

DESISTANCE FROM OFFENDING:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE POTENTIAL  
INFLUENCES OF ADULT INSTITUTIONS

by

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by

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Persistent offending over the life-course is marked by young adulthood as it is this age range that lies between the two general natural declines of criminal behavior (late adolescence and late adulthood). Debate within the desistance literature is ongoing into what components are essential to the initiation and termination of anti-social behavior. One approach argues for turning points that encourage prosocial conformity while others advocate that a prosocial cognitive shift is essential. The current study extends the literature by examining the impact of adult institutions on the criminal desistance process while employing a cognitive element. Findings indicate some support for the unique contribution of turning points, however, it remains unclear the full impact of these institutions and identity reformation and where they lie causally within the desistance process. The implications of these findings regarding policy approaches as well as recommendations and paths for future research are discussed.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Criminal desistance is the process of reducing the rate and ultimate termination of offending for individuals with a history of antisocial behavior. There is substantial support in the criminological literature that the greatest increase in offending occurs during adolescence, however, these high offending rates sharply decrease as adolescents enter adulthood. Specifically, offending rates derived from both official and self-report data drop dramatically during the later adolescent years into the 20s, proposing an ‘aging out’ effect for offending (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Although there is agreement for ‘aging out,’ some argue this effect may extend past adolescence into adulthood. Arnett (2007) proposes that current societal norms such as higher educational attainment marking adulthood success for those 18-25 within the socioeconomic spectrum have prolonged the transition to adult identity which may incentivize offending rather than desisting. In this context, some adolescents continue to offend well into adulthood while others may have the onset to offend during their 20s or later. Criminological research has primarily focused on criminal trajectories and the factors that influence persistent offending. In recent decades, however, a body of research has emerged into the processes and motivating factors attributed to desistance. There remains debate into the theoretical reasons for how and why desistance occurs. Nevertheless, this field of research has invited arguments into the importance of understanding how to guide individuals toward desistance rather than disproportionately relying on features of offending such as recidivism and dimensions of criminal trajectories including onset, persistence, frequency, and severity. Desistance research remains in conflict over the internal and external factors that interact and influence this complex



process. Without question, however, is that most offenders, even those with extensive criminal histories, will eventually desist from crime (Maruna, 2001). This later form of desistance is an ‘aging out’ effect that can take decades before coming into effect compared to the initial late adolescent drop off; well into the middle 30s and later adult years of life as life perspectives become less individualistic. Thus, regardless of offender type, criminal careers do decline (Sampson and Laub, 2003). In this context, it is critical that research examines the contributing factors associated with the age cohort (early 20s and early 30s) which lies between these acknowledged crime declines (i.e., late adolescence and middle adulthood).

There is the view that desisting offenders have self-perceived control of their lives stemming from meaningful roles compared to persistent offenders that likely have a more chaotic livelihood (Maruna, 2001). Furthermore, the appraisal from other people is recognized to shape behavior and identity, such is the case with young children toward parents, adolescents toward peers, and adults toward family and co-workers (Sampson and Laub, 2003; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007). This recognition suggests that marriage, having children, educational attainment, and stable employment are likely influences for prosocial adulthood.

To contribute to the growing body of research that focuses on desistance, the current study seeks to examine several potential factors that induce desistance and how these affect offending rates on a large, nationally representative sample of individuals designated as young adults (ages 18-32). Moreover, this study expands on the desistance literature which often explores male populations by utilizing a sample with a larger gender distribution. Furthermore, this research will investigate the effects of employment, parenthood, marriage, and post-secondary education on adult desistance from various antisocial behaviors. It is hypothesized that

among those who persist with antisocial behavior, those who attain more than one adult role will be more likely to desist compared to those that hold one adult role or none.

The hypothesis stems from the desistance literature which postulates the importance of adult institutions or roles in promoting prosocial opportunities (i.e., ‘turning points’ Sampson and Laub, 1993; ‘hooks’ Giordano et al., 2002) while others contend that such institutions are not an essential component to the desistance process, and place causality within the individual (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). No one institution unequivocally signifies an adult identity but rather several factors congregating to induce an adult role which in this context is assumed to signify desistance (Massoglia and Uggen, 2010). Considering the theoretical backdrop, offending rates are likely to decrease as more roles are attained. However, reduced offending rates should also occur in the absence of these adult institutions if Paternoster and Bushway (2009) are correct. Additionally, it is expected that offending rates are higher in the first cohort (ages 18-26) compared to the second cohort (ages 24-32) since individuals in the latter are more likely to have attained adult roles during that time.

The goal of this study is to expand the body of literature regarding criminal desistance in hopes to better inform public policies and perspectives that emphasize measures of recidivism. While much of criminology places focus on crime prevention, it is just as important to direct efforts toward intervention for those who have persisted or are on the onset of offending in young adulthood. Ongoing debates over the causal process within criminal desistance is a salient topic as it is critical to dissect which components bring about the greatest effect. For the moment, policies that influence practices and programs will continue to vary as they rely on different mechanisms within the desistance process. As such, the current study will consider its findings

and how it relates to policy practices and theoretical implications on both serious and non-serious offenders within young adulthood. Furthermore, limitations of this study will be discussed as well as suggestions for future research including the importance of rigorous methodology which facilitates a better understanding of an ever-growing body of research and critical feature of criminal offending, desistance.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DESISTANCE THEORIES**

The content of this chapter considers the theoretical foundations of criminal desistance that encouraged the development of this study. The prominent desistance theories include the age-graded theory of informal social control, cognitive theory of transformation, and identity theory of desistance (ITD). Major themes, revisions, and theoretical comparisons are laid out in detail over the following sections with empirical support for each approach discussed in the subsequent chapter.

#### *Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control*

A prominent theory for desistance in life-course criminology, Sampson and Laub first introduced their turning points hypothesis within their monograph for the age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Their argument for criminal desistance entails how offending declines in relation to certain events or shifts over the life-course that allow individuals to leave the past behind and begin anew. These events or shifts were termed ‘turning points’ which encourage increases in informal social control. The main factor they attribute to the desistance process is the promotion of conventional social bonds that provides individuals with a stake in social conformity as well as a change to their routine activities that were otherwise characterized by antisocial behaviors (Laub and Sampson, 1993).

Social conformity is posited to be brought about by opportunities that increase informal social control. Sampson and Laub propose opportunities such as marriage, employment, and the military are likely turning points for individuals with the propensity to offend. As such, it is these

turning points that lead individuals to transition from delinquent offenders to mature prosocial adults. Thus, prosocial roles initiate the desistance process, so long as such roles are interdependent, stable, and high quality (Sampson and Laub 1993). This suggests that the desistance process requires the exposure to a turning point that can increase social conformity which may encourage the formation of a prosocial identity (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Although they postulate the importance of quality opportunities, there is a lack of discussion into what attributes constitute high quality for turning points such as marriage, employment, and the military.

One of the most important aspects of the turning points hypothesis that separates it from other prominent desistance theories is that it does not require individuals to have a change in identity or an individual-level shift to successfully desist. Sampson and Laub do posit, however, that identity change may occur only after conventional social bonds are formed and create the pathway to generate a change in self-perception. They later revised their theory by elaborating on social control and routine activities and incorporating a component of unpredictability brought on by human agency. In their revised age-graded theory of informal social control, they suggested that agency is purposeful action subject to situational context (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Although these revisions were important, the definition of human agency remains an ambiguous concept. Other theoretical perspectives that place greater emphasis on its significance to the internal mechanisms for change are discussed next.

### *Theory of Cognitive Transformation*

Giordano et al.'s (2002) theory of criminal desistance took a different approach to how individuals change by placing desistance within symbolic interactionism rather than social control theory. Their contribution to the theoretical work in desistance focuses on the importance of the cognitive processes that take place before 'hooks' (i.e., turning points) are provided and be effective. Regardless of the frequency or quality of potential hooks, they will not induce a meaningful pathway toward desistance if the individual has not yet accepted an identity role uncharacterized by offending. Their initial theory identified two cognitions: (1) openness for identity change, and (2) a hook perceived as meaningful to themselves (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). Perceptions that are detached from criminality and towards a prosocial identity follow only after these two cognitive transformations occur. To exemplify this argument, an offender is unlikely to have a stake in conformity if they have yet to make an internal commitment to change despite the efforts of a prosocial spouse or co-worker.

Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich (2007) further revised the theory to include emotional transformations which emphasize role taking and stakes in conformity encouraged by prosocial relationships. This addition suggests that persistent offending stems from negative emotionality which can be ameliorated by meaningful romantic relationships that serve as a guide and support system (Giordano et al., 2007). Additionally, they visit the notion of human agency regarding criminal desistance by placing it in the middle of the spectrum of advantage and disadvantage; explaining that agency is not enough to overcome the extreme disadvantage that afflict some offenders and is irrelevant if one is surrounded by prosocial influence (Giordano et al., 2002). Moreover, human agency in this context is underscored by the social causes to desist rather than internal self-perceptions. Specifically, the will to desist stems from social

learning and reinforcement brought about by role taking such as romantic relationships (Giordano et al., 2007). Thus, their revised theory places greater emphasis on social learning rather than the individual shift originally suggested by their cognitive transformation theory in 2002. Regardless, both cognitive and emotional transformations need to occur before any hook or turning point can take effect while human agency remains at the middle ground of being influential to the desistance process.

### *Identity Theory of Desistance*

Paternoster and Bushway formulated the most recent theory of criminal desistance. They contend with a clearer definition and more reliance on human agency by positing that offenders will only continue to pursue antisocial behavior so long as their perception of benefits outweighs the costs of crime. Moreover, these costs can be designated as failures of the offender, although, persistent offenders are likely to place blame on guiltless factors such as fate or circumstance (Maruna, 2001; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). They also contend that identity reformation initiates after repeated failures in offending and other shortcomings in life finally overwhelm the perceived benefits of crime. This stockpile of blame is then directed toward the offender and their inadequacy rather than on chance and begin to conceive a failed future self; a ‘feared self’ (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Thus, desistance is triggered by the development of the feared self which encourages the creation of a new identity—expressed as ‘replacement self’ in cognitive transformation theory.

Their position on when identity change occurs emphasizes the sequence of events that leads to prosocial influences and elucidates on the cognitive transformation theory as to why an

offender would be opened to transitioning away from antisocial behavior and be favorable toward prosocial values. Furthermore, it explains how this internal process leads to other prosocial changes such as effective turning points within the age-graded theory (Paternoster et al., 2015). Of important note within identity theory is the notion that a turning point which is the primary basis underlying age-graded theory is not a necessary component for successful desistance, although, they do provide a valuable support system. Specifically, the authors point out that a prosocial lifestyle does not have to be characterized by turning points such as stable employment or marriage as social conformity can still occur so long as one has an established prosocial identity.

Paternoster and Bushway (2009) have further contended that the age-graded theory does not support current criminal demographics. When considering serious offenders, many are afflicted with mental health and substance abuse issues suggesting that procuring either a satisfying marriage or stable employment is doubtful as they would not possess the necessary qualities to attain either, especially in the absence of an internal change to be better (Paternoster et al., 2015). They also postulate that identity theory is more adequate for generalizability as the age-graded theory is based on a population belonging to the twentieth century in which the social context had different circumstances, livelihoods, and opportunities compared to modern populations. Moreover, offenders with criminal histories are limited in their means for adopting prosocial roles, making the notion of turning points or hooks less achievable (Maruna, 2001). Thus, it is more likely that those who desist do so because of a change in identity and strive to create and maintain their limited support.



Overall, debate remains about whether individuals who desire to desist from criminal behavior do so in response to endogenous cognitive shifts or, rather, are initiated by exogenous prosocial opportunities (i.e., hooks, turning points). Similar themes among the desistance theories are that social roles and institutions such as marriage, employment, parenthood, and higher education bring about successful transitions to conventional society. Both cognitive transformation and identity theory stress the importance of cognitive shifts before social roles can be effective while age-graded theory emphasizes that social conformity occurs because of these prosocial opportunities. Regarding the causal process and essential components of criminal desistance, empirical findings show ambivalent support for either approach. The following chapter will discuss the empirical research that supports the age-graded, cognitive, and identity theories of desistance.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The content of this chapter discusses the empirical evidence for the theories of desistance identified in Chapter 2. The primary focus of the research review is the turning points hypothesis with less attention given to the cognitive component argued by cognitive transformation and identity theory since the focus of the current study is on major institutions that signal a transition to adulthood, sections are organized by employment, parenthood, marriage and post-secondary education. Evidence for both serious and non-serious offenders is included.

#### *Employment*

The literature regarding support for employment as an effective influence toward conformity is mixed. Sampson and Laub (1993) first suggested that employment gave rise to informal social control and prosocial bonds by examining a group of adolescents and younger adults at ages 17 to 25 and found that those that held 'stable' employment had reduced rates of offending when analyzed again at ages 25 to 32. However, results of their follow-up study were less fruitful; suggesting that stable employment may not necessarily signal a turning point, though, it does certainly sustain the desistance process (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Research in support of the age-graded theory and employment find that prosocial coworkers can provide alternative peer groups for offenders which can decrease criminal behaviors. Wright and Cullen (2004) used data from the National Youth Survey and found that adult employment can reduce offending rates and drug use so long as such employment involved interacting with prosocial peers and disassociating from antisocial peers. This process, however, was found to only stimulate and accelerate the desistance process rather than initiate it.

Other research has suggested that employment opportunities do not contribute to the initiation of the desistance process (Maruna, 2001; Skardhamer and Savolainen, 2014). Such studies support the idea of cognitive change preceding turning points. Specifically, Maruna (2001) conducted a series of in-depths interviews on a sample of persisting and desisting offenders in Liverpool. He discussed that desisting offenders held ‘redemption scripts’ in that their self-narratives had themes such a productivity, achievement, and accomplishment and had made the commitment to stop offending prior to any role attainment such as employment and were more so concerned of how to maintain desistance (Maruna, 2001). Additionally, Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) implemented rigorous statistical methodology to examine employment patterns before and after entry into employment. Their findings suggest that offenders were in the desisting phase before acquiring employment and that holding a job did not further reduce offending rates. In addition, Massoglia and Uggen (2010) implemented latent class techniques and found that employment is tightly bound with other adult roles and that those who ascribe to an adult status have reduced rates of offending. As such, the evidence indicates that employment may be the result of criminal desistance rather than an initiator.

### *Parenthood*

Although the research findings are mixed, another major life event that signals adulthood is having children. A study conducted by Kreager, Matsueda, and Erosheva (2010) found that it was motherhood rather than marriage that provided the prosocial opportunity to desist from criminal patterns including delinquency and substance use for a sample of women living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Other research suggests that parenthood is important for both males and females and notably concludes that there were greater drops in offending for men over

time, although evidence of parenthood as a causal factor toward desistance was inconclusive since offending rates began to decrease before the birth of the first child (Monsbakken, Lyngstad, and Skardhamar, 2013).

The influence of parenthood is not discussed in the age-graded theory; most likely due to the original data, first analyzed by Glueck and Glueck (1940), being comprised of males born in Boston in the early twentieth century. A male only sample would not have stressed the potential influence on fatherhood compared to other turning points such as marriage, employment, and the military. Nevertheless, other research has found that fatherhood can also provide a turning point for males (Kerr, Capaldi, Owen, Wiesner, and Pears, 2011). Specifically, Kerr and colleagues (2011) examined a sample of at-risk males and found that criminal behaviors markedly decreased after the delivery of the first biological child. Moreover, prior to childbirth, marriage was also found to decrease criminal trajectories which supports the role of parenthood as an influential factor in desistance. These findings indicate that having children serves as a meaningful opportunity to promote desistance due to motivations and perspectives shifting from individual interests to caring for families.

Parenthood has also been evaluated on more serious offending and gang-membership. A study by Pyrooz, McGloin and Decker (2017) found that motherhood led to significant decreases in offending while fatherhood had a moderate drop only when fathers resided with their children. Giordano and colleagues (2011) examined parenthood effects on desistance in relation to socioeconomic status and found that self-reported delinquency does not decrease among men or women living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, but decreases were reported for participants in higher socioeconomic statuses. These studies suggest that parenthood can be an opportunity for

prosocial change as individuals can take on a new identity as a parent and change routine activities away from offending.

However, other research suggests that parenting does little to reduce offending rates even if individuals were married (Blokland and Nieuwbeerta, 2005). Additionally, they discuss that life circumstances are more influential on criminal trajectories, especially for serious offenders who often deal with troubled childhood backgrounds, extensive criminal histories, and difficult living conditions that make parenting stressful. This is also implied by Bachman Kerrison, Paternoster, Smith, O'Connell (2016) who examined a sample of drug and criminally involved women and found that childcare was only influential in decreasing criminal behavior once mothers had transitioned away from criminal identities which contends with age-graded theory.

### *Marriage*

Despite the findings on women and parenthood, other research has found that marriage does contribute to criminal desistance, at least in the context of males. Sampson, Laub, and Wimer (2006) studied a sample of high-risk males in addition to the original Gluecks' data and found that marriage significantly reduced offending rates by 35 percent compared to individuals who were not married. Such an outcome is expected in age-graded theory since spouses would encourage direct informal social control on their intimate partners which would theoretically make them less inclined to offend. Moreover, they argue that the robust methodology incorporated into the study including a multitude of time-varying covariates matched against the all-male group helps solidify the notion within age-graded theory that marriage is a causal factor in criminal desistance. Another rigorous study in support of marriage, especially among males as

an influence on criminal desistance was conducted by Barnes and Beaver (2012) who found that after controlling for genetic influences based on sibling data, marriage remained a significant predictor of desistance.

Contending research finds that individuals labeled as serious offenders were less influenced by potential prosocial opportunities such as marriage, suggesting that official reports of offending as well as attributed sanctions are more damaging to marriage quality than less serious offending that is more likely to be self-reported (Blokland and Nieuwbeerta, 2005). An additional study by King, Massoglia, and Macmillan (2007) assessed the influence of marriage on criminal offending by examining both males and females; acknowledging that both criminality and marriage are highly gendered. Results suggest that marriage remained an influential force in reducing offending rates regardless of males propensity to marry. However, this relationship was not as strong for females which only showed decreases in offending for those that have a moderate propensity to marry. These findings underscore that marriage may not be a strong factor for females and rather parenthood may be more salient as concluded by Kreager and colleagues (2010). Other researchers such, as Lyngstad and Skardhamar (2013), support that desistance precedes the exposure to adult institutions such as marriage. Specifically, they found that offending propensities decrease prior to marriage regardless of offense type and there is even a slight increase in offending for married men.

### *Education*

Educational attainment is another adult institution with mixed results which may serve as a prominent role in criminal desistance. This institution may be highly concomitant with viable

employment opportunities since higher paying occupations typically require some type of degree in higher education. Moreover, individuals only holding a high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) have difficulty finding both a practical and satisfying position in the modern job market (Zgoba, Haugebrook, and Jenkins, 2008). Thus, offenders may be more inclined to rely on illegal behaviors that can provide better economic satisfaction. As such, post-secondary educational attainment (i.e., junior college, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and professional degrees) provides better job outlooks since more opportunities open among employers. Such jobs require specific skills and specializations as well as the acknowledgment that individuals who hold post-secondary degrees likely possess the motivation to perform well and stray from criminal behaviors. Regardless, agency remains a critical component in the desistance process, and it can be assumed that those who attain a post-secondary education have the necessary motivation to advance themselves in social status and away from criminal behavior as they adopt more conventional values.

Research supporting education as an influence on desistance includes a study conducted by Machin, Marie, and Vujic (2011) who examined the potential causal effect education has on crime rates in Great Britain following a change in compulsory education. Results suggest that education does have a causal influence based on rigorous methodology in decreasing rates of property crimes. However, it was also concluded that violent crimes did not decline and were much more unpredictable compared to property crimes (Machin et al., 2011). In addition, Abeling-Judge (2020) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 to examine educational return and degree attainment on criminal desistance and found partial support that degree attainment contributes to reductions in offending rates. Other research has

assessed higher education in relation to incarceration. Specifically, Runell (2017) conducted in-depth interviews with formerly incarcerated individuals who participated in a higher education program post-release and found that higher education, maintained through personal agency, was associated with the desistance process. Additionally, Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson (2012) examined the recidivism rates of offenders released from the Indiana Department of Corrections and found that both education and successful employment outcomes predicted reductions in recidivism. Of note was that offenders who attained a college education were less likely to reoffend compared to those with a GED or less education. Such research supports the influence of educational attainment on offending rates and suggest that education is an important opportunity that provides individuals with the means to not only be exposed to more prosocial peers, and more viable job outlook, but also provide them with an internal goal for an enhanced prosocial identity.

In sum, the criminal desistance literature is unclear as to the degree and direction of impact each major adult role previously discussed has on offending rates. Some research has examined the influence of major adult roles on severity, frequency, and type of offending while others have assessed their impact on offender groups including biological sex. The contradictory evidence stems from the theoretical and methodological differences used to disentangle the causal process for desistance. Such variation expresses that research should continue to examine the exogenous influence of adult institutions while incorporating other theoretical arguments for endogenous factors like a cognitive shift.

### *Current Study*



The research within criminological literature regarding whether adult institutions such as employment, parenthood, marriage, and post-secondary education initiates criminal desistance is mixed. The current study aims to expand the desistance literature by examining a nationally representative sample comprising an age range of early 20s to early 30s which lies between both ‘aging out’ periods to better understand the desistance process. By analyzing the effects of adult institutions on this age cohort while also including a measure for perceived social comparability, this study will address the lack of a cognitive element in the literature and hopefully shed light into the theories of desistance.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The content of this chapter will discuss the data from which the sample was drawn as well as the dependent, independent, and control variables. Specifically, an overview of the data is presented followed by the justifications for the items included in each measure. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of the methodological strategies employed to examine the relationships of adult institutions to desistance.

#### *Data*

Data for the study are drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). This ongoing longitudinal study began collecting data on American adolescents in grades seventh through twelfth during the years 1994 to 1995 and has since conducted five waves of in-home interviews with the latest data collection occurring from 2016 to 2018 when respondents were between the ages 32 and 42. Several components of participants' lives comprise the data sets including but not limited to mental health, education, family, income, and criminal justice involvement. The current study examines these individuals at waves 3 and 4 which were gathered in 2001 to 2002 and 2008 respectively. Participants were at the ages of 18 to 26 in wave 3 and 24 to 32 in wave 4, thus meeting the target age demographic of interest which lies between both crime reduction points. For the purposes of this study regarding criminal desistance, respondents were only included if they committed at least one crime measured by the criminal offending scale in wave 3. After removing respondents that did not offend in wave 3, the sample of 4,882 from the public-use data set was reduced to 720 individuals who had some degree of a criminal history from wave 3 that was again reduced to 719 due to an extreme

outlier. The specific measures for delineating desistance and offending rates are discussed below with the observed sample consisting of 518 (72%) males and 201 (28%) females; 502 (68%) identified as White, while the other 215 (32%) identified as non-White.

Table 4.1.

*Descriptive Statistics (N = 719)*

	Mean (Percentage)	Std. Dev.	Range	
			Min	Max
Desistance (w4)				
Yes	(68.4)	—	—	—
No	(31.6)	—	—	—
Offending Rate	0.27	0.29	-0.83	1.66
Cognition	0.08	1.06	-3	3
Children (w3)				
Yes	(23.8)	—	—	—
No	(76.2)	—	—	—
Children (w4)				
Yes	(89.6)	—	—	—
No	(10.4)	—	—	—
Married (w3)	0.09	0.29	0	2
Married (w4)	0.38	0.54	0	2
Employment Satisfaction (w3)	2.13	0.95	1	5
Employment Satisfaction (w4)	2.19	0.93	1	5
Higher Education (w3)				
Yes	(10.9)	—	—	—
No	(89.1)	—	—	—
Higher Education (w4)				
Yes	(32.4)	—	—	—

Table 4.1, continued

No	(67.6)	—	—	—
Victimization (w3)				
Yes	(31.3)	—	—	—
No	(68.7)	—	—	—
Victimization (w4)				
Yes	(14.7)	—	—	—
No	(85.3)	—	—	—
Age (w3)	21.55	1.76	19	26
Race				
White	(68.4)	—	—	—
Non-White	(31.6)	—	—	—
Sex				
Male	(72.0)	—	—	—
Female	(27.9)	—	—	—

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ABBREVIATIONS: Max = Maximum; Min = Minimum; Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation; w3 = Wave 3; w4 = Wave 4

### *Dependent Variables*

The dependent variables of interest are (1) changes in offending rates between the third and fourth waves and (2) desistance from offending between these waves. Offending in this study relies on self-reported delinquency as it is assumed that much criminal activity occurs without criminal justice intervention (Farrington, Piquero, and Jennings, 2013). A scale was created for both waves that utilizes and combines the means of six survey items present in both waves which are used to measure both dependent variables. The six items included evaluate whether respondents ever committed the following criminal behaviors in the past 12 months: (1)

stealing something worth more than \$50; (2) selling drugs; (3) taking part in a group physical fight; (4) buying, selling, or holding stolen property; (5) pulling a weapon on someone; and (6) shooting or stabbing someone. The items are selected to comprise the criminal offending scale given that they cover a range of criminality, their homogenous coding scheme, and their presence in both observed waves.

The first dependent variable is the offending rate of respondents which is measured by the difference in criminal offending scale scores between the third and fourth waves. Respondents are numerically scored with values ranging from 0-3 with higher values indicating a higher prevalence of offending and lower values indicating a lower prevalence of offending while a score of zero is held uniquely at wave 4 to indicate no criminal activity which is further discussed below. The difference between the wave 3 and 4 scores constitute respondents' offending rate across both surveys ranging from negative values to positive values. A negative value indicates that respondents increased their rate of offending, and a positive value signals a decrease in offending, while a value of zero indicates no change in a respondent's offending rate.

The second dependent variable is criminal desistance which is dichotomously coded as "0" did not desist and "1" desisted, indicating whether a respondent completely terminated criminal behavior during the fourth wave of interviews. Respondents who reported committing any of the six offenses that comprise the criminal offending scale receive a score of 0, while those that did not report committing the noted offenses receive a score of 1. Through this coding scheme, 492 (68%) of the sample respondents did not commit any of the crimes indicated by the criminal offending scale in wave 4, thus suggesting they may have desisted from criminal behavior.

### *Independent Variables*

Five independent variables are included in the analyses to measure the signs of adulthood which may influence the dependent variables. These include post-secondary education, children, marriage, and employment. Additionally, a measure of cognitive shift is included to test the arguments of ITD. Specifically, the cognitive variable, like the offending rate, takes the difference of values between waves 3 and 4 on a single item: “you felt you were just as good as other people;” coded 0 to 3 (0 being never/rarely and 3 being most/all the time). Negative values denote increases in positive responses, zero signifies no change, and positive values denote decreases in positive responses. Moreover, the independent variables constituting adult institutions are observed at both waves to assess their influence on either age cohort given that each of these variables are likely to change during the time between waves.

The first adult institutional role is having children which is observed by scaling two survey items in wave 3: (1) children present in household under the age of 6; (2) children present between the ages 6 and 12. For wave 4, one item is used to indicate having children: “how many children do you have or intend to have?” Both variables are coded as binary to indicate whether children are present “1” or not “0” to keep consistency among survey items. Secondly, marriage is observed in both waves by the number of times married coded from 0 to 2 (0 being never married and 2 marrying twice or more). Thirdly, employment is observed in this analysis as employment satisfaction in both waves which is coded 1 to 5 (1 being extremely satisfied and 5 being extremely dissatisfied). Employment satisfaction not only suggests job quality, which may encourage prosocial lifestyles, but also serves as a proxy for employment status given that a similar proportion of respondents either skipped or responded with “no” regarding employment

status. This implies that employment satisfaction is not applicable to someone that is jobless. The last adult institutional independent variable is post-secondary education which includes attainment of vocational/technical training after high school, junior college, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and professional degree. The variable is dichotomously coded at both waves as "1" has attained a higher education degree and "0" has not attained a higher education degree.

### *Control Variables*

Four control variables: age, race, sex, and victimization are included. For the purposes of this study, age is measured in years, while sex, race, and victimization are measured dichotomously. Specifically, sex is presented in wave 3 and coded as "(0)" for Male and "(1)" for Female," given that males are more likely to offend and be personally victimized. Race is also measured in wave 3 as White or non-White. Victimization, included as a covariate given its correlation with offending, asks respondents whether they were a direct/indirect victim or non-victim of a crime in the past 12 months of the following violent offenses: (1) someone pulled a knife or gun on you; (2) you saw someone shoot or stab a person; (3) you were beaten up; and (4) someone shot or stabbed you.

### *Analysis*

Each of the dependent variables—changes in offending rates between the third and fourth waves and desistance from offending between these waves—calls for a different analytic approach. Specifically, the effects of each independent variable are observed in both waves in one model on the offending rate through ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The second approach uses a logistic regression to examine the effects of the independent variables distinctly

at wave 4 on the binary desistance variable. Statistically significant independents are then observed individually against the control variables to distinguish any individual effects on reduced offending rates or desistance. The subsequent chapter conveys the results of these analyses through tables and correlational descriptions.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

This chapter contains the findings produced by the statistical analyses. The quantitative data tables of the ordinary least squares and logistic regression analyses are presented along with applicable interpretations of the findings.

#### *OLS Regression*

The results of the OLS regression convey the independent variable effects against the offending rate dependent variable. Table 5.1 presents the results for the OLS regression analysis of the impact of adult institutions and cognitive outlook on the prevalence of offending. In Model 1, none of the suggested independent variables had highly significant relationships. The only moderately significant relationship ( $p \leq .01$ ) is the wave 4 employment satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.05$ ) which is associated with lower changes in offending rates (i.e., increased offending) as employment satisfaction scores become higher (i.e., more dissatisfied). Additionally, the presence of children in wave 4 is slightly significant ( $p \leq .05$ ) which means that having children reduced offending rates ( $\beta = -0.10$ ). Moreover, Model 2 examines the individual effects of employment satisfaction in wave 4 on offending rates against the control variables, results reveal that employment satisfaction is slightly significant ( $\beta = -0.02$ ) and explains 0.03% of the variance (i.e., R-squared value) for offending rates. It appears to have a negative correlation with offending meaning that as satisfaction scores get higher (i.e., higher scores being more dissatisfied), then offending rates become higher by the fourth wave indicating that offending is more prevalent regarding poor job satisfaction. Some controls had moderately significant positive relationships ( $p \leq .01$ ) to offending rates when observing the individual effects model.

Table 5.1. OLS Regression: Effects of Adult Institutions & Cognitive Outlook on Offending Rate Reduction ( $N = 719$ )

Variables	<u>Model 1</u>			<u>Model 2</u>		
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Beta	Coefficient	Standard Error	Beta
Cognition	-0.005	0.015	0.467			
Children (w3)	-0.031	0.036				
Children (w4)	-0.103 *	0.048				
Married (w3)	0.004	0.043				
Married (w4)	-0.012	0.031				
Employ. Satisfaction (w3)	0.024	0.017				
Employ. Satisfaction (w4)	-0.045 **	0.016		-0.024 *	0.012	0.365
Higher Education (w3)	-0.001	0.048				
Higher Education (w4)	0.011	0.035				
Age (w3)	-0.005	0.009		-0.004	0.007	
Victimization (w3)	0.023	0.034		0.070 **	0.025	
Victimization (w4)	-0.111 .	0.057		-0.043	0.033	
Race	0.064	0.040		0.071 **	0.026	
Sex	0.031	0.028		0.019	0.026	
R-Squared	0.081			0.030		

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; w3 = Wave 3; w4 = Wave 4

Specifically, respondents who were victimized during wave 3 were slightly more likely to reduce offending ( $\beta = 0.07$ ). Additionally, respondents who identified as White at wave 3 were more likely to reduce offending with a similar rate as those victimized at wave 3 ( $\beta = 0.07$ ). It is important to note, however, that the independent variables only accounted for 0.08% of the variance (i.e., R-squared value) for offending rates in the first model, thus the model may not have been inclusive to all relevant variables. Nevertheless, the effects and significance of the relationships can also be influenced by limitations such as small sample sizes and unreliable measures that will be discussed in-depth in a later chapter.

### *Logistic Regression*

Table 5.2 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis which compares the independent variables from wave 4 on the binary criminal desistance dependent variable. The wave 3 independent variables were excluded from this model given that desistance is examined solely at wave 4, thus it is relevant to examine only those variables that influenced respondents at the time of wave 4 while also including the independent cognitive shift variable into the analysis. In Model 1, results reveal two notable relationships stemming from the wave 4 independents: cognition, and post-secondary education. Cognitive shift has a slightly significant negative relationship ( $p \leq .05$ ) with desistance. This means that as cognitions become more disagreeable (i.e., higher values), the likelihood of desistance from crime slightly decreases ( $\beta = -0.18$ ). Additionally, post-secondary educational attainment has a moderately significant positive relationship ( $p \leq .01$ ) with desistance. Specifically, respondents' who earn higher degrees are more likely to desist from crime ( $\beta = 0.61$ ). Furthermore, examining the individual effects of the significant wave 4 independent variables on desistance against the relevant control variables

Table 5.2. Logistic Regression: Effects of Adult Institutions & Cognitive Outlook on Criminal Desistance

Variables	<u>Model 1</u>			<u>Model 2</u>			<u>Model 3</u>		
	Coef.	SE	OR	Coef.	SE	OR	Coef.	SE	OR
Cognition	-0.18 *	0.09	0.839	-0.03 .	0.02	0.972			
Children (w4)	-0.056	0.31	0.943						
Married (w4)	0.23	0.18	1.256						
Employ. Sat. (w4)	-0.08	0.10	0.925						
Higher Ed. (w4)	0.61 **	0.21	1.832				0.10 **	0.04	1.109
Age (w4)	-0.01	0.06	0.987	-0.001	0.01	0.999	-0.002	0.01	0.998
Victimization (w4)	-1.15 ***	0.24	0.317	-0.27 ***	0.05	0.765	-0.25 ***	0.05	0.777
Race	0.46 *	0.21	1.578	0.09 *	0.04	1.131	0.09 *	0.04	1.093
Sex	0.75 **	0.23	2.114	0.12 **	0.04	1.131	0.12 ***	0.04	1.132

\* p ≤ .05, \*\* p ≤ .01, \*\*\* p ≤ .001; w4 = Wave 4; Coef. = Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; OR = Odds Ratio

reveals that cognition is not significant ( $\beta = -0.03$ ) in Model 2 as it was in Model 1, thus it does not uniquely contribute to the likelihood to desist. However, when examining the individual effects of post-secondary education in Model 3, results reveal that higher education is uniquely significant with desistance ( $\beta = 0.10$ ) as it is in the first logistic model. This relationship indicates that when higher education is attained the more likely a respondent will desist from their offending from wave 3. In addition, every model of desistance reveals that the control variables were significant to some degree. Victimization in wave 4 has a highly significant negative relationship with the likelihood to desist from crime ( $p \leq .001$ ). Specifically, as victimization increases among respondents, the likelihood for those respondents to desist from crime decrease ( $\beta = -1.15$ ). Race was also related to desistance in each model showing a slightly significant positive relationship. Respondents who identified as White are revealed to have greater increases in desistance ( $\beta = 0.46$ ) compared to those that are non-White. Finally, there was a moderately significant positive relationship with biological sex and desistance revealing that respondents who identified as female are more likely to desist, especially in the first logistic model ( $\beta = 0.75$ ).

Despite the lack of highly significant findings in either analysis, there were a few noteworthy relationships. Within the OLS models, employment satisfaction and presence of children were related to reduced offending rates. Within the logistic models, post-secondary education and cognition were related to criminal desistance. Regardless of the insignificance of marriage at either wave in each model, the analyses may be indicative of the independent variables' true relationships to reduced offending and desistance if they were integrated into more robust measures and inclusive models. The implications of the findings for theory, policy, and future research directions are discussed further in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, implications for the findings stemming from the OLS and logistic analyses are considered. Specifically, inferences are made into how the results may inform both practical and theoretical work. Furthermore, speculations are made into why results did not yield substantial support for the theoretical principles that motivated the current study. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the methodological limitations and propositions for future research that can better understand the mechanisms that influence criminal desistance in young adulthood.

#### *Conclusions*

The pursuit of the current study was to examine the effects of children, marriage, employment, and post-secondary education on the capacity for young adults to either reduce or completely desist from criminal behavior. In addition, a variable to measure identity reformation was created to better understand its effect on the desistance process. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was employed to construct a generalizable sample of young adult offenders stemming from two separate waves of the periodical national study. The findings of this study yielded unremarkable results that did not provide ample support for the theoretical approaches and principles outlined in chapter two. It was hypothesized that those who obtained more than one adult role would be more likely to desist or reduce offending compared to those with only one adult role or none. Little support for this hypothesis was found in the analyses as few of the adult institutions significantly contributed to reductions in offending or desistance from criminality.

The most influential factor in the statistical analyses was found in the desistance model and regarded the effect of post-secondary education. The relationship shows that those who earned a higher education degree had a greater likelihood of desistance from criminal behaviors in wave 4 ( $\beta = 0.61$ ). This institution is also found to be highly significant with criminal desistance even when its individual effects are compared against the control variables ( $\beta = 0.10$ ). Such a result does support research that has deduced the unique impact higher education can have on criminal desistance (Abeling-Judge, 2020). Moreover, the positive relationship found is not surprising given that those who attain higher education are in a better position to stray from anti-social influences and deviant peers as such educational degrees open pathways to prosocial peer affiliations and higher quality job opportunities. Higher educational attainment also implies that respondents earning them possess prosocial qualities such as good work ethic, perseverance, and determination which are also qualities that are assumed to be a part of the agency component of having the motivation to desist from criminal behaviors.

In addition to the impact of post-secondary education on desistance, the variable measuring cognitive outlook was also significant. The relationship suggests that respondents who reported a positive outlook in Wave 4 as compared to Wave 3 were more likely to desist from anti-social behaviors such as selling drugs, taking part in physical fights, pulling a knife or gun on someone, buying, selling, holding stolen property, etc. This finding may provide support for Paternoster and Bushway's contention that a cognitive identity shift must occur before social roles can be effective. However, the individual effects of the cognitive variable were not significant to desistance when compared to the control variables: age, victimization, biological sex, and race.

Moreover, although present, the true effect of identity reformation remains unclear and concrete support for ITD may be outside the scope of this study. The independent variable was comprised of a single item indicator, “in the past seven days, you felt you were just as good as other people,” which measured cognitive reformation through social comparability, however, such a measure may not have been sufficient to denote an identity reformation. In addition, the methodology did not utilize a time series component to assess whether identity change occurs before attainment of adult roles (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Despite this drawback, the results may give some degree of support for ITD given that higher scores for the cognitive variable indicated a greater likelihood to desist from crime in the initial desistance model ( $\beta = -0.18$ ) along with wave 4 post-secondary educational attainment. Although post-secondary education yielded a higher degree of statistical significance, respondents who endorsed earning a higher degree only comprised 32% of the sample meaning such a turning point may be helpful but not essential to the desistance process.

Such results did not confidently support either desistance theory nor did they reinforce contentions that adult institutions and identity reformation would influence reductions in criminal behaviors given the unremarkable results in the reduced offending model. Specifically, the most influential role from the initial model regarded employment satisfaction ratings in wave 4. Employment satisfaction was used as a proxy for employment given that respondents who did not answer the question item were assumed to not have a job. Employment satisfaction also aligns with principles of age-graded theory which describe not only the presence of social attachments such as marriage, children, and employment, but also the strength and quality of those institutions (Sampson and Laub, 1993). The relationship reveals that higher scores of



complacency for employment satisfaction among respondents was associated with reduce offending ( $\beta = -0.05$ ) which adds to the research that endorses that employment stimulates the desistance process. Although, as other research contends (Maruna, 2001; Skardhamer and Savolainen, 2014), this study could not disentangle whether employment was an essential component to initiate reduced offending or simply a result of it.

The only other adult role that was significant in reducing offending rates was having children by wave 4. Such an institution was proposed to be related to reduced offending as it gives individuals the opportunity to lead a prosocial lifestyle by caring for another rather than continuing down a path of self-interested anti-social behaviors (Kerr et al., 2011; Pyrooz et al., 2017). The correlation reveals that respondents who indicated having children by wave 4 were slightly more likely to reduce their offending rates compared to those who did not have children ( $\beta = -0.10$ ). Although, unlike employment satisfaction, the individual effects of having children were not significant when compared against the control variables. Again, like employment, the sequence in which children were present relative to the reduction in offending could not be included in the current study, thus parenthood as a causal factor cannot be deduced as other research has pointed out (Monsbakken, Lyngstad, and Skardhamar, 2013). Moreover, the current study was unable to examine the quality of parenthood which could be indicative of the weak relationship between having children and reduced offending. Researchers such as Blokland and Nieuwbeerta (2005) argued that negative life circumstances could make parenting difficult and add to stimulating anti-social behavior.

The most underwhelming of the study's results stemmed from the institution of marriage which was not significant in reducing offending or criminal desistance. The weak correlations in

the reduced offending model indicated a slightly positive relationship in wave 3 and slightly negative relationship in wave 4. Effects were stronger for the desistance model, with a positive relationship signifying respondents who were married in wave 4 were more likely to desist compared to those who are unmarried, but again, these relationships were insignificant despite support for the impact of marriage in the desistance process (Sampson, Laub, and Wimer, 2006; King, Massoglia, and Macmillan, 2007). Such insignificance could be due to the same impediments acknowledged in the measure for parenthood. Specifically, the marriage measure simply designated whether marital status was present for a respondent which does not convey the quality of a marriage (Sampson and Laub, 1993), nor how many times a respondent has been married.

The control variables introduced in the analyses did account for some of the variation for both reduced offending and criminal desistance as anticipated, however, none of the controls were significant for reduced offending rates until they were directly paired against employment satisfaction. Specifically, results show that victimology and race were related to reduced offending when taking employment satisfaction solely into account. As such, offending rates were more likely to decrease when respondents identified themselves as White and indicated being victimized in wave 3. In terms of complete desistance, the controls were statistically significant in every model excluding age. Respondents who identified themselves as female and White were more likely to desist from their criminal behaviors reported in wave 3. Although, the most statistically significant control was victimization which shows a strong negative relationship meaning those that indicated being victimized in wave 4 were more likely not to desist from offending. Such a relationship is understandable as there is a large body of

victimization research underscoring the victim-offender overlap which observes that those that offend live risky lifestyles and are placed in situations where they are more likely to be victimized (Jennings, Piquero, and Reingle, 2012).

In sum, the statistical analyses revealed that few of the adult institutions (i.e., marriage, parenthood, employment, and post-secondary education) endorsed by this study were significantly related to reduced offending rates. These findings may be a consequence of several factors including poor measurement strategies, under-sampling, and confounding variables. Regardless, some interesting relationships were unveiled which reinforce the claims within the desistance literature that institutions can convey transitions to prosocial attitudes and membership into conventional society. Specifically, post-secondary education attainment was significantly related to desistance while cognition also played a role in this process. Those that answered more positively when associating themselves to other people when compared to their answers in wave 3 may suggest that a cognitive shift is necessary for completely terminating anti-social behavior given its significance in the desistance model. Whether or not this influence is causal could not be ascertained by this study.

Moreover, while being a parent and having higher employment satisfaction scores were related to reduced offending rates among respondents they were not as significant in the termination of criminal behavior. Such a case could be because completely terminating a set of behaviors is difficult compared to simply reducing the prevalence of those behaviors. Another possibility is the lack of valid measures to support the theme that institutions help conform individuals to conventional society. It is past the scope of this study to dissect the elements and interdependence of the institutional domains such as number of kids and quality of parenthood.

However, one integral element emphasized by the literature was attained through employment satisfaction scores which suggests some support for prosocial conformity as positive satisfaction implies good job quality. Nevertheless, more work must be done to disentangle the intricacies of adult institutions on criminal desistance.

### *Limitations*

While the study provided some support for the hypotheses and arguments in the desistance literature, there were several limitations that future research should consider. First, the study's sample consisted of 719 respondents who initially offended in wave 3 out of a total sample of 5,000 individuals made available from the Add Health public-use data. It is important to note that the public-use data comprises of only half of the true sample surveyed in the national study. This study may suffer from under-sampling which is problematic since the statistical power of the results may not have been able to accurately disentangle the intricacies of desistance and reduced offending, especially when so few respondents offended. Such unremarkable results may have stemmed from the sample containing only a small subset of individuals that frequently offended.

In addition, the longitudinal design of the sample was useful for the purposes of examining criminal trajectories for respondents that were first surveyed during their adolescent years. However, the time gap observed between waves 3 and 4 utilized by this study was seven years which allows ample time for behavioral patterns to change but does not allow for the capacity to examine at what point behaviors were altered through more frequent surveying periods. This limitation hindered the ability to add a time series element into the study's

methodology which would allow for intricate time-varying variables to assist in understanding the causal process of desistance.

Another limitation includes the validity of the measures implemented into the study. As noted in an earlier chapter, both parenthood and marriage were dichotomized due to the inconsistency within the Add Health surveys between Wave 3 and 4. Thus, the analysis only examined whether the presence of either adult institution had a significant impact on the desistance process. Only the presence of children was related to reduced offending, and neither were significantly related to desistance at wave 4. More stringent measures in either of these domains such as quality of parenting, quality of marriage, and level of attachment for both spouse and children would better encompass and validate parenthood and marriage measures. Additionally, the cognitive shift measure was also comprised of a single item indicator of social comparability to imply that a respondent conformed to a prosocial identity although this measure may not fully capture all the elements within the domain of identity reformation.

The last limitation of note within this study is the narrow spectrum of crime offenses included in the criminal offending scale. As mentioned previously, six items were utilized to form the offending scale which included elements of theft, violence, and illegal trafficking of substances. However, there are several other forms of criminal behavior that are not employed by this study since other specific types of crime were not consistently asked across both surveys. If other criminal behaviors were included, then there may have been a larger sample of offenders from the original Add Health data with the potential to desist.

Moreover, the criminal offending scales from waves 3 and 4 that constitute the offending rate variable comprise of question items asking if respondents ever committed the six considered criminal behaviors in the past 12 months. This question design does not account for the frequency of committing each offense, thus, according to the scales, a respondent who committed one type of offense several times over 12 months is equal to someone who committed the same offense once. Such a limitation leads to an inaccurate measure of criminal behavior rates among respondents despite the offending rate variable's effort to observe prevalence of offending. Future studies can consider this weakness by including other forms of crime and noting the frequency of each offense within a given period while also addressing the other limitations mentioned through a more rigorous and thorough research design.

#### *Policy and Future Directions*

Although this study reported unremarkable findings concerning the impact of adult institutions on the desistance process and reduced offending in young adulthood, there may be one takeaway that policies should consider when exploring future practices and program design. Despite the lackluster results in terms of prosocial opportunities, the cognitive shift measure remained present when compared to the rest of the institutional domains. Such a case may indicate that policies and programs may need to put further emphasis on cognitive rehabilitation that can engender identity reformation. Specifically, treatment programs can focus on principles outlined by Maruna (2001) which underscore the importance of redemption scripts and developing a coherent prosocial identity marked by productivity and accomplishment. Doing so may foster more motivated individuals that have stimulated their personal agency, allowing them to better participate in programs that provide prosocial opportunities such as employment and

higher education. These programs would then be more efficacious compared to simply presenting a potential turning point to an unmotivated individual, especially when such programs also employ the same redemption principles and advance individuals from offenders to conventional members of society.

The current study calls for future research to address the limitations previously noted through more rigorous designs and investigate other directions that can further the desistance literature. Specifically, studies can include more extensive surveys that allow researchers to map out criminal trajectories through frequent and shorter reporting intervals. Future research should also include several other types of crime that can be individually examined rather than scaling several criminal offense items together like this study did to examine reductions in general offending. By assessing individual offense types, researchers can better capture the true scope of desistance and the impact adult institutions have on these offenses.

As emphasized in this discussion, it is paramount to have validated measures that can encompass the adult institutional domains employed by this study. Despite the current findings, the literature endorses the unique impact prosocial opportunities such as adult roles can have on reducing the rate of offending. Future studies should extend the understanding of turning points by re-examining adult roles with more valid and thorough measures as well as include other features that are relevant to social conformity in young adulthood. Finally, the placement of the cognitive element within the desistance process remains unclear, thus research should continue to examine this domain through stricter definitions, more validated measurements, and utilizing rigorous techniques such as incorporating a time series component to better understand the causal sequence within criminal desistance. Understanding this process not just for young adults

but for all age cohorts will help the development of efficacious policies and foster pathways for individuals to cease their anti-social behaviors as well as provide insight into how research and policy can better address criminal behavior.



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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Maxwell Lindsay Parsons was born in Wichita Falls, Texas and raised in Vernon, Texas. After graduating from Vernon High School in 2016, he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2019 from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. During his time earning his undergraduate degree, he participated as a research assistant for the Pathways to Resilient Youth Development (PRYDe) Research Lab at Texas Tech University. This experience sparked an interest in juvenile delinquency, mental health, and criminology which encouraged his pursuit for a graduate degree. After he earns his master's degree, Mr. Parsons plans to continue his graduate education by pursuing a Doctoral degree in Psychology and then begin a career in private practice or a government agency.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

**Maxwell Lindsay Parsons**

**Email:** mlp200000@utdallas.edu

## I. Education

### **Texas Tech University**

Major: Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Graduation: December 2019

Minor: Sociology

Cumulative GPA: 3.902/4.0

Psychology GPA: 4.0/4.0

### **University of Texas at Dallas**

Major: Master of Science in Criminology

Graduation: May 2022

Cumulative GPA: 3.778/4.0

## II. Academic Honors

Texas Tech University Dean's List

Fall 2016 – Spring 2017

Texas Tech University President's List

Fall 2017 – Fall 2019

Texas Tech University CMLL Classics Alumnus

Fall 2019

## III. Research Experience

Texas Tech University:

Pathways to Resilient Youth Development Lab (Research Assistant)

*Supervisor: Adam T. Schmidt, Ph.D.*

Summer 2019 – Spring 2020

Metacognition and Learning Lab (Research Assistant)

*Supervisor: Michael J. Serra, Ph.D.*

Fall 2018 – Fall 2019

## IV. Publications / Presentations / Abstract

### V. Abstracts

*Readiness and Willingness to Change: Relations to Justice-Involved Youths' Recidivism and Prosocial Behaviors*

James E. Barnett, M.A. (1); Kelsey A. Maloney, M.A. (1); **Maxwell L. Parsons**, B.A. (1); Cassidy Fala, B.A. (1); Jacquelynn Duron, Ph.D. (2); Abigail Williams-Butler, Ph.D. (2); Gerri R. Hanten, Ph.D. (3); and Adam T. Schmidt, Ph.D. (1)

1. Department of Psychological Sciences, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas
2. School of Social Work, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey
3. Baylor College of Medicine