persona: “There’s a picture of me with a bandana, the Mexican sombrero that I had picked up on the trip down there, and an unloaded shotgun over my shoulder.” He concisely explained why being a renegade was important to him: “Being an outlaw brought me some kind of comfort in the Reagan era.”

This writer inquired as to how he was able to satisfy his thrill-seeking urges after he stopped growing and transporting marijuana. He explained, “Some physical activity, it’s like I learned to dive, to do scuba and with age that sort of diminished.” A combination of a decrease in his drive to take risks as he grew older combined with “somewhat demanding outdoor activity” has kept him content.

This writer also asked how he made the switch from resisting becoming a lawyer to giving up dealing marijuana partly so he could pursue a career as a lawyer. He explained that even as he continued to handle marijuana he “had gotten more engaged in the community, I had gotten pretty darn engaged in the community in the ‘80s, I was organizing environmental protests against logging and being on the school board.” His shift to prosocial community member was gradual, “I was, little by little, I was integrating into the system.” By the time he was faced with the decision of continuing to grow marijuana and accept the harsher consequences or choose a different course, he was already actively

engaged in local prosocial pursuits. It seems the groundwork had been laid for him to pursue a formal prosocial path.

He explained how a reporter from a right-wing publication wrote about him because he did a “lengthy protest hunger fast—I sat on the steps of the court house for a couple of weeks” to protest budget cuts for public services and was put in jail. Participant #3 explained that he talked about his frustration with libraries closing while there was still sufficient funding devoted to catching people who were growing marijuana. He explained how a conservative reporter, someone with a perspective nearly opposite his own, actually contributed to his decision to become a lawyer:

If I thought this strongly about changing the marijuana laws I should become a lawyer and I was going through this uncertainty as to what I could do and I thought, “Wait a second, if these people from opposite sides are reaching the same conclusion I probably ought to think about this,” and so I guess this brings up just being attuned to what others are thinking or saying about what might work for you, not to dismiss them out of hand, sometimes good advice can come from the strangest places and that’s certainly what happened for me.

When asked to address the time when he came the closest to reoffending, he stated: “I don’t have a ready answer to that because after 1990 there was never any question in my mind that I wasn’t going to reoffend.” He added, “I don’t think I’ve ever come close to reoffending or violating but what’s stopped me, theoretically, would be the reluctance to be imprisoned.” He described what he disliked about incarceration:

I didn’t like the hypervigilance that’s required and the suspiciousness and you always have to be on guard and you have to gang—you have to group up, you don’t have to gang up necessarily, even in the camp setting I was getting some hassle. I’m kind of small and everything. I had to find the person who was ethnically closest, the couple of guys ethnically close to

me, we would hang out together, one of the guys was bigger and stronger and everything, even at that low, low level [of security].

When answering the question about what motivates him to continue to stay away from crime, Participant #3 spoke about the tension involved in perpetuating crime, the threat of incarceration, his disillusionment with the fantasy of the outlaw, and his desire to keep his professional and personal life separate. He stated:

The things that I jotted down were a lack of economic need, that's one thing, but even if I were in a situation of economic need, my unwillingness to endure all the tension and stress and unhappiness would probably keep me from re-committing, but what I also noted was unwillingness to be incarcerated just to fulfill economic needs.

The other thing was that I have so much exposure to people, through my work, people who are engaged in criminal conduct. I've been practicing 16 years now and the first few years I still had a bit of a romantic image of the outlaw. I've gotten to know the mentality enough that most of the people are doing it just because either occasionally they're antisocial; generally they just lack imagination or belief in themselves or a notion that they could do something different; or perhaps a certain degree of laziness, it can be kind of easy money if you can pull it off. I like being able, at the end of the day, to not have to deal with those people, although I do have a number of clients as friends and I play tennis with one client. I don't dislike my clients as a whole, I just want that to be almost like work and not to have those sort of issues and concerns weighing upon me all the time.

Participant #3 offered the following advice for the individual in custody who wants to learn how to change:

Try to figure out what you're good at, what you enjoy, something unique that you have and just pursue that. I understand that's really hard if you don't have any means to do so, but I think there's a need to really look into yourself.

In response to the inquiry about his ideas or theories about how people in general manage to stop engaging in illegal behavior, Participant #3 spoke about three changes that are often essential precursors to criminal desistance. First, he

identified “drug rehab” as critical for anyone with a substance abuse or dependence problem. Second, he spoke to the value of therapy for someone attempting to make a major change:

Therapy for developing internal strength and resilience because obviously if you’re changing your lifestyle, you’re going to have a lot of defeats or a lot of setbacks, and if you’re fragile, if you have a very fragile personality structure, quite possibly you won’t be able to pull off with this transformation without some help.

Third, he addressed the role of social influence and stated: “You may have to change your associates, you have to drop a lot of the people who you’re hanging with.”

He’s happy to reveal his own criminal record to help a client feel more comfortable with him or to begin to think about change for him or herself. He stated: “I always bring up my own background, I’m not shy about doing that.”

He spoke to how he promotes criminal desistance in his role as a lawyer in the following quote:

I also think that the lawyer, the defense lawyer, that’s what I hate about the public defenders is that they don’t have the time or the inclination or whatever to do more than just deal with their client’s case. True defense, from my perspective, you really have to engage with the client. Sometimes it’s next to impossible. I can’t deal with this idiot, and then all I can do is just defend them, but I really try to see, I’m always looking for a point of vulnerability for my client. Or if they’re guilty, assuming they’re guilty—once it becomes clear that they’re guilty, then I’m always going to try and get them the best deal possible or if it’s winnable case, I’m going to try to win it regardless and beat some of the counts at least, but I try to sort of infiltrate a little bit with them so that they’ll listen to me. I try and talk to both them and with their permission, with their family and say, “Look, let’s be honest about this, there’s a problem here and the problem has something to do with how you act or react or whatever,” and I’ll try and show them what I’m seeing as a pattern here and why I would suggest rehab and there’s always a question of whether you can afford it.

He continued to explain how he contributes to criminal desistance with his work,

If rehab isn't needed then I encourage them to see whether a little therapy might not help them build up some of those internal strengths and resilience that would allow them to go a different route. So it's a process, I try to engage them early on in the representation of thinking of a different direction for themselves. I'll say, "Look, I'll do my best to get you through this, don't internalize too much of the stress and the strain on this, let me deal with most of this. You need to think, John, about whether you want to continue going through these kinds of stressful and expensive situations for you? Don't you think the risk-to-reward ratio is really turning ugly in your case?" If they say no then I'll say, "Okay, let's just understand that you are likely to be back here as my client at some point down the road here and I don't have any moral, I don't have any scruples or concerns about who you are or anything, I'll be happy to represent you again, but I just have a hard time imagining that this is still enjoyable for you." So we try to engage a bit in this. I have some psychology background and I really try and use it with them.

This writer continued to probe about the ideas he's developed from his professional experience about the psychology of criminal desistance and he stated:

I have some cases where I'm doing the diagnosis myself, but it's unmistakable, and ultimately I generally do try and get the court to appoint a forensic psychologist for an exam to confirm because it gives you a heads-up on saying, "Your Honor, this fellow needs treatment more than..." and this is one of my leitmotifs, if it's not a really serious crime I'm always trying to get treatment rather than incarceration, unless this person's just a hardcore criminal. So we have that, that's an issue, the personality, the personality disorders and then I don't know how one gets around the lack of good psychotherapy inside, behind bars.

He also spoke about how challenging it can be for a criminal to engage in psychotherapy, even if he is willing to do the work:

How one addresses psychological push-factors is tough when probably most of the guys don't see the underlying psychological issues, may well not be motivated for lack of perception, may well not be motivated to do anything, or else they think it's just hopeless. And then if you are motivated, can you really find the services you need to go into self-examination; corollaries are whether you can afford those services and what do you do during the process, during the months or years that you're

examining your psychodynamics, and can you afford not to be engaged in crime while you're attempting to disengage from crime?

Given that Participant #3 described a history of social activism, this writer asked him if he believes he has been more effective at working towards his goals or causes as a lawyer than as an outlaw. Essentially he explained that he has been more productive as a prosocial citizen because he does not feel the pressure that comes with the constant looming threat of incarceration. He also talked about efficacy, aging, and liberation in the following excerpt:

My illegal activity, in a best-case scenario, would have done nothing towards my effectiveness besides leaving me with an economic cushion to pursue the social, political, environmental, justice issues that I like. So I think the answer would be a definite yes, much more effective since I don't have to look over my shoulder, so to speak, I can just get out there. I mean, part of it comes with aging, I'm one of those people for whom aging is a terrific sense of freedom. I don't have to do whatever the fuck society wants me to do. You can see—I'm listening to what's coming out and there's a certain—I'm not all that well socialized [laughs], truth be told, in terms of adapting the typical mores. There's a great sense of liberation in the beginning with increasing age. I began to get a sense of that by no longer being under the eye of the cops.

Participant #4

Background Information

Participant #4 is a 45-year-old woman who described her ethnic background as half-Caucasian and half-Hispanic. She permitted this writer to interview her in her home and the audio recording of her interview was 2 hours and 21 minutes. Her long adult rap sheet has consistent entries from the mid-1980s to 2002 with gaps in criminal activity due to incarceration. She was often pregnant in jail and prison and delivered at least one of her four children while in custody. Her criminal record includes predominantly drug charges and theft

charges, with numerous parole violations and violent offenses peppered in as well. For example, a typical offense for Participant #4 was “possession of controlled substance” and various offenses specifying theft, robbery, burglary, or carjacking. Her record also includes “assault with a deadly weapon, not a firearm, great bodily injury likely” and “battery of a person.”

Participant #4 explained her use of violence:

I was high and I was drunk and I hurt a lot of people, not anyone that I really felt didn't deserve it, but when you're loaded you might not be thinking right. I could justify anything and be like, “You shouldn't have done that and you had this coming and you had...” I know now that if I wasn't high or drunk, those are things that I wouldn't ordinarily do unless I was under the influence. I know these things now, I didn't know those things then and that was my lifestyle. So I had a pretty tough reputation. I protected the underdog, wherever I was at, people weren't messing with them because they knew they would have to deal with me, and they didn't want that, I had already developed this reputation for, “She'll fucking stick you.”

Her last conviction was in 2002, she successfully completed a prison sentence followed by parole, and she has been crime-free in the community for the better part of the last decade. Thus her desistance process began when she was in her mid-30s. Her motivation to change had a snowball effect in her life. She stated, “I told myself, in my mind if I could quit smoking and stay not smoking, I could stay clean and sober, so I haven't smoked, drank, used drugs, or any of that in the last 8 years.” Her commitment to sobriety and criminal desistance are intertwined. She stated, “I haven't relapsed, not one time. I haven't picked up one cigarette. I haven't committed any crimes.”

She was able to identify the impetus for her earliest criminal behavior that set the stage for later antisocial involvement:

Probably about age 4; age 4 obviously wasn't when I got into crime but that's when my dad passed away and as a little girl I was traumatized. So father passed away on Christmas, daughter 4 years old, close to her dad, traumatized.

She further explained:

On Christmas morning he had overdosed on prescription medications; he had been shot and was paralyzed from the waist down so he was in a wheelchair. He was in a wheelchair; before that he was a boxer, a construction worker, he was a good family man and all that. Anyways, we were close so that traumatized me and because it was Christmas too it traumatized me even more.

After that, I just started blaming my mom. The family stepped in, they were like, "We can raise the two kids." My mom was like, "No way, they're my kids, I'm going to raise them," and she did the best she could. The best she could included: "I'll provide—I'll be the mom and the dad and I'll be the provider," so that was her mindset.

In becoming the provider, she got into making money illegally so she began selling illegal drugs, prescriptions, whatever right. And that went on forever, my whole life and so everyone in my whole entire family has been to prison, all my mom's six brothers, her, me, my brother, all of us have been to prison. So as I said, my mom was making money but I think that my mom became addicted to money, not to doing drugs but to making money. So we always had new cars, we owned our homes and stuff like that, but it was work because she always had a business, she always had different businesses, different licenses, for an upholstery business or a headshop business or a different business.

Participant #4 had a complicated relationship with her mother who was in and out of custody during Participant #4's childhood and adult life. She described her relationship with her mother in childhood and adolescence:

Before my dad died she was going to be a court stenographer and she'd been to college, but anyways our lives took a turn and so I was angry, still, all this time I was angry. We always had plenty but I was still always angry at her, so her and I didn't really get along too good and I kind of fought her in every sense. I was the rebellious one, my brother was not. She doted money and whatever on both of us but he was accepting to it and I was like, "I don't want nothing from you, matter of fact, I'm gonna show you I can do stuff on my own." I was the really, really rebellious one.

During that time I was really close to my mom's mom, which was my Nonna. We couldn't keep babysitters 'cause I'd run them off and I'd

want her there to come and get me. Anytime I could, I was there with my Nonna and so growing up I was with her a lot, but I was becoming uncontrollable. My anger at my mom and at my situation, I didn't even really know that I was angry then, I don't think; I do now 'cause I've done a lot of work around it but then I guess I thought I was rebellious.

Her anger towards her mother seemed matched by her mother's aggression. For example, she quoted her mother: "Bitch, if you steal my mom's car one more time, I'll be down there to break your arms and your legs," and again, "Bitch, you are lucky you made it because the only reason why you did is because you're a good swimmer. Bitch, I had 13 abortions, you're lucky you're here."

She described her mother's role in the community and contrasted it with their relationship when Participant #4 was an adolescent:

She was a very, very, very respected lady in that she was a motivator to other women that "You don't have to be abused by some guy, let me show you how to make money so you don't have to rely on some stupid guy that's just going to beat you up, take your money, take your welfare check, or whatever," so my mom was very well-respected, the only one who didn't respect her was me. I was really the only one who didn't respect her. She was always about her business, she always had like wads of money, she always owned our home, she always took care of me wherever I was at—behind my back. I would find out, wherever I was at, she'd be sliding them money. She'd be, "Ain't nobody gonna take care of my kid and say they did something for my kid" and so that's how she felt about it and that's how it was and then as soon as I'd find out she was dropping money on them or whatever I'd shake the spot and I'd go somewhere else and that was kind of our relationship.

At the age of 19, after Participant #4 had her first child, her attitude towards her mother began to change, "I decided to stop hating her and that I was hating for all the wrong stuff and it wasn't her fault." She stopped being so resistant to accepting her mother's help. At times she and her mother were at the same correctional facility, each serving their own sentence. She described how her mother prepared for her arrival in the general population:

I go to the main yard and there my mom is. She's sitting there with her friends and she's got a big bag of cigarettes and hygienes and food. She knew I was coming over. She had obviously gotten me pulled over as

quickly as she possibly could because she had been a frequent flyer, she'd spent a lot of time there.

Her mother continued to be criminally active until her death from a heart attack in 2001. She never got to see Participant #4's transformation.

Participant #4 discussed her juvenile criminal behavior. She recalled that she was arrested for the first time at the age of 13 for being intoxicated in public, the first of a slew of drunk-in-public charges that she accrued as a teenager. She explained how she avoided being separated from her family:

I didn't ever wind up in any group homes, any kind of CYA or anything like that. I was just partying and stuff and being out of control. I wasn't breaking stuff or stealing stuff. I was just getting drunk pretty much, and so they started not wanting to give me back to my grandma, but she fought hard for me and she would always get me.

Between the ages of 15 and 18 she started to use intravenous methamphetamine and continued to "party." She gave birth to the first of her four sons at the age of 19 while in jail. Much like her mother did with her and her brother, she always made sure that her children were with family when she was incarcerated. She graduated to prison in her early 20s for felony convictions. She stated:

I could steal a car in a heartbeat. I'd part them out, I'd sell them, I'd drive around in them. I always had a car and it was hardly ever mine even though I kind of, in my mind, thought it was.

Participant #4 explained how she rationalized her criminal behavior and preserved the integrity of her self-worth while hurting others:

It was property theft, didn't really belong to me but I never really felt like I was really bad. I was always really strong-minded, strong-willed. I never stole from people that I knew. I didn't really count it—the ones that I didn't know, they didn't really count to me. They do now, they didn't then, and then I developed kind of this tough reputation too.

Participant #4 had a reputation for violence which helped to protect her: “I got into knives and drinking and in a rough crowd and I was a rough one too and everybody knew not to mess with me because they might get stabbed or something.” She laughed when she spoke about her intimidating persona. She laughed appropriately at times during the interview when she seemed to be reflecting on the extreme behavior in her past that is so foreign from the way she conducts her life now.

She talked about the cognitive distortion that she held that made her believe that prosocial life wasn’t an option for her:

I never really felt like—I don’t want to say that I didn’t feel like I was entitled to it but—I felt like people who had those kind of lives were kind of like born into those kind of lives. I was born into a different kind of life, where my family balled out of control, we all went to prison, we weren’t bad people we were just in a fucked-up environment, and we were survivors and we made it however we needed to make it. Then you have people that are born with money, and their families send them to school and buy them new cars, and it’s kind of separate kind of a lifestyle. But that’s kind of a lie that I’ve come to realize later down the line that I was selling to myself because I thought that you have to be born into that to make it.

Later in the interview she spoke to this again and referred to a therapeutic technique that she believes helps to break down this type of thinking:

There’s this big lie that we sell ourselves that because we’re felons and because we’re ex-drug addicts, drug-addicts, ex-criminals, criminals, that we ain’t got a life coming. Yes we do, we can be about something. “Look I manage this program? I work in a drug program, you can do it” and so I think a lot of motivational interviewing techniques come into play.

Eventually jail and prison became a place of respite for Participant #4 as evidenced when she stated:

I started getting to where I wasn't really staying out as much as being in so I started being as comfortable inside of jail as I was out and then it came to a point where I was more comfortable on the inside than I was out.

She explained how prison can become comfortable:

It took me awhile, once I'd be in prison and I'd come out, to get used to how people are out here because in prison you know what to expect. You live your life a certain way and you know what to expect out of the prisoners, out of the guards, out of everyone and you come out here and you don't see things coming because people are sneaky and sheisty. It's just this whole different world than it is in there and so it takes some getting used to so when you become institutionalized. You're looking at people and you're a little nervous to be around them and a little anxious and it's like some people can't stay out here for very long because they miss it and they need to be in controlled environments.

She even went so far as to admit:

Prison saved my life a lot of times and I'm going to tell you why: Because I would get out of prison and I would use and I would get skinny and I would get tired and I would need a place to go rest and that's what I used prison for.

She deliberately prepared for her inevitable reincarceration when she completed a sentence because she always knew she would be back:

I only wanted to stay out here for awhile and then I was going to be ready to go back pretty soon. Like when I'd leave, I'd leave a box of stuff packed, I'd have a carton of cigarettes, all my hygienes and clothes. I'd have all my stuff packed with a lifer that would be there that I knew, and then that way when I came back, I'd go back and get my stuff because I knew I was coming back. I knew I was coming back and if I wasn't back in a year, then go ahead and get rid of my stuff. I had a TV and a stereo and all my hygiene stuff and all my stuff but I knew I was coming back. I'll catch you guys next time.

This writer asked if she left this type of care package for herself the final time she left prison and she replied:

No, the last time I left I knew I wasn't coming back. The last time I left was the only time I knew I wasn't coming back because I wasn't. Every other time I was coming back and I knew it.

Desistance Process

Participant #4 was convicted for the last time in 2002 after which she completed a prison sentence and reentered the community with a new perspective. She described internal changes that were taking place during that final sentence, but she couldn't pinpoint exactly what happened. She stated,

So my last time that I went, it was just like something changed. Before I was always happy to be in prison because I needed to rest and I needed to get my mind together and I wish I could tell you that it was this certain thing or this certain someone.

She described the beginning of her transformation in detail:

My last time in prison it was weird because I kind of opened my eyes for the very first time and I looked around me and I said, "I don't want to fuckin' do this anymore." I wasn't scared that I was facing a whole bunch of time. It was nothing like that at all. I just kind of had this spiritual awakening, maybe that's the best way that I can describe it, because my last time there, I was like, "I don't fuckin' want to do this no more," and then I was trying to get my hands on a book and I couldn't get my hands on a book and liked to read always. I was like, "I know a book I can get a hold of," and it was the Bible.

She described the impact of finding a Bible,

I read the whole New Testament. I started praying everyday that God would change me and that I would get my kids back and that I would be a good mom and that I'd stop going to jail and prison all the time and I'd quit leaving my kids with family.

Participant #4 identified spirituality as critical to her transformation process, but she accepted spirituality on her own terms:

I always thought that people who went to church and all that stuff was full of shit, I was like, "Bitch, you know, you're going to be right back out there getting loaded so what are you doing?" and they'd be on the phone crying about their kids, and I'd be like, "Bitch, you're going to get out of jail and you ain't even going to go home so what are you on the phone crying for?" and I was pretty hard on the inside. So that's how I felt about people who would go up and pray and stuff, "You're going to be praying

and then you're going to get out and you'll have a glass dick in your mouth in a matter of minutes."

So I'd start breaking away from my friends and they'd be like, "Where you going?" and I'd be like, "I'm going to pray bitch, what? You got a fucking problem with that? Because if you do we can handle it anyway you want to," I was so tough [laughs], I still did things my way, I still did it however I wanted to do it. Until they'd be looking at me kind of crazy like, "What?" "Yeah, I'm going to fucking pray, you got a problem with that?"

In response to the inquiry about identifying only one internal change that enabled her to become crime-free, Participant #4 stated, "It was the spiritual connection, I want to say that it happened by accident and I really can't put my finger on it and identify exactly what it was." She followed up this response by honoring the complexity of the desistance process:

There's not that one easy thing. I mean I went to this reentry meeting and all these like straight ladies were firing all kinds of questions at me and they were like, "Wasn't your kids enough?" and I was like, "Uh, no..." "Wasn't this enough?" "No." "Didn't you hate being in jail, didn't jail scare you?" "No." "Didn't prison scare you?" "No."

She stated simply: "It sucks that I can't claim one certain thing, but it was everything I think."

Participant #4 described the value of being exposed to people and organizations that are promoting change:

Along my way in and out of jails there were people that would come into the jail. They would come in for NAs and they would come in for church and there was this one organization that would come in and talk to the girls in jail. I kind of used them as a way to get out and meet other inmates and I didn't really know at that time, I know it now, didn't know it then, but they were planting little seeds in me and I wasn't really watering them and I wasn't really paying attention.

This is also encouraging to people who try to help inmates. Participant #4's transformation process highlights that people attempting to help those in custody may never know how valuable their work actually is.

Participant #4 also talked about the poor state of her relationship with one of her older sons when she made the decision to change:

My son that's in prison now, he quit talking to me, he was living with dad and grandma and he quit talking to me. He was like, "Fuck that bitch, she ain't never here for me," and it was the truth, I wasn't. I think about it now and I think it must have been really hard for him, going to school and stuff and them always being, "Where's your mom?" because his dad would go to stuff but, "Where's your mom?" And you know he must have just got tired of telling them that I was in jail or prison or he didn't know. So he was very angry with me and he quit talking to me. I'd be up in his face and he'd just look at me with hate in his eyes. I was so messed up to begin with, I was like, "Fuck him! He'll get over it," but he wasn't getting over it and it had been 2 years and he still was not talking to me.

Her thoughts and feelings about her estranged relationship with her son were perhaps a subconscious contributing factor to her decision to change as she explained: "I think that had a part in it; however I don't really know that it was that prevalent in my mind at that time. I mean it's just kind of like everything started fitting together."

Participant #4 detailed how her change process had to gestate:

I'm working in the kitchen so I'm like bringing out pans of meat to the drug dealers, and that's how I'm hustling for my money and stuff, meat, cheese. I'm helping them get sugar to make pruno and fruit and so that's how I'm making my money. I'm still hustling but I'm still reading the Bible and I'm still in this room full of heroin addicts and I'm still making some changes in my mind, slowly, and in my heart. Finally I'm just waking up and I'm like, "These fucking kids here are never going home and I'm not living my life like that anymore. I don't want to wear a carrot suit and I don't want to keep my hair above my shoulders and I don't want to walk a line and I don't want to do this anymore and I'm fuckin' done! I'm not doing it!"

For the first time in my life I didn't get high in jail or in prison. I guess I could back up and say all the times before I did, and in prison it's heroin, out on the streets it's not, but in there that's what they have and so that's what you do. So I didn't get high and I was like, "Okay, what am I going to do? How am I going to do this? I don't know anybody else who's clean and sober, none of my friends—I don't even know anybody who don't use, I don't know any families who don't use, I don't know—I don't have any relatives that don't use, I don't have any friends of friends that don't use—I mean like, what the fuck am I going to do? Where am I going to go, how am I going to make this happen?" And so I started writing to drug programs and I was like, "I need to get into a program."

Participant #4 expressed her resistance to and ambivalence about change by refusing to enter any drug rehabilitation program that would not accommodate her two pre-adolescent sons. She would only go into a program on her own terms. Eventually she was accepted into a program despite herself, she explained:

"I'm not fucking going to [*note: name of specific program omitted to protect confidentiality*] where they got a parole agent, like I just got out of prison," and that was still kind of my mentality that, "I'm not doing that, I've already been locked up for a year," but something was still going on about that Bible stuff and things were still just kind of changing. So even though they threw out [*note: name of specific program omitted to protect confidentiality*] and I said, "No, I'm not doing it," something happened and I called them and I said, "Well you know I've got two kids." I said, "I have two sons and one's 12 and one's 11," and I had expected them to say "mm-mm [*negative*]" because most programs don't take kids that old but they were like, "Alright you can bring them," and I was like, "What?" and they said, "Yeah, you can bring them," and I was like, "Alright."

Participant #4 was not certain about the genesis of her want to change:

It wasn't working for me at all anymore, I mean it could have, but something just started—you know how they talk about a light switch going on, about how the light bulb goes on? You know how you never know when someone's going to get it, like don't ever give up on people because it could be you quit right before the miracle? Well, the miracle was happening within me and I wish I could say it was this, that, or something else, but it wasn't. It was everything coming together and just happening for me.

Although she was not sure what was causing this change, she knew who was responsible for it. Participant #4 identified personal agency as critical to her desistance process. She stated: “Well I haven’t been back to jail or prison. Why? Because I said I was done, that’s why,” and, “I fucking did that, I did that, not you, you, you and you. I did that.” Participant #4 attributed her success to her self-determination and will, making for high self-efficacy. She developed a mantra to avoid regressing:

In my mind I’m like, “I’m not taking no backward steps no matter what, no matter what. This is it, it’s a wrap for me,” I’m not—I’m never going to go back to prison and I’m never going to put myself in a position to do that and as long as I’m not putting myself in a position to do that, I’m going to be okay. As long as I have my spiritual connection with God, as long as I’m doing stuff the right way to the best of my ability, then I’m going to be okay. So while I was in the program, I was doing a lot of therapy.

Participant #4 spoke in detail about the importance of therapy in her change process. She described seeing and understanding her past in a new way, and her ability to disconnect from her emotions and surroundings that enabled her to be a successful criminal:

I think that I started putting some things together in therapy and connecting some dots. I don’t think that I really understood or knew much about being mad at my mom and how everything just kind of tied together and how everything was really kind of connected. How relationships along the way were really important and how I was so very, very adaptable that I was able to connect on all these different levels and everything.

At the same time that I connect on different levels, the flip side of that is I can disassociate and disconnect [snaps fingers] like that. So that worked for me because a lot of people can’t do that and if you can’t do that, then things are like very intense, like your surroundings are intense, your situations are intense, having these serious connections is intense and it wasn’t that way for me because I could disconnect in different situations and adapt quickly.

I think that relationships and everything are really kind of connected now, but I didn’t really understand that then. I think in therapy I

started figuring a lot of that stuff out about my mom and my dad and my family dynamic and thinking that I was born into a lifestyle was like this really big lie that I believed and that I allowed myself to believe.

When asked what question she would add to the interview protocol regarding her thoughts and feelings about how she managed to change her life and stop committing crime, Participant #4 spoke more about therapy:

Therapy and the importance of it. I think that it's really important and even though I'm not an AA/NA type of person, I do believe in connections and I do believe in relationships and I do believe that we're only as sick as the stuff that we keep inside of us.

I also believe that we have to learn how to forgive ourselves for things that we've done. We've done a lot of things to our kids, to ourselves, to our families, and so I think that it's really important to get some therapy and start really cleaning up the inside. How do I be okay with me if I'm still mad at myself or if I'm still guilty or if I'm still hurt? As drug addicts and criminals, we've done a lot of things that we have to live with and some of those things are kind of fucked up and wrong. How do I be okay with those things? How do I forgive myself even when I've done things that others are not going to be able to forgive me for, how do I forgive myself? I had to clean up my inside. I had to forgive myself. I mean that was kind of some traumatic shit for my son to go through—that he wouldn't talk to me for 2 years. I did some damage in his life—how do I be okay with that? How do I not then turn around and parent my kid out of kid out of guilt? How do I do that? The only way I can do that is if I forgive myself for hurting him and forgive myself for living the lifestyle that I lived—that I led.

I've got to clean up the inside so that I don't take that hurt and that guilt and that shame and make that a piece of who I am. If I live with all that stuff on the inside, then I'm going to promote actions and feelings and make moves that are surrounded by that guilt, hurt, pain, shame... our whole persona is surrounded by that, so I think a lot of therapy and a lot of motivational interviewing, learning how to forgive, if I don't forgive me then I'm stuck with all this sick stuff that I have inside of me.

She spoke about some of the most memorable moments for her in therapy and the value of therapy for former criminals specifically:

I had this one family therapy session where we did like this role-reversal thing. I acted out as the way that I saw my kids acting and my kids acted out the way they viewed me acting and when I was able to really look at that, I was like, "Oh my God!" It was just so eye-opening to me and then

going through the things with my dad dying and connecting all the dots and the way that I treated my mom and connecting those dots and so a lot of therapy really kind of cleared me out.

I told you that I'm able to disassociate and disconnect and adapt and readapt to different situations and everything, because I have that mechanism within me. I was really able to disassociate from my old way of thinking and feeling and connect to a new way, on some levels I readapted to a different way of thinking and a different outlook, like when I was in it, I was in it to win it and I was about it, and then when I switched over and hopped the fence and changed my way of life, I was in that and I was in it all the way. I figured if I straddled the fence... and I know that many people will do that for a long, long time and some won't be able to make it all the way over and some will fall off back on the other side, but if you figure out how to kind of forgive yourself, I think is kind of key, for the things that you cannot change and be the best that you can be and know that yesterday is gone, you know you can't do anything to change things that have already happened so why spend your time feeling guilty and all upset about all that?

And just do things to promote positive change in your life. Yeah I did some terrible things, I sure did, hmm-mm, and if I spend my time staying upset and mad and guilty over it, then it's going to hold me back from being the person that I'm supposed to become. Like God expects me to be better, to do better, and when you know better, you do better, but if I spend my time staying stuck in guilty feelings in this process that I'm supposed to be moving away from, then I'm stuck in the problem and I just prefer to be stuck in the solution, instead of the problem.

I think a lot of therapy to help forgive yourself, that's a big piece of it and you've got to do it in a sneaky kind of way too. Like you can't let them know what they're buying into, you've just got to kind of sell it, sell it in spoonfuls, you know what I mean? Like you can't say, "Okay, well you know, I'm going to go in with this therapist and she's going to look down on her glasses and she's going to look at me and she'll be like, 'hmm-mm, hm-mm, hm-mm.'" You've got to get somebody who's kind of cool, who makes you feel comfortable to talk to them, somebody that you could go dump all your shit out, and you can know that, whatever you say, you say it and boom! It's off your chest, give it to some stranger. Like give it to a random person or like, "I carried it so long, I don't care what you do with it, you can't beat me up anymore for it than I've already done so here you go, take it, it's yours."

I tell my girls in the program that all the time, because they're like, "Well we don't feel trusting enough to put our stuff out there," "Why, why?! It ain't no secret! You were selling your ass for drugs, you was hitting licks and doing tricks! So what?! So what? Put it out there, get rid of it! Because if you leave here with the same stuff you come with, you will get loaded again! You will!" So I say dump everything out because it's just too much.

Participant #4 adhered to the intensive treatment and finally she was ready to leave the program:

After about a year, me and the kids and going to college and putting money on my little furniture and doing my little stuff and being involved in my little groups and my little political moves that I'm making and then I'm not really around the program as much. I'm there longer than anyone and I'm kind of like a senior around there. My head isn't even really there anymore, like I pretty much have gotten whatever I'm going to get from them. I just really always needed that place to get my shit together. I needed a place so I could get my own stuff together and that's what I did. I used it so I could get my mind right, and so that I could disconnect from that lifestyle that I was leading, and I could figure out what I wanted in my new lifestyle that I was going to put together.

Around that time of disconnecting, I started thinking, "Okay, well I can't be here forever and I'm going to have to go back because I'm about done with my program" and so I got a place before I even left there and it just kind of fell in my lap. I looked for subsidized housing and I had it within like a month.

An important piece of her desistance process was self-talk and she repeated her mantra during the interview:

So we're at these apartments, I'm getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning, taking the ferry. I'm telling myself, "No backward steps _____ [says name], no backward steps." I'd have to take the freaking—and mind you, remember I was a car thief? And I always had a car, so telling myself, "No backward steps, no backward steps, no backward steps," meant I had to take the freaking bus to the grocery store. I never even knew how to take a bus before because I always had cars. Now I'm having to take a bus to the grocery store, but I'm telling myself, "_____ [says name], no backward steps, you got this DUI, you've got to go to DUI school and get this taken care of," so even after 10 years, they're supposed to wipe them off? No.

She was motivated to resolve outstanding business from her past the right way, including taking various forms of public transportation until she went through the time-consuming process of getting her license reinstated.

In addition to her aforementioned motto, she has another powerful motivator for continuing to stay away from crime:

My kids motivate me to do good because I need to be a good role model to them because I got to show them that, “Hey look, my mom could do it, you know, so I could do it,” you know, “If my mom could make it through all that jail, prison, drugs, criming—if my mom can do it, then I can.” And I don’t mean so much for my young one but I mean it for my one that gets in trouble and stuff still. If I can show him that no matter what your mom can do it, you can do it too.” At one point I think he even wanted to be a probation officer or somebody who helped people who were in gangs or something like that. If I can just stay on my track and show them, “Hey, look at me, I did it, you don’t always have to live your life that way,” that’s what motivates me the most is my kids.

Thinking back, Participant #4 described how difficult her early days of criminal desistance were:

When I was in college and I got my place, I told myself, “No backward steps, _____ [says name], no backward steps,” so even though I’m living in this drug-infested place where I know people, where I used to sell drugs, where it was my stomping grounds and I’ve got these teenage kids who were a bit out of control. I’m dealing with my little wreckage in my past, and because I’m in recovery and all, that doesn’t mean they changed what they were doing.

I wish I could say it was that easy but it wasn’t and I told myself, “No backward steps,” so I had to take two buses to get to my son in juvenile hall and this is the son that wouldn’t talk to me and I’d go up and I’d see him. We’d just kind of sit there and we wouldn’t really talk that much but I was there twice a week to see him and it took me two buses to get there and two buses to get home and he knew it.

In the meantime, his grandma sold her house and so when he got out, he didn’t have a place to go but with me because now his dad was out of a place too so he had to come and stay with me. Well he had to come home on an ankle-monitor and he was just angry. He didn’t want to be around me, he wasn’t feeling me, he didn’t love me, for sure he didn’t love me, like I had killed it. It took a lot of time. We’re close now but I can honestly say that for a period of time, he didn’t love me, he was so angry with me and so hurt. He, like me, is able to disconnect and he disconnected from me, completely and didn’t have no guilty feelings about it, didn’t have no conscience—none of that—disconnect. Adaptable, adaptable, I mean like the kid’s a little savage, he can break fingers one at a time and he’d just be like, “Uh,” he’s my kid for sure, oh my blood for sure....

She succeeded in repairing her relationship with her son:

Him and I have really, really forged this bond, we've always really had this close connection because he was put in prison and because he's so much like me and even when he quit talking to me for those couple of years.

She explained how her mother's unwavering belief in her while she was alive continues to be a powerful source of motivation. Participant #4 offers her criminally-active son the same support with the hope that she will see him change his life.

My mom always believed in me and always said that I could do better, always, "I think you're good, you can do whatever you want, you don't have to do this," and so that's the other part of my motivation. She said I could make it and check it out, I did and I'm continuing and I know that she's proud of me. She never gave up on me, ever, ever, ever gave up on me, EVER and I carry that with me. I will never, ever, ever give up on my son that's in prison, never, and my only hope and prayer is that I'm able to see him before I go with a family and a lifestyle that is not gang-banging and is productive and that he's able to change it around the way that I did.

Now I'm the grandma. It's my responsibility to show my kids and my grandkids and be to them what my mom was to me and my whole family because she was like the glue that kept everything together. She was like the "make-it-happen captain" and now it's my turn to fill her shoes. I'm doing it a little different, but I'm doing it, you know, and she had some pretty big shoes to fill so I'm trying my best!

Very early in her desistance process, Participant #4 made helping others a priority. While she was still living at the rehabilitation program house, she started to attend college and co-founded a program for women who had been to jail or prison and wanted to attend school. She explained:

For people like us getting on to the college campus is kind of intimidating. You get up there and you see all these kids and stuff and you're like not knowing where to go, not knowing what to do. If you don't really know how to navigate the system then, like seven or eight times out of ten, they won't make it the whole way. So what we would do at [note: states the name of the program she co-founded] is I would take them through the

whole matriculation process, all the way through admissions and registration and financial aid. We had our own educational counselor that was for our population of people and it's still running today, different people are running it.

She explained why it's so important for her to help others:

Whatever happened happened and sometimes it was bloody and sometimes it wasn't and I'm sorry for the ones that was, I don't even remember all of it. I can't go back and make amends for it so the way I make my amends is I help the most unfortunate, the ones that, everybody else has given up on them.

Participant #4 had to take a hiatus from school for financial reasons. Given her life experiences and penchant for helping others, it made sense that she would join a profession that enabled her to continue to enrich the community. Participant #4 is actively involved with various agencies that provide services [such as housing assistance, food, hygiene items, case management, rehabilitation, and therapy] to people that are mentally ill, homeless, substance dependent, disabled, and otherwise struggling. Of her professional life she stated, "I am constantly wearing several hats." She talked about some of her professional activities that run the gamut from visiting homeless encampments and distributing food to connecting veterans with critical services. She gave examples of the ways in which she helps her clients: "Getting them in to take showers, laundry, treatment, detoxes, programs, working on getting them some GA, SSI, housing, whatever."

She described what has changed the most about her personality since she stopped engaging in illegal behavior:

I always believed in making amends and trying to make things right and I always had this sense of right and wrong. I knew that I couldn't just go back and apologize to the people that I stabbed or hurt and they're going to be like, "Hey, no problem," so I had to figure out a way to give back and to clean the slate so that I could be okay. When they open the Book of

Life and say, “Ooh! You were busy doing bad stuff,” and then they open my other book and they’re like, “Yeah! But you made that right!”

I helped people on the lowest-of-the-low levels, like the stinky ones that are coming in that everybody’s given up on. Like I’ll give you a hug even if you stink and I’m like, “Let me get you some clothes, come take a shower, let’s do some laundry, come on, let me get you in a program,” and they’ll be like, “No, no, no, no,” and I’ll be like, “Well, just sit through a group, you ain’t even got to participate, just sit there,” ‘cause I know if you sit there a seed might get planted because it got planted with me and I didn’t even know it. So even if you’re sitting there, not even wanting to participate, just like not even really trying to not listen, something’s still going to get in. I’m going to feed it to you in small spoonfuls until I make it look so good that you’re like, “Yum, yum!” “Okay, _____ [says name]!”

Participant #4 described the appeal of the criminal lifestyle for her, and how in some way she maintains the same role as a prosocial citizen as she did when she was involved in the criminal community. She continues to utilize her ability to make herself known, make connections, and put people in touch with each other. She explained:

That was really basically my biggest addiction was to a lifestyle. I had a lot of notoriety and I was respected and that was more it than, “Oh, I love to get high.” I mean that was kind of it for me, yeah I did get high, yeah I did drink a lot, but it was way more than that for me. It was about being a rebel, like doing shit my fuckin’ own way and having people that followed behind me. I wasn’t the follower, I was the leader, and so it really kind of made sense to me when I got my shit together that I should still be a leader. I was a leader in my old life and I’m a leader in my new life. Now I’m reaching my hand back and I’m pulling people along the way with me that came from the same cut of cloth that I came from. It don’t matter where you came from, let me show you how to get there, and even if I don’t have everything figured out, I’m continuing to grow and to learn and to not forget where I came from.

She’s still an authority:

I have a lot of connections everywhere, everybody knows me on every different level and so like I can call somebody and say, “Hey I’ve got this veteran, you know, da-da-da...need some help with him,” so I’ll get them connected to benefits.

Participant #4 talked about how her life experience puts her in a unique situation to help others:

I know that however you get to where you're going, you pretty much need to walk the steps that you walked to make it there, and that's what made me the person that I am today. I couldn't do all of the things that I do now, I couldn't mentor other reentering women, I couldn't deal with the homeless and the mental health population. Not a lot of people can be where I'm at, I'm going to say that because for about as far down as I made it, getting high and using, when people come in to me now that are drunk, using or whatever, I don't have one little bit of, "Ooh I miss that and I want it back," I don't, I'm like, "Oh my God, let me get you into detox, let me get you into a program, let me..." My mind's like clicking on how can I help this person, they're where I made it to and like I know how it is over there and let me show you how to make it somewhere else, like you don't gotta do this! Like I did that for a hundred years and I know that there's another way, and I'm going to tell you because I did it too and then people want to listen to me because I'm not just like book-smart about it, like I lived it, I walked it, I made it through.

So then I incorporate that part of it into my speeches about, "Yeah I did that but I also went to school and I also got it on paper and put letters behind my name and I relate to you on every level whatever level it is," because of going to jail and prison so much, it made me be very adaptable so I can adapt to any situation. Like some people are scared, they have a lot of anxiety. I blend in wherever. I don't care if you've got a lot of money or you have no money, I fit in with you both. I'm not looking up to you going, "Oh you intimidate me because..." "No!" I think that's just my personality or my character. It's just from being in and out of institutions and stuff that it don't bother me, like I can fit in anywhere with any group of people, it's kind of amazing, I guess.

Her advice to someone in custody who wants to make a change and stop committing crime is as follows:

I think the most important thing would probably be to connect, connect with something. You've got to have something that you believe in, that you connect to. You've got to make some decisions and you've got to stick by your decisions. You've got to decide that you want better, you don't got to know how to do it, you've just got to know that you want it and if you want it, there's a way, and you've got to figure out that way and you've got to let people help you. You can't be expected to know how to do it. We've lived our whole life not knowing how to do shit but once you know that you want something, then you've got to do little stuff so that you can get there.

She spoke directly about the importance of gratitude:

I need to be grateful, I'm working two jobs, I have a family, and here's from somebody who started off shooting dope at 15 years old and going to jail and prison and becoming so institutionalized that I was more comfortable in prison than I was out of prison.

She denied that there was ever a time when she came close to reoffending or violating once she made up her mind that her criminal career was over. She explained:

I haven't come close to reoffending and I'm not going to come close to reoffending because I live by that motto: "No backward steps," and if I allow some shady stuff to come my way or if I start doing stuff dirty or I start stealing or I start drinking or I start using then that's opening the door to go back and I'm not willing to do any of that today, none of it.

Participant #4 spoke to the improvement in her quality of life:

It's easier now, it is, it's easier now because everything was a fight, I think, back then. This is kind of like the good life. I mean, yeah, I've got to do things the right way. I go by what I feel is right and maybe my feelings have changed about what's right and wrong, but I always felt like I went for what I thought was right. Now I'm not tired all the time, I'm not fighting the wrong fight, I'm fighting the right fight, and so things are definitely easier now.

She succinctly stated: "It's not always easy to do the right thing but it's much easier to do the right thing than it was always doing the wrong thing and trying to make it be right." Not only is Participant #4 grateful for what she has today but she's grateful for her life experience:

I'm very grateful and thankful that I have my four sons and that I've lived the life that I lived because now I can show them that they don't have to live the way that I was living and yeah, I know better now and no, I don't condone selling guns and drugs, but if that's what you do, I'm not going to hate you for it and I'm not going to be down on you or turn you into the police or any of that. I'm going to try to feed you something different a spoonful at a time and hopefully you'll make it, before you die or you get a life sentence.

Participant #5

Background Information

Participant #5 is a 48-year-old African-American male with a criminal history that began in his youth. He revealed extensively engaging in criminal activities for which he was never caught including, but not limited to, armed robberies, numerous instances of “very violent” crimes, and selling drugs. In fact he was so successful at selling drugs without detection by law enforcement, that this was his primary source of income for many years. His misdemeanor convictions include driving while intoxicated, driving with a suspended license, and driving without a license. He attributed being pulled over so many times to “racial profiling.”

He was very methodical about his antisocial behavior, carefully considering the potential costs with the likely benefits before proceeding. He described how he educated himself on antisocial behavior:

I did a lot of reading when I was younger, read everything that crossed my path, everything I could get my hands on.... So it gave me a lot insight, documented insight, of what the crime life was like to where I knew, I understood every criminal act I committed, I understood it.

His final conviction and incarceration for felony domestic assault occurred in 2005. He successfully completed his probation in 2008 and has had no unfavorable contact with the law since 2005. His criminal record has been clear for 6 years this year. During the interview, he explained that he was not guilty of the 2005 assault conviction. Participant #5 recounted his former wife’s infidelity, his hurt feelings, and how he left the scene after deciding that the marriage was over:

The door slammed closed a little too hard and she heard and she jumped up and she come chasing me and she fell down the stairs and she fractured her eye socket and her nose but while she's in the Emergency Room she told them I hit her.

He pled guilty to the offense because, "With the pictures and everything and her willing to testify, I had a snowball's chance in hell." He felt confident that if he refused to accept a plea he would have been sentenced to many years of "prison time." Instead he accepted a plea and was given a short incarceration followed by probation. He accepted accountability for abuse he did not inflict. He reflected on the irony of being convicted for a crime he did not commit when he had previously committed so many crimes for which he was never convicted.

In response to the inquiry about the origins of his criminal behavior, Participant #5 spoke about the role of race and described how violence was a normative but still-puzzling part of his early life,

Part of it is psychological; part of it could be geographical as well as social status. Being raised up in the '60s, right at the beginning of desegregation, segregation coming down to the end, and civil rights and all that. Back in those days we had to hang in little groups so that you wouldn't disappear. I'm from the South so—but it went from traveling in groups for protection to traveling in groups to be aggressive, to where, it's like, if you weren't from this side of the tracks, then we didn't get along. I couldn't figure that out for a long time. We had neutral grounds, where while we're in school or in Church, nobody bothered each other, but other than that, you was open season on everybody. Back then it was a lot of bats and chains.

He tried to resist the status quo, but it was a challenge without more education.

One day I just got tired of doing it so I started being by myself, started reading the dictionary, trying to educate myself and that worked for a little while. This is childhood, adolescence age. Then it got to the point to where—after you get out of high school, if you didn't go to college, the only thing you had to do was get a job in a factory, go to work from 7 to 3, 3 to 11 or whatever, 11 to 7, get paid every Friday, go to a club Friday night, Saturday night have you a few beers, smoke some weed, if you're fortunate enough and good on your rap game, you could get you a female

and have some sex, but then Sunday everybody hung out at the park, played basketball, drank beers and shared our stories and journeys of them, the disco days, the night before, and then come Monday or Sunday night, start the cycle again and that was it.

He found freedom and luxury in drugs sales.

When the drug situation got involved, cocaine became a thing, I started selling cocaine and boy, did the money come in, hand over fist, started traveling state to state. I broadened my boundaries, I'll put it like that, kept the job as a front for the money that I would spend when I bought nice things, I had three cars, two motorcycles, a mobile home, I was on my own, I was on my own. I didn't mess with the product, just made money hand over fist.

Currently he supports himself with SSI, which he receives due to an arthritic condition. He has one adult son with whom he is in touch, but he described their relationship as distant and cool. He reported that his son is about to graduate from college and he is hopeful that their relationship will improve as his son matures.

Desistance Process

When asked to identify one internal change that made it possible for him to become crime-free, Participant #5 stated, "I've learned how to control my anger, as well as other emotions, the feelings associated with everything." He credited his newfound ability to successfully manage his emotions to adopting a new perspective: "What other people think about me is none of my business." He even read a book about this topic befittingly called *What You Think of Me Is None Of My Business*. He identified an integral part of his process of disengaging from antisocial thinking as learning that "It wasn't strictly all about me." He nurtured his observing ego, became less burdened by the judgments of others, and came to understand that others are usually focused on their own lives and problems. In

response to the inquiry about what has changed the most about his personality since he stopped engaging in illegal behavior, Participant #5 stated, “I would say I’m more open-minded, more carefree. Because I know I can’t control another. Most of the time I have a tough time trying to control what’s going on in me.” Taken together, it appeared that Participant #5 shifted his focus from the external to the internal. He focused less on what others were thinking and feeling about him and began to place emphasis on self-reflection.

Participant #5’s “epiphany” came when he saw his future in the form of an older gentleman parked in his wheel chair on a street corner. This older gentleman asked him for a lighter. After Participant #5 obliged and gave him the lighter, the older gentleman instructed him to keep watch while he took a crack pipe out of his jacket and began to smoke. He then audaciously asked Participant #5 for a cigarette. Participant #5 described his internal anger, “I likely erupted like Mt. Saint Helen,” but noted that he kept his composure and calmly informed the man “If you can buy crack, you can buy cigarettes,” and walked away. Participant #5 reflected that his own situation was not enviable, so he knew he would feel hypocritical lashing out against this man. He explained,

To be oppressed with a felony conviction, I started feeling like I wasn’t even worth the salt in my sweat. I was very depressed. I couldn’t provide for myself, I didn’t know how to provide for myself, and time was slipping by. What jolted me was this man in his late-sixties, early-seventies—to be as content as he was, on the streets, in a wheelchair, smoking crack and then when he finished he asked me if I had a cigarette.

It seemed that this man provided a mirror for Participant #5 and he was jarred by what he saw. The older man’s entitlement and apparent satisfaction with his situation inspired Participant #5 to make different choices. He stated:

Now if I keep down the path that I'm going and not trying to change it, 10 years will slip by and I'm still going to be standing right here except for I might be in a wheelchair pushing a crack pipe, asking another young man if he got a cigarette after I done blew a truckload of smoke all up in his face [makes a big breathing sound], "Hey young man, can I get a cigarette?" I just started checking myself and I'm like, "Oh man, you know, this shit--this shit's for real." I can keep doing this old stupid stuff I'm doing, breaking the law, cheating people, robbing Peter to pay Paul, and it ain't no good and I know it.

Drug and alcohol use for pain management due to his arthritic condition and recreation were a part of his story, but Participant #5 denied that substance use was a significant source of his problems. His opinion was that he used substances to suppress thoughts and feelings as opposed to promoting action. He stated, "I used the drugs to drown the shit that I didn't want to act off of but I didn't use drugs and alcohol to have the courage to go do something," and, "I used it to discourage me, not to encourage me." In other words, because he used substances to manage his emotions and not to change his behavior it was not dependence, abuse, or addiction from his perspective. He said that he no longer uses substances to help control his feelings, "Everything I do now is by choice, not by influence." He reported that 12-step meetings are not helpful to him because as he has already surrendered his control and the messages are redundant. He said of these meetings, "Telling me that I was powerless, all this and that and first thing you heard me say is I can't control nothing outside of me."

Participant #5 believed that his spirituality enabled him to muster the courage to get "past the fear" associated with making changes. When asked about the source of his courage he stated:

It came from God, I was reading his Bible, I was reading his word one day and it says, "Greater is he that is in me than is he that is of this world," so

it told me that God lives in me and he's not of this world, which he can't be of this world, but his word says, "Greater is he that is in *me* than is he that is of this world," so God resides within, but the devil is a part of the world or the opposition.

Becoming more dependent on spirituality enabled him to become more empowered as an individual as he located the source of God inside himself. He also acknowledged that his spiritual beliefs decreased his reliance on external validation. "That inner voice tells me I don't need no outside recognition." His spirituality seemed to reinforce the value of self-reflection as evidenced when he stated, "I go inwardly a lot now instead of just acting out, 'Greater is he that is in me....' I start quoting scriptures."

When asked what motivates him today to continue to stay away from crime, his answer was simple: "The time, I can't do the time." When Participant #5 was asked the hypothetical interview question about what advice he would give to someone in custody who wanted to make a change and stop committing crime, he reported that he does offer advice to people he knows that are still entrenched in criminality. He explained, "I do tell them this when I'm walking, 'Be an individual. Learn to think for yourself and don't be afraid to take chances, get dirty, make mistakes and then you will know exactly what you want to do.'" He added: "'Quit being a follower.'"

Of his personal theories about criminal desistance, Participant #5 explained,

What motivates them is, the majority of them, wanting to be a part of something, wanting to be a part of something positive. In other words, that they became individuals and within their individuality, they're making choices to be more with their family, their blood, they want their wives and their kids versus running with the pack.

Also, “Most of them that I talk to said they getting tired of going back and forth to jail.”

When asked what one question should be added to the interview about his thoughts and feelings about how he managed to stop committing crime Participant #5 stated, “What are you afraid of and why?” When prompted to answer this question for himself, he stated, “Prior to me maturing to the point where I am mentally, I was afraid of being called a ‘chicken,’ a ‘yellow,’ I was afraid of disappointing people, I didn’t want to let my home-boys down.” He explained that looking back on his former way of thinking he has come to realize that his former perspective might be phrased as: “I’m afraid to let them down, I’m afraid to be an individual.” In other words, the group served as a convenient source of validation until he improved his ability to reflect and tolerate emotional tension. This growing observing ego enabled him to feel empowered as an individual.

Since Participant #5 has become more connected with his individuality, his connections with groups have become prosocial instead of antisocial. He now asks himself questions like, “What am I doing to benefit the community today? How am I helping people? Am I doing things that can make a positive impact instead of a ripple of negativity? Because everything I do affects my surroundings.” To make a positive contribution to the community, Participant #5 has enrolled in a pre-law program at a local college and his goal is to become a judge. He described the appeal of this school, “It feels like you’re a part of something and they’re open, they receive you with open arms and just

understanding that people are people.” He has found acceptance and nonjudgment in this prosocial community.

Participant #5 did not sugarcoat his situation and was able to reflect on his current lifestyle with a balanced perspective. Although he is energized by his schoolwork and the peace of mind he has found from developing emotional-regulation skills, he admitted that he still has to cope with familiar feelings. For example, this writer asked, “Do you still feel the anger rising and aggression?” He was quick to admit, “Yeah I do, I do, everyday to be honest.” His current life is challenging; he’s struggling financially. He was highly motivated to meet with this writer to receive the \$25 gift card as he is currently restricted to a modest fixed income. Participant #5 noted that living a crime-free life has benefits: “It is easier ‘cause there’s no stress, no worry. Who gonna come knocking on the door? Who gonna snitch on you? I ain’t gotta live a shrouded life, it’s much easier.” He explained that he was willing to share his story because: “If it’ll help save one, then it’s worth it all, it’s worth it: save one you can save a civilization.”

Open Coding

Every line of participant response in the interview transcripts was assigned at least one code based on Borgatti (n.d.) questions: “What is this about? What is being referenced here?” This writer was the primary coder with assistance from two colleagues who recently earned doctoral degrees in clinical psychology and have worked directly with the forensic population. Coding was a time-consuming but informal process in accordance with the recommendation of Borgatti who wrote, “If after coding much text, some new categories are invented, grounded

theorists do not normally go back to the earlier text to code for that category.”

Thus the frequency of each open code is not specified as frequency is not necessarily an accurate reflection of significance.

Through a process of alternating inductive and deductive reasoning while open coding, 12 broad categories of codes emerged including early life, criminal history, antisocial thinking, impetus for change, self-reflection, psychological growth, feeling connected to prosocial objects, incarceration experiences, obstacles, motivation to remain crime-free, prosocial behavior, and prosocial impulses. Each of these categories is described in more detail below. Every open code from the five transcripts fit into one of these 12 categories. Some of the open codes could have been categorized under more than one category. For the sake of parsimony, each open code was placed in only the category where it seemed most applicable at the discretion of this writer and assisting coders. Participants shared their personal stories as well as ideas about criminal desistance in general, given what they’ve observed going through the criminal justice and corrections systems. Given that, some of the codes refer to the personal experiences of the participants while others refer to the participants’ ideas about criminal desistance. Please see Appendix I for the codebook that includes all of the open codes organized into the aforementioned 12 categories for each participant.

Early Life

To varying degrees the participants discussed their early lives (including childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood) in response to the interview question asking for “the story of how you first got involved with crime” and at

various times throughout the interview. Participant #1 described an idyllic upbringing but contradicted himself when he noted that he was already stealing car parts and engaging in voyeurism as a teenager. Participant #3 did not report getting involved with crime until adulthood after he had graduated from an Ivy League school and did not feel it was necessary to follow the rules of “the system.” Participants #2, #4, and #5 all reported that criminal behavior was a normative part of their early environments. Early life experiences varied significantly among this sample.

Criminal History

Codes in this category often referred to types of crime, profiting from crime, and repeat offending. All of the participants spoke in detail about their extensive criminal backgrounds. All of the participants alluded to committing crimes for which they were never caught. Details about the criminal backgrounds of each participant are provided in the participant summaries.

Antisocial Thinking

This category is closely related to the criminal history category but is specific to the antisocial thinking that underlies antisocial behavior. For the purpose of this research, antisocial thinking refers to all of the thinking that contributes to the perpetuation of criminal involvement. Common codes included cognitive distortion, rationalization, justification, thrill-seeking, secrets, avoidance, entitlement, arrogance, minimizing, and lying to self. Participants #1 and #3 described being drawn to the thrill associated with antisocial activities,

while Participants #2, #4, and #5 were drawn to crime because it is what they knew best.

Impetus for Change

The participants spoke about their earliest thoughts and feelings about change. Important codes in this category included emerging self-awareness, saw his future, seeing other options, consequences of criminal behavior getting more serious, importance of exposure to different perspectives, sick/tired of criminal lifestyle, instability, and spiritual awakening. Frustration with all that the criminal lifestyle entails was identified as basic to the change process.

Self-Reflection

The relationship between the categories of “self-reflection” and “impetus for change” is comparable to the chicken-and-the-egg dilemma. At least a small amount of self-reflection is necessary to think about change in any meaningful way; on the other hand, once the desistor has begun to think about change, a great deal of self-reflection is critical to propelling movement. There is a period of overlap between antisocial behavior and prosocial behavior during the process of disengaging from criminality. Self-reflection is the bridge between deciding to change and turning change into action.

Of the 12 categories, self-reflection contained the most open codes due to the territory it covered. Participants reflected on a lifetime of destructive habits, disappointments, regrettable behavior, emotions that were unexpressed or inappropriately expressed, adventures, and relationships, as part of the desistance process. Highlights from the open codes included therapy, relationships with

women, extremes, crazy, judgment, age, danger, stress, betrayal, confused, drug use, addiction, hurt feelings, time, self-examination, relationship issues, normal, hard to look at past, soul searching, introspection is essential, reality, rehab, and adaptable.

The two venues for self-reflection most commonly mentioned by the participants were therapy and custody. Participant #1 combined both therapy and prison: “I sued them and made them give me a court order, I sued them for lack of mental health treatment.” All of the participants were involved in some form of mental health treatment, whether formal (psychotherapy) or informal (self-help reading), at some point in their desistance process. Participants #1, #3, and #4 spoke about the importance of psychotherapy. Participant #2 talked about Suboxone treatment for heroin dependence. Participant #5 talked about self-help books. Self-reflection is incubation for the psychological change that creates the foundation for criminal desistance.

For some of the participants, substance abuse made self-reflection impossible until they became sober. As Participant #2 stated,

When you actually get some abstinence from the alcohol and drugs, especially this last time in prison for me because I didn’t use when I was in, and I got to think about it a lot with a clear head over a long period of time, and I started thinking about what I wanted in life.

All five of the interviewees discussed using substances, meaning drugs or alcohol. Participants #2 and #4 identified substances as a problem and noted that sobriety was essential to their desistance processes. Participants #1 and #5 both reported heavy drug use in the past, but denied being addicts. Participant #3 described moderate use of marijuana.

The positive relationship between aging and criminal desistance was also addressed and a mediating variable of self-reflection was suggested. For example, Participant #1 noted that some people never stop committing crime and never change their behavior, so age is not the cure for criminal desistance. He suggested that age may be positively correlated with criminal desistance because wisdom can accompany age, but it is not a guarantee that you will become wise as you age. He attributed his own wisdom to undergoing 35 years of therapy.

Participant #3 was in a unique position to talk about criminal desistance as both a former criminal and present criminal defense attorney. He has engaged in self-reflection about criminal desistance both personally and professionally. In addition to his own desistance process, he was able to discuss the patterns of criminal behavior he has observed from decades of work as an attorney. As such, many of his responses were drawn from what he's observed in his clients, not necessarily what he experienced in his own life. When asked what advice he would give to someone in custody who wanted to make a change and stop committing crime, Participant #3 spoke about the fundamental role of self-reflection:

Try to figure out what you're good at, what you enjoy, something unique that you have and just pursue that. I understand that's really hard if you don't have any means to do so, but I think there's a need to really look into yourself.

Self-reflection allows the desistor to reconcile his past, giving him the opportunity to move forward. Participant #1 succinctly stated why self-reflection is critical: "You can't go back and revisit, you can't turn back the clock. I guess

understanding that is what makes it okay.” Self-reflection may be the next best option to changing the past.

Psychological Growth

There was also a relationship between reports of self-reflection and psychological growth in this sample. Self-reflection was critical for this sample because it led to increased awareness of patterns of behavior, reasons to change, and possibilities for the future. Self-reflection was also required for the participants to establish and develop various psychological skills.

The following were important codes in this category: self-talk, accountability, observing ego, anger management, stress management, coping skills, self-soothing, emotional regulation, cognitive dissonance, self-efficacy, understanding behavior helps promote change, recognition of immaturity, emotional maturity, self-awareness, self-acceptance, broadening/changing perspective, must address underlying condition to achieve criminal desistance, therapy for developing internal strength, therapy facilitates forgiving yourself, criminals have to live with what they’ve done, decrease in egocentrism, self-control, de-escalating, thinking before acting led to decrease in antisocialism, self-inventory, can’t control anything external, individuality, no longer needing external validation, and improved decision-making. Much like self-reflection, psychological growth was described as taking place in therapy, drug rehabilitation treatment, jail/prison, or while reading spiritual or self-help books, all while sober.

Most participants directly stated that managing addiction issues is part of the psychological growth required to achieve long-term criminal desistance. For those participants who identified themselves as dependent on substances, insight into the nature of addiction and the role addiction played in perpetuating criminal behavior was critical to desistance. It was also essential that they achieved control over their addiction in order to be capable of psychological growth. Of substance use Participant #2 stated, “It impairs your growth, your psychological growth or whatever, you never really grow emotionally.” He explained that his physical development continued, but his psychological growth stopped when his addiction issues began in adolescence.

Maturity might be another appropriate name for the category of psychological growth as it was the psychological changes that can accompany aging, and not simply getting older, that these participants identified as crucial to change. Participants acknowledged that developing maturity was part of the criminal desistance process. Participant #2 put it succinctly: “Jesus, grow up!”

Feeling Connected to a Prosocial Object

Along with ample self-reflection and a qualitative change in psychological maturity, another theme that came up time and time again during these interviews was feelings of connectedness to some prosocial object. Often the source of the connection was external: a loved one, a spiritual belief, even an ideology. However, the connection could also be to something internal or something external that was taken inside the self. For example, Participant #5 spoke about how he connected to the piece of God that resided within himself. These

connections could be concrete (a person) or abstract (a spiritual connection). Highlights from the codes in this category included human decency, understanding from others, close to sister, feeling positive about showing appreciation for sister, needing sister's support, human connection, spiritual connection/spirituality, closer with God, blessed, prayer, positive relationship with probation officer, positive relationship with kids, family support, engaged in the community, social consciousness, criminal desistance largely influenced by outside help, bond/close connection with son, people encouraging me to do better, make a connection, importance of relationships, community, feeling like a part of something at school, feeling loved, and connecting with something positive.

Participant #1 noted that he felt supported by his sister unconditionally. He explained that without his connection to his sister, "I wouldn't have made it through the joint and I recognize what a wonderful sister that she's been and I always tell her." He described having a strong connection with his current girlfriend fueled by his desire to "save" her. He also talked about having a positive relationship with his probation officer. In addition to feeling connected to specific people, he also described a newfound connection to humankind and talked at length about "human decency." He specifically noted that religion was not part of his desistance process.

Participant #2 talked about how his relationships with his children have improved now that he is sober and crime-free. He described feeling positive about finally being in a position to be able to help his children and his girlfriend. He reported feeling close with God and frequently described himself as "blessed." He

also talked about his admiration for his probation officer and how her consistently respectful treatment has been critical to his ability to desist. He stated that she is “the perfect PO.”

Participant #3 was actively involved in the well-being of his community at the same time that he was growing marijuana. However, he stopped engaging in illegal activity in part so he could better connect to prosocial causes by becoming a criminal defense attorney. He described how important it is for him to connect to his clients and explained, “True defense, from my perspective, you really have to engage with the client.”

Participant #4 described significant connection to her sons, her grandchildren, her extended family, and other loved ones. She began reading the Bible for the first time while incarcerated and became inculcated with a connection to God. She is now deeply connected to prosocial organizations in the community through her work. She stated, “Now I’m reaching my hand back and I’m pulling people along the way with me that came from the same cut of cloth that I came from.” In this way she is solidifying feelings of connectedness by helping others.

Participant #5, as previously mentioned, identified feeling a personal connection to God as part of his desistance process. He also described feeling connected to the community at the school he is attending. Of his experience at school he stated, “It feels like you’re a part of something and they’re open, they receive you with open arms and just understanding that people are people.”

Feeling connected to other people and ideas does not in and of itself promote criminal desistance. For example, a gang member might feel connected to other members and this connection facilitates antisocial pursuits. It is important that the source of the connection is prosocial.

Incarceration Experiences

Incarceration, probation, and parole are mandated, and participants in this research demonstrated that proper management of these experiences is important to criminal desistance. The participants all described successful, albeit at times unpleasant, incarcerations before they were released for the final time. They adapted to prison by reading, engaging in therapy when it was available, achieving sobriety, engaging in self-reflection, or making prosocial plans for the future. All participants made good use of the time and laid the foundation for criminal desistance. Examples of codes in this category included prison riots, prison murder, value of reading in prison, no drug use in prison/ sobriety in prison, mental illness, racism in prison, therapy in prison, most inmates never change, antisocial behavior is reinforced, Skinnerian reinforcement, criminals are part of society, trauma, gambling, visits hard in prison, inmates glorify crime in prison, supervised release, probation/parole, heroin addiction started in prison, prison is noisy, prison is crowded, hypervigilance in custody, finding ethnically similar group in custody, drug use in custody, loss of freedom, pregnant in prison, mother had clout in prison, breaking the rules in prison, more comfortable in jail, prison a life saver, prison as a resting place, realization in prison, started praying

in custody, trying to change life, hustling, never going back to prison, son breaking rules in prison, and labor.

Participants described prison as overflowing with antisocial behavior, drugs, violence, and gambling. Even so, Participants #2 and #4 spoke directly about becoming comfortable in prison. Participant #2 stated, “people like to get pretty comfortable in prison, I actually did and that’s sad to say.” Alternatively, prison was described as a toxic place, as evidenced by Participant #1’s observation: “I made it through and didn’t get bitter or mean or crazy, I don’t know how I did that, I mean there were so many crazy people that I met over the years.” Although each of the participants were able to function, even thrive at times, in custody, all of them were unwavering in their commitment to avoid reincarceration at all costs.

Obstacles

Obstacles for the hopeful criminal desistor are both internal and external. Codes in this category included antisocial impulse, habit, view situation as hopeless, helplessness, judgment, guilt, depression, oppressed by felony conviction, racism, aggravation of relationships, raised in antisocial environment, eliminate negative social influences, no sober friends, criminals feel unworthy, not sure how to live prosocially, relapse, making mistakes, financial hardship, crime generates income, no support, no resources, and treatment is expensive.

One of the most prevalent internal obstacles mentioned was the antisocial impulse. On the whole, participants had learned to manage this impulse rather well. In addition to reports that the antisocial impulse weakened with age,

participants described the antisocial impulse being sublimated into a prosocial impulse (addressed later under the prosocial impulse category). Participants also described using the psychological tools they developed, e.g., observing ego or self-talk, to manage the antisocial impulse.

Another internal obstacle mentioned was tolerating negative affect, such as depression and guilt. Participant #4 stated,

I've got to clean up the inside so that I don't take that hurt and that guilt and that shame and make that a piece of who I am. If I live with all that stuff on the inside, then I'm going to promote actions and feelings and make moves that are surrounded by that guilt, hurt, pain, shame.

Participant #5 spoke about the role of racism, specifically in terms of the way that law enforcement officials have interacted with him as an African-American man. He reported, "That's when they started the (quote-unquote) 'categorizing of social profile' and 'racial profiling' so every time I got behind the wheel I got stopped, every time."

An external obstacle faced by the hopeful criminal desistor is eliminating old antisocial relationships, reestablishing old prosocial relationships, and establishing new positive relationships. For example, Participant #4 described how challenging it was to repair her relationship with one of her sons, but she never gave up and has managed to forge a close bond with him.

Risk of relapse and financial hardship were other external obstacles. Participant #3 posed an important question: "Can you afford not to be engaged in crime while you're attempting to disengage from crime?" The former offender may need to find stable housing, invest in further education, and attend psychotherapy to make criminal desistance a realistic possibility. Taking the steps

successfully to desist from crime can be expensive, especially for someone who has to make a career change as part of the process.

Motivation to Remain Crime-Free

Participants identified a variety of sources of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, for remaining crime-free. Examples of codes related to motivation included life is easier, relaxed, carefree, having nothing to hide is liberating, unwilling to endure stress caused by offending, do not have to look over shoulder, minimal anxiety now, risk-to-reward ratio, not tired all the time anymore, fear of reincarceration, fear of lifetime imprisonment, fear of dying in prison, no more wasting time in prison, fear of not having access to Suboxone in prison, motivated by kids, hurt kids/hurt family, never there for son, being a role model, forgiveness, make meaning out of the rest of life, and mantra.

One intrinsic motivator identified by all of the participants was the desire to minimize the tension in their lives. There was a consensus among the participants that a crime-free lifestyle is much easier than managing the multiple stressors of an active criminal life. As Participant #4 stated, “It’s much easier to do the right thing than it was always doing the wrong thing and trying to make it be right.” Participant #1 described the euphoric feelings associated with having “nothing to hide” for the first time in his life: “The best! The best, the best, the best, I mean the best. It’s like I wish it had always been this way but it wasn’t but that’s just the way it went.”

Extrinsic sources of motivation included resistance to reincarceration. Participant #1 stated that rather than “die in prison,” “I’d cut both hands off first, I

tell you what, I'd find a gun and blow my brains out." Although dramatic, it conveys the intensity of his resistance to reincarceration. For Participant #1 the experience of being surrounded by criminals in prison was intolerable and so prison "did have a deterrent effect in that way." The threat of reincarceration even influenced decisions around substance use. Of stopping himself from spiraling after a heroin relapse, Participant #2 stated: "I think one of the reasons it didn't go too far this time was I didn't let it, I didn't want it to get that bad again this time where I was going to end up doing more prison time."

Another source of extrinsic motivation was avoiding further hurt to loved ones, especially because, in many cases, these relationships had been newly mended by criminal desistance. Finally, Participant #4 remembered her mantra when she was struggling, "no backwards steps."

Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behavior is the action associated with criminal desistance. Open codes in this category included helping others, saved girlfriend's life, saving a person, helping kids, helping people like herself, helping those that everyone else has given up on, apologizing, doing the right thing, sharing her own life story, making sacrifices to stay crime-free, active in political movements, prosocial work skills, law school later in life, education, clean up past, resolving problems, satisfied drive for thrills with physical activity, and prosocial recreation.

It is not the case that participants only engaged in prosocial behavior after they desisted from crime, but if they were engaged in both criminal and prosocial pursuits simultaneously than they often had to hide their duplicity. For example,

Participant #3 explained that he was “on the county school board at the same time I was growing, of course they didn’t know I was growing.” Eradicating criminal activity facilitated prosocial behavior. For example, Participant #3 had to make the decision to stop cultivating marijuana in order to pursue his career as a defense attorney. With regard to pursuing prosocial goals now that he has desisted from crime, Participant #3 explained that he is “much more effective since I don’t have to look over my shoulder, so to speak, I can just get out there.”

One of the reasons this writer chose to use the term “career” in reference to these long-term career criminals is because criminality can be an occupation. If you force a person to quit his job, at which he’s had some success, and begin to train for a new career, he is likely going to struggle in this process. Unless the career criminal is able to retire (as Participant #1 did), the former offender must retrain for a prosocial occupation (as Participants #3, #4, and #5 did), or fall back on prosocial work skills (as Participant #2 did). Attending school was central to the desistance experiences of Participants #3, #4, and #5.

Resolving outstanding problems from the past and consistently trying to find solutions to new problems that arise is another important behavior for the criminal desistor who is accustomed to avoiding dealing with problems, often by using substances. Participants #1, #2, #4, and #5 all described the numbing effect of drugs.

For the serious criminal, antisocial behavior also infiltrates many aspects of life, even recreation. Participants #1 and #2 spoke about finding prosocial

activities to satisfy thrill-seeking tendencies. They both identified physical activity as an adequate substitute for risky criminal behavior.

A theme that was common in the stories of the desistors in this research is that they were not neutral or indifferent about prosocial behavior. They were all enthusiastic about prosocial involvement, likely as a means to atone. Both Participants #1 and #5 referred to trying to “save” people. Saving is more powerful than helping. The language must become extreme to compensate for extreme wrongdoing.

Prosocial Impulses

For the purpose of this research, the category “Prosocial Impulses” refers to thoughts and feelings that promote the well-being of the self and humankind. The participants gave numerous examples of prosocial impulses. Highlights from the open codes for this category included opportunity to be decent, redemption, atonement, truth, gratitude, cooperation, golden rule, Karma, reciprocity, healing, hoping to help, helping, best reality is today, morality, honesty, accountability, good intentions, don’t give up, self-forgiveness, acceptance, safety, and empathy. These prosocial impulses reportedly fueled the aforementioned prosocial behavior.

It often seemed to be the case that the antisocial impulses could be sublimated into prosocial impulses. By way of example, Participant #2 explained that when he was younger selling marijuana was a “natural” way to make extra income. Participant #2 came to have a much more nuanced understanding of exactly what he was contributing to by selling marijuana. He realized that

marijuana dealing is not just selling product and making money as evidenced when he stated, “I never really looked at dealing marijuana as a bad thing, but it’s not as simple as that. The whole thing gets so much more complicated when you really think about it.” Now when he thinks about selling marijuana his impulse is prosocial, he experiences empathy, he thinks about the people that get hurt, even killed, in the process, instead of focusing on the financial gain.

Another interesting example of sublimating the antisocial into the prosocial comes from physical activity. As previously mentioned, Participants #1 and #3 described themselves with words like “outlaw,” “outsider,” and “thrill-seeking” when explaining risk-taking behavior. After desisting from crime they still seemed to require an outlet for this piece of their identity. The shift from antisocial to prosocial outlet seemed to be critical to criminal desistance. For example, Participant #1 now finds exhilaration in riding his bike in city traffic, a notoriously risky mode of transportation. Participant #3 also mentioned fulfilling his need for thrilling experiences and exhilaration with physical activity and “somewhat demanding outdoor activity” such as diving, scuba, and hiking. He added that his work as a defense attorney was integral to his role as “outlaw.” Sublimation can also be seen in professional choices. The same impulse that drives career criminality can drive a mainstream career. Participant #4 illustrated,

I was the leader, and so it really kind of made sense to me when I got my shit together that I should still be a leader. I was a leader in my old life and I’m a leader in my new life.

Finally, all of the participants discussed empathy. The following is an excerpt from Participant #1's interview that demonstrates his developing empathy:

Participant #1: But there is a fundamental change in my perception of interaction with others.

Sarah: Okay, can you say a little more about that?

Participant #1: I try to understand their realities.

Sarah: Okay, whereas before it didn't matter?

Participant #1: Right, before it didn't matter because I was so self-centered and so stepped up in my own and so self-centered and interested in getting my own way that I would do anything to do that: lie, cheat, steal to get my own way, even though there were times I had very strong feelings towards people, but still that disorder drove me onward. I wanted what I wanted when I wanted it and I think that's probably the hallmark of all immature people.

Axial Coding

Axial coding was used to connect the aforementioned 12 categories. In grounded theory, these connections are described with a frame (Borgatti, nd.d). The frame is comprised of the phenomenon, causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action strategies, and consequences. The phenomenon is the subject of the investigation; in this case, psychological changes underlying long-term criminal desistance.

Causal conditions are the categories that contribute to the evolution of the phenomenon. In the present research, the categories that lead to criminal desistance are early life, criminal history, antisocial thinking, impetus for change, self-reflection, psychological growth, and feeling connected to prosocial objects. The causal conditions include the categories related to criminal behavior because

criminal behavior is always a precursor to criminal desistance. Other causal conditions, namely impetus for change, self-reflection, psychological growth, and feeling connected to prosocial objects, form the basis for the psychological changes necessary for lasting criminal desistance.

According to Borgatti (n.d.), the categories that belong under context are not all that different from the categories that are classified under causal conditions. He described context categories as “background variables.” Thus the categories that fall under context for this research are incarceration experiences and obstacles. Jail and prison are quite literally the background settings where criminal desistance often has its origins. Obstacles do not cause criminal desistance, but they contribute to the background noise, so to speak, that affects a person’s ability to desist from crime.

There is not a universally agreed-upon definition of the difference between causal conditions and intervening conditions, but the subtle distinction between the two is that intervening conditions refer to the categories that provide explanation (Borgatti, n.d.). The category that best explains the psychology underlying long-term criminal desistance in the current research is motivation to remain crime-free.

Action strategies are the behaviors that manifest as a result of the phenomenon and the intervening conditions, for this research, the behaviors that manifest as a result of criminal desistance and staying motivated to remain crime-free (Borgatti, n.d.). Action strategies for criminal desistors are all that falls under the prosocial behaviors category.

The consequences portion of the frame includes the categories that are related to the outcome of the action strategies (Borgatti, n.d.). The consequences of prosocial behavior are prosocial impulses.

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the final stage of the grounded theory coding process. One core category is chosen to form a hypothesis that addresses the phenomenon of interest. Prosocial impulses are at the core of the psychological changes taking place for the criminal desistor. Without an increase in prosocial impulses occurring somewhere along the way, criminal desistance will be short-lived. For example, without prosocial impulses, psychological growth would not be applied to promoting the well-being of the self and others; feelings of connectedness to prosocial objects would wither; or motivation to remain crime-free would fade.

The prosocial impulse is the psychological drive underlying all of the efforts towards desistance. Early life, criminal history, and antisocial thinking lay the foundation for career criminality. Impetus for change creates intention for criminal desistance. Some form of self-reflection is critical groundwork for successful long-term criminal desistance. Self-reflection is essential because it give the desistor the opportunity to develop self-awareness, understand his past, and imagine possibilities for the future. Also, self-reflection helps the hopeful desistor develop the psychological tools required to make and sustain change. Psychological growth is necessary to navigate the challenges of moving from antisocial to prosocial life. One such challenge is forming and nurturing prosocial connections. For example, this could mean repairing damaged relationships,

cultivating spiritual beliefs, or becoming actively involved in the community. These connections solidify attachment to prosocial life. Incarceration is also integral to the desistance process because many hopeful desistors have their first serious thoughts about change while in custody.

Criminals hoping to change face a variety of obstacles from the concrete (financial hardship) to the abstract (viewing one's situation as hopeless). In order to sustain criminal desistance, the ex-convict must maintain a high level of motivation. Criminal desistors are motivated by both fear (of reincarceration) and hope (life is easier crime-free). Motivation to remain crime-free leads to the pursuit of prosocial activities. With all of these factors in place (impetus for change, self-reflection, psychological growth, feeling connected to prosocial objects, incarceration experiences, obstacles, motivation to remain crime-free, and experiences of prosocial behavior), prosocial impulses grow. There seems to be a circular relationship between prosocial behavior and prosocial impulses. Participating in prosocial activities inevitably leads to an increase in prosocial impulses, and this creates more commitment to prosocial behavior that generates stronger prosocial impulses.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary of the Findings

The present research is an investigation of the psychological changes accompanying criminal desistance. The crux of the psychology underlying long-term criminal desistance is an increase in prosocial impulses, the thoughts and feelings that promote well-being in the self and the community. This increase in prosocial impulses is caused by both psychological changes and behavioral changes. Rooted in self-reflection, successful criminal desistors have the following psychological experiences: thinking about change; developing more sophisticated psychological skills; feeling connected to prosocial objects; and staying motivated to remain crime-free— all of which contribute to an increase in prosocial impulses.

Each participant had a unique path to an increase in prosocial impulses, but each desistance story contained the aforementioned themes. Participant #1 was engaged in self-reflection for decades in both therapy and prison before he was able to change. In his case, thoughts about change became serious when he was finally able to face his feelings of disgust about his voyeurism and could look at his behavior honestly. He developed new tools for emotional regulation that enabled him to have an honest relationship with a woman for the first time in his life. Additionally he felt connected to his sister, who never stopped supporting him through his incarceration lasting nearly two decades. He also felt invested in “human decency.” He stayed motivated by his refusal to return to prison and his

enjoyment of his new lifestyle. He talked about experiencing a plethora of prosocial impulses such as empathy, gratitude, and a drive to atone to make things right.

Participant #2 was able to think seriously about change once he gained control over his addiction. He admittedly did not have the capacity to engage in self-reflection until he was sober. He developed the psychological resources he needed to address the challenges of life directly instead of avoiding problems with substance-induced numbness. He felt connected to God, his children, his new girlfriend, and even his probation officer. He continued to be motivated to remain crime-free because he didn't want to waste more time, he was fearful of reincarceration, and he hoped that he would not cause any further hurt in the lives of his children. The prosocial impulses he experienced included honesty, accountability, hope, thankfulness, and empathy.

Participant #3 was forced to think about change when it became obvious that the consequences for persisting with marijuana cultivation would become increasingly severe. His thoughts about change also involved a plan that was incompatible with a criminal path; he wanted to become an attorney. He utilized therapy for self-reflection and advocated for mental health treatment for his clients. Participant #3 talked about the importance of psychological growth, particularly with regard to learning about yourself, realizing what you are passionate about, and learning about your talents. This is what he did when he realized that it was the right decision for him to pursue becoming a lawyer. He was prosocially connected to his loved ones, his community, and the justice

system. His motivation to stay crime-free remained high as he wished to maintain the relative peacefulness of a prosocial lifestyle. Various prosocial impulses underlay his professional activities including his commitment to social causes, his desire to help, and his empathy for the criminal.

Participant #4 began to seriously think about change in prison. She could not be sure why, but the last time she was in prison she realized that she was ready to retire from criminality. She started reading the Bible, praying, reflecting, and contacting rehabilitation programs in prison. When she was released she was ready to take action. She honed her self-awareness and emotional expression in therapy. She formed a relationship with God, renewed her bond with her sons, entered the mental health profession, and became actively involved in community outreach programs to help people not unlike herself, former offenders not sure what to do. Participant #4 had a mantra for motivation: “No backwards steps.” In addition, she was motivated by her wish to be a reliable source of love and support for her family. She bubbled over with prosocial impulses such as good intentions, her drive to continue to grow and learn, her nonjudgmental stance, her commitment to helping those most in need, and even her humor.

Participant #5 saw his future when he encountered a disabled man with an entitled attitude abusing drugs on the street. He was horrified and was flooded with thoughts about change. He knew that change would require soul-searching and his self-reflection process involved reading both self-help books and the Bible. He improved his ability to regulate his emotions, especially with regard to managing feelings of anger. He felt connected to God and to his community at

school. He stayed crime-free because he is resistant to squandering time focused on antisocial pursuits or wasting time locked up, especially as he is aging and has physical limitations. He also relished the ways in which desistance has made his life easier, he was no longer preoccupied with anticipating all the many things that can go wrong when one is criminally active. Examples of the prosocial impulses to which he referred included helping, empathy, curiosity, acceptance, appreciation, reciprocity, honesty, taking responsibility, humor, and hope.

This research demonstrates that the fundamental shift underlying criminal desistance is an increase in prosocial impulses. The aforementioned is the hypothesis developed from this research for how prosocial impulses are cultivated and related to criminal desistance. The details of the participants' stories are very different, but the themes are the same and this is exciting given the diversity of the sample. There are commonalities in the desistance processes of a wide variety of offenders.

Comparison of the Present Findings With Previous Findings

Similarities With Other Studies

There are similarities between the present results and previous research about criminal desistance. For example, the positive relationship between aging and desistance is apparent even in this small sample. The participants range in age from 46 to 66. The decrease in antisocial behavior with age is the most established pattern of criminal behavior (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Morizot & Le Blanc, 2007). The participants in this research directly referred to this trend. For

example, Participant #1 observed that the association between increased age and decreased criminal activity is well documented “in all the statistical manuals.”

The findings of this research also offered support to the following correlates of desistance detailed in the Literature Review: maturation (criminal desistance naturally accompanies aging), developmental processes (criminal desistance is caused by identity changes and improved decision-making skills that accompany aging), rational choice (criminal desistance is associated with cost-benefit analysis), social learning (criminal desistance is related to social variables), self-control (criminal is facilitated by willpower), belief in a just world (criminal desistors believe that when you do something wrong you get punished and when you doing something right you get rewarded), medical-model story (criminal desistance is caused by therapy or rehabilitation), and specific-deterrence story (criminal desistance is caused by fear of punishment) (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008; Gleuck & Gleuck, 1974; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Warr, 1993, 1998). The axial codes that support these theories include impetus for change, self-reflection, psychological growth, feeling connected to prosocial objects, motivation to remain crime-free, prosocial behavior, and prosocial impulses.

Additionally, many of Maruna’s (2001) findings were supported. Both Maruna and this researcher observed that criminal desistance is associated with beliefs about the self, self-efficacy, optimism, and atonement. Also, similar to Maruna’s findings, the participants did not consider garden-variety atonement to be sufficient; the redemption efforts had to be greater than or equal to the effort

put into the harm done. Maruna's desistors were hopeful about the future and believed that they had the power to make an impact in their own lives and the lives of others. The participants in the present research were similarly optimistic and self-efficacious. Maruna observed that desistors wanted to take the credit themselves for being able to desist from crime. Likewise Participant #3 suggested that often people are reluctant to give credit to others for success and stated: "They don't want to acknowledge that they didn't do it themselves or whatever but I do think it's perhaps largely influenced by outside help, outside ideas or advice."

This research also reaffirmed the necessity of connecting to prosocial objects to achieve successful criminal desistance. The value of positive relationships with family members and loved ones to the desistance process has been found in previous studies and in this research (Bahr et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1981; La Vigne, Visher & Castro, 2004; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Naser & Visher, 2006; Sampson & Laub, 1990, 1993). Sampson and Laub (1990, 1993, 1996) repeatedly demonstrated that forming connections to prosocial objects is a positive form of social control (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Similar to Sampson and Laub, this writer found that the source of the prosocial connection does not have to be a person. For example, the present research reaffirmed that a job can foster similar feelings of prosocial connectedness. The present findings expand upon what is already known about the relationship between social variables and criminal desistance by suggesting that additional social variables that have previously been overlooked can be important to criminal desistance. For example,

feeling connected to social change or a newfound moral code, can also be significant to criminal desistance.

The participants also talked about curtailing criminal behavior to facilitate professional pursuits. Similarly Sampson and Laub (1990, 1993) asserted a correlation between working consistently and desisting from crime. According to Maruna (2001), people derive identity from chosen professions. This was certainly true for Participants #3 and #4, and Participant #5 spoke passionately about his hope to become a judge. Participant #2 talked about how drug use, a major contributing factor to his past recidivism, was mutually exclusive to maintaining prosocial employment. Participant #1 had retired so work was not a factor in his desistance process.

The role of psychotherapy and rehabilitation programs in maintaining permanent desistance has also been demonstrated in previous research and was echoed by this research (Andrews et al., 1990; Di Placido et al., 2006; Gendreau, 1996; Walters & White, 1990; Zanis et al., 2003). Psychotherapy and outpatient or residential substance abuse treatment in particular were identified as critical to desistance by these participants and previous researchers.

Additionally, these research findings are in alignment with the principles of restorative justice outlined in the Literature Review (Prelog et al., 2009). When appropriate, the offenders talked about harm they had done or harm to which they had contributed. They developed empathy for their victims and demonstrated improved emotional awareness. Like previous research on successful desistors,

the participants in this research demonstrated accountability for their antisocial behavior and thinking (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Differences From Other Studies

There are some notable differences between the outcome of this investigation and the limited research that specifically addresses the psychology of criminal desistance. At least one researcher has postulated that incarceration experience undermines self-esteem (Flanagan, 1981). Although the participants talked in detail about both positive and negative experiences in jail and prison, they never reported that their self-esteem had been compromised. This research does not challenge the findings of Flanagan's (1981) research. On the contrary, perhaps it is the offender who suffers damage to his self-esteem while incarcerated who goes on to reoffend.

Maruna (2001) postulated that successful criminal desistors believe in a good core self that remains intact through delinquency and criminal behavior. Thus the uncorrupt self can be accessed during the desistance process to facilitate feelings of self-worth. This was not consistent with the findings of this research, which suggested that criminal desistors do not always identify with a good core self and corrupt external surroundings. Other variations are possible. For example, both the self and the environment can be viewed as normative and natural, neither good nor bad, as was the case for Participant #2. However, Participant #1 does illustrate Maruna's point:

It was always there but when the fog of the character disorder... somehow the self-destruction faded, then what was left was the way I was raised. That is the answer! Because if you peel off the top part, which is rotten, you've got to look at what's underneath and what was underneath was just

a kid that was raised in [*note: name of state removed to protect confidentiality*] in '50s and in the '60s who basically was not really a bad person, he just had things stuck on him that he didn't ask for. I didn't ask for being a voyeur. I didn't ask to have that stuck on me.

Maruna (2001) also suggested that successful desistors do not focus on the harm they have done. This is not consistent with the findings of this research which demonstrated that successful desistors held themselves accountable both for their past actions and the harm they inflicted. Participants in this research were not using cognitive distortions to modify the understanding of the past as Maruna suggests desistors are prone to do. The participants in this research often acknowledged that the past happened and that it shaped the person they have become. However, they did not glorify a criminal past as the road that led them to an evolved state of humanity.

Maruna (2001) developed a formula for how the successful criminal desistor learns to make sense of his past: "If it weren't for X (me going to jail, my life of crime, etc.), I would never have realized Y (that there are more important things in life than money, that I was good at helping others, etc.)" (p. 98). This was true for Participants #3 and #4 whose current occupations have been enriched by their criminal pasts. However, the other participants had no such story.

One major difference between the present study and previous research is the emphasis on the concept of prosocial impulses. The positive relationship between prosocial impulses and long-term criminal desistance among different types of former criminals is made evident by this research.

Social and Professional Implications

The implications of this research most directly apply to the fields of psychology and forensics. Psychotherapy is traditionally associated with self-reflection and psychological development, and participants were adamant about the value both of psychotherapy and reflection in desisting from crime. Since the participants spoke directly and indirectly about criminal impulses, treatment could also be focused on acknowledging that the criminal impulse will likely always be present in some form and on providing assistance with sublimation of the criminal impulse. In this way the criminal impulse can be honored and reintegrated. Additional interventions could also be crafted to promote prosocial impulses and feelings of connectedness to prosocial others and ideas.

Psychotherapy can be prohibitively expensive for an individual. Larger-scale, funded programs could be developed to achieve some of the same results. For example, a program that encourages clients early on in their desistance process to find a way to help others or enrich the community in some way that is personally meaningful could help to promote feelings of connectedness. Criminals on probation are often required to complete some number of community service hours as part of their debt to society. Rather than forcing a former inmate into an arbitrary volunteer role just to meet the requirement, this community service requirement could be used to connect probationers/parolees with volunteer opportunities that are personally meaningful. This would facilitate investment in helping others and the community.

The findings also have implications for the corrections system. The psychological shift that accompanies criminal desistance can originate in jail or prison. Participants directly spoke about psychological changes occurring in prison that promoted desistance from illegal behavior. There are various types of therapeutic and program opportunities in custody in place already. It may be that these programs could be modified slightly to incorporate some of the ideas generated by this research, e.g., more emphasis on self-reflection, increased support around re-establishing or making new prosocial connections, and guidance in the development of targeted psychological skills.

The findings also may have implications outside of therapy or prison. For example, Participant #3 spoke about the ways in which he tries to promote criminal desistance as a criminal defense attorney. He encourages self-reflection in his clients and tries to get them to think about change. He wants his clients to move forward with their lives fully informed. Thus should they decide to reoffend, they know exactly what consequences they can expect. Perhaps education about the concrete consequences of criminal behavior, e.g., likely years spent in custody for different behaviors, should be offered to youth.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this study is the sample size; given a project of this scope and an analysis of this depth, it was essential to keep the sample small. Another limitation is the recruitment process. The sample was self-selecting. Three of the participants (#1, #2, #4) were motivated to give an interview because someone they respected, e.g., a probation officer or friend,

encouraged them to participate. As previously mentioned, Participant #5 was motivated by the promise of a \$25 gift card. Participant #3 saw a flyer posted and contacted this writer as he is professionally invested in the topic of criminal desistance. Volunteering to take part in student research for negligible compensation requires motivation, comfort talking at length, and a willingness to talk about potentially sensitive material. This sample may not be representative of the average criminal desistor.

Another possible limitation of the study has to do with the way the material was coded. As all 12 of the axial categories were closely related, it's difficult to be sure that they were indeed discrete categories that could not be consolidated into fewer categories or expanded into more categories.

Further, because this research is retrospective, one cannot conclude that thinking about change, self-reflection, psychological growth, feelings of connectedness, staying motivated, and prosocial impulses are consistently involved in the psychological process of the criminal desistor. It may be that there are other psychological variables more significant to the desistance process that could be identified in a prospective study.

It is possible that the variables associated with desistance in this study could lead to recidivism in some types of offenders. For example, it is possible that promoting self-reflection among some criminals could lead to feelings of loneliness and negativity, and ultimately result in recidivism.

Also, because this study is retrospective it's difficult to determine the order in which changes took place. Grounded theorists do aim to relate categories

causally and this researcher has followed suit in the present study. However, these casual relationships are only speculative. For example, as mentioned previously, it's difficult to imagine that it's possible to start thinking about changing one's behavior without some amount of self-reflection. That being said, once the decision to change has been made, the participants described ongoing and extensive self-reflection to make these changes a reality. Thus the variables included in the "impetus for change" category are presumed to precede the variables in the "self-reflection" category, for the most part. Also, the variables under the "impetus for change" umbrella are not necessarily the criminal's very first thoughts about change; rather, these seem to be the thoughts that resulted in a successful criminal desistance. It may be that having periodic thoughts about change over many years had a cumulative effect and this enabled the final round of thoughts about change to translate into action.

One relationship that seems more obvious is that self-reflection facilitated psychological growth and gave participants an improved ability to relate to prosocial people and ideas. It's not clear if psychological growth improved the likelihood of feeling connected to prosocial objects or vice versa. Instead these two concepts seem to go hand-in-hand, maturity facilitates connectedness, and relating to others promotes personal development. There is also a chicken-and-egg dilemma with prosocial behavior and prosocial impulses. There is a circular relationship between these two categories, and again, it's hard to imagine that prosocial behavior could occur without at least some prosocial impulses, but once the prosocial behavior becomes an active part of life, it was reported that

prosocial impulses increased. In other words, the prosocial behavior required to sustain a prosocial lifestyle only helped these types of impulses increase. A longitudinal study could help clarify how these changes occur.

Future Directions

As this study was small, the first step towards doing additional research might be to collect more interviews on the same topic or to add a quantitative component. Comparison groups and control groups would also be valuable for future research. For example, criminal desistance could be measured in a sample not encouraged to do anything to desist from crime, a group of criminals who were prompted to engage in self-reflection only, and a group of criminals who were offered guidance in thinking about change, self-reflection, psychological development, cultivating feelings of connectedness, and learning to stay motivated. Ideas for promoting change that could be implemented in future research include offering individual psychodynamic therapy, process-oriented group therapy, self-help books, guided meditation, education about various types of spiritual practices, volunteerism, couples therapy, or family therapy.

Additionally, to this writer's knowledge there is no measure of prosocial impulses, let alone measures validated in criminal populations. Thus there is no way to determine the frequency of prosocial impulses, nor any way to measure quantitatively what variables might lead to an increase in these impulses. Examining measures of altruism might be the best place to start working towards creating a measure for prosocial impulses. Although the participants in this study described experiencing prosocial impulses, it could be that a person who

ultimately recidivates also experiences these types of impulses. Further research on prosocial impulses and their relationship with desistance from crime is needed to support or repudiate the findings of this research.

Conclusion

As crime will never be eradicated, criminal desistance must be considered a priority. As Participant #1 stated, “There’s always been criminals, there always will be criminals, there is no answer to why there are criminals, I don’t know what percentage of the population are sociopaths but that’s just the way it is.” Hundreds of inmates are released from state and federal prisons in this country every day (Petersilia, 2003). They are labeled criminal, felon, or repeat offender: all classifications that restrict future opportunities. Even those among us with no compassion for the former offender trying in earnest to re-assemble his life must face the reality that people with criminal records are always close: they are our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers, and our loved ones. It simply makes sense to help the formerly incarcerated thrive in the community because they will always be part of the community. During the last minute of the last interview that this writer collected for this project, the interviewee stated of offering his story: “If it’ll help save one, then it’s worth it all, it’s worth it: save one you can save a civilization.” It is this writer’s hope that this research will help the formerly incarcerated to thrive in some small way.

References

- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (1995). *LSI-R the level of service inventory revised user's manual*. North Tonawanda, NY: Multi-Health Systems.
- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2006). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (4th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.
- Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J., & Hoge, R. D. (1990). Classification for effective rehabilitation: Rediscovering psychology. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *17*, 19-52. doi: 10.1177/0093854890017001004
- Bahr, S. J., Armstrong, A. H., Gibbs, B. G., Harris, P. E., & Fisher, J. K. (2005). The reentry process: How parolees adjust to release from prison. *Fathering*, *3*, 243-265. doi:10.3149/fth.0303.243
- Beaver, K. M., Wright, J. P., DeLisi, M., & Vaughn, M. G. (2008). Desistance from delinquency: The marriage effect revisited and extended. *Social Science Research*, *37*, 736-752. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.11.003
- Beck, A. J., & Shipley, B. E. (1989). Recidivism of prisoners released in 1983. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report*, 1-13.
- Benda, B. B., Toombs, N.J., & Peacock, M. (2002). Ecological factors in recidivism: A survival analysis of boot camp after three years. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *35*, 63-85. doi:10.1300/J076v35n01_04
- Benda, B. B., Toombs, N.J., & Peacock, M. (2003). An empirical examination of competing theories of recidivism of adult offenders five years after graduation from boot camp. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *37*, 43-75. doi:10.1300/J076v37n02_03
- Bereswill, M. (2004). Inside-out: Resocialization from prison as a biographical process. A longitudinal approach to the psychodynamics of imprisonment. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *18*, 315-336. doi:10.1080/0265053042000314401
- Blumstein, A., & Cohen, J. (1987). Characterizing criminal careers. *Science*, *237*, 985-991. doi:10.1126/science.237.4818.985
- Blumstein, A. (1998). U.S. criminal justice conundrum: Rising prison populations and stable crime rates. *Crime and Delinquency*, *44*, 127-135. doi:10.1177/0011128798044001014

- Blumstein, A., Cohen, J., Das, S., & Moitra, S. (1988). Specialization and seriousness during adult criminal careers. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 4, 303-345.
- Blumstein, A., Cohen, J., & Hsieh, P. (1982). *The duration of adult criminal careers*. (Final report submitted to National Institute of Justice). Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie-Mellon University School of Urban and Public Affairs.
- Borgatti, S. (n.d.). *Introduction to grounded theory*. Retrieved from <http://www.analytictech.com/mb870/introtoGT.htm>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dejong, C. (1997). Survival analysis and specific deterrence: Integrating theoretical and empirical models of recidivism. *Criminology*, 35, 561-575. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.1997.tb01230.x
- DeLisi, M. (2001). Extreme career criminals. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 25, 239-252. doi:10.1007/BF02886848
- DeLisi, M. (2005). *Career criminals in society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DeLisi, M., & Vaughn, M.G. (2008). The Gottfredson-Hirschi critiques revisited: Reconciling self-control theory, criminal careers, and career criminals. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 52, 520-537. doi:10.1177/0306624X07308553
- Di Placido, C., Simon, T. L., Witte, T. D., Gu, D., & Wong, S. C. P. (2006). Treatment of gang members can reduce recidivism and institutional misconduct. *Law and Human Behavior*, 30, 93-114. doi:10.1007/s10979-006-9003-6
- Doherty, E. E. (2006). Self-control, social bonds, and desistance: A test of life-course interdependence. *Criminology*, 44, 807-833. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.2006.00064.x
- Dunford, F., & Elliott, D. S. (1984). Identifying career offenders using self-reported data. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 21, 57-86. doi:10.1177/0022427884021001004
- Farrall, S. (2002). *Rethinking what works with offenders*. Cullompton, England: Willan.

- Farrall, S., & Bowling, B. (1999). Structuralism, human development, and desistance from crime. *The British Journal of Criminology*, *39*, 253-268. doi:10.1093/bjc/39.2.253
- Farrall, S., & Maruna, S. (2004). Desistance-focused criminal justice policy research: Introduction to a special issue on desistance from crime and public policy. *The Howard Journal*, *43*, 358-367. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2311.2004.00335.x
- Farrington, D. P. (2007). Advancing knowledge about desistance. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *23*, 125-134. doi:10.1177/1043986206298954
- Farrington, D. P., Loeber, R., Elliot, D. S., Hawkins, J. D., Kandel, D. B., Klein, M. W., & ... Tremblay, R. E. (1990). Advancing the knowledge about the onset of delinquency and crime. *Advances in Clinical Child Psychology*, *13*, 283-342.
- Flanagan, T. J. (1981). Dealing with long-term confinement adaptive strategies and perspectives among long-term prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *8*, 201-222. doi:10.1177/009385488100800206
- Gendreau, P. (1996). Offender rehabilitation: What we know and what needs to be done. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *23*, 144-161. doi:10.1177/0093854896023001010
- Gendreau, P., Little, T., & Goggin, C. (1996). A meta-analysis of the predictors of adult offender recidivism: What works! *Criminology*, *34*, 575-607. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.1996.tb01220.x
- Gleuck, S., & Gleuck, E. (1974). *Of delinquency and crime: A panorama of years of search and research*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Gosnell, K. (2007). Fathers successfully returning home. *Corrections Today*, *69*, 46-49.
- Gottfredson, M., & Hirschi, T. (1990). *A general theory of crime*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gunnison, E., & Mazerolle, P. (2007). Desistance from serious and not so serious crime: A comparison of psychosocial risk factors. *Criminal Justice Studies*, *20*, 231-253.
- Harris, N. (2003). Reassessing the dimensionality of the moral emotions. *British Journal of Psychology*, *94*, 457-473. doi:10.1348/000712603322503033

- Hirschi, T., & Gottfredson, M. (1983). Age and the explanation of crime. *American Journal of Sociology*, *89*, 552-584. doi:10.1086/227905
- Horney, J., Osgood, D., & Marshall, I. (1995). Criminal careers in the short-term: Intra-individual variability in crime and its relation to local life circumstances. *American Sociological Review*, *60*, 655-673. doi:10.2307/2096316
- Huffman, E. G. (2005). Psychotherapy in prison: The frame imprisoned. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *34*, 319-333. doi:10.1007/s10615-005-0022-4
- Kanazawa, S. (2003). Why productivity fades with age: The crime-genius connection. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *37*, 257-272. doi:10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00538-X
- Kazemian, L. (2007). Desistance from crime: Theoretical, empirical, methodological, and policy considerations. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *23*, 5-27.
- Langan, P. A., & Levin, D. J. (2002). Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report*, 1-16. doi:10.1525/fsr.2002.15.1.58
- Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2003). *Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- La Vigne, N.G., Visher, C.A., & Castro, J. (2004). *Chicago Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/publications/311115.html>.
- LeBel, T. P., Burnett, R., Maruna, S., & Bushway, S. (2008). The 'chicken and egg' of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime. *European Journal of Criminology*, *5*, 131-159. doi:10.1177/1477370807087640
- Martinez, D. J., & Christian, J. (2009). The familial relationships of former prisoners: Examining the link between residence and informal support mechanisms. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *38*, 201-224. doi:10.1177/0891241608316875
- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Maruna, S. (2004). Desistance from crime and explanatory style. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *20*, 184-200. doi:10.1177/1043986204263778

- Massoglia, M., & Uggen, C. (2007). Subjective desistance and the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *23*, 90-103. doi:10.1177/1043986206298950
- Mauer, M. (1999). *Race to incarcerate*. New York: New Press.
- Ménard, K. S., Anderson, A. L., & Godboldt, S. M. (2009). Gender differences in intimate partner recidivism: A 5-year follow-up. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *36*, 61-76. doi:10.1177/0093854808325905
- Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Life-course persistent and adolescence-limited anti-social behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, *100*, 674-701. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511490057.017
- Morizot, J., & Le Blanc, M. (2007). Behavioral, self, and social control predictors of desistance from crime: A test of launch and contemporaneous effect models. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *23*, 50-71. doi:10.1177/1043986206298945
- Naser, R. L., & Visher C. A. (2006). Family members' experiences with incarceration and reentry. *Western Criminology Review*, *7*, 20-31.
- Olver, M. E., & Wong, S. C. P. (2009). Therapeutic responses of psychopathic sexual offenders: Treatment attrition, therapeutic change, and long-term recidivism. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *77*, 328-336. doi:10.1037/a0015001
- Otto, K., & Dalbert, C. (2005). Belief in a just world and its functions for young prisoners. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *39*, 559-573. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2005.01.004
- Ouimet, M., & Le Blanc, M. (1996). The role of life experiences in the continuation of the adult criminal career. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, *6*, 73-97. doi:10.1002/cbm.65
- Pager, D. (2003). The mark of a criminal record. *American Journal of Sociology*, *108*, 937-975.
- Paparozzi, M., & DeMichele, M. (2008). Probation and parole: Overworked, misunderstood, and under-appreciated: But why? *The Howard Journal*, *47*, 275-296. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2311.2008.00522.x
- Paternoster, R., Brame, R., & Farrington, D. P. (2001). On the relationship between adolescent and adult conviction frequencies. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, *17*, 201-225.

- Petersilia, J. (2003). *When prisoners come home: Parole and prisoner reentry*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Piquero, A. (2000). Frequency, specialization, and violence in offending careers. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 37, 392-418. doi:10.1177/0022427800037004003
- Pratt, T. C., & Cullen, F. T. (2000). The empirical status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime: A meta-analysis. *Criminology*, 38, 931-964. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.2000.tb00911.x
- Prelog, A. J., Unnithan, N. P., Loeffler, C. H., & Pogrebin, M. R. (2009). Building a shame-based typology to guide treatment for offenders. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 48, 249-270. doi:10.1080/10509670902766638
- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1990). Crime and deviance over the life course: The salience of adult social bonds. *American Sociological Review*, 55, 609-627. doi:10.2307/2095859
- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1996). Socioeconomic achievement in the life course of disadvantaged men: Military service as a turning point, circa 1940-1965. *American Sociological Review*, 61, 347-367. doi:10.2307/2096353
- Savolainen, J. (2009). Work, family, and criminal desistance: Adult social bonds in a Nordic welfare state. *British Journal of Criminology*, 49, 285-304. doi:10.1093/bjc/azn084
- Schnittker, J., & John, A. (2007). Enduring stigma: The long-term effects of incarceration on health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 48, 115-130. doi:10.1177/002214650704800202
- Shinkfield, A. J., & Graffam, J. (2009). Community reintegration of ex-prisoners type and degree of change in variables influencing successful reintegration. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 53, 29-42. doi:10.1177/0306624X07309757
- Sommers, I., Baskin, D. R., & Fagan, J. (1993). Getting out of the life: Crime desistance by female street offenders. *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 15, 125-149. doi:10.1080/01639625.1994.9967964

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology an overview. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 273–285). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.
- United States Sentencing Commission. (2009, Nov. 1). *Federal sentencing guidelines manual*. Retrieved from http://www.ussc.gov/guidelines/2010_guidelines/Manual_HTML/4b1_1.htm
- Walters, G. D., & White, T. W. (1990). Therapeutic interventions with the lifestyle criminal. *Journal of Offender Counseling, Services & Rehabilitation, 14*, 159-169. doi:10.1300/J264v14n01_13
- Warr, M. (1993). Age, peers, and delinquency. *Criminology, 31*, 17-40. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.1993.tb01120.x
- Warr, M. (1998). Life-course transitions and desistance from crime. *Criminology, 36*, 183-216. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.1998.tb01246.x
- Whiteley, S. M., & Hosford, R. E. (1983). Counseling in prisons. *The Counseling Psychologist, 11*, 27-34. doi:10.1177/0011000083112006
- Wilkinson, R. A., & Rhine, E. E. (2005). Confronting recidivism: Inmate reentry and the second chance act 2005. *Corrections Today, 67*, 54-57.
- Zanis, D. A., Mulvaney, F., Coviello, D., Alterman, A. I., Savitz, B., & Thompson, W. (2003). The effectiveness of early parole to substance abuse treatment facilities on 24-month criminal recidivism. *Journal of Drug Issues, 33*, 223-235.
- Zimring, F. E., Hawkins, G., & Kamin, S. (2003). *Punishment and democracy: Three strikes and you're out in California*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Please tell me the story of how you first got involved with crime, what made you continue to commit crime, and how you managed to stop engaging in criminal behavior.

If you could identify only one change inside yourself that enabled you to become crime-free, what would it be?

What has changed the most about your personality since you stopped engaging in illegal behavior?

Please tell me about the time when you came the closest to reoffending or violating. What were you thinking and feeling? What stopped you?

What motivates you today to continue to stay away from crime?

If you could give one piece of advice to someone in custody who wanted to make a change and stop committing crime, what would it be?

What ideas or theories do you have about how **people in general** manage to stop engaging in illegal behavior?

What is one question that I should add to this interview about your thoughts and feelings about how you managed to stop committing crime? What would be your answer to this question?

Finally, if you know anyone else who would be willing to talk with me about their experiences, please pass on my contact information.

Appendix B

Participant Information Letter

Sarah Bourget is a doctoral candidate in the Clinical Psychology Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. She is conducting a study to explore criminal desistance among former offenders.

You are a suitable participant for this study if you are an adult and if you have an extensive criminal past spanning 5 to 10 years or more (a minimum of 5 years between first adult arrest and most recent release from jail or prison). You are an appropriate candidate for this research if you have been convicted of a crime at least 2 separate times. Your criminal record should include at least 2 felony convictions or at least 1 felony conviction along with several misdemeanor convictions. You are a suitable participant for this study if you have been out of custody for at least 3 years and have not engaged in any illegal activity or committed any violations of your supervised release during that time. Finally you are eligible to participate in this research if you identify as a former criminal who plans to remain crime-free.

Your role as a participant in this study is to provide thoughtful and genuine answers to the interview questions. The questions are not meant to invade your privacy and you are free to answer them or not as you see fit. The time required for the interview will be approximately 1 hour. However, if you feel comfortable taking more time to share your story, the interviewer will welcome the opportunity. The interview will include your story, how you've changed, and your thoughts and feelings about avoiding criminal activity. It would be ideal to

conduct this interview in person, but a telephone interview may be acceptable if time constraints or transportation are prohibitive. Upon completion of the interview you shall be offered a \$25 gift card as a gratuity for your time and effort.

Prior to the interview you will be given a copy of the questions to review. You will be asked to read the interview questions in advance to confirm that you are comfortable with the questions and so you have time to reflect on the topic before the interview.

The interview will be recorded. Confidentiality is guaranteed within the limits of the law. Your name will not be associated with your answers in any private or public report of the results. Access to interview recordings will be limited to the primary researcher, Sarah Bourget, and the transcribers only.

The goals of this research are not therapeutic in nature. There are no guaranteed benefits for participating in this study. It should also be noted that you may find the interview process interesting and thought-provoking. You may enjoy sharing your past experiences and outlook on criminal desistance. Although unlikely, the risks could include experiencing distressful emotions. If you experience distress caused by your participation in this study, professional psychotherapeutic assistance will be offered at no or reduced fee (addresses of available therapists you can get from Sarah Bourget). If you feel at risk, uncomfortable, or for any other reason, you may choose to drop out of this study at any time without explanation or penalty.

If at any time during the process you have any concerns or unresolved questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a participant you may contact me at (415) 420-2838 or at sarah@sbourget.net. You may also contact Dr. Kaisa Puhakka, by calling (415) 575-6103. Furthermore, you may directly or anonymously write to The Human Research Review Committee Chair, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Thank you for your interest, Sarah Bourget

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent Form

Sarah Bourget is a doctoral candidate in the Clinical Psychology Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. She is conducting a study about criminal desistance entitled, "Psychological Changes Underlying Long-term Criminal Desistance Among Former Career Criminals." Participation involves 1 recorded interview lasting for approximately 1 hour.

The recording of the interview will be reviewed and transcribed after the session. The transcript will allow the researcher to code themes and use quotes from the interview. Access to the recording will be limited to Sarah Bourget and the transcriber. The recording and transcription will be stored in a locked cabinet to which only Sarah Bourget has access. Your name will not be associated with your answers in any private or public report of the results. All identifying data will be deleted when direct quotes are used in the dissertation. The transcripts may be shared with co-researchers who will assist in the coding process. Sarah Bourget will also take other measures that you deem appropriate to further safeguard your confidentiality. *All transcripts and/or audio recordings will be destroyed within 5 years of collection.*

Confidentiality is guaranteed within the limits of the law. However, there are circumstances where a psychological researcher is required by law to reveal information, usually for the protection of a research participant or others. A report to the police department or to the appropriate protective agency is required in the following cases: 1) If, in the judgment of the psychological researcher, a research participant becomes dangerous to himself or herself or others (or their property), and revealing the information is necessary to prevent the danger; 2) If there is suspected child abuse, in other words if a child under 18 has been a victim of a crime or neglect; 3) If there is suspected elder abuse, in other words if a woman or man age 60 or older has been a victim of crime or neglect. If a report is required, the psychological researcher should discuss its contents and possible consequences with the research participant.

Aside from a \$25 gift card offered as a gratuity for your time, no direct benefit is offered or guaranteed as a result of participation in this research. You may, however, find the process interesting and thought-provoking. The information you provide will benefit the understanding of criminal desistance.

The interviews may touch sensitive areas for some people and bring up troubling, negative emotions. You will be free to refuse to answer any question or to end your participation in the study at any time. Sarah Bourget will be available before, during and after the interviews to talk about my concerns, and to facilitate

referrals to a therapist if such a need should arise. Sarah can be contacted at (415) 420-2838 or sarah@sbourget.net.

I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data that is collected during this study to be used in the process of completing a Doctoral degree. I also grant permission to recording of the interview. I have been assured that all information will be held in confidence within the limits of the law. I have been assured that the findings will be confidential and that the goals of the interviews are not therapeutic in nature. Having fully considered the above factors, I hereby consent to participate in this study. I realize that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If I have a complaint I can contact the California Institute of Integral Studies' HRRC chair at:

California Institute of Integral Studies
Bob Duchmann, Chair, Human Research Review Committee
1453 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
415 575 6100 x 1 bduchmann@ciis.edu

Participant's Name	Signature	Date
--------------------	-----------	------

I certify that I have provided information to the above participant about the nature, purpose and potential benefits and risks associated with participation in this research study, and have answered all questions that have been raised.

I have provided the participant with a copy of this signed consent form and the Participant Bill of Rights.

Researcher's Name	Researcher's Signature	Date
-------------------	------------------------	------

Appendix D

Bill of Rights for Participants

You have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity and respect;
2. Be given a clear description of the purpose of the study and what is expected from you as a participant;
3. Be told of any benefits or risks to you that can be expected from participating in the study;
4. Know the researcher's training and experience;
5. Ask any questions you may have about the study;
6. Decide to participate or not without any pressure from the researcher;
7. Have your privacy protected within the limits of the law;
8. Refuse to answer any research questions, refuse to participate in any part of the study or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative effects to you;
9. Be given a description of the overall results of the study upon request;
10. Discuss any concerns or file a complaint about the study with the Human Research Review Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Appendix E

Consent to Contact Probation/Parole Officer

I, _____, hereby authorize Sarah Bourget to contact my current or former Probation/Parole Officer, _____, for the purpose of this research on criminal desistance. Confidentiality is guaranteed within the limits of the law. Ms. Bourget will be confirming that I have a documented history of criminal behavior, have not participated in any illegal activity within the past 3 years, and, if applicable, have not violated the conditions of my probation or parole within the past 3 years.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Name	Participant's Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Name	Researcher's Signature	Date

Appendix F

Consent to Allow a Legal Official to Disclose Criminal History

I, _____, hereby authorize Sarah Bourget to have access to my legal history (e.g., a RAP sheet) for the purpose of this research on criminal desistance. Confidentiality is guaranteed within the limits of the law. Ms. Bourget will be confirming that I have a documented history of criminal behavior, have not participated in any illegal activity within the past 3 years, and, if applicable, have not violated the conditions of my probation or parole within the past 3 years.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Name	Participant's Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Name	Researcher's Signature	Date

Appendix G

Flyer

ATTENTION
OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE
IN PAID RESEARCH!!!

- **Were you once actively involved in crime but changed your life?**
- **Are you a former criminal who believes you will not commit crime again?**

If you answered YES, you may qualify to participate in an interview about your life and receive a **\$25 gift card** as a gratuity for your participation!

- ⇒ Do you have an adult criminal history lasting 5 to 10 years or **more?** (At least 5 years between your first adult arrest and most recent release from jail/prison)
- ⇒ Have you been convicted of a crime at least 2 separate times?
- ⇒ Does your criminal record include at least 2 felony convictions OR at least 1 felony conviction in addition to multiple misdemeanor convictions?
- ⇒ Have you been out of custody AND both crime and violation free for at least 3 years?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ALL OF THE QUESTIONS ABOVE,
PLEASE CONTACT SARAH AT 415-420-2838 OR
sarahresearch2010@gmail.com
TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH!

Appendix H

Transcript Samples

Excerpt from Participant #1's Interview

Sarah: You're the only criminal you ever knew?

Participant #1: Yeah

Sarah: Okay

Participant #1: What I'm saying is –

Sarah: In your life and in the world?

Participant #1: The only criminal I've ever really interacted with is me, I've never had any interest in criminals.

Sarah: Got it

Participant #1: You know what I mean? Or criminal behavior– I don't know how to make that sound... I never was into, like it is today, the gangs and... if I meet people that I consider... I can spot sociopaths in a heartbeat, not that I haven't been one myself. I never had any interest in sociopathy in terms of friends, buddies, pals. I always hung out with really straight people.

Sarah: Okay

Participant #1: And I always hid my past and I've been married four times.

Sarah: Do you have any kids?

Participant #1: No

Sarah: No kids

Participant #1: And all the women were extremely nice and well educated, middle class. One was a social worker, I mean, they're all nice ladies and I lied to them all about my past and what I was doing.

Sarah: Did you have a usual cover story or was it always something different?

Participant #1: You couldn't tell – look at me, talk to me. Do I seem like a criminal?

Sarah: Well...

Participant #1: No, it didn't come up, there didn't appear to be –

Sarah: Right, it never came up, I see

Participant #1: See, there was –

Sarah: So you were omitting certain things...

Participant #1: I omitted the fact that I was awful but the fact is that I was so good at appearing normal that it didn't enter their mind until I blew it completely and then they were shocked beyond belief.

Sarah: Wow

Participant #1: And then I would get that look, like “how could I?” Women judge themselves by the men they choose and then they would have that look in their eye like, “how could I have possibly not been able to see this?”

Sarah: What was it like for you to see that?

Participant #1: Oh, it hurt – it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it did hurt. I see it in their eyes and I would suffer the pain of rejection, but everything in my life I ever did I brought upon myself.

Excerpt from Participant #2's Interview

Sarah: What will it feel like for you, do you imagine, for you to not have anything hanging over your head anymore?

Participant #2: You know, I don't know yet (laughs).

Sarah: (laughs)

Participant #2: If I was to imagine it – it's like – yeah, it'd seem like a fresh start, it'd seem like a fresh start

Sarah: How important is a fresh start for you?

Participant #2: Oh, in another 2 years, I'd say I should have everything cleaned up in 2 years, I'll be off parole, hopefully get everything taken back – taken care of back east, get my license back.

Sarah: Okay

Participant #2: That's kind of my – that's kind of like my goal before I get off parole, is to get everything cleaned up.

Sarah: When you have that fresh start in a couple years what will you do?

Participant #2: Well, probably travel more back there to see my kids more often, and I often wonder what I'm going to do, if I'm going to move back there or not, but life actually hasn't been bad for me out here, I got a good job, good paying job, I'm in a good union, I got a girl out here, she's a great girl and...

Excerpt from Participant #3's Interview

Sarah: Yeah well, I just had a couple of follow up questions – so the thrill seeking side of yourself that you identified as present in your life, how did you fulfill that part of yourself after you left growing marijuana and transporting it and so forth?

Participant #3: Some physical activity, it's like I learned to dive, to do scuba and with age that sort of diminished

Sarah: Right

Participant #3: Because by now – I was forty-five when I went to law school, when I started law school so I think that just went with age and... a lot of hiking and not mountain climbing but somewhat demanding outdoor activity was adequate.

Sarah: Okay and I guess also along with that, the switch from really resisting going down the path of becoming a lawyer to then pursuing it, how did you make that shift?

Participant #3: Well I had gotten more engaged in the community, I had gotten pretty darn engaged in the community in the '80s, I was organizing environmental protests against logging and being on the School Board and that actually, ironically enough, was a part of what led to my – the final conviction there because I had opposed – the Sheriff came in wanting to implement a “just a say no to drugs” program and I along with one other School Board member really got into with him about the wisdom and validity of the approach and they ultimately admitted they parked a helicopter over me due to that opposition and resistance to – it was sort of like the DARE program with the...

Sarah: Yeah

Participant #3: So they figured out how to deal with me.

Sarah: Wow

Participant #3: So but again I was, little by little, I was integrating into the system. I think I'm the poster child for not integrating into the political system if you're engaged in marijuana growing.

Sarah: It seems like you got more and more organized about your approach and then eventually it just led to law school.

Participant #3: Yeah although I don't know if I would have stopped but for that final bust and as I'm going to tell you later, it was made pretty clear to me, one more time I was going to prison. I had been in prison on the first one in the federal a bit, I mean, it wound up being a camp, a federal prison camp but...

Excerpt from Participant #4's Interview

Sarah: So if you could identify only one change inside yourself that enabled you to become crime-free, what would it be?

Participant #4: Again I think it was the spiritual connection, I want to say that it happened by accident and I really can't put my finger on it and identify exactly what it was, maybe I was tired of...

Sarah: Okay

Participant #4: Maybe it was a spiritual awakening?

Sarah: And this was an awakening about?

Participant #4: About myself in my life and what I wanted

Sarah: Okay

Participant #4: I know it's always kind of hard because people always want to know, "what was it? What was that thing?"

Sarah: Yeah right, they want an easy answer and I know and it's not

Participant #4: There's not that one easy thing. I mean I went to this reentry meeting and all these like straight ladies were firing all kinds of questions at me and they were like, "wasn't your kids enough?" and I was like, "uh, no..." "wasn't this enough?" "No," "didn't you hate being in jail, didn't jail scare you?" "No," "Didn't prison scare you?" "No."

Sarah: Right

Participant #4: "Well what was it that made – what was it that made you change your mind?" "Uh, I don't know," (laughs)

Sarah: Right

Participant #4: "I just wanted to and then I did." (both laugh) I went for as long as I could or as long as I wanted to and then I stopped!

Sarah: Right and it seems like for you, a big part of that was that it was you, I mean, it was on your terms

Participant #4: Yeah and it sucks that I can't claim one certain thing but it was everything I think

Sarah: Right, if it were that simple then we wouldn't be here today, right?

Participant #4: Trying to figure it out

Excerpt from Participant #5's Interview

Sarah: If you could identify only one change inside yourself that enabled you to become crime-free, what would it be?

Participant #5: I've learned how to control my anger, as well as other emotions, the feelings associated with everything.

Sarah: How did you do that?

Participant #5: I read a book that someone referred to me that said what other people think about me is none of my business.

Sarah: I've heard that expression.

Participant #5: It's actually a book, *What You Think of Me Is None Of My Business*, 'cause that's in their head and I dare not try to get up in there to figure out what's going on with their little itty-bitty shitty committee. So leave that alone. Because, as I mentioned too, back in the days, it was certain, when we used to hang out on the corners and drink beer and smoke weed and just doing our little dirt, no matter how much we ragged on each other, there was just certain areas that you couldn't go into. I couldn't talk about your mama, I can't say nothing bad about your daddy, and I better not use that word "bitch" 'cause if I did that, I – I'm goin' be picking myself up off the ground, we respected the women back then, we all came from women, I still carry that high sense of respect for them.

Sarah: Okay, even after what happened with your wife and everything?

Participant #5: Oh yeah! That was just one event, she was screwed up, not me.

Sarah: So you changed your thinking?

Participant #5: It wasn't strictly all about me.

Sarah: Okay

Participant #5: (laughs softly) I never did close my heart off to trusting another woman, I have a woman in my life now.

Appendix I

Axial Coding

Participant #1 Axial Coding

EARLY LIFE

Juvenile criminal history
Conduct D/O
Precursor of antisocial PD
Idealized childhood
Peer influence
Normal child
Social integration
Good mother
Positive relationship with mother
Love for mother
Loved by mother
Relationship with mother
Exposure to normalcy/ Exposure to normalcy in childhood/ Childhood exposure to normalcy/ Early exposure to normalcy
Upbringing
No childhood abuse
Good education
Father drank
Curious child
Educated
Middle class upbringing

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Non-violent crime
Sex offense/ Sex offender
Voyeurism/ Voyeur
Origins of voyeurism
Origins of voyeurism unknown
Indecent exposure
Extensive criminal record/ Extensive criminal history
First conviction
Enjoying voyeurism
Probation
Hiding
Experts on criminal behavior
Identify as sociopath
Criminal history
Business
Guns
Felon in possession of a firearm
Conviction

Mistake
Trespassing
Rape
Criminal behavior
Criminal
Non-violent person
Sexual deviancy
Violent crime
Probation officer
Not hurting men
Hurting women
Manipulating
Crazy not risky behavior
Antisocial behavior
Lying/ Lie
Cheat
Steal(ing)
Anti-social surface
Treating people badly
Scaring people
Frightening women
Terrorizing women
Not pedophile
RAP sheet

ANTISOCIAL THINKING

Rationalization/ Rationalizing
Minimization/ Minimizing
Not intending to hurt others
Not physically hurting others
Cognitive distortion
Personality disorder
Warped perspective
Warped filter
Self-destructive
Controlling behavior
Denial
Hiding past
Other crimes are worse
Symptoms of personality disorder
Symptoms
Rationalization for deviance
Taking advantage of others
Lying to self
Lying to have love
Self-justification
Self-convincing
Self-gratification
Immaturity
Materialistic
Self-centered

Avoidance
Self-protection
Past aggression
Narcissistic
Lack of self-awareness
Get away with anything
Entitled/ Entitlement
Thrill seeking
Manipulative humor

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Acknowledging reprehensible behavior
Reprehensible behavior
Good understanding of guilt
Acceptance of guilt
Overcoming denial
Self-disgust
Emerging self-awareness/ Increasing self-awareness
Resistant to believing truth about self
Questioning behavior
Cringing at own behavior
Seeing the light
See video of self
Disbelief about own behavior
Gradually looking at self
Hard to look at self
Horrifying to look at self
Other people horrified by him
Horrified by himself
Horrified by own behavior
Impetus for change
Unhappy

SELF-REFLECTION

Self-analysis
Intelligent
Saved by intelligence
Mother's death
Relationships with women
Almost no mention of father
Long-term therapy
Societal norms
Reality/ Realities
Abnormal
Normal/ Normalcy
Amazed by normalcy
Crazy
Marriage
Travel
Extremes
Terrible life

Wonderful life
Contrasting life experiences
Adventure
Great adventures
Extreme behavior
Extreme thrills
Extreme problems
Exhaustion
No kids
Relationships with nice women
Lying to women
Appearance of normalcy
Shocking others
Judgment
Pain of judgment
Pain of rejection
Luck
Change
Religion
Sins
Rejection of religion/God
Christianity as mythology
Spirituality
Rejection of spirituality
Diagnosis
Lucky
Aging
Statistics
Age not perfect predictor
Never change behavior
Age is not the cure
Criminality among seniors
Wisdom can accompany age
Wisdom due to long-term therapy
Completing therapy
Resistance to therapy
No answer to past
Criminal desistance was natural
Can't stay friends with women
Gender differences
Betrayal
Love
Wanting love
Perversion
Risk(y)
Danger
Never mainstream
Wild
Hippy
Sex
Drugs

Music
Excess
Psychiatrist
Death
Stress
Retirement
Comparison(s)
Others have worse problems
Survivor/ Survival
Risky behavior
Drug use
Consequences of drug use
Not drug addict
Enjoying drugs
Enjoying marijuana
Decriminalizing marijuana
Marijuana
Medical marijuana
Developing insecurity
Therapy
Incomplete person
Deficit(s)
Emptiness
Hole
Sex is not the cure
Love is not the cure
Incomplete
Simplistic
Wrong
No explanation for voyeurism
No explanation
Unaware
Confused
Self-awareness too late
Insanity
Insane
Success with women
Sexual harassment
Normal heterosexual behavior
Pleasing women
Not interested in pornography
Voyeurism split off
Otherwise normal
Realization
Learning from therapy
Self-reflection
Unbelievable
Getting worse over time
Getting bolder
Attractive
Regret

Doing more for mother
Fear
Puzzled
Hurt motherly figure
Liked women but women targets
Unconscious
Bizarre
Learned social reactions
Hates mean drunks
Marijuana does not cause aggression
Alcohol is evil drug
Harm of drunk driving
Hating alcohol
Prepared to be alone
Survival alone
Time
Explaining behavior
Self-reliant
Unusual
Not qualified to give advice
Reprehensible
Stop criminal behavior
Hurt feelings
Comfort in anonymity
Diversity in the city
At home in the city
Sane by comparison
Normal by comparison
Substances
Life is strange
Times have changed
Complicated
Self-destructive behavior
Chain of events
Multiple contributing variables
Interpret the world
Filters
Subjectivity
Reality today
Relating to mainstream values

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH

Self-awareness
Self-talk
Change perception/ Changing perspective/ Perspective/ Perception of reality
Changing understanding of criminal behavior
Changing from crazy to normal
Contemplation
Internal dialog
Less self-centered
More self-control

Not blaming others
Accountability
Self-blame
Cognitive change
Observing ego
Awareness of anger
Learning
Anger management
Stress management
Coping skills
Self-soothing
Emotional regulation
Tolerating stress
Improved coping skills
Decrease in self-destruction
Not a bad person
Stop being bad
Stop feeling badly about yourself
Awareness of wrong
Cognitive dissonance
Self-conflict
Understanding human behavior
Knew the self better
Self-efficacy
Nothing to hide
Insight
Looking in mirror
Mirror
Saw the truth
Understanding behavior helps promote change
Realization of abnormal views
Recognition of immaturity
Crime egodystonic
Voyeurism egodystonic
Psychology
Consequences

FEELING CONNECTED TO PROSOCIAL OBJECTS

Successful younger sister
Relationship with sister
Loved unconditionally by mother
Human decency
Support from friends
Life long friends
Current relationship
Current relationship positive
Legacy
Understanding from others
Changing social interaction
Close to sister
Grateful for sister

Showing appreciation for sister
Recognition of familial support
Feeling positive about showing appreciation for sister
Gratitude for sister
Unconditional positive treatment
Lived up to expectations from family
Needing sister's support
Promise of support
Current girlfriend
Connection with current girlfriend
Seeking acceptance from others
Human connection

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Helping girlfriend
My turn to help
Owe prosocial behavior
Helping one person
Making current girlfriend happy
Stopping himself
Helping others
Prosocial communication
Trying new behavior
Solution oriented
Prosocial problem solving
Prosocial recreation
Current girlfriend's alcoholism
Terms of relationship
Intolerant of girlfriend's drinking
Never drank alcohol
Establish rule
Saved girlfriend's life
Intended to save girlfriend
Positive for girlfriend
Good companion
Saved girlfriend
Saving a person
Trying and failing
Doing the right thing
Trying
Admittance of guilt
Breaking habit
Changing behavior
Moderate behavior
Middle
Avoid extremes

INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

Prison experiences
Release from prison
Criminals

Corrections System
No interaction with other criminals
No socialization with other criminals
Lack of criminal identification
Incarceration
Prison riots
Prison murder
Reading
Value of reading in prison
Reading saturation
Radio
No drug use in prison
Did not gamble in prison
Dangers of prison
Prison gambling
Prison homosexuality
Prison drugs
Shock
Incarceration experiences
Advice for successful incarceration
Survival in prison
Mental illness
Crazy people in prison
Prison hard on young
No women in prison
Racism
Racism in prison
Environment influencing criminal behavior
Dying in prison
Successful incarceration
Therapy in prison
Death in prison
Hated other inmates
Prison OK
Ignorance in prison
Hostility in prison
Personal racism
Disliked other prisoners
Not mad about incarceration
Entitlement among other inmates
Hurting people without remorse
Most inmates never change
Crime is normal to inmates
Social influence
Anti-social behavior is reinforced
Skinnerian reinforcement
No universal advice for criminals
Criminals are part of society
Trauma
Triggering event
Criminal mind

OBSTACLES

Split self
Criminal impulse
Anti-social impulse
Intensity of anti-social impulse
Long desistance process
Not perfect
Getting his way
Mad
Temptation of retaliation
Speaking out of anger
Other
Splinter of insanity
Two people
Crazy person living in head
Still hear anti-social impulse
Still hear anti-social voice
Weakened anti-social voice
Impatient
Unkind
Indecent
Negative feelings due to anti-social voice
Not understanding
Personality remains
Anti-social voice clouds thinking
Girlfriend aggravating
Aggravation of relationships
Anti-social voice
Intolerant
Impulse control
No middle
Old behavior
Habit
Old thought
Voice
Anti-social voice
Anti-social impulse creates destruction
Thrills

MOTIVATION TO REMAIN CRIME-FREE

Fear of lifetime imprisonment
Fear of dying in prison
Drives are gone
Forgiveness
Not spiritual
Optimism about future
Carefree
Easy
Stop feeling badly about yourself
Can't change past/ Can't redo past
Explaining behavior to probation officer

Relaxed
Life is easier
Refuse to die in prison
Consequences
Prison effective deterrent
Living with self
Coping with past
Having nothing to hide is liberating
Not hiding anything

PROSOCIAL IMPULSES

Telling the truth
Peacefulness
Prosocial impulse always present
Prosocial impulse underneath personality disorder
Opportunity to be decent
Redemption
Atonement
Repentance
Morality/Morals
Truth
Right versus wrong
Moral code
Doing what's right
Knowing when he's wrong
Empathy/Developing empathy
Understanding others' perspectives/ Understanding the perspective of others
Compromise
Cooperation
Underlying prosocial impulse
Gratitude
Reach life meaning
Confidence in desistance
Knowing his limits
Honesty in relationship
Opening the self
Pure motive
No malice
Genuine
Prosocial impulse creates progress
Career criminals can change
Reciprocity
Golden rule
Live life differently
Forward looking
Sense of accomplishment
Healing
Honest for the first time
Honest(y)/ Honestly
Acceptance
Prosocial thrills

Understanding
Let you inside
Best reality is today
Hoping to help

Participant #2
Axial Coding

EARLY LIFE

Juvenile substance use
Juvenile substance use normative
Environment
Juvenile criminal behavior

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Adult criminal behavior
Burglary
Bailed out
Record
Dealing marijuana
Growing marijuana
Non-violent crime
Sold drugs to friends
Selling marijuana to friends
Selling marijuana to co-workers
Maintained prosocial job concurrently
Used drugs with customers
Maintained lifestyle for years without serious trouble
Domestic dispute
Varied criminal activity
Marijuana sales to support heroin habit
Need money to support habit
Dealing drugs exclusively
Can't work so have to deal weed
Drug dealing connections
Never dealt heroin
Dealt cocaine
Dealing drugs is criminal
No more drug connections/ No connections to deal
Most of his crimes misdemeanors
Substance use biggest factor
Getting into trouble because of substances
Crime seemed normative
Dealing marijuana seemed natural
Dealing marijuana never seemed wrong/ Never saw dealing marijuana as bad
Selling drugs never seemed wrong

ANTISOCIAL THINKING

Minimizing criminal behavior
Drug sales extra money
Drug sales good money

Drug sales easy money
Drug sales convenient
Marijuana sales normative
Marijuana sales as fallback
Drug crime as a source of income/ Dealing drugs lucrative
Drug crime facilitating upward mobility
Self-indulgence
Drug sales creating opportunity
Cocaine sales lucrative
Made quick money from cocaine
Never caught selling cocaine
Built first house from cocaine sales
Getting money led to overwhelming urge to use
Failure to think about consequences
Acting out without thinking
Comfortable in jail/prison
Avoidance
Rationalization

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Addiction makes prosocial employment impossible
Addiction makes construction work impossible
Amazed that he survived
Putting himself in danger
Sobriety
Unpredictability
Guilty
Sick of criminal lifestyle
Criminal lifestyle is extreme
Instability
No stability in crime
Sick of hurting loved ones
Emotionally drained
Addiction is a burden
Jail time is a burden
Getting rid of pressure
Always stuff hanging over his head

SELF-REFLECTION

Substance use normative
Construction
Good paying jobs
Married
Kids
He was happy
Wife unhappy
Partying
Using cocaine
Out all night
Wife left
Failed marriage

Father's death/ Father died
Marital problems
Bar
Intoxicated
Wife had affair with his best friend
Slapped wife
Arrested
Marriage dissolved
Impetus for increased substance use
Crime as an escape
Serious trouble
Back in community
Daily heroin use/ Heroin use
Heroin habit/ Heroin addiction
Heroin use increased
Lost prosocial job
Lucky
Dispute with drug dealing partner
Crazy
Dangerous
Transporting drugs
Heroin dependence
Bad drug deal
Ripping off drug dealers
Violence
Violent attack on him
Survived
Stopped thinking about past criminal involvement now
Disbelief
Should be dead
From east coast city
Methadone program
Methadone gets you high
No high from Suboxone
Fear of unemployment
Free time is crazy-making
Dislike boredom
Stopped selling cocaine quickly
Decriminalization of marijuana
Only need to sell marijuana if unemployed and still need to support heroin habit
Unemployment
Collecting unemployment
Frugal
Addiction
Serious heroin addiction
Running away from problems
Origins of avoidance unknown
Running away from problems in the past
Running to substance use
Used substances to avoid problems
Pre-Suboxone

Spending every paycheck on heroin
Economic deprivation
Losing the fight against addiction/ Addiction is a losing battle/ Previously losing addiction battle
12-step meetings not for him
12-step meetings work for some
Wanted treatment that required less thought than 12-step
Didn't apply himself to 12-step
Getting money first thought heroin
Overcome by urge to use
Mixed feelings about cocaine
Asocial on cocaine
Embarrassing behavior on cocaine
Paranoia on cocaine
Grew out of cocaine
Stopped being around others using cocaine
Social cocaine user
Socializing with other heroin users
Socializing with other addicts problematic
Heroin drug of choice
Heroin was an escape
Heroin suppresses all emotions
Heroin makes you carefree
Heroin numbs everything
Not hard to stay away from cocaine
Chased heroin
Lucky to be alive
Giving advice is tough
Origins of criminal behavior
Immature decisions
Immaturity
Poor decision making while under the influence
Experience life
Avoid drugs
Drink in moderation
Extreme
Rehabilitation
Treatment
Suboxone
Suboxone miracle drug/ Suboxone is a miracle/ Amazed by Suboxone
Long-term Suboxone treatment
Successful Suboxone treatment
Blessed with Suboxone
Drug use causing criminal behavior
Jealousy in relationships causing criminal behavior
Multiple factors leading to criminal behavior
Most criminal behavior is not thought through
Abstinence
Self-reflection while sober
Clear head
Goal identification during sober self-reflection

Self-reflection leads to facing the past
Relapse after prison
Avoided communication with kids after relapse
Kids know when I'm high
Multiple factors behind desistance
Do not get comfortable in prison
Stay scared of prison
Risk
Traveling
Travel without worry
Pending heroin charges back east/ Outstanding warrants
Hard to talk about past
Hard to look at past

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH

Perspective/ Changing perspective/ Change in perspective
Reality
Realization
Positive mindset
Suboxone takes away all cravings/ No thoughts about heroin on Suboxone
Cravings disappear
On Suboxone getting money first thought paying bills
Becoming ideal self through Suboxone
Sobriety no longer a fight
Can't drink in moderation
Addiction supersedes everything
Solving problems directly/ Resolve problems thoughtfully
Addressing problems directly new norm
Improved problem solving skills
Comprehension
Maturity
Emotional maturity
Admittance of mistakes
Self-awareness
Substance use impairs psychological growth
Desire for insight
Substance use impairs emotional growth
Emotional regulation
Normal coping skills
No emotional control under the influence
Substance use impeded judgment
Poor coping skills related to early and chronic substance use
Never grew up psychologically because of substances
Development stunted by substances
Body grew but mind did not grow
Mind same age as first use
Facing regrets
Battling your past
Wanting to move on but battling regrets
Guilt leads to relapse
Self-acceptance

Never tempted to resume dealing marijuana
Sobriety facilitates saving money

FEELING CONNECTED TO PROSOCIAL OBJECTS

Blessed/ Feeling blessed
Friend set him up with work
Increased spirituality
Closer with God
Connection to spirituality/ Spiritual connection
Feeling connected
Positive relationships with kids
His kids are supportive
Connection with kids
Frequent communication with kids
Spirituality
Ask God to help
Family
Positive relationship with probation officer
Giving credit to probation officer for his success
Respect from probation officer
Perfect probation officer
Supportive probation officer
Usually resistant to probation
Good kids
Kids had good mother
Kids had good stepfather
Visiting kids
Travel to see kids
Moving near kids
Great girlfriend
Meeting girlfriend
Human connection
External prosocial connection

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Prosocial work immediately after release
Prosocial work skills
Construction work skills
Steady employment
Job opportunity/ Good job/ Good union
Physically demanding work
Preparing for retirement
Has a good paying job/ Good pay
Don't need to sell marijuana anymore
Prosocial behavior
Got his life together
Helping kids
Helping girlfriend
Being responsible
Nothing hanging over his head
Clean up past/ Clean up everything in his life

Resolving all outstanding problems/ Resolving problems/ Resolving problems from past
Take care of outstanding warrants
Honesty with kids
Minimizing risk
Vacationing with kids
Protect kids
Facing problems
Don't run from problems
Daily problem solving
Reconciled with kids

INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

Prison sentence
Jail
Heroin addiction started in prison
Federal authorities
Thought about past criminal behavior in prison
Federal prison sentence
Released from custody
Probation officer
Probation experience
Early termination of probation
Consistent compliance with supervised release
Monthly reports
Supervised release
Not judging criminals
Being around criminals
Talking about crime
Inmates glorify crime in prison
Criminal behavior reinforced by other criminals in prison
Sobriety in prison
Acceptance of sentence
Focused on serving your time
Can't think about the outside world in prison
Cut outside ties while in prison
Gambling
Watching sports
Never wanted visits in prison
Visits hard in prison
Probation/parole
Wanting incarceration over supervised release
Continued probation
No violation

OBSTACLES

Relapse
Thinking about heroin led to use
Substance use
Out of control
Poor impulse control
Fighting the habit

Thoughts about heroin
Pending charges
Pending misdemeanor charges
Tried to resolve outstanding charges while in prison
Making mistakes
Fighting addiction
Money
Making money
Money causing criminal behavior

MOTIVATION TO REMAIN CRIME-FREE

Fear of violation
Fear of reincarceration
Spent many years in jail/prison
No more wasting time incarcerated
Motivated to do the right thing
Motivated by kids
Counter-productive to go back to prison now
Fresh start
New life
Fear of not having access to Suboxone in prison
Overcome many obstacles already
Thinking about damage caused by substance use
Hurting kids
Don't want to put stress on kids
Not being there for kids
Don't want to hurt kids again
Regrets
Could have been better father
Embarrassed kids
Daughter defending Dad
Caused hurt
Forgiveness

PROSOCIAL IMPULSES

Helping is good
Suboxone helping others
Addressing problems directly isn't hard anymore
Morality
Drive to do what's right
Implications of dealing marijuana
Implications of dealing marijuana are complicated
Thinking about consequences of dealing
People involved in marijuana dealing do get killed
Safety of others
Bigger picture
Marijuana dealing is not just selling product and making money
People get hurt
Prosocial considerations
Compelled to resolve pending charges
Uncomfortable with outstanding charges

Productive
Think about consequences to actions
Empathize
Encourages self-control
Gratitude
Stopping self after relapse
Honest with probation officer
Honesty
Accountability
Outstanding warrants burden on his mind
Anxiety about police contact
Freedom
Prosocial goals
Life is good
Thinking back on damage done
Reconciliation
Atonement
Not hopeless
Thankful

Participant #3
Axial Coding

EARLY LIFE

High level of education
Left a teaching job
Master's degree from Ivy League school
Teaching
Moved to American Southwest
Back to the land movement

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Grew marijuana/ Growing marijuana
Successful grower
Cultivation/ Gardening
Transported marijuana
Drug crimes
Drug sales
Non-violent crime
Federal conviction
Felony
Misdemeanor
Attorney puzzled by his behavior due to socioeconomic background
Plead
Simple possession
Rap sheet
Judge
Criminal activity/ Illegal activity
Continuing to commit crime
Started to make money selling marijuana
Continuing to grow/transport marijuana for money and thrills

Growing marijuana while on the school board
School board members unaware of his criminal activity
Wife assisted with criminal activity
Wife minimally involved with cultivating/ Wife did some manicuring of plants
He was the main grower
Family benefitted from his growing
Final conviction
Opposition to “just say no to drugs” led to being surveilled by authorities
Mugshot
Hidden surveillance/ Surveillance
Conviction
Legal proceedings
No white collar crime experience
Trial
Not trying to avoid consequences for marijuana cultivation
Repeat offender

ANTISOCIAL THINKING

Risk taking
Thrill seeking
Rationalization
Duplicitous
Secrets
Outlaw for financial gain
Familiar with criminal mentality
Criminals are antisocial
Criminals lack imagination
Criminals lack belief in self
Criminals lack the belief that they could do something different
Criminals can be lazy
Criminals seeking easy money
Crime as a source of income
Self-justification
Deviation
Criminal mindset
People reoffend due to indifference
Relationship between bipolar disorder and criminal activity
Manic phase of bipolar disorder associated with criminal activity
Relationship between personality disorders and criminal activity
Violence
Maybe never stopped growing if not for final conviction

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Stopping criminal activity was easy
Motivated by plan to become a lawyer
Interacted with lawyers regarding his criminal activity
Had skill set needed by lawyers
Change can require external pressure
Consequences of criminal activity getting more serious
Further cultivation would result in serious prison sentence
Point of vulnerability

Point out problematic behaviors
Going to rehab requires external pressure
Intervention
Hold up mirror
Point out mistakes
Enemies said he should become a lawyer to decriminalize marijuana
People from both sides thought he should be a lawyer
Influenced by various perspectives
Taking advice from unlikely sources
Be attuned to what others are thinking/saying might work for you
Don't dismiss advice thoughtlessly
Good advice coming from strange sources
Exposure to different perspectives important
Who influenced your decision to abandon crime

SELF-REFLECTION

Uncertainty about becoming lawyer
Resistant to becoming a lawyer at first
Opposed "the system"
Resistant to being too much involved in "the system"
Injustice in the United States
Canada much better social system
Universal healthcare
More social support in Canada
U.S. is survival of the fittest
Self-reflection in jail
Newspaper sided with sheriff
Media discredited him
High profile before bust and accomplished good
After bust people were backing away from him
Acquaintanceships ended
No genuine friends lost as a result of marijuana cultivation
Still defend the client who committed offense
"The system" unjust
Believing client is guilty has unconscious impact on attorney's efficacy
Outlaw
Outlaw image
Outlaw image comforted him
Comparison
Outlaw image as self-expression
Decriminalization of marijuana
Medical marijuana
"Just say no"
Opposed "just say no to drugs"
Self-examination
Self-reflection
Self-reflection is essential to criminal desistance
Mental health treatment
Personal psychotherapy
Therapy
Therapy facilitates change

Lack of good psychotherapy in custody
Relationship issues
Making mistakes
Public defenders don't have time
Defending the guilty
Getting best deal for the guilty
Repeat clients
Some clients are friends
Some acquaintances are clients
Some criminals are very smart
Some criminals are educated
Don't dislike clients
Avoids appointed work
Addiction
Can anyone desist from crime without addressing addiction first
Addiction impairs judgment
Drug rehabilitation
Rehabilitation/ Rehabilitation programs
Rehabilitation run by former drug dealer
Successful rehabilitation
Rehab not always needed
Poor economy
Funding cut for libraries
Funding cut for public services
Substantial funding for catching marijuana offenders in poor economy
Misinterpretation
Illegal activity didn't facilitate efficacy with social, political, and environmental justice issues
Reluctant to adopt typical mores
Forensic psychologist
Treatment often needed more than incarceration

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH

Factors underlying criminal desistance
Drive for thrills diminished with age
Desistance with age
Broadening perspective
Changing perspective/ Perspective
Gradually integrated into the system
Less of a renegade
Less of an outsider
Less of an outlaw
Still views himself as an outlaw
Figure out what you're good at/ Pursue what you're good at
Figure out what you enjoy/ Pursue what you enjoy
Criminal activity often related to drug issues
Therapy for developing internal strength
Therapy for developing resilience
Defeats and setbacks involved in changing your lifestyle
Personality development
Psychology background

Thinking
Self-talk
Observing ego
Aging is freeing/ Aging is liberating
Criminal desistance is a gradual process
Personality structure analysis
Relationship between mental health and criminal activity
Must address underlying condition to achieve criminal desistance
Diagnosis
Psychological issues underlying criminal activity
Most criminals aren't aware of underlying issues

FEELING CONNECTED TO PROSOCIAL OBJECTS

Family support
Family support while in school
Family decision-making
Engaged in the community
School board member
Social consciousness
Family supported efforts to change "the system"
Re-engaged in community later
Family
Friends
Loved ones
Mentor
Talking to criminal's family
Someone close must intervene
Trusted others influencing a change of behavior
Trusted others can take steps to help criminals
Criminal desistance largely influenced by outside help
Criminal desistance largely influenced by outside ideas and advice
People resistant to acknowledge that they didn't do it themselves

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Satisfied drive for thrills with physical activity
Physical activity
Somewhat demanding outdoor activity
Law school later in life
Work as an attorney
True defense involves engaging the client
Getting criminal to listen
Admit that there is a problem
Attorneys can give guidance to criminals
Encourage clients to get into a program
Solving source of the problem
More success at working towards goals without criminal involvement
Trying to get treatment for clients in the role of attorney
Working attorney
Getting the best deal for his clients
Criminal background not a weakness for him
Criminal background has not set him back

Shares his own background with clients
Being honest with clients about his concerns
Being honest with clients about addiction issues
Organizing environmental protests
Anti-draft organizing
Education
Back to school
Helping others through desistance research

INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

Sentence
Jail/ Jail time
Prison
Prison camp
Federal prison
Prison is noisy
Prison is crowded
Prison is racially tense
Jail is boring
Hypervigilance in custody
Suspiciousness in custody
Finding a group in custody
Establish relationships
Find ethnically similar group in custody
Not confined in camp
Outside in camp
Drug use in custody
Prison changes over time
Loss of freedom
One incarceration experience may be enough to motivate change for some
Loss of freedom not enough of a deterrent for the repeat offender
Female offenders
Prison is not a deterrent for everyone

OBSTACLES

Economic necessity
Poor
Borrowed money
Applied unsuccessfully for pardon
Romantic image of the outlaw
Hard to pursue what you are good at with no means
Fragile personality structure makes change difficult
People need help to change
Eliminate negative social influences
Change of environment
Dissociate from antisocial influence
Recidivism due to economic need
Repeat charges not enjoyable
Enemies
Felt shunned in community after bust
Withdrew emotionally after bust

After bust people were backing away from him
Community opprobrium
Disdained in community
Law school challenging period
Not motivated for lack of perception
Not motivated to do anything
View situation as hopeless
What's the point of criminal desistance
Treatment can be unaffordable/ Treatment is expensive
Psychotherapy may need to last for months or years
Crime generates income
Not financially feasible to stop offending

MOTIVATION TO REMAIN CRIME-FREE

Remain crime-free
Avoid reincarceration
Fear of reincarceration
Consequences of further cultivation
Lack of economic need
Offending associated with tension, stress, unhappiness
Unwilling to endure stress caused by offending
Unwilling to be incarcerated
Exposed to criminals at work
Want separate home and work life
Doesn't want criminal concerns always on his mind
Risk to reward ratio
His past involvement with crime is a strength in present life
Minimal anxiety now
Do not have to look over shoulder
Being prosocial is liberating because you are not under the eye of cops

PROSOCIAL IMPULSES

Defense attorneys as outlaws
Redirected outlaw impulse
Some anger at "the system" promotes efficacy as criminal defense attorney
Efficacy as defense attorney
Never came close to reoffending
No question about not reoffending
Confident in criminal desistance
Empathy
Honesty
Encourage clients
Encourage clients to get into therapy
Encourage clients to think about change
Encourage clients to think about consequences
Does his best for clients
Encourage clients to think about stress and expense of crime
Promote self-awareness in clients about the consequences of their behavior
Morality
Happy to represent clients again
Thoughtful

Nonviolent protest
Civil disobedience
Reciprocity
Prosocial goals
Helping

Participant #4
Axial Coding

EARLY LIFE

Origins of criminal behavior
Father died/ Father's death
Father died on Christmas
Traumatized by father's death
Father died from overdose
Father in wheelchair from being shot
Father good family man
Mom was provider for family
Mom did her best
Mom was mother and father
Making money illegally
Mother's criminal history
Mom sold drugs
All family members experienced incarceration
Criminals in the family
Mother addicted to making money
Idealized life
New cars
Owned homes
Mother always working
Mother always had businesses
Crime as a source of income
Crime providing opportunities
Mother very intelligent
Mother went to college
Negative relationship with mother as juvenile
Resisted accepting money from Mother
Independent
Wanted to prove herself
Close to grandmother
Uncontrollable
Juvenile substance use
Juvenile partying
Criminal activity with cousin
Truancy
Arrested as juvenile, public intoxication
First arrest at 13
Juvenile crime
Juvenile hall
Grandmother
Juvenile system

Never in group homes or CYA
Partying
Out of control
Using drugs
IV
Methamphetamine
Turning 18
Mother incarcerated
Living with Grandmother
Stealing Grandmother's car
Cruising
Lying to Grandmother
Mother incarcerated out of state
Mother's threats from prison
Believed Mother's threats
Mother's threats
Boyfriend, pregnant at 18
Boyfriend has criminal record
Pregnant and incarcerated at 18
Incarcerated
Trying to get bail
Talking to Mom's friends in custody
Mother's humor
Mother's dark humor
Well-respected mother
Mother motivated other women
Mother advocated for battered women
Mother encouraged abused women to be self-reliant
Didn't respect mother
Mother cared for kids
Rocky mother-daughter relationship
Had first child at 19
Stopped hating mother
Stopped blaming
Resumed drug use
Abstained from drug use while pregnant
Resumed drug use months after childbirth

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Stealing
Criminal behavior
Stealing cars
Car jacking
Doing drugs
Grand theft auto
Felonies
Breaking rules
Mother bailed out
Mother stopped bailing her out
Shave keys
Property theft

Criminal activity
Knives
Violence
Weapons charges
Attempted murder
Didn't get caught
Dangerous lifestyle
Threats of violence
Recidivism
On the run
Catch a new case
Known in parole department
Robberies

ANTISOCIAL THINKING

Lying
Self-indulgence
Felt the stolen car belonged to her
Rationalization
Never stole from people I knew
Easier to hurt people you don't know
Justification
Hurting others
Only hurt others she felt deserved it
Can justify anything under the influence
Self-justification
Threatening to sue
Manipulating the situation
Arguing with CPS
Arguing
Self-righteous
Rebellious/ Rebellion
Loved being a rebel
Lived by her own rules
Entitlement
Self-centered
Reluctant to follow rules
Lying to self
Cognitive distortion
Not listening to people trying to help
Resistant to program/ rehabilitation
Resistant to help
Addicted to notoriety
Addicted to respected
Getting high was less appealing than lifestyle
Having followers
Never the follower
Antisocial leader
Self-destruction/ Self-destructive
Out of control
Skilled at disassociating/disconnecting

Disassociating from emotions
Disassociate
Disconnect
People used to come to her for antisocial help

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Last time in prison something changed
Before she was happy to be in prison to rest
Criminal desistance not caused by one thing or one person
People representing organizations coming into jail
Used meetings as way to get out and meet other inmates
Organizations planting seeds
Seeds planted subconsciously
Exposure to outreach programs
Cumulative effects/ Cumulative influence
Opening eyes in prison
Done with crime
Not scared
Spiritual awakening
Looking for a book
Only book she could find was the Bible/ Bible the only book available
Committed to reading the Bible
Hard to read the Bible at first
Commitment to change
Focus on New Testament
New Testament
Reading the Bible contributed to change
Making changes inside while surrounded by drug addicts
Changes in her mind and heart
Woke up
Realized that some people are never going home
Wanted to make a home
Done with jail/prison life
Criminal desistance
Tired of criminal lifestyle/ Getting tired of criminal lifestyle
Criminal was the result of multiple factors
Everything came together
Seeds

SELF-REFLECTION

Blamed mother for problems
Anger towards mother
Unaware of anger
Wild
Used meth
Used crank
Alcohol
Meth and alcohol good combination
Substance-induced rollercoaster ride
Using
Getting high

Drinking
Daily substance use for years
Self-blaming
Strong-minded
Strong-willed
Contradicting self
Self-awareness
Emerging self-awareness
Tough reputation
Rough crowd
Intimidated others
Unpredictable
Outburst
Behavior altered by drugs and alcohol
Questions
Self-reflection
Thinking about what she wanted
She was well-respected and hated
High confidence/ Confident personality
High self-esteem
Drove nice cars
Pregnant
Living with mother
Mother's house raided
Found drugs in car
Not her drugs
CPS involved
Resistant to being told what to do
Promising to stay sober
Getting kids back
Second chance
Outpatient program
Complying with CPS
Kids have always been with family or her
People are born into their life
She was born into criminally active family
Family not bad people
Family of survivors
People born into privilege
Born into lifestyle
Can't change what you are born into
Allowed myself to believe cognitive distortions
Class differences exist
Future is not predetermined
Rock bottom
Seeing others under the influence is not a trigger
Book smart
Experienced the criminal life
Adapt to any situation
Not scared
Not anxious

Not intimidated by people
Blend in anywhere
Not intimidated
Fit in anywhere
Meeting people from past
Praying that God would change me
Praying to get kids back
Praying to be a good mom
Praying to stop going to jail and prison
Praying that I would stop leaving my kids with family
Continuing to read the Bible
Changing on the inside
Surrounded by criminals and changing on the inside
Sobriety led to self-reflection
Getting high with friends
Friend got clean
Residential program for women
Drug use with friends
Sober friend
Rehabilitation program/ Rehab program
Out of prison
Program
Spiritual-based program
Rehab
Corrupt rehab
Left corrupt rehab
Left program
Parole unforgiving
Father of kids high
Drug use creates dysfunctional family
Kids with grandma
Grandma clean
Drug addicts
Testing rehabilitation program
Allowed her kids in rehab/ Kids with her in rehab program
Dad gave permission for kids in program
Surprised by cooperation
Challenging
Kids used to doing what they want
Kids have rules in the program
Kids got along with other parolees
Kids antisocial behavior
Kids used to freedom
Kids resistant to living in program with drug addict mom
Strict program
Required to follow program rules
Therapeutic community
Behavior modification
Problematic lifestyle
Lifestyle change
Never forget where she came from

Mother in jail/prison
Son hated her
Thought son would get over hatred
Son mad at her
Son involved with gangs
Criminally active son
Son got arrested
Took bus to see son
Therapy
Feedback in therapy
Family therapy
Role reversal in family therapy/ Role reversal with kids/ Role playing
Mirroring
Falling into place
Adaptable
Intense surroundings
Disconnecting is adaptive in intense situations
Age
Snapped into criminal desistance
Senior in the rehab program
Leaving program
Subsidized housing
Housing
Housing in bad neighborhood
Living in neighborhood where she formerly sold drugs
Son angry at her
Son hurt by her
Son in juvenile hall
Staying prosocial in antisocial environment
Teenage sons out of control
Her change does not correlate with sons wanting to change
Visited son in juvenile hall twice weekly
Son had to live with her when he left juvenile hall
Son had ankle monitor
Son didn't love her
Took a long time to rebuild relationship with son
Her son can disconnect from his feelings without guilt like her
Son can disconnect
Son is adaptable
No conscience
Son is a savage
Kids' behavior got her evicted
Moving
Mom
Foreclosure
Household
Got close with son
Son in prison
Son remembered that she took two buses each way to see him
Didn't judge son
Son selling drugs

Son knows she sold drugs
No disrespect from kids in her house
Kids will not engage in crime in her house
Don't want to hear about son's criminal activity
Looking back at life
Can't say what specifically caused change
Can't identify exactly what causes criminal desistance
Hard to explain what causes criminal desistance
Criminal desistance was not caused by one certain thing
Hard to pinpoint cause
Criminal desistance was not motivated by fear
Having pull and influence
Mother died
Mom never saw her crime-free
Mom getting money to bail her out
Mother makes bail money
Released from jail
Reunited with mother
Mother criminally active
Mother had heart attack
Mother passed
Readapt
Adapt to different situations
Change
Working on solutions
Dually diagnosed
Anger with taxes
Not being at poverty level
No concept of time
Landmarks in life
Time
Revolving door
No landmarks in life
Holes
Can't mark time with revolving door of recidivism
Putting time together
In and out of custody constantly
Don't know total years spent incarcerated

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH

Changing perspective
Desire for learning
Learning
Aware of anger came from therapy
Mistook anger for normal rebellion
See things differently now
Accountability
Substance use compromising judgment
Embarrassed by what she said in the past
Recovery
Past shapes the person you are today

Self-realization/ Realization
For the first time didn't get high/drunk while incarcerated
Changes happening internally
Lifestyle biggest addiction
Respect
Doesn't have it all figured out
Changing idea of what's OK behavior
Putting things together in therapy
Connecting the dots/ Connecting dots in therapy
Started to become aware of anger towards mother in therapy
Everything is connected
Connecting on different levels
Started to understand how relationships are connected
Learned about mom and dad in therapy
Learned about family dynamics in therapy
Understanding past
Therapy eye-opening
Eye-opening
Making connections in therapy
Therapy helped stop substance use
Quit smoking cigarettes
Quit smoking cigarettes motivates her stay sober from all substances
No smoking, drinking, using drugs in 8 years
Haven't relapsed
Have not smoked or committed crime since deciding to quit
Self-efficacy
Attributes her success to herself
Personal agency
Got everything she could from rehab program
Used to program to disconnect from criminal lifestyle
Planning prosocial lifestyle in program
She knows now that selling drugs is wrong
She knows selling drugs is wrong because she did it
When you know better you do better
Understanding herself
Bible changed her life
Change process
Importance of therapy to criminal desistance
Therapy facilitates forgiving yourself
Therapy for cleaning up inside
Therapy facilitates acceptance
Therapy facilitates understanding
Criminals have to live with what they've done
Others may never forgive you
Not parenting out of guilt, effect of crime on parenting
Anger at self
Can't make guilt, hurt, pain, shame a part of you
Can't take action out of guilt, hurt, pain, shame
Sick stuff inside
Used ability to disassociate to disassociate from old way of thinking and feeling

Come so far
Know better now

FEELING CONNECTED TO PROSOCIAL OBJECTS

Kids
Son
Four sons/ Four children
Relationship with son
Close to son/ Close to son now
Bond/close connection with son
Bond with son because they've both been incarcerated
Bond with son because they are so alike
Youngest son
Independent sons
Youngest son less exposure to criminal life
Prosocial youngest son
Connection(s)/ Connecting
Relating on every level
Realization that others can help
Outreach
Visitors
Aunt
People encouraging inmates to do better
People encouraging me to do better
Reaching to people
Spiritual connection
Spiritual connection reassuring
Establish connection with others/ Having connections and relationships/ Establish relationships with people
Importance of relationships
Influence of relationships
Reconnecting with people from past
Committed to being a family
Different relationship
People come to her for prosocial help
Grandson
Son married
Life as a grandmother
Not traditional grandmother
Now she's the grandmother
Loves grandchildren
People from past
Full circle
Make a connection
Believe in something
Connections
Relationships
Having connections
Family

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Protected the underdog
Criminal past enables her to help reentering women
Criminal past enables her to help the homeless and mentally ill
Helping others detox
Helping others get into programs
Disclosing/ Disclosing her past to help
Nonjudgmental therapist
Non-critical therapist
Reentry program
Being approached to mentor women in criminal system
Mentoring others in the criminal system
Break the cycle
Get kids
Live prosocially
Figuring out prosocial living along the way
Sobriety led to planning
Sobriety led to problem-solving
Writing to drug programs
Trying to get into program
Get my life together
Helping people like herself
Showing others how to change/ Showing people other ways/ Showing people different ways to Live
Helping people from past
Importance of education
Education/ School
Student loan
Prosocial employment
Started a program to help women coming out of jail/prison navigate through school
Got her program funded
Got somebody to include her program in a grant
Presented program idea to Director of Women's Prisons
Offering services for reentering women
College campus intimidating for reentering women
Her program guides reentering women through entire matriculation process
The program she started is still running
Active in political movements
Helping families
Helping women
Helping children
DUI school
Making amends
Resolving problems
Apologizing
Giving back
Giving back as a way of apologizing/making things right
Helping the helpless
Helping those that everyone else has given up on
Planting seeds of change
Helping people change little by little

Pointing out what isn't working
Sharing her own life story
Providing support
Convincing others to change
Case manager/ Case management
Help the most unfortunate
Never came close to reoffending
Helping kids
Keeping herself in line
Being available when kids need her
Commit to decisions
Doing better
Take action towards goals
Follow up desire to change with action
Job
Worked in a mental health shelter
Developed passion for working in mental health
Mental health rehab worker
Homeless outpatient center worker
Went back to school
AOD certification
Addiction Specialist
Program coordinator for homeless center
Working with homeless
Helping to connect the homeless with services
Homeless prevention
Rapid re-housing
Integrated services
Working with people with disabilities, mental health issues, substance abuse issues, etc.
Housing first
Harm reduction
Abstinence
Also working at residential drug and alcohol treatment facility for women
Wearing several hats
Helping profession work history
Work history
Outreach
Connecting people to services
Having 2 jobs

INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

Prison
Gave birth in prison
Participated in mother-infant program in custody
Mother-infant program
Incarcerated
Incarcerated with mother
Mother's incarceration
Mother had clout in prison
Pregnant in prison
Delay in infant's arrival in the program

Separated from son after delivery
Stressed by separation from infant
Unsure when infant would arrive in the program
Missing son
Friends on parole
Friend has son
Son in drug raid
Reunited with son
Partying in Mother-infant program
Drinking in Mother-infant program
Breaking rules in prison
Using drugs in prison
Arrested
Bail
Escaped parolee
Worried about son
Multiple incarcerations
Correctional officer (CO)
Asks CO for help with son
CO cared for her son
CO helps care for son
Frequent flyer
Son with CO
CO
Released from prison/ jail
Hard for CO to return her son
Kids with family
Started to be in custody more than in the community
More comfortable in jail
Violations
Maximum number of violations
Discharged from parole
Often incarcerated for violations not new cases
Parole
Parole violation
Morrissey board
Offering deal
Accepting deal
Incarceration system
Flaws in the prison system
Prison a life saver
Prison as a resting place
Incarceration experiences increase adaptability
Incarceration increased flexibility
Realization in prison
Always have friends in prison
Girlfriend sent me tobacco in prison
Sold tobacco instead of drugs in prison
Cigarettes expensive in prison
Smoking tobacco in prison
Not supposed to smoke in prison

Profiting from cigarette sales
Reading the Bible
People praying together
Thought people going to church in custody were hypocritical
Tough exterior in jail/ prison/ custody
Started breaking away from old friends
Started praying in custody
Have to be tough to survive in custody
Main yard
Selling tobacco
Ending relationship with girlfriend in custody
Homosexuality not right
Trying to change life
Trying to please God
Surrounded by criminals
Surrounded by drugs
Using in prison
Smoking in prison
Still hustling while reading the Bible/ Reading the Bible and continuing to hustle
Working in the kitchen
Hustling
Selling meat and cheese
Selling sugar and fruit for pruno
Continuing to make money illegally in custody
Reading Bible and still selling tobacco
Drug of choice in prison was heroin
Parole inflexible
Never going back to prison
Son incarcerated
Son breaking rules in prison
Reentry meeting
Prison expectations
Prison is predictable

OBSTACLES

Relapse
Others anticipating failure
Challenges of prosocial living/ Prosocial living not easy
Financial hardship
Difficult as a former car thief to take public transportation
Welfare
Bills
Criminals feel unworthy
Raised in antisocial environment
Not sure how to live prosocially
No sober friends
No sober family members or relatives
No sober friends of friends
Didn't know how to make change a reality
Can't be expected to know how to change
Only as sick as what we keep inside

Don't dwell on feeling guilty and upset about past
Feeling upset, mad, guilty about past will hold you back
Stuck in the problem
Institutionalized
Not comfortable in community at first
Feeling anxious in the community at first
Need to be in controlled environment
Always used to plan to go back to prison
Always used to know she'd be back in prison
Recidivism

MOTIVATION TO REMAIN CRIME-FREE

No backwards steps
Motto
Mantra
Guiding principle
Fear of getting arrested
Extrinsic motivation
Bible
Blind faith
God
Conversations with God/ Conversing with God
Son refused to talk to her
Never there for son
Hard for son
Hurt kids/ Hurt family
Put son through trauma
Damage son
Refuse to fail
Not going to die in prison
Criminal lifestyle no longer working
Breaking the cycle
Never regressing
Never going to compromise position
Done with jail/prison because she said so
Mom never gave up on her
Strong beliefs
Unwilling to resume criminal lifestyle
Kids are motivation
Being a role model/ Role model for sons
Clean slate
Positive reinforcement
Pointing out cognitive distortions
Motivational Interviewing
Mother as motivating factor/ Mother as motivation
Mother always believed in her
Mother always thought she could not better
Mother never gave up on her
Hope to see son living prosocially before she dies
Responsible for being family glue
Filling mother's shoes

Forgiveness

Difficult to maintain both antisocial and prosocial lifestyles simultaneously

Last time she left prison she knew she'd never be back

Every other time she knew she'd be back in prison

Not going back

Time spent incarcerated

Sell different ways of living to criminals in small doses

Expose you to different possibilities for life

Never give up until death or life sentence

Life is easier

The past was a fight

The good life

Not tired all the time anymore

Not fighting the wrong fight anymore

Things are definitely easier now

Not always easy to do the right thing

Much easier to do the right thing than to always do the wrong thing and try to make it right

PROSOCIAL IMPULSES

Good intentions

Remorse

What can I do to help

Mind racing about ways to help when others are in need

Don't give up

Miracles

Prosocial leader

Leader in both old and new life

Leadership

Background doesn't matter

Desire to grow

Continuing to grow

Best of her ability

Drive

Planning for prosocial future/ Planning for prosocial life

Planning for a different future

New life

Seeing a need and finding a solution

Wanting to help

Helping

Doing things the right way

Doing the right thing and things work out

Change idea of what's right and wrong

Always did what she felt was right

Resolving outstanding issues

Prosocially resolving lingering issues from past

Rewarding

She will never give up on her kids/ Never give up on her son

Desire to change

Sense of right and wrong/ Know right from wrong

Your life can be meaningful

Belief in the self
Nonjudgment
Atonement
Redemption
Encouragement
Deciding to want better
Don't have to know how to change
Let others help you
Wanting to stop
Wanting better
Make decisions for yourself
Want it first
No one else can make you want to change
Can't forgive yourself if you are mad, guilty, or hurt
Self-reconciliation
Forgive yourself/ Forgiving yourself is essential
Self-forgiveness/ Forgiving self
Cleaning the inside
Understanding
Connect to prosocial thinking and feeling
Prosocial outlook
Open to different perspective
Can't change past
Accepting the past
Be best you can be in present
Promote positive change in your life
Optimistic
Dumping
Catharsis
Emotional purging
Safety
Humor
Grateful/ Gratitude
Thankful
Won't hate you for criminal behavior
Won't judge you for criminal behavior

Participant #5
Axial Coding

EARLY LIFE

Time era/ era
Generation
Segregation
Civil rights
Small community
Living in Southern U.S.
Groups for protection
Groups for aggression
Confused by prejudice
Neutral territory

Normative violence
Trying to educate self
Isolation
Trying to separate self from violence
Growing up
Limited access to education
Work in factory
Routine
Party
Drug use normative
Skill and reward
Camaraderie
Timeline
Stories
Routine
Normalcy
Desired more
Experience from childhood
Society

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Selling drugs
Drugs
Money
Money facilitating independence
Luxury purchases
Material items
Saving
Travel
Work
Sales
Not getting caught
Didn't get caught for many crimes committed
Driving while intoxicated
Denial of violence
Domestic abuse/ Domestic violence
Domestic violence conviction
Trouble
Felony
Proof
Evidence
No chance
Plea
Crime
Violence
Proof
Experience
Misdemeanor
Deal
Speed Limitations
Conviction

Battery
Acting out

ANTISOCIAL THINKING

Rationalization/ Rationalizing
Rationalizing by claiming to support antisocial friends
Selling drugs to create opportunities
Selling drugs as a source of income
Crime lucrative
Selling drugs facilitating upward mobility
Selling drugs as an escape
Attitude
Arrogance
Entitlement
Ego
Secrecy
Masking
Jealousy
Argue
Profiting from wife's infidelity
Wife's infidelity become a business transaction
Ambition
Using drugs to numb emotions
Anger
Impulsivity
Lie to save face
Drug transactions and benefits/networking
Using someone
Hustle
Don't care
Understood crimes
Acted deliberately
Grandiosity
Vanity
Dishonesty
Dishonesty in others
Intrude
Placing blame on others
Acknowledgment of no consequences for violent crimes
Lack of compassion
Lack of understanding
Accusations
Insecurity
Selfishness
Lack of caring
Negative communication styles
Avoidance
Vanishing
Anticipating confrontation
Call me out
Not thinking things through

Not thinking about consequences
Taking advantage of others
Minimizing
Self-importance
Others make you feel stupid for caring for people
People tease you when you care for others
Social pressure to be antisocial
Superiority
Denial
Set himself apart
Rejecting parts of himself
Egocentrism in relationships

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Understanding of committed crimes
Self-help book
Book
Self-esteem
Saw his future
Jolted by seeing future
Life slipping away
Epiphany
Opening eyes
Looking at death in the face
Tired of criminal lifestyle
Seeing other options

SELF-REFLECTION

Soul searching
Self-reflection
Deep self-reflection
Psychological
Geographical
Social status
Marriage
Abstained from drugs
Stopped selling drugs
Moved
Abandoned
Transitions
Living life on his own terms
Comfortable
Legal rights
Birthday
San Francisco
Moderation of drugs
Salary
Achievement
Honor
Work obligations
Pay increase

Work tasks/ Email work tasks
Scheduling
Payment
Wife's infidelity
Betrayed by friend
Confusion
Drug-laden decisions
You are still responsible for your decisions under the influence
Shunned wife
Disrespected by wife
Wife's wrongdoing
Sadness
Supporting
Entitled to what he paid for
Slave
Lack of appreciation
Empty marriage
Loss of connection
Wife not committed
Shelter
Leaving
Decisions
Betrayal
Have each other
Worthless
Hurt
Hypervigilance
Chasing
Falling
Bodily pain
ER
Downward spiral
Exiled
Court orders
Obligations
Scared
Time
Image
Divorce
Alone
Distance
Location
Knowing the law
Compliance
Range of salary
Duration
Terrorism
Place
Just happened
Graduation
Failure to meet obligations

Reality
Agreement
Coming out
Womanizer/ Womanizing
Women
Notice women
Relationships with women
Benevolent sexism
Encourages his girlfriend to have her own identity
Belief that having no identity causes immaturity and childishness
Suspiciousness in relationships
Hierarchy
Lack of development of self
Force
Laws
Legal advice
Previous legal acts in history
Need to show knowledge
Patriot Act
History
Externalism
Standards
Self-fulfillment
Methodical
Came to understanding
Trying to validate
Living independently together
Resistant to giving antisocial help
Wife helped him to stay calm
Angered by ignorance
Satisfying customers
Business
Good business practice
Recycling
Habit
Only habit is tobacco
Tobacco
Recycling to support self
Retired
SSI
Disability
Pain
Drug use for pain
Substance dependence
Denied that he was ever substance dependent
Never used substances to enable behavior
Used substances to numb
Reflecting on past
Perception
Used drugs to discourage not encourage behavior
Resistant to 12-step

Resistant to brainwash
Not powerless
Don't believe in relapse
Surrendered
Fallacies
Reading the Bible
Scripture
Independence
Introspection
Introspection is essential
Don't try to intimidate me
Tolerant of others disrespect
Capable of defending himself
Poor relationship with son
Respectful of son
Son focused on his own life

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH

Learning
Broadening perspective
Looking outside
Consequence(s)
Change
Relinquish of blame
Insight
Unaware
Couldn't foresee
Control anger and emotions
Anger management
Emotional regulation
Less affected by judgments of others
Observing ego
Decrease in egocentrism
Leave relationship when he sees signs of negative communication
Multiple reasons for change
Self-talk
Internal monolog
Don't want to be disrespectful
Walking away from antisocial behavior
Stop breaking the law
Stop cheating people
Not exempt
Can't take criminal desistance for granted
Self-control
Emotional response
Not worth it
De-escalating
Awareness that he needs to think before acting
Thinking before acting led to decrease in antisocialism
Self-inventory
Responsible for his own choices now

Everyone makes his or her own choices
Choice
Making choices
Not influenced by others now
Self-efficacy
Agency
Can't control anything external
Commitment
Commitment to self
Being an individual
Thinking for yourself
Individuality
Don't be afraid to take chances
Make mistakes
Figure out what you want to do
Quit being a follower
Get past fear
Shift from follower to individual
No longer needing external validation
Think about consequences
Intolerant of violence
Strategic decision-making
Improved decision-making
Psychological maturity
Learned to listen to everybody
Listening is critical to criminal desistance

FEELING CONNECTED TO PROSOCIAL OBJECTS

Connection
Cohesiveness
Family
Friends
Community
Protection
Friendship
Being wanted
External influences shape us
Gift from god
Trying to connect
Trying to connect and show understanding
Prayer
Community at school
Feeling like a part of something at school
Feeling received with open arms
Feeling cared for
Courage from God
Empowerment through spirituality
God
God inside him/ God resides in him
Drawing strength from knowing that God is within him
Feeling loved

Feeling encouraged
Feeling supported by spirituality
Connecting with something positive
Son
Meaningful relationships
Others caring for him
Recognizing love from others
Susceptible to prosocial influence from women
Connecting with community
Connecting with something positive

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Hire
Work hard
Documentation
Worthwhile
High skill set
Entrepreneurship
Education
School
Knowledge
Higher education
Pre-law
Helping others
Not hurting others/ Not hurting anybody
Making ends meet
Taking care of basic needs
Taking care of himself
Reluctant to accept help/charity
Accepting help
Making sacrifices to stay crime-free
Looking for prosocial work
Permission
Sharing his experiences
Saving one person
Saving a civilization

INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

Jail
Punishment
Parole
Probation
Felons
Victim
Probation violation
1st time in prison
Brothers
Prison
Camp
Mountains
Maximum security

Violating rules
Environment
Hillbilly place
Labor
Humiliation by children
Released from prison and never went back
Convicted felon

OBSTACLES

Racial profiling
Isolation
Expenses
Requirements
Rules
Stuck
Label of felon
No connections/resources
Homeless
Dependence
Failure
Can't handle negative behaviors/ Can't contain negative behaviors
Helplessness
Hunger
Financial hardship
Get off the streets
Discontent
No support
No resources
Only criminal activity
Selling drugs best option for supporting himself
Racial limitations
Others' restrictions
Racism
Limitations today
Stupidity
Social injustice
Judgment/ Judgment of others
Other people's thoughts
Pariah
Lack of safety
Fear(s)
Propaganda
Drugs and socialize
Peer pressure
Punishment
Stereotypes
Others wanting antisocial help
Oppressed by felony conviction
Depression
People content with antisocial living
Provoked

Hate
Still feels antisocial impulse daily
Aggression
Afraid to make changes
Fear of disappointing others
Guilt
Supporting antisocial friends
Fear of being an individual
Criminal desistance is effort

MOTIVATION TO REMAIN CRIME-FREE

Fear of reincarceration
Fear of wasting more time in custody
Fear of third strike
Tired of incarceration
Too old for criminal lifestyle
Court not worth it
Future goals to be a judge
Make meaning out of rest of life
Aging
Continue down same path will lead to same result
Don't want to be old criminal
Don't want to be entitled
Antisocial behavior is stupid
Physical limitations
Can't do whatever I want
Refuse to go backwards
Carefree
Life is easier crime-free/ Life is less stressful crime-free
No one will knock on his door
No one will snitch on him
Motivation
Motivated by desire to be part of something prosocial
Motivated by desire to make decisions for himself
Motivated by choice to be with family
Want to be with family rather than antisocial associates

PROSOCIAL IMPULSES

Safety
Diligence
Politeness
Truth/ trust
Wish
Living
Forgiveness
Karma
Humor
Prosocial goals
High expectations for self
Stay focused
No control

Focus on controlling himself
Do not attempt to control others
No control outside of self
Other people have lives
Surrendering control
Acknowledgment that others can't be controlled
Respect
Gratitude
Appreciation
Understanding
Trying to understand
Understanding and supportive
Supportive
Acceptance
Being accepting
More open to experience
Open-minded/ More open-minded
Prosocial intention
Intention to go to school
Check yourself
Hope
Responsibility
Being genuine
Faith
Leap of faith
No conditional prayers
Doing the best he can
Living in the present
Belief system
Dependent on faith
Dependent on belief in himself
Inner voice
Tolerance
Curiosity
Empathy
Imaging the perspective of others
Reciprocity
Genuine
Thoughtfulness
Impulse to benefit community
Asking himself how he benefit can the community
Asking himself how he can help people
Asking himself how he can make a positive impact
Refuse to be ripple of negativity
Taking responsibility
Realizing that his actions affect everyone
Honesty
Need to share story
Helping