CHAPTER THREE

Explaining the Life Course of Crime

We need to take seriously the remarkable heterogeneity in criminal offending over the life span. Some offenders have short careers in violence, theft, and public order crimes; other offenders have very long careers. From a theoretical perspective, rather than thinking in simplistic, rigid offender/nonoffender categories, Matza (1964) offered the image of "drift" to capture the instability of offending over time. Along similar lines, Glaser (1969) suggests that it is more appropriate to view criminality as a "zig-zag path" consisting of a crime and noncrime cycle. In his research on ex-offenders, Glaser showed that men typically do not commit crime for long periods of time. Instead, they "follow a zig-zag path . . . going from noncrime to crime and to noncrime again. Sometimes this sequence is repeated many times, but sometimes they clearly go to crime only once; sometimes these shifts are for long duration or even permanent, and sometimes they are short lived" (1969, 58).

This view of criminal careers is a poor fit with the static person-based conceptualizations reviewed in Chapter 2. At the same time, the zigzag image of offending is consistent with more relational studies of personality (see Emirbayer 1997, 302–303). This line of research examines what a person does in particular situations rather than what broad traits a person possesses. By contrast, traditional criminology measures delinquency in an invariant manner in constant settings, inducing more stability than is likely to be found in the everyday lives of

its subjects. The point we wish to stress is that criminality is a dynamic concept, especially when viewed over long periods of time. From this starting point, persistent offending and desistance from crime are inextricably tied together—theoretically, methodologically, and analytically.

Although at first it may seem counterintuitive, our fundamental beginning argument is that persistence and desistance can be meaningfully understood within the same theoretical framework. In its strong form, our argument is that persistence in crime is explained by a lack of social controls, few structured routine activities, and purposeful human agency. Simultaneously, desistance from crime is explained by a confluence of social controls, structured routine activities, and purposeful human agency. In this version of our argument the fundamental causes of offending are thus the same for all persons, although for some there may be a single pathway to crime or desistance, whereas for others there are multiple pathways. Regardless of the number of pathways, then, it is possible that the same causal mechanisms account for trajectories (pathways) of criminal behavior over the life course. This framework is similar to the stance we have taken in our prior work regarding crime-specific analyses (see Sampson and Laub 1993). In the current argument, the specific manifestations of violence may be different than the specific manifestations of property crime, but both are explained by the same general processes, namely, informal social control, routine activities, and human agency. The dynamics of persistence in crime may be different from the dynamics of desistance from crime, but the same general processes of social control, routine activities, and human agency explain both. We approached the follow-up study for this book with these general premises in mind, while allowing for a revision of our thinking along the way in light of discoveries in the data.

A Theory of Persistent Offending and Desistance from Crime

We seek a theory of social control that will identify sources of persistence in and desistance from crime. What sustains persistent offending? What keeps some offenders from moving to more conventional pathways? In a similar vein, how do offenders go straight? How do offenders shift from crime and deviance to more conventional pathways? How do ex-offenders maintain conformity to the law? The cen-

tral question we seek to answer is: what are the mechanisms underlying the processes of persistent offending and desistance from crime?

One of our theoretical goals is to expand the understanding of informal and formal social control across the life course. In the follow-up, we focused our attention on work, family, the military, community organizations, and neighborhood hangouts (for example, taverns) as well as on formal social control institutions like the police, prison, and parole. Thus we propose to examine a wide array of institutions that we believe influence both formal and informal social control. At the same time, we explicitly recognize that these institutions are embedded in a specific local culture (place) as well as a specific historical context (time).

Consider next the topic of delinquent peer influences (see Warr 2002). Our life-history data suggest that delinquent peers are important not only in the development of antisocial behavior in adolescence but in sustaining offending over the life course. Perhaps people who persist in offending over the life course are in a state of "arrested development" as they age. Consistent with that notion, Glaser (1969, 325–326) notes that association with deviant peers is especially appealing to people who are unsuccessful in securing satisfying and meaningful relationships in other domains such as family and work. This does not mean that social learning explanations are necessarily correct; rather, peer relations are important in structuring routine activities and opportunities for crime over the life course.

We also believe that human agency (or personal choice) and situational context, especially routine activities, are vitally important for understanding patterns of stability and change in criminal behavior over the life course. Individuals make choices and are active participants in the construction of their lives. For example, as revealed in more detail in Chapter 7, calculated and articulated resistance to authority is a recurrent theme in the lives of persistent offenders. At times crime is attractive because it is exciting and seductive (see Katz 1988). In crucial ways, then, crime is more than a weakening of social bonds—human agency must be recognized as an important element of understanding crime and deviance over the life course.

Situational contingencies and routine activities may also lure individuals toward or away from crime, and these contingencies and activities need to be systematically incorporated into our understanding of criminal trajectories over the life course. For example, we found

persistent offenders to have rather chaotic and unstructured lives across multiple dimensions (such as living arrangements, work, and family). Routine activities for these men were loaded with opportunities for crime and extensive associations with like-minded offenders. Thus situational variation, especially in lifestyle activities, needs to be taken into account when explaining continuity and change in criminal behavior over the life course.

Aging is another significant feature in understanding the life course of crime. There are "natural sanctions" associated with criminal offending—early mortality, for example. Moreover, there are health costs associated with crime and deviance. It is also apparent that both formal and informal social controls become more salient with age. That is, the influence of social bonds interacts with age and life experiences. As seen in work by Shover (1996) and by Graham and Bowling (1995) in Great Britain, we find in our life-history narratives that, for some offenders, there has to be an "accumulation of losses" before one becomes sensitive to the inhibiting power of informal social controls. Likewise, it seems to be the case in our life-history data that fear of doing more time in prison becomes more acute with age (see also Shover 1996).

Our conception of crime builds on our previous work (Sampson and Laub 1993), wherein we posited an age-graded theory of informal social control. In *Crime in the Making,* we concluded that marriage, work, and military service represent "turning points" in the life course and are crucial for understanding the processes of change in criminal activity. Abbott contends that "turning points are narrative concepts, referring to two points in time at once" (1997, 85). He notes that "what makes a turning point a turning point rather than a minor ripple is the passage of sufficient time 'on a new course' such that it becomes clear that direction has indeed been changed" (1997, 89). Turning points are often retrospective constructions, but Abbott claims they do not have to be. Abbott identifies several types of turning points—focal, randomizing, and contingent (1997, 94)—but all turning points are "consequential shifts that redirect a process" (1997, 101). In a similar vein, Denzin emphasizes "epiphanies," defined as a "moment of problematic experience that illuminates personal character, and often signifies a turning point in a person's life" (1989, 141). Like Abbott, Denzin identifies several types of epiphanies—major, cumulative, illuminative, and relived (see Denzin 1989,

129–131). Turning points and epiphanies are more likely to be implicated in the desistance process than in the persistence process.

Although a wide range of experiences have been associated with the notion of a turning point (for example, residential moves, marriage, and military experience), Rutter (1996) warns that turning points should not be equated with major life experiences or expectable transitions (see also Maughan and Rutter 1998; Clausen 1998). First, some transitions lead to no change in a life trajectory. Second, some transitions merely accentuate preexisting characteristics rather than promoting change. Despite these difficulties, Rutter concludes that "there is convincing evidence" of turning-point effects, defined as change involving "a lasting shift in direction of life trajectory" (1996, 621). Thus in our view, the turning-point idea reveals the interactive nature of human agency and life events such as marriage, work, and serving in the military. Nevertheless, more needs to be learned about the mechanisms underlying turning points in the life course.

It is noteworthy that Maruna argues that the value of the turning-point idea to understanding desistance has "probably been overstated" because "nothing inherent in a situation makes it [an event] a turning point" (2001, 42–43). For Maruna, a more promising strategy is to focus on individuals as agents of their own change. This view underscores desistance as a process, not an event (Laub and Sampson 2001), but our theory focuses on the potential of structural turning points and the subsequent within-individual change in behavior that results. From this perspective, desistance from crime can be initiated by a "disorienting episode" (Lofland 1969) or a "triggering event" (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998) seemingly independent of an individual's cognitive restructuring.[1]

To be sure, turning points take place in a larger structural and cultural context. Group processes and structural determinants (for example, race and ethnicity, social class, and neighborhood) need to be considered in the process of continuity and change in criminal behavior (see also Sullivan 1989). In other words, concepts such as crime, agency, choice, and informal social control need to be contextualized, because their meaning and significance varies by context.

In this chapter we therefore revisit the areas of marriage, employment, and military service, examined in our previous study (1993), as well as uncover some previously unexplored sources of turning points. Our goal is to further unpack the processes of persistence and desistance, or why some offenders stop offending and why other offenders continue offending throughout large portions of their life. Our approach illuminates why marriage, employment, the military, and other institutions have the potency to reshape life-course trajectories for those previously involved in crime. As will be developed in detail below, a major part of the answer is that involvement in these institutions reorders short-term situational inducements to crime and, over time, redirects long-term commitments to conformity (Briar and Piliavin 1965). We then examine the criminal justice system, especially prison, and ask whether this institution facilitates persistence or desistance in offending. After examining the institutional sources of informal and formal social control, we move to a discussion of human agency, situational influences, and local culture and historical contexts. These elements play a key role in our modified version of informal social control theory. We conclude the chapter by arguing that person-based life-history narratives are required to fully capture the processes of persistence in and desistance from crime.

Marriage and Family

Marriage, especially strong marital attachment, has been implicated as a predictor of desistance from crime among men (for a detailed review, see Laub and Sampson 2001).[2] This idea was illustrated most directly by a former delinquent who had been married for forty-nine years when we interviewed him at age 70: "If I hadn't met my wife at the time I did, I'd probably be dead. It just changed my whole life . . . that's my turning point right there." These kinds of declarations raise fundamental questions. What is it about marriage that fosters desistance from crime? And must changes be recognized by the men? There are several possibilities.

First, a change in criminal behavior may not necessarily result from marriage alone. Rather, change may occur in response to an enduring attachment that emerges from entering into a marriage. From this perspective, the growth of social bonds is like an investment process (Laub and Sampson 1993, 310–311; Nagin and Paternoster 1994, 586–588). As the investment in social bonds grows, the incentive for avoiding crime increases, because more is at stake. Our past position has been that social ties in marriage are important insofar as they create interdependent systems of obligation and restraint that impose

significant costs for translating criminal propensities into action. In this scheme, adults will be inhibited from committing crime to the extent that they accumulate social capital in their marital relationships.

Empirical support for the idea of marriage as an investment process comes from Laub, Nagin, and Sampson (1998), who showed that early marriages characterized by social cohesiveness led to a growing preventive effect. Consistent with the informal social control theory of Sampson and Laub (1993) and Nagin and Paternoster (1994), the data support the investment-quality character of good marriages. The effect of a good marriage takes time to appear, and it grows slowly, gradually inhibiting crime. These findings accord well with studies using contemporary data. For example, Horney, Osgood, and Marshall (1995) showed that large within-individual variations in criminal offending for a sample of high-rate convicted felons were systematically associated with local life circumstances (for example, employment and marriage). As the authors noted, some of the time, some high-rate offenders enter into circumstances, like marriage, that provide the potential for informal social control (see also Farrington and West 1995).

Marriage also influences desistance because it frequently leads to significant changes in everyday routines. It is well known that lifestyles and routine activities are a major source of variation in exposure to crime and victimization (Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978; Cohen and Felson 1979). Osgood and colleagues (1996) have shown that participation in unstructured socializing activities with peers increased the frequency of deviant behaviors among those aged 18 to 26. Marriage, however, has the potential to radically change routine activities, especially with regard to one's peer group. As Osgood and Lee (1993) have argued, marriage entails obligations that tend to reduce leisure activities outside of the family. It is reasonable to assume that married people will spend more time together than with their same-sex peers. We already noted that there is supporting empirical evidence that the transition to marriage is followed by a decline in time spent with friends and exposure to delinquent peers (Warr 1998, 183). Marriage, therefore, has the potential to cut off an ex-offender from his delinquent peer group (see also Graham and Bowling 1995). Shover (1996, 126) notes that "successful establishment of bonds with conventional others and participation in conventional activities are major contingencies on the path that leads to termination of a criminal career."

Marriage often means the introduction of new friends and family (in-laws), who can affect routine activities as well. These changes hold the promise of new opportunities for socialization and changed routines. Marriage can also lead to a residential change—moving from the old neighborhood to the suburbs or to a different state altogether—and this physical relocation changes one's routine. In addition, parenting responsibilities lead to changes in routine activities as more and more time is spent in family-centered activities rather than in unstructured time with peers.

Further, marriage may lead to desistance because of the direct social control exerted by spouses. This may be particularly true of marriages in the 1950s and 1960s, which we partially examined in our previous work (Sampson and Laub 1993). Along with providing a base of social support, wives in this era took primary control of the planning and management of the household and often acted as informal guardians of their husbands' activities. Implicit was an obligation to family by the male partner, especially concerning economic support. Married men thus felt responsible for more than just themselves. Spouses provided additional support by exercising direct supervision. Supporting evidence for this idea can be found in Umberson (1992). Umberson hypothesizes that marriage is beneficial to health because spouses monitor and attempt to control their spouse's behavior. She finds that women "nag" about health more than men and that men engage in more risky behaviors compared with women. Thus marriage has the capacity to generate both informal social control and emotionally sustaining features.

Finally, marriage can change one's sense of self. For some, getting married connotes getting "serious"; in other words, becoming an adult. Although it now may seem retrograde, the men we are studying came of age when getting married meant becoming a man and taking responsibility. Marriage also meant having someone to care for and having someone to take care of you. This view became even more evident once children entered the family.

A key unanswered question is whether there is something unique about marriage from the standpoint of desistance from crime. Or can the apparent crime suppression benefits of marriage extend to those

that are involved in cohabitation or other arrangements as well? This question is important for criminology in light of recent work by Waite (1995), who makes a strong case that marriage is indeed different and better for participants across several domains (see also Waite and Gallagher 2000).[3] Horney and her colleagues have shown that marriage is different than cohabitation with respect to crime suppression effects (Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995; Horney, Roberts, and Hassell 2000). That is, marriage reduces crime; cohabitation appears to increase criminal behavior.

Overall, we would agree with Waite and Gallagher, who have argued that "marriage actually changes people's goals and behavior in ways that are profoundly and powerfully life enhancing" (2000, 17). This is especially true with respect to those with damaged backgrounds and who have offended in the past. Waite and Gallagher add, "Marriage makes people better off in part because it constrains them from certain kinds of behavior, which, while perhaps immediately attractive (i.e., staying up all night drinking beer, or cheating on your partner) do not pay off in the long run" (2000, 24). Thus marriage, and the subsequent marital attachment, is an important source of desistance from crime. If marriage is absent, or characterized by weak or nonexistent attachment, continued offending will occur. From our perspective, the influence of marriage is nonetheless complex, operating through multiple mechanisms, not all of which necessitate cognitive transformation.

Is Marriage a Selection Effect?

Of course, some researchers have argued that marital bonds do not just happen but are created by individual choice, therefore rendering the marriage-crime relationship spurious (for example, Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1995). For theoretical and empirical reasons, we reject selection as a simple explanation of the marriage effect (see Sampson and Laub 1995 for details). For one thing, Laub, Nagin, and Sampson (1998) demonstrated that childhood and juvenile characteristics were insufficient for predicting patterns of future offending in a high-rate group of juvenile offenders. Individual differences presumed to influence the marriage process (for example, temperament, intelligence, aggressive behavior) were explicitly controlled. These findings imply that many of the classic predictors of the onset and frequency of delinquency do not explain desistance, much less explain away the marriage effect.

More generally, in an intriguing study, Johnson and Booth (1998) examine the question of whether stability in marital quality is due to the dyadic properties of the relationship or to personality or to social factors that individuals bring into the marriage. Using data from a national probability sample of persons married in 1980, these authors analyzed marital quality for those with two successive unions compared with data on marital quality over time for those with the same partner. The data suggest that stability in marital quality is due largely to the dyadic relationship environment. This finding suggests that while individuals bring personality and interactional styles to any relationship, these characteristics are malleable and can be altered by emergent qualities of the marriage itself. In other words, although one cannot deny selection effects, the resulting marital relationships can be quite powerful.

Selection into marriage also appears to be less systematic than many think. As we shall demonstrate, many men cannot even articulate why they got married or how they began relationships, which often just seemed to happen by chance. There is a long history of research on marriage that reveals strong effects for prosaic factors such as residential propinquity (Blau 1977). Selection is surely operating at some level, but most marriages originate in fortuitous contacts rooted in everyday routine activities. Frank Cullen has also pointed out that such fortuitous contacts almost always result in deviant men ending up with less deviant women. According to Cullen: (1) men are more criminal and deviant than women; (2) there are many more men than women with low self-control (in the parlance of Gottfredson and Hirschi); (3) therefore the composition of the marriage pool for women results in a short supply of high self-control men as marital partners, so a certain proportion of women must marry or otherwise associate with men who have less self-control than they do; (4) thus, from an ecological or routine activities perspective, women come into contact with men who have less self-control (Cullen, pers. comm., May 25, 1996).

We could perhaps put it more bluntly—given the crime differences between men and women, it is almost invariably the case that men marry "up" and women "down" when it comes to exposure to vio-

lence and crime. For this reason alone it is little wonder that marriage, to virtually any woman, could benefit men. We admit this position is crude and pessimistic regarding the character of men, but would defend it as empirically correct. Indeed feminists are justified, by this logic, in recoiling at arguments about "good marriage" effects. Good for whom, we must ask. Yet given the gendered nature of the Glueck sample along with the historical context, we cannot help but focus here on male outcomes. We look to other scholars to uncover the role of marriage, if any, in the offending careers of women (for example, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002).

Work

Like marital bonds, strong ties to work can lead to desistance from crime. In our previous analyses (Sampson and Laub 1993), we found that job stability was strongly related to desistance. In a similar vein, using qualitative data, Shover (1996) determined that acquiring a satisfying job was an important contingency in the lives of men who desisted from crime. It is therefore important to examine the mechanisms underlying the desistance process for work. We contend that the processes for work are similar to those for marriage.

First, in *Crime in the Making,* we argued that job stability, commitment to work, and mutual ties binding workers and employers increase informal social control and, all else equal, lead to a cessation in criminal behavior. As with spouses, here we emphasize the reciprocal nature of social capital invested by employers. For example, employers often take chances in hiring workers, hoping that their investment will pay off. This investment by the employer may trigger a return investment in social capital by the employee. The theoretical point is that interdependency is reciprocal and embedded in the social ties between individuals and social institutions. This conception may help explain how change in delinquent behavior is initiated, as when an employer takes a chance on a former delinquent, fostering a return investment in the job, which in turn inhibits the deviant behavior of the employee. This was the experience of one former delinquent, who said to the Gluecks' interviewer at his age 25 interview, "My employer . . . was good to me. He trusted me with the money, put his confidence in me, and I learned to respect such confidence and was loyal to him." Work provided the Glueck men clear benefits as well as responsibilities and obligations.

Second, even more than marriage, work, especially full-time work, leads to a meaningful change in routine activities. Work restricts many criminal opportunities and thus reduces the probability that criminal propensities will be translated into action. For example, men in stable employment situations are typically subject to more structured activities and have less free time than those not employed or employed intermittently. As William Julius Wilson argues, work is important as a "central experience of adult life" and is a "regulating" force in life (1996, 52). Like marriage, full-time legal employment gives structure to one's time and provides fewer opportunities for offending and other forms of deviance. Work is central to structured routines. The simple fact is that people who work are kept busy and are less likely to get into trouble.

Third, depending upon the nature of the work, employers, like wives, can provide direct social control. In other words, employers can keep their employees in line. For example, one former delinquent told us that his employer was "like a strict father. He went after me a few times. He also took me under his wing. We would have a few drinks together." This man was such a valued and dedicated employee that the company bought him the house he now lives in and provides him with a luxury car every two or three years for his good work.

Finally, work can give a man a sense of identity and meaning to his life. Paul Goodman (1956), for example, wrote about "man's work" as work that allows one to keep "one's honor and dignity." For Goodman, having a good job is one of the principal mechanisms enabling young men to be taken seriously, to be seen as useful, and, indeed, to grow up. Young men who fail to work may get stuck in a state of arrested development (see also Graham and Bowling 1995, 97). This was especially true during the 1950s and 1960s, when men were viewed as the sole household breadwinner and women's work outside of the home was perceived as "extra." Writing from a different disciplinary vantage point, Vaillant and Vaillant (1981, 1434) have argued that work can "reflect competence, social utility, and self-esteem" and is central to mental health.

As for marriage, a selection argument can be made on the spurious nature of the work-crime connection. It is likely that selection con-

tamination is even greater for employment, if for no other reason than that there are sorting mechanisms (for example, applications, interviews) for work that are not found in informal marriage markets. Perhaps the most convincing attempt to counteract selection bias comes from a recent analysis of data from a national work experiment that drew participants from poor ghetto areas in nine U.S. cities. Uggen (2000) found that overall, those given jobs showed no reduction in crime relative to those in a control group. Age, however, significantly interacted with employment to affect the timing of illegal earnings and arrest. Those aged 27 or older were more likely to desist when provided marginal employment. Among those younger, the experimental job treatment had no effect on desistance. This is an important finding, because the experimental nature of the data addresses the selectivity that has plagued much research in this area. By specifying event history models accounting for assignment to, eligibility for, and participation in the National Supported Work Demonstration Project, Uggen provides more refined estimates of the effects of work as a turning point in the lives of criminal offenders. Furthermore, we would maintain that although individual factors most certainly matter, employment relationships, like marriage, generate emergent properties that take on a life of their own and are not easily reducible to the character of the person. The whole idea of "vacancy chains" (White 1970) in the employment literature was to show that getting a job is an interdependent system not reducible to individual decisions. In any case, we treat selection and work as an empirical question to be resolved in analysis.

Military Service

In our previous work (Sampson and Laub 1996), we have argued that military service is a turning point in the transition to young adulthood (see also Elder 1986). Using quantitative data from the Gluecks' study, we found strong evidence that military service in the World War II era fostered long-term socioeconomic achievement among men raised in poverty areas of Boston during the Great Depression. Military service during World War II stands out as the defining moment for an entire generation, touching the lives of three in four American men and yielding one of the largest social interventions in U.S. history—the G.I. Bill of Rights. Our results revealed that overseas duty,

in-service schooling, and G.I. Bill training at ages 17 to 25 generally enhanced subsequent occupational status, job stability, and economic well-being, independent of childhood differences and socioeconomic background. The benefits of the G.I. Bill were also larger for veterans stigmatized with an officially delinquent past, especially those who served in the military earlier rather than later in life (see Sampson and Laub 1996 for more details).

Some evidence, though limited, suggests that the military presents a unique setting for men with a disadvantaged past in yet another arena—the stigma of prior criminal conviction. Mattick (1960) compared the recidivism rates of men paroled to the army with those of a group of civil parolees, and found that the rates among army parolees were much lower. An eight-year follow-up revealed lasting positive effects of the army experience: the recidivism rate for the army parolees was 10.5 percent, compared with the national average of 66.6 percent. Mattick, however, could not identify the aspects of the army experience that may have accounted for this difference.

Our age-graded conceptualization of the life course suggests that military service sets in motion a chain of events (or experiences) in individuals' lives that progressively shape future outcomes. What is it about the military that facilitated change in behavior, especially for those who were involved in crime prior to entering?

First, military service exemplifies change by removing disadvantaged youths from prior adverse influences (for example, bad neighborhoods, delinquent peers) and social stigma (for example, criminal record). As Elder (1986, 244) argued, war and serving in the military can profoundly affect a person's development by introducing a major source of discontinuity in the life course. Caspi and Moffitt (1993, 247) also point out that the military is a strong situational transition because it includes institutional discouragement of previous responses and provides clear direction and novel opportunities for behavioral adaptation. Beginning with basic training, the military provides a basic education and socialization designed to reorient newcomers to a world with different rules and structures. Past accomplishments and past deficits alike have diminished influence. Thus a prominent feature of serving in the military is the "knifing off" of past experience and its potential for reorganizing social roles and life opportunities (see Brotz and Wilson 1946; Janowitz 1972). One former delinquent told us, "The military cured me. It took a young hoodlum off the

street. My neighborhood in East Boston was a jumping-off place for jail."

Second, the military provided opportunities such as in-service training and subsequent training or education under the G.I. Bill. In this way military service may offer additional structural benefits that in turn enhance later attachment to work and marriage, which may in turn encourage desistance. As evident in the life-history narratives described in Chapter 6, the military provided a bridging environment for disadvantaged men, especially those with a delinquent past (Browning, Lopreato, and Poston 1973; Cutright 1974, 318).

In short, similar to marriage and work, but more by conscious design, the military changes routine activities, provides direct supervision and social support, and allows for the possibility of identity change. In addition, the military setting provides qualities often missing from the homes of disadvantaged men, such as firm discipline, cooperative relations or teamwork, strong leadership, social responsibility, and competent male models for emulation (Elder 1986, 236–238). The military also entails new options and experiences, especially travel to diverse places and corresponding exposure to all sorts of people and situations—varied backgrounds, talents, interests, goals, and even new conceptions of meaning (Elder 1986, 238–240; see also Elder and Hareven 1993, 53).[4] For some, the military even provided basic necessities—food, shelter, and clothes, for example. One man we talked to said, "I liked the uniform. It seems like it's [the military] altogether different from my childhood. From what I went through." For some, the attraction of the military was so great that they went to great lengths to enter. One former delinquent wanted to join the Marines to get away from his father, and he was so desperate to do so that he signed up under another name.

Of course, serving in the military has its downside as well. Some men were seriously injured in the military, affecting their lives dramatically. According to Elder (1986), veterans least likely to benefit from the military experience were those who served in combat, who were wounded or taken captive, or who observed killing by others. War-induced trauma can undermine the stability of marriage or can result in avoiding marriage altogether. Using data from the Terman study, Pavalko and Elder (1990) examined the effects of mass mobilization in World War II and found that veterans were more likely to divorce than nonveterans. Similarly, Laufer and Gallops (1985) suggest that

trauma resulting from combat heightens the risk of marital instability. The tragic consequences of military service cannot be ignored, nor can the wider historical context of war be neglected. The Vietnam War unleashed a dimension of military service and strife unknown to our men. Consistent with the life-course perspective, we are thus careful to situate claims about the military in their historical context.

Justice System Involvement

Do criminal justice sanctions, especially incarceration, foster recidivism or help lead to the termination of offending? This question has had a long and protracted history in criminal justice research, but is becoming ever more relevant given the recent incarceration increases in the United States. Central to life-course research is how early events like juvenile incarceration influence later outcomes. Conventional wisdom suggests that involvement in the juvenile justice system, especially incarceration, can have consequences that reverberate over the life course.

In our research program analyzing the Gluecks' data, we examined the role of both criminal behavior and reactions to it by the criminal justice system, finding that delinquent behavior has a systematic attenuating effect on the social and institutional bonds linking adults to society (for example, labor force attachment, marital cohesion). More specifically, we found that social bonds to employment were directly influenced by criminal sanctions—incarceration as a juvenile and as a young adult had a negative effect on later job stability, which in turn was negatively related to continued involvement in crime over the life course (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 1995).[5] From this finding as well as other suggestive evidence (see Freeman 1991; Nagin and Waldfogel 1995), we explored the idea of "cumulative continuity," which posits that delinquency incrementally mortgages the future by generating negative consequences for the life chances of stigmatized and institutionalized youth (see Sampson and Laub 1997). For example, arrest and incarceration may spark failure in school, unemployment, and weak community bonds, in turn increasing adult crime. Western and Beckett's recent study (1999, 1048) shows that the negative effects of youth incarceration on adult employment time exceed the large negative effects for dropping out of high school and living in an area with high unemployment. Serious

delinquency can thus cut off future opportunities such that participants have fewer options for a conventional life.

By design, all of the delinquent subjects in the Gluecks' *Unraveling* study were incarcerated in either the Lyman School for Boys in Westboro or the Industrial School for Boys at Shirley. The Lyman School was the first state reform school in the United States. George Briggs, the governor of Massachusetts, stated in 1846 at the opening:

> Of the many and valuable institutions sustained in whole, or in part, from the public treasury, we may safely say, that none is of more importance, or holds a more intimate connection with the future prosperity and moral integrity of the community, than one which promises to take neglected, wayward, wandering, idle and vicious boys, with perverse minds and corrupted hearts, and cleanse and purify and reform them, and thus send them forth in the erectness of manhood and in beauty of virtue, educated and prepared to be industrious, useful and virtuous citizens. (quoted in Miller 1991, 69)

Work by Miller (1991), McCord and McCord (1953), Ohlin, Coates, and Miller (1974) and an autobiography by a former Lyman inmate, Devlin (1985), however, make clear that the reality of the Lyman School was quite different from the lofty hopes expressed by Governor Briggs.

During the 1940s and 1950s (the time period of the Gluecks' study), the Lyman School was a large custodial institution containing 250 to 350 boys, primarily 13- to 15-year-olds. The institution was organized as a cottage system that was age-segregated with house parents. The institutional structure was extremely regimented. For instance, inmates marched from their rooms to meals, and each day activities were segmented and marked by a series of bells and whistles. Credits were earned for privileges like cigarettes and ultimately parole. If an inmate misbehaved, a master could subtract any amount of credit from the boy's total. Physical punishment and verbal humiliations were common. For instance, boys were kicked for minor infractions like talking. Other physical punishments included hitting inmates with wooden paddles or straps on the soles of their bare feet. Cold showers were also used as a form of punishment and intimidation by the masters (see Miller 1991, 96).

Most distressing were the unusual and cruel punishments imposed by the staff. For example, boys were forced to sit at their lockers for hours. Haircuts were also used as a form of punishment and punitive

discipline. Jerome Miller, the former director of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, writes of staff reporting the need to "hit the little bastards for distance" (Miller 1991, 94). Miller goes on to describe "programs" that included "kneeling in a line in silence, scrubbing the floors with toothbrushes, or being made to stand or sit in odd, peculiarly painful positions" (1991, 94). Along with these demeaning rituals, there were examples of sadistic discipline (such as having to drink from toilets or kneel for hours on the stone floor with a pencil under one's knees) (Miller 1991, 95).

Our analyses in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 aim to uncover the connection between such incarceration experiences and later life. In addition to transmitting information on punishment and length of incarceration, our narrative data provide a unique window from which we can also view subjective understandings of the criminal justice system. One theme that emerged from our interviews is that the criminal justice system is corrupt and a "game." The men we spoke with talked about police planting evidence, cons selling each other down the river, and arbitrary decision making by judges, district attorneys, and probation and parole officers. In the eyes of the men we interviewed, no one was concerned about justice, truth, helping offenders, or even exacting punishment for crimes committed. Everybody was out to get "the best deal," and the deal you got had little to do with what you did. There is a growing body of research on the perceived legitimacy of law and institutions of social control (see, for example, LaFree 1998; Tyler 1990; Sampson and Bartusch 1998) that we draw upon to better understand how attitudes about criminal justice bear on the adult lives of convicted men.

We also hope to understand the consequences of incarceration, especially early on in the adolescent period, across a variety of adult domains, including family, work, and the military. We ask a simple but provocative question: to what extent is incarceration a turning point (positive or negative) in the experience of human lives? It may be the case that the effects of incarceration are variable, especially when viewed from the perspective of the men themselves.

Expanding Informal Social Control Theory

Reflecting upon developments in life-course criminology over the decade since the publication of *Crime in the Making,* we have concluded that our age-graded theory of informal social control needs to be

modified in some significant ways. Perhaps even the language of social control is in need of revision, although we set that question aside for the moment. In this section we identify several components—human agency, situational influences and contexts, and historical context—that should be incorporated into social control theory in order to provide a richer and more complete explanation of criminal behavior over the life course, especially patterns of persistence in offending and desistance from crime.

Human Agency

Drawing on ethnographic studies and first-person accounts, Katz (1988) argues that crime is purposeful, systematic, and meaningful. Crime is therefore action—"something to do"—which for Matza (1964) evokes the notion of will and desperation.[6] In this regard, crime is a vehicle for demonstrating freedom and agency. Other themes that are evident in the life histories of offenders include the attraction and excitement of crime (the seduction of crime; see Katz 1988) and crime as calculated and articulated resistance to authority (crime as defiance; see Sherman 1993).

Our view is that these agential processes are reciprocally linked to situations and larger structures (cultural, social, and psychological), past, present, and future. Agency is thus best viewed as an emergent process, both spatially and temporally. Kohli makes a similar argument: "The individual life course has to be conceptualized not as a behavioral outcome of macrosocial organizations (or of its interaction with psychological properties of the individual) but as the result of the subject's constructive activity in dealing with the available life course programs" (1986, 272). What is important is the interplay between agency, action, and structure through time, such that "agency is path dependent as well as situationally embedded" (Emirbayer 1997, 294). Emirbayer goes on to argue that "social actors are always embedded in space and time; they respond to specific *situations* (opportunities as well as constraints) rather than pursuing lines of conduct in purely solipsistic fashion" (1997, 307).

The questions asked in the course of collecting our life-history narratives were designed to reveal human agency and the contexts within which criminal and deviant actions occur. Yet as in Katz (1988), narratives have been used in criminology primarily to study persistence in crime, or what keeps offenders going. Less understood are the actions

and mechanisms by which offenders stop or withdraw from a life in crime. If crime is so seductive, how does one exit the temptation? This question points to an important gap in the criminological literature on desistance—the actions that active criminals take in order to improve their chances in life need to be recognized (see also Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002). Fortunately, as developed in more detail below, what is most striking in the narratives we collected is the role of human agency in processes of desistance from crime and deviance. The Glueck men are seen to be active players in their destiny, especially when their actions project a new sense of a redeemed self. One man told us how he felt when he left prison: "The heck with you [guards and others in authority]. I made a conscious effort—do my time and get the hell out. And don't come back." There are numerous examples of similar actions in our narrative interviews, with "redemption" emerging as a key process in desistance. We therefore exploit our life-history narratives to better understand the agential processes involved in the lives of former delinquents, especially mechanisms that differentiate the life paths of persistent offenders from desisters.

The Situational Context of Crime and Violence

It is important to ground crime and social control in their situational context. As Birkbeck and LaFree (1993, 129) point out, "situations vary in the extent to which they constrain behavioral choices." Informal social controls may be contingent on social context. From our life-history narratives, it is apparent that crime and violence are normative in certain settings and in certain situations. This fact has implications for understanding persistence in and desistance from crime over the life course.[7] The men we interviewed made fine shadings in their characterization of violence. In fact, in certain contexts and situations, strong informal social controls can sometimes promote crime rather than prevent it (Black 1983). Black, for example, argues that one kind of social control is "self-help"—"the expression of a grievance by unilateral aggression such as personal violence or property destruction" (1983, 46). Others have argued that there is a great deal of overlap among offenders and victims (Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991). Thus it is wise to consider crime, especially violent episodes, as situated transactions (Luckenbill 1977).

Routine activities are, of course, linked to situational variations.

We saw that for persistent offenders, the percentage of time spent married, in the military, or in the labor force is very low, especially in contrast to those that desisted. In contrast, the percentage of time spent institutionalized is quite large. Two patterns emerged with respect to persistent offenders: (1) little or no work, relatively speaking—a low percentage of time is spent working or in a marriage situation; and (2) a lot of short-term work—some seasonal—but nothing long term. There is lots of hustling, but few stable, structured work routines are evident. There are also multiple marriages (between two and five) that do not last very long (for example, two to four years). One persistent offender told us that "a change of pasture makes the cow fat." The men also appeared to go back and forth between their wives and their ex-wives fairly frequently. These patterns show a considerable lack of stability in routine activities.

It is also apparent that alcohol sustains crime in part because it makes work and marriage more difficult. One persistent offender told us, "As soon as I started on a drunk, I'd wind up walking off the job." Moreover, if consuming alcohol is a major part of your life—"tonight, I am going drinking"—then your lifestyle activities involve bars, clubs, and parties with others similarly situated, men and women. One man told us that he never met a woman that was not "a drunk." It is no surprise then that heavy drinking was a dominant feature in the group of persistent offenders we interviewed. In contrast, none of the desisters we interviewed were heavy drinkers and those that had been in the past had gotten help to deal with their problem drinking.

Overall our narrative data suggest that criminologists should treat the definition and meaning of crime as problematic. For this generation and in these neighborhoods, some crime is normative. One man said to us, "I don't classify that [fights down at the bar] as crime because it was normal to fight around here anyways." He went on to say that "well, we got black eyes. One guy got a broken jaw and stuff like that. But no serious stuff." In addition, these men are not afraid to take cash for a side job and not report it as income. Fudging on taxes is not viewed as wrong, nor is overcharging on repair jobs. In fact, many of the men seem willing to cut any deal they can.

Historical Context

Historical context, especially growing up during the Great Depression and World War II era, heavily influenced the objective opportunities and the subjective worldview for the men in our study (see Laub and Sampson 2002). The historical embeddedness of particular turning points (for example, early marriage and children; lack of education and geographic mobility; military service and the G.I. Bill) cannot be overstated. Although not necessarily reflected in the lives of the Glueck men, this period of history was marked by less mass alienation and crime than today, low unemployment, increasing national wealth, expansion of the occupational structure, and, for some, the G.I. Bill with its occupational and educational training.

We believe this time period is a particularly interesting one in which to think about crime and deviance as well as more general developmental patterns over the life course (for example, the adolescence-to-adulthood transition). For example, drugs like crack cocaine were not even known in this period, and the level of criminal violence, especially gun use, was below what we see at present. Pervasive alcohol abuse, coupled with the virtual absence of other drug use, suggests a strong period effect. As already noted, one of the major forces in the lives of some of the men we interviewed was the military. These men were also in a position to take advantage of numerous opportunities offered by the G.I. Bill (see Modell 1989, 204–205). As Modell has argued, "the dominant lasting effect of the war seems to have been the economic forces it unleashed, and the personal optimism and sense of efficacy that it engendered" (1989, 162). This description rings true for the men who desisted from crime in adulthood, as shown in Chapter 6.

In addition to macrolevel historical events, we explore the role of local culture and community context in the lives of the Glueck men. As been said many times, Boston is a city of neighborhoods, and not surprisingly the local context helps us understand the processes of persistent offending and desistance from crime. For too long, individual lives have been examined in isolation, even though it is now clear that historical time and geographic place are crucial for understanding lives in their full complexity (Elder, Modell, and Parke 1993).

Life Histories

With the exception of single case histories like *The Jack-Roller at Seventy* (Jack-Roller and Snodgrass, 1982), there have been very few long-term qualitative studies of offenders and ex-offenders. Our goal in this book is to explicate and better understand the processes of per-

sistent offending and desistance from crime over the life course. Using a life-history approach has five major advantages.

First, the life-history method uniquely captures the process of both becoming involved in and disengaging from crime and other antisocial behavior. This information is crucial for understanding the relationship between crime and the mechanisms of informal and formal social control. Life histories reveal in the offenders' own words the personal-situational context of their behavior and their views of the larger social and historical circumstances in which their behavior is embedded. For example, life histories can be used to discover how people react to salient life events, the meaning of those events to the persons involved, and most important, how their experience of the events structures later life decisions. In this way, life-history narratives expose human agency and reveal how conceptions of self and others change over time. These personal accounts play a dual role; they represent the past, but they also actively shape future actions (Scott and Lyman 1968).

Second, life histories can uncover complex patterns of continuity and change in individual behavior over time. Life-history narratives focus on the whole life, not just one dimension or one set of variables, and reveal the interconnectedness between life events and situations. Shover has argued that "the notion that most offenders follow a zigzag path of criminal participation compels us to be sensitive to *turning points* in criminal careers and the reasons for changes in direction at these junctures" (1996, 1–2). Life-history narratives, ordered temporally, can be used to show sequences that are "on-line" and "off-line" over long time spans (Mishler 1996). We are especially interested in detecting systematic patterns in subjective assessments of "turning points," including the nature or type of self-identified turning points, their timing over the life course, and the triggering mechanisms.

A third advantage is that life histories reveal the complexity of criminal behavior. Ernest Burgess pointed out many years ago that "to label behavior does not serve to explain it. In fact, it may act to prevent understanding of the many different kinds of behavior that may be covered under one term" (1931, 235). Multiple pathways to the same outcome may be present, and life histories expose "the heterogeneity of experience that can lead to a given outcome" (Carr et al. 1995, 23; see also Singer et al., 1998). Life-history narratives offer a way of breaking down complex phenomena by providing detailed information about events as they are experienced and the significance of these events for the actors involved.

A fourth advantage is that life histories are grounded in social and historical context. Shover's research on persistent thieves illustrates this notion with respect to choice and social class. Shover asks: what is rational choice for those who are economically marginalized with little hope for the future? He argues that "offenders do calculate in some manner, but the process is constrained severely by their prior choices of identity and lifestyles" (1996, 177). Life chances and views of opportunities for crime depend on historical circumstances and location in the social structure. Moreover, such calculations often change with age. Thus for each offender the rational calculus surrounding the decision to participate in crime becomes quite different over time and place.

A fifth advantage is that the life-history method shows the human side of offenders. Bennett (1981) notes that life histories disclose the "essential humanity of those who offend," and in turn the distance between the offender and nonoffender is reduced. The purpose of life histories is not to romanticize offenders and their lifestyles, but the closer one is to delinquents or adult offenders, the less likely one is to impute pathology (see also Hagan and McCarthy 1997).

In sum, life histories have advantages that cannot be easily obtained using traditional quantitative data on offenders and the patterns of offending. More broadly, life-history research has the potential to change the discipline by "reorienting criminology to the concrete" (Bennett 1981, 157). We concede that the development of quantitative methods has solidified criminology's claim as a scientific enterprise, but what criminology is lacking is a rich, detailed knowledge base about offending from those who commit crime, expressed in their own words. The consequence is that we have little understanding of the circumstances underlying the dynamics of criminal activity and processes of social control. Life histories can provide the human voices to counterbalance the wide range of statistical data in criminology and the social sciences at large (Bennett 1981; Clausen 1993; Hagan and McCarthy 1997).

Setting the Stage

There is much to learn about persistence in a life of crime versus desistance from crime and other antisocial behavior. We believe that a

life-course theory of crime that incorporates a dynamic view of social control, situations, and individual choices that vary within individuals over time provides the best hope for unpacking the processes of persistence and desistance. Furthermore, by drawing on ex-offenders' own words, life-history narratives can more fully illuminate continuity and change in criminal and deviant behaviors as individuals construct their own life course. The data found in our narratives challenge our theory, and we therefore approach the analyses open to subsequent changes in theoretical concepts, the specifics of which unfold in the chapters that follow.

Our approach, then, is to integrate quantitative and qualitative data in both data collection and data analysis. This integration takes two forms. First, we collected, coded, and analyzed criminal record data from criminal histories and death records from vital statistics (see Chapter 5 for results). Second, these quantitative data were combined with an analysis of life-history narratives. In addition, "objective record data" from the Gluecks' earlier studies (1950, 1968) were integrated with the life histories (see Chapters 6, 7, and 8). In Chapter 9, we return to the quantitative data for an analysis of how changes in adult domains—marriage, work, and military—are related to changes in criminal activity within individuals over time. We now turn to the original sources of the data that we collected to resolve these challenging issues in understanding persistent offending and desistance from crime over the life course.

CHAPTER FOUR

Finding the Men

Where are they now? How have time and experience changed them? Who has died? Who is still alive? Such questions are the stuff of television specials, high school and college reunions, and gatherings of war veterans. These questions are also important for researchers interested in criminal behavior over time. One objective of life-course research is to examine how events that occur early in life can shape later outcomes. Thus long-term longitudinal studies are needed to understand the pathways of development from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. It is also true that longitudinal studies allow the uncovering of turning points that may help to explain significant changes in behavioral trajectories over time. One problem in the social sciences generally, and especially in criminology, is the short-term nature of most longitudinal follow-up studies. To rectify this problem, we initiated a comprehensive follow-up study of the original delinquents in Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck's *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* study (1950).

As detailed below, the Gluecks' three-wave study of juvenile and adult criminal behavior involved a sample of 500 male delinquents aged 10–17 and 500 male nondelinquents aged 10–17 matched case by case on age, ethnicity, IQ, and low-income residence. Over a twenty-five-year period (1940–1965), the Gluecks' research team collected a wealth of information on these subjects in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (see Glueck and Glueck 1950, 1968). Subjects

CHAPTER SIX

Why Some Offenders Stop

To better understand the processes of persistent offending and desistance from crime over the life course, in the next three chapters we turn to life-history narratives. We present narratives for men who have desisted from crime (Chapter 6), for men who have persisted (Chapter 7), and for the remaining group of men that reveal the zigzag quality of many criminal careers (Chapter 8). Our rationale for using life-history narratives was explained in Chapter 3 and the strengths and weaknesses of these qualitative data were discussed in Chapter 4.

Our strategy wherever possible is to weave back and forth between quantitative and qualitative data. The life histories that follow are informed not only by the trajectory analyses just completed but by further quantitative data on the criminal histories (for example, number of arrests and time served in prison) and social data (for example, proportion of time married) for the 52 men in the follow-up. Then in Chapter 9 we return to a quantitative analysis of life-course trajectories to explain how changes in adult domains—marriage, military experience, and work—are related to changes in criminal activity within individuals over time. This quantitative analysis is informed, in turn, by the narrative data. In the end, our approach represents a blending of diverse methods of data collection and analysis that could not be achieved by exclusive reliance on a single mode of research.

Strategy and Background

As discussed in Chapter 2, defining and identifying desistance is problematic. Classification schemes that posit "desisters" as formally distinguishable from "persisters" or other offenders are at some level arbitrary and suspect. At the same time, the concept of desistance has theoretical utility and provides a useful means of organizing our narrative data.

Combining both narrative data and official records, our strategy is to investigate two subgroups of men who desisted from crime. The first group consists of men who were arrested as juveniles (age 7 to 17) for nonviolent crimes only, and were not arrested for any predatory crimes (violence or property) as adults. A few of these men were arrested for speeding or other moving violations as adults as well as for other minor offenses (for example, profanity), but still desisted from interpersonal offending. We interviewed 15 men in this group. The second group consists of 4 men who had at least one arrest for violent crime as a juvenile, but none for predatory crime in adulthood (after the age of 21). Again, we did not consider arrests for minor motor vehicle violations as counting against the men in terms of desistance. Thus we interviewed 19 men we call desisters from serious crime. We compare these two subgroups of desisters to detect any differences in desistance by type of offense.

Criminal history data for the 19 desisters are displayed in Table 6.1, and information regarding other important social characteristics is displayed in Table 6.2. Using available data up to age 70, we find that the "nonviolent desisters" were arrested on average nine times, and by design these men had no arrests for violence at any point in their life. The "violent desisters" were arrested on average twelve times throughout life, and by design all had a violent arrest as a juvenile. Although all of the men were classified as desisters, they did spend time incarcerated in prisons and jails, especially early in their criminal careers. For example, four-fifths, or all but three, of the "nonviolent desisters" stayed out of jail or prison over the adult life course (age 17 to 70), whereas half the "violent desisters" stayed out of jail or prison over their adult life course. Interestingly, both the "nonviolent desisters" and the "violent desisters" were incarcerated as juveniles for 1.4 years on average.

Table 6.1 Desisters: Criminal history data

Name	Total report	Official offenses <17	Official offenses 17–32	Total official offenses[a]	Total official violent offenses[a]	Age first incarcerated	Time served <17 (in years)	Time served 17–32 (in years)	Time served[b]
Nonviolent offenders									
Henry	13	6	1	7	0	10	2.4	0.0	0.0
Vinnie	11	8	1	9	0	14	1.0	0.0	0.0
Victor	8	4	0	4	0	14	0.6	0.0	0.0
John	10	4	1	6	0	14	1.0	0.0	0.0
Robert	17	4	2	10	0	13	1.9	0.0	0.2
Leon	19	3	0	4	0	12	1.1	0.0	0.0
Stanley	7	2	0	5	0	15	1.0	0.0	0.0
Norman	14	8	2	11	0	14	0.7	0.0	0.0
David	17	4	1	7	0	13	0.7	0.0	0.0
Richard	23	7	0	7	0	14	0.6	0.0	0.0
William	17	3	1	4	0	11	2.9	0.0	0.0
Gilbert	18	9	10	22	0	11	3.6	9.0	62.3
Domenic	15	4	0	4	0	13	1.0	0.0	0.0
George	15	5	1	6	0	14	1.1	0.0	0.0
Edward	15	5	18	29	0	15	0.9	2.6	17.9
Violent juvenile offenders									
Leonard	11	15	6	23	1	14	2.1	5.5	37.6
Angelo	6	6	4	10	1	15	0.6	0.0	0.0
Bruno	7	6	3	9	1	15	0.5	0.0	0.0
Michael	17	5	0	6	1	10	2.3	1.0	8.0
Mean	13.7	5.7	2.7	9.6	0.21	13.2	1.4	1.0	6.6

a. Ages 7 to 70.
b. Ages 17 to 70, days incarcerated over lifetime per year.

Table 6.2 Desisters: Social history data

Name	Ethnicity	Age at interview	IQ	Adolescent competence	Proportion of time married[a]	Proportion of time divorced/ separated[a]	Proportion of time with unstable employment[b]	Proportion of time in military[b]	Military outcome
Nonviolent offenders									
Henry	Swedish	69	93	1	0.85	0.06	0.13	0.40	Honorable
Vinnie	Italian	69	86	3	0.96	0.00	0.40	0.20	Honorable
Victor	Lithuanian	69	112	3	0.89	0.00	0.20	0.20	Honorable
John	Czech.	70	115	2	0.96	0.00	0.00	0.33	Honorable
Robert	English	71	79	0	0.87	0.00	0.13	0.33	Honorable
Leon	German	70	103	0	0.92	0.00	0.27	0.07	Honorable
Stanley	Polish	69	86	3	0.72	0.00	0.07	0.60	Honorable
Norman	Eng. Can.	69	77	0	0.62	0.11	0.13	0.00	*N.A.*
David	American	67	75	3	0.92	0.00	0.20	0.07	Honorable
Richard	Eng. Can.	68	101	*N.A.*	0.62	0.00	0.07	0.93	Honorable
William	Irish	64	90	1	0.83	0.00	0.27	0.33	Dishonorable
Gilbert	Eng. Can.	65	104	3	0.76	0.00	0.80	0.00	*N.A.*
Domenic	Italian	67	112	2	0.75	0.00	0.07	0.20	Honorable
George	Eng. Can.	68	80	1	0.98	0.00	0.40	0.00	*N.A.*
Edward	English	67	90	0	0.00	0.00	0.57	0.00	*N.A.*
Violent juvenile offenders									
Leonard	Fr. Can.	70	90	1	0.81	0.00	0.47	0.00	*N.A.*
Angelo	Italian	70	90	*N.A.*	0.92	0.00	0.27	0.13	Honorable
Bruno	Italian	70	92	0	0.87	0.00	0.40	0.27	Honorable
Michael	Irish	63	89	0	0.87	0.00	0.27	0.53	Honorable
Mean		68.2	92.8	1.4	0.80	0.01	0.27	0.24	

Note: On adolescent competence, see note 1.
a. Ages 17 to 70.
b. Ages 17 to 32.

Table 6.2 presents social history data for these men. Most revealing is that men who desisted from crime are distinguished by long-term stability in marriage and employment. Most of the desisters also had a successful stint in the military, a pattern of stability that holds for both nonviolent and violent desisters. No discernible pattern emerges with respect to ethnicity, IQ scores, or our measure of adolescent competence.[1]

We begin with a detailed life history of two men in the group of nonviolent desisters. These cases were selected because they highlight different aspects of the desistance process with regard to family life and military service. We then present one life history from the second group of desisters—men who had a record of violence as adolescents, but none as adults. After presenting these life histories, we draw on the remaining interview data to explore in detail several emerging themes regarding the mechanisms involved in the desistance from crime. We believe life-history narratives are especially valuable in uncovering issues overlooked in more traditional quantitative approaches in criminology. In particular, the following narratives provide rich and nuanced information that we use to further develop our theory of why people stop offending.

Marriage as a Turning Point

If I hadn't met my wife at the time I did, I'd probably be dead.

Consider first the life of Leon. Leon grew up in a large family in a poor neighborhood in Boston. He had nine brothers and sisters, but several of his siblings died young. Leon's father was described as a "heavy drinker." He had been arrested for assault and battery, vandalism, receiving stolen goods, and drunkenness. Leon's mother also had an arrest record for assault and battery and profanity. She too was described in the records as a "heavy drinker." According to the Gluecks' initial investigation in the 1930s, Leon's parents showed little concern for their children, providing lax supervision and erratic discipline. Their home was dirty and the children were neglected. The combination of a large family with inept parenting by two alcoholic parents meant that Leon experienced a rather chaotic family life growing up. As but one example, his family moved more than twenty times while he was a child. In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that Leon's parents condoned his stealing. Despite these unsavory conditions, at his age 14 interview, Leon reported that he was "attached" to both of his parents.

Leon's educational experiences were dismal as well. He went through the seventh grade but quit when he was sent to reform school. Leon's full IQ score was 103, but his verbal IQ score was 83 and his performance IQ was 123—a discrepancy of 40 points. It is well known that verbal deficits are related to delinquency (Moffitt 1993). Because of his poor verbal skills, Leon was placed in a special class, putting him three grades behind other students his age. It comes as no surprise that Leon felt little attachment to school or his teachers, and began skipping school at the age of 7.

Leon was arrested three times as a juvenile for breaking and entering, mainly stores and trucks. He served a little more than one year in reform school. His total self-reported score of "unofficial delinquency" was 19, well above the mean for the delinquent sample (see note 1 for a description of this measure). Like most of the persistent offenders, Leon started his criminal career early—he began playing hooky at the age of 7 and was first arrested at the age of 11. He was also a savvy delinquent. According to notes in his record, Leon became involved in a series of burglaries and lootings of trucks while he was on parole from the Lyman School. The stolen goods included silk stockings that his gang sold around the neighborhood. Leon learned that the police knew who was responsible for the thefts, and he subtly suggested to his parole officer "that he would like to be returned to the Lyman School for having broken his parole by truanting." This strategy enabled Leon to avoid a new set of criminal charges, a potentially longer period of confinement, and a more extensive criminal record.

In contrast to the chaos and disorganization early in his life, Leon's adult life is markedly stable. He lived in only three places in his middle and later years, including a stretch at one address for thirty years. As an adult, he worked as a manager at a donut shop for thirty years and as a laboratory technician at a chemical plant for twelve years. In fact, Leon worked more or less continuously from the age of 13. Most of his early employment consisted of low-paying jobs as a movie usher, furniture mover, a shipper in a bakery, and an attendant in a gasoline station. Despite a seventh-grade education, Leon is now a homeowner who spends his retirement traveling throughout the United States and

Europe with his wife. At the time of our interview, Leon was 70 years old. He looked back on his life with a sense of accomplishment, especially sweetened by the fact that he overcame early hardship and disadvantage. Throughout his adult life, he had been strongly committed to upward mobility and recognized that he could make progress, if only a little bit at a time. What accounts for such change?

Leon served in the U.S. Army between 1946 and 1948. He was drafted at the age of 21, six weeks after he was married. As with many Glueck men, he served a tour of duty in the Far East. After his military service, he used the G.I. Bill to buy a home. Not all is rosy in the military-as-turning point story, however. Leon told us that, like his father, he developed a drinking problem in the service. There is no mention of this fact in his military record (for example, no arrests for drunkenness were recorded), which again underscores the importance of collecting both official and self-report data. As we learn below, Leon still did not become an alcoholic, nor did his early drinking problem hamper his adult development.

At the time of our interview, Leon's major turning point, at least in his own mind, was marriage. He met his wife when he was 17 (she was also 17 years old at the time). Marriage's roles in changing routine activities, as a social investment generating strong social support, and in supplying direct social control all describe Leon's situation. His wife knew he was in trouble as an adolescent, but she decided to take a chance on him anyway. During our interview with Leon, she stated, "I was young and naive." She went on to say,

> It wasn't unusual in those days for kids to be in that kind of trouble and for some reason . . . if my daughter took up with anybody like that, I'd go through the roof! We had so many strikes against us. He had no education, he drank. Not when we were together . . . When you think of it, you know, I can't get over how well we've done with how little we had. He had no occupation. He was a baker. And luckily he learned to bake and then he learned to manage, and he was a go-getter, and actually that's all we had going. And I was a fighter and a go-getter. Even though I had a little bit more education, we got so much in common, that's why we get along so well, we like the same things.

Not only did Leon have a record, his mother, a Catholic, strongly disapproved of his marriage for religious reasons. She did not want one of her sons marrying a Protestant. Leon's wife told us that his mother "put a curse on our marriage" because of her unhappiness with the union.

Despite the long odds and lack of family support, Leon's marriage was a success. As a married man, Leon worked every day, did not go out with the guys, and was home every night. At his age 25 interview, Leon stated that he was "quite content to stay at home." Home life became the center of activity for Leon and most other men who desisted from crime. Leon insisted to us that he would have continued getting into trouble if he had not married. Indeed, some fifty years earlier, when asked for the reasons behind his reformation, Leon stated emphatically, "My wife straightened me out." Even before his actual marriage, Leon's parole officer remarked that he had given up drinking and gambling when he became interested in a 17-year-old woman who would later become his wife.

At Leon's age 25 interview, the Gluecks' interviewer remarked on the beneficial influence of his wife. She was described as "respectable," "decent," and with a "stronger personality" than her husband. During this earlier interview, the interviewer wrote that "the couple seem very much in love and made a display of their attachment in an obvious manner." This was our sense at the age 70 interview as well. During our interview, Leon and his wife completed each other's sentences and displayed a great deal of love and affection.

Along with the social support and love that came from this successful marriage, additional factors help explain why Leon was able to desist from crime. First, perhaps in response to his wife's investment in him and vice versa, Leon took his marital responsibilities very seriously. He often worked overtime to support his family. Moreover, later in his career, he turned down a promotion because it would have taken more time away from his wife and children. Second, as a direct result of his marriage, Leon was cut off from his former peer group. These peers were replaced by his wife's friends. At his age 25 interview, Leon disclosed that one of his delinquent friends "went away" for murder. Leon continued, "On the very night of the murder, I had a date with my wife and we went to a dance. If it weren't for my wife, I'd probably be up for murder." Third, Leon spent more time with his wife's family than he did with his own. In fact, the couple moved to get away from his family. They relocated to another part of Boston and his in-laws moved in on the first floor of their two-family home. This action solidified his new family bonds, both practically and symbolically.

Leon and his wife have a rewarding union and are clearly woven together. One of the more poignant moments in the interview came

when they spoke of their son who had died of a heart attack at the age of 45. This heart attack was brought on by drug and alcohol abuse. Rather than dwelling on the loss of their son, the couple focused on the future of their daughter-in-law. Referring to their daughter-in-law, Leon's wife said, "She was an enabler. She did everything for him. All the classic things that you do for alcoholics. She called the boss and told him that he's sick, . . . She learned to be a baker, taking over for [her husband] when he was hung over or drugged over or whatever." The discussion with Leon and his wife continued.

Wife: It was a terrible marriage in that way, because—
Leon: It made it terrible for her, not him.
Wife: It made it terrible for her is right, and it didn't help him at all. I mean, instead of saying, "Look, buddy, you know, get with the program or get out," she didn't. She just kept covering for him and covering for him and covering for him.
Leon: And she's still like a daughter to us today.
Wife: Ruined ten years of her own life.
Leon: An adopted daughter, in fact, . . .
Wife: She remarried a wonderful guy.
Leon: She's doing wonderful, yeah. She's going to school.
Wife: She's a computer expert now. They have these robots that go down to see the fish. She's in charge of that. She does the repair work and everything on those computers, so she's done that all on her own.
Leon: . . . She had ten years of living with a drunken drug addict, and yet she turned her whole life around on her own, once she got away from him.

A second transformative event mentioned in Leon's interview was his institutionalization in the Lyman School. Leon characterized his time at Lyman as a "turning point in his life." He went to Lyman when he was 13 for breaking and entering and skipping school. He described the reform school as offering a "learning environment." Leon recounted:

> I mean it might sound silly—I thought it was great. I mean they taught you a lot of things there. They taught you to respect yourself, and no matter what you did you were dressed up every day, you were clean, you went to school, and they just, I mean even like, I used to set the table, you learned the proper way to set a table . . . I might have been one out of a thousand that got anything out of it, but still, I go back to that whenever I think of a change in my life . . . And I think it was great, I think they ought to have them today instead of having these places where they stick the kids in the halls [detention centers].

Leon and his wife also became involved with meditation—unusual for our sample of delinquents. They took up the practice when they were in their thirties, and they claim it has given them spiritual peace and an overwhelming sense of well-being. Leon declared, "It made me simmer down." Leon's wife described him as "like a hen on a hot griddle" before he took up meditation.

Military Service as a Turning Point

> I learned a lot of responsibility there [in the military] and . . . how to follow orders.

Here we examine the life history of another desister we call Henry. Like Leon, Henry experienced no arrests for predatory crimes of violence or property as an adult. His narrative brings into play new elements that add further complexity to our understanding of how movement away from criminal behavior is sustained.

Henry, at the age of 69, was interviewed by telephone at his retirement home on the southwest coast of Florida. Although possessing only an eighth-grade education, Henry worked as a machinist nearly all of his adult life. Employed most of his life, he stated emphatically, "I was never without a job." This glimpse of Henry's life as an adult provides a dramatic contrast to his childhood and adolescent experiences.

Henry grew up in slum areas in Boston. At the time of the wave 1 interview, Henry's family lived in a deteriorated wooden tenement district close by the waterfront. Like many delinquents, Henry often changed schools because his family moved excessively (at least once a year). He repeated grades one and four and from age 10 was frequently truant. According to teacher reports, Henry seemed childish and immature. His overall IQ score was 93 (79 verbal and 107 performance).

Henry's home conditions were considered very poor by th Gluecks' research team. At the time of the interview, his mother an

father had been separated for four years. Henry and three sisters were living with their mother. She was described as being "careless in her appearance, some of her front teeth missing, and her fingers heavily stained from cigarette smoke." Henry's father was described as a "heavy drinker." In fact, Henry's father was a weekend drinker who went on "benders." When he drank he was verbally abusive to the children and his wife. One illustration from Henry's file described the following: "When the father went to bed, he would stick a knife in the closed bedroom door explaining that if anyone opened the door during the night the knife would fall on them and kill them." Despite this family situation, a psychiatrist noted that Henry "seems very fond of his father" and hoped to be paroled to his father.

Henry's mother had her husband committed to Boston State Hospital for observation. He was "paranoid" and claimed that he could not work because he had to keep an eye on his wife. Furthermore, he questioned the paternity of the children and accused his wife of child neglect. There is a notation in Henry's file that his mother had an affair with his uncle, his maternal aunt's husband. Henry's father had disappeared and was therefore not providing any child support. As a result, the family was living on welfare.

At his wave 1 interview, Henry was described as a stubborn child, a truant, a runaway, and a beggar. He apparently committed thefts to get money for candy and the movies. Henry's first arrest occurred at the age of 10 and the charge was stubbornness. Overall, Henry had six arrests as a juvenile.

One of the most important events in Henry's life was his decision to join the Marine Corps at age 18. He served three years in the Marines (from 1945 to 1948). Henry achieved the rank of corporal, and he received the Good Conduct Medal and the Victory Medal for World War II. Then he joined the Air National Reserves for two years. At the end of the two years, he was called back to the service—"convenience of the government, they called it, COG." He served again from 1950 to 1951. Henry used the G.I. Bill when he left the service to receive on-the-job training as a machinist. Looking back on the military, Henry maintained that it was a very important part of his life. He declared: "I learned a lot. It was just a big part of my life and I liked it." When asked further about the precise change-inducing elements of serving in the military, Henry stated, "It taught me a lot of responsibility and things like that."

The ordeal of reform school was also a transforming experience for Henry, as it was for Leon. When asked whether he experienced any turning points or things that happened that pushed him in a direction other than he might have gone, Henry responded that his turning point was being sent to the Lyman School for Boys. "That was a big turning point in my life . . . I think that helped straighten me out quite a bit that Lyman School." When pressed on what it was about the Lyman School that changed him, Henry said, "Well, I started learning a lot of responsibility. Taking more responsibility—to stay on the good side because I used to do a lot of skipping school and stuff like that. I think that taught me to grow up, I'd just go to school and learn what you can and do what you can." For Henry, going to reform school twice facilitated his desistance from crime. "I didn't want to go back . . . It's not a reform school but like a reform school. It was like a real, private, strict school. They were very strict. If you needed a whack, you'd get a whack . . . I think it helped me a lot."

The parallel experiences between the military and the Lyman School in Henry's life are clear. In both institutions, Henry learned "responsibility" and "how to follow orders." Reflecting back over the long term, Henry considered both experiences as turning points in his life. He described both institutions as "helping him out a lot." Both institutions facilitated and perhaps redirected the natural process of maturation. In large part, Henry was a defiant adolescent who did not like to be told what to do. In his own words, he did not "like to be ordered around." He went on to say, "My main problem I think when I was growing up, not liking school, skipping school, and not taking authority the way I should." This was something that he "grew out of" with the help of the Lyman School and his military experience.

Nevertheless, the story of pure social causation is complicated by Henry's own actions. According to information in his file from his parole officer, Henry was "unable to get along with either his mother or his stepfather," and he "selected the service as his 'out' for his problems." Henry's parole officer further speculated that Henry was "intelligent enough to realize that part of his difficulties existed in his home and that the U.S. Marine Corps might give him a second chance in the service to make good under closer supervision than what the U.S. Maritime Service gave him."

The timing of these institutional engagements and life-course events is also important. After serving a sentence in the Lyman School for

Boys, Henry reported that he joined the Maritime Service at age 16, two years before he joined the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, serving in the Maritime Service did not work out. Henry went AWOL and received a dishonorable discharge. In effect Henry simply continued his antisocial behavior, especially regarding the following of rules and orders. At age 18, however, the Marine Corps was one of his self-described life-course turning points. Although the Maritime Service and the Marine Corps are not strictly comparable, it seems that the timing of these two experiences is crucial. It should be noted that Henry did not reveal to the Marines that he had been dishonorably discharged from the U.S. Maritime Service or that he was on parole from the Lyman School for Boys.

According to Henry, another significant element in his life was a move from the city to what was then a country setting. Henry recalled these residential changes as significant in facilitating desistance: "Well, I think my family—my Mom and Dad—moving out of the Boston area had a lot to do with it also. Originally we had lived in a town about twenty miles north of Boston. And it's a completely different scenario. It's like living out in the country. Getting away from the Boston environment that it had at that time [1930s and 1940s] had a lot to do with it." Given that these moves occurred before his unsuccessful stint in the U.S. Maritime Service, it is not clear what role they played in the desistance process. Nevertheless, Henry described these events as important turning points.

In looking back on his life, Henry saw marked improvement given his childhood and adolescent experiences. He feels "fortunate that things had turned out the way they did," and he has a sense of accomplishment from overcoming disadvantage and hardship early in life. This is true of Leon as well. Displaying a sense of generativity, Henry also believed that things were more promising for his children and that he could help them have a better start in life than he did.

The Lyman School as a Turning Point

Everybody should do a stretch in Lyman.

The next life history we profile in this chapter comes from a man called Bruno. Bruno grew up in a large Italian family in East Boston. He had seven siblings. Although there is evidence in the Gluecks' interview of strong emotional attachment in the family, Bruno was not well supervised during adolescence. He talked about frequently staying out late at night and returning after his parents went to bed. They never knew what time he came into the house. Bruno also had little interest in school as a kid. He repeated two grades and eventually quit school at age 16. He went up to the ninth grade. Although he had a full-scale IQ score of 92, his teacher thought he reached his "intellectual ceiling" in eighth grade.

As a youth, Bruno was the leader of a small but tough street gang that encouraged his delinquent behavior. He had six arrests as a juvenile, including one for violence (he and two friends were drinking and got involved in a brawl on New Year's Eve). Bruno and his companions were also arrested for "jack rolling," but they were formally charged with larceny, not robbery, for this crime. In total, Bruno spent about six months in the Lyman School for Boys for his crimes.

As an adult, Bruno refrained from any criminal activity. Like Leon, Bruno's adult life displayed remarkable stability across several important life domains. For instance, at the time of our interview, Bruno had been married for forty-six years. He went into business for himself as a plumber when he got married. At age 70 when we spoke to him, he had recently retired from the plumbing business. Bruno spent his entire life in one neighborhood in Boston. At his age 32 interview, he and his wife had lived in his mother's house for about seven years. From there they moved to their current address, where they have lived for the past thirty-eight years. This residence was originally his mother in-law's house.

Bruno maintained close ties to his family by virtue of his living arrangement: "My wife and I live here [the first floor of the three-decker where the interview was conducted]. My son lives upstairs with his wife and their two daughters. My daughter lives up another flight with her husband and baby boy. And then my other guy lives up the street."

As was true for Henry, one of the major self-reported turning points in Bruno's life was serving in the military. He enlisted and served three years in the Marine Corps. Like many of his cohort, he saw action in the war in the Pacific theater. Bruno achieved the rank of corporal, and he received the Good Conduct Medal and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two Bronze Stars. When he returned to Boston, he used the G.I. Bill to become a plumber, a skilled trade. Bruno

recounted, "I wouldn't have been able to learn to be a plumber because I didn't have the money for school, but when I went under the G.I. Bill, it cost the government the money to teach me. It was like an apprenticeship."

Like Leon and Henry, and once again surprising to us, Bruno thought one of the other turning points in his life was getting sent to the Lyman School for Boys.

> It was positive, it was good. I'll tell ya', everybody should do a stretch in Lyman, because the people don't hurt you. If you were in a disciplinary cottage, yes. But they deserved to get shellacked. But I never did. While I was up there, I became a painter. We used to paint boats down around the harbor there. Then from that we would . . . you know you pick certain jobs. So, in other words, every chance I had I'd try to do better, because I wanted to get out. I wanted to go home. I missed my mother's cooking.

This account is consistent with what he told the Gluecks' interviewer more than forty years before our interview. In that interview, Bruno admitted that he deserved to be sent to Lyman and that his commitment convinced him to "respect the things that count in life." In addition, Bruno said that Lyman was "the best thing that ever happened" because he was placed under "firm authority and close supervision." There was a definite change in Bruno because of the Lyman experience. Before Lyman, he described himself as a "wise guy—I knew all the answers and no one could tell me anything. My father did the best he could, but I thought I knew more than he did."

In the aftermath of his Lyman experience, Bruno was not allowed to associate with the friends that he got in trouble with earlier in his career. He recalled, "I had two brothers that used to watch me—not watch me—they used to kick the shit out of me in plain English. But never enough to hurt me, but enough for me to think."

For Bruno, then, the crucial factors appeared to be the Lyman School and his military experience. What is significant is that the factors that facilitated Bruno's desistance from crime after adolescence are the same as those that facilitated desistance for Henry and Leon, despite the fact that Bruno was involved in violence as a youth. These narratives, plus those described below, suggest a general process of crime cessation that is not necessarily distinguished by crime type. This perspective on desistance is consistent with the general theory of

crime we presented in Chapter 3, which also does not distinguish distinct causal mechanisms for crimes of violence compared with crimes of property. We turn to a deeper exploration of these mechanisms.

Unpacking the Desistance Process

In examining desistance, several themes emerge in the life histories profiled so far. Despite early instability, rancor, and family chaos, men who desisted from crime exhibited remarkable stability and organization across several adult life domains—work, marriage, and living arrangements. Self-identified turning points included marriage, serving in the military, being sent to the Lyman School for Boys, residential relocation, and becoming involved in meditation. One unexpected finding was the positive aspect of the reform-school experience for these former delinquents. The reform-school experience was especially salient for some men when coupled with serving in the military, a fact that suggests the need to examine further the Lyman School–military connection. A second surprise was that although all three men we profiled displayed remarkable employment stability in light of their childhood and adolescent backgrounds, none of them pointed to work as a major turning point in his life. This suggests that stable work may not trigger a change in an antisocial trajectory in the way that marriage or serving in the military does, even though employment may play an important role in sustaining the process of desistance. In this section, we examine these themes in more detail, drawing on the additional interviews we conducted.

Lyman School

For some men, the Lyman School provided an important setting in which to acquire the discipline and structure that were absent from their young lives. The Lyman School also was a place where they could perform tasks that they would be rewarded for, in sharp contrast to many of their school and family experiences. For others, the Lyman School represented a purely deterrent force. For example, Angelo did not go back because he "learned that he did not want to do the time." Several others expressed the same feeling. Angelo went on to tell us that he had a "very distinct recollection" of the Lyman School. A guard "gave me a crack on the mouth that I still can remember and feel today. And I have a vengeance for him that you can't be-

lieve. But it did teach me to respect society or whoever." He concluded, "If you haven't got the time, you don't do the crime. Lyman was a turning point in the sense that I don't want to do the time." For others, Lyman provided an environment for learning important lessons about life. As Stanley said, "I learned how to be away from home and how to get along with other people."

The Lyman-Military Nexus

Perhaps even more important, several men alluded to a Lyman-military connection. There are important commonalities in the two experiences for men who later desisted from crime. For instance, Richard identified the parallel themes between the two institutions as "discipline and strictness." In addition, he noted the capacity of both institutions to "give kids something they never had at home." For Richard at both places, "Somebody took me under their wing and that was it. It changed my life." In a similar vein, at his age 25 interview, John said that he believed his correctional school experiences helped him considerably in adjusting to Navy life, as he learned at the Lyman School to accept authority and to live with large groups of other boys harmoniously. In his interview at age 63, Michael also noted the similarities between reform school and the military: "Well a lot of people can't adjust to stuff like that. I was in reform school and all that. Like I told you—You got to get up. Gotta go to bed. You got to eat. It was just like the military. You get up at a certain time. And you eat at a certain time. You do calisthenics at a certain time. You go to bed at a certain time. I'm used to it."

But what is also evident from our interviews is that the Lyman School was not the right experience for all men, nor was it necessarily a turning point, positive or negative. For instance, in his interview at age 67, David told us that staying at Lyman was a horrible experience. He continued:

> It was bad. Real bad. You see these pictures about torturing the kids. Well, they did then, let me tell you. Well, we'd come in from a march out in the cold, and . . . and you were walking beside him [another inmate] and I says "How is everything going today?" and the counselor heard you he'd take you back in the room and take your shoes off and you had to hold your feet up with no shoes on and he had a stick that big [about two feet long] and that thick [about two inches] he'd give you 10 whacks. Now you can't walk. And if you dropped your foot down you'd get another 10. I mean the pain was right up through your leg. And then they'd take you in the corner and they'd pound the living shit out of you.

When asked how long he had been in reform school, David recalled the exact number of days he was there—"13 months, 2 weeks, and 3 days—made it to Saturday." This was more than fifty years after his Lyman incarceration.

What is harder to untangle is why those who had adverse experiences in Lyman did not react negatively to those experiences by committing crime or displaying other forms of poor adaptation as an adult. For instance, Victor talked about beatings, cold showers, and endless marching at Lyman. His view of the Lyman School experience was prosaic—"I didn't learn anything up there, except not to go back. That's about it." This came from a man who was sent to Lyman because his father was the town drunk and the probation officers had it in for his father. Despite his apparently unjust incarceration, Victor did not go on to commit any more crimes during adolescence or adulthood.

Gilbert, another desister, recalled Lyman:

> I was mistreated back then. There was people that ran these cottages and they beat the devil out of you and beat on the bottom of your feet with a stick when you ran away and they'd get you down on the floor and make you scrub the floor with an old bristle brush that was just wood against wood. And demoralize you—make you stand in line with your arms folded and demoralize you as a young person. I was only, cripes, a young kid then. And I remember these points vividly in my mind—how I was treated at Lyman School. I was always running away. Some of the people I couldn't stand—there were sex deviants there too. All kinds of crazy stuff going on.

Remarkably, Gilbert remembered the guard's name who beat him. He exclaimed, "Can you imagine? Here I am talking about how many years ago when I can remember this guy's name . . . It's unbelievable. When I could remember a man's name that used to beat me on the bottom of my feet with a stick, trying to tell me that I won't have any more feet to run away with."

Military Service

Our quantitative data for the desisters show that several had a successful tour of duty in the military (see Table 6.2). Moreover, several

men who desisted from crime described the military as a turning point in their interview (see also Sampson and Laub 1996). The following statement from Victor highlights this point.

> I'd say the turning point was, number one, the Army. You get into an outfit, you had a sense of belonging, you made your friends. I think I became a pretty good judge of character. You met some good ones, you met some foul balls. And things along that line. There was more of a spirit of camaraderie there, togetherness, you know, you come to rely on the friends you make, you know. And even if you didn't like the guy you wouldn't throw him to the dogs. There's no question that the fittest survive and you have to learn to get along with everybody.

The timing of the military experience for this cohort of men, who were raised during the Great Depression, is crucial as well. The military in the 1940s represents something quite different from the military today. Patriotism and pride in the military during the World War II era were abundant. But even more significant, the military offered clothes, shelter, meals, discipline, and structure to men who had little. Several men we talked to about the military mentioned food. John recalled:

> I thought a turning point was joining the Navy. Oh, sure, everybody squawked about the food. And I'm laughing myself, because I had nothing. Where the hell can you have roast beef on a Monday for supper and then have roast pork? If we had roast beef [in Boston], we had it once a month. So I appreciated it. Like I said I only had a couple of bad meals. Like on a Sunday night, that bologna . . . we used to call it. Every other meal, even breakfast, was good. That was my turning point.

For more on what the military offered to disadvantaged youth, we turn again to Victor's interview:

> Well, number one, you had guys that were coming out of the Depression. They got out of school and there were no jobs around, that was number one. And a lot of my friends, they're a little older than I am, a lot of those jumped into the National Guard to pick up a few extra bucks and they got a uniform. A lot of guys went into the service in World War II, a lot of them didn't know what three squares a day was. And I can remember a picture I saw in *Life* magazine pertaining to that. It showed a black from Georgia going back home on leave and everybody's just sitting on the porch and they're feeling his uniform and everything else. They never saw threads like that. He's got shoes on, you know? But, like I say, put three meals on the table, and then the Army too in those days didn't take any shit. You went and did your thing. If you want to be a wise ass, they had ways of taking care of you. Like I can remember, going out to the obstacle course and dig a 6 × 6. That's 6 feet square, 6 feet deep. He'd throw our newspaper in and then he buried it up, bury it, and say, "What was the headline?" Dig it up, and take a look. Shit details, KP, things like that. They had a way of getting back at you.

Another man we interviewed further added that the military taught him to control his temper, the value of helping others, and the need to follow orders. As William pointed out, "They teach you that you can be your own boss as long as you do what the other people want you to do."

It is also important to note that the military offered something concrete to men when they returned to civilian life—the G.I. Bill. The importance of this voluntary "aftercare" program should not be underestimated (see Sampson and Laub 1996). To illustrate, we examine John's experience in the military. While on parole at the age of 17, John enlisted in the Navy. He received important skill training as an electrician in the Navy, a career he would eventually work in all of his life. When he left the service, he used the G.I. Bill. But even more important for John was the fact that his veteran status overrode his ethnic status in joining the union. He told us,

> I worked for [name of company] the last four months of '41. I went to the service from there. Congress passed a law saying that anybody leaving their job voluntarily would come back to the same place—regular seniority. And I went back there [in 1945] and they were non-union. In 1946 they had to go union because they had a bank that they couldn't get on the job unless they were a union shop. And they went, "Hey, sign me up." I happened to be one of the guys there who was working there as non-union and then I got into the union. At the time with my name, which looks real Italian—I'm not Italian—it was an Irish union. "What are you, Ginzo?" But I got in the union. They took 200 veterans. The VA made them do it. I was about the 180th or something like that, that close. That was 1947. I was an apprentice for four years. You had to be an apprentice in the union. So I had my license at the end of three years. I was just hanging for a year—but I was getting the G.I. Bill, which paid up to five cents under an hour. In other words if I was getting $1.80 an hour at the time, I can get up to $1.75 with the G.I. Bill. It was pretty

good; it was helpful with four kids. My biggest help was the G.I. Bill of Rights. It raised my pay up to five cents under what a journeyman would make.

As discussed in Chapter 3, military service has the potential to be a transformative experience, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For some men the military, like the Lyman School, provided the opportunity to learn a new set of skills, both technical and interpersonal, in a new and different environment. Moreover, being in the military meant one could make use of the G.I. Bill, a bridge that allowed disadvantaged men to gain access to jobs, technical training, and even housing to facilitate their efforts to start anew.

Marriage

Unlike the persistent offenders described in the next chapter, the desisters had stable marriages, with divorce or separation conspicuously absent (see Table 6.2 for details). Indeed, from several narrative accounts, we learned that one of the sources of desistance is a successful marriage. This was illustrated most directly by Leon, who had been married for forty-nine years when he was interviewed at age 70. He said, "If I hadn't met my wife at the time I did, I'd probably be dead. It just changed my whole life . . . that's my turning point right there." Leon is not alone. Several men we interviewed told us that marriage was their turning point and that their criminal and deviant behavior changed as a direct result of getting married. For example, in response to the question "When you look at your life, do you think you've had turning points?" Domenic said, "Oh, sure. My biggest turning point is when I met my wife." Stanley stated proudly, "I gave up drinking after I got married." Similarly, William insisted, "The thing that changed me was marriage. That turned me right straight down the line. She won't put up with any baloney. Well, if you got a job you're supposed to do what the boss wants. I call her the boss. No, we're both the boss, [but] she's got more head than I have. She's got more schooling, she knows more. And I agree with her." For these subjects, marriage was part of "being a man" and that required becoming "serious and responsible."

As discussed in Chapter 3, marriage has the potential to change one's life across several dimensions. We have written extensively about the role of marital attachment and the increased social capital that results from a "good marriage" (see Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 1993; and Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998). What has not received enough attention is the role that marriage plays in restructuring routine activities and the direct social control that spouses provide, especially concerning deviant peer group associations.

One wife of a former delinquent, for example, talked about her husband's joining the Elks Club. That club became the place where he spent his leisure time, rather than a bar in Charlestown where his former delinquent friends congregated. She went on to point out that from her perspective, "It is not how many beers you have, it's who you drink with that matters." Graham and Bowling (1995, 71) have shown that continued involvement in offending is closely associated with heavy alcohol use with friends of the same inclination, and wives can provide the triggering influence to extract husbands from this deviant lifestyle (see also Warr 1998; Farrington and West 1995). Marriage can also lead to a residential change. When asked why he left East Boston, Angelo told us, "Because I got married. I got married and I married a girl from Malden and we lived in Malden." As Kenaszchuk (1996) found in his study of good marriages among a subsample of Glueck delinquents up to age 32, a residential change allowed the men to break away from unsatisfactory family and peer relationships that were, or were expected to be, problematic to the husband-wife dyad.

Parenting responsibilities also lead to changes in routine activities, as more time is spent in family-centered activities rather than in unstructured time with peers. Although becoming a parent was not a significant factor in explaining desistance from crime once marital attachment was taken into account (Sampson and Laub 1993), the life-history narratives suggest that parenting was important. For example, shortly after marriage and becoming a father, one former delinquent bought property in New Hampshire and spent each weekend clearing the land and building a summer getaway for his wife and children. Another man told us that he and his wife had one child and they "poured it all out to her." Along with changing routine activities, having children can also influence a person's identity and sense of maturity and responsibility (Graham and Bowling 1995, 72–73).

Perhaps the most unexpected finding emerging from the life histories is that marriage may lead to desistance because of the direct social control effects by spouses. This social control feature may be especially true of marriages in the 1950s and 1960s, which we are examining here. Along with providing a base of social support, wives took primary control of the planning and management of the household and acted as informal "guardians" of their husbands' activities.[2] Some wives "managed" their husband's deviance; others adopted a strict "zero-tolerance" policy. For example, David's wife controlled the pace and timing of his drinking: "Like we had [only] two or three hours [at the bar]. You could drink eight or 10 beers and a couple of shots in that time so that would be enough." His wife also managed to get him to work after a bout with drinking: "What she did is—I went to work every day . . . before I never worked. I'd say, 'The hell with it, why should I go to work?' " David felt an obligation to his family that was reinforced by his wife's presence and constant reminders. "I had to get the money to support the house. If I didn't have that, why would I have to quit drinking and go to work? I think that pushed me to a point anyways."

This view was shared by other men we interviewed. William talked about his sister and later his wife providing supervision and monitoring while he was an adult. Bruno was reluctant to sign the consent form to be interviewed without his wife's permission. He said that he didn't "want to start any trouble with the old lady, you know?" We left the consent form with him and he mailed it back to us after his wife had looked it over.

The experience of a wife taking a direct role in the social control of the man was explicit in the life of one man we interviewed. Before marriage, Leonard's wife told him directly, "Your friends or me." This man was a serious delinquent and had served time as a young adult for burglary, auto theft, and larceny. Upon learning of her impending marriage, friends told her, "Are you out of your mind? He is never going to be anything. He will always be in trouble." Leonard's wife, however, would not tolerate crime or any other misbehavior. At the early stages of their marriage, Leonard wanted to quit his job because he felt he was not making enough money. Like the persistent offenders we describe in Chapter 7, Leonard was not scared of prison and he sought easy money. He told his wife, "I am making peanuts. I can make this money in one day." His wife told him, "You quit, you leave." Leonard took his wife's advice (or followed her orders)—he stayed with his employer for forty-three years and was never involved in crime again. At the time of our interview, furthermore, he had been married for forty-three years and the couple had lived at the same residence for the last thirty-two years. This life story illustrates the reciprocal nature of social support invested by spouses.

For some men, wives were like bosses, but for others, wives played a different role. For some men, a wife was one of the first people to care for them and about them. In this instance, the marriage represented a fusion of interests and shared goals for the future. For instance, George told us that his wife cared for him and that this was the first time in his life that another person had felt this way toward him. Moreover, his in-laws "surrounded" him and adopted him into their family. This acceptance contrasts sharply with his own family, where he had little contact with his siblings and parents. Vaillant has argued that during recovery from alcohol abuse it is valuable for alcoholics to form bonds with people who have not hurt them in the past (1988, 1154; see also Shover 1985, 1996). Satisfying relationships can offer a "new sense of direction and achieve a sense of belonging" (Graham and Bowling 1995, 72).

Additional benefits of marriage deserve mention. 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. Many wives finished high school, whereas most of the delinquents did not. Moreover, some delinquents married women from families that were better off economically than they were. "Marrying up" provided many concrete benefits, such as housing, employment, and other material goods.

It should be pointed out that these changes are more gradual than abrupt. Our conceptualization suggests that because investment in social relationships is gradual and cumulative, resulting desistance will be gradual and cumulative (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998). As the wife of a former delinquent said, "The change did not happen overnight." This woman told us that she worried her husband would return to crime. He worked in the neighborhood he grew up in and saw many of his friends who were still involved in criminal activity. For instance, she spoke of worrying each time he was late from work. She

went on to say, "It took about five to six years into the marriage before I could relax. Once the company he worked for moved out of Boston, I knew there would be no problem."

Employment

The men we interviewed who desisted from crime displayed marked stability in employment (see Table 6.2). As we noted in Chapter 3, we believe that the processes for work are similar to those for marriage. In our previous writing, we focused on the role of job stability—length of employment and work habits—in facilitating desistance from crime (Sampson and Laub 1993). Here we broaden our perspective to focus on how work changes routine activities; how employers, like spouses, can provide direct social control; and how work can change one's sense of identity and meaning of life. Following this line of thought, we find that stable work, while not necessarily self-defined as a major turning point, does play an integral role in the process of desistance from crime.

From the life-history narratives, a steady paycheck from work was evidently an indicator of stability and responsibility. As Domenic said, "I had a paycheck coming in every week without fail. I always knew that it was going to be there, or even if I got sick. So that makes you stable and that takes a lot of worry out of your life." This perception rings true particularly for men growing up in the Great Depression.

The men were employed in a wide range of jobs, which included work as a cab driver, fire fighter, boiler maker, construction worker, pipe-covering installer, postal worker, engineer, and stove repairman. Some men clearly enjoyed their work, and for them work was an end in itself. Gilbert claimed that work allowed him to show "what he was best at." He went on to say, "I was best at doing what I enjoy doing and it benefited the world because I got things done. It benefited society because I was able to work at what I felt was good for me because I knew a lot about it. I felt good at doing it." But for most men, work was something that one did as a means to an end. It was simply a way to make money to live as comfortable an existence as possible.[3]

In addition, work served a social control function. Mostly this was an informal by-product of working, but sometimes the social control function was direct. In fact, some employers kept their employees in line. For example, Leonard said that his employer was "like a strict father. He went after me a few times. He also took me under his wing.

We would have a few drinks together." Leonard was such a valued and dedicated employee that the company bought him the house he now lives in and buys him a luxury car every two or three years for his good work. (Recall that Leonard initially wanted to quit this job because he believed he was underpaid.)

Work also provided a structured routine. Perhaps a dramatic example, but John told us that working as an electrician he "averaged 3,400 hours a year." He added, "I didn't work all the time; I was sleeping half the time . . . I did a lot of work. I'd get up at 5:30 in the morning for at least 25 years. I did it for years. You're used to it; it's a trend." Many men who desisted from crime worked extensively. It was also not unusual for men to work nights and/or weekends. If given the opportunity, the men often worked overtime. It was also true that many of the men's wives worked outside the home as well, further structuring routine activities.

Finally, though not common, work gave some men an identity and sense of accomplishment. Gilbert told us, "Being able to work, being able to get a pay check. Being able to spend the money and not have to steal it. Being able to go to the store and buy something and not have to steal it. That's important in life . . . what changed my life is work."

Other Circumstances

It is possible that desistance can occur "unnaturally"; that is, without any institutional or personal intervention that changes a criminal pathway. As discussed in Chapter 2, desistance by death is possible. Desistance can also result from physical injury. For example, Vinnie was physically disabled because of an injury he received in the military. At the time of the interview (at age 69), he had not worked for the past thirty years or more.

Other circumstances can also lead to desistance from crime. For instance, Norman was a born-again Christian and a strong believer in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). He is one of the few Glueck men who changed because of either formal religion or AA. According to Norman, he was turned around by his wife's insistence that he leave the household and get help for his drinking. At our interview, he gave the following account:

> *Norman:* Well, I had come home drunk and I got into a fight with my wife. I guess I had beaten her and my daughter too—my

stepdaughter. They called the cops. That was the only time she ever called the cops on me in her life. That's the best thing she ever done for me. That's when I went out looking for help.

Q: So you got arrested then?

Norman: Well, I don't know if you call it getting arrested or not. But I was in a cell overnight. They put me in the tank there overnight with the rest of the drunks. And I was ready to face the judge the next morning. And I guess my wife and my daughter came down. They were going to press charges against me. And a clerk of the court called me over out of the group and told me that they were there and that they told me if I would promise to stop drinking and leave the house that they wouldn't press any charges against me. It sounded pretty good so I promised them I would, so I didn't have to face the judge. They let me go. And when I came back home, I went into the house. There was nobody home. I felt pretty lousy, so I dropped into the bed and fell asleep. And when my wife come home she come into the bedroom and she says, "What are you doing here?" I says, "What do you mean what am I doing here? I live here." She says, "Not any more you don't." I says, "Why, what are you talking about?" She said, "You were supposed to leave. You promised me and you told right in front of the cops and everything that you were going to leave and that you were going to get help for yourself. Try to find out what was wrong, why you were drinking so much and all." I got down on my knees and I begged her and stuff, but she stuck to her guns though. As I say it's the best thing she's ever done. Because that's when I went out . . . called my mother and stayed with my mother and father for a while. But they both drank. So they got into arguments and everything and I got into the middle of it and here I am trying to stop drinking. So I moved out and got myself a room over in South Boston, right near the job where I worked. I was working over a boiler over at the [name of company] in South Boston. I could walk to work from where my room was. And then I went and talked to Father [name] with the Gavin House in South Boston.[4]

Norman told us that he had been in all of the correctional institutions in Massachusetts as part of an AA group talking to prisoners.

Some men also benefited from a residential change, independent of marriage. As noted above, Henry moved from a poor Boston neighborhood to a small town twenty miles outside of Boston. Another subject, George, escaped from the Lyman School and went to live with relatives out of state. He told us that he knew he could not go back to his old neighborhood in Boston because he would find himself in jail or dead if he did.

For others, mentors were important in steering them away from crime. Gilbert told us that while he was in federal prison he learned "a lot about life from a guy down there named Jack. He was an amateur radio guy in the service . . . he loved amateur radio. And he got me interested in radio and electrical stuff and things of that nature." Jack was an electrician who worked in the prison. Gilbert went on, "I'm still a young guy. He saw the potentials in me. He saw I enjoyed electricity. I enjoyed radio and stuff like that. He took me under his wing. And I thought an awful lot of this guy in a short ten months I worked with him. He was a prince." Gilbert concluded, "I prepared my whole life in ten months to do something. Think about it. Those ten months I spent in [name of prison] were the most crucial in my life. Because they turned me around. [Name of prison] turned me around. Jack turned me around. Jack was a humanitarian and cared for me as an individual. Let's get down to brass tacks. What if Jack wasn't there? What if I wasn't offered the opportunity? . . . He treated me right. As a matter of fact, after I left [name of prison] year after year on a yearly basis I would take my wife and the kids, we'd drive all the way to [name of prison] to see Jack."

The Missing Link in Desistance: Human Agency

> Not because of my mother and father. Because of me. I'm the one that made it shitty.

We have argued that life histories are especially useful in uncovering ideas that have not been examined in previous research. What is most striking in the narratives we collected is the role of human agency, or choice, in desistance from crime and deviance. The men who desisted are "active" players in the desistance process. Cohler (1982) has noted that a subjective reconstruction of the self is especially likely at times of transition (see also Emirbayer and Mische 1998,

1004). Several examples emerge from the life-history narratives that we collected.

For example, Michael went into the military to avoid trouble. When asked why he entered the service, he answered ironically, "I had no choice. If I'd a gone back out when I left Shirley [a reform school in Massachusetts]—If I'd a gone back out on the corner—I'd get mixed up with the same gang that I got involved with, so I didn't want to do that. So I just went in. And the reason I stayed in was I didn't want to get out, because I would get mixed up with the guys again." This was a conscious decision on Michael's part in light of his perception of the situation. Michael was in the Army for seven years. He told us with a smile that the decision to stay in the military so long "probably saved my bacon." Reflecting back on the importance of the military experience in his life, Michael chuckled and said,

> Well you can say that the army changed me. If I had gotten out the first time, I'd probably [have] gone back with the same crowd that I grew up with. And I probably would have ended in jail, because that's the way I was heading . . . I wouldn't take a million bucks for my experience . . . I loved it. I was brought up in a ghetto. And I struggled my way out. If the military had not been available, I tell you what—I'd hate to say what I would have become.

As we learned above, Norman actively participated in Alcoholics Anonymous to try to get his family back. His wife and daughter left him after tiring of his drinking and violence in the home. Norman told us,

> I used to slap her and [the] kids around and stuff until I was put out. I was out of the house until she ended up in the hospital . . . She had a nervous breakdown and she was under a psychiatrist's care. She had shock treatments and everything. When she got sick and went to the hospital she asked me if I could move home and take care of the children until she got out of the hospital. And I said, "Sure." I've been staying sober all the time. I went to AA and I haven't had a drink since my first meeting.

Norman changed with the help of AA, and what motivated him in large part was the fear of losing his wife and family if he did not straighten out.

Similarly, John worked hard all of his life to provide for his family. He did not want his children to repeat his own experiences growing up. John's parents separated and his father left the family when he

was ten years old. His father was arrested for assault and battery and was known as an alcoholic and a wife beater. John was ready and willing to take advantage of opportunities that came his way to avoid repeating what he saw as his father's mistakes. He always worked overtime. John recounted, "If you don't mind working, anybody can do it, really, if you have the opportunity. I really didn't have an opportunity even to get into the union, unless I was a G.I. My main thing at the time, I didn't have an Irish name, although I'm 3/4 Irish. I didn't have the Irish name. That was the union then." John worked as an electrician all of his life up to his retirement in 1990. When we interviewed him at the age of 70, he was living comfortably in retirement in a waterfront condo on the South Shore in metropolitan Boston.

Accounts in Later Life

The men who desisted from crime accepted responsibility for their actions and freely admitted getting in trouble. Some of the men were "not proud" of what they had done, but they saw that period of their life as long over. They did not, however, offer excuses. Tough times due to the Great Depression, uncaring parents, poor schools, discrimination based on ethnicity and class, and the like were not invoked to explain their criminal pasts. Michael captured this opinion best when he said, "Not because of my mother and father. Because of me. I'm the one that made it shitty." Furthermore, some men claimed that it was merely "luck" that distinguished them from the persistent offenders we present in Chapter 7.

For the men who have desisted from crime, one is struck by the pride they have in their accomplishments and material effects. They are proud of their cars, homes, and possessions such as large-screen TVs and VCRs. Simple, material things are important to them because they did not have material goods in their youth.[5] They were bitten and bitten hard by growing up during the Great Depression in poor, disadvantaged neighborhoods in Boston. They are rightfully proud of what they have now. Michael captured this sense of accomplishment most vividly:

> What I done here is a success story. I have no education whatsoever. I have no grammar school. No high school. No nothing . . . In plain English I done all the shit jobs, because I had no education . . . My life now is

> beautiful. Raised five kids. No education. Worked every day in my life. Whenever I lost one job, I got another. No, I think I done pretty goddamn good.

David echoed this sentiment—"I'd say I had a goddamn good life. Goddamn good. I'm 67 years old now. I'm in pretty good shape. I think I've got a few more years. When I was young I never thought I'd have this age. I think I'm doing pretty good. I've got nice kids, nice wife, can't ask better than that."

Combined with their pride in their possessions and accomplishments, the men who desisted also exhibited generativity (McAdams and St. Aubin 1992). They have worked and are working to make things better for the next generation. The most dramatic evidence is a man and his wife who have taken foster children from state hospitals into their home for many years. Several of the men we talked to have adopted children from teenage mothers. Illustrating the theme of generativity concretely to us, one man we interviewed insisted we send his payment to a local charity in the neighborhood in which he grew up.

The men worry about the apparent lack of generativity in the current generation. For example, Victor deplored young people's failure to take responsibility.

> That's the way I look at it—we've gotten away from everything . . . all these people gave something to the country. . . . You never saw their kids, and it was always working for their kids. And their kids in turn worked so that their kids could be a little better. After that the whole thing started to change. I see like the passing of the box at church Sunday. A bunch of these goons—three of them in the last row. I tell Father [name]: "Why don't you take them and put them down in front?" Comes the time to pass the box under their nose. Out of those three rows, if I get 15 cents, I'm lucky. How the frick is the church going to survive in the future? But, if there is a basketball game, World Series, or baseball game, or rock concert, baby, they can come up with 30 or 45 bucks for a ticket.

In a similar vein, Leon and his wife pointed out the differences between growing up during the Great Depression and today. Leon's wife stated:

> We lived paycheck to paycheck practically until we retired. All our lives, I've always had to worry about money. There's never been enough of it, but we managed to buy a home, several homes, and buy and sell them, and go up the ladder a little bit more each time. But I think that most parents of our generation were far too generous with their children, and I don't think it gave them the work incentive that our generation had. I think we took that away from them, and I think that's a sad thing. I think things come much too easy to my children's generation. It's much too easy for them to get themselves into debt. We couldn't have got ourselves into debt. They didn't have charge cards that I know of in our day, so if we wanted something, we had to save up for it. Or get it on time and have somebody co-sign for us or something, you know.

Whether these views represent normative generational conflict or a real change is not known.

What Have We Learned?

Why do some offenders stop offending? It appears that offenders desist as a result of a combination of individual actions (choice) in conjunction with situational contexts and structural influences linked to important institutions that help sustain desistance. This fundamental theme underscores the need to examine both individual motivation and the social context in which individuals are embedded. The processes of desistance operate simultaneously at different levels (individual, situational, and community) and across different contextual environments (family, work, and military). The process of desistance is more than mere aging or "maturational reform" (Matza 1964), and we believe that life-history narratives are useful for unpacking complex person-environment interactions.

Overall it appears that successful cessation from crime occurs when the proximate causes of crime are affected. A central element in the desistance process is the "knifing off" of individual offenders from their immediate environment and offering them a new script for the future (Caspi and Moffitt, 1995). Institutions like the military and reform school have this knifing-off potential, as does marriage, although the knifing-off effect of marriage may not be as dramatic. Another component in the desistance process is the "structured role stability" that emerges across various life domains (for example, marriage, work, residence). The men who desisted from crime shared a daily routine that provided both structure and meaningful activity. The structure was fully embraced by the men, and one result was a

disassociation from delinquent peers in adulthood, a major factor in explaining their desistance from crime (see Graham and Bowling 1995; Warr 1998). As discussed in Chapter 3, marriage can change routine activities, especially regarding one's peer group. Wives, for example, may limit the number of nights men can "hang with the guys," so that marriage has the potential to cut off an ex-offender from his delinquent peer group (see Warr 1998, 2002).

This idea is consistent with research on social stratification: successful mobility is a cultural change involving new opportunities and a willingness and ability to accept them. For example, Gans (1962, 254) found that people from the West End of Boston who moved into the middle class had to first break, or have broken for them, their dependence on family and peers. That is, those who strove to get ahead had to shift from peer-group goals to object goals, such as a career, prestige, wealth, or individual development (see Whyte 1993 for a similar discussion of peer groups in Boston's North End).

The routine activities of work and family life and associated informal connections serve two functions. One is to provide social support (Cullen 1994) or emotional "attachment" (Hirschi 1969). The other function is one of monitoring and control through the provision of a set of activities and obligations that are often repeated each day. Many habits are mundane, but they nonetheless give structure to one's time and restrict opportunities for crime. Moreover, these activities result from shifts in role expectations that are not fully explained by age (Osgood and Lee 1993).

What is especially notable in the desistance process is personal agency. A vital feature that emerged from our qualitative data is that personal conceptions about the past and future are apparently transformed as men maneuver through the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The men engage in what can be called "transformative action." Although informed by the past, agency is also oriented toward the future (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Cohler 1982; Maruna 2001). Projective actions in the transition from adolescence to adulthood advance a new sense of self and a new identity as a desister from crime or, more aptly, as a family man, hard worker, and good provider. As a result the men we studied were active participants in the decision to give up crime. Thus both objective and subjective contingencies are important in the desistance process (see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Maruna 2001; Shover 1996).

As we observed in our life-history narratives, the men who desisted from crime seem to have acquired a degree of maturity by taking on family and work responsibilities. They forged new commitments, made a fresh start, and found new direction and meaning in life. These commitments were not necessarily made consciously or deliberately, but rather were "by default"—the result of "side bets" (Becker 1960, 38). The men made a commitment to go straight without even realizing it. Before they knew it, they had invested so much in a marriage or a job that they did not want to risk losing their investment (Becker 1960; see also Toby 1957, Hirschi 1969). Involvement in these institutions—work and marriage—reorders short-term situational inducements to crime and, over time, redirects long-term commitments to conformity (Becker 1964; Briar and Piliavin 1965).

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 (see Maruna 2001). From our life-history narratives, for example, we sense that certain roles and certain behavior are seen as "age inappropriate" (Shover 1996). One former delinquent linked the role of "party boy" to being young and single. In response to the question, "What about your marriage? Has that changed you?" Richard replied with a hearty laugh, "Oh yeah. I mean that's when you really had to settle down." He continued, "Especially when [my oldest son] came." Remaining a delinquent or a party boy or a hell-raiser would signify a state of "arrested development" and be incompatible with adult status (see Gove 1985, 129). This notion is consistent with Hill (1971), who discusses changes in identity over the life cycle as one moves from "a hell-raiser to a family man."

We are by no means claiming an absence of regret in the process of desistance. In his study of the transformation from being a hell-raiser, Hill presented evidence of the ambivalence that men feel regarding their new role and identity as "family men" (1971). This is not surprising because, as Smelser (1998, 8) pointed out, bonded relations are fused with ambivalence—dependence, even when welcomed, "entails a certain entrapment." For example, William told us that if he were not married he would be "wandering" around. He said ruefully, "There's many times I wanted to go back to Alaska to see what it was like now. But we can't do that. We're hoping to go to Disney next March." We heard many such bittersweet remembrances of deviant lives left behind—of exciting moments given up.[6]

The lessons we learned about desistance from our narratives are consistent with the research literature on drug and alcohol relapse. In a study of one hundred hospital-treated heroin addicts and one hundred hospital-treated alcohol-dependent individuals, Vaillant (1988) found that external interventions that restructure a drug addict's or alcoholic's life in the community were often associated with sustained abstinence. The main factors are: (1) compulsory supervision; (2) finding a substitute dependence to compete with drug or alcohol consumption; (3) obtaining new social supports; and (4) membership in an inspirational group and discovery of a sustained source of hope and inspiration (see also Vaillant and Milofsky 1982). Culling the recent literature on treatment, especially from Canada, produces some hopeful signs that offenders can be rehabilitated when proximate causes of crime are targeted. Programs that address dynamic attributes of offenders and their circumstances (for example, antisocial attitudes, involvement with delinquent peers, and employment status) that can change during and after the treatment process appear to be more successful than programs that focus on static factors or background characteristics (Andrews and Bonta 1994; Bonta 1996; Gendreau, Cullen, and Bonta 1994).

What is also striking from our life histories is that there appear to be no major differences in the process of desistance for nonviolent and violent juvenile offenders. Despite contrary expectations put forward by many criminological theories, this finding is consistent with empirical research showing that violent offenders have the same background characteristics as frequent but nonviolent offenders (Farrington 1991; Capaldi and Patterson 1996; Piquero 2000). In fact, Farrington concluded that "the causes of aggression and violence must be essentially the same as the causes of persistent and extreme antisocial, delinquent, and criminal behavior" (1991, 25). Our narratives reveal that the processes of desistance across a wide variety of crime types are very similar.

Overall, then, while there are multiple pathways to desistance, there do appear to be some important general processes or mechanisms of desistance at work. We have found four major self-described turning points implicated in the desistance process: marriage/spouses, the military, reform school, and neighborhood change. Each of these creates new situations that (1) knife off the past from the present; (2) provide not only supervision and monitoring but opportunities for social support and growth; (3) bring change and structure to routine activities; and (4) provide an opportunity for identity transformation. Although some offenders may seek to "make good" (Maruna 2001) or engage in "up-front work" to better their lives (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002), we believe that most offenders desist in response to structurally induced turning points that serve as the catalyst for sustaining long-term behavioral change. As Becker noted a long time ago,

> A structural explanation of personal change has implications for attempts to deliberately mold human behavior. In particular, it suggests that we need not try to develop deep and lasting interests, be they values or personality traits, in order to produce the behavior we want. It is enough to create situations which will coerce people into behaving as we want them to and then to create the conditions under which other rewards will become linked to continuing this behavior. (1964, 52–53; see also Becker 1960)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Why Some Offenders Persist

We now turn to the challenge of understanding the lives of men we call persistent offenders. Approaching the problem from an angle not common in criminal career research, we use narrative data to peer into the lives of men who offend repeatedly throughout their lives, indeed well into middle age. As discussed in Chapter 4, we define persistence in offending as being arrested at multiple phases of the life course. This strategy seems consistent with the idea of persistent offending as enduring, repetitious, and tenacious. As we saw in Chapter 5, however, the rate of offending declines with age even for high-rate and presumably chronic offenders, making the notion of the life-course persister problematic. As with the desister group in the last chapter, we use these labels as a means of organizing our analytic strategy and presenting our narratives, leaving as an empirical question the ultimate validity of such classification schemes.

We set out to examine two types of persistent offenders. The first consisted of men who were arrested as juveniles (aged 7 to 17), young adults (aged 17 to 32), and older adults (aged 32 to 70) for crimes of violence. The second consisted of men who were arrested as juveniles, young adults, and older adults, including arrests for violence in at least two of the three phases of the life course. Altogether, we interviewed 14 men who were not only persistent offenders but serious, violent offenders as well.

Using available criminal history data up to age 70, we find that these men were arrested on average forty times (more than twenty-three times up to age 32). Moreover, they spent an inordinate amount of time in prisons and jails; on average, 1.8 years up to age 17 and 6.4 years from age 17 to 32. Over the full life course, these men were incarcerated on average 75 days each year. Criminal history data for the 14 persistent offenders, along with information on other important social characteristics, are displayed in Tables 7.1 and 7.2. It is notable that whereas these persistent offenders had similar scores for our measure of unofficial delinquency, IQ, and adolescent competence compared with desisters (see Table 6.2), the persisters spent considerably less time married, working, and in the military over the course of their lives.[1]

We begin with a detailed life history of "Boston Billy" from the persistent offender group. We selected this case for intensive analysis because it was one of the most absorbing life histories we collected, and Billy was one of the most interesting and poignant of the men we encountered. Even more important, Boston Billy illustrates many of the emerging themes we develop regarding persistent offending over the full life course. After presenting his life story, we draw on additional narratives from other interviews to explore several themes that emerge from the data. As will be seen below, life-history narratives are especially useful in uncovering issues overlooked in more traditional quantitative approaches in criminology, including our own previous work (see Sampson and Laub 1993).

The Life of Boston Billy

> My entire record is stealing cars and armed robbery . . . it was so easy and money was so scarce. It was nice to have a couple hundred dollars. To me that was a lot of money. And I had it in my pocket. I couldn't find a good job. And I couldn't find a job where I could learn a trade. And I didn't have no education. So I did the only thing I could.

From early in our follow-up study, Boston Billy stood out as a challenging and intriguing case. Although Billy was worthy of the title "career criminal," he was not a product of a disorganized and chaotic family of immigrants. His parents were native born, and on many counts they would be considered good parents. They provided adequate supervision and "firm, but kindly" discipline. For instance, if

Table 7.1 Persistent offenders: Criminal history data

Name	Total report	Official offenses <17	Official offenses 17–32	Total official offenses[a]	Total official violent offenses[a]	Age first incarcerated	Time served <17 (in years)	Time served 17–32 (in years)	Time served[b]
Tony	13	8	18	34	6	13	2.0	12.6	107.21
Jimmy	6	9	20	50	4	13	2.8	12.6	93.66
Harry	12	4	5	15	4	12	1.8	2.0	13.74
Buddy	19	4	17	37	5	14	1.6	10.5	162.26
Gino	20	5	15	33	2	14	0.9	0.8	5.58
Wally	13	4	9	25	3	16	0.8	0.0	0.00
Billy	14	10	8	26	7	15	1.1	14.0	213.45
Gus	18	7	16	27	4	10	3.5	2.6	24.62
Charlie	17	23	8	37	3	12	3.8	11.1	129.72
Arthur	12	12	20	57	6	12	1.8	5.2	39.24
Frankie	17	5	42	106	4	15	1.0	8.1	55.77
Maurice	23	8	20	54	3	15	1.3	9.8	106.98
Don	16	5	14	25	3	16	0.8	0.0	0.00
Nicky	13	8	2	27	6	14	1.8	0.3	100.66
Mean	15.2	8.0	15.3	39.5	4.3	13.6	1.8	6.4	75.2

a. Ages 7 to 70.
b. Ages 17 to 70, days incarcerated over lifetime per year.

Table 7.2 Persistent offenders: Social history data

Name	Ethnicity	Age at interview	IQ	Adolescent competence	Proportion of time married[a]	Proportion of time divorced/ separated[a]	Proportion of time with unstable employment[b]	Proportion of time in military[b]	Military outcome
Tony	Italian	70	102	1	0.58	0.00	1.00	0.00	*N.A.*
Jimmy	Irish	71	104	2	0.66	0.00	0.93	0.00	*N.A.*
Harry	Jewish	69	69	1	0.82	0.04	0.27	0.00	*N.A.*
Buddy	Eng. Can.	69	105	1	0.00	0.00	0.80	0.27	Dishonorable
Gino	Italian	70	97	0	0.35	0.24	0.53	0.00	*N.A.*
Wally	German	69	94	1	0.82	0.08	0.27	0.47	Honorable
Billy	German	68	87	*N.A.*	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	*N.A.*
Gus	Greek	63	82	0	0.92	0.08	0.93	0.07	Dishonorable
Charlie	Swedish	64	111	2	0.69	0.25	1.00	0.00	Dishonorable
Arthur	Italian	65	72	1	0.12	0.82	1.00	0.00	*N.A.*
Frankie	Irish	69	84	0	0.00	0.00	0.93	0.00	*N.A.*
Maurice	Portuguese	68	105	3	0.64	0.13	1.00	0.07	Dishonorable
Don	Irish	68	90	1	0.72	0.00	0.67	0.13	Honorable
Nicky	Italian	68	87	1	0.87	0.11	0.53	0.20	Honorable
Mean		67.9	92.1	1.1	0.51	0.13	0.78	0.09	

Note: On adolescent competence, see note 1 in chapter 6.
a. Ages 17 to 70.
b. Ages 17 to 32.

Billy returned home past his 9:00 P.M. curfew, his father would keep him in the next night and sometimes the night after.

Billy's father was a plumber and a "good worker." He was employed by the same company for several years. He did not have an arrest record, was not a "drinking man," and was described as "intelligent" and having an "even disposition." Although Billy's mother had been committed twice to the Lancaster School for Girls as a "stubborn child" and for being "idle and disorderly," she had no record of criminal activity or drinking as an adult. Moreover, she was described in one social worker's report as a "mother who has definite interest in her children" and as a mother who keeps a "neat home." Billy's mother worked as a candy dipper three days a week. According to social worker reports, his mother prepared lunch for her children before leaving for work, and one of Billy's sisters gave the children lunch and "kept house" until their mother came home.

Billy's family was also distinguished by its residential stability. Unlike families of the most active delinquents (Sampson and Laub 1993), Billy's family moved only once from the time he was born, and even that move was five and a half blocks down on the same street in Boston to a three-family house that they bought. Billy was the fourth child in a family of six, with two brothers and three sisters. He was the only person in his family to get into serious trouble.

Unlike many of his delinquent counterparts at the time, Billy enjoyed reasonably good living conditions. He had his own bed in his own room and his house also had a bathroom, tub, flush toilet, hot water, central heat, and electricity. The home was "adequately furnished" and well-kept and neat. Perhaps even more important, the family's household routine was depicted as "orderly"—there were regular meal times and sleeping times. Billy's parents encouraged their children to have their friends in the house as a way of avoiding trouble on the streets. They set up a radio and had board games in a "club" in the cellar for Billy's friends. Unlike many families in the neighborhood, the family was also in relatively good shape economically. They owned their home, had a car, and were "careful with their money."

There were early warning signs, however, that the cohesive family life was not sufficient. One of Billy's early obstacles in life was school, in which he had no interest. Billy did not like schoolwork and had to be "prodded" constantly. Despite this lack of interest, his teachers reported that he was not a "behavior problem." He scored 87 on the general Wechsler-Bellevue IQ test (90 verbal and 87 performance). It is perhaps not surprising, given his lack of interest in schoolwork, that Billy repeated first and sixth grade. Yet unlike most persistent offenders, he began skipping school at a relatively late age—12. Billy finished his formal schooling with only an eighth-grade education. His dislike for school was long lasting and consistent. At his age 25 interview with the Gluecks' investigator, Billy stated, "I hated school." Nevertheless, he became an effective jailhouse lawyer during his long career in crime.

As a kid, Billy did not belong to any clubs and expressed a dislike for "supervised recreation." He preferred playing in the streets. He did not belong to a gang, but he did associate with a large number of peers, all boys, some the same age as he and some older. Companions played an important role in Billy's life history.

Juvenile Delinquency

According to his criminal record, Billy's juvenile delinquency began relatively late for someone who offends persistently over the life course—age 15. As a teenager, Billy stole cars. He was a confirmed "hot boxer" (car thief). Along with other delinquent companions, Billy stole cars for immediate use, not profit. When interviewed at age 15, he estimated that he had stolen about 50 cars.[2] He also reported being drunk on several occasions.

In contrast to his official record regarding the onset of delinquency, Billy's self-report indicated that he began his criminal career at age 6, when he started stealing from the 5 & 10. Sounding like Stanley from *The Jack-Roller* (Shaw 1930), Billy said that older friends took him to Codman Square (a shopping district in Dorchester) on Saturdays and initiated him into the art of snatching items (such as candy, jackknives, toys, and comic books) from the 5 & 10 store counter. This earlier age of onset is consistent with much research on criminal careers and points out the need for multiple sources of data (Farrington, Loeber, et al. 1990; Patterson, Crosby, and Vuchinich 1992). Billy also reported running away, gambling, late hours, drinking, truancy, hopping trucks, and sneaking admission into shows. His total unofficial delinquency score was 14, about average for the delinquent sample from the Gluecks' study.

Billy's delinquent companions also taught him how to "fish" cars (steal items from cars) and steal cars. In his file, the Gluecks' investigator wrote,

> As a little boy, probably not old enough to be held legally responsible for criminal acts, he used to toddle along with older delinquent boys who would let him go with them to "fish" cars. This merged into going to ride with them in "hot boxes" so that he became trained by imitation of experts in all the techniques of fishing and stealing cars, or rather, stealing especially those cars that appeared to contain "good fishing." To follow, look on, help, become expert and finally to be one of the most sought for and most welcome partners in these automotive delinquent projects was and probably still is a great emotional satisfaction to the boy. In this way he found what in reality for him is the joy of life. Long before his commitment to Shirley [Industrial School for Boys], he had arrived at the status of what we may call a consulting engineer in all the knotty problems of getting into, starting, and driving locked cars.

This is suggestive evidence for the significance of peer influences in the onset of crime in Billy's life (see Warr 2002).

With respect to personality, Billy was described in his psychiatric report at age 15 as "stubborn, extraverted in action and feeling, and having poor insight." The psychiatrist also noted that Billy was "suggestible" and that he suffered from "social insecurity." Billy's mother reported in the home investigation that he was "always stubborn and very nervous." His Rorschach assessment revealed "marked hostile and aggressive trends."

Billy and his parents attributed his involvement in delinquency to his association with delinquent companions. In fact, "hot-boxing" (stealing cars) was the preferred type of delinquency in the neighborhood. Several sources reported that Billy insisted in going out with his delinquent friends. Billy's official criminal record consisted of ten arrests as a juvenile (before age 17 in Massachusetts). He was committed to the Industrial School for Boys at Shirley on three different occasions, serving a total of 392 days.

When Billy was sent to the Shirley School for the first time (at age 15), he said, "it was the greatest." From Billy's vantage point, the reform school at Shirley had everything, even a swimming pool. For Billy, it was "exciting . . . like going to a farm." Significantly, he did not see his incarceration as punishment at all—"it was just going away for a while and then you came home." When you returned home, "of course, you made it sound like it was kind of tough but you made it. But it wasn't." Despite all of the fun, Billy did reveal that for the first month he was there he "cried his head off" because he had never been away from home before. He wrote to his parents every week, and they maintained contact by visiting him frequently. Nevertheless, when he was released he met the "old gang again and was back into trouble."

Crime in Young Adulthood

Billy logged eight arrests between ages 17 and 25. During a two-month crime spree when he was 18, Billy and a co-offender committed at least twenty armed robberies. The pair spent their illegal gains on alcohol, women, and gambling. During this period, Billy also committed auto theft, larceny, and burglary. Between the ages of 17 and 25, Billy spent 7¼ years in prison (first at the Massachusetts Reformatory, then at the state prison at Charlestown).

At his age 25 interview, conducted in prison, Billy said that when he found out he could not get a job, he decided to get "big money" fast by robbing people. At the time of the interview, he was classified as one of the "eight most dangerous inmates" at state prison, although this designation may mean that he was "dangerous to the Department of Corrections" because Billy was outspoken and critical of the correctional system. At his age 25 interview, Billy also related that he feared his life would be "nothing but a continuous prison term." He had lost hope for any kind of "civilian job." Billy experienced no arrests between ages 25 and 32, perhaps only because of his prison confinement throughout virtually the whole period.

When asked for the reasons he was delinquent, at age 25 Billy responded, "I have no one but myself to blame for my troubles. You need help to go straight—I did not get any—hence I went back with my old companions, and drifted into crime." Perhaps surprisingly, Billy initially maintained close family ties during his confinement, and his family frequently visited him in prison. His father was described as "loyal and interested." Billy had planned on working with him as a plumber's helper when he was released from prison. Later, however, during the 1960s, Billy "lost" his family when he was sent to state prison. Although his father still visited him regularly, Billy said later that his father hated him for what he had done. His mother also visited him when she could, but eventually she went into a nursing

home. The rest of Billy's family "disowned him." When Billy was released from prison in the 1970s, he lived with his two sisters, but eventually they asked him to find his own place. When he left, he never saw his family again until recently, at the age of 68. Much of Billy's mid-life experiences outside of prison consisted of floating from place to place looking for a spot to stay.

Crime in Mid-Life and Beyond, Ages 32 to 70

Billy was arrested eight times after age 32 for a variety of crimes, including armed robbery (twelve counts), larceny, possession of a deadly weapon, auto theft, and assault and battery with a deadly weapon. Not surprisingly in light of this record, Billy spent considerable time in prison after age 32—we estimate a total of seventeen years. For instance, at age 32 his parole was revoked when he was implicated in twelve armed robberies. In 1960 he was sentenced to state prison to serve a term of five to eight years for these robberies. Then, about two years after his release on parole in 1965, he was arrested again for armed robbery (seven counts) of several package and convenience stores in the greater Boston area and sentenced again to prison for a term of seven to ten years. He served six years and was released in 1973, as we shall see. Billy was then arrested in 1981 for receiving stolen property (a motor vehicle). He was given a suspended sentence and placed on probation with an order to pay over $5,000 in restitution. At age 58, he was arrested again for receiving stolen goods and resisting arrest. He served one year in the house of correction in New Hampshire for this crime; this was his first arrest and commitment outside of Massachusetts. Still not finished, Billy was arrested at age 59 for armed bank robbery, conspiracy to commit bank robbery, and bank robbery with force and violence. He was sentenced to ten years in the federal correctional system for this offense.

Yet according to prison reports, at the age of 46, Billy was described as "courteous, polite, and cooperative." When he was 58 years old, Billy received his high school equivalency diploma in the house of correction. Earlier in his life, despite an eighth-grade education, Billy became an effective jailhouse lawyer.[3] In fact, he won a case that led to his outright release in the early 1970s. Billy also challenged his convictions on the federal charges of bank robbery, but he was unsuccessful in these legal challenges.[4]

Pathways to Desistance in Young Adulthood: The Road Not Taken

From our prior research (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 1993) and the life histories presented in the previous chapter, we identified at least three pathways leading away from crime in the transition from adolescence to young adulthood—strong bonds to work, strong ties to a spouse, and a successful military experience. From our narratives, we also discovered that for some men who desisted from crime, incarceration in the Lyman School was a "turning point" that deflected them away from crime. Here we look at Billy's life experiences in each of these domains.

Employment

Billy never really worked at an everyday job through most of his adult life. From his age 25 interview, we learned that the longest job he ever had was at age 16, when he worked as a plumber's helper for eight months. This fact was confirmed in our interview at age 68. Billy did, however, hold a variety of other jobs for a brief period of time. For example, he worked as a painter, parking attendant, pipe fitter, laundry attendant, and helper on an ice truck, and he did odd jobs around the house. At age 68, Billy recounted his work experiences: "I was more or less doing odds-and-ends jobs like helping people move and whatever I could find to make a few bucks. I never really had a good job." Billy often did chores in exchange for food and lodging. For instance, he would baby-sit for friends, or he would drive his friends and their children to work and school. Billy was in this kind of work and family situation for most of his adult life when he was not incarcerated.[5]

Marriage

Billy was married once during the 1950s. He met his wife in a restaurant in Boston. He recalled that she was going out with some "bike-y" and was having a problem with him.

> She wanted to get away from him so she came with me and lived with me. We got married and then the bills started piling up and I just got in trouble again. I couldn't make it. So we started stealing and robbing and I got myself back in prison. And she divorced me. I was only married a very short time, probably about nine months. I tried to straighten out but I couldn't. I was in too deep.

Military Service

Billy tried to volunteer for the service at the age of 23, but he was rejected because of his record. When we asked him about this incident during his interview, however, Billy said that he tried to enlist, but was not accepted because of his health. "The health I think is the thing that turned me down. I don't know why."

At a second interview, the military came up again. Billy was asked if he thought that the military could have turned him around. He answered,

> I tried to get into the military. Yes, I did. I tried. And the reason they wouldn't let me in was because I was stealing cars. My record really hurt me. Once you get arrested, you're going to pay for it the rest of your life. Even though you did your time. I feel that once you did your time that should be it. But then again, three strikes you're out.

Reform School

As we have seen, Billy thought the reform school at Shirley was "the greatest." The only thing that Billy did not like was "that you had to go to bed early." Reform school seemed to have little positive or negative effect on his subsequent criminal behavior. What is evident is that for Billy reform school had no deterrent effect, as it did for some men we interviewed (see Chapter 6). Billy told us, "Actually it wasn't punishment at all. It was just going away for a while and then you came home."

The Lack of Positive Turning Points

Billy seems to have had little opportunity or ability to engage successfully in the traditional pathways away from crime. He did not serve in the military, he did not have a steady job that he was willing to invest in (or an employer to invest in him), and he did not have any strong ties to a spouse. Moreover, the effect of being sent to reform school was apparently innocuous. Of course, a critical issue is whether these are the factors that influenced Billy's continued involvement in crime or whether they are the consequences of his rather obvious propensity for trouble. Without any structural turning points and subsequent social ties to deflect his criminal trajectory toward conformity, his remaining social networks consisted of like-minded delinquent peers.

Even the concept of a life-altering turning point was different for Billy. When asked if he had any turning points in his life, Billy responded,

> Well, the turning point—it may sound silly to you—but I got to learn how to drive when I was real young and I enjoyed it. And I remember going over to Somerville and I bought a car. I put a down payment on it. And at that time I was working with a guy that was doing plumbing work. And he was paying me so much money a week and I was putting it away because I had been living with my mother and father and didn't have to pay no rent. So I saved up a little bit of money and I saw this car that I liked very, very much and I bought it. I put the down payment down and I was paying the rest the following week. And I had thought at that time because I put the down payment that . . . my father would help me to pay for the rest of it, which was probably a lot then for him. But it seemed so little to me [the amount was about $300]. And he refused to help me. And they took the car back and I lost the down payment. That's when I said to myself, "Well, I'll get a car." And I went out and stole it. And I kept stealing them. When they would run out of gas, I would just leave them. I never wrecked one. I never had one longer than like a week. And then I would only drive it in the daytime. Because in the day time, you could see the police car a mile away; in the night time they could be right behind you and you wouldn't know it.

Billy was only 15 years old when this incident took place, and yet his trouble seemed to start well before. Perhaps for Billy this was the turning point that solidified his path to persistent offending. Or perhaps Billy's account merely reveals the potential for distortion inherent in retrospective self-reports of salient life events and their significance for understanding lives. This conundrum presents a major challenge for narrative analysis, one that we shall keep addressing. Our strategy is to probe deeper into the narratives and then reevaluate the emergent framework with further analysis of our quantitative data.

What Sustains Crime in Adulthood?

What sustains crime in adulthood, and what accounts for persistent offending over the life course? It would be easy to conclude that Billy continued to commit crime as an adult because he lacked the human and social capital necessary to desist. Indeed, Billy lacked social bonds, and informal social control was not a factor in his adult life. Formal sanctions had little influence as well. But we are not willing to

accept this explanation for Billy's persistent offending as the whole story.

There are many puzzles in Billy's life history. Probably most significant is that little in his early life record portended a life of adult crime and violence and more than thirty years in prison. Many of the delinquents in the Gluecks' study had more extensive and more violent juvenile records. To dig deeper into Billy's life, we draw on detailed information culled from our interviews. We first interviewed Billy for this study when he was 68 years old and on parole from federal prison. The interview took place in his home in a working-class neighborhood in Boston. Subsequently we interviewed Billy again at his home and on occasion met over lunch at a local restaurant.

Here we explore the role of personal agency, the immediate situation (or what Katz (1988) calls the foreground), and the changing social controls in the course of Billy's criminal career. More precisely, life-history narratives let us examine the motivations underlying crime, the planning of crime, the meaning of crime, and the sense of self that emerges—all from the perspective of offenders in their own words. Several important domains that emerged from Billy's narrative shed additional light on the natural history of persistent offending. We describe these domains below and conclude that a theoretical focus on informal social control needs to be augmented as well as more nuanced.

Personal Agency and Persistent Offending

From Billy's perspective, "everybody" was stealing cars in his neighborhood when he was a youth. Everybody was breaking into houses too, which Billy claimed he did not want to do. Although Billy certainly exaggerated, the kind of criminal cultural milieu in disadvantaged neighborhoods in 1940s Boston seemed to lead to even bigger things for Billy. He recalled hearing about the money one could make robbing people and he tried it and it worked. Billy asserted, "It was so easy, it was pathetic. I just kept saying to myself, 'I'm going to get caught.' But I never did [*sic*]. It was easy."

When Billy robbed liquor stores and other commercial establishments, he typically worked with a partner. One or both of them would carry a gun. Most of the robberies occurred during the evenings, around dinner or closing time. Billy and his partner didn't put much thought into what store they would rob. Billy recalled,

> I was desperate. I would steal a car. And I would drive around until I thought it was safe for me to go in, and rob the store. And hope that a person wouldn't put up a fight, which they never did. And I'm glad. Because I don't know what I would have done. I'm glad it never turned out that way. But when I went in—and I was desperate—it was possible I could have done anything. Because when I was desperate—I don't know if you know what it's like to be without—it's not easy. I got to the point where I had to have money and it was the only way I could get it. I couldn't get a job because I couldn't do any kind of work.

Yet Billy does not see himself as a violent person. When asked if he had any kind of violence in his history, Billy said, "None whatsoever. I've been shot by the police, but I never hurt anyone. I have never shot anybody. I have never struck anybody . . . in my life actually."[6] For Billy, it is as if violence is distinct from crime. He remarked, "If I hurt a person, I'm not just hurting that person, but I'm hurting his family . . . But I could never do that. I'm probably capable of doing it, but I just don't want to do it."

Billy used a gun to commit robberies just to make the theft of cash easier. He said that using the gun was just a "phony front" to get money. When asked if he was prepared to use his gun, Billy replied, "I don't know what I would have did. I can't say because it never happened. But when I would go in there I would go in there because I needed that money. And that's what I would go in there to get—that money."

Billy went on to say that he selected liquor stores because they were easy to rob and "I figured they had more money than a delicatessen or whatever or any of them places." Billy avoided other kinds of more lucrative robbery (for example, banks, armored cars) and dealing drugs.[7] "I just didn't want to go into banks then. I didn't run with the drugs. I was offered a billion times to go into drugs and I said, 'No. I don't like drugs.' " Billy also shunned burglary. He explained, "Well, I just didn't want to go in anyone's house. Because I look back watching my mother and my father—what little they had. If somebody came in and took it, it probably would have killed them. And when I rob a liquor store, I figure, 'Well, they're insured.' " Billy also observed, "I knew that if I took $500 from the liquor store, those people in the liquor store would say I took $2000 and their insurance company would pay them back $2000. They would say I took $900 when I took $100. Because I would see it in the paper. And at the trial some-

times they would say, 'Well, he took $5000 out of my store.' And I only took probably $100 or $150. And there's nothing I could say to prove different."

Billy's rationalizations are familiar. Sykes and Matza (1957) some time ago discussed techniques of neutralization that facilitate the commission of crime. Billy seems to be evoking the idea of "denial of injury"—for example, no one was really hurt here. Or that the money was insured. Equally important is the allusion to a cynical worldview that implies everyone is corrupt. For Billy, even so-called straights commit crime in their own way. Ultimately, however, Billy openly admitted his crimes and claimed that he "alone was responsible—I knew it was wrong."

The Initial Attraction and Excitement of Crime

Billy was attracted to crime early in life, despite relatively strong informal social control by his family. Of course, his predilection may have been due in part to the influence of delinquent peers. There is evidence that delinquent peers play a major role in the onset of delinquency (see, for example, Warr 2002). Moreover, Billy lacked strong ties to school, an important indicator of delinquency (see Sampson and Laub 1993). Billy did feel rejected as a kid, and he believed that he was treated unfairly (see, for example, Patterson 1982; Coie and Dodge 1998). Whatever the underlying reason, however, Billy was clearly drawn to crime at a young age, and he persisted in criminal activity until he was in his late fifties. As a kid he stole cars and as an adult he was an armed robber. Billy told us proudly, "My entire record is stealing cars and armed robbery."[8] He was attracted to this kind of crime because it was "easy" and, as indicated above, his values steered him away from other forms of criminal activity.

We asked Billy what motivated these crime sprees. He stated emphatically that his main motive was to get money. He went on, "I just ran amuck. Why I did it—like I said, I needed money. But I got in so deep I couldn't get out, so I kept going. I flipped right out. I didn't care what happened to me. I just did everything." Billy would spend the money he obtained in the robberies on rent, food, cigarettes, booze, gambling, and women.

In addition, Billy believed that he would never get caught, and that if he did get caught once, he would learn from that mistake to avoid being caught in the future. The idea of deterrence as a means to prevent crime did not seem to affect Billy's decision making (see also Shover 1996; Wright and Decker 1994, 1997). What is clear from Billy's narrative is that crime was an attractive alternative to conformity. It was exciting.

At age 68, Billy was asked what he remembered the most from his adolescence. Being shot at by the police and getting away, he responded. He was 16 years old at the time and had run away from the reform school at Shirley. He and another inmate had stolen a car and were heading to New York City. Although the police had set up a roadblock to capture them, Billy and his co-offender managed to escape, albeit not without a gunshot wound. Billy also recalled the excitement of participating in a prison riot at the state prison at Charlestown. More than forty years later, he told both stories with great animation. As we discuss below, Billy's narrative suggests that social scientists should pay more attention to the attractive elements of crime (Katz 1988). Bordua (1961a) argued long ago that crime can be, and often is, fun.

A Long-Standing Resentment of Authority

Willis (1977) points out that a central element of working-class male culture is opposition to authority and rejection of the conformist. Willis argues that "this opposition involves an apparent inversion of the usual values [for example, diligence, deference, respect] held up by authority." (1977, 12; see also Cohen 1955). Resisting authority is thus part of the attraction of crime (Katz 1988). In Fox Butterfield's *All God's Children* (1995), Butch and Willie, who as children would not obey their parents, bullied their neighbors, and defied their teachers at school, are illustrative examples of this defiance toward authority. Sherman (1993) extends the idea of defiance to explain the conditions under which criminal sanctions backfire and increase crime.

Consistent with these works, another theme that emerges in Billy's narrative is defiance and resentment of authority. Billy did not want to do anything that was "forced" on him. From early on, he resented having to go to school. Billy was also not swayed by his parents' attempts to control him. Once when he was upset with his parents, he stole his father's car, left it on the steps of the courthouse, and told his father he did it. Billy said, "I knew it was wrong. At the time I just didn't care about nothing."

Even the Gluecks' investigator noted that Billy was not respect-

ful of authority, especially the police, because he thought they were "dumb." Following on this point, Billy's parole officer in 1945 found him "thoroughly uncooperative, antisocial, and a vicious criminal who has absolutely no respect whatever for any kind of decency or law enforcing agency."

Alcohol Abuse and Losing Control

When Billy described his crime sprees in more detail, his life seemed out of control.

> What got me off track was when I came out I stayed with my sisters for a while and it was hard. Then I just took off. I never came back. I quit my job and I went from one friend to another friend. I didn't want to impose on anyone. "Damn it," I said to myself, "I got to get another job." So I got another job and I was painting and I was getting sick from the paint. So I quit that. I tried again. In the meantime I had no meals and every time I went on the train it was costing me money. It wasn't much but I didn't have much. So from there I said, "Well, I don't know what to do?"—so I'd go out and steal a car, sell the car. Doing things like that. Buy food here from the money I got for the car. Actually that's all I really was into was cars at that time. And even when I came out, it was my way of moving around. I didn't like trains. I didn't like buses. And I couldn't afford a car, so I stole them. I think if I had a good car and a halfway decent job like I got now I could have made it. But things got tighter and tighter and then I got arrested in New Hampshire.

Billy served one year in New Hampshire on a charge of receiving stolen goods, in this case, a car. Incidentally, Billy's reputation from Massachusetts affected his stay in the New Hampshire jail. He reported, "I was a trustee and I got a job—they created it for me—just to keep me happy." This was because, they said, "you was in a riot at Charlestown. We don't want no riots here. And we're going to try to make you happy while you're here." Billy was serving a one-year sentence, and one week before his release, the FBI arrested him for a bank robbery in Maine.

When he was not in jail during this period, Billy was drinking quite heavily. He told us,

> I was drinking everything. I couldn't sit here without drinking and talking to you. I'd have to drink. I was drinking vodka, Southern Comfort, and Jack Daniels. Drinking all them three, yeah, heavy. I passed out drinking them. Pretty close to every day. Now I don't drink because of my heart. And it was one of two evils I got rid of: cigarettes or the booze. I got rid of the booze, and I continued with the cigarettes. And I'm trying to stop that but it's not that easy. I've been smoking all my life, and I had been drinking very heavily. And the reason I'm able to stay off that is you can't buy beer or liquor in prison. But you can buy cigarettes.

Like many persistent offenders, Billy had a serious problem with alcohol that contributed to his sense of losing control over his life (Katz 1988; Shover 1996). In Shover's research on criminal careers, there is evidence that alcohol abuse promotes a mood of desperation. Vaillant (1983) notes that over time progressive alcoholism involves a loss of control.

The Prison Experience

One of the most striking aspects of Billy's life history is the amount of time he spent in prisons and jails. By our estimate, Billy had spent about half his life in these institutions (roughly thirty-two years), experiencing what Sykes (1958) called the "pains of imprisonment." Most recently, Billy did a stint in a federal prison for bank robbery. During the 1980s, he spent time in the house of correction in New Hampshire. During the 1960s and 1970s, he spent time in state prison in Massachusetts. In the 1950s, Billy was in state prison and served time in forestry camps. At age 68, Billy stated that prisons were "terrible." He went on to say, "I've seen everything in prison. Everything!"

One salient event in Billy's time in prison was a riot at the Charlestown State Prison in the early 1950s. The riot was precipitated by concerns about food. Billy explained,

> I don't know if you've heard anything or know anything about Charlestown [the state prison at the time], but they never had a kitchen where you could eat, a dining room where you could eat. What they did was open the door in the morning and you came down and you went to the window and you had guys with hash barrels there. And they had stew in this barrel, potatoes in this barrel. And they gave you one scoop each. You could see bugs and everything else in it. The place was infested with cockroaches. There was no way you could look you'd see nothing but cockroaches. Thousands of them. And you took your food back to your cell. You sat down and you ate. You had no toilet in your room and no sink. Every morning on the way to work you had to take your bucket, carry it down and empty it, rinse it and put some white stuff in there to take the smell away. And water was brought to you like maybe twice a night. An inmate that was trusted was out and he'd walk around with a

pitcher and you'd put your little tin cup out and he'd fill it up. That was your water. And if you wanted to shave, you had a little metal dish and in the morning they'd bring warm water and let you shave. Now you've got to time yourself. You had to eat and shave and get out the door on time or you're in trouble. When you came out, you stepped out your door, put your hand on the shoulder of the guy in front of you and carried your bucket in this hand. And you couldn't take your hand off that guy's shoulder until you reached the bucket; that's where you emptied it, rinsed it and put stuff in it. Then they have a crew of guys that brought them back. Because the number of your cell was on the bucket. They used to bring the buckets back—like the west wing, south wing, north wing, east wing. And it was tough. It was tough.

Regarding the riot, Billy provided the following account: "There was 52 of us; I was one of them. I destroyed the dentist's room. We took over the whole prison." Billy was especially angry with the dentist from a previous encounter.

I went into the dentist one time and I asked him to pull a tooth; it hurt. And he says, "I'll pull it for you." And he got me in the chair and stuck the needle in. And he started pulling and I said, "It's hurting." I was trying to tell him it's hurting. I was trying to push his hand away but he forced his hand back in and he yanked it out. I mean he did an awful job when he pulled it. I was mad at him. Then when the riot come off, I got into it. And the first thing I did was go up there and destroy the whole dentist's office—destroyed the whole thing. And I told him afterwards, "That's why I did it."

Like many criminal acts, this one had a context and a history. Billy's punishment for participating in the riot was confinement in "the hole" on bread and water for 10 days. In addition, he lost all of his good time.

The question remains: why wasn't prison a turning point for Billy? When asked that question, he admitted that it was hard to say: "Like I said, prisons are horrible places. I have seen more people get killed in prison than on the street. I think prisons toughen you up to a point that you don't care. Just like today, the average kid will shoot another kid in the head and don't care about the consequences." Billy has strong feelings on the inability of prison to reduce crime. He explained,

I went in for stealing cars. I wouldn't dream of robbing anybody or breaking into a house. When I was in there I used to see these guys there

with money and they could go to the commissary and whatever. And they were all in for armed robberies and things like that. And they used to brag about it. And I used to listen. They were telling me how easy it was. And it was that easy. And it still is that easy. But the consequences, I never thought of them. I never gave it a thought. And then when I did it was too late, you know.

Billy continued, "A prison will either break ya or make ya. And if it breaks ya, you don't want to do time. And if it makes ya, you don't care about nobody but yourself. And if someone nabs you with a knife, you're going to go back at them. But if they break ya, you ain't going back."

Billy's long experiences of confinement suggest a pattern of "institutional dependency" (Straus 1974). Straus describes this as a characteristic of people who have lived long periods of time in institutions where their basic needs are provided, their expression of initiative is prohibited, and they are cut off from normal socializing experiences of family and work so that they are unable to cope satisfactorily with independent living in the larger society (1974, 334). Along similar lines, Glaser (1969, 325) pointed out that "a lack of long-range focus on either criminal or conventional life after prison seems to distinguish the most highly institutionalized individuals who may prove relatively inept at both criminal and noncriminal pursuits after release."

The Long-Term Consequences of Crime

Billy currently rents a one-bedroom apartment in a working-class neighborhood in Boston for $450 a month. When we first met him, he told us that this was the first time in his life he had a place of his own. "It's the first apartment I've ever had!" he gushed with the excitement of a 18-year-old moving out on his own for the first time. Previously, Billy had lived in rooming houses, with friends, or in prisons.

Billy works as a bus driver and has held his job for more than three years. He was able to get his driver's license with the help of his parole officer. Billy had no work skills, but he could drive. All he needed was a license. Despite a steady job, there is still uncertainty and an edge to Billy's future. He explained:

I still feel kind of uncomfortable, even though I've been out like three years now. It's actually the first time I ever held a job this long. I haven't

> been in trouble. No police officers have ever came over and asked me anything or anything like that. And it makes me feel good because I know I'm in here and they can't say I'm doing something out there. I work every day, except Saturdays and Sundays now. I stopped working on Saturdays and Sundays because I don't want these people [Social Security] to think I'm trying to buy a Cadillac or a home.

Although working and trying to avoid trouble that would lead to a return to prison, Billy still hopes to get a big score from the lottery. His lucky number is 8104, which was his mother's phone number before she died. When asked why he plays the lottery with his small discretionary income, he reasoned,

> I keep thinking it's going to keep coming up. And it has. That's how I am. I get desperate and I'm trying to say, "I don't want to go out and do nothing wrong. So I'm going to put in this number." I put in 5 Quick Picks and I always have my 8104 there. When I get a little extra money I'll pour it all into a couple of those.

Perhaps most striking is the routine in Billy's life now, especially in contrast to the carefree days of his youth and nearly all of his adulthood when he was involved in crime. Billy works all week long driving a bus, two shifts a day. He leaves his house at 5 o'clock in the morning and gets home about 10 or 10:30 A.M. He leaves again for work at 1:30 and gets home about 7:30 P.M. Saturday mornings he usually stays in and cleans his house. Then he does his food shopping. On Sundays, he goes over to his sisters' or his brother's house and helps them out with chores.

There is still a precariousness to Billy's everyday life that we believe is tied to the consequences of a life of crime. We assess some of these consequences below.

Family

During the interview, Billy talked about the importance of reconnecting with his family. "I just wanted to be—you know, back with the family. I had never seen my family for all them years. Never. Never got a visit all the time I was in the federal prison. Never. I never got letters, never got Christmas cards, never got nothing."

Billy's mother died while he was in prison in Massachusetts. He recalled being taken to the funeral parlor in handcuffs while he paid his last respects. His father died shortly after Billy was released from prison in the early 1970s, and he had had little relationship with him during his long incarceration.

Now Billy's family situation is very different. Billy summarized:

> But now I see the difference. They wanted to help me but I just didn't give them a chance. And since then, since I've been out, I've been going every week over to my sister's. I did her back stairs for her, because she is older than I am. And I did her front steps. I painted everything for her. I cut down trees for her. And once in a while I go up to my sister's in New Hampshire. Plus I can only stop at her place when I'm working because I can't leave the state without permission.

According to information from Billy's age 25 interview, these two sisters were described as loyal to their brother.

Health

Billy had two heart attacks while in federal prison. "I thought it worked out fine until six months later I almost dropped dead. I was working . . . The next thing I knew I was on a plane, being shipped to Missouri. They did four bypasses. And they opened my leg up, took the vein out of the leg. The scar goes all the way up. And my leg hasn't been right since then." Billy developed diabetes in prison too. We asked him if he worried about his health and he said, "No, because sometimes I don't care." He smokes a pack of cigarettes a day, but he is trying to quit. "I know I shouldn't [smoke] but I do. I'm very nervous and it's the only thing—it may not help me but I feel it helps me." Billy has tried to stop smoking. In fact, he says his doctors have told him a hundred times to quit, but he can't.

Billy still drinks alcohol, but "just a little bit." In a week, he probably drinks four small cans of beer. When Billy does drink, he drinks at home. The serious problem he had with alcohol when he was younger has abated. "That was one of my big problems. I drank too much." Billy experienced blackouts and tried to cut down, but he was not successful in reducing his alcohol intake until he was sent to prison. "Then I had no choice." After Billy was released from prison, he got sick when he drank. "I was away from the liquor for so long I tried it when I come out and I got so sick. I just couldn't take it."

A Last Chance at Redemption?

Looking back on his life, Billy viewed it as "a waste, a real waste." He admits that when he was younger he didn't care about anything and

he didn't think about the consequences of his actions. He continued, "I'm just going along thinking back all the years that I've wasted. I think if I had what I had now I don't believe I would have had to do what I did as I was coming up, you know. There's no reason for me to do anything wrong (now). But before I had no choice." As Billy told us of his regret, he wept considerably.

Although it may be too late, Billy said, "Today I have a lot of good friends again. Hopefully, I just hope that I can make it." About a year later, Billy said that he was the "happiest he had ever been." He went on to declare, "I licked it, I really have. It feels good." He joked, "I don't think I will need to get the old pistole again," making the shape of a gun with his fingers.

Unpacking the Process of Persistent Offending

Data from additional persistent offenders' narratives will allow us to develop in more detail some of the themes that emerged in Boston Billy's life history. One intriguing idea concerns the lack of positive turning points in Billy's life. It was as if Billy was never structurally positioned to experience any concerted effort moving him toward desistance. Several other themes also appeared important in sustaining Billy's criminal activity over the long haul. The most striking of these included actions taken by Billy himself (human agency), serious alcohol abuse, and long-term institutional confinement in prison. These emergent themes fit within our expanded version of informal social control theory, aiding our effort to explain both continuity and discontinuity in offending over the life course.

The Lifestyles of Persistent Offenders

The life-course persistent offenders we interviewed exhibited chaotic lives in multiple dimensions (residences, work, family). When asked about residential arrangements, Buddy told us, "Oh, my God, I bounced all around. Well, I've been in and out of jail all my life." He guessed that he had lived in about twenty places in the last thirty-five years (when he was not in jail or prison). By his own account, he worked about five years of his life, "except when I was in the can." Buddy never married, although he "lived with broads." Like Boston Billy, Buddy displayed remarkable continuity in antisocial behavior in several domains. He engaged in illegal and deviant activities in the

community, the military, and prison. He was arrested thirty-seven times. He guesses that for every robbery for which he got caught, he probably committed two.

Nor were other persistent offenders we interviewed well positioned to take advantage of available opportunities to desist from crime. This situation was exacerbated by long periods of confinement in prison or several short-term incarcerations. It was not unusual for this group of offenders to have spent most of their young adulthood (ages 17 to 32) in prison or jail (see Table 7.1 for more details). Many of these men had unstable living arrangements. Several moved frequently, including being in and out of jail. Others were in "off-time" family situations for their cohort. For example, one man we interviewed was a new father at age 53 and another at age 57.

As for work, virtually none of the persistent offenders held a steady job or had a trade. Table 7.2 displays a measure of job instability for each of the 14 men. The average for the group is .78 (with 1.00 equaling unstable). Among those who did work, many worked seasonal jobs in construction, in roofing, or as a longshoreman. Others worked on and off as painters, day laborers, or bartenders.

The persistent offenders also had difficulty in the military. Most saw their participation (or attempts to participate) in the military as, upon reflection, a big mistake. Some of the men tried to enter the military through fraudulent means (most commonly using an assumed name or reporting their age to be older than it was).[9] Others who entered legally went AWOL or generally disregarded orders. One man was in the military for a little more than six months and spent most of this time in the guardhouse. Ultimately the vast majority of persistent offenders either could not enter the military because of their record or received a dishonorable (undesirable or bad conduct) discharge once they did serve (see Table 7.2).

Finally, most of the persistent offenders were divorced or had never married at the time we interviewed them. Some had a history of marital instability, marrying several times (see Table 7.2). For example, Gino was married five times. He is the persistent offender whom we quoted in Chapter 3 as saying "a change of pasture makes the cow fat." A few of the men were married for lengthy periods, yet they continued their pattern of persistent offending. Although marriage was not a turning point for these men, the idea of marriage to the right woman appealed to most of them.

Turning Points in the Lives of Persistent Offenders

Unlike the desisters, who pointed to turning points in their lives such as marriage, work, the military, and reform school that helped move them away from crime, in general turning points are absent or of a different kind in the lives of persistent offenders. For some persistent offenders, typical turning points—marriage or serving in the military—are even seen as "backfiring" and making offenders worse off than when they started.

Some of the persistent offenders we interviewed claimed that they had no turning points. When Nicky was asked if he had any turning points in his life, he responded, "No, not really. I've had wasted years, you know." Others were more direct and emphatic. Harry said in response to the same question, "I don't think so, sir. I can't recall of any." He continued, "Well, whatever I did with my life, I can blame myself for it. Because I had nobody to influence me or steer me in a certain direction. Whatever I did was pretty much on my own."

Some of the men described turning points that accounted for their persistence in criminal offending. Looking back on his life, Buddy thought he kept getting in trouble because of his Lyman School experience, which made him "so mad" that he "just hated society for the rest of his life." At age 69, he told the following story:

> I was threw in with guys your size [6 feet, 2 inches, 200 lbs.] and I'm only a kid twelve years old. They'd punch you right in the face, you know. Beat the hell out of you; like if you pissed in bed, which I used to do when I was a kid. I was very nervous or something. They'd scrub you with scrubbing brushes and stuff like that. They'd scrub you until you was raw; your skin was all raw. So I got so aggravated because of this experience that I hated any kind of rules or regulations, you know, when I got out. And I'd do things just because I wanted to aggravate people. You know what I'm saying? I wasn't mean. I wouldn't try to hurt people. But I'd take their money away from them. Like walk into a store and stick them up or something like that. But the only reason I did that—I don't think it was because I was so greedy. Because I didn't look for a whole bunch of money. It was just that I wanted something and that was where I was going to get it.

We asked Buddy if he still felt a sense of injustice about the system and what it did to him. He replied, "I probably do because I look for it in everything." Buddy expounded this theme of perceived victimization as a turning point in his life as he described an earlier incident.

> I'd say I was only 9 or 10 years old when I started my running away. I wound up in Vermont for a while. The Children's Aid Society took me in and put me in a foster home in Vermont. But anyway I come home one day and all the little things that I had done—you know, I'd break a dish or something or I'd put a little duckling in a thing of water. I'm only a kid and I figured ducks know how to swim when they're small. And this thing just sunk and before I got him out he was drowned. But anyway all this stuff was listed. Mr. [name]—he was my social worker at the time—he used to come up and see me every once in a while. So he made an agreement with me. He says, "Listen, it's a long way to school. You'd like to have a bike, wouldn't you?" I'd say, "Oh, yeah." So he says, "If you save half, I'll put the other half with it and buy you a bike." So I had the jar in the chest, in the bureau—so I used to put all my nickels and dimes and pennies. So anyway we were out picking blueberries one day and I come home and I went to my jar. So I looked in the thing—so I was going to count how much money I had saved and there was a note in there that everything that I had done wrong—like any dish that I had broke, and she was going to take all of the money that I saved. [Buddy became very upset and teary at this point in retelling this story.] Anyway I took all of my money, you know, out of the jar and put it in my pocket, put on my Sunday shoes, and went through the woods, got on a highway and tried to hitchhike back to Boston.

Although this touching story may be true, there is no record of the incident as Buddy described it in the Gluecks' records. We did find a statement from a social worker indicating that Buddy left his foster home in Vermont because he "missed the excitement and the activity of the city" and the country was "too quiet for him." Nevertheless, Buddy recalled the episode as one of disappointment and unfairness.

One can speculate that Buddy's disappointments began with the unexpected death of his father. He had no record of persistent delinquency before his father's death when he was 10 years old. Buddy's life began to unravel from that point on and his cascade of trouble began. His mother remarried a man who was a drunk, and Buddy was left without any adequate supervision.

Although turning points can be either positive or negative, not all turning points are necessarily discrete events. Some are reactions to objective experiences and part of an ongoing process of change. Buddy related that "most of the turning points in my life were disap-

pointments in people that I figured were friends, like Jimmy. He grew up with me and he wound up ratting on me. That's been the story of my life." Buddy went on to say, "See, I have a strict sense of loyalty and I never hurt a friend, you know what I'm saying. So, those things like that happened to me are . . . you could define them as crises because they're so disturbing. Like I hate this Jimmy. Those things—hell, they're really a disturbing thing to my life, you know."

Other persistent offenders referred to turning points as missed opportunities. Gus recounted the following:

> I don't know, I feel that I could have made something out of myself real big, if I got the education. I know that, I always said that. If I ever had a chance to finish schooling, maybe get to college, I could have made something of myself. Because I was always inquisitive about things. I was always reading something on the attorney's side, or doctor's side, I always got involved in reading things that I didn't even understand. I was interested in it, but I didn't understand. So I know it was the education part. And then I kind of realized, I says, well you ain't got the education, you are what you are. Don't look for nothing in life, just be satisfied with what you got.

Gus later returned to this theme: "Like with me, education. That was my turning point. If I didn't get married at a young age, finished my high school. Who knows if I would have got a scholarship to college. See? This is it."

For other men timing of the potential turning point seemed to have made a difference in retrospect. For example, Maurice said, "As for a change, I think what happened when I was 17 in that army made things worse for me. That was down. That was really the downer, what happened there. Because I think if I had been able to go into the service after the war had ended and I would have been serving as the peace thing instead of actually being in the war. I might have liked it. I might have learned to accept discipline, which was hard for me to accept. I might have been able to continue my education while I was in the service."

Desisting Persisters?

We do not wish to imply that none of the persistent offenders ever desisted from crime. In fact, as we showed in Chapter 5, all offenders eventually desist. It is just that some do so later or at different rates than predicted by the conventional wisdom in criminology. Boston

Billy, for example, took until his sixties to finally give up on a life in crime. But another persister stopped committing crime at age 43. Without any solicitation or discussion of the turning point idea, this persistent offender said that his sister's death was his positive turning point. Charlie was in prison at the time and he was brought to the hospital to see his sister, who was dying. According to Charlie, his sister said, "I want you to promise me something." I said, "What?" She said, "You won't get in trouble again. And watch out for the kids [she had 8 children]." I said, "You've got my word." Charlie continued his account of this event: "And that was it, I haven't been in any trouble since . . . I think that was a turning point in my life; my sister dying." He returned to this incident later in his interview. "It was just, you know, what my sister asked me to do. And it was hard, believe me, because I had many opportunities to make a fast buck. I just didn't want to get in trouble again and I didn't want to break my word to her. And ever since then I've been working, made good money, good hourly wage. For the last twenty years I've made some big money working. Up until I got sick I was working fourteen, sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. It didn't bother me at all." Charlie said that his wife helped him keep out of trouble, as well. When Charlie would get nervous and anxious about bills, she encouraged him to hang in there and not revert to his old ways.

One might scoff at this description as a doubtful turning point and wonder if the interviewee is merely spinning a good tale, but a longitudinal record can shed important light on the life history. At his age 25 interview, there was considerable mention in the Gluecks' file regarding Charlie's attachment to his sister. For instance, it was noted that he and his sister corresponded weekly while he was in prison. In addition, at his age 32 interview, one of the Gluecks' investigators again remarked on Charlie's loyalty to his sister. Thus some objective data in the record confirm Charlie's strong regard for this older sibling.

Other men eventually changed because of processes similar to those that desisters experienced earlier in their lives. One wife of a persistent offender stated, "The marriage, he did a complete turnaround, you know. I wouldn't put up with that. He was a changed man." Similarly, Don described his "wife" (he was not officially married) as a "good woman." He elaborated, "I used to go out a lot—I like women myself. So I went out quite a bit, just girlfriends I had. They liked to

have a few drinks. But as soon as I got around with her, she never drank much . . . So, then I wasn't consuming what I would have normally done if I was out with the guys or the other women. So after I said, 'Hey, this thing is pretty good.' She did very good to me." Another man pointed to the military as his turning point. He stated, "Oh, the military helped me a lot. Gave me an education. Helped me know right from wrong, discipline. Be neat and clean. Yeah. In other words, the Marine Corps was like a mother and father to me . . . Like a closely knit family."

The issues surrounding turning points and change are thus complex. In discussing why some kids may have changed for the better as a result of serving a sentence in the Lyman School, Buddy remarked,

> Well, I think the difference is kids that get out [of Lyman] and straighten out have weak natures—some of them—I don't mean all of them. I'm talking about some of them. The majority of them have weak natures. They conform because that's the thing to do. Because that's the easiest way. Others figure it out. Like I finally figured it out that this is a losing game. I've wasted my goddamn life by just hating; by hating the system, you know. So, I finally figured it out. Some of the kids have got that ability to get that understanding early. Maybe they've had in their early life they've had some experience with being . . . of good and bad, you know. Where my experience for me has been mostly bad. So I responded in that way, by not wanting to take part in any goddamn thing.

There are also contingencies even in the lives of hardened offenders. It seems as though all persistent offenders had chances to go straight, but things did not work out. For Buddy, his perceived window of opportunity for change came when he was nearly forty years old. By then he was ready for change even if it ultimately did not materialize. Looking back, he said,

> Well, I figured I done enough time; I learned a trade and I was working and I was making good money. Things were going reasonably well. Except this broad would get me upset every once in a while by not showing up . . . I guess I was in love with her. Like I say, she was worse than I was. She was an alcoholic. She'd go out and be gone for a week and be back—that's why I finally got rid of her. I eventually moved over to Southie [South Boston] and went back to my old ways.

Buddy claimed that if he had met somebody "decent" (his word) he could have changed at that point. In other words, Buddy thinks that the right marriage could be a turning point for some offenders. He explained, "Positively—stability, having somebody else to take care of and give to, you know. It didn't matter too much on the take; it was to give that's important. To have somebody to help become something." Buddy mourned that he had never met a woman who wasn't a drunk.

Personal Agency and the Motivation for Persistent Offending

The motivation for those persistent offenders who were involved in robbery, burglary, and other forms of theft was clear and straightforward—"fast money." For example, when asked why he committed burglaries, Arthur responded, "Why does anybody do anything? Either because it's money, or fast money." Although some offenders preferred robbery to burglary or vice versa, there is little evidence of offender specialization.

For some men, however, the motivation for crime is more complicated. In response to the question "Why did you do it?" Jimmy replied, "Self-punishment—that is the only thing I can think of now. I didn't do it for the money. I don't care about money now or then. It was stupid. I did not steal for the money. To a certain extent, it was something to do. Once when I was drunk, I broke a window and got charged with B&E. It was stupid." Jimmy's account of his crime evokes Matza's idea of crime as infraction. "An infraction is among the few acts that immediately and demonstrably make things happen. Infraction properly and predictably invokes the criminal process. Thus, it may serve well as a symbol of restored potency" (Matza 1964, 190).

Of course, not all of the persistent offenders that we interviewed were armed robbers or burglars. Some were also involved in assaultive violence. (See Table 7.1 for the number of violent arrests for each of the 14 persistent offenders.) For example, Gus was described by the Gluecks' investigator as "evasive," "deceptive," and "vicious" at age 14. In his first arrest, Gus was accused of stealing from a blind woman at the age of 10. He was so determined to go out each night against his mother's wishes that when she resorted to hiding all of his clothes, he got around this problem by hiding an extra set of clothes himself to wear on his nightly excursions. Gus was arrested for assault and battery as a juvenile, as a young adult, and in mid-life. For offenders like Gus, individual choice (or to use Matza's term, "will") seems to

be important in understanding patterns of offending (Matza 1964). From our narratives it is clear that "will"—the mental faculty by which one deliberately chooses or decides upon a course of action—is necessary to activate crime, whether crimes of violence or crimes of theft.

We found three types of violent offenders in our persistent offender group. First, there is the Boston Billy type—men who are committed to armed robbery involving guns, but for the most part engage in little physical violence toward others. The second category of violence is a variation of what Chaiken and Chaiken (1982) call "violent predators." These men are involved in domestic violence (especially on wives), assaults on nonfamily members, larcenies, burglaries, drug dealing, and all other forms of criminal behavior. Unlike the Chaikens' violent predators, none of these men committed robbery as well. The third category comprises offenders who are continually involved in drinking and assaultive behavior. In this instance, local neighborhood values, barroom culture, and assaultive behavior are joined.

Among the persistent offenders, some calculus went into the selection of targets. For example, Charlie said that he tried to take money from the people who had it and couldn't say anything about the theft to the police. So he robbed bookies. Other robbers, such as Buddy, told us that they avoided potential targets like cabbies because they were "out struggling" to make a living. Buddy made it clear to us that he would do anything, but that he "preferred the robbery, because the money was right there." He especially liked robbing commercial establishments, because they represented those with "more power" in society. Thus Buddy used crime as a means of transcending his circumstances and triumphing over people with more power (Katz 1988).

The robbers we interviewed carried guns or knives or both. They were fully prepared to use them, if the situation demanded it. Charlie quipped, "I carried a gun. And I knew in my own mind that if somebody tried to stop me I would shoot them, I knew that." Fortunately, most of the offenders we interviewed did not have to use their weapons except for display. Importantly, and apparently unlike present-day offenders, these men chose not to carry their weapons unless they were going to commit a robbery. Charlie stated emphatically, "I never carried a gun unless I was going out to commit a crime [a robbery]. I never carried it just to be carrying one." The ramifications of this sec-

ular change in gun carrying are enormous. The persistent offenders we interviewed did not carry a gun to a bar when they went out drinking or in other social settings. The weapon had a solely instrumental purpose and was carried only on those occasions.[10] Nicky elaborated on this point:

> No, in them days you never did [carry a gun to a bar]. Yeah. When I was in trouble, . . . I don't know if you heard of Winter Hill gang [a well-known gang connected to organized crime during the 1960s]. Well, I knew every one of them. They were the only ones that carried guns at them times. But the only people they used to shoot were their enemies. It was taboo to shoot—"suckers," they'd call ordinary people. You'd be a sucker—a clean, ordinary guy. It's different today though. I think it is the dope.

Nicky seems to imply that abuse of drugs other than alcohol and changes regarding norms of gun carrying led to a change in the incidence of violence.

Finally, like Boston Billy, the men who were persistently involved in crime never thought about getting caught. That is not to say that they liked doing time—they did not. The point is that fear of punishment by the criminal justice system did not seem to influence their decision making about crime. Ironically, not being caught the first time seemed to incite further criminal activity. One persistent offender offers this insight.

> *Nicky:* The worst thing that can happen to a kid, I think, or a guy—is to go out and do something and be successful the first time out. Boy, I'll tell you, money comes easy. Then you figure. Yeah, I was driving trucks . . . I was making big money then at that time. In the '60s I was making $700 or $800 a week. Of course, I was working 100 hours a week. I got a proposition to drive a car in a bank job, so I went. Everything went off good. . . . I got a good offer, you know. Like I say, I got an offer to drive a car in a job. I was making good money. I was offered like $30,000—you know that was in the '60s. That was big money.
>
> *Q:* So was it simply then the attraction of it? Or was it also the excitement?
>
> *Nicky:* No. I was just going to drive a car once; I'd give it a try. And it worked out good, so, like I say, if you're a success, it feels

> good. So we kept going . . . it wasn't excitement. It was the money, let's face it.

Recall that Boston Billy reported that crime was so easy it was "pathetic." It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that sanctions make no difference whatsoever, especially as the men aged. Gino, for example, knew about sanctions for nonpayment of child support. He told us that if you skip paying support for two weeks you are all right, but if you skip three weeks the court will hold you in contempt. As a result, he routinely paid his child support two weeks late.

The Attraction and Excitement of Crime

According to his record in the Gluecks' file, Charlie "enjoyed delinquency" at the age of 12. Many of the persistent offenders described themselves as "hell-raisers." They seemed to possess a strong desire for action and adventure. Frankie, a confirmed "hot boxer" like Boston Billy, described himself as a "seeker" who would often hop freight trains as a kid. This group of persistent offenders was also fearless. As noted by the Gluecks' interviewer, for these boys the "Lyman School holds no terror."

Perhaps most troubling is the fact that in their adulthood as well as in their youth, these men didn't seem to care about anything or anybody. This lack of caring can be viewed as a form of alienation and seems quite different from a bumbling impulsivity or lack of self-control. The men had an "edge" about them that seemed to indicate that because they had nothing, they had nothing to lose. Thus the consequences of their actions were ignored rather than unforeseen.

Supporting the idea of the sensuality of crime, Maurice discussed the "sneaky thrill" he received from breaking and entering (see Katz 1988, 52–79). He recounted:

> The thing at that time was breaking and entering because doing that, you did it under the guise of nobody could see you. You had less chances of getting caught if you did it at the right time and there was, to me—I used to get a charge. I used to get a feeling. You know, you get euphoria, you know you're getting away with something. It's like a high, you know. And I just kept doing it, you know. And I kept getting caught.

Calculated and Articulated Resistance to Authority

Persistent offenders have a difficult time with all types of authority, rules, and structure. One of the investigators on the Gluecks' research project described Buddy at age 14 as having an "ingrown resentment for any authority." This subject was also described as having a negative and hostile attitude and a "quiet resentfulness." At age 69, Buddy told us, "I never made it on parole. I just couldn't stand any supervision." Buddy could not make it in the military either. He was in the Navy and the Army, but he got kicked out of both branches of the service. "I just couldn't conform. You know, my previous experience was in the Lyman School and being told what to do—I couldn't handle any kind of regulation. When somebody told me to do something, if I didn't think it was right I'd tell them to go and fuck themselves."

This defiant outlook was captured succinctly by Jimmy, who noted, "Ask me and I will do it. Demand it, forget it." Jimmy went on to describe crime as "a struggle for power. The more you say don't, the more I will." Similarly, Frankie was depicted as "deeply suspicious of, and hostile against, authoritative adults," according to his Rorschach assessment taken at age 14. The report went on, "He would like to get rid of them, of their rules, standards, commands, and prohibitions." Another subject, Don, was described in the Gluecks' record as "unmanageable and defiant" at age 14. As an adult, he was a drinker and a brawler. In his age 32 interview, the Gluecks' investigator said that Don was defiant toward any symbol of authority. When we spoke with him at the age of 68, he stated that as a young adult, "I was a son of a gun. I didn't care." Maurice too had problems in the military. When told that he did not have enough time in to get a furlough to see his family, Maurice remembered that he responded, "Is that right? You should have never told me that. My hackles backed right up. I said, screw him, you know. So I went AWOL."

The Gluecks' investigators were not spared from the defiance of authority by the persistent offenders. When interviewed at Deer Island House of Correction for his age 25 interview, Jimmy came into the room with a "hostile attitude." He stated, "I don't mean any disrespect to you and I have no hard feelings but we might as well get it straight right now that if you're after personal information I have nothing to say." Jimmy also expressed resentment at the Gluecks' investigators' continued interference in his "personal affairs."

For some, defiance does not diminish with age. In his interview at age 69, Harry told us, "I like to tell people off when they don't do me right." Likewise, when asked if he was still defiant at age 69, Buddy responded, "No . . . I have changed. [But] there's still a lot of that in me. Like if I get mad at somebody, I'll tell them to go and fuck them-

selves. You know, just stay away from them and avoid them. If I find out they're the kind of people that I can't handle, that have nothing to offer or that I have nothing to offer them."

The men's defiance may have been fueled by a perceived sense of injustice resulting from contact with officials of the criminal justice system. Many persistent offenders see the system as unfair and corrupt. Moreover, many of the men talked about "setups" by the police (for example, planting evidence and then arresting them), being "shaken down" by the police (for example, having their money and property taken illegally in a routine traffic stop), and general harassment (for example, showing up at the place of employment of the ex-offender to question him about alleged crimes). Similar evidence was found by Glaser (1969, 258), who reveals that a recurrent theme in the stories of prison inmates is alleged police harassment. Furthermore, some of the men we interviewed were charged with assault and battery on a police officer. Arthur told us that he did not assault any cop. They try to "break your ass, that's all. Like I said, if they don't find you guilty of something, they know you didn't do anything, they'll come up with something else."

Frankie told us he had a run-in with a police captain who afterward targeted him. The captain's officers were told to bring Frankie in any time they saw him—"these are guys [the police officers] that never even knew me, never seen me before." Frankie claimed that the captain said, "If you ever see him, bring him in. I don't give a shit if he's doing nothing. Bring him in." According to Frankie, most of his early crime consisted of automobile theft because "this bum [the police captain] up here wouldn't give me my license." According to Frankie's account, the dispute stemmed from the fact that Frankie witnessed the captain engaged in police brutality. "I got him killing a guy in the cell one time. He beat the shit out of him. Oh yeah. He would OK it. He was the captain. I told him—I got him fucking a guy in a cell next to me. The guy was screaming. The guy was drunk." Frankie also asserted that this police captain was on "the take." "He'd walk around all these bar rooms, walk in . . . I want $100. I want $100 or you're going to get locked, closed up. He went to every bar in the neighborhood . . . , [he] wanted to get $100 off of each bartender." Frankie lamented, "He never forgot me, in forty years he never forgot me. The rotten bastard." The extent to which these accounts are exaggerated is not known.[11] It is possible that the men are employing the technique

of "condemnation of the condemners" as a way of justifying their own criminality (Sykes and Matza 1957; Matza 1964).

For Frankie and others, the justice system is viewed as a game (see Blumberg 1967). Plea bargains, corrupt cops, deals for testimony, false charges, and a courtroom workgroup wherein prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges act in concert to achieve their mutual interests are the images our men see when they view the system. Frankie complained,

> The same shit. They always hit me with something. I'd walk in drunk or something—they'd always hit you with two or three other charges. This is what I'm trying to tell you. Everything was . . . when they walked in, they looked at this piece of paper. Now they say, "for the month of January, there's 35 breaks, there was six cars stolen in the area. There was a couple of houses broken into, a couple of stores. All right put him down for three breaks. We've got to clear this. We've got to clear the books up." . . . Instead of being smart enough, which you ain't because you ain't got no money for a lawyer or anything else—your lawyer [a public defender] will say, "Here, plead guilty. The judge is not going to send you away." That's good for the cops because that clears the record. And the judge lets you go on a two months' probation. That's why you read the paper today and you say to the guy, "Jesus Christ, if that judge let that guy off, he just knifed a guy and almost killed him." The poor bastard might have admitted that the other charges he wasn't even around to do. But this is what society *is*.

A large portion of the defiant stance is class based. Recall that these men were raised in poor, working-class neighborhoods in Boston. The notion that forms of deviance and the probability of state sanctions vary across social class and the dominant hierarchy was uncovered in our narratives. Jimmy, who grew up in Charlestown, said, "If you've got the money, you're going out the door. If you haven't got the money, you're going to stay right there [meaning prison]. You don't have to be 19, 20 years old to understand that." Jimmy went on to point out that no kids from Needham or Newton [middle-class suburbs of Boston] were sent to Lyman or Shirley. Instead reform schools were for kids from Charlestown, East Boston, and Roxbury. Jimmy concluded, "It is all social class." Extending this view, Frankie claimed that all of the prison guards at Concord were "sadistic, Protestant bastards . . . And where do you think they all came from? Nine-tenths of them? Concord, Lexington, Belmont [middle-class suburbs

of Boston]—where all the high Republican— . . . high-class money people [live]." The defiant stance of Jimmy and Frankie (men of Irish descent) was influenced by class, ethnic, and religious prejudices.

This outlook has wider ramifications for the men's view of society. Most persistent offenders (as well as ex-offenders) see society as a whole as corrupt. Buddy provided the following account:

> From my experiences with . . . well, my main experience has been with convicts so I figured that most people are generally the same way. Well, business people, they cut their friend's throat just to get ahead in business. They'll beat their friends for money. So I think the nature of man is evil. They're just polluted. If you're offered more money to do something that will hurt your partner you will go ahead and do it. It's the nature of man, I think. There's good and there's evil and I think the evil outweighs the good in human nature.

The view of the world as corrupt and no one in it as trustworthy enhanced the importance of being a "stand-up guy" at the local level—a person with values in a world without values, so to speak (MacDonald 1999, chap. 8). One of the important values on the street was loyalty. Buddy described his friend as being loyal in the following way: "If you got pinched on a job, he'd stand there and shoot somebody to protect you, you know." For Buddy, this was the honorable action for a stand-up guy.

Alcohol Abuse and Persistent Offending

A major problem for these persistent offenders was alcohol abuse. It is apparent that during the decades these offenders were active, the drug of choice was alcohol. These men were part of a culture that encouraged drinking, where going out drinking was an evening's activity. Moreover, there are indications that their crime sprees were linked to binge drinking. Fighting in bars was part of the drinking culture as well. Buddy told us that he drank at home all the time because he knew he would wind up in trouble at the bars, especially in "strange areas where nobody knows [you] . . . you're a target."

Many of the persistent offenders suffered from chronic alcoholism and called themselves alcoholics. Most started excessive drinking in late adolescence and early adulthood. For instance, Buddy described himself as a "drunk." Although he reported that he had been sober for eight years at the time of the interview, alcohol was a major catalyst and sustainer of his criminal career. He committed robberies and other thefts to get money for booze. His problems with alcohol also hampered his acquisition of stable employment and a steady mate. Buddy related that as soon as he started on a drunk, he would walk off his job. "I really enjoyed the work [printing], but I couldn't stay off the booze." For a time, he was able to manage work and drinking. "See, what I'd do is all week I wouldn't drink, especially when I was with somebody [a woman]. And over the weekend, I'd drink Friday night and Saturday and then sober up Sunday and be ready to get back to work." All of the women he met were drinkers, so relationships did not provide a passage away from crime and deviance. Buddy told us, "The places I hung around—I'd run into nobody but drinkers. That's probably why I drank so much."

Alcohol was also a major factor in Charlie's offending. He reported to us that he committed robberies only when he was drunk, none when he was sober. He said, "I drank like a fish. And half the time I didn't even know where I was."

Don's drinking problem was worsened by his job—he was a bartender. He said that his girlfriend tried to monitor his drinking without success. He recounted to us, "See, this bartending—one week I'd work nights. The next week I'd work days. Well, I worked from 8 to 4:30. [At] 4:30 I'd stop, sit in with all the guys—'come on, have a drink.' My wife would call me—not my wife, but I call her my wife—'When the hell you coming home?' I'll be home. I'll be home." Later in the interview, Don did confess that he did not consume as much alcohol when he went out with his steady girlfriend as he did with the guys, indicating the potential of marital (or quasi-marital) attachments to modify deviance such as excessive drinking.

The long-term effects of alcohol abuse are painfully evident. At his age 69 interview, Buddy stated that he is a "confirmed alcoholic." He continued, "Every time I'd drink I'd go into a blackout. I'd wake up on the floor. Hopefully there would be another drink in the bottle and I'd drink that and pass out again. I was just a stoned alcoholic. I just drank. Probably I was trying to kill myself. I don't know." Buddy is currently sober. Like many Glueck men, he disdains Alcoholics Anonymous and prefers to stay away from booze on his own.[12]

> As a matter of fact, when I first came here [to his present residence] they caught me on the floor one day—I was stoned. They took me to a detox. Well, I checked out of the detox the next day and the lady that runs the

> place told me she's going to kick me out. She just threatened. I told her "I'll just go down to Pine Street [a shelter in Boston]." She said, "Well, listen, let's talk about it." She tried to get me to go to AA and I convinced her that I couldn't stand the AA because the time I went to an AA meeting I stay a drunk, you know. I can't stand people telling their sad stories . . . it just makes me angry. Because these people are fools. They come to one meeting and they'll tell one story and you go to another meeting and they're there telling another story or they lied. That's another thing about me, I can't stand people who lie. I just don't like lying. But anyway, I convinced her that I wouldn't go to AA meetings. So she made me promise to get meals every day and come down and see her every day twice. So I did that for about a year and finally I talked her out of making me go to meals.

The threat of being evicted clearly facilitated Buddy's attempt to stop drinking. As he recounted,

> I would have got kicked out if I didn't quit. When I thought about it, I said, "Where am I going from here? What the hell is the matter with me? I've got a nice place here. I'm content. I'm out of the city. I'm out"—and I finally decided—all them years that I was drinking I was a goddamn fool because there was nothing to drink for anymore, you know. I used to drink this to escape from the goddamn world, you know. But I didn't need any escape anymore because I was content.

Prison Experiences of Persistent Offenders

What distinguishes persistent offenders from all other offenders we interviewed is the exorbitant amount of time they served in jails and prisons (see Table 7.1 for details). It is especially important to learn how these men viewed the prison experience and what effect they believed it had on their lives.

Uniformly, the persistent offenders we interviewed did not regard adult prison as a positive turning point. "Bullshit" is what Frankie called prison. Charlie told us, "All they did in state prison was teach you how to be a better thief. All you did was make number plates. There was nothing there, no incentive to do better, to be better. If you didn't do it on your own, you were dead." Others confirmed that they didn't learn any useful skills in prison and hence they returned to their communities, often in the same place they were before they were incarcerated, though now with the burden of a longer record.

There is also evidence of violence in prison—by staff and by other inmates. For example, Jimmy was one of the youngest inmates in the Concord Reformatory during the 1940s. He said it was a "strange" experience: "The guards at Concord were pricks. They used leaded canes to beat you." Later in the interview, Jimmy told us, "I said put me in the goddamn hole. Up yours. I refused to do whatever they said. I did not care." Because of this attitude, Jimmy spent a fair share of his time in prison in solitary confinement. In the words of Sykes's classic study *The Society of Captives,* Jimmy was a "ball buster." "Blatant disobedience, physical and verbal assaults on the officials, the constant creation of disturbances—these are the patterns of behavior of the typical ball buster" (Sykes 1958, 99).

Frankie said that Concord was a "terrible place." In fact, the word he used the most was "sadistic." Frankie continued,

> They had a saying, "the Protestant bastard." That's what they used to call [the guards] . . . They were very, very, very, very sadistic. There was no reasoning whatsoever. They were very, very sadistic. They would take you or me through the mess hall, shut the lights out and bang you with the leaden cane—the cane loaded with lead—whacking you in the head, the back, your spine.

An example of inmate-on-inmate violence comes from Tony, a well-known offender in the Boston area. Tony participated in a home invasion during the 1950s that involved terrorizing a family in the process of committing a $4,300 robbery. Tony received a long prison term (a 48- to 55-year sentence) for various charges stemming from the incident, including assault to murder, kidnapping, and armed robbery. No stranger to violence, Tony had a long criminal record dating from his juvenile years, including a charge of manslaughter when he was 20 years old. According to information provided by Tony's wife and newspaper accounts, Tony was in his cell one night when he was attacked by three inmates. In the attack, Tony was stabbed in the stomach, hit on the head with a pipe, and blinded from acid thrown in his face by his attackers. A Boston newspaper reported that Tony was stabbed in a "typical gangland attempt at revenge."

Our group of persistent offenders saw their juvenile incarceration experiences as especially deleterious. Don remembered "cold showers" in the wintertime. He went on, "These guys that run this place were no good. I mean, I wasn't up there for being a good boy; I stole a couple of cars. But, Jesus Christ, we didn't deserve this kind of shit."

When asked about his recollections of the Lyman School, Jimmy remarked that Lyman had the "dregs of humanity" and "sadistic bastards." He commented on the humiliating showers and beatings (for example, being handcuffed to a pipe with his pants down and beaten with a strap on his bare buttocks). He expressed extreme bitterness toward Lyman.[13]

Finally, there is some support for the idea of institutional dependency, especially among long-term prisoners. Jimmy said that prison was easier than being on the street. "When I came out of Concord I had nothing. I was completely lost. I lasted three days." Overall, Jimmy was incarcerated 15.3 years before age 32. Similarly, Buddy, who was incarcerated for almost half his life (about 35 years), maintained, "The fact that I've been in jail most of my life . . . I'm sort of like a half cripple."

Accounts in Later Life

Many of the persistent offenders we interviewed fully accepted responsibility for their misdeeds—there was little or no denial of criminal events. It is possible that there is less need to invoke "techniques of neutralization" in later life. Jimmy maintained that his involvement in crime was "stupid." He went on to say that "I can't blame it on my friends—other guys turned out O.K. I wasn't abused or anything like that."

Although not widely appreciated, there is considerable ambivalence toward crime among persistent offenders. Competing with the attraction and seduction of crime is the simultaneous recognition of the downside of crime (for example, injury, anxiety, prison). The latter seems to increase with age (see, for example, Shover 1985, 1996). As Smelser (1998, 5) points out, ambivalence implies instability, contradiction, and uncertainty in individual behavior and the relationship between individuals and social institutions, especially with those in positions of authority.

Most striking is the sobering recognition by the persistent offenders of their lives as "damaged" and "wasted." For example, when we asked Buddy what he saw when he looked back on his life, he replied, "A big loss." Undoubtedly aging plays a role in this. Again, Buddy told us, "Twelve years ago, the last time I got out of the can, I said, 'To hell with it. I'm sick of this life. I'm going to try to correct'—by then it was pretty late." Buddy noted that it is harder to fight the things that disturb you when you get older.

Revealing the vacillation between the seduction of crime and the reality of punishment and its costs as one ages, Gino pointed out, "There is money to be had without committing crime. You have to work for it. You can't be lazy. Also, I do not want to go to jail at my age." Arthur noted, "Yeah, the last time I did time it changed me because I said what am I wasting my life in the can for? Why don't I waste it on the street, forget about it. And that's what I'm doing. I'm 65 years old, how much can I push? How much time I'm going to do before I drop dead. So, either I live the right life or I don't. Like I said, when you're growing up you think you're a wise guy, you think you can do anything and get away with it until you get caught two or three times, and then you say hey, I'm wasting my life." When we asked Arthur at the age of 65 whether he would get involved in crime again, he replied, "Oh forget it. I am too old. I can't run no more."

Although the persistent offenders we interviewed are still alive, a life of crime has taken its toll. Most are heavy smokers with more than their fair share of health problems. Some have lingering injuries due to their criminal and deviant escapades that resulted in accidents or direct injuries from crimes. For instance, at the age of 40, Buddy described being chased by the police after robbing a store. While driving drunk, he hit the back of a truck and broke his neck. He also had a piece of his lung taken out and was in a cast from head to toe. Whether his account is somewhat exaggerated or not, Buddy still suffers serious health problems stemming from this incident.

Another compelling example is Frankie, who was struck by a train at age 30 and had his right arm severed in the accident. Up to that time, Frankie was one of the more active delinquents in the Glueck study. He had been arrested 47 times before age 32, including arrests for robbery, drunkenness, loitering, breaking and entering, auto theft, larceny, receiving stolen goods, and violation of probation. After the accident he could not work, but he was still arrested a number of times. He also never married. Frankie spent his life living with his sister in the house in which he grew up.

Ironically, many of the men we interviewed expressed a fear of crime, especially by young "hoodlums." These aging offenders de-

scribed life as different today, largely because of guns, drugs, and a perception that communities and neighborhoods no longer exist. For example, Charlie noted,

> I think, you know, when we were growing up we were into sports and things. That's all we had were sports. We didn't have TV or nothing. In the wintertime we used to go out and shovel off the field and play football and all we'd do is put on a bunch of sweaters. And after the game we'd . . . play the kids in South Boston. After the game we automatically had a fight, a fistfight. But a fistfight, we did it with our hands. If you argue with a kid today you're going to pull a gun on them, because they don't care. Nothing can be done to them and they know it.

When asked about crime today, Nicky responded,

> Crime? Crime is terrible. I'll tell you, the kids today are dangerous. Let me tell you. I'll tell you, if someone said to us, "Halt," you know, that was it. Today if they're robbing you, you give them your money and they shoot you anyways. Kids today are crazy. Yeah, really. I think it's the dope. Eight and nine years old—they're killing kids. That's bad.

For most of the men we interviewed we detected a last attempt at "redemption." These activities are often tied to seemingly mundane things, but, especially for men with chaotic backgrounds, they represent stable and reassuring routines. Buddy has a series of chores he does in his building. "I go down every noontime—that lady I told you about that runs the place—I get lunch for her. And I deliver the mail to a couple of the older women in here that can't get up to the mailboxes." For others, redemption is expressed through generativity. Jimmy coaches a baseball team in the Babe Ruth League and helps kids with soccer. Recently, with his son-in-law, he raised money to develop three soccer fields, three baseball diamonds, and a clubhouse in his town. Along somewhat different lines, Charlie told us that his life was full of "twists and turns," but that despite his troubles the "last twenty-five years have been the happiest." He continued,

> I've had good success working; I've raised four kids. I see them and the grandkids; I look back and say, "Gee, I did that." I still have a problem with one of them [a son who is involved with drugs], but I've got him, he's straightening his act out . . . He was into it heavy but I got him off it. I got him a good job, and I just got him his license back. And he's getting his car this week so he can get back and forth to work because I've been driving him for the last six months every morning. I think he's all set now.

What Have We Learned?

What draws persistent offenders to crime and keeps them there? Is it an inability or unwillingness to conform? Is it the result of long-term cumulative disadvantage brought about by a difficult childhood temperament? Is persistence due to a lack of structural turning points and a reduced exposure to situations and commitments that facilitate change? Or does abuse of alcohol or other drugs sustain persistent offending? This chapter begins to grapple with these questions by drawing on life-history narratives from a group of men who have persisted in offending over much of their life course.

From a methodological standpoint, the persistent offender represents challenges with respect to the validity of the narrative data acquired. Perhaps surprisingly, there appeared to be a substantial amount of cover-up by only a small subset of the offenders we interviewed. As the Gluecks' investigator remarked more than fifty years ago after an interview—"What he did say was the truth, but what he left unsaid is probably more important than the admissions he made." A few of the men even denied being in reform school, which was the basis for being selected for the Gluecks' study. As with all criminological data, one must be cautious, and to the extent possible, use supplemental sources of information as we have done throughout this study, moving from interview data to records gathered from multiple sources. This issue is compounded, of course, by the interpretation of life-course events under investigation, especially in light of our long retrospective window.

Given the long-term nature of our data, the men we interviewed for this chapter sounded a lot like what are commonly called "life-course persisters" (Moffitt 1993). Moffitt uses this term to describe a relatively small group of offenders who offend during each developmental stage of their life course. For Moffitt, the life-course persister has distinct traits such as personality disorder and cognitive deficits. These offenders have inadequate social skills, do poorly in school, have fragile mental health, lack the capacity to forge close attachment, have inadequate self-control, and have low intelligence. These characteristics emerge early in life, typically between ages 7 and 12.

As the career of the life-course persister unfolds, salient life events in adolescence and adulthood become problematic. Life-course persisters often leave school early, become fathers as teenagers, experience unemployment, divorce, and separation, abuse alcohol and drugs, and continue criminal activity that often leads to incarceration.

At first glance, looking back over the course of lives, support for Moffitt's portrait of persistent offending can be found in our narratives. Much of the support, however, is illusory. What is most striking about the persistent offenders we interviewed is that their childhood traits are the same as those who desisted from crime (see Chapters 5 and 6 for more details). What is particularly striking is that men who exhibited childhood and adolescent risk factors for "life-course-persistent" offending according to Moffitt's theory just as often desisted from crime in adulthood. Consistent with Chapter 5, in our narrative data we find no evidence that a group of "life-course-persistent" offenders can be identified prospectively. As the case of Boston Billy aptly demonstrates, there is something at each stage of the life course—childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and mid-life—that sustains involvement in crime.

These narratives also convey the richness and complexity of examining lives over time. Even the most hardened offender is not a persistent offender in the true sense of the term, and all offenders eventually desist albeit at different rates and ages (Chapter 5). The question becomes, What is it about frequent and persistent, but eventually desisting, offenders that distinguishes them from low-rate offenders and those who desist earlier? In our view, rather than being identified by a single trait like poor intelligence or even a series of static traits, the persistent offender seems devoid of connective structures at each phase of his life course, especially involving relationships that can provide informal social control and social support (Sampson and Laub 1993; Cullen 1994). Generally, the persistent offenders we interviewed experienced residential, marital, and job instability, failure in the school and the military, and relatively long periods of incarceration. Men who desisted from crime led rather orderly lives, whereas the life of the persistent offender was marked by frequent churning, almost as in adolescence. Surely part of this chaos reflects an inability to forge close attachments or make any connection to anybody or anything. One can view the men as possessing a distorted sense of autonomy without any commitment or concern for others.

In turn, the lack of structure these men experienced offered more situations conducive to crime and encouraged a downward spiral. Routine activities are different for those without jobs, permanent addresses, spouses, children, or other stable forms of life (Osgood et al. 1996). As a consequence, one has increased contact with those individuals who are similarly situated—in this case, similarly unattached and free from informal social control. Thus the influence of deviant peers, criminal networks, and prison is especially strong in the lives of persistent offenders,[14] although their criminal activity does not necessarily depend on learning crime from a supportive peer group, as Sutherland (1947) claimed. Rather, as Matsueda and Heimer argue, the lack of role structure affects behavior by "delimiting opportunities, and affecting the generalized other and identities by affecting communication networks, peer associations, and subcultural affiliation" (1997, 175).

Like men who desist from crime, persistent offenders also articulate personal agency and imbue meaning to their actions. This group of persistent offenders did not apologize for their behavior, nor, for the most part, did they make excuses. Generally they saw themselves as responsible agents, though not in a moral sense. Moreover, the men appeared to be painfully aware of the choices they had made and, as they looked back, they saw a life filled with misery and missed opportunities. The sense of loss is profound, and they will carry their broken dreams with them forever.

CHAPTER NINE

Modeling Change in Crime

Our qualitative analysis of the Glueck men's narratives has made a compelling case for the importance of turning points in explaining changes in criminal activity over the adult life course of troubled boys. The in-depth examination in Chapters 6–8 is fundamentally linked to the discovery in Chapter 5, using quantitative analysis of trajectory patterns, of considerable heterogeneity in criminal offending through time and of widely disparate ages of desistance. We thus asked the men themselves, and probed as well as we could with in-depth interviews, for possible explanations of the many changes in crime we observed, such as deflections of criminal trajectories to desistance, acceleration of offending, and intermittent patterns of offending. What is intriguing here, once again, is the marked variability even within a highly disadvantaged group of men.

As we detailed throughout Chapters 6–8, changes in criminal behavior were associated in the narratives with a number of themes, including aging, employment, marriage, military service, excessive drinking, and personal choice. Of all the themes we have investigated, marriage comes up again and again in the narratives as a turning point. Recall Leon's narrative wherein he attributed his life-course change to his marriage and his wife's influence, like many of the men we interviewed who desisted from crime. Contrast that with the narrative from Buddy, a man who never married and spent half of his life incarcerated, who told us that he longed for a chance to meet a "decent woman," a chance that never materialized. Does this apparent salience of marriage (or its absence) as a turning point hold up under a different kind of rigorous analysis?

This chapter answers that question with a targeted move back to quantitative analysis, this time through a systematic analysis of variations in crime linked to time-varying (within-individual) and between-individual explanatory factors. Although the methods are quite different, perhaps jarringly so at first, we believe they are in service of the same theoretical goals that animate our investigation throughout the book. In the case of the present chapter, the strength of our analysis is the ability to model quantitative variations in crime both between and within persons up to age 70, along with time-varying covariates at each age. Data limitations preclude our ability to empirically examine factors such as time-varying personal choice. We can and do, however, focus squarely on the themes that emerged most clearly from the narrative analysis and that can be objectively measured in our sample of 52 men—especially marriage. Because we administered a life-history calendar during the personal interviews, we were able to code yearly changes in incarceration and marital status over the full life course, enabling a long-term dynamic look at marriage's influence on crime while the men were free in the community. In addition, by recoding a set of yearly data from our work in *Crime in the Making* on all 500 of the Glueck men up to age 32, a secondary goal is to examine an even wider set of life events (for example, military service, employment) from late adolescence to the early thirties for both the long-term follow-up group and the full delinquent group sample of 500 men.

Research Strategy

Our analytic strategy was constructed to serve the theoretical goal of simultaneously modeling within-individual change and between-person "propensity" differences in crime. Because of our focus on the life course, we chose age-years as the unit of within-individual change. Moreover, we aim to assess changes in adult crime, especially desistance, using both adult turning points and childhood risk factors measured well before the point of adulthood. To meet these goals we coded person-year observations for each of the 52 men we interviewed starting from age 17, which marks the transition to young

adulthood and the peak of overall offending, up to age 70. During the course of our interviews, we asked each man to fill out a life-history calendar of major life events (see Chapter 4). In general it was relatively easy for the men to do this for events such as marriage, divorce, having children, stays in prison, and retirement. Considering the period of recall, which could be almost forty years, we were not surprised to encounter considerable difficulty collecting employment data by year. For example, it was common to get very general answers, and for the men to forget sequences of employment during the volatile young-adult years (for example, one man reported dozens of jobs in one year). After preliminary analysis and confronting considerable missing data, we dropped the hope of examining employment over the full life course and turned to a primary focus on time-varying states of marriage from ages 17 to 70.[1]

The outcome of interest is the criminal activity of each man during these years. On the basis of a combination of Massachusetts's criminal histories, a national FBI search, and death records as described in Chapter 4, we coded the number of criminal events, by crime type, for each year ages 17 up to 70, adjusting for mortality. The outcome of crime is thereby generated from a source independent of the life-history calendar. As argued earlier, our main focus is on within-individual change, where stable characteristics of the person often associated with police bias (race, class, IQ) are not confounded. We did ask about self-reported crime during the interviews, but the retrospective placing of events within specific years going back so far in time proved too difficult for the men. Wherever possible, however, we compared life-history narratives with official records in an effort to discover anomalies. For both major crime episodes and prison stays, the interviews with the men yielded a generally consistent picture.

At the between-individual level, we considered in Chapter 5 a wide-ranging number of stable and early risk factors. Combined with our analyses in *Crime in the Making,* there is a long set to choose from. We experimented with a number of specifications, but the results were surprisingly robust. For simplicity we present here a small number of specifications that best represent the overall pattern. In terms of factors that are exogenous to adulthood and measured before the start of the desistance process, we focus on intelligence (full-score Wechsler-Bellevue test), total number of juvenile delinquencies as reported by self, parents, and teachers, and the validated childhood risk measure

introduced in Chapter 5. To match the within-individual analysis, we also examine stable person-level differences in marriage, and in a subanalysis, we use available data in early adulthood to examine unemployment and military service.

Hierarchical Statistical Models of Change

Our goal is to simultaneously estimate variations in crime within individuals over time and between-individual differences in the latent propensity to offend. As already demonstrated, the Glueck men generated thousands of crimes in total, a repeated outcome not well suited to event-history analysis of single events. We therefore use generalized hierarchical models for nested or repeated measures data (Mason, Wong, and Entwisle 1983; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). In our case, time periods are nested within individuals, so that level 1 of the hierarchical model becomes the change analysis and level 2 the between-individual analysis. The interdependence of observations within individuals is thus explicitly modeled.

The hierarchical statistical model we estimate was modified to incorporate three important features of our data. The first is a conception of crime as a rare event in any one year, especially in older age. The second is the likely unexplained variation between individuals in the underlying propensity to offend (heterogeneity). The third is that there is variation across time and individuals in incarceration, yielding a varying "street time" during which one has the opportunity to commit crime (see also Blumstein et al. 1986). To accommodate these three important features, our model views the count of crime Y_{it} for a given person i at time t as sampled from an overdispersed Poisson distribution with mean $n_{it}\lambda_{it}$, where n_{it} is the number of days free on the street for person i at time t and λ_{it} is the latent or "true" offending rate for person i per days free in year t. Recall that we collected data on the number of days incarcerated for each year. We view the resulting log-event rates of crime as normally distributed across persons. Specifically, using a hierarchical generalized linear model (Raudenbush et al. 2000; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), we set the natural log link $\eta_{it} = \log(\lambda_{it})$ equal to a mixed linear model that includes relevant covariates, and a random effect for each person to account for heterogeneity.[2]

This model serves well our theoretical goals. The individual offend-

ing rate conforms to an overdispersed Poisson distribution, incorporating the skewed nature of crime with its many values of zero in any given year, while at the same time creating a metric that defines meaningful effect sizes. For example, exponentiating the regression coefficient in our model allows us to estimate percentage changes in the rate of individual offending associated with a change in marital status and other predictors. Our approach also incorporates unique unobserved differences between persons via random effects (see also Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995, 661). To the extent that individuals have unique stable features that affect crime, these random effects are important in accounting for variation not explainable by the structural model.

Let's consider a simple manifestation of this model, which we later generalize with more predictors. Conceptualizing a criminal trajectory, we begin by modeling the log of a person's crime rate per days free as a linear function of age and marriage. On the basis of preliminary analyses of best-fitting models, prior research, and the fact that the age window for the transition to young adulthood (and hence marriage) begins at or near the average peak age of total offending (17) and our follow-up extends up to age 70, we specify a linear and quadratic function of age. Using the above notation the basic elements of this within-person model become:

$$E(\text{CRIME}_{it} \mid \beta_i) = n_{it} * \lambda_{it}$$

$$\log(\lambda_{it}) = \beta_{0,i} + \beta_{1,i}\,(\text{AGE})_{it} + \beta_{2,i}\,(\text{AGE}^2)_{it} + \beta_{3,i}\,(\text{MARRIAGE})_{it} + r_{it},$$

where i is the index for individuals, t is for longitudinal observations, and n_{it} is the number of days free on the street for person i at time t. MARRIAGE is a time-varying covariate that can take on values of 0 (unmarried) or 1 (married) during each year from 17 to 70. The intercept, $\beta_{0,i}$, is the estimated log event-rate of crime while free when the predictors are set to zero.

To increase meaningful interpretation of the age effect, we center AGE at the mean of the observed age-person distribution, which for our data is age 43. As Raudenbush and Bryk (2002, 182) note, such centering "in the middle" has two desirable results. First, our centering scheme means that the change parameter, $\beta_{1,i}$, is defined not only as the average rate of change in crime at 43, but as the average

rate of change (or, in effect, desistance) over the observation period. Second, by centering at the mean, the age and age-squared terms are orthogonal and thus allow more stable estimation procedures. Quadratic models of age effects are typically plagued by high correlation among the age terms.[3] Overall, then, our centering scheme yields an interpretation of the intercept in the above equation as the log event rate of crime for 43-year-old unmarried men in our follow-up. The $\beta_{1,i}$ and $\beta_{2,i}$ parameters estimate the average rate of change and curvature (rate of acceleration or deceleration), and $\beta_{3,i}$ estimates the time-varying marriage effect.

The between-person model takes the following general form, again using AGE and MARRIAGE:

$$\beta_{0,i} = \gamma_{0,0} + \gamma_{0,1}\,(\text{MARRIAGE})_i + u_{0,i}$$

$$\beta_{1,i} = \gamma_{1,0} + u_{1,i}$$

$$\beta_{2,i} = \gamma_{2,0}$$

$$\beta_{3,i} = \gamma_{3,0}$$

According to this model, the latent rate of offending and the main desistance parameter for age are allowed to vary across persons, as indicated by the presence of an error term. Put differently, the model allows for persistent heterogeneity across individuals (compare Nagin and Land 1993), not just in levels of offending, but in the rate of change. If the age effect is as invariant as Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) hypothesize, there should be minimal, if any, variation across individuals in $u_{1,i}$; our theoretical perspective suggests otherwise. On the other hand, we assume fixed effects for the error terms for marriage and the age-squared term. There is no theoretical reason to expect randomly varying marriage effects, and the error term for the age-squared term was not estimable in models where age itself was allowed to randomly vary.

We modify the above equations and then generalize in the analysis below to take into account additional predictors at the within-individual and between-individual levels. As noted, we examine stable person traits like measured intelligence, childhood risk, and prior delinquency. Recoding archival material from the Gluecks' follow-up to age 32, we also examine states of unemployment, military service, and marriage for each year during ages 17–32. This strategy allows us

to replicate the marriage analysis and then add in employment and military service for both the 52 men in the long-term follow-up and the full delinquent sample. In these analyses unemployment takes on the value 1 if the person was unemployed for at least four months during the year and 0 otherwise; similarly, military service is coded as 1 if the person was in the military for any portion of the yearly period, 0 otherwise.

One important feature of our model, similar to Horney, Osgood, and Marshall (1995), concerns the centering of the time-varying covariates. We center all such covariates, with the exception of the age specification already described, around each person's life-time mean (that is, person-mean centered). Importantly, this centering scheme allows us to account for the possibility that some men are in a state of marriage because they have a higher personal propensity to marry (a selection argument). To examine change within individuals we thus examine deviations in any given year from each person's overall mean level of marriage, which we then link to the latent probability of offending in that year. At level 2, or between persons, we estimate the simultaneous association of the mean time spent in marriage on crime, allowing us to decompose the relationship of marriage (and later, unemployment and military service) to crime into its average within-individual or time-varying component and the stable propensity of men to be married.[4]

Age, Crime, and Variability

One of the simplest and yet most informative results concerns the level of variability in both crime and key covariates over time. After all, if there is not much change in men's lives, then the validity of our conceptual scheme and the explanatory power of our change models will be inherently limited (see also Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995, 662). As it turns out, the percentage of men that produced at least one change in status over time was large: 90 percent for marriage, 87 percent for unemployment, and 64 percent for military service. As previewed in Chapter 5, crime also changes significantly within persons over time, such that all 52 men in the interview follow-up contribute at least one change in criminal status over the yearly observations. More revealing, the total variation in the estimated event rate of criminal offending while free that lies within individuals (over

time) is a substantial 64 percent for total crimes. Corresponding figures for violent, property, and alcohol/drug offenses are 62, 60, and 16 percent, respectively.

It is also the case that our sampling scheme in selecting the 52 men for follow-up produced an age-crime distribution that is reflective of aggregate patterns in the criminological literature and Chapter 5. For example, Figure 9.1 displays the raw mean number of offenses and the Poisson-predicted number of total crimes while free from ages 7 to 70. Similar to the patterns for the full delinquent group in Chapter 5, we see the rapidly rising rate of observed crime counts until the late teens, and then a gradual and erratic decline throughout adulthood. Because of this asymmetric nature of the decline by age, the predicted peak age of offending is pulled slightly to the right. Still, for both observed and predicted counts while free, Figure 9.1 demonstrates the general aggregate pattern of increasing and then decreasing crime by age.

On the other hand, we know from our sampling design for the follow-up, coupled with the analysis from Chapter 5, that there should be significant heterogeneity around the aggregate pattern, with some

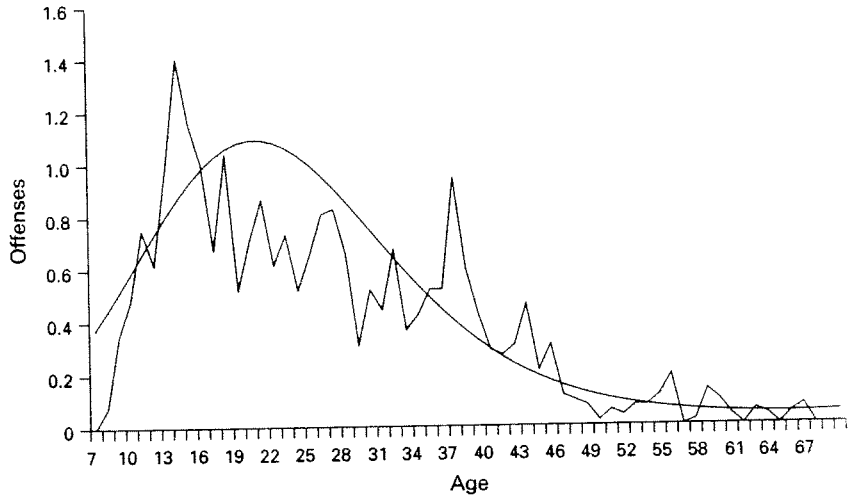

Figure 9.1 Actual mean number of offenses and age-predicted number of offenses while free for total crime: 52 interviewed men, ages 7 to 70

men desisting from crime earlier than others. We also know that there are differences by crime type, with violent crimes peaking in the twenties and alcohol/drug offenses at around age 30. In the interest of parsimony, and because violence is extremely rare in any given person-year, we combined violence with property crime on the argument that both are predatory in nature, at least in comparison with offenses related to substance abuse. Figure 9.2 presents predicted age-crime curves for predatory and alcohol/drug offenses generated from a Poisson count model adjusting for days free in each person-year. Once again we see the decline by age for both offense types, but at a significantly later age for alcohol/drug offenses.

Explanatory Models of Change in Crime

The major goal of this chapter is to account for the variability in crime in relation to stable personal attributes, age, and time-varying life events. Because our analysis is focused on the transition to young adulthood (age 17) up to age 70, Figures 9.1 and 9.2 tell us that the age effects will be mainly a story of differential desistance (decline)

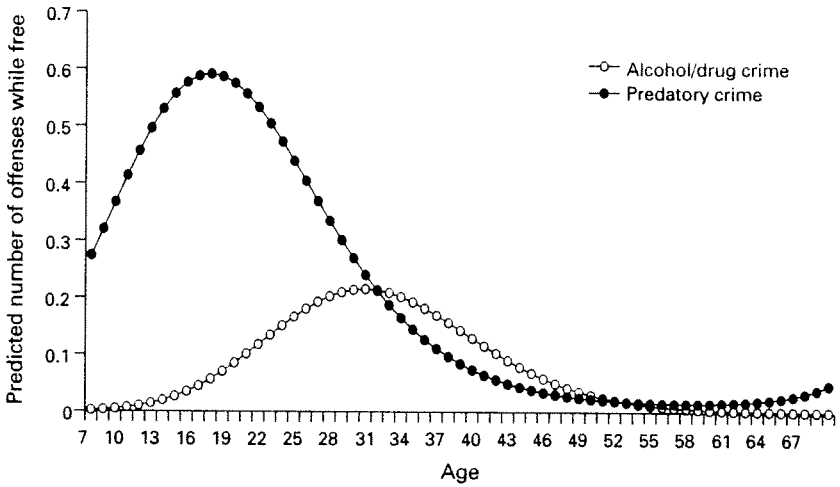

Figure 9.2 Age-predicted number of offenses while free by crime type: 52 interviewed men, ages 7 to 70

over the adult life course. In addition to the direct effects of age, we seek to examine social transitions related to marriage, employment, and military service. We begin in Table 9.1 by estimating variability in the log event rate of total crime.

As described in the methods section, this is an overdispersed Poisson model that accounts for exposure time on the street and persistent heterogeneity in unobserved causes of offending. We estimate a series of models that begin with age and then sequentially introduce time-varying and stable person-level predictors. Model 1 enters just the age terms, which basically amounts to an analysis of the average rate of change and its curvature. Exponentiation of the intercept informs us that the average annualized rate of offending at the average age of 43 is about .29 crimes while free on the streets ($e^{-7.149} * 365$). Both age and age squared are significantly negative, but the coefficient for age ($-.0933$) is much larger. Exponentiating this coefficient tells us that the average rate of change is fairly steep (about a 9 percent decline in crimes while free at age 43), with a downward curvature as indicated by the negative quadratic coefficient. The main age slope variance is highly significant as well, indicating that there is substantial individual variation around the estimated desistance slope. This latter finding is consistent with our overall theoretical expectations regarding variability in desistance, as opposed to an invariant age distribution imposed on all offenders.[5]

Model 2 enters the time-varying covariate of marriage, and Table 9.1 presents the average within-individual estimate of its effect. The coefficient is $-.44$, yielding an estimate of a 36 percent reduction in overall crime associated with being in the state of marriage. In other words, the same delinquent man, when married, is considerably less likely to offend given the opportunity than when he is not married. But what about individual differences in the propensity to be married a long time and hence in any given year? To address this question, in Model 3 we estimate the effect of mean years married, effectively decomposing the marriage association into its within-individual and between-level components. Note that the between-individual estimate is highly significant as well—married men, as opposed to unmarried men, are less likely to commit crime (t-ratio $= -10.06$). However, the more interesting result is that the coefficient for within-individual change in marriage barely budges. Controlling for marriage propen-

e 9.1 Hierarchical overdispersed Poisson models of total crime counts: 52 follow-up men and change from ages 17 to 70 (N = 2,433 complete observations)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Coeff. (se)	*t*-ratio	Coeff. (se)	*t*-ratio	Coeff. (se)	*t*-ratio	Coeff. (se)	*t*-ratio	Coeff. (se)	*t*-ratio
tercept	−7.149	−46.866**	−7.095	−45.749**	−5.605	−31.426**	−6.928	−6.993**	−8.745	−10.506**
	(.1525)		(.1551)		(.1784)		(.9907)		(.8324)	
ıin-individual										
ge	−.0933	−13.906**	−.0948	−13.389**	−.0939	−11.191**	−.0920	−11.439**	−.0808	−12.396**
	(.0067)		(.0071)		(.0084)		(.0080)		(.0065)	
ge^2	−.0010	−2.943**	−.0014	−3.757**	−.0014	−3.889**	−.0014	−4.088**	−.0013	−3.945**
	(.0003)		(.0004)		(.0004)		(.0003)		(.0003)	
arriage			−.4434	−4.964**	−.4072	−3.726**	−.4135	−4.185**	−.3889	−4.243**
			(.0893)		(.1093)		(.0988)		(.0917)	
veen-individual										
arriage					−2.723	−10.059**	−2.895	−9.278**	−1.327	−4.667**
					(.2707)		(.3120)		(.2843)	
nofficial							−.0094	−.163	−.0141	−.561
delinquency							(.0577)		(.0251)	
)							.0150	1.331	.0101	1.119
							(.0113)		(.0090)	
hildhood risk							.5333	2.603*	.4363	1.999*
							(.2049)		(.2182)	
ıemployment									2.752	6.832**
									(.4029)	
ilitary									−.0576	−.083
									(.6919)	
ance components										
tween-individual	1.492**		1.453**		.8040**		.8764**		.9290**	
ithin-individual	1.531		1.551		1.550		1.577		1.818	
ge slope	.0013**		.0012**		.0013**		.0012**		.0010**	

< .05. **p < .01.

sity and age effects, Model 3 tells us that the percentage change in crime associated with a change in marriage is approximately 33 percent, compared with 36 percent in the unconditional marriage model.

Model 4 continues the logic of controlling for between-individual differences, this time measured in childhood and adolescence. Surprisingly, neither of the traditional predictors of crime—frequency of unofficial juvenile delinquency and measured intelligence—are significantly related to the average level of adult offending across men. In contrast, the childhood risk indicator created in Chapter 5 is positively associated with later average levels of offending. Those entering adulthood with a history of early trouble and vulnerability exhibit a 70 percent higher rate of later offending than low-risk adolescents. These analyses once again demonstrate the ability of early risk factors to predict levels of later offending, even though trajectory patterns are another story (see also Chapter 5).

Model 5 adds two more between-person predictors measured during the early adulthood years. Specifically, controlling for average time spent unemployed and in the military in the period 17–32, the coefficient for the effect of changes in marriage (from 17 to 70) on total crime is barely changed. The magnitude of the between-person marriage coefficient is cut by about half, on the other hand, suggesting that some of the observed "propensity" association of marriage with desistance is due to the negative association of marriage with unemployment. Nevertheless, the basic pattern holds for our key within-individual factors of age and marriage.

Crime-Type Patterns

It may well be that there are important crime-type patterns in the data. To explore this possibility, in Table 9.2 we present models for alcohol/drug offenses and predatory crimes, respectively.[6] Although the linear age effect is negative across the two crime types (−.136 and −.050), the quadratic age term shows a positive curvature for predatory crime and a negative curvature for alcohol/drugs (Models 1 and 2). This pattern reflects an attenuation of the age effect for predatory crimes at older ages (see also Figure 9.2). Further analysis suggests that the positive curvature for predatory crime is somewhat sensitive, however, for it does not hold up when the variance of the desistance parameter is fixed. Apparently heterogeneity in the desistance rate by age, perhaps induced by our sampling scheme that captured late-onset violent offenders, leads to a somewhat unexpected tailing off of the desistance effect at higher ages.

By contrast, the marriage change analysis is remarkably similar in pattern across crime types. The event rate of offending while free is significantly and negatively associated with marriage transitions within persons for both alcohol/drugs and predatory offenses. The estimated percentage decline is greater for alcohol-related offenses than predatory crimes (40 percent versus 21 percent). At the between-individual level we also control for marriage propensity, which is significantly negative for both crime types, and three child-related factors. Childhood risk predicts overall levels of later offending, whereas the IQ estimate is unexpectedly positive for predatory crimes (Model 2). We are reluctant to put much stock in this latter isolated result.

On theoretical grounds and as a further empirical test we investigate the relationship between excessive drinking and predatory crime. Previous research by Horney and her colleagues (1995) suggests that during periods of heavy drinking or substance abuse, men may be more likely to be in situations (for example, bars, drug transactions) where the risks of violence and theft are enhanced. Our narratives in Chapters 6–8 also uncovered evidence that drinking lifestyles and criminal offending were tightly linked. Although alcohol/drug offenses and predatory crimes are both measured with official records, creating a potential artifactual correlation because of the same measurement source, the two types of crime are nonetheless distinct on conceptual grounds. Therefore, by controlling for within-individual and between-individual propensity differences in substance abuse as measured by alcohol- and drug-related arrests, we provide another way to counteract potential selection bias associated with marriage.

In Model 3 of Table 9.2 we re-estimate variations in predatory crime by entering the frequency of alcohol/drug offenses in both the within- and the between-individual equations. The results are intriguing in that changes in drinking are *not* significantly related to the rate of predatory crime. The marriage coefficients, however, remained virtually unchanged—the within-individual marriage coefficient, controlling for within-individual changes in drinking/drug offenses, is −.2386 compared with −.2389 in Model 2. Being in a state of marriage, then, is still associated with a 21 percent reduction in predatory crime controlling for not just marriage propensity, but also changes in drinking and the overall propensity to excessive alcohol/drug use. To

Table 9.2 Hierarchical overdispersed Poisson models of alcohol/drug crime and predatory crime (violent/property): 52 follow-up men and change from ages 17 to 70 (N = 2,433 complete observations)

	Alcohol/drug crime		Predatory crime			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio
Intercept	−8.383	−6.030**	−10.00	−8.528**	−9.870	−8.956**
	(1.390)		(1.173)		(1.102)	
Within-individual						
Age	−.1365	−14.342**	−.0502	−8.759**	−.0506	−9.013**
	(.0095)		(.0057)		(.0056)	
Age^2	−.0014	−4.432**	.0011	5.061**	.0012	4.965**
	(.0003)		(.0002)		(.0002)	
Marriage	−.5107	−11.371**	−.2389	−2.824**	−.2386	−2.781**
	(.0449)		(.0846)		(.0858)	
Alcohol/drugs					.0352	.590
					(.0597)	
Between-individual						
Marriage	−4.231	−8.065**	−3.294	−9.425**	−3.421	−10.231**
	(.5246)		(.3495)		(.3344)	
Unofficial delinquency	−.0611	−.916	−.0132	−.220	−.0141	−.245
	(.0667)		(.0601)		(.0578)	
IQ	.0281	1.503	.0400	3.370**	.0401	3.435**
	(.0187)		(.0119)		(.0117)	
Childhood risk	.8212	2.273*	.6830	2.781**	.7634	3.349**
	(.3613)		(.2456)		(.2280)	
Alcohol/drugs					−.6880	−2.530*
					(.2719)	
Variance components						
Between-individual	2.716**		2.834**		2.786**	
Within-individual	.3620		.8816		.8807	
Age slope	.0103**		.0046**		.0046**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

the extent that drinking/drug arrests are an indicator of criminal propensity (for example, Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), Model 3 is a strict test of the time-varying marriage effect. In other words, the possible simultaneous influence of criminality on marriage within any observation period is addressed in the models where drinking/drugs are controlled. The results in Model 3 thus add further evidence to the marriage-as-turning-point hypothesis.[7]

Competing Adult Life Events

A limitation of the analysis so far is that it has not permitted the simultaneous estimation of change in life transitions related to employment and military service. That is because we do not have accurate yearly measures of employment for men in their middle and older adult years. On the other hand, military service is essentially a constant (zero) once the men reached their thirties and beyond. We therefore replicate the core analysis in young adulthood (ages 17–32) by relying on raw data we collected for *Crime in the Making* from the Glueck archives. We specifically recoded evidence of unemployment spells and military service for each yearly segment. Because of the short age window and considerable loss of degrees of freedom, we estimate a model for total crime that focuses on age and age squared, along with the decomposition analysis for unemployment, marriage, and military service.[8] We centered age at the mean of the valid observation periods, with the result that the intercept refers to the log event rate of offending at age 24, and the linear age effect refers to the average rate of change in crime over observations.

The age results in Table 9.3 show a declining crime trend in the twenties and early thirties, with significant negative coefficients for age and age squared, respectively. To our mind the rather more remarkable and surprising results concern the time-varying covariates—all three within-individual change factors are significant. We expected one or two to survive a competitive analysis with respect to change over time, but clearly all three factors matter. Controlling for age and between-individual differences in propensity, Table 9.3 indicates that the Glueck men were less likely to commit crime (while free on the street) when they were in states of military service, marriage, *and* employment. Moreover, average differences in marriage and unemployment between men make a difference, but not military service. What this tells us is that the military association is strictly time varying, whereas the unemployment and marriage patterns hold both

Table 9.3 Hierarchical overdispersed Poisson model of total crime counts: 52 follow-up men and change from ages 17 to 32 (N = 694 complete observations)

	Total crime	
	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio
Intercept	−7.256	−22.577**
	(.3214)	
Within-individual		
Age	−.0356	−2.019*
	(.0176)	
Age^2	−.0096	−2.797**
	(.0034)	
Marriage	−.4110	−3.183**
	(.1291)	
Military	−1.102	−2.968**
	(.3712)	
Unemployment	.7224	5.125**
	(.1410)	
Between-individual		
Marriage	−.9224	−3.678**
	(.2508)	
Military	−.0003	−.205
	(.0016)	
Unemployment	3.526	9.844**
	(.3582)	
Variance components		
Between-individual	.3290**	
Within-individual	1.179	
Age slope	.0084**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

within and across persons. Consistent with our theoretical expectations and narrative analysis, then, life events are systematically related to crime in a truly dynamic fashion.

We now turn to a replication in Table 9.4 on the full delinquent group of 500 men, ages 17–32, where we have considerably more power. With the added cases at the person level we can control for more factors, and in addition, we were better able to estimate crime-specific models. Model 1 begins, as in Table 9.2, with alcohol/drug offenses as the outcome of interest. We see that the average rate of change in crime is negative from ages 17 to 32, and that this rate has a negative curvature (note quadratic term). Once again there is

Table 9.4 Hierarchical overdispersed Poisson models of alcohol/drug crime and predatory crime (violent/property): Delinquent group sample (N = 419) and change from ages 17 to 32 (N = 5,116 complete observations)

	Alcohol/drug crime		Predatory crime			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio	Coeff. (se)	t-ratio
Intercept	−10.130	−17.093**	−9.112	−21.480**	−9.125	−21.545**
	(.5926)		(.4242)		(.4235)	
Within-individual						
Age	−.0310	−2.918**	−.1245	−14.126**	−.1250	−14.007**
	(.0106)		(.0088)		(.0089)	
Age^2	−.0054	−2.695**	.0025	1.404	.0030	1.679
	(.0020)		(.0018)		(.0018)	
Marriage	−.3124	−3.054**	−.1959	−2.654**	−.1936	−2.650**
	(.1023)		(.0738)		(.0730)	
Military	−.8663	−5.691**	−.5121	−4.447**	−.5057	−4.389**
	(.1522)		(.1152)		(.1152)	
Unemployment	.3375	3.733**	1.096	12.808**	1.083	12.711**
	(.0904)		(.0856)		(.0852)	
Alcohol/drugs					.1362	4.155**
					(.0328)	
Between-individual						
Marriage	−.4228	−1.517	−.8892	−5.176**	−.8888	−5.162**
	(.2787)		(.1718)		(.1722)	
Military	−.0259	−.089	−.9834	−2.117*	−.9854	−2.111*
	(.2918)		(.4646)		(.4668)	
Unemployment	1.759	6.373**	3.545	22.417**	3.547	21.807**
	(.2761)		(.1581)		(.1626)	
Unofficial delinquency	.0990	7.122**	−.0065	−.506	−.0072	−.571
	(.0139)		(.0128)		(.0127)	
IQ	.0048	.822	.0059	1.392	.0061	1.426
	(.0058)		(.0042)		(.0042)	
Childhood risk	.0421	.239	.1717	1.512	.1691	1.491
	(.1763)		(.1135)		(.1134)	
Alcohol/drugs					.0095	.077
					(.1226)	
Variance components						
Between-individual	2.213**		.7170**		.7236**	
Within-individual	.4305		1.083		1.072	
Age slope	.0491**		.0133*		.0140**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

significant heterogeneity in the linear age slope, disconfirming a simple age invariance model at the individual level. In Model 2 the linear rate of change in predatory offending is also negative, but this time there is no further punch added by the quadratic age function ($p > .10$).

After accounting for the direct effects of age, we consider next the three time-varying covariates. As for the 52 men in our follow-up (Table 9.3), states of marriage, employment, and military service are independently associated with lower event-rates of offending over time in the full delinquent group sample, whether alcohol/drug related or predatory (Models 1 and 2). The magnitudes of association are impressive. For our main indicator, being married is associated with an estimated reduction in offending of 27 and 18 percent for alcohol-related and predatory crimes, respectively, controlling for person-level differences in marriage and other traits. The estimated effect size for military service is larger for both crime types (approximately 40 and 58 percent reductions for predatory and alcohol/drugs, respectively). The magnitude of association for unemployment is also larger than marriage. However, we urge caution in interpreting the magnitude of the unemployment coefficient, because some of the association with crime may be spuriously due to incarceration. Although the number of days free is controlled in the exposure model, in the Gluecks' original coding scheme men who were incarcerated more than four months were sometimes considered to be unemployed. We reran the analysis selecting only observations where the men were free at least eight months as a check, and obtained similar results. Still, unlike military service and marriage where the coding was independent of incarceration, the unemployment results need to be interpreted with more caution.[9]

As in Table 9.2, Model 3 enters alcohol/drugs to predict propensity differences and within-individual changes in predatory crime. In the full delinquent group, it turns out that during periods when men are presumably engaged in excessive drinking, their event rates of predatory offending are significantly enhanced. This finding is consistent with Horney, Osgood, and Marshall (1995). Yet propensity (between-individual) differences in drinking are not linked to predatory crime (bottom panel of Table 9.4). Note also that stable differences during adulthood in marriage and military service are unrelated to propensity differences in alcohol/drug offenses (Model 1).

The main result for our purposes, however, is that controlling for simultaneous alcohol/drug offending does not in any meaningful way change the interpretation of the estimated effects of marriage, military service, or unemployment. In fact, comparing Models 2 and 3, which predict predatory crimes, the coefficients for these three predictors at both the within and the between-individual levels are invariant to the introduction of alcohol/drug offending.[10] Table 9.4 further suggests that exogenous (relative to age 17) child and adolescent factors are generally weak predictors of later between-person variations in propensity. Indeed, measured IQ and the childhood risk indicator are unrelated to both types of offenses, and the frequency of juvenile delinquency predicts early adult differences only in alcohol/drug offending.[11]

As a final test, we examined another set of models that took into account overall criminal propensity as estimated by a lagged version of the total number of crimes committed by each man. Specifically, we re-estimated Table 9.4 by replacing concurrent drinking with the total offense rate in the observation year prior to the measurement of the dependent variable and values of marriage. This procedure is a very conservative test since prior marriage transitions could have influenced prior crime. Nonetheless, the results of this test were very robust despite the expected high levels of stability for crime-related offenses across time—the t-ratios for the within-individual association of lagged crime with concurrent predatory offending and drinking/drug offenses were 4.86 and 4.99, respectively (both $p < .01$). Yet the within-individual marriage pattern maintained its presence, with a coefficient of $-.32$ for predatory offending (t-ratio $= -4.76$) and $-.29$ for drinking (t-ratio $= -2.88$). Even the between-individual marriage association remained significantly negative controlling for propensity differences in prior crime. Comparing these results with Table 9.4, we thus conclude that the estimated effects of marriage on predatory offending and drinking/drug offenses are not explained away by prior between-individual propensities to crime and prior within-individual changes in crime.

Summary and Convergence

The findings from this chapter contribute the final pieces to the picture that has emerged in an interactive fashion over the course of

analysis throughout this book. First, we have demonstrated the enormous variability over time in criminal offending and major life events among a group of boys chosen for their persistent delinquent activity. The vast majority of men experienced changes in marriage, military service, and unemployment states, and even for predatory crime, more than 50 percent of the variation in our follow-up group was within rather than between individuals. Second, the general pattern of age and desistance is strong—the average rate of change in crime and its curvature are both negative for total crime and alcohol/drug offenses. Third, we discovered significant individual heterogeneity in the rate of desistance as indicated by formal tests for variance in the age-crime slope. So while the direct effects of age are clearly evident, there is considerable variance in desistance rates as high-rate active delinquents age over the life course.

Most important from our perspective, changes in the event rate of crime, controlling for age, are systematically related to adult transitions to marriage, unemployment, and military service. Our inferences are strongest for marriage, where we have person-period observations from 17 to 70: when in states of marriage (but also military service and employment), men are less likely to be criminal (see also Farrington et al. 1986; Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995; Farrington and West 1995). The strength of our hierarchical analytic approach was that it separated within-person variability and simultaneously modeled between-person influences of life-course transitions. Although both were significant, the results for within-individual "turning points" are of particular interest. Namely, when deviations from a person's overall propensity to be married were examined over time, the major results demonstrated that offending was lower when men were married. We estimated the marriage effect to be as large as a 40 percent reduction in the rate of criminal offending associated with a within-person state of being married. This finding was not explained away by age effects, overall propensity to be married, criminal propensity as reflected in prior total offending, concurrent drinking/drug offending (for predatory crimes), or exogenously defined childhood and adolescent risk factors—all of which we controlled.

At first glance it may appear that the findings on marriage are inconsistent with our earlier theoretical emphasis and empirical findings on the quality or strength of social bonds, such as marital attachment, rather than the event of marriage itself (see Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998). Unfortunately, because of data limitations we cannot directly model yearly changes in social bonds such as marital attachment and job stability from ages 17 to 70. On the other hand, one needs first to enter the state of marriage to experience marital attachment, and one cannot have job stability without a job. In the Glueck data, in fact, marital attachment from ages 25 to 32 is highly correlated with the lifetime proportion of years the men were married ($r = .71$, $p < .01$), giving support to the idea that the investment quality of good marriages grows stronger over time. Job stability is also substantially negatively associated with the mean proportion of years unemployed during the age period 17–32 ($r = -.70$, $p < .01$). We thus believe our present focus on time-varying transitions in marriage, employment, and military service over the full life course makes both theoretical and empirical sense.

None of this denies the enduring legacy of high-risk childhoods. Although one may quarrel with some of the specifics, our thirteen-item risk scale from Chapter 5 incorporates most if not all the major risk factors identified in the literature and proves to be predictive of future offending at the group level. On average, high-risk children are more likely to offend in the latter years than those defined by low childhood risk. Yet individual predictions into adulthood remain poor, and childhood risk fails to explain trajectory patterns and differential rates of desistance.

These results undermine the common wisdom emanating from the selection-bias view of the world, where the life-course correlates of crime are seen as inauthentic. If adult life changes are mere stand-ins for other factors, they would not survive rigorous within-individual analysis where each person serves as his or her own control for time-stable factors. The data suggest that, if anything, the opposite is true. Our hierarchical analysis of change indicates that more frequently than not, it is the dynamic prediction of within-individual change where the life-course events are most salient. Consistent with Farrington (1988) and Horney, Osgood, and Marshall (1995) but taking a longer view of the life course, we find that even when delinquent men predisposed to crime in their early years experience states of marriage, military service, and employment, they are less likely to commit crime. This does not mean such effects are lasting, or that selection bias plays no role. Rather it means that, as Chapters 6–8 indicate, situational and structural life circumstances simultaneously shape human behavior.

Overall, then, our final quantitative analyses have converged to validate the importance of proximate adult social processes, especially marriage but also employment and military service, that are systematically associated with less crime across the adult years, just as they have converged to show how childhood risk factors are consequential not only in childhood but spanning into adulthood as well. It would appear that child and adult factors are continually and interactively at play in a complex process that winds through time along a number of pathways. Despite the complexity, however, in the end the qualitative and quantitative analyses agree more than they disagree on the fundamental pathways to eventual desistance from crime.

CHAPTER TEN

Rethinking Lives in and out of Crime

> Both science and autobiography affirm that a capacity for change is as essential to human development as it is to the evolution of new species. The events of the opening years do start an infant down a particular path, but it is a path with an extraordinarily large number of intersections.
>
> —JEROME KAGAN (1998)

> The events that go wrong in our lives do not forever damn us.
>
> —GEORGE E. VAILLANT AND CAROLINE VAILLANT (1981)

We return to the lives of Arthur and Michael, whom we introduced in Chapter 1. Despite remarkably similar beginnings, Arthur and Michael constructed radically different adult lives. Recall that at age 65 Arthur was in poor health and living alone on social security. He smoked four to five packs of cigarettes a day and was taking Paxil for stress. Married and divorced twice, Arthur was a self-described loner. Somewhat pathetically, he told us, "I live alone. I'm happier that way. If I want to get laid, I get a broad for $15." Besides soliciting prostitutes, Arthur had been extensively involved in a variety of crimes as an adult and was no stranger to prison and jail. Given his lack of meaningful connections to people and institutions, Arthur's prospects for change, even in old age, appear to be grim.

In contrast, Michael's adult life was a story of success. He was a decorated war veteran and had recently become a homeowner. Happily married for forty years and a grandfather six times over, Michael has a close relationship with his wife and their five adult children. Although he officially retired at age 63, he still moonlights as a security guard. Living off pensions, social security payments, and income from his wife's job and his part-time work, Michael has not missed a mortgage payment in the seven years since he purchased his house. He suffered some health problems once he hit the age of 60, but his response was to stop drinking and take his medication on a regular basis. Per-

haps most important for this book, Michael clearly desisted from criminal behavior as an adult. Although we have recognized the complexity of turning points and their interpretation throughout our analysis, his explanation was a simple but powerful one—"Well, you can say that the Army changed me."

A dominant theme in our culture is that divergent adult outcomes are the result of varying childhood experiences. Strong versions of the notion that "wounded inner childhoods" explain adult experiences are more popular than ever (see, for example, Merkin 2002). It is interesting to speculate on why notions of childhood determinism have such appeal in our society (see Kagan 1998, 83–150; Bruer 1999). We believe that cultural beliefs about the childhood-adult connection are in part distorted by dominant methodological approaches. If we start with adult offenders, the childhood origins of crime and antisocial behavior become evident and relatively straightforward. The simple "bad boys–bad men" connection seems to fit quite well. If we begin with children, however, and follow their paths to adulthood, we find considerable heterogeneity in adult outcomes. Some antisocial children do become involved in delinquency as adolescents and then they graduate to adult offending; yet other children and adolescents cease all offending by adulthood. Retrospective data tend to confuse and simplify cause and effect for both laypersons and scholars alike. Although maddeningly difficult to carry out, only prospective longitudinal data—studying lives going forward—can sort out causal ordering and shed light on how complex processes emerge over time (Vaillant 1995; 2002, 29–33). As George Vaillant pointed out with regard to retrospective narratives, "It is all too common for caterpillars to become butterflies and then to maintain that in their youth they were little butterflies" (2002, 30).

Advances in the Study of Whole Lives

> Like following life thro' creatures you dissect,
> You lose it in the moment you detect.
>
> —ALEXANDER POPE (1993 [1733])

Drawing on what is arguably the longest study of criminal behavior in the world, we have sought to understand the lives of Arthur and Michael and others like them. Our approach contrasts with that of many

social scientists, especially criminologists, who have sought to identify and isolate distinctive "effects" due to individual traits, family, school, peer group, and neighborhood. The problem with this latter approach is that it has "led to an overly simplified view of the relations of parts to wholes and of causes to effects" (Lewontin 2000, 72). As noted by John Modell (1994), we were guilty of this as well in *Crime in the Making* (1993). The problem, according to Richard Lewontin, an evolutionary biologist, is that the organism is the nexus of a very large number of weakly determining forces (2000, 76) and "much of the uncertainty of evolution arises from the existence of multiple possible pathways even when external conditions are fixed" (2000, 88). In other words, when thinking about a phenomenon like crime, there is a multiplicity of causal chains and pathways, all of which have a weak individual influence (Lewontin 2000, 94; Rutter 1988; Rutter, Giller, and Hagell 1998).

Of course, the challenge is to find a middle ground between a naive reductionism and a wholism that does not allow for any precise explanation. We believe we have done so by capitalizing on a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative data and by taking seriously the life-history narratives provided by the men themselves. We have worked throughout to integrate quantitative and qualitative data, weaving back and forth between rigorous analysis of both within-individual longitudinal records and narrative accounts. Systematic integration such as this is paid lip service by many social scientists but is rarely carried out, especially in an interactional sequence that allows one data source to challenge and inform the other. With our extensive and varied forms of data gathered for a large number of serious criminal offenders across the full life course, we believe we are well positioned to address the major challenges to our previous work on behavioral change and stability over time, as well as to answer unresolved questions. In so doing, we hope to move criminological theory and policy forward in new and productive ways. In our view, criminology seems to be falling into a simplistic debate between "kinds of people" versus "kinds of contexts" arguments, although doing so in a sophisticated and technically complex manner. Both arguments fail to take seriously the idea of behavioral change across the life course.

One of the advantages of employing life-history narratives is their ability to uncover new ideas and challenge conventional wisdom. We are struck by the surprises in our data, surprises that challenge not

only the prevailing wisdom in criminology but also some of the themes in our prior work, *Crime in the Making*. A prominent example is findings that challenge the structural determinism of turning points in the life course. We now turn to these new themes and articulate in more detail our revised theory of crime, which recognizes the importance of human agency and choice as embedded in social structures. We also summarize our revised conception of the mechanisms that underlie persistent offending and desistance from crime.

Desistance by Default

> Such a theory might start with the observation that the commitment made without realization that it is being made—what might be termed the "commitment by default"—arises through a series of acts no one of which is crucial but which, taken together, constitute for the actor a series of side bets of such magnitude that he finds himself unwilling to lose them.
>
> —HOWARD S. BECKER (1960)

The process of desistance is complex and occurs for all types of offenders (for example, serious and nonserious, violent and nonviolent) at different ages over the life course. Although there are multiple pathways to desistance, our data indicate that desistance is facilitated by self-described "turning points"—changes in situational and structural life circumstances like a good marriage or a stable job—in combination with individual actions (that is, personal agency). Although age is clearly important in understanding desistance, a focus on age and age alone obfuscates understanding the life course of crime. From our perspective, desistance is best viewed as a process realized over time, not a single event.

Our stance on the desistance process contrasts with emerging theories of desistance that emphasize cognitive transformations or identity shifts as necessary for desistance to occur (see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Maruna 2001). We believe that most offenders desist in response to structural turning points that serve as the catalyst for long-term behavioral change. The image of "desistance by default" best fits the desistance process we found in our data. Desistance for our subjects was not necessarily a conscious or deliberate process, but rather the consequence of what Howard Becker calls "side bets" (1960, 38). Many men made a commitment to go straight without

even realizing it. Before they knew it, they had invested so much in a marriage or a job that they did not want to risk losing their investment (H. Becker 1960, 1964; see also Matsueda and Heimer 1997, 171). In other words, "habits provide an anchor by strengthening the forces making for persistence in behavior" (G. Becker and Murphy 2000, 152). We agree that the offenders' own perspectives and words need to be brought into the understanding of desistance, and we believe we have done so. However, offenders can and do desist without a conscious decision to "make good" (compare Maruna 2001), and offenders can and do desist without a "cognitive transformation" (compare Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002).

Some of the men we studied, of course, did want to make good, and they in fact desisted from crime. Consider, for example, Richard and his wife, who have taken in foster children who were wards of the state for many years. Our main point is that many of the desisters did not seek to make good—they simply desisted with little if any cognitive reflection on the matter. "Redemption scripts" (Maruna 2001) were also noticeably absent in most of the life-history narratives. The majority of men we interviewed desisted from crime largely because they were able to capitalize on key structural and situational circumstances. They often selected these structural and situational circumstances (for example, they decided to get married, get that job, hang out with those friends), but these institutions and relationships in turn influenced the men as well (see also G. Becker and Murphy 2000). Thus the developmental phase of cognitive transformation or making good is not a necessary pathway to desistance.

(De)Connectivity and Marginality

> The lyricism of marginality may find inspiration in the image of the "outlaw," the great social nomad, who prowls on the confines of a docile, frightened order.
>
> —MICHEL FOUCAULT (1995 [1975])

Men who desisted from crime were embedded in structured routines, socially bonded to wives, children, and significant others, drew on resources and social support from their relationships, and were virtually and directly supervised and monitored. In other words, structures, situations, and persons offered nurturing and informal social control

that facilitated the process of desistance from crime. Even the most hardened offender is not a persistent offender in the true sense of the term and, as we have observed in our long-term follow-up study, virtually all offenders eventually desist albeit at different rates and ages.

The key question is, What is it about "persistent" offenders that distinguishes them from other offenders? In our view, more than being identified by a single trait like poor verbal intelligence or low self-control or even a series of static traits, the persistent offender, to the extent the term has meaning, seems devoid of linking structures at each phase of the life course, especially involving relationships that can provide nurturing, social support, and informal social control. Generally, the persistent offenders we interviewed experienced residential instability, marital instability, job instability, failure in school and the military, and relatively long periods of incarceration. Except when in prison or jail, they were "social nomads," to use Foucault's term (1995 [1975]). In contrast to the men who desisted from crime, the life of the persistent offender was marked by marginality and a lack of structure that led to even more situations conducive to crime. For those without permanent addresses, steady jobs, spouses, children, and other rooted forms of life, crime and deviance is an unsurprising result—even for those possessing so-called prosocial traits. As a consequence of chaotic and unstructured routines, one has increased contact with those individuals who are similarly situated—in this case, similarly unattached and free from nurturing, social capital or support, and informal social control. Thus while group offending may well decline with age (Warr 2002, 130), we find in our narrative data that the influence of deviant peers and criminal networks is particularly salient in the lives of persistent offenders.

Will: The Power of Human Agency

> Will is the conscious foreshadowing of specific intention capable of being acted on or not. It is a sense of option that must be rendered in context.
>
> —DAVID MATZA (1969)

For a number of our formerly delinquent men, personal agency looms large in the processes of persistence and desistance from crime. Our narratives showed that some men who persisted in crime consciously chose to continue involvement in crime and did not apologize or

make excuses for their criminal behavior (see also Katz 1988). Many men who desisted from crime similarly displayed a variety of voluntaristic actions that facilitated the process of desistance. In our life-history narratives, one thus sees strong evidence for both will/human agency and "commitment by default" (H. Becker 1960), often in the same man's life. In other words, there is no escaping the tension surrounding conscious action and unconscious action generated by default.

The net result is that our work offers a dual critique of social science and popular thinking about crime over the life course. Many developmental criminologists believe that childhood and adolescent risk characteristics are all that really matter, but our work shows otherwise. Not to be overlooked and equally important is our critique of structuralist approaches in criminology that contend that location in the social structure, namely poverty and social class, are all that really matter. The men we studied were active participants in constructing their lives, a finding that challenges more deterministic theories like Moffitt's (1993), derived from developmental psychology, as well as theories like Merton's (1938), Cohen's (1955), Cloward and Ohlin's (1960), and Wilson's (1987), derived from sociology.

In our view, both objective and subjective factors are implicated in the processes by which some offenders commit crime at a higher rate and for a longer period of time than other offenders (see also Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Maruna 2001; Shover 1996). The linked ideas of "contingencies" and "intercontingencies" are useful in this discussion (see H. Becker 1998, 28–35). Events and their resulting actions are contingent upon other events and their accompanying actions. Intercontingencies are events and actions that are dependent upon events and actions by other people. Thus a quality marriage may be a turning point for some men because of the event itself, their subjective state, and the behavior of others around them as well as the subsequent events that result because of the fact that they are now married.

Perhaps the concept that best captures this theoretical idea is "situated choice." Our interest is the interaction between life-course transitions, macro-level events, situational context, and individual will. Moreover, we recognize that both the social environment and the individual are influenced by the interaction of structure and choice. This view of individual choice extends well beyond selection effects—

structures are determined by individual choices, and in turn structures constrain, modify, and limit individual choices. In other words, choices are always embedded in social structures. Following Gary Becker and Kevin Murphy (2000), we believe that the interaction of choice and structure produces behavior that cannot be predicted from a focus on one or the other. From our perspective, it is particularly important to reconcile the idea of choice or will with a structuralist notion of turning points (Abbott 1997, 96–97). Indeed, as Abbott has written, "A major turning point has the potential to open a system the way a key has the potential to open a lock . . . action is necessary to complete the turning" (1997, 102). In this instance, action is both thought and behavior, and thus individual action needs to align with the social structure in order to produce behavioral change and to maintain change (or stability?) over the life course. As noted above, this process of change reflects the continuous interplay between purposeful action and default "side bets" (H. Becker 1960) that accumulate over time.

Who Cares about Boston Boys Born in the 1920s?

> Perhaps you ask, "Are these lives from a previous generation relevant to us today?"
>
> —JOHN CLAUSEN (1993)

We have argued that the effects of historical context cannot be ignored in any study of offending patterns over time. This raises the question—is our work merely a historical document or does it speak to the issues of the day? In other words, who cares about Boston boys born in the 1920s if one is interested in understanding and doing something about antisocial behavior and crime in the new millennium? To push the deconstruction argument a bit further, why should we be concerned about a study of all boys in the first place? Along similar lines, why should we be concerned about white boys? Paul Tracy and Kimberly Kempf-Leonard, for example, summarily dismissed the findings in *Crime in the Making* because they were drawn from an "all-white, all-male sample" and offered "only a distorted perception of the reality of crime" (1996, 62–63).

From our perspective, the context of criminal opportunities and the ways in which antisocial tendencies are manifested needs to be recognized in any discussion of offending patterns over time. Moreover, we believe that the patterns of persistence in and desistance from crime that we have uncovered are more general than specific with respect to place, historical time, gender, and race (see also Laub and Sampson 2001, 2002).

Let's take the example of marriage, the most consistent factor to emerge on the basis of both the qualitative narratives and the longitudinal analysis of within-individual change (where each man acted as his own control for stable traits). Why is marriage important in the process of desistance? From our data, it appears that at least five dimensions of marriage affect desistance, and none of them to our knowledge are limited to a particular historical period or demographic subgroup. First, marriage offers the potential resources of another person (social support and capital). Presumably, as marriage continues, these investments grow over time and get stronger. Second, marriage contains an element of direct social control. Spouses often monitor and supervise their mates regarding a variety of behaviors, including crime and deviance. The strategies adopted by spouses vary from "zero tolerance" to "management and containment," but the intent is the same—informal social control. Third, marriage means a change in routines and lifestyle activities, namely, new friends, new family, and new time obligations. Previous routines may no longer be possible because of competing demands and obligations. Fourth, marriage often means a residential change, which can affect routine activities and in turn influence both opportunities and barriers to crime. Fifth, marriage may lead to children, who can not only change one's worldview but dramatically alter routine activities. This view is readily accepted in the popular culture. Consider a recent statement by the actor Nicolas Cage: "Before I was the anarchist setting off fireworks. Once I had my son, instead of big explosions, I looked for stability in my life" (Hawkes 2002, 4).

We are witnessing a revival of interest in the causal effects of marriage, and there is serious discussion and debate regarding the larger role of marriage in society (see Amato and Booth 1997; Waite and Gallagher 2000; Wilson 2002). We do not take a normative stance on marriage, but considering the present climate our findings on the importance of marriage seem relevant. We see our work as central to the debate about how within-individual behavior changes or remains stable over time as individuals connect or disconnect across a variety of

institutional domains (for example, marriage, work, the military). Indeed, these were the central questions pursued here by both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis. In any case, as Waite and Gallagher (2000) summarize, most people marry and most who divorce get married again, so the idea that marriage is not relevant to the study of crime is indefensible.

The apparently strong effects of marriage on health are particularly suggestive: if marriage can influence or regulate physiological responses (Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton 2001; Mazur and Michalek 1998), it is possible to conceive of behavioral responses to marriage. To be sure, in this book we have studied the connection of marriage to criminal deviance among men. It is not obvious that women reap the same benefit, although in the case of health the evidence suggests, contrary to prevailing wisdom, that the net gains are positive for all participants (Waite 1995; Waite and Gallagher 2000, 47–64; Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton 2001).

With respect to persistence in crime, consider next the role of addiction and substance abuse. Drawing on a large body of empirical literature, Michael Rutter and his colleagues have concluded, "Antisocial behavior at an earlier age increases the risk of alcohol or drug problems at a later age and vice versa" (1998, 152). Whether involving alcohol or other drugs, substance abuse is an important component in the maintenance of crime over the life course. Moreover, since most of the Glueck men who were substance abusers abused alcohol, it is worthwhile to point out that "alcohol is a more important risk factor for antisocial behavior than are other drugs (because it is more frequently taken in excess)" (Rutter et al. 1998, 154). As revealed in the life-history narratives, drug and alcohol abuse sustains crime in part because of the negative consequences and social difficulties caused by heavy drinking and drug use in the domains of work, family, and the military. Like our findings on marriage, our findings on the role of substance abuse in sustaining criminal behavior over time are not isolated. The Glueck men do not have to have used crack cocaine in order to be relevant to current criminological thinking.

Critics whose gaze is limited to the present thus suffer in the end from a lack of scientific sense. Because our focus is on within-individual patterns of stability and change, we must rely on longitudinal data that other investigators began collecting many years ago in order to empirically study various life adaptations over the long-term (see also Vaillant 2002). There is no other way to proceed—the study of crime cannot sit still while the principal investigators of today's ongoing longitudinal studies collect data. To be sure, we look forward to learning more about trajectories of adult crime and their linkage to childhood behavior in such studies (for example, the Pittsburgh Youth Study; Rochester Youth Development Study; Dunedin cohort study; Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods) when those subjects turn age 70 in the year 2045 and well beyond. But of course by then those data too will be criticized as old.

Implications for Developmental Criminology

> Development (*svillupo* in Italian, *desarrollo* in Spanish, *Entwicklung* in German) is literally an unfolding or unrolling of something that is already present and in some way preformed.
>
> —RICHARD LEWONTIN (2000)

If one defines development as life-history change, then developmental criminology should focus on changes in the development of crime and antisocial behavior over time. Relying on what Michael Tonry and David Farrington (1995) refer to as the central insight from Shakespeare—that the child is father to the man (see Caspi 2000)—researchers have addressed how developmental processes are linked to the onset, continuation, and cessation of criminal and antisocial behavior. Much has been learned and developmental criminology is now ascendant. One of the most popular and compelling theories of crime in the developmental camp is Terrie Moffitt's dual taxonomy theory of offending.

In our view, the character of "development" in developmental criminology is a key theoretical issue. Lewontin has stated that "the term *development* is a metaphor that carries with it a prior commitment to the nature of the process" (2000, 5). Using the analogy of a photographic image, Lewontin argues that the way the term "development" is used is a process that makes the latent image apparent. This seems to be what developmental criminological theory is all about. For example, in Moffitt's theory of crime, the environment offers a "set of enabling conditions" that allow individual traits to express themselves. Although reciprocal interactions with the environment are allowed, life-course-persistent offenders and adolescence-

limited offenders follow a preprogrammed line of development—an unwinding, an unfolding, or an unrolling of what is fundamentally "already there." The view of development as a predetermined unfolding is linked to a typological understanding of the world—different internal programs will have different outcomes for individuals of a different type. Lewontin writes, "If the development of an individual is the unfolding of a genetic program immanent in the fertilized egg, then variations in the outcome of development must be consequences of variations in that program" (2000, 17).

Debates about development in the social sciences are not new (see, for example, the exchange between Dannefer (1984) and Baltes and Nesselroade (1984)). As noted, some developmentalists recognize social interactions, but in the end they embrace a between-individual focus that emphasizes the primacy of early childhood attributes that are presumed to be stable. We view the life course as something altogether different. Furthermore, we see development as it is typically defined and emphasized in the literature as not necessarily pertinent to the study of situated human behavior. In our theory of crime, development is better conceived as the constant interaction between individuals and their environment, coupled with the factor of chance or "random developmental noise" (Lewontin 2000, 35–36). Recognizing developmental noise implies that "the organism is determined neither by its genes nor by its environment nor even by interaction between them, but bears a significant mark of random processes" (2000, 38).

From this view it makes sense that we uncovered enormous heterogeneity in criminal offending over the life course. Some offenders start early and stop; others start early and continue for long periods of time. A sizable portion of the offending population displays a zigzag pattern of offending over long time periods. Most important, long-term patterns of offending cannot be explained by individual differences (for example, low verbal IQ), childhood characteristics (for example, early onset of misbehavior), or adolescent characteristics (for example, chronic juvenile offending). In our conception of development, then, the sum of the parts includes individual differences, environmental differences, social interactions, and random, chance events. All of this leads to considerable "noisy, unpredictable development." Coupled with the analyses presented throughout this book, this description captures well the life-course reality of much crime.

On the Dangers of Offender Typologies

> The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance.
>
> —ALEXANDER ROSENBLUETH AND NORBERT WEINER (1951), AS QUOTED IN LEWONTIN (2000)

> The typological idea is a fairly simple and straightforward one that has superficial plausibility, but it is also an idea whose time has probably gone.
>
> —DON GIBBONS (1985)

Richard Lewontin has cautioned that while metaphors are important in intellectual debates, there is a significant danger of confusing the metaphor with the thing of real interest (2000, 4). The discipline of criminology would do well to heed this warning, for if the trend toward reifying offender groups as distinct rather than approximations or heuristic devices continues, we may well miss indications that statistically constructed groups or types do not, in fact, exist. In other words, despite appropriate cautions and caveats, research questions and research designs run a considerable risk of reinforcing the "metaphorical imagery."

Typological configurations pose a related but perhaps more vexing risk. Despite early warnings by Don Gibbons in the 1980s, the popularity of typological approaches to crime has, if anything, increased in recent years. In our view, the problems with typological approaches are many and far reaching. In a general sense, typologies are related to the larger issue of development as a packaged unfolding, as discussed above. But in other ways, the issue of typologies in criminological theory and research is distinct and different from the larger issue of development. One fundamental problem is that most typological approaches in criminology are atheoretical and post hoc. After the fact, it appears possible to find groups in any data set, many of which cannot be replicated or validated with independent data.

The underlying question is whether delinquency and crime are homogeneous or a unidimensional phenomenon. As Travis Hirschi pointed out more than thirty years ago, "the problem with the typological approach is that it begs the question of causal homogeneity by focusing exclusively on the question of behavioral homogeneity" (1969, 53). As we witnessed in our long-term follow-up data, it is

more likely that offender groupings follow a fairly continuous distribution across variables. The key finding from our analyses is that the process of desistance follows a remarkably similar path for all offenders, albeit at different rates. Moreover, we could find no credible evidence that this finding is an artifact of our data source.

The notion of offender typologies is also inextricably linked to interventions. The fundamental idea is that different interventions are needed for different types of offenders (see Gibbons 1985). One result of this intellectual approach is the development of specialized study groups and the emergence of the risk-factor paradigm. For instance, in 1995 the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention convened a study group on serious and violent juvenile offenders (Loeber and Farrington 1998). The unexamined assumption was that serious and violent juvenile offenders are distinct and different from nonserious and nonviolent juvenile offenders in ways other than what their outcomes indicate. A few years later, a second study group was formed on child delinquents (Loeber and Farrington 2000). The underlying assumption of this study group is that early offenders are different from later offenders. The next study group will no doubt focus on yet another offender category or offense type.

An obvious problem is that there is little consistent empirical support in decades of criminological research for the idea of offense specialization and differential causal forces (Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin 1972; Wolfgang, Thornberry, and Figlio 1987; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein 2003). Moreover, depending upon the data source (official versus self-report), offender types are at best a loose reflection of reality and do not capture the complexity of offending over the life course. When one considers long-term follow-up data, offender typologies become even murkier and difficult to justify on empirical grounds. Indeed we designed our follow-up study to capture a typology of adult offending, only to question it as the complexity of the men's lives became apparent. Finally, the success of specialized, targeted interventions focusing on offender types such as life-course-persistent offenders has not been demonstrated; this approach may lead to grandiose proclamations like those seen in the National Summit on Violence pamphlet (1999) that far exceed the state of scientific knowledge in the field of criminology.

By raising critical questions about typological approaches, we are not arguing that groups or grouping techniques have no place in criminology. As discussed in earlier chapters, groups serve many useful purposes, and methods such as trajectory group analysis (Nagin and Land 1993) are innovative in recent criminology. Nevertheless, serious problems arise when groups are defined atheoretically and reified as substantively real without prospective or external validation. Despite the appeal of groups for simplifying a messy reality, we believe that criminologists may be better served by attending to individual trajectories of crime. Understanding general causal pathways to crime at all points in the life course is the research question that criminology might profitably begin to address.

Reconsidering the Risk-Factor Paradigm

> Certainly the art of constructing [prediction] instruments for use at an early age is in a somewhat parlous state.
>
> —DAVID J. BORDUA (1961b)

The conference "Delinquents under 10: Targeting the Young Offender" was held in Minneapolis in 1999. As the name indicates, the risk-factor and prediction paradigm has again taken hold of criminology, especially for those interested in crime prevention and crime control policies (for an excellent overview of this approach, see Farrington 2000). Investigators know what the risk factors are; however, what we don't know very well is which kids will do what and when. In other words, as David Bordua observed more than forty years ago, our ability to predict behavior prospectively over the long term continues to be weak at best.

An analogy may be appropriate here. In an article in *Science,* Robert Geller and his colleagues have concluded that earthquakes cannot be predicted. They write:

> Whether any particular small earthquake grows into a large earthquake depends on a myriad of fine details of physical conditions throughout a large volume, not just in the immediate vicinity of the fault. This highly sensitive nonlinear dependence of earthquake rupture on unknown initial conditions severely limits predictability. The prediction of individual large earthquakes would require the unlikely capability of knowing all of these details with greater accuracy. Furthermore, no quantitative theory for analyzing these data to issue predictions exists at present. Thus, the consensus . . . was that individual earthquakes are probably inherently unpredictable. (Geller et al. 1997, 1616)

What is needed, Geller and his colleagues conclude, are "observable and identifiable precursors that would allow alarms to be issued with high reliability and accuracy" (1997, 1616).

In the field of criminology do such precursors in fact exist? Yes and no. The yes refers once again to the fact that adult criminals seem always to possess early childhood risks (Robins 1966, 1978), a sturdy finding in criminology. The no refers to the prospective reality. There is a lengthy history of prediction research in criminology showing that childhood variables are quite modest prognostic devices, going forward in time. Known as the false positive problem, prediction scales often result in the substantial overprediction of future criminality (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1987; Farrington and Tarling 1985). Likewise, prediction attempts often fail to identify accurately those who will become criminal even though past behavior suggests otherwise (false negatives). In one of the best studies that illustrates the problem, Jennifer White and her colleagues (1990, 521) document that "early antisocial behavior is the best predictor of later antisocial behavior." This study examined behavior from age 3 to age 15. Nevertheless, their data clearly show the limitations of relying only on childhood information to understand behavior over time. As White et al. (1990, 521) argue, a high false positive rate precludes the use of early antisocial behavior alone as a predictor of later crime. They go on to note the general inaccuracy of specific predictions and describe how the heterogeneous nature of delinquency in later adolescence (and by implication, adulthood) thwarts accurate prediction. White's findings complement our own. Using data from ages 7 to 70 we have illustrated the inherent difficulties in predicting crime prospectively over the life course. This long history of problems in predicting crime and delinquency has been a core criticism of the Gluecks' research program dating back to the 1950s and 1960s (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 1991).

Incarceration and Offender Reentry

> The most terrible moment in the life of an offender is not that in which the prison door closes upon him, but that in which it opens to permit his return to the world.
>
> —FREDERICK HOWARD WINES (1919)

The study of criminal recidivism after prisoner release has a venerable tradition in criminology and has produced some of the field's most important works (for example, Glaser 1969), but what to do about offender "reentry" after incarceration remains a major policy issue. This concern is being driven by the number of ex-prisoners returning home (roughly 1,600 a day) and by the unexamined belief that the needs of ex-offenders are different today than in eras gone by (see Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001; compare Glaser 1969).

One of the more troubling findings from our analysis of the Gluecks' data concerns the possible counterproductive effects of punitive sanctions, such as incarceration, when considered in the long run of individual lives. Our analyses over the years have found that employment is directly influenced by criminal sanctions—incarceration as a juvenile and as a young adult had a negative effect on later job stability, which in turn was negatively related to continued involvement in crime over the life course (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 1995). Notwithstanding positive assessments of juvenile incarceration in the narratives of some men who desisted, the view of incarceration, especially long-term incarceration, was overwhelmingly negative among those men who persisted in crime over the life course. From these findings as well as other evidence on the consequences of imprisonment (see Fagan and Freeman 1999; Hagan 1993; Western 2002), the idea of cumulative disadvantage seems germane. Cumulative disadvantage posits that arrest and especially incarceration may spark failure in school, unemployment, and weak community bonds, in turn increasing adult crime (Sampson and Laub 1997; Thornberry 1987; Thornberry and Krohn 2001).

This line of inquiry in life-course criminology appears directly relevant to policies based on deterrence and other forms of punitive intervention as well as to efforts addressing prisoner reentry. We need to take into account the potential negative effects of sanctioning in forestalling desistance, along with factors that facilitate offender reintegration. What is needed is a mechanism or, better yet, a series of mechanisms to bring offenders back into the institutional fabric of society. The critical question that should be on the table, then, is how does society facilitate reconnections that are so essential to the process of desistance from crime?

"Well sir, I guess there's just a meanness in this world," sings Bruce Springsteen (1982). Our data also reveal the inherent complexities

and difficult challenges facing offenders in their reentry efforts. Behavioral change is complicated, varied, and seemingly impossible to predict. We studied men who were arrested in every decade of their life, some of whom committed murder, child rape, and armed robbery well into adulthood with no regrets whatsoever. Their crimes, attitudes, and lifestyles confirmed for us what James Q. Wilson noted decades ago: "Wicked people exist" (1975, 260). Or as Jack Katz (1988) observed, many offenders are deeply and possibly forever attracted to the seductions of what we might call "doing harm." In confronting the pathos and destruction of such men, we were struck by the Pollyannaish quality of much criminological talk about reintegration. Nevertheless, although warm and cuddly prisoner reentry options seem ill suited for such hardened men, we do not wish to use this fact to attack all rehabilitation efforts and crime prevention programs, as Wilson did. We believe these initiatives are essential and well justified from a scientific standpoint (Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Sherman et al. 1997). Moreover, we see these initiatives as important components of a fair, just, and humane society. Our point is a cautionary one to those who have embraced "offender reentry" as the answer to the crime problem, especially the idea that we merely need to help offenders "make good." The road is long, the participants often unwilling, and our state of knowledge quite limited.

Conclusion

Whereas in *Crime in the Making* we saw informal social control as the primary explanation of crime and desistance over the life course, here we offer a more nuanced perspective. As David Matza said almost forty years ago, the missing element in traditional social control theory is human agency (1964, 183); motivation has always been its weakest link. Moreover, as we argued in the past, traditional social control theory suffers from other problems: it is narrowly portrayed as a static, cross-sectional theory that ignores the dynamic, longitudinal aspects of informal social control and support; the theory neglects the role of social structure in the social bonding process; and the theory fails to appreciate the feedback effects of crime and incarceration on social bonds as an important part of the causal story. And though beyond the scope of this book, traditional social control cannot easily explain (or possibly even comprehend) crime that results when individuals are socially bonded and tightly connected to strong subcultures or higher-echelon segments of society. Events such as the Enron and WorldCom scandals, alleged insider trading by Martha Stewart, terrorism here and abroad, and sex abuse by priests in the Catholic Church should cause even the most ardent supporter of traditional social control theory some discomfort and consternation.

Although we do not abandon control theory, we see other concepts as equally relevant for understanding persistent offending and desistance from crime over the life course. As we discussed in Chapter 3, these concepts include personal agency and situated choice, routine activities, aging, macro-level historical events, and local culture and community context. We have thereby offered an expanded vision of our age-graded theory of informal social control presented in *Crime in the Making* and our other writings over the last decade. Interestingly, as much as our earlier theory was linked to our methodological and analytical approach (for example, regression models focusing on holding individual differences constant to see the effects of turning points), our revised theory here is also linked to our method and analytical strategy (for example, life-history narratives derived from the men themselves integrated with quantitative longitudinal data reconstructed from the Glueck archive supplemented by our own follow-up study at age 70). This merging of quantitative and qualitative data allowed us to gain insight into the life course of crime that would not have been possible using traditional approaches. Within-individual hierarchical models and trajectory analyses turned out to sit rather well with in-depth narratives and qualitative analysis, at least for the purposes of better understanding lives through time. Integrative and emergent findings pushed us to expand our theory of informal social control to include, among others, the idea of situated choice as central to an understanding of crime from childhood through old age. As the Glueck men near the end of their lives, the complexities and possibilities of such choices become ever more apparent and, inevitably, ever more consequential.