Juvenile Homicide Offenders: A Life-Course Perspective

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Juvenile Homicide Offenders: A Life-Course Perspective

by

Norair Khachatryan

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Department of Criminology College of Behavioral and Community Sciences University of South Florida

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Keywords: juvenile murderers, post-release recidivism, long-term follow-up study, desistance from crime, mixed-method study

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ABSTRACT

Murder by offenders under the age of 18 is a cause for public concern, despite the overall decrease in the rate of juvenile-perpetrated homicide since 1994. Due to several rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court (i.e., Miller v. Alabama, 2012), the likelihood that convicted juvenile homicide offenders (JHOs) will be released from prison has increased. Accordingly, it is important to examine these offenders’ long-term readjustment to society after their release. Using a mixed-method approach, the present study was designed to explore the factors that influence whether JHOs reoffend and their reoffending patterns, over a period of approximately 35 years. Another purpose of the study was to examine the applicability of Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control to JHOs. The sample consisted of 22 men who committed a murder or attempted murder when they were juveniles in the early 1980s, were convicted as adults, and sentenced to serve time in an adult prison. Bivariate, quantitative analyses were used to assess the relationships between demographic, pre-incarceration, incarceration-related, and post-release factors and two variables measuring the frequency of recidivism: the number of arrests and the number of violent offenses. Qualitative analyses were employed to examine the divergent themes in the lives of JHOs who desisted after their release from prison for the homicide conviction and those who continued engaging in antisocial and/or criminal behavior and were reincarcerated. The qualitative component of the study also contained a preliminary analysis of the trajectories of offending among the JHOs who did not desist (i.e., the “persistent offenders”). Correlation, chi-square, and t-test analyses indicated that the frequencies of general and violent recidivism were significantly related most consistently to
being Black and three post-release variables: return to old neighborhood, association with pre-incarceration friends, and pursuit of educational opportunities. In the qualitative analyses, the following themes were found to differentiate between 8 desisters and 11 persistent offenders in the sample: return to old neighborhood, association with pre-incarceration friends or other criminal peers, substance abuse, fatalism, issues with anger, stable employment, a positive intimate relationship, generativity, human agency, and participation in a prison reentry program. Moreover, the persistent offenders exhibited four distinct trajectories of criminal behavior. The findings in this study provided partial support for Sampson and Laub’s theory, as well as other developmental and life-course theories. With respect to criminal justice policy, the findings suggest that formerly incarcerated homicide offenders would benefit from settling in a different neighborhood, learning employment-related skills, and exposure to cognitive behavioral therapy. Although this study is the longest and largest follow-up study conducted on juveniles convicted of murder, the small sample may affect the generalizability of the study’s findings. In addition, participants consisted of male JHOs from a single state. Future research focusing on both female juvenile murderers from multiple states is needed.
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Murder by juvenile offenders (i.e., those under the age of 18) has generated a great deal of interest and concern in the United States since the 1980s. The decade between 1984 and 1993 was marked by consistent increases in arrest rates for juvenile-perpetrated murders (Heide, 1999); the rising prevalence of this crime was largely attributed to an eruption of youth violence in the country’s major urban centers, which was facilitated by an expansion of the drug trade and easy access to firearms (Blumstein, 1995; Cook & Laub, 1998; Zimring, 2013). Scholars predicted that the high levels of juvenile violence were going to persist into the new century (e.g., Fox, 1996).

However, the trend began to reverse in 1994 and juvenile homicide rates have been, for the most part, decreasing ever since (Cook & Laub, 2002; Heide, 2018). As demonstrated by Heide (2018), the proportion of juvenile offenders among arrestees for murder was reduced by more than half between 1995 and 2014 (15% v. 7%). In 2018, the last year for which Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data were available, 8.2% of homicides for which the offender’s age was known were committed by juveniles (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019).

Despite the reduction in juvenile homicide rates, these offenders remain a cause for concern, specifically with respect to their propensity for recidivism after release from custody. Several prior studies on recidivism among released juvenile homicide offenders (hereinafter, JHOs) have shown that the majority of JHOs released from juvenile or adult correctional
facilities recidivate (e.g., Caudill & Trulson, 2016; Hagan, 1997; Heide, Spencer, Thompson, & Solomon, 2001; Khachatryan, Heide, Hummel, Ingraham, & Rad, 2016). Prior research has also found that many JHOs commit violent offenses after release from incarceration, including homicide (e.g., Khachatryan et al., 2016).

Prior research on incarceration in general has shown that prisons have achieved limited success in reducing recidivism, and some studies in fact have found incarceration to increase the likelihood of recidivating, when compared with less severe punishments (e.g., Mears & Cochran, 2018; Mitchell, Cochran, Mears, & Bales, 2017; Nagin, Cullen, & Jonson, 2009). For example, Mitchell and colleagues (2017) found that incarceration had no effect on recidivism, compared to regular probation and intensive probation. Moreover, Mears and Cochran (2018) reported that offenders released from a jail or prison had higher odds of recidivism than those sentenced to regular probation and intensive probation. Both studies examined offenders from the state of Florida and used new felony convictions as a measure of recidivism.

Two relatively recent Supreme Court cases have increased the likelihood that juveniles convicted of homicide offenses will be released back to society. In *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), the Court ruled that imposing the death penalty on offenders who committed murder as juveniles was unconstitutional. The judges recognized that the part of the brain that regulates behavior is less developed in juveniles, compared to adults, and they should therefore be held to a lesser degree of culpability.

Subsequently, in the *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) case, the Supreme Court struck down mandatory life without the possibility of parole sentences for juvenile murderers. In other words, juveniles convicted of murder could still be sentenced to life without life without parole (LWOP), but mitigating factors need to be taken into consideration by the jury or judge before
offenders are sentenced. The Court ruled in a later case that the abolition of LWOP sentences applied retroactively, which rendered 2,100 JHOs across the country possibly eligible for resentencing (Boone, 2015; Montgomery v. Louisiana, 2016); the resentencing process has already started for some of these offenders (Garbarino, 2018).

The fact that many future JHOs are likely to serve shorter prison sentences, and that homicide offenders who were supposed to spend the rest of their lives in prison may be released after all, demonstrate the urgent need to identify the factors that exert the most influence in helping juvenile murderers readjust successfully to society. Both incarceration and post-release factors are important for understanding why many of the JHOs released from prison have been found to resume their involvement in criminal behavior, while other JHOs are able to desist from it and become law-abiding citizens.

The Present Study

The study presented in this dissertation was designed to assess how individuals who committed homicide offenses as juveniles fare inside prison and subsequently after release, over the course of more than 30 years. This study is a mixed-method one; in-depth psychosocial interviews were conducted with more than 20 male juveniles from a single U.S. state who were convicted of murder or attempted murder in the early 1980s. Moreover, approximately 35 years of official arrest data were collected on the JHOs in the sample.

A mixed-method study, while costly and time-consuming, is a worthwhile endeavor because the qualitative portion provides meaning and nuance to the patterns of behavior identified in the quantitative analyses (Maruna, 2010). In other words, through in-depth interviews, researchers often can provide meaning and corroborate the statistical relationships found in the data. Moreover, mixed-method research is beneficial for the purpose of uncovering
individuals’ specific motivations for engaging in certain behavior (e.g., recidivism), which may remain unknown in a purely quantitative study.

Prior research has not examined JHOs who were released from incarceration using a life-course perspective. Given the severity of the crimes these individuals committed in adolescence, it is crucially important to conduct an in-depth assessment of the degree to which these offenders pose a long-term threat to society, both in terms of further violent behavior and other types of crimes.

The men in this sample were originally part of a larger sample of juvenile offenders who killed or attempted to kill someone in the 1980s, as further discussed in the methodology section. These male JHOs were charged as adults with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or attempted murder; they were subsequently convicted and sentenced to adult prison. Semi-structured psychosocial interviews were conducted with all the sample subjects more than 30 years ago, and a wide variety of record data were collected about them.

The quantitative analyses in the present study are used primarily to examine whether incarceration and post-incarceration factors have a significant effect on the frequency of general offending and violence after JHOs are released from prison for the homicide-related conviction, although pre-incarceration factors are also employed in these analyses. Incarceration-related factors include whether or not the JHO participated in rehabilitation programs while in prison, perpetration of violence against correctional staff members or other inmates, and violent victimization, among others. Post-release factors include variables measuring employment, marriage/cohabitation, return to the old neighborhood, and association with criminal peers after incarceration, among others.
The qualitative analyses explore the divergent themes in the lives of the JHOs who were able to make a successful transition to society and those who failed and continued engaging in criminal behavior. These analyses are also be used to identify any unique offending trajectories that emerge in the data; for example, the lives of offenders who may have been rearrested following their initial release from prison, but desisted from crime in later years, are examined.

With respect to recidivists, particular attention is devoted in the qualitative analyses to JHOs’ serious violent behavior after release from prison, including murder or attempted murder, aggravated assault, simple assault, or robbery. Due to the greater societal concern engendered by violent recidivists, it is essential to explore in greater depth the factors that contribute to their continued perpetration of violent crimes.

The primary theoretical framework guiding the qualitative analyses in this study is the life-course perspective, and specifically the age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Laub & Sampson, 2003). According to this theory, experiences during adulthood (e.g., attachment to a significant other, employment, service in the military, etc.) can shape whether juvenile delinquents continue to commit crimes as adults, through informal social control; offenders who are exposed to higher levels of informal social control are less likely to engage in post-release criminal behavior, according to the theory. While Sampson and Laub have found support for the theory in their study of Glueck and Glueck’s (1950) juvenile delinquent sample, it has never been examined in relation to juveniles who committed murder; the data in this study are appropriate for exploring the tenets of the theory.

As shown in Chapter 2, most prior studies on recidivism of juveniles incarcerated for homicide offenses have been quantitative and almost none of them have examined the effect of post-release occurrences on likelihood of rearrest. Greater knowledge regarding the most
significant post-incarceration factors for desistance is needed in order to develop effective interventions that will reduce JHOs’ likelihood of recidivating.

The two components of the present study aim to answer the following research questions:

**Research question 1**: Are incarceration-related variables related to frequency of general recidivism and violent recidivism?

**Research Question 2**: Are post-release variables related to frequency of general recidivism and violent recidivism?

**Research Question 3**: What are the main factors that distinguish between desisters and persistent offenders in the sample?

**Research Question 4**: How many distinct behavioral trajectories exist among JHOs released from prison?

**Research Question 5**: What effect do factors related to informal social control have on post-incarceration recidivism outcomes?

The results from this study presented in Chapter 5-7 begin to illustrate the factors that are most consequential for desistance among JHOs up to middle adulthood. Therefore, the study can potentially be used by practitioners and legislators as a blueprint for determining the best avenues for reducing the probability of recidivism for offenders who committed a homicide offense in adolescence. For example, if stable employment is shown to increase the likelihood of successful adjustment after release from prison, more state or federal resources need to be devoted toward teaching incarcerated JHOs adequate job skills and helping them find work after they are released. Moreover, if association with criminal peers from their old neighborhood is found to be a risk factor for persistent recidivism among JHOs, resources should be invested in helping these offenders settle in new neighborhoods after they are released and intervention
programs that teach them communication skills, which will facilitate their interactions with new prosocial individuals.

**Outline of Chapters**

Chapters 2-3 of this dissertation contain the review of relevant literature. Chapter 2 discusses the common demographic characteristics of JHOs and characteristics of the homicide incidents in which they are involved, as well as risk factors for juvenile homicide identified in prior research. This chapter also presents prior research that has been conducted on recidivism by JHOs; in particular, the review of prior recidivism literature will focus on research that examined the effectiveness of treatment in decreasing JHOs’ likelihood of recidivism, studies on recidivism among subtypes of JHOs (e.g., offenders who committed sexually oriented homicides), and studies that used general samples of homicide offenders released from correctional institutions. Chapter 3 describes Sampson and Laub’s life-course perspective in more depth and reviews the research that has tested it thus far. This chapter also includes a discussion of prior qualitative follow-up studies of offenders released from incarceration, regardless of whether they included murderers or not.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology of the current study. The chapter includes information on the original sample, how the present sample was generated, the structure of the follow-up interviews, the creation of variables for the quantitative portion, the structure of the qualitative portion, and the data analysis plan. The results from the quantitative analyses are presented in Chapter 5, and the findings from the qualitative analyses are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7; Chapter 6 presents qualitative themes in the lives of JHOs who had desisted from crime after they were released from prison, and Chapter 7 includes the offending trajectories and behavioral themes of JHOs who continued engaging in criminal behavior after their release.
Chapter 8 contains a summary of the important findings in the study, their implications for theory and criminal justice policy, the limitations of the study, and avenues for future research.
CHAPTER TWO:

JUVENILE HOMICIDE OFFENDERS

In the section below, the predominant demographic characteristics of JHOs are discussed, in terms of gender, age, race, and socioeconomic status. Subsequently, research that has illustrated the most common incident-related characteristics (with respect to presence of accomplices, victim-offender relationship, choice of weapon, and homicide circumstances) of juvenile-perpetrated homicides is presented.

Characteristics of JHOs and their Offenses

Juvenile offenders who commit homicidal acts have been extensively examined by academics and mental health professionals at least since the 1940s (Adams, 1974). Earlier studies on characteristics of JHOs have primarily relied on clinical samples (e.g., Bender, 1959; Bender & Curran, 1940; Duncan & Duncan, 1971), whereas later research has used general samples of juvenile killers, as well as comparative samples that contained both JHOs and other types of juvenile delinquents (e.g., Busch, Zagar, Hughes, Arbit, & Bussell, 1990; Darby, Allan, Kashani, Hartke, & Reide, 1998; DeLisi, Piquero, & Cardwell, 2016). Perusal of the juvenile homicide literature reveals a profile of the typical JHO and juvenile homicide incident.

Gender

Prior research has demonstrated that the vast majority of juveniles who commit homicide are males, similar to other serious violent crimes (Heide, 2018). For example, Heide and Solomon (2009) reported that male offenders accounted for more than 90% of all juveniles
arrested for murder between 1976 and 2005. The much higher involvement of males in juvenile-perpetrated homicides may be due to the fact that many young men are embedded in a subculture that promotes violence as a means of asserting their masculinity and resolving conflict (e.g., Anderson, 1999; Miethe, Regoeczi, & Krass, 2004), as well as men’s greater involvement in the drug trade (e.g., Williams, 1989) and in crimes that can easily escalate to homicides (e.g., robberies; Heide, 2018).

Important statistically significant differences have been found in prior studies that have compared male JHOs to their female counterparts. Using a nationwide sample of male and female juveniles who were arrested for murder in the years 1984-1993, Loper and Cornell (1996) found that males were more likely to kill male victims, older victims, and victims who were strangers to them. Male JHOs were also more likely to kill with a firearm, commit the homicide with at least one accomplice, and kill while committing another crime.

Studies by Roe-Sepowitz (2009) and Heide, Roe-Sepowitz, Solomon, and Chan (2012) obtained similar significant findings with respect to the age of the victim, victim-offender relationship, and method of killing; both studies found that male JHOs were more likely to kill older victims (i.e., those over the age of 5) and strangers, as well as commit the killing with a firearm, compared to their female counterparts. Heide and colleagues (2012), using data from the Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) on JHOs arrested over a 30-year period, also found that male JHOs were significantly more likely to commit crime-related and gang-related killings, and less likely to commit conflict-related killings, than female JHOs. Moreover, in contrast to the findings by Loper and Cornell (1996), Heide and colleagues (2012) reported that male JHOs were less likely to kill with an accomplice.
The gender differences reported by Heide and colleagues (2012) were expanded upon and replicated in two additional studies that relied on SHR data: In Heide, Solomon, Sellers, and Chan (2011), the researchers examined gender differences after dividing the sample into younger (ages 6-12) and older (ages 13-17) JHOs. Sellers and Heide (2012) subsequently investigated the effect of gender on victim and incident characteristics in a sample of young JHOs between the ages of 6 and 10.

The study by Roe-Sepowitz (2009), which was based on a sample of 136 juveniles arrested for murder in the state of Florida, identified several significant childhood and mental health differences between male and female JHOs. Compared to female JHOs, male offenders were less likely to experience abuse and neglect in childhood, and scored lower on clinical scales measuring anger, depression/anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

Age

Prior work on JHOs has shown that the vast majority of juveniles arrested for murder in the United States are older adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 (Darby et al., 1998; Heide, 2018; Zimring, 2000). Younger and older JHOs tend to kill for different reasons, as explained by Heide and colleagues (2011). Preteen JHOs (i.e., children below the age of 13), and particularly those below the age of 10, do not fully understand the concept of death and typically kill impulsively in response to severe conflict or due to serious psychological issues (also see Bender, 1959). On the other hand, adolescents (i.e., juveniles aged 13 and above) often kill due to involvement in a criminal lifestyle or pressure from association with antisocial peers.

Prior studies that examined differences between younger and older JHOs in larger samples have reported mixed findings. Shumaker and Prinz (2000) compiled a sample of 11 pre-teen JHOs and 28 adolescent JHOs from case reports presented in prior academic articles, and
found several significant differences between the two groups. Younger JHOs were more likely to have an adverse relationship with a male caretaker, exhibit cruelty toward other children, have a history of lying, and have a history of fire-setting. Conversely, older JHOs were more likely to report deviant sexual experiences, ruminate about the homicide before committing it, and have a history of truancy.

Using media reports, court reports, and case studies, Hammond and Ioannou (2015) explored differences between 63 younger JHOs (ages 13 and below) and 87 older JHOs (ages 14-17). In contrast to Shumaker and Prinz (2000), the authors found no significant differences between younger and older JHOs on offender demographic, background, and behavioral factors, as well as victim and homicide incident characteristics.

**Race and Socioeconomic Status**

In the United States, more than half of juveniles arrested for murder are African Americans, although they represent approximately 14% of the overall U.S. population of juveniles (Heide, 1999; Heide, Michel, Cochran, & Khachatryan, 2020). Specifically, Heide and colleagues (2020) reported that Black youth constituted 55% of all U.S. JHOs between 1976 and 2012, whereas White youth accounted for 42% of JHOs arrested during this time period. This study also found several significant differences between White and Black JHOs regarding victim and incident characteristics: Compared to Black JHOs, White homicide offenders were more likely to target a family member, and commit gang-related and conflict-related homicides. Conversely, Black JHOs were more likely to commit a crime-related homicide, kill in large cities and in the South, and kill with a firearm.

Several prior studies have found race to significantly differentiate between young homicide offenders and other types of offenders. Two of these studies were part of the Pittsburgh
Youth Study (PYS), which tracked a sample of 1,517 inner-city boys from childhood to early adulthood (Loeber & Farrington, 2011). In Loeber and colleagues’ (2005) analyses, the authors reported that juvenile and young adult homicide offenders were more likely to be Black than four other types of young offenders: convicted serious violent offenders, self-reported serious violent offenders, offenders who committed property crimes and/or less serious violent crimes, and minor offenders. Similarly, Ahonen, Loeber, and Pardini (2016) found that young homicide offenders in the PYS were more likely to be Black than non-homicide violent offenders.

Two other studies were based on samples of juvenile offenders in the state of Florida. In an examination of juvenile offenders who were arrested for the first time at the age of 12 or below, Baglivio and Wolff (2017b) found that among juvenile early-onset offenders, those who were Black were significantly more likely to be arrested for homicide or attempted homicide. Baglivio and Wolff (2017a) compared between JHOs, violent sexual juvenile offenders, and violent non-sexual juvenile offenders in a sample of all juveniles arrested for violent offenses between 2007 and 2014 in Florida. The researchers reported that JHOs were significantly more likely to be Black than non-sexual violent offenders, and they were more likely to be Black and Hispanic than violent sexual offenders (Baglivio & Wolff, 2017a).

Young homicide offenders in the U.S. tend to grow up in lower-income neighborhoods (e.g., Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012). These disadvantaged areas produce more homicide offenders due to scarcity of employment opportunities, high prevalence of weapons, and the presence of a street code that encourages confrontation and violence (Anderson, 2000; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Wilson, 1987). The overrepresentation of Black youth among JHOs can be explained to a large degree by the fact that they are more likely to grow up in poor neighborhoods in the U.S. (e.g., Massey, Gross, & Shibuya, 1994). Moreover,
measures of economic disadvantage have been found to significantly increase rates of homicide offending for both Black and White juveniles (Messner, Raffalovich, & McMillan, 2001; Ousey, 2000).

**Accomplices**

Based on 32 years of data, Heide (2015) reported that the majority of JHOs (51%) in the U.S. kill with at least one accomplice; most group offenders during this time span targeted a single victim. Research conducted in Canada (Woodworth, Agar, & Coupland, 2013) yielded similar findings; between 1990 and 2008, more than 60% of JHOs in that country committed a group homicide.

In a comparison between JHOs and non-homicide violent juvenile delinquents, Shumaker and McKee (2001) reported that the homicide offenders were significantly more likely to commit their crime alone. Additionally, a study by Khachatryan, Heide, Rad, & Hummel (2016) found several significant differences between lone and group murderers in a sample of 59 JHOs. Overall, juvenile offenders who committed a group homicide were more criminally oriented; compared to lone JHOs, group offenders were more likely to be Black, have a delinquent record prior to the homicide, accumulate a higher number of prior arrests, target a stranger, and commit the homicide offense in conjunction with another crime.

**Victim-Offender Relationship**

Prior research has predominantly shown that JHOs tend to target either acquaintances or strangers, both in the U.S. (e.g., Heide et al., 2012; Rowley, Ewing, & Singer, 1987) and in other countries, such as Finland (Hagelstam & Häkkänen, 2006). In a nationwide sample of 787 JHOs, Rowley and colleagues (1987) reported that 82% of offenders killed an acquaintance (49%) or a stranger (33%). The authors also reported that homicides involving a victim who is a stranger
were significantly more likely to be theft-related and more likely to be committed by multiple offenders, which is consistent with the findings by Khachatryan and colleagues (2016).

Analyses by Heide and colleagues (2012) indicated that between 1976 and 2005, 79% of murders committed by JHOs involved an acquaintance (34%) or stranger (35%) victim. Moreover, the authors found that 5% of JHOs during this 30-year time span killed a parent or a stepparent. On the other hand, Heide (2013) reported that juveniles arrested for killing a parent or a stepparent accounted for 20% of all parricide offenders in the U.S.

**Weapon Choice and Homicide Circumstances**

Numerous studies have found that a firearm is the most common method of killing for a JHO in the U.S. (e.g., Blumstein, 1995; Darby et al., 1998; DiCatalado & Everett, 2008; Farrington et al., 2012; Heide, 2015; Myers, Scott, Burgess, & Burgess, 1995). Specifically, Blumstein (1995) reported that among juveniles arrested for homicide between 1976 and 1985, approximately 60% of them used a firearm on average. The prevalence of firearm use among juvenile murderers increased in later years; according to Heide (2015), close to 70% of JHOs arrested between 1997 and 2007 across the entire United States killed with a firearm.

The frequent use of firearms in U.S. juvenile homicide cases can be attributed to the widespread availability of firearms in this country (Stroebe, 2013). Studies conducted in the United Kingdom (Bailey, 1996), Canada (Woodworth et al., 2013), and Turkey (Erbay & Buker, 2019) reflect the low prevalence of firearm-related killings in many developed countries outside the U.S.; the majority of JHOs in the above-mentioned countries were found to kill with a knife.

According to Heide and colleagues (2020), the highest proportion of juveniles arrested for murder between 1976 and 2012 committed conflict-oriented homicides (36%), which may entail arguments over money, arguments that occur when individuals are under the influence of
drugs or alcohol, and conflicts within the context of a romantic relationship, among others (Heide, 2015). The second highest proportion of JHOs arrested during this 37-year time span (34%) killed during the commission of another crime, such as a robbery, burglary, rape, or others. Additionally, 14% of JHOs committed gang-related homicides and another 16% killed under different circumstances, which may include senseless thrill-seeking killings (Ewing, 1990).

Cornell, Benedek, and Benedek (1987) compared 37 JHOs who committed crime-related homicides to 30 JHOs who killed during an interpersonal conflict on variables related to family dysfunction, illnesses during childhood, school adjustment, psychiatric problems, pre-homicide history of crime and violence, history of substance abuse, and whether a JHO experienced any stressful events before the homicide occurred. Overall, the crime-related group was found to have a more problematic background; these offenders reported significantly higher levels of school adjustment problems (e.g., truancy, suspension, etc.), pre-homicide criminal activity, and substance abuse. Conversely, the conflict-related group experienced a significantly greater number of stressful events before the homicide incident, which suggests that the killings committed by the JHOs in this group were more situational, rather than an outcome of their lifestyle. In a later study, Cornell, Miller, and Benedek (1988) found the crime-related offenders to score significantly higher than their conflict-related counterparts on several subscales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), which indicates greater personality disturbances within the former group.

A profile of juveniles who kill emerges from the research reviewed above. The typical JHO appears to be an older adolescent Black male from an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, who tends to target either an acquaintance or a stranger with a gun during a
killing that stems from either an interpersonal conflict or a felony offense that escalates to murder. In the next section, factors that increase the risk that a young person will commit murder are discussed.

**Risk Factors for Juvenile Homicide**

Prior research on three categories of risk factors for homicide among juvenile offenders is presented below. First, familial and neighborhood risk factors of juvenile homicide are presented, followed by a discussion of biological and psychological factors. Lastly, factors related to JHOs’ pre-homicide behavior are discussed.

**Early Familial and Neighborhood Risk Factors**

Studies spanning several decades have shown that the home environments of individuals who kill as juveniles are often characterized by abuse, neglect, and violence prior to the homicide (e.g., Bailey, 1996; Heide, 1999, 2013; Hill-Smith, Hugo, Hughes, Fonagy, & Hartman, 2002; Hughes, Zagar, Busch, Grove, & Arbit, 2009; Lewis et al., 1985; Myers et al., 1995; Zagar, Grove, Busch, Hughes, & Arbit, 2009). For example, Heide (1999) indicated that reports of child abuse in the U.S. had drastically increased between the 1970s and 1990s, which may have contributed to the large surge in juvenile violence and homicide in the years 1984-1993. Heide also differentiated between different types of abuse and neglect that children may experience at home. Abuse can be physical, sexual, verbal (i.e., words directed to or said in front of a child that are likely to damage his/her self-esteem), or psychological (i.e., words or behaviors that are likely to damage a child’s self-concept and/or feeling that they are safe from harm). Parental neglect, on the other hand, can be physical (i.e., failure to provide a child with food, clothing, and proper supervision), medical (i.e., failure to provide access to medical care when needed by a child), or emotional (i.e., failure to provide warmth, love, and support to a
A constellation of abuse and neglect is commonly found in cases of juveniles who kill their parents (Heide, 2013).

Multiple studies have illustrated the prevalence of abuse in samples of JHOs. Lewis and her colleagues (1985) compared 9 JHOs to 24 non-homicide juvenile delinquents on neuropsychiatric and family history variables, and found that seven of eight JHOs for whom relevant data were available experienced severe physical abuse in childhood; conversely, 14 of 24 (58%) delinquent subjects experienced childhood physical abuse. Bailey (1996) and Hill and colleagues (2002) both examined samples of approximately 20 JHOs from the United Kingdom, and reported that 50% of homicide offenders were abused by their parents in childhood. Moreover, the JHOs in the study by Hill and colleagues (2002) were significantly more likely to experience parental violence than a control group of young burglars.

Heide and Solomon (2006) described the biological effects of childhood abuse, which exacerbate the risk of future violence or homicide. According to the researchers, severe long-term abuse and neglect in childhood impedes normal brain development, and hinders individuals’ ability to regulate their emotions (anger in particular), control their impulses, feel empathy for others, experience pleasure, or cope adaptively under stressful conditions. Moreover, memories of traumatic abuse become trapped in the limbic system, which makes processing new information more difficulty for the brain and lowers an individual’s ability to learn from past mistakes and modify his/her behavior accordingly. The combination of these factors increases the likelihood that a severely abused juvenile will commit serious violence, including murder.

Exposure to violence in the home and in the neighborhood also increases the risk of committing homicide for a child or adolescent (e.g., Lewis, Shanok, Grant, & Ritvo, 1983).
Heide (1999) noted that in inner-city neighborhoods, where homicide rates are the highest, violence tends to be a part of life; high rates of juveniles in these neighborhoods witness serious violence (e.g., a shooting or stabbing), experience it personally, or experience it vicariously (i.e., know someone who was wounded or killed).

Several prior studies have highlighted the importance of exposure to violence in the lives of juveniles who commit homicide. In a comparison between 71 JHOs and 71 non-violent delinquents, Busch and colleagues (1990) reported that the homicide offenders were much more likely to have a violent family member. Myers and colleagues (1995) assessed a clinical sample of 25 JHOs and found that the vast majority of them (81%) witnessed violence in the home. Lastly, DeLisi, Piquero, and Cardwell (2016) examined predictors of homicide in a sample of 1,354 juvenile offenders from the Pathways to Desistance data set, and their analyses revealed that witnessing and/or experiencing community-based violence significantly increased the risk of homicide commission.

Exposure to abuse and violence can lead to homicide through at least two pathways (Shumaker & Prinz, 2000). First, experiencing violence can instill rage in children and hinder them from developing empathy toward others (see also Heide & Solomon, 2006). Second, experiencing or witnessing violence can reinforce to young people the utility of using violence to resolve a conflict or achieve a goal (e.g., relieving frustration), and thus increase the likelihood that they will engage in serious violence in the future.

**Biological and Psychological Risk Factors**

Multiple prior studies have identified cognitive differences between JHOs and other types of juveniles. Hughes and colleagues (2009) compared JHOs and young adult killers who were abused in childhood to three other groups of abused subjects and a control of group of non-
abused subjects. Compared to the control group, the homicide offenders who were abused in childhood had significantly lower executive functioning. Additionally, Cope and colleagues (2014) examined an incarcerated sample of 20 JHOs and 135 non-homicide delinquents, and found that the JHOs exhibited significantly reduced gray matter volume in their bilateral temporal lobe. The findings from these two studies suggest that JHOs, compared to both non-delinquents and other types of juvenile delinquents, may suffer from higher levels of impulsivity, poorer judgment of consequences, and lack of insight, among other things.

Some studies have found evidence regarding the link between epilepsy and homicide in juveniles. Epilepsy was more common among JHOs than non-homicide offenders in the studies by Busch and colleagues (1990) and Hughes and colleagues (2009). Moreover, 15% of JHOs in Bailey’s (1996) sample suffered from epilepsy. However, more research is needed to determine whether epilepsy influences violence and homicide directly, or whether the relationship is spurious due to brain dysfunction that causes both epilepsy and aggression (see Marsh & Krauss, 2000).

Research on the relationship between low intelligence and homicide offending among juveniles has produced mixed findings. Some studies have found lower IQ scores to differentiate between JHOs and other juvenile offenders (e.g., Busch et al. 1990; DeLisi et al., 2016; Hays, Solway, & Schreiner, 1978). The mean IQ score for the youth homicide offenders in the study by Hays and colleagues (1978) was 80, which was significantly lower than the IQ scores obtained for the control group of juvenile status offenders. Busch and colleagues (1990) and DeLisi and colleagues (2016) found that lower IQ significantly increased the risk for homicide perpetration in samples of juvenile offenders. Other studies, involving clinical samples (e.g., Bender, 1959; Myers et al., 1995), found a small percentage of JHOs with drastically below-average IQ scores
(i.e., below 100) and some JHOs with above-average IQ scores. For example, Bender (1959) reported that 6 of the 33 (18%) subjects in her particularly young sample of JHOs (ages 5-15) had above-average IQ scores.

A common diagnosis among juvenile murderers is conduct disorder (CD), which consists of a persistent pattern of violating the rights of others and is the juvenile precursor to antisocial personality disorder (Lewis et al., 1983; Loeber et al., 2005; Lynam, 1996; Myers et al., 1995; Myers & Scott, 1998; Shumaker & Prinz, 2000). For example, the majority of the homicide offenders examined by Lewis and colleagues (1983) and Myers and colleagues (1995) were diagnosed with CD. Additionally, Loeber and colleagues (2005) found a diagnosis of CD to significantly increase the risk of homicide offending in their Pittsburgh sample. Shumaker and Prinz (2000) added that comorbidity of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with CD exacerbates the risk that a juvenile will commit homicide.

Some evidence from prior research has linked psychosis to juvenile homicide. In Lewis and colleagues’ (1985) comparison of JHOs and non-violent delinquents, the authors found that all the homicide offenders experienced psychotic symptoms, the most common of which was paranoid ideation. This symptom was also prevalent in Myers and Scott’s (1998) examination of 18 JHOs; 15 of them (83%) experienced paranoid ideation. Furthermore, the JHOs in this study were more likely to report psychotic symptoms than a control group of aggressive hospitalized teenagers. However, the extant literature indicates overall that the vast majority of JHOs are not psychotic or severely mentally ill (Ewing, 1990; Heide, 2015).

According to Heide (1999), personality characteristics are important for understanding why young people commit murder. For example, many JHOs exhibit low self-esteem and become involved in crime due to their inability of achieving success and a sense of pride through
conventional avenues (e.g., school, sports, etc.). Furthermore, JHOs tend to have low frustration
tolerance, which results in the use of unrestrained violence by these youths when they feel angry
(Heide, 1999). JHOs’ failure to control their anger may explain their high involvement in
murders that originate from interpersonal conflict.

**Behavioral Risk Factors**

For many JHOs, homicide is not the first violent act they commit. Several studies have
demonstrated that JHOs commonly engage in other types of violent crime prior to committing
homicide (e.g., Darby et al., 1998; Farrington et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 1985; Myers et al., 1995).
In Farrington and colleagues’ (2012) analyses of the PYS data, for example, 62% of the 37
young homicide offenders had previously committed a serious violent offense. Prior violence
was also a statistically significant predictor of homicide in this study. Darby and colleagues
(1998) reported even greater involvement in pre-homicide violence: More than 75% of the 112
JHOs in their sample had engaged in violence prior to the homicide incident.

Juvenile murderers often exhibit problems in relation to school (Gerard, Jackson, Chou,
Whitfield, & Browne, 2014; Myers & Scott, 1998; Zagar, Busch, Isbell, & Hughes, 2009). Prior
studies have shown a high propensity among JHOs for truancy (e.g., Bailey, 1996; Shumaker &
Prinz, 2000), suspension from school (e.g., Farrington et al., 2012), failing a grade and being
held back (e.g., Loeber et al., 2005; Myers et al., 1995), withdrawal from school (e.g., Cornell et
al., 1987; Hill-Smith et al., 2002), and poor academic achievement (e.g., Zagar, Busch, et al.,
2009). Failure at school may increase the risk of committing homicide by leading to frustration
and anger for young people, as well as alienating them from prosocial peers and reducing
opportunities for prosocial involvement.
Numerous studies have found substance abuse to be an important risk factor for homicide among juvenile offenders (e.g., Ahonen et al., 2016; Bailey, 1996; Busch et al., 1990; Darby et al., 1998; DiCatalado & Everett, 2008; Heide, 1999; Loeber et al., 2005; Myers & Scott, 1998; Roe-Sepowitz, 2009; Zagar et al., 2009). As explained by Heide (1999), JHOs are rarely under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the killing. Instead, abuse of drugs and/or alcohol tends to diminish youths’ overall decision-making and contributes to their involvement in deviant behavior, and subsequently homicide.

Two factors that have consistently been shown to increase the risk of juvenile-perpetrated homicide are weapon carrying (e.g., DiCatalado & Everett, 2008; Farrington et al., 2012; Loeber et al., 2005; Myers et al., 1995; Sorrells, 1977; Zagar, Busch, et al., 2009) and involvement in gangs (e.g., Baglivio & Wolff, 2017a; Busch et al., 1990; Farrington et al., 2012; Zagar, Arbit, Sylvies, Busch, & Hughes, 1990; Zagar, Busch, et al., 2009). Some studies have found co-occurrence between these two factors (Gerard et al., 2014); both weapon carrying and gang-related fighting significantly increased the risk of homicide in analyses of PYS data by Loeber and colleagues (2005) and Farrington and colleagues (2012). Additionally, Zagar, Busch, and their colleagues (2009) found that gang membership and weapon carrying were significant risk factors for homicide in a comparison between young homicide offenders and non-homicide delinquents in Chicago.

Youths who carry a weapon, and a firearm in particular, are at a higher risk of engaging in deadly violence because they are more likely to escalate an interaction with another person (e.g., Durant, Getts, Cadenhead, & Woods, 1995), and they may feel emboldened to commit property-related crimes, such as robbery or burglary. The presence of a weapon may be the only difference between a mere violent encounter and a murder (DiCataldo & Everett, 2008). Gang
membership among juveniles increases their risk of homicide perpetration by (1) instilling pro-violence attitudes in them, and (2) contributing to their frequent involvement in situations that are likely to end in violence (e.g., Decker, 1996; Melde & Esbensen, 2013).

The risk factors for juvenile homicide are additive. Juveniles who commit murder tend to grow up in violent homes, where they are neglected, abused, and deprived of love and guidance. Consequently, they struggle at school, develop cognitive and psychological problems, consume drugs and alcohol, become involved in criminal peer groups, develop violent tendencies, and carry a weapon for protection in their often dangerous neighborhoods and to further their criminal lifestyle. The interaction between two or more of the above risk factors is likely to culminate in a homicide offense.

**Literature on Recidivism of JHOs**

Some prior studies have focused on recidivism among particular subtypes of JHOs, while others investigated recidivism outcomes in general samples of youths who killed someone. Five categories of studies are reviewed in this section: First, studies that examined recidivism outcomes for juveniles who committed a homicide offense against a parent or stepparent (i.e., juvenile parricide offenders) are discussed, followed by recidivism research on juveniles who committed sexually oriented homicides. Subsequently, recidivism studies that compared between crime-oriented and conflict-oriented JHOs, as well as those that compared between JHOs who received treatment and those who did not, are reviewed. The last category consists of studies that have examined the prevalence of recidivism in general samples of JHOs who were released from correctional facilities; some of those studies have also identified factors that increase the likelihood of recidivism for JHOs.
Juvenile Parricide Offenders

Early research on recidivism of JHOs focused primarily on parricide offenders, and typically consisted of small clinical samples. Several of these studies provided promising results regarding the post-homicide reintegration to society of juvenile parricide offenders. Duncan and Duncan (1971) reported that four out of the six juveniles who killed or attempted to kill a parent in their study had not recidivated, in an analysis conducted more than 10 years after their release. No follow-up information was available on the other two offenders. Tanay (1973, 1976) described the cases of three juveniles who killed an abusive parent and provided follow-up information about them. Using a follow-up period of 4-10 years, the author reported that all three offenders had readjusted well to society; none of them had been rearrested. Similar findings were obtained in Post’s (1982) analysis of four abused juvenile parricide offenders. Follow-up data, for which the length of time was unspecified, were available for two male offenders, and neither of them had been rearrested; at the time of the analyses, one of the offenders had a stable job, and the other one was in school. The offenders in the studies by Tanay and Post fit the description of Heide’s “severely abused parricide offenders” (Heide, 2013). These adolescents kill their abusive parents because they can no longer tolerate the abuse they experience at the hands of the parents, and may even think that their life is in danger.

Corder, Ball, Haizlip, Rollins, and Beaumont (1976) compared post-homicide outcomes between 10 juveniles who killed a parent, 10 juveniles who killed a relative other than a parent or an acquaintance, and 10 juveniles who targeted a stranger. The average follow-up period was 4.5 years. The authors reported that the parricide offenders fared much better than the non-parricide offenders; only one out of 10 parricide offenders was incarcerated at the time of the follow-up investigation, compared to 19 out of the 20 JHOs who killed non-parental victims.
Russell (1984) and Heide (1994) both provided follow-up information on two juvenile parricide offenders, with mixed outcomes. In Russell’s analyses, one of the offenders obtained an advanced degree, became a professor, and had not been rearrested after his release from a psychiatric hospital. Conversely, the second offender continued committing violent crimes after being released on parole, including attacks against strangers. Heide (1992) also discussed two parricide offenders with differential post-release outcomes. One of the juveniles had not recidivated during a period of 2.5 years since his supervised release, but the second juvenile did not adjust well to society after he had been found not guilty by reason of insanity and subsequently released from a mental hospital. This youth was later arrested for committing a number of armed robberies and sent to prison. After his release on probation, he violated it by absconding.

In her book on parricide offenders, Heide (2013) discussed the post-homicide outcomes of 11 juvenile parricide offenders she had evaluated. Of these 11 offenders, five had been released from an adult prison (n = 4) or a mental institution (n = 1). The average follow-up period was 12 years. Post-release data indicated that one of the five released offenders had not gotten into trouble, three had committed new crimes, and one had violated the terms of his probation and was sent back to prison. One of the recidivists committed a double homicide more than a decade after his release. Moreover, among the six offenders who had not been released from prison, two of them adjusted successfully to the prison environment, and four experienced poor adjustment. One offender killed a fellow inmate, and the remaining three had received extensive amounts of disciplinary reports, and had been spending a large portion of their incarceration in disciplinary confinement.
Juvenile Sexual Homicide Offenders

Four prior studies have examined how juvenile sexual homicide offenders fared after release from incarceration. In a case study of a 13-year old sexual homicide offender who fatally stabbed an adult female neighbor, Myers, Eggleston, and Smoak (2003) reported that the youth was struggling to readjust to society. After serving nine years in prison, the offender was arrested twice in the three years between his release and the end of the follow-up period: once for possession of a firearm and once for stalking an ex-girlfriend. Both of these offenses constituted violations of the terms of his probation.

Hill, Habermann, Klusmann, Berner, and Briken (2008) examined a sample of 166 German male sexual homicide offenders who committed a sexual homicide between 1945 and 1991; 11% of sample subjects (n = 19) were under the age of 18 when they committed the sexual killing. The authors provided follow-up information on 90 offenders who had been released from incarceration, and the follow-up period was approximately 10 years. The results indicated that none of the juvenile sexual homicide offenders had committed another homicide after release from prison. However, offenders who committed their first sexual homicide when they were younger than 21 and offenders who served less than 15 years displayed significantly higher rates of post-release sexual violence.

An assessment of 22 male juvenile sexual killers who were convicted in adult court was conducted by Myers, Chan, Vo, and Lazarou (2010). Eleven of the 22 offenders had either been released from prison after their initial homicide (n = 9) or had not been caught for the sexual homicide for which they were included in the study (n = 2). Six of the 11 released offenders were rearrested within a mean of more than 4 years after release; three of the recidivists committed additional sexually oriented homicides. Among the remaining three recidivists, one offender was
arrested for selling drugs and resisting arrest with violence, and the other two violated the conditions of their parole and were sent back to prison. Psychopathy scores were found to be significantly higher for recidivists than non-recidivists.

Lastly, Khachatryan, Heide, Hummel, and Chan (2016) investigated a sample of eight men who committed a sexually oriented murder at the age of 18 or below, and were sentenced to serve time in adult prison. The follow-up period was approximately 30 years for these men, during which six of them had been released. Four of the released offenders had recidivated; three of them committed violent, property, and drug-related offenses and were reincarcerated. The fourth recidivist committed relatively minor offenses and managed to stay out of prison. Moreover, the two sexual homicide offenders who had not been released during the follow-up period did not adjust well to incarceration; both of them engaged in antisocial behavior throughout the entire 30-year time span, which was reflected in their large record of disciplinary reports for misconduct.

**Crime-Oriented v. Conflict-Oriented JHOs**

As previously discussed, Cornell and colleagues (1987) examined differences between JHOs who killed during the commission of a crime and those who killed during a conflict, and found higher psychological maladjustment among the crime-oriented offenders. However, Cornell and his colleagues did not explore whether this typology could differentiate between recidivists and non-recidivists. In order to fill this gap in the literature, Toupin (1993) analyzed follow-up data on a sample of 41 male Canadian JHOs, 18 of whom committed crime-oriented homicides and 23 committed conflict-oriented homicides. The sample was selected from police and youth court records, as well as records from a psychiatric hospital and several residential treatment centers. The follow-up period was approximately seven years. Recidivism by offenders
who committed conflict-oriented homicides was significantly less frequent, compared to both crime-oriented offenders and a control group of property offenders, in terms of any offenses, violent offenses, and serious offenses.

Different results regarding post-release outcomes of crime- and conflict-oriented JHOs were reported by Khachatryan, Heide, and Hummel (2018). The researchers used a sample of 59 male offenders who killed as juveniles in the early 1980s and were sentenced to adult prison. During the course of the approximately 30-year follow-up period, 48 JHOs had been released from prison; 35 of them originally committed a crime-oriented killing and 13 committed a conflict-oriented killing. The analyses showed no significant differences between the two groups on the number of post-release arrests and post-release violent offenses. The contrast in findings between the two studies could potentially be attributed to differences related to the length of the follow-up period, institutional settings (treatment facilities for juveniles vs. adult prison), or level of support for released offenders between Canada and the U.S.

**Treated v. Untreated JHOs**

The knowledge about the differences in recidivism outcomes between JHOs who receive treatment after committing the homicide and JHOs who do not receive treatment has been produced primarily by one treatment program. For more than a decade, The Texas Youth Commission had evaluated the effectiveness of an intensive group treatment program, the Capital Offender Program (COP), later known as the Capital and Serious Violent Offender Treatment Program (C&SVOTP), in reducing recidivism rates for JHOs and non-homicide violent juvenile offenders who used a deadly weapon in their crime. The program is administered at the Giddings State School in Giddings, Texas, and enables serious young violent offenders to
develop prosocial coping skills and attitudes, a safe expression of thoughts or feelings, and empathy for their victims and others (Heide, 2013).

Overall, the results from this program regarding recidivism have been mixed. In the original analyses, JHOs who were enrolled in COP were compared to a control group of JHOs who were not able to receive treatment due to space limitations. Recidivism was measured by examining rearrest and reconviction data at one- and three-year intervals (Howell, 1995; Texas Youth Commission, 1996). The initial set of findings showed short-term positive results for the COP regimen, in that JHOs who were treated had significantly lower rearrest and reincarceration rates than those who were not treated, one year after release. However, these differences disappeared three years after release, and treated JHOs were no longer less likely to reoffend than their control group counterparts (Howell, 1995).

Subsequent analyses provided more promising results for this program. Heide (2013) reported that youths who completed the C&SVOTP in 2006 were 55% less likely to be reincarcerated for any offense and 43% less likely to be reincarcerated for a felony, compared to youths who did not participate in the program. In 2010, juveniles who were enrolled in the program, regardless of completion status, were 66% significantly less likely to be rearrested for any offense than their untreated counterparts. Treated juveniles were also 19% less likely to be rearrested for a violent offense, but this difference was not statistically significant (Texas Youth Commission, 2010).

The Texas Youth Commission was abolished in 2011, and a new agency called the Texas Juvenile Justice Department assumed the responsibility of assessing the effectiveness of treatment programs for detained juvenile offenders in the state (Texas Juvenile Justice Department, 2011). Recent findings regarding the effectiveness of the C&SVOTP are less
encouraging; in 2017, the last year for which recidivism data are available, offenders who completed the C&SVOTP were more likely to be rearrested for a violent offense and reincarcerated than those who completed other treatment programs (e.g., drugs and alcohol program, mental health program) within a year after release (Texas Juvenile Justice Department, 2017). In contrast to previous analyses, JHOs and other violent juveniles who were treated at the C&SVOTP were not compared to a matched group of youth who did not receive this treatment.

**Recidivism in General Samples of Incarcerated JHOs**

Twelve studies to date have analyzed recidivism patterns in moderate to large samples of JHOs who were released from correctional institutions. In six of these studies, JHOs were released from juvenile correctional facilities (Caudill & Trulson, 2016; Hagan, 1997; Trulson & Caudill, 2017; Trulson, Caudill, Haerle, & DeLisi., 2012; Trulson, Haerle, Caudill, & DeLisi, 2016; Vries & Liem, 2011). In the other six studies, JHOs were released from adult prisons (DiCataldo et al., 2017; Heide, 2019, 2020; Heide et al., 2001; Khachatryan et al., 2016; McCuish, Cale, & Corrado, 2018). Ten of the studies were conducted in the U.S., and the remaining two used samples from the Netherlands (Vries & Liem, 2011) and Canada (McCuish et al., 2018).

Hagan (1997) examined a sample of 20 male subjects who were convicted as juveniles of a completed or attempted homicide, and were released from incarceration in the late 1970s and 1980s. The follow-up period ranged from a minimum of 5 years to more than 15 years after release. The author found that none of the JHOs had committed a post-incarceration homicide; however, 60% of them (n = 12) had recidivated, and 58% of recidivists (n = 7) had committed another violent act. Moreover, 10 offenders were sent back to prison for a new conviction. There was no significant difference between the homicide and attempted homicide offenders on
likelihood of reoffending. The JHOs were also no more likely to recidivate than a control group of non-homicide juvenile offenders.

Heide and her colleagues (2001) followed up on a sample of 59 male JHOs from southeastern state who were sentenced to adult prison between 1982 and 1984. The sample consisted of offenders who were convicted of murder, attempted murder, or manslaughter. The follow-up period ranged from 1 year to 16 years, and sample subjects were considered recidivists if they were recommitted to prison after committing a new crime or violating the terms of their parole. The researchers found that 43 of the 59 offenders in the sample were released from prison, and that 60% of released JHOs (n = 25) received new prison sentences or were recommitted for a parole violation. Eighty percent of the recidivists (n = 20) in the sample recidivated within the first 3 years after release.

Using the same sample, Khachatryan and colleagues (2016) tracked these 59 JHOs up to 2012. They reported that 48 offenders had been released from prison during the 30-year follow-up period, eight offenders were still incarcerated for the original homicide conviction, and three offenders died before they could potentially be released. The authors found that 88% of released JHOs (n = 42) had been rearrested during the follow-up period; additionally, 63% of JHOs who were released (n = 30) had been arrested for a new violent offense. Five of these violent recidivists killed (n = 4) or attempted to kill (n = 1) again. Due to the fact that there was little variation in new arrests within the sample, the authors tested the effect of pre-homicide, homicide, and incarceration factors on post-release violent offenses. Logistic regression analyses revealed that time served in prison was a significant predictor of post-release violence; JHOs who were incarcerated six years or less were approximately six times more likely to be arrested for violence after release from prison than those who were incarcerated seven years or longer.
The only follow-up study on JHOs from Europe was conducted by Vries and Liem (2011). Their sample consisted of 137 Dutch JHOs, who constituted all the juveniles convicted of homicide between 1992 and 2007 in the Netherlands. Eighty-five percent of the JHOs (n = 116) were male and the remaining 15% were female. The follow-up period ranged from 1 year to 16 years.

The results indicated that more than half of the sample (59%) committed new offenses after release from incarceration during the follow-up period. Three percent of all post-release offenses were either completed (n = 2) or attempted (n = 16) homicides. Moreover, the authors examined the effect of static and dynamic factors on recidivism. Regarding static factors, three of them were found to significantly predict recidivism: being male, lack of self-control, and three measures of criminal history (i.e. number of prior offenses, age at first offense, and age at the time of the homicide). The relationships between the significant static factors and recidivism were in the expected directions. The dynamic risk factors found to predict recidivism were association with delinquent peers and substance abuse prior to the homicide incident. The latter factor influenced recidivism in the unexpected direction; substance abuse was found to significantly decrease the odds of recidivism.

Recidivism by JHOs released from juvenile detention facilities managed by the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) was analyzed in several studies by Trulson, Caudill, and their colleagues. In the first study, Trulson and colleagues (2012) examined whether juveniles who committed gang-related homicides were more likely to recidivate than other types of juvenile murderers, as well as non-homicide violent offenders. Their sample consisted of 1,804 serious and violent male juvenile offenders, who were both incarcerated and released from a juvenile correctional facility between 1987 and 2004. One hundred twenty-six of those offenders were
convicted of a gang-related homicide, and 338 of them were convicted of a non gang-related homicide and labeled “general homicide offenders”. The follow-up period was 3 years, and the dependent variables of interest were any arrests, felony arrests, and frequency of new arrests.

The authors did not report the overall percentage of recidivists in the sample. Multivariate analyses indicated that juvenile gang murderers were 51% more likely to be rearrested for any offense and 89% more likely to be rearrested for a felony offense, compared to general homicide and non-homicide offenders in the sample. Conviction for a gang-related murder had no significant effect on the frequency of new arrests. Moreover, general homicide offenders were 72% more likely to be arrested for a new felony offense than non-homicide violent offenders.

In another study, Caudill and Trulson (2016) examined recidivism in a sample of 221 JHOs who were released from TYC facilities between 1987 and 2000, after serving the juvenile portion of their blended sentence. The authors reported that 58% of the sample had been rearrested within the 10-year follow-up period. A survival analysis revealed that the risk of recidivism significantly increased for offenders who assaulted correctional staff members, served shorter sentences, and accumulated a higher score on a scale that measures behavioral disruption.

In a third study, Trulson and colleagues (2016) assessed recidivism in a sample of 238 male and female JHOs released from TYC correctional facilities. Within the five-year follow-up period employed by the authors, 58% of JHOs had been rearrested. Offenders who were male and Black, as well as those who committed assaults on the ward, were significantly more likely to be rearrested. JHOs who participated in an intensive treatment program, served longer sentences, and participated in fewer assaults against other inmates were at a significantly lower risk of being rearrested.
In the last study by this group of researchers, Trulson and Caudill (2017) tracked 247 JHOs who were sentenced to the TYC in the years 1987-2011 and were released before they had to serve the adult portion of their blended sentence. Male offenders constituted 92% of the sample. Within a three-year follow-up period, 50% of the sample had been rearrested. The recidivism rate did not differ between JHOs involved in capital murder cases and non-capital JHOs. Offenders who were Black, experienced childhood neglect, and assaulted other inmates were more likely to recidivate after release, whereas JHOs who served longer sentences were less likely to recidivate.

Recidivism outcomes for 22 JHOs were examined by DiCataldo and colleagues (2017). The juvenile murderers were all released from adult prisons across the state of Massachusetts; some of them started their sentence at a juvenile facility, and were subsequently transferred to an adult institution at a certain point between the ages of 18 and 21. The authors employed a mean follow-up period of approximately 8 years, and the measure of recidivism was post-release convictions. In contrast to other recidivism studies, the majority of JHOs in this sample did not recidivate during the study period; the results indicated that 32% of the sample (n = 7) were reconvicted after release from prison. There were no significant differences between the recidivists and non-recidivists on age at the time of release, time at risk, prior offense history, family history, mental health problems, and community-related factors.

In a Canadian study of recidivism among juvenile and young adult killers, McCuish and colleagues (2018) analyzed the offending trajectories of 26 young murderers (i.e., killed between the ages of 12 and 19) after release from prison and up to age 28, and compared the homicide group to young offenders who were convicted of a violent offense other than homicide (n = 358) and non-violent offenders (n = 139). The offenders were all from the Canadian province of
British Columbia. The authors did not specify the proportion of homicide offenders who were 18 years of age or older at the time of the homicide. The results revealed that 71% of the homicide offenders were reconvicted of a post-release crime, and there was no significant difference between the homicide group and the other two groups on likelihood of recidivism. Moreover, homicide offenders and non-homicide offenders did not significantly differ with respect to post-release offending trajectories. The authors added that the recidivists in the homicide group tended to commit minor, non-violent crimes.

The last two studies to have examined recidivism among JHOs were conducted by Heide (2019, 2020), using the same sample that will be analyzed in the present study. In the first study, Heide (2019) explored the influence of a wide variety of factors, including post-release factors, on reincarceration for 19 JHOs from a Southeastern state who served time in adult prison for a homicide offense they committed in the 1980s. Follow-up data spanning approximately 35 years were obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with these offenders. The results indicated that the 58% of the 19 released subjects (n = 11) had been reincarcerated during the follow-up period. Logistic regression analyses indicated that reincarceration was significantly predicted by settlement in neighborhoods where they lived pre-incarceration, time served in prison, and GED completion; JHOs who went back to their old neighborhoods after release from prison were more likely to be reincarcerated, whereas offenders who served longer sentences and those who completed a GED in prison were less likely to be sent back to prison.

In the second study, Heide (2020) asked JHOs a series of questions about the reasons that they got into trouble with the law 35 years earlier. She found that JHOs who reported that they lived in neighborhoods in which crime was routine as kids and those who got involved in crime because the opportunity presented itself were significantly more likely to be rearrested after
release and sent back to prison than JHOs who did not report these circumstances. Interestingly, JHOs who lived in crime-ridden areas prior to the homicidal incident were significantly more likely to return to the old neighborhoods post release than JHOs who do not grow up in these types of neighborhoods.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the review of the literature on recidivism by JHOs. First, follow-up studies have shown that the majority of JHOs recidivate regardless of the length of the follow-up period; a relatively small proportion of them commit new homicide offenses. Second, the knowledge regarding the recidivism patterns of different subtypes of JHOs is currently limited. Third, systematic knowledge on the effect of treatment on JHOs’ recidivism outcomes is limited as well. Lastly, the literature on recidivism in samples of juvenile murderers largely consists of quantitative studies, and no prior study has examined the influence of indicators of adult social control on frequency and severity of post-release criminal behavior.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the characteristics of juvenile homicides, risk factors for juvenile homicide, and post-release outcomes for offenders who kill as juveniles were discussed. The extant literature indicates that juvenile murderers are more likely to be Black males from violent low-income neighborhoods, who grow up in violent homes where they are frequently severely mistreated by their parents. Their lives outside the home are characterized by problems at school, absence of prosocial peers and role models, excessive use of drugs and alcohol, and aggressive and criminal behavior. Their homicide offenses tend to be committed against acquaintances or complete strangers, and using firearms that they carry regularly.

After they are released from prison, many of these homicide offenders are rearrested, reconvicted, and sent back to prison. The effects of pre-homicide and some incarceration-related
factors (e.g., violence against other inmates) on post-release recidivism have been established in
the literature. Knowledge remains scarce regarding the influence of JHOs’ activities and
circumstances after release from incarceration on their patterns of recidivism, particularly with
respect to frequency of offending.
CHAPTER THREE:
DESISTANCE FROM CRIME

A prominent area of research within the field of criminology in the past three decades has been desistance from criminal behavior, particularly among serious and chronic offenders (e.g., Loeber & Farrington, 2012; Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington, & Milne, 2002). Given the fact that between 600,00 and 700,000 individuals are released from incarceration every year in the U.S. alone (Mears and Cochran, 2014), empirically-based knowledge on the factors that aid offenders in gradually ending their involvement in criminal behavior is needed. One of the most influential perspectives on desistance from crime is Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control, which will serve as the theoretical framework for the current study.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, Sampson and Laub’s social control theory, as well as empirical evidence the researchers provided to support their theoretical propositions, are discussed. Second, prior research that has examined whether the sources of social control highlighted in Sampson and Laub’s theory facilitate desistance in other samples is presented. The last section of the chapter revolves around qualitative studies that have examined the experiences of offenders released from incarceration without using Sampson and Laub’s framework, focusing primarily on factors that have been found to promote desistance from crime.

Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control

Sampson and Laub’s (1993) perspective constitutes an extension of Hirschi’s (1969) social control theory. Hirschi examined the link between four elements of informal social control
(i.e., attachment to intimate others, commitment to conventional goals, involvement in structured conventional activities, and belief in societal norms) and juvenile delinquency. Conversely, Sampson and Laub aimed to explain both juvenile delinquency and adult crime by focusing on the quality of informal social control. Their initial theory consisted of three components: (1) Causes of juvenile delinquency, (2) stability in criminal trajectories from adolescence to adulthood, and (3) change in criminal trajectory due to the quality of social control in adulthood.

According to Sampson and Laub (1993), juvenile delinquency originates from indicators of structural disadvantage, such as low socioeconomic status, family disruption (i.e., parents do not live together), overcrowded household, residential instability, parental unemployment, and parental deviance. These structural variables indirectly lead to delinquency through their effect on measures of informal social control, in terms of a child’s relationship with the parents, the school, and his/her peers and siblings (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Parent-related measures of social control include harsh and erratic parental discipline, parental rejection, weak supervision by the mother, and weak attachment to parents by the child. School-related social control is represented by weak attachment to the school and poor academic performance. Lastly, the researchers contended that structural disadvantage caused juvenile delinquency by strengthening one’s attachment to delinquent peers and delinquent siblings.

As acknowledged by Sampson and Laub, juvenile delinquency is a strong predictor of criminal behavior in adulthood (e.g., Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2007; Tracy & Kemph-Leonard, 1996). Therefore, in the second part of their theory, Sampson and Laub (1993) argued that the transition from adolescence to adulthood was marked by continuity in behavior to a large extent; individuals who engaged in criminal behavior in adolescence will continue to do so as adults. Moreover, delinquent behavior in adolescence will
lead to a variety of other negative adult outcomes, such as unemployment, dependence on welfare, marital problems and divorce, and turbulent military service.

The third part of Sampson and Laub’s theory, which will be the main focus of the current study, is related to change in patterns of criminal behavior during adulthood. Despite the fact that juvenile delinquents are expected to continue committing crimes in adulthood, Sampson and Laub (1993) argued that changes in the quality of informal social control led to changes in one’s trajectory of criminal behavior. The researchers contended that an increase in an offender’s bond to society will result in a reduction in criminal behavior and eventual desistance from crime.

The two elements of the social bond on which Sampson and Laub (1993) focused are marriage and employment. They argued that having a spouse and a job would not lead to desistance by themselves; instead, high-quality marriages and jobs increase one’s stakes in conformity and dissuade him/her from engaging in criminal behavior, regardless of this individual’s rate of offending in adolescence and possibly early adulthood. However, the researchers recognized that a high rate of criminal activity may result in frequent contact with the police and/or multiple periods of incarceration, which would consequently limit an offender’s ability of entering into a loving marriage with a prosocial partner or securing meaningful employment.

An event or life circumstance that can produce a change in one’s trajectory of criminal behavior is referred to as a “turning point” (Elder, 1985; Sampson & Laub, 1993). In the context of Sampson and Laub’s perspective, high-quality marriages and employment opportunities serve as turning points away from deviant and criminal behavior through the strengthening of informal social control.
**Extension of Theory**

In their later book, Laub and Sampson (2003) expanded their theory of informal social control and described the specific mechanisms through which marriage, employment, and other turning points lead to desistance from crime. The researchers also explored the roles of aging and human agency in causing desistance from criminal behavior.

Laub and Sampson (2003) argued that marriage may induce desistance from crime through four different mechanisms. First, an offender may develop a strong attachment to his/her spouse, which would increase the perceived cost of criminal behavior (i.e., loss of contact with the spouse) and promote desistance. Second, marriage is likely to produce a change in routine activities. For example, individuals who are married have obligations that lower the amount of time they can spend with longtime peers, including criminal peers. Given the well-established relationship between peer deviance and one’s own deviant behavior (e.g., Haynie & Osgood, 2005; Matsueda & Anderson, 1998), less exposure to antisocial peers will reduce the likelihood of future involvement in criminal activities. Moreover, marriage may lead to relocation to a new neighborhood, which would further alienate one from old criminal networks (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Third, a spouse can provide direct supervision. In the case of a male offender, his wife may monitor his behavior directly and ensure that he will not get into trouble or spend time with known criminals. Lastly, Laub and Sampson (2003) asserted that marriage could lead to desistance by changing an offender’s sense of self, especially among men. Married men may view offending as a barrier to their new goal of taking care of their wife and possibly children.

As with marriage, employment can also lead to desistance through several pathways, according to Laub and Sampson (2003). First, stable employment provides individuals with a
higher stake in conformity, which increases informal social control and reduces the likelihood of offending. Second, employment, and especially full-time positions, reduce opportunities for criminal behavior by limiting the amount of time one can spend on unstructured activities with others. In other words, employment changes the nature of one’s routine activities, similar to marriage.

Third, similar to spouses, employers can also serve as a direct form of social control with respect to their employees’ behavior. Employers who develop a close relationship with an employee can monitor his/her actions and encourage the individual to avoid illegal behavior. Fourth, meaningful employment may give one a sense of purpose in life, and thus inhibit behavior that will endanger this shift in identity, including crime.

In the reformulation of their theory, Laub and Sampson (2003) discussed the potential role of military service in changing the life-course trajectory of juvenile delinquents. Military service may lead to desistance by removing offenders from disorganized neighborhoods that contain negative peer influences, and providing them with a sense of identity and a structured environment. Military training can foster a permanent behavioral change in individuals who offended in adolescence and early adulthood, and turn them into law-abiding members of society. Moreover, the G.I. Bill provides individuals discharged from the military with educational opportunities, which represent a source of social control and lower their likelihood of involvement in criminal behavior (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1996).

Two additional factors related to desistance were highlighted by Laub and Sampson (2003). First, an individual’s willingness to take advantage of turning points out of crime increases with age. Older individuals perceive the consequences of crime as more costly; for example, a potential prison sentence may seem acceptable to a teenager or young man, but serve
as a strong deterrent for an older man with a family and/or health-related problems. Also, criminal acts, particularly those that require physical effort (e.g., burglary), may seem less appealing to older people. Therefore, Laub and Sampson argued that sources of informal social control would be more effective in constraining criminal behavior among offenders who are older.

Lastly, Laub and Sampson (2003) discussed the importance of human agency in promoting desistance. The researchers asserted that offenders needed to consciously choose to take steps that would gradually end their involvement in criminal behavior. In other words, structural indicators such as a strong marriage and stable employment are essential, but will not lead to desistance alone. In order for the process of desistance to be successful, offenders need to have the will to stop committing crimes and exert an effort in achieving this goal.

**Empirical Evidence from Sampson and Laub’s Research**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Sampson and Laub tested their theory of informal social control using a sample collected by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, beginning in the 1940s. In order to uncover the causes of delinquency, Glueck and Glueck (1950) recruited 500 delinquent boys and a control group of 500 non-delinquent boys from the city of Boston. The boys were all between the ages of 10 and 17. The delinquent boys were recruited from two reformatory schools, whereas control group subjects were selected from public schools across Boston. The two groups were matched on race, ethnicity, age, neighborhood type (i.e., low-income, high-crime neighborhoods), and IQ (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

For the initial project, Glueck and Glueck (1950) interviewed the boys, as well as their parents, teachers, and neighbors. The researchers also conducted two follow-up investigations on their sample, tracking the subjects’ life experiences and criminal behavior up to age 25 and later
up to age 32. Subsequently, Sampson and Laub (1993) gained access to the Gluecks’ data and supplemented it by collecting official arrest records on both delinquents and non-delinquents up to the age of 45. Overall, using the data set produced by the Gluecks and their own contribution to it, Sampson and Laub were able to test the relationship between informal social control and crime at various stages of the life course.

The results presented by Sampson and Laub (1993) regarding juvenile delinquency were consistent with their theory. Structural family variables significantly predicted indicators of informal social control, which proceeded to mediate the relationship between family structure and delinquency. In multivariate analyses, the strongest and most consistent predictors of delinquency were attachment to parent, parental rejection, harsh and erratic discipline by parents, supervision level by mother, attachment to the school, and attachment to delinquent peers. The effects were all in the expected directions: parental rejection, harsh/erratic discipline, and attachment to deviant peers increased the likelihood of delinquency, whereas attachment to parents, mother’s supervision, and attachment to one’s school decreased the likelihood of delinquent behavior (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

As predicted by Sampson and Laub (1993), the delinquent sample exhibited behavioral continuity from adolescence to adulthood. While none of the measures of informal social control in adolescence were related to adult criminal behavior, self-reported delinquency was found to be a consistent significant predictor of arrests up to age 45. Adolescent delinquency was also significantly related to a variety of other adult outcomes, at the bivariate level. Both official and self-reported delinquents were significantly less likely to graduate from high school, obtain stable employment, express strong occupational aspirations, advance to a high rank in the military, and develop an attachment toward their spouse; additionally, they were more likely to
be dependent on welfare, experience separation or divorce from a spouse, and engage in deviant and criminal behavior in the military (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Sampson and Laub’s (1993) theoretical propositions regarding the effect of adult social bonds on change in criminal trajectories were supported by their analyses as well. Marriage status was not related to criminal behavior, measured by official arrests. However, attachment to a marriage partner emerged as a consistent predictor of both contemporaneous and future criminal behavior; for example, higher levels of attachment to a spouse at ages 25-32 decreased involvement in criminal behavior at ages 25-32 and 32-45.

Employment stability in adulthood was also found to be a significant negative predictor of crime, although not as consistently as attachment to a marriage partner. Employment stability at ages 17-25 significantly decreased involvement in crime at ages 17-25 and 25-32. However, employment stability was not related to crimes committed at ages 32-45 (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Commitment to occupational aspirations, which is another measure of informal social control, was not found to be a significant predictor of crime in adulthood.

In Sampson and Laub (1996), the researchers assessed the relationship between military service and later socioeconomic success in the Glueck sample. They found that military service overseas and post-military vocational training under the G.I. Bill significantly increased the likelihood of obtaining a skilled or professional position by the age of 32. Their findings also highlighted the effect of negative experiences in the military on later life outcomes; men who were arrested during their military service earned significantly less money every week, were less likely to obtain stable employment, and more likely to be dependent on welfare.

Lastly, Laub and Sampson (2003) tracked the Glueck sample of delinquents up to the age of 70, and presented both quantitative and qualitative results on the life-course experiences of
these men. Regarding overall criminal behavior, the researchers found that both persistent offenders and desisters displayed a similar criminal trajectory over the life course. Similar to desisters, even high-rate persistent offenders exhibited a sharp decline in criminal behavior in middle adulthood and afterwards. Furthermore, the mean number of arrests for any crimes by sample subjects between the ages of 60 and 69 was 0.2 (Laub & Sampson, 2003). These findings suggest that all juvenile delinquents either desist from crime or engage in little criminal activity as they become older.

Using life-history interviews with 52 of the 500 offenders in the original sample, Laub and Sampson (2003) explored the factors that led to either desistance or persistence for the men in the sample. The researchers classified 19 of these men as desisters, which indicated that they had not committed any serious violent or property crimes in adulthood. The adult lives of these desisters were characterized by stability: they were in long-term marriages, had managed to maintain steady employment throughout adulthood, and for those who served in the military, their service was completed successfully.

As predicted by Laub and Sampson, marriage and employment served as both direct and indirect sources of informal social control. Wives and employers monitored the subjects’ behavior and directly inhibited them from engaging in deviant or criminal behavior. Several subjects commented on the persistence by their wives and employers to keep them away from criminal behavior and deviant friends. Marriage and employment also led to desistance from crime through changing the men’s routine activities; due to long hours at work and participation in family-oriented activities (e.g., parenting activities), Laub and Sampson’s (2003) desisters had little time for engaging in crime or excessive substance use. Moreover, marriage was accompanied by relocation to a new neighborhood for some desisters, which separated them
from the abundance of criminal opportunities and peers in their neighborhood of origin and increased their access to prosocial networks.

For some of the desisters in the sample, military service emerged as a turning point away from crime. The military instilled conventional values in sample subjects, and provided them with a sense of belonging and identity. It also provided them with a consistent access to food, which many of them they did not experience in childhood due to growing up during the Great Depression. Furthermore, desisters who served in the military discussed the importance of the G.I. Bill in obtaining educational and vocational training, and subsequently stable employment, after their service had been completed (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Some of the desisters also highlighted the time they spent in one of the reformatory schools as a turning point away from crime. The correctional school led to desistance through two pathways: Some of the individuals who desisted from crime in adulthood benefitted from the structure and discipline they received during their incarceration, whereas others were deterred from further involvement in criminal behavior by the violent abuse they experienced at the facility.

The remaining 33 subjects in the qualitative portion of Laub and Sampson’s (2003) study continued engaging in serious criminal behavior throughout their adult lives. Fourteen of these offenders were persistent violent offenders at every stage of the life course, while 19 were arrested for their first violent crime in adulthood and were overall less frequent offenders. In contrast to the desisters in the sample, the persistent offenders either did not experience turning points associated with increased informal social control or the turning points did not produce the desired result for these men. These persistent recidivists either did not marry or were involved in multiple chaotic marriages, or they did not have a skilled trade and were unable to maintain
stable employment. Those who were able to enlist in the military tended to be dishonorably discharged due to misconduct.

Additional factors that contributed to persistence in crime were incarceration and alcohol abuse (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Persistent offenders spent a large portion of their adult life in prison, and their incarceration was characterized by chaos and violence. Moreover, some persistent offenders became institutionalized and found life in prison to be easier than life outside of it, which increased the likelihood of continued criminal behavior. Lastly, many non-desisters suffered from alcoholism or consumed alcohol excessively throughout adulthood; alcohol abuse both led to commission of violent and property crimes and prevented offenders from experiencing meaningful turning points, such as a stable marriage or steady employment.

Laub and Sampson (2003) found evidence in their qualitative analyses for the influence of human agency on both desistance and persistence. On the one hand, several of the desisters took deliberate steps that facilitated the termination of their criminal career. On the other hand, many persistent offenders consciously chose to continue committing serious crimes in adulthood and did not attempt to desist.

**Summary of Sampson and Laub’s Perspective**

Sampson and Laub argued that criminal behavior at each stage of the life course (i.e., adolescence, young adulthood, and middle adulthood) was caused by weak informal social control at that particular stage. For example, juvenile delinquency is a function of weak social control exerted by the parents and the school. Conversely, criminal behavior in adulthood is caused by a weak or non-existent bond to adult institutions, such as marriage, full-time employment, and the military. Sampson and Laub’s theory was the first to assert that childhood risk factors had little to no relevance in predicting adult crime.
The empirical analyses conducted by Sampson and Laub on a male sample from Boston provided support for their perspective. Indicators of informal social control in childhood and adolescence, such as attachment to parents and level of supervision by mother, significantly predicted involvement in delinquency. These juvenile social control indicators, however, did not play a significant role in causing adult criminal behavior. Instead, criminal involvement in adulthood was predicted by the strength of adult social bonds; offenders who were married and strongly attached to their wives, as well as those who reported stable employment, were significantly less involved in adult crime. Successful military service was also found to help offenders achieve socioeconomic success and desist from crime (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993, 1996).

Marriage and employment, which were found to be the primary social control mechanisms in desistance, lead to a change in behavior through increasing individuals’ stakes in conformity, imposing direct supervision on them, altering their routine activities, and facilitating the formation of a more prosocial identity (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Moreover, desistance from crime and engagement with adult social bonds are tied to human agency; the researchers found that many ex-offenders were able to develop a strong bond to society and stop committing crimes because they actively chose to change their lifestyle.

Sampson and Laub demonstrated the predictive utility of age-graded informal social control on crime throughout the life course, using a sample of serious delinquents who were born in the 1920s and 1930s in Boston. Research that has tested the main concepts from their theory on other samples is reviewed in the next section.

**Literature on Sampson and Laub’s Theory**

The research reviewed in this section has examined desistance from crime using Sampson
and Laub’s theoretical framework. As shown further below, prior tests of this theory have typically focused on the effect of informal social control on crime in adulthood, and have not attempted to replicate Sampson and Laub’s analyses of juvenile delinquency. First, empirical findings regarding the influence of marriage on desistance are presented, followed by research that has tested the link between employment and desistance. Afterwards, studies that have evaluated the relationship between other sources of social control (e.g., military service, residential mobility, parenting, and family support) and desistance are discussed.

**Marriage**

Numerous prior studies have examined the relationship between marriage and desistance from criminal behavior, and the results have been mixed. However, as shown further below, the majority of prior studies have found that marriage decreased the likelihood of crime and recidivism, in support of Sampson and Laub’s theoretical proposition (Bersani, Laub, & Nieuwbeerta, 2009; Horney, Osgood, and Marshall, 1995; Paternoster, Bachman, Kerrison, O’connel, & Smith, 2016; Piquero, Brame, Mazerolle, & Haapenen, 2002; Steiner, Makarios, & Travis III, 2015; Van Schellen, Apel, and Nieuwbeerta, 2012; Warr, 1998).

In Horney and colleagues (1995), the researchers examined the effect of marriage on self-reported offending over a 36-month period, among more than male 600 offenders who were incarcerated at the time of the study. They reported that cohabitation with a wife led to a significant decline in the likelihood of perpetrating assault during the follow-up period, but was not related to crime in general. Cohabitation with a spouse was also significantly related to a reduced likelihood of offending in Steiner and colleagues’ (2015) analyses of approximately 2,000 parolees from the state of Ohio.
Using data from Waves 5 and 6 of the National Youth Study (NYS), Warr (1998) found that marriage led to desistance indirectly: Individuals who were married spent less time with criminal friends, and were therefore significantly more likely to desist from crime. Marriage had no effect on desistance, independent of the measure of criminal peers. Piquero and his colleagues (2002) examined post-release offending trajectories over a seven-year period in a sample of parolees from the state of California. They reported that the sample exhibited four distinct trajectory groups, and that a combined measure of marriage and stable employment significantly reduced non-violent offending for one of these groups.

Two studies have assessed the link between marriage and desistance using a longitudinal data set of individuals who were convicted of a crime in the Netherlands in 1977, and were tracked until 2003 (Bersani et al., 2009; Van Schellen et al., 2012). First, Bersani and colleagues (2009) found that marriage significantly lowered the odds of reconviction for both male and female offenders, and that the strongest effect of marriage on recidivism was experienced by individuals who were born later in time (i.e., between 1956 and 1965). Van Schellen and colleagues (2012) also found a significant negative relationship between marriage and reconviction, but only for individuals who were married to prosocial spouses; marriage to a spouse who had been convicted of a crime had no effect on one’s reoffending.

The last study to have uncovered a significant relationship between a measure of marriage and recidivism was conducted by Paternoster and colleagues (2016), using a sample of drug offenders who were released from prisons across the state of Delaware. The follow-up period was between 12 and 18 years, and the researchers reported that almost the entire sample (95%) had been rearrested during this period. While marital status was not related to recidivism,
those who reported improvements in their marriage had a significantly longer time at risk before they were rearrested.

In contrast to the studies reviewed above, three studies that have used Sampson and Laub’s theoretical framework found no relationship between marriage and desistance (e.g., Giordano, Cernkovich, & Holland, 2003; Kruttschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000; Lussier & McCuish, 2016). Notably, the study by Giordano and colleagues (2003) replicated Sampson and Laub’s measures of marriage and employment: attachment to spouse and job stability. Using quantitative and qualitative analyses on a sample of released juvenile delinquents from Ohio, these researchers found that Sampson and Laub’s primary turning points had no effect on desistance in adulthood, and that association with prosocial individuals was the best predictor of desistance.

The two remaining studies that have found no relationship between marriage and desistance used samples of sex offenders. Kruttschnitt and colleagues (2000) tracked more than 550 sex offenders over a two-year period, and found that marital stability was not related to the likelihood of rearrest. Subsequently, Lussier and McCuish (2016) found that marital status was not related to reconviction in a sample of 500 sex offenders from Canada; their study used a follow-up period of almost four years (46 months).

**Employment**

Research that has tested the relationship between employment and desistance has produced mixed findings, similar to the research on marriage reviewed above. Several prior studies have found employment to be a significant negative predictor of recidivism (Cobbina, Huebner, & Berg, 2012; Paternoster et al., 2016; Piquero et al., 2002; Ramakers, Nieuwbeerta,
Uggen (2000) presented data from an experimental work assistance program that targeted lower-class individuals across nine U.S. cities. Individuals with prior arrests in these cities were randomly assigned to a treatment (exposure to employment assistance program) or control (no exposure to the program) condition. Sample subjects were tracked for a period of 18-36 months. Uggen found that the employment program was a significant predictor of recidivism, but only among older offenders; those who were 27 years of age or older and were assigned to the program had a significantly lower likelihood of rearrest, compared to older offenders who did not have access to employment assistance. In a study of felony offenders from Finland, Savolainen (2009) used five years of data to examine the effect of adult social bonds on the number of new convictions. He found that employment stability significantly reduced the number of times an offender was reconvicted for a felony.

Two other studies assessed the relationship between employment and desistance in non-U.S. samples. Van Der Geest and his colleagues (2011) used a sample of 270 offenders who were released from a juvenile treatment facility in the Netherlands, and tracked their employment and offending patterns between the ages of 18 and 32. The researchers found that offenders who were employed a longer number of days and those who had a higher-quality job reported significantly lower reconviction rates during the follow-up period. In another study that examined a Dutch sample, Ramakers and colleagues (2016) reported that employment stability and holding a high-level position significantly reduced the odds of rearrest within the first six months after the offenders were released from prison.
The studies by Cobbina and colleagues (2012) and Paternoster and colleagues (2016) both reported that measures of employment significantly increased time at risk before rearrest. Cobbina and her colleagues (2012) tracked a sample of 570 parolees from a Midwestern state for a period of almost 4 years, and found that employed male offenders spent more time in the community before being rearrested; employment status was not related to recidivism among female offenders. In Paternoster and colleagues’ (2016) study, offenders who displayed greater satisfaction with their job avoided rearrest for a longer period of time.

The remaining study that has found a negative relationship between employment and crime was conducted by Steiner and colleagues (2015). During the one-year follow-up period, parolees who were employed were significantly less likely to be rearrested for any crime, as well as rearrested for a felony.

In a smaller number of studies, employment had no significant effect on desistance (Giordano et al., 2003; Liem & Weggemans, 2018; Lussier & McCuish, 2016; Skardhamar & Savolainen, 2014) or was found to increase the likelihood of property crime (Horney et al., 1995). In Skardhamar and Savolainen’s (2014) study of 783 chronic Norwegian offenders, the researchers found that employment status did not predict desistance from crime over a five-year period. Lussier and McCuish (2016) reported that multiple measures of employment were unrelated to the likelihood of reconviction in their Canadian sample of sex offenders. Finally, Liem & Weggemans (2018) conducted interviews with 10 high-profile offenders in the Netherlands, who had been released from prison for convictions related to homicide, pedophilia, and terrorism. The authors reported that none of the sample subjects had recidivated, despite their inability to find employment or the absence of any other meaningful turning points from their lives after release from incarceration.
Other Turning Points

The literature on other turning points that may increase an offender’s bond to society in adulthood is small, but the results from the few studies conducted to date have been promising. All of the studies reviewed below have found some significant effect of increased informal social control on reduction in offending.

Teachman and Tedrow (2016) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) to estimate the relationship between military service and subsequent criminal behavior. Over a 15-year period, individuals who served in the military were significantly less likely to be arrested for a non-violent crime; military service, however, was not related to likelihood of arrest for a violent crime.

The effectiveness of neighborhood relocation in reducing recidivism was evaluated in a study by Kirk (2012), using Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans as a natural experiment. He examined a sample of 1,370 offenders who were released from incarceration in 2005 and 2006 and had to settle in new neighborhoods due to the devastation in their neighborhoods of origin caused by the hurricane, and compared them to 1,538 offenders who were released from prison prior to the hurricane and could return to their original neighborhoods. The findings demonstrated that residential relocation was a turning point for offenders who were released after Hurricane Katrina; offenders who moved to a different neighborhood exhibited a significantly lower risk of reincarceration within the first three years after release than those who settled in their old neighborhood.

Pyrooz, McGloin, and Decker (2017) assessed whether parenthood served as a turning point in the lives of gang members. The authors used a subsample of 629 gang members from the NLYS97 data set to determine the effect of parenthood on the likelihood of gang involvement.
and offending, over a nine-year period. Their findings indicated partial support for the notion that parenthood leads to conformity among gang members. Male gang members who lived with their children had significantly lower odds of remaining in their gang, but their odds of engaging in less offending were only significant at the 0.10 level; parenthood had no effect on gang membership or offending for subjects who did not live with their children. For female gang members, parenthood significantly reduced the frequency of offending, but exerted a non-significant negative effect on the odds of continued gang membership (i.e., significant at the 0.10 level).

Lastly, two studies have examined the effect of family support after incarceration on desistance. In analyses of 962 serious and violent offenders who had been released from prison, Boman IV and Mowen (2018) found that family support did not predict self-reported offending by itself; instead, increased family support inhibited offending by weakening the effect of association with criminal peers on recidivism. The authors tracked the sample for a period of 15 months. Walker, Kazemian, Lussier, and Na (2020) examined three years of follow-up data on a sample of 318 sex offenders who had been released from prison in Canada. The researchers found that stronger family support resulted in a significantly lower rate of reconviction for sample subjects.

Overall, research that tested Sampson and Laub’s theory of informal social control has shown that a stronger social bond in adulthood is an important factor in desistance from crime, both in the U.S. and in other countries. The studies reviewed above have provided substantial evidence that turning points such as marriage and employment promote desistance over the life course, particularly in general offender samples; they are less effective in producing desistance among sex offenders (e.g., Kruttschnitt et al., 2000; Lussier & McCuish, 2016), which may be a
function of the societal stigma these offenders experience after their conviction. Findings from research on other turning points, such as residential relocation and family support, suggest multiple sources of informal social control can reduce or eliminate involvement in criminal behavior. In the next section, qualitative research on factors in successful reintegration to society for released inmates is discussed.

**Qualitative Research on Offenders Released from Incarceration**

Qualitative studies on samples of ex-inmates are important for the purpose of identifying the precise mechanisms through which certain factors lead to successful post-release adjustment to society. Given the qualitative component in the present study, findings from other studies that have relied on interviews with offenders released from prison are reviewed in this section. Based on the extant qualitative literature, three different factors in reintegration are explored below: identity transformation, generativity, and acceptance by society.

**Identity Transformation**

A seminal study on the role of identity transformation in desistance was conducted by Maruna (2001), using a sample of 50 offenders who had spent time in prison in Liverpool, England. Maruna classified 30 of the subjects as desisters and noted that these individuals viewed themselves as prosocial people whose prior deviant behavior occurred due to circumstances outside their control. The author termed this identity shift a “redemption script”; after a long criminal career, the desisters in the sample intended to show society their “true selves” by becoming law-abiding citizens.

An important component in the process of desistance is a sense of agency. Sample subjects who had desisted from crime felt that they had control over their decisions and had chosen to end their involvement in criminal behavior. Conversely, the 20 subjects in Maruna’s
(2001) sample who were active offenders at the time of the interview were fatalistic and described their choices in life as predestined. According to Maruna, the persistent recidivists in his sample followed a “condemnation script”.

Several other studies found identity transformation to be a helpful factor in offenders’ reintegration to society (e.g., Appleton, 2010; Aresti, Eatough, & Brooks-Gordon, 2010; Bachman, Kerrison, Paternoster, O’connel, & Smith, 2016; Doekhie and Van Ginneken, 2019; Farmer, McAlindien, & Maruna, 2016; Liem & Richardson, 2014). For example, similar to the desisters examined assessed by Maruna (2001), the desisters in the studies by Appleton (2010) and Farmer and colleagues (2016) developed a prosocial identity and tied their past crimes to circumstances outside their identity. On the other hand, identity transformation was linked to a change in goals, hobbies, and social networks for the desisters examined by Aresti and colleagues (2010), Bachman and colleagues (2016), and Doekhie and Van Ginneken (2019).

Liem and Richardson (2014) analyzed post-incarceration narratives for a sample of 67 homicide offenders from Boston and Philadelphia, 51% of whom were classified as desisters by the researchers. The authors reported that the main distinguishing factor between desisters and recidivists was a sense of agency; released homicide offenders felt that they had control over their decisions and actions, which facilitated their transition away from crime.

In their perspective on desistance, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) highlighted the role of four elements in identity (or cognitive) change: readiness to change, exposure to “hooks for change” (structural factors such as marriage or employment), the construction of a prosocial identity that replaces the old, deviant identity (i.e., a “replacement self”), and developing a negative view of criminal behavior. Their qualitative findings in a sample of formerly incarcerated men and women from Ohio demonstrated the importance of
readiness to change in the desistance process, even for offenders who had not fully desisted at the time of the interviews conducted by the researchers.

**Generativity**

A number of studies have emphasized the role of generativity in societal reintegration and desistance (e.g., Aresti et al., 2010; Appleton, 2010; Harris, 2014; Hlavka, Wheelock, & Jones, 2015; Maruna, 2001). The concept of generativity refers to the desire to help others, especially those in younger generations (e.g., McAdams & St. Aubin, 1992). Prior qualitative research has shown that generative activities contribute to the process of desistance by providing offenders with a sense of purpose (e.g., Maruna, 2001).

Narratives by released offenders indicate that they tend to assume a variety of generative roles in their effort to help society. Some offenders mentor younger inmates while they are incarcerated (e.g., Appleton, 2010), while others begin to help others after they are released, by becoming prison counselors (Hlavka et al., 2015), drug counselors (e.g., Maruna, 2001), or mentors to offenders or at-risk populations (e.g., Aresti et al., 2010; Harris, 2014; Hlavka et al., 2015). For example, some of the released sex offenders examined by Harris (2014) facilitated their own reintegration to society by mentoring other sex offenders.

**Acceptance by Society**

Prior research has highlighted the importance of societal acceptance for the process of reintegration. For example, the desisters in Maruna’s (2001) sample discussed the impact of public recognition of their desistance efforts on their sense of self. Several of these desisters were praised in court for their hard work and non-offending by the judge and community members, which reinforced their self-perception as prosocial individuals and encouraged them to maintain their conventional lifestyle. Moreover, other researchers have found that emotional support
provided by family members or friends after an offender’s release from prison was essential in enabling him/her to make a successful transition back to society (e.g., Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Hlavka et al., 2015).

Conversely, societal rejection and stigmatization may inhibit identity transformation and complicate the desistance process. Post-incarceration narratives demonstrate that many released offenders experience rejection from a variety of sources, including prospective employers, educational institutions, dating partners, and family members (e.g., Aresti et al., 2010; Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Grommon & Rydberg, 2018; Harris, 2014; Pogrebin, Stretesky, Walker, & Opsal, 2015). Rejection by representatives of conventional society impedes the development of a prosocial identity and increases the likelihood of recidivism (Pogrebin et al., 2015).

Qualitative research on offenders’ post-incarceration experiences has found that success after release from prison depends largely on identity transformation, generative activities, and societal acceptance. Released offenders who adopt a prosocial identity, feel that they have control over the actions they may take, become involved in professions or activities that revolve around helping others, and receive support from conventional members of society are more likely to desist from crime and lead a productive life. Notably, while Liem and Richardson (2014) conducted interviews with released homicide offenders, no prior qualitative study has examined whether post-release experiences are associated with patterns of offending in a sample of individuals who killed when they were juveniles.

**Chapter Summary**

Sampson and Laub posited that the most important factors in both juvenile delinquency and adult criminal behavior were sources of informal social control. In contrast to prior theories and research, Sampson and Laub did not consider childhood factors as important predictors of
crime in adulthood; they argued that adults commit crime because they have a weak bond to adult institutions, such as marriage, full-time employment, or the military. Therefore, juvenile delinquents who develop a strong bond to society in adulthood, in the form of a strong marriage, stable employment, or who successfully completed service in the military have a higher likelihood of becoming law-abiding citizens.

Sampson and Laub’s comprehensive empirical analyses provided substantial evidence that strong informal social control promoted desistance from crime, at least among men who were born before World War II in a large American city. Subsequent research on Sampson and Laub’s theory has provided additional support for the perspective’s hypotheses, although the results were not consistent and some studies have found a limited effect of informal social control on desistance (e.g., Paternoster et al., 2016; Pyrooz et al., 2017).

In qualitative studies of offenders released from incarceration, ex-inmates who have desisted from crime attributed much of their success to a change in identity, the ability to help members of disadvantaged groups (e.g., offenders, drug addicts, high-risk youth), and signs of approval and support from society. A factor such as employment tended to be discussed by former offenders in terms of its generative role, rather than a source of social control.

Nevertheless, Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control has been shown to be an important contribution to criminological understanding of desistance. Among other things, this theory demonstrated that, under the right circumstances, even serious juvenile delinquents have the ability to become prosocial members of society in adulthood. Thus, the present study examines whether the theory is applicable to the most serious juvenile offenders, which are those who kill or attempt to kill others. More specifically, one of the study’s primary aims is to determine whether the theory’s main concepts distinguish between desisters and
persistent offenders in a small sample of individuals convicted of murder as juveniles and subsequently released from adult prison. In contrast to most prior tests of the theory, the present study tracks juvenile offenders up to middle adulthood, similar to the follow-up period employed by Sampson and Laub (1993) in their initial analyses. In the next chapter, the methodology of the present study is described.
CHAPTER FOUR:  
METHODOLOGY

Original Data Collection

The present study is a long-term, follow-up investigation of 22 male JHOs who committed a homicide offense in the early 1980s and were subsequently sentenced to serve time in the adult correctional system. These offenders are drawn from a sample of 59 juvenile offenders from a southeastern state who were arrested for murder or attempted murder between 1981 and 1983, and were interviewed by Dr. Kathleen Heide in prison between 1983 and 1984. The original sample was identified by the Department of Corrections (DOC) in the southeastern state under study, using the following inclusion criteria: (1) male offender, (2) under the age of 18 at the time of the homicide incident, (3) charged with murder or attempted murder and processed through the adult criminal justice system, (4) convicted as an adult and received by the DOC between January 1982 and January 1984, (5) incarcerated less than a year at the time of identification by the DOC, and (6) 19 years old or younger at the time of the initial interview with Dr. Heide.

The sample consisted solely of male offenders due to the fact that juvenile murderers have long been predominantly males, as discussed in Chapter 2 (e.g., Heide & Solomon, 2009). The sample contained both murderers and attempted murderers because their homicidal intentions were not found to differ; some of the subjects in the sample did not kill their victim.
due to such factors as poor marksmanship, the stamina of the victim, and the rapid availability of medical care (see also Block, 1977; Myers et al., 1995).

Only JHOs who were processed as adults were included in the sample because the vast majority of juveniles arrested for murder in the early 1980s were treated as adults in the southeastern state from which the sample was selected; for example, 87% of juveniles charged with homicide offenses in 1983 were sent to adult court in this state. Lastly, JHOs had to be incarcerated in prison less than a year to be included in the sample because the researcher sought to interview offenders who were still adolescents and had yet to become institutionalized.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this prospectus, in-depth psychosocial interviews were conducted with all 59 JHOs and supplemented by official records. The original interviews covered areas such as family history, neighborhood circumstances, school and work history, drug and alcohol use, dating and sexual history, leisure activities, values and beliefs, history of deviant behavior, and circumstances behind the index homicide offense. The record data included police reports regarding the index homicide, pre-homicide delinquent history, family background, education and work history, substance abuse, and court documents. The data were collected from a variety of sources, such as probation department reports, indictment and charging documents, sentencing documents, and DOC reports.

Present Sample

The process of generating the sample for the present study is illustrated in Figure 1. Of the 59 JHOs in the original sample, 10 are currently deceased. Information on cause of death was not available for three of these offenders. With respect to the remaining seven JHOs, two of them died of AIDS before completing their sentence for the homicide conviction, one died under unknown circumstances following an escape from prison, one drove a vehicle while intoxicated
and was killed in a car accident, and another offender reportedly died from complications related to alcoholism. The last two deceased JHOs were murdered; one of them was mistaken for a rival gang member and was stabbed to death, while the other was fatally shot during a robbery attempt.

The 49 offenders who were found to be alive were contacted by letter and asked to participate in an interview. The letter indicated that participation in the interview was voluntary and confidential, and that the aims of the study were to learn about the men’s experiences in prison as adolescents and adults, the challenges they faced after release from incarceration (if applicable), post-release recidivism, and their views regarding society’s ability to prevent juvenile-perpetrated homicides and help those JHOs who had been arrested (Heide, 2019).

Letters to five of these 49 JHOs were returned and attempts to find a current address were unsuccessful. Twenty-two of the 44 homicide offenders (50%) who were contacted agreed to participate in the study. The response rate in this study is higher than in most studies that examine prison-related issues (Talichet & Hensley, 2004; Trentham, Hensley, & Policastro, 2018); as noted by Talichet and Hensley (2004), prison studies that entail sensitive questions typically report a response rate of 25% or less. Moreover, chi-square and t-test analyses revealed no significant differences between the 22 JHOs who agreed to be interviewed and the 22 JHOs who did not participate in the study. The analyses were used to test whether the two groups differed on offender race, growing up in a high-crime neighborhood, pre-homicide arrest record, pre-homicide violent arrest record, the number of pre-homicide arrests, the use of accomplices in the homicide incident, whether the homicide offense victim was a stranger, whether the homicide offense was crime-oriented or conflict-oriented, the type of weapon used in the homicide offense, and time served in prison for the homicide conviction.
The JHOs who agreed to be included in the study were interviewed by Dr. Kathleen Heide in 2018 and 2019. Eight offenders were interviewed in prison, whereas the remaining 14 were interviewed in several cities across the U.S. Nineteen of the 22 offenders in the sample had been released from prison for the homicide conviction. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative analyses in this dissertation will be based primarily on these 19 JHOs. Notably, both the present follow-up study and the original study from the 1980s were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of South Florida, as well as the state DOC.

Although a sample of 19 JHOs is considered to be small, the findings from this study nonetheless represent an important contribution to the homicide offender recidivism literature, due to the fact that no prior study has examined the reoffending patterns of individuals who committed a homicide in adolescence over a period of so many years. Furthermore, prior
research has not evaluated the long-term quality of reintegration into society by a JHO sample of this magnitude.

The sample used for the present study is important to examine because these JHOs were convicted and incarcerated during a period of time in which their state undertook a more punitive approach toward juvenile offenders. For example, from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, the state reported an increase both in the rate of juvenile offenders who were processed in adult court and the rate of juvenile offenders who were confined in adult prisons. Accordingly, analyses of the experiences and challenges faced by violent juvenile offenders who were committed to prison in that period are valuable, in order to gain greater knowledge regarding the effects of the state’s harsher treatment of these offenders.

Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the sample, as well as information on type of homicide conviction. Close to 60% of JHOs (n = 13) are Black, whereas the remaining 41% (n = 9) are White. Offenders are between the ages of 50 and 54, with a mean age of 52.4. At the time of their arrest for homicide, the offenders were between the ages of 14 and 17, and their mean age was higher than 15.5. Half the sample (n = 11) spent their childhood in low-income neighborhoods in which crime was prevalent. Lastly, with respect to homicide conviction, 82% of sample subjects killed their victim; 4 JHOs (18%) were convicted of first-degree murder, 13 JHOs (59%) were convicted of second-degree murder, and a single JHO (5%) was convicted of manslaughter. The remaining four offenders were convicted of attempted murder.

Originally, the majority of the JHOs in the sample (n = 13) were charged with murder in the first degree, which made them eligible for the death penalty in the state under study during that period of time. The charge of first-degree murder encompassed murders perpetrated during
the commission of a felony (e.g., robbery, burglary), which applied to more than 60% of sample subjects. Nine of the JHOs who were originally charged with first-degree murder pled guilty to second-degree murder, three of them pled guilty to first-degree murder, and the remaining JHO was convicted of first-degree murder at trial.

In the 1980s, prison inmates in the state under study received two days of credit for every day of good behavior. Accordingly, they were often released after serving approximately a third of their sentence. Life sentences for second-degree murder, for example, were calculated at 17 years, resulting in some JHOs serving 6 or 7 years in prison during this period. This policy accounts for the relatively short sentences served by many of the JHOs in the sample, as further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Currently, due to a “truth-in-sentencing” law that was implemented in the mid-1990s in that state and many others, inmates must serve 85% of their sentence before they become eligible for early release (Ditton & Wilson, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offender Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9 (41.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>13 (59.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.36 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at Homicide Arrest</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.59 (0.854)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Crime Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (50.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (50.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Conviction Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder 1</td>
<td>4 (18.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder 2</td>
<td>13 (59.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
<td>1 (4.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Murder</td>
<td>4 (18.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow-Up Interviews

The follow-up interviews were semi-structured and consisted of three main parts: (1) Experiences in prison, (2) experiences after first release from incarceration, including any recidivism, and (3) reflections about their involvement in juvenile delinquency and the homicide incident. All of the JHOs in the sample were asked to describe their experiences in prison, with a particular emphasis on how sample subjects fared in prison as adolescents (Heide, 2019). While discussing incarceration experiences, the interviewer covered the following topics: participation in mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, educational attainment, vocational training, work assignment, availability of drugs and alcohol and use of these substances, religious activities, difficulties with other inmates and correctional officers, violent and property victimization experiences, disciplinary misconduct, physical and mental health, overall adjustment to prison conditions, contact with friends and family members who were outside prison, friendship with other inmates, intimate relationships inside and outside prison, and plans for the future.

JHOs who had been released from prison for the homicide conviction during the follow-up period were asked questions related to the following areas of post-incarceration life: places of residence, intimate relationships, employment, educational attainment, participation in treatment programs, post-release supervision, overall views on difficulty of reintegration into society, communication with family members and pre-arrest friends, use of drugs and alcohol, leisure activities, and involvement in post-release criminal behavior. Offenders who had been rearrested after their first release from prison were asked to discuss the circumstances behind the arrests, the disposition of the cases, whether or not they had been recommitted to prison, and the effects of reincarceration, if applicable.
In the final part of the interview, JHOs in the sample were asked to reflect on their participation in criminal behavior in childhood and adolescence, including the index homicide offense. Regarding criminal behavior in general, the JHOs were asked to rate the degree to which 20 distinct theoretically derived factors contributed to their involvement in juvenile crime, on a scale of 1 (= not a factor) to 3 (= a big factor). In a preliminary analysis of this sample, Heide (2020) reported that four factors were rated as very influential (i.e., “a big factor”) in causing criminal behavior by a majority of the 20 JHOs who completed this part of the interview: peer pressure (70%), the crime “just happened” (i.e., the offender did not intend to commit a crime, but the situation escalated and a crime occurred nonetheless; 58%), being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol (55%), and crime was routine in the neighborhood where the JHO grew up (53%).

With respect to the homicide offense, the JHOs were asked to describe how they felt about the incident and whether they thought the crime could have been prevented in any way. The purpose of the former question was to determine whether the subjects felt any remorse for killing or attempting to kill someone, whereas the latter question assessed whether JHOs were aware that they had choices in life, and that they chose to engage in behavior that led to the killing or attempted killing of the victim (see Heide, 1999; Warren, 1969). Lastly, the subjects were asked whether they had any suggestions for society on how to prevent juvenile homicide incidents in the future, as well as to help juvenile murderers after they are arrested, while they are incarcerated, and after they are released.

The interviews followed a detailed 40-page protocol; the topic index is presented in Appendix A. Approximately 100 questions related to the three topic areas described above were prepared by the interviewer in advance. Moreover, subjects’ responses typically led to prepared
follow-up questions that were tailored to their particular responses. For example, one of the questions posed to the JHOs was: “Did you ever get in trouble in prison?” If the JHO said he had, follow-up questions included “What did you reportedly do?”, “what happened?”, “have you ever been locked up in disciplinary confinement? For what?”, “length of confinement? Longest confinement? What was that like?”, and “did your getting in trouble change over the years? Less as you got older?”

In contrast to the original study in the 1980s, the follow-up interviews were not recorded in order to alleviate any concerns of the subjects regarding disclosure and to encourage candor. Instead, subjects’ responses were written down by the interviewer in the 40-page protocol packet, including many direct quotes. Subsequently, the responses were organized by topic area and transcribed. The quantitative and qualitative analyses in the present study rely on these transcripts.

Recidivism Data

Although the JHOs who had been released from prison had discussed their post-incarceration criminal activities with the interviewer, the decision was made in this study, as well as the other two recent studies by Heide (2019, 2020), to examine the recidivism patterns in the sample using official records in order to account for the possibility that offenders may have omitted certain crimes due to minimization efforts or memory problems. In the current study, approximately 35 years of criminal record data on the offenders who had been released from incarceration for the original homicide conviction were obtained from two sources. Fifteen offenders remained in the Southeastern state where they were arrested for the original homicide offense after their release from prison, and their criminal records were obtained through the central law enforcement agency in that state. These data included information on arrests,
dispositions, and incarcerations. Conversely, a background check platform that was determined
to be legitimate (InfoTracer) was used to examine the arrest records of the four JHOs who had
relocated to other states after their release from prison for the homicide conviction.

In Khachatryan and colleagues’ (2016) study, official arrest data were compiled on the
original JHO sample up to December of 2012. In the present study, however, the collection of
arrest data was expanded to include all arrests up to November of 2020. Accordingly, these data
are well suited for exploring JHOs’ frequency and severity of reoffending from a life-course
perspective.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The quantitative portion of the present mixed-method study is discussed in this section.
The quantitative analyses were designed to answer two of the study’s research questions: (1) Are
incarceration-related variables related to frequency of general recidivism and violent
recidivism?, and (2) are post-release variables related to frequency of general recidivism and
violent recidivism? The measures that will be used in the statistical analyses are described below,
followed by the analytic plan.

**Measures**

As discussed in Chapter 2, preliminary analyses of the current sample used
recommitment to prison as the measure of recidivism (Heide, 2019). In the present study, new
arrests after the first release from prison are used to measure recidivism, in order to assess in
greater depth the risk JHOs pose to society after their release over a period of more than 30
years, in terms of both violence and other types of crimes. Therefore, the analyses include two
dependent variables: number of arrests and number of violent offenses. Regarding the latter
variable, if a particular arrest contains several charges related to violence, these charges are
counted as separate offenses; this coding decision is intended to provide a more precise estimate of the amount of violence JHOs commit after they are released from incarceration.

Independent variables are based on both the original data from the 1980s and the newer follow-up interviews, and they are divided into three categories: (1) demographic and pre-incarceration (pre-homicide arrest history, childhood maltreatment, and homicide incident characteristics) variables, (2) incarceration-related variables, and (3) post-release experiences. All of the independent variables in the quantitative analyses are dichotomous. The variables within each category are presented in Table 2, as well as described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Variables Used in Quantitative Analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic and Pre-Incarceration Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Crime Neighborhood in Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-homicide Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Homicide Violent Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Neglect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Accomplices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger Homicide Victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Weapon Choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to the first major category of independent variables, demographic characteristics include race (White v. Black) and whether one was raised in a high-crime neighborhood. Variables measuring pre-homicide arrest history consist of delinquent arrest
record prior to the homicide, and violent arrest record prior to the homicide. Prior criminal behavior is included because it has been shown to predict recidivism among JHOs (e.g., Vries & Liem, 2011).

Two variables are used to measure the presence of childhood maltreatment. Recent research has found adverse childhood experiences (i.e., ACE events) to increase the odds of violent and chronic criminal behavior (e.g., Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, & Epps, 2015; Garbarino, 2018; Muniz et al., 2019). However, the ACE checklist of 10 traumatic childhood experiences was developed in the late 1990s (Felitti et al., 1998). The original interviews in the 1980s, which were conducted when the subjects were in their adolescent years, did not specifically address all of the traumatic events on the checklist. Accordingly, two measures are employed to assess the effect of childhood maltreatment on long-term recidivism for JHOs: evidence of childhood abuse and evidence of childhood neglect. Evidence of abuse includes physical aggression or verbal degradation of the JHO by a parent or another older family member, while evidence of neglect includes lack of parental supervision or affection toward the JHO. Lastly, the homicide incident variables include presence of accomplices (lone v. group offender), victim type (stranger v. known victim), homicide circumstances (crime-oriented v. conflict-oriented homicide), and weapon choice (firearm v. non-firearm).

Several variables are used to measure experiences during incarceration, which is the second major category of independent variables. Four of these variables measure antisocial behavior and victimization in prison, with respect to both other inmates and correctional officers: predatory violence against others, evidence of frequent disciplinary misconduct (in the form of disciplinary reports), violent victimization, and property victimization (e.g., having personal items stolen). Due to the violent nature of a prison, most inmates engage in violence at some
point during their incarceration, as further discussed in the following chapters. Therefore, the variable measuring violence in prison is limited to predatory assaults initiated by the JHOs against other inmates or correctional staff members.

Regarding misconduct, a JHO was coded as having engaged in frequent misconduct during incarceration if he self-reported receiving many disciplinary reports (DRs) or if the specific number of DRs that he provided amounted to more than one DR per year of incarceration, on average. Moreover, inclusion of disciplinary infractions and predatory violence is important because both violence and misconduct in general have emerged as significant predictors of post-release recidivism in some prior studies (e.g., Cochran, Mears, Bales, & Stewart, 2014; Trulson et al., 2016).

Other prison-related variables include the attainment of a GED while incarcerated, participation in mental health treatment (e.g., anger management classes; one-on-one counseling; having a prescription for psychotropic medication), participation in treatment for drug abuse, and family support (e.g., visiting the JHO in prison or calling him on the phone). Lastly, given the significant effect of time served on recidivism in prior JHO recidivism studies (e.g., Heide, 2019; Khachatryan et al., 2016; Trulson et al., 2016), a measure of years served for the original homicide conviction is also included in the analyses. Time served was calculated from the offenders’ initial arrest date until their release date from prison, due to the fact that the time they spent in jail while awaiting trial was subtracted from their prison sentence. Given the distribution of the data, this variable is coded as 1 = 2-8 years in prison, 2 = 15-35 in prison.

The last major category of variables in the study consists of measures of post-release experiences, namely the measures of informal social control. Two variables tap the concepts of marriage and employment, which were the primary focus of Sampson and Laub’s (1993) theory:
attachment to intimate partner and employment stability. The variable measuring attachment to intimate partners includes both wives and live-in girlfriends due to the declining marriage rates in recent decades in the U.S. (e.g., Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). An offender was coded as having high attachment to a wife or live-in girlfriend if he reported that the relationship had a positive effect on his life overall (e.g., happiness; no fighting or other types of dysfunction). Employment stability was coded as having a full-time job for one year or longer at some point after release from prison for the homicide conviction.

Other measures of social control in the analyses are whether the offender returns to his neighborhood of origin after release from incarceration, family support, and parenthood. The family support variable entails receiving help from a parent or other family members with the reintegration process (e.g., providing the JHO with financial assistance or a car; helping him find employment). Furthermore, only JHOs who live with their children are coded as being parents, as parenthood alone may not constitute a turning point in the lives of offenders (Pyrooz et al., 2017).

Perusal of the interview data indicated that military service was very rare in the sample; only one of the JHOs who had been released from prison for the original homicide conviction served in the military. Unless they receive a special felony waiver, convicted murderers are typically ineligible to join the U.S. military. In fact, the lone military veteran in the sample was able to enlist due to lying about his criminal record, per the advice of a military recruiter. Therefore, the decision was made to exclude military service from the analyses.

The remaining post-release variables are as follows: involvement in mental health treatment and/or a support group, educational achievements (i.e., bachelor’s degree or higher), association with deviant pre-incarceration friends, and drug or alcohol abuse. Some research has
found association with criminal peers after incarceration to be a significant positive predictor of recidivism (e.g., Boman IV & Mowen, 2018), but its effect on rearrest among JHOs has not been examined to date.

**Plan of Analysis**

The quantitative component of this study is presented in Chapter 5 and consists of two main parts. In the first part, extensive descriptive information is provided about the sample, in terms of childhood abuse and neglect, pre-homicide criminal behavior, homicide incident characteristics, experiences during incarceration and after the first release from prison, and frequency of general and violent recidivism. Data on specific types of post-release offenses are also presented, with a particular emphasis on violent offenses. Descriptive data related to pre-incarceration factors and incarceration-related experiences are provided for all 22 JHOs who were interviewed for this study, whereas data on post-incarceration experiences are provided for the 19 JHOs who had been released from prison for the homicide conviction during the follow-up period.

Subsequently, statistical analyses that were used to assess the effects of the independent variables on frequency of post-release offending are presented. First, correlation analyses were used to examine the magnitude of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent recidivism variables, which were measured continuously for the purpose of these analyses. Second, two sets of chi-square analyses were conducted to test whether the variables of interest were significantly related to each measure of recidivism, both of which needed to be re-coded. Based on their distributions, the variable measuring the number of post-release arrests was recoded as $1 = 0-2$ arrests, $2 = 4-24$ arrests, and the measure of post-release violent offenses was re-coded as $1 = 0$ offenses, $2 = 1-8$ offenses. Statistical significance was set at .05 for these
analyses, and the strength of significant relationships was measured using phi. In analyses with particularly small cell sizes, Fisher’s exact test is used to determine statistical significance. For relationships that emerge as significant, the odds ratios included in chi-square analyses are presented to provide an additional estimate regarding the magnitude of an independent variable’s effect on a measure of post-release recidivism.

Lastly, t-tests were conducted to examine mean differences with respect to the number of post-release arrests and the number of post-release violent offenses. Similar to the chi-square analyses, statistical significance was set at the .05 level for the t-tests. Although the effects of demographic and pre-incarceration variables on recidivism are tested, the primary purpose of the quantitative analyses in this study is to assess whether experiences during incarceration and after release are related to reoffending. Given the small sample size in this study, multivariate regression analyses are not possible.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative portion of the study addresses the following research questions: (1) What are the main factors that distinguish between desisters and recidivists in the sample?, (2) how many distinct behavioral trajectories exist among JHOs released from prison?, and (3) what effect do factors related to informal social control have on post-incarceration recidivism outcomes? The qualitative findings are presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation; themes in the lives of desisters are discussed in Chapter 6, whereas the lives of the offenders who persisted in deviant and criminal behavior are covered in Chapter 7.

For the purpose of these analyses, a sample subject who meets the following criteria is considered a “desister”: (1) Has not been arrested for any serious violent or property offenses, (2) has not been arrested frequently for minor offending, and (3) has not been recommitted to prison
for any offenses, including violation of parole or probation. Examples of serious violent crimes are index violent crimes from the FBI’s UCR (murder or non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault), as well as simple assault and kidnapping. Serious property crimes include index property crimes from the UCR (larceny theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson), as well as dealing in stolen property. Frequent minor offending is defined as having been arrested five or more times for minor offenses (misdemeanors and less serious felonies) from the date of release from prison for the homicide-related conviction until November of 2020, in accordance with the definition of chronic offending provided by Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin (1972).

In each of the two chapters that present the qualitative analyses, common themes are explored, with particular attention devoted to themes related to informal social control factors. For example, are desisters more likely to be in a long-term, loving marriage or intimate relationship? Are persistent offenders more likely to have an unstable work history after release from prison? Moreover, the roles of such factors as returning to pre-incarceration neighborhood, reconnecting with pre-incarceration friends, human agency (i.e., an individual’s actions are driven by conscious choices), fatalism (i.e., the belief that one’s life is predestined and he/she has no control over it), generativity (i.e., willingness to help other people, focusing especially on members of younger generations), and substance abuse are also examined in relation to desistance from and persistence in crime; these factors have been found to influence post-release criminal behavior in prior qualitative research (e.g., Appleton, 2010; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001).

Lastly, the existence of different subtypes within each group (i.e., desisters v. persistent offenders) are explored in Chapters 6 and 7. For example, as discussed in Chapter 6, some JHOs
who can be classified as desisters have not been arrested since their release from incarceration for the homicide conviction, whereas others have been arrested for at least one crime. Moreover, as shown in Chapter 7, some persistent offenders resumed their involvement in criminal behavior shortly after their release but desisted later in life due to several factors; conversely, other persistent offenders continued to commit crimes in their 50s. As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, more attention will be devoted in Chapter 7 to the violent recidivism in which the persistent offenders engaged, including the motivations reported by the JHOs for committing certain violent acts.

Despite the relatively small sample and the inability to conduct multivariate analyses in the quantitative portion of the study, the findings in this study may have important implications for policy and criminological theories. As discussed in Chapter 1, the results of this study provide a preliminary assessment of the degree to which incarceration and post-release factors influence the long-term reoffending patterns of juvenile killers. More specifically, the study provides evidence regarding whether factors related to Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control are effective in reducing recidivism for JHOs; the present study represents the first attempt to examine whether this theory is applicable to homicidal juvenile offenders. If the findings are supportive of the theory, they will further demonstrate that adult experiences such as a positive intimate relationship or stable employment are more influential in determining the level of criminal behavior in adulthood than childhood factors, even for the most serious young offenders.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology of this study, including the generation of the sample, data collection process, selection of variables for the statistical
analyses, and the analytic plan for both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. Overall, this mixed-method study is well suited to examine whether individuals convicted of homicide offenses as juveniles pose a risk to society throughout much of their adult lives, and whether informal social control and other post-release factors have an effect on the risk level.
CHAPTER FIVE:
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

Information on the JHOs’ histories of childhood maltreatment and pre-homicide criminal record is displayed in Table 3. There is evidence of childhood abuse for 50% of the JHOs in the sample (n = 11), while 73% of the JHOs (n = 16) experienced childhood neglect. Regarding criminal history, more than 75% of the sample (n = 17) had a criminal record prior to the homicide incident; the highest number of pre-homicide arrests was 16, with a mean of 4.05. The majority of JHOs did not have a violent record prior to committing the homicide offense; 36% of them (n = 8) were arrested for a violent offense. The violent offenses consisted of robbery, simple assault/battery, and aggravated assault/battery.

Table 3. Childhood Maltreatment and Prior Record Variables (n = 22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Childhood Abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Childhood Neglect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16 (72.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (27.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Homicide Criminal Record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17 (77.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (22.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Homicide Violent Record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (36.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (63.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The characteristics of the juvenile homicide incidents are provided in Table 4.

Approximately 73% of the JHOs in the sample (n = 16) committed the homicide offense with at least one accomplice, and the same percentage of JHOs killed or attempted to kill their victims during the commission of another crime, such as a residential burglary or a robbery. The majority of sample subjects (n = 12) targeted a stranger during the homicide offense. Regarding the method of killing, the highest percentage of offenders (36%, n = 8) used a firearm, followed by a blunt object (23%, n = 5), such as a hammer. One JHO in the sample participated in a group killing that involved multiple types of weapons, during which the victim was struck by a car, hit with a cinder block, and repeatedly kicked in the chest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of Accomplices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16 (72.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (27.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger Victim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12 (54.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (45.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Circumstances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime-Oriented</td>
<td>16 (72.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict-Oriented</td>
<td>6 (27.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearm</td>
<td>8 (36.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blunt Object</td>
<td>5 (22.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knife</td>
<td>4 (18.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangulation or Asphyxiation</td>
<td>4 (18.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Types</td>
<td>1 (4.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experiences During Incarceration**

The offenders in the sample described prison as a place in which the use of violence is
unavoidable; all 21 JHOs who discussed their behavior as inmates reported engaging in some type of violence during incarceration. Furthermore, as shown in Table 5, 46% of the JHOs (n = 10) committed at least one unprovoked, predatory assault against another inmate or a correctional officer. Nine JHOs admitted to committing assault while incarcerated in prison, and the remaining offender was coded as having committed predatory violence because he was arrested and charged with aggravated assault on a correctional officer while in jail. The majority of offenders also engaged in frequent disciplinary misconduct. Fifty-two percent of the JHOs who discussed their behavior in prison (n = 11) received many disciplinary reports; the highest number of DRs in the sample was 250, which was reported by a JHO who served more than 20 years in prison for the homicide conviction. JHOs received DRs for behaviors such as possessing contraband (e.g., drugs; cell phone), disrespect toward a correctional officer, disobeying a correctional officer, disorderly conduct, and fighting, among others.

Table 5. Misbehavior and Victimization in Prison (n = 22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committed Predatory Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 (45.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Misconduct (n = 21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (52.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (47.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Victimization (n = 20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (70.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (30.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Victimization (n = 20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (55.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9 (45.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 also displays the prevalence of in-prison victimization within the sample. Seventy percent of the JHOs (n = 14) reported experiencing an unprovoked violent assault by
either another inmate or a correctional officer while in prison; some of these assaults resulted in more serious injuries, such as a broken jaw. At least two JHOs were sexually assaulted by other inmates, and seven others reported being threatened with sexual violence. The majority of the sample also experienced property victimization in prison; 55% of JHOs had some of their belongings taken from them.

Information on JHOs’ participation in educational and rehabilitative programs, whether they received support from their family members, and the amount of time they served in prison for the homicide conviction is presented in Table 5. More than 60% of the offenders in the sample completed a GED (n = 14) and received some type of mental health treatment (n = 13) in prison. Conversely, the majority of JHOs (n = 14) were not exposed to drug-related treatment while incarcerated. Close to 70% of the sample (n = 15) were supported by their family members during incarceration through regular visits, letters, phone calls, or financial assistance (i.e., adding money to the offender’s prison account).

**Table 6. Other Incarceration Experiences and Time Served (n = 22)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed GED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (63.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (36.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Treatment (n = 21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13 (61.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (38.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Treatment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (63.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (36.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15 (68.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 (31.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Served (n = 19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-8 Years</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-35 Years</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned before, three JHOs are still in prison for the index homicide conviction, more than 35 years after they were arrested and incarcerated. Among the 19 offenders who had been released from prison for the homicide offense, the mean amount of time they spent in prison was 159.79 months (approximately 13 years, 4 months), ranging from 25 months (2 years, 1 month) to 422 months (35 years, 2 months). Overall, 58% of released JHOs (n = 11) served between 2 and 8 years, while the remaining 8 JHOs served between 15 and 35 years.

**Post-Release Experiences**

Table 7 displays the JHOs’ experiences after their first release from prison. Approximately 58% of offenders (n = 11) settled in the neighborhood where they lived prior to incarceration. Less than one-third of JHOs (n = 6) reunited with their pre-incarceration friends. The majority of the sample did not seek educational and rehabilitative opportunities after incarceration; only 26% of JHOs (n = 5) continued their education after release, while 37% of them (n = 7) attended counseling or support group sessions. Among offenders who were asked about their use of substances, close to 40% (n = 7) reported abusing alcohol and/or drugs.

The majority of released JHOs (n = 11) received support from their family members after incarceration. These offenders’ relatives provided them with housing, gave them money, and helped them obtain a job and a vehicle. Regarding parenthood, close to 70% of released offenders (n = 13) either were not parents or their children did not live with them. Lastly, with respect to the two main measures of informal social control, 42% of JHOs (n = 8) had high attachment to a wife or live-in girlfriend, whereas more than 60% of them (n = 12) had a stable, full-time job at some point after their first release from prison.

**Recidivism.** Thirteen JHOs, accounting for 68% of offenders who had been released from prison for the original homicide conviction, were rearrested at least once. Their mean time
Table 7. Post-Release Experiences (n = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (63.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 (31.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not Have Friends</td>
<td>1 (5.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (26.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (73.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (36.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 (63.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse (n = 18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (61.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenthood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (31.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13 (68.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment to Intimate Partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12 (63.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 (36.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

at time risk until the first arrest was 21.23 months, ranging from 2 months to 101 months (8 years, 5 months). Conversely, the six JHOs who were not rearrested during the follow-up period had a mean time at risk of 182.33 months (approximately 15 years, 2 months), ranging from 32 months (2 years, 8 months) to 422 months (35 years, 2 months). Moreover, close to 50% of
released offenders (n = 9) were rearrested for at least one violent offense during the follow-up period.

A descriptive summary of the frequency of post-release arrests and violent offenses is shown in Table 8. The mean number of post-incarceration arrests was 5.47 (SD = 6.92), ranging from 0 to 24 arrests. The JHOs accumulated a total of 104 arrests after their release for the homicide conviction. Additionally, the offenders in the sample committed relatively few violent offenses, with a mean of 2.42 (SD = 2.99). The number of violent offenses ranged from 0 to 8, leading to a total of 46 offenses during the 35-year period.

Table 8. Summary of Post-Release Arrests and Violent Offenses (n = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Arrests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Violent Offense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 provides information about specific violent offenses committed by the JHOs in the sample. Two offenders (11%) committed another homicide offense after release from incarceration. One of the offenders committed a completed homicide and was convicted of manslaughter, whereas the other one committed an attempted homicide. More than 20% of released JHOs (n = 4) committed a robbery; three of them committed an armed robbery, and the remaining offender was arrested for a strong-arm robbery, which does not involve the use of a weapon. Five released offenders (26%) committed an aggravated assault or battery, and the same number of offenders committed a simple assault or battery. Two offenders committed a burglary
while carrying a weapon. Lastly, three offenders (16%) committed other types of violent offenses, which include firing a weapon, kidnapping, and aggravated child abuse.

**Table 9. Types of Post-Release Violent Offenses (n = 19)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 (10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 (89.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (21.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (78.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated Assault/Battery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (26.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (73.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Assault/Battery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (21.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (78.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Burglary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 (10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 (89.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 (15.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16 (84.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequencies of non-violent crimes in the sample are presented in Table 10. Forty-two percent of released JHOs (n = 8) were rearrested for property-related crimes, such as larceny theft, burglary, petit theft, dealing in stolen property, and causing damage to property.

Approximately 37% of JHOs (n = 7) were rearrested for drug-related offenses, which included the manufacturing, possession, and sale of drugs. With respect to drug offenses, four of these JHOs were only arrested for offenses related to cocaine, two JHOs only had marijuana-related arrests, and the remaining JHO was arrested for offenses related to both cocaine and heroin.
Six released offenders (32%) were found to be in possession of a firearm, which is illegal for convicted felons. One offender (5%) was rearrested for a sexually oriented offense, which was indecent exposure. Seven JHOs (37%) violated the terms of their parole or probation. Only one of these offenders was solely arrested for a violation of parole/probation during the follow-up period; the other 6 offenders were rearrested for other crimes as well.

**Table 10.** Types of Post-Release Non-Violent Offenses (n = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property Offenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Offenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (36.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 (63.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of a Firearm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (31.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13 (68.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Crimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (5.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18 (94.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of Parole/Probation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (36.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 (63.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Crimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight JHOs (42%) were rearrested for other types of crimes after their first release from prison. This category includes crimes such as fraud, driving under the influence (DUI), trespassing, prostitution-related crimes (e.g., solicitation of a sex worker), destruction of evidence, and failure to appear in court.
Approximately 58% of the JHOs who had been released from prison for the homicide conviction (n = 11) were reincarcerated at least once during the 35-year follow-up period. The majority of reincarcerated offenders (n = 8) were recommitted to prison multiple times; the highest number of recommitments was 4, which was accumulated by one JHO. Four of the reincarcerated JHOs (36%) are currently in prison; accordingly, of the 22 JHOs in the full sample, seven are currently incarcerated, either for the original homicide conviction (n = 3) or a new crime (n = 4).

**Statistical Analyses**

Correlation, chi-square, and t-test analyses of general recidivism are presented first. Subsequently, findings from analyses of violent recidivism are presented. As explained in Chapter 4, the analyses were conducted to assess whether the frequencies of general and violent recidivism are related to three groups of independent variables listed previously in Table 2:

- Demographic and pre-incarceration factors (offender race, growing up in a high-crime neighborhood, pre-homicide arrest record, pre-homicide violent arrest record, evidence of abuse and neglect in childhood, use of accomplices in the homicide, whether the homicide offense victim was a stranger, homicide offense circumstances, and homicide weapon choice)

- Experiences during incarceration (commission of predatory violence, evidence of frequent disciplinary misconduct, violent victimization, property victimization, completion of GED, mental health treatment, drug treatment, family support, and time served)

- Post-release experiences (attachment to intimate partner, employment stability, return to old neighborhood, family support after release, parenthood, participation in
mental health treatment and/or support group, educational attainment, association with pre-incarceration friends, and substance abuse).

**General Recidivism**

A total of 28 correlation analyses of the variables discussed above in the statistical analyses section were conducted to examine the association between the frequency of general recidivism and the independent variables, five of which were significant. Among demographic and pre-incarceration variables, the frequency of general recidivism had a moderate positive correlation with offender race (Pearson’s r = .518, p < .05). With respect to incarceration-related variables, frequency of general recidivism had a moderate negative correlation with mental health treatment (Pearson’s r = -.510, p < .05) and time served in prison (Pearson’s r = -.487, p < .05). Conversely, the frequency of general recidivism was positively correlated with two post-release variables: a moderate correlation with return to old neighborhood (Pearson’s r = .598, p < .01) and a strong correlation with association with pre-incarceration friends (Pearson’s r = .769, p < .001). Frequency of general recidivism was not significantly correlated with any other pre-incarceration, incarceration-related, and post-release variables.

Table 11 presents the chi-square tests of general recidivism frequency that have produced significant findings. Only four of the 28 variables tested were significant at the .05 level: one demographic variable and three post-release variables. With respect to demographic and pre-incarceration variables, frequency of general recidivism was significantly related only to offender race ($\chi^2 (1) = 7.892$, $p < .01$, $\varphi = .645$). Black JHOs were more likely to have 4-24 arrests than their White counterparts (69% v. 0%), who were more likely to have 0-2 arrests. The odds ratio value in this analysis was 0, which indicates that Black JHOs had 100% higher odds of being rearrested more frequently than White JHOs. Frequency of general recidivism was not
significantly related to any other variable in this category. Notably, the relationship between the use of accomplices and frequency of general recidivism approached statistical significance ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.560, p < .10$) in the expected direction; JHOs who killed with accomplices were more likely to have a higher number of post-release arrests.

Analyses of incarceration experiences did not reveal any significant relationships at the .05 level. The relationship between completion of a GED and frequency of general recidivism approached significance ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.232, p < .10$), and was in the expected direction; JHOs who completed a GED during their first incarceration were less likely to have a higher number of arrests after release.

Frequency of general recidivism was significantly related to three post-release variables: Return to the old neighborhood ($\chi^2 (1) = 6.739, p < .05, \phi = .596$), education ($\chi^2 (1) = 6.107, p < .05, \phi = -.567$), and participation in mental health programs such as counseling or a support group ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.866, p < .05, \phi = -.506$). JHOs who resettled in their old neighborhoods after they were released were more likely to have a higher number of arrests (73% v. 12.5%). The odds ratio value indicates that JHOs who returned to their neighborhoods of origin were more than 18 times likely to be arrested more frequently. Offenders who continued their education after release were less likely to accumulate a higher number of arrests (0% v. 64%), compared to JHOs who did not pursue educational opportunities following their release; the odds ratio for this analysis was 0, given the fact that no JHOs who continued his education after release was arrested more than two times. Similarly, JHOs who attended counseling or support group sessions were less likely to accumulate a higher number of arrests (14% v. 67%); these offenders had .92 lower odds of recidivating more frequently. No other post-release factor was significantly related to the frequency of general recidivism, although the relationship
Table 11. Correlates of Post-Release General Recidivism (n = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number of Arrests</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-2 (%)</td>
<td>4-24 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6 (100.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4 (30.8)</td>
<td>9 (69.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 7.892**, $\phi$ = .645</td>
<td>OR = .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Old Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 (27.3)</td>
<td>8 (72.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 (87.5)</td>
<td>1 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 6.739*, $\phi$ = .596</td>
<td>OR = 18.667</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (100.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (35.7)</td>
<td>9 (64.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 6.107*, $\phi$ = -.567</td>
<td>OR = .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (85.7)</td>
<td>1 (14.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>8 (66.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 4.866*, $\phi$ = -.506</td>
<td>OR = .083</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR = Odds Ratio
*p < .05 (Fisher)
**p < .01 (Fisher)

between association with pre-incarceration friends and the dependent variable approached significance ($\chi^2$ (1) = 4.000, p < .10), and was in the expected direction; offenders who spent
time with their old friends after release from prison were more likely to accumulate a higher number of arrests.

As displayed in Table 12, significant mean differences emerged with respect to seven of the 28 variables in t-test analyses of the frequency of general recidivism: two demographic and pre-incarceration variables, one incarceration variable, and four post-release variables. With respect to demographic and pre-incarceration variables, Black JHOs had a significantly higher mean number of arrests (7.85) than their White counterparts (.33), and JHOs who used accomplices were arrested more frequently (6.93) than those who killed alone (0).

The only incarceration-related variable found to be significantly related to the number of arrests in t-test analyses was sentence length. Offenders who served shorter sentences (2-8 years) had a higher mean number of arrests (8.27) than those who served longer sentences (1.63). Analyses of 3 other variables approached statistical significance (p < .10): JHOs who completed a GED had a lower mean number of arrests (3.18 v. 8.63), as did JHOs who received mental health treatment (2.40 v. 9.50). Conversely, JHOs who received family support had a higher mean number of arrests (7.17 v. 2.57).

With respect to the four post-release variables found to be significant, offenders who returned to their neighborhoods of origin had a higher mean number of arrests (8.91 v. 0.75), similar to those who spent time with their pre-incarceration friends after release (13.17 v. 2.09). In contrast, JHOs had a lower mean number of arrests if they pursued educational opportunities (.40 v. 7.29) and had children who lived with them (1.83 v. 7.15). No other measure of post-release experiences was significantly related to the number of arrests, including the primary indicators of informal social control (i.e., attachment to intimate partner and stable employment).
Table 12. T-test Analyses of General Recidivism (n = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number of Arrests</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offender Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (12.649) = -3.695**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Accomplices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (14) = -3.768**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Served</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-8 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>7.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-35 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (12.883) = 2.627*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Return to Old Neighborhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>7.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (11.111) = -3.586**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association with Old friends</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (16) = -4.810***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continued Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>7.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (14.046) = 3.477**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenthood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (14.549) = 2.325*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  
**p < .01  
***p < .001
In summary, of the 84 analyses of the frequency of general recidivism, 16 were statistically significant at the .05 level. Significant findings included five correlations, four chi-square analyses, and seven t-test analyses. The five variables significantly correlated with the number of post-release arrests were offender race, mental health treatment in prison, time served for the homicide conviction, return to neighborhood of origin after release from prison, and association with pre-incarceration friends after release. The four significant chi-square analyses indicated that JHOs were more likely to accumulate a higher number of post-release arrests if they were Black, resettled in their old neighborhood after release from prison, did not continue their education after release, and did not participate in mental health programs after release. T-test analyses indicated that offenders had a higher mean number of arrests if they were Black, committed the original homicide offense with accomplices, served less time in prison, resettled in their old neighborhoods, spent time with their old friends after release, did not continue their education after they were released, and either did not have children or had children and did not live with them. Two variables were significant across all three types of analyses: offender race and return to old neighborhood.

**Violent Recidivism**

Out of 28 correlation analyses conducted between the number of post-release violent offenses and the independent variables, five were significant. With respect to demographic and pre-incarceration factors, the number of violent offenses was significantly correlated with offender race, and the correlation was positive and moderate (Pearson’s r = .566, p < .05). Only one variable was significantly correlated with the frequency of violent recidivism among incarcerated-related experiences as well; a moderate negative correlation was found between the number of violent offenses and completion of GED (Pearson’s r = -.646, p < .01). Among post-
release experiences, the number of violent offenses had a moderate positive correlation with return to old neighborhood (Pearson’s r = .600, p < .01) and association with pre-incarceration friends (Pearson’s r = .510, p < .05), and a moderate negative correlation with pursuing educational opportunities (Pearson’s r = -.498, p < .05).

The chi-square tests of the frequency of violent recidivism that were found to be significant are presented in Table 13. Recall that this variable was recoded for the purpose of the chi-square of analyses as 1 = 0 violent offenses, 2 = 1-8 violent offenses. Five of the 28 variables tested were significant at the .05 level: one demographic variable, two incarceration-related variables, and two post-release variables. Offender race was the only demographic or pre-incarceration factor that was significantly related to the number of post-release violent offenses ($\chi^2 (1) = 7.892$, $p < .01$, $\phi = .645$); Black JHOs were more likely to have committed a higher number of violent offenses than White JHOs (69% v. 0%); the odds ratio for this analysis was 0. The relationship between the number of violent offenses and use of accomplices approached statistical significance ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.560$, $p < .10$); JHOs who perpetrated the original homicide offense with accomplices committed more violent offenses after release from prison than those who killed alone.

Among incarceration-related factors, the number of violent offenses was significantly related to completion of GED ($\chi^2 (1) = 8.927$, $p < .01$, $\phi = -.685$) and time served for the homicide conviction ($\chi^2 (1) = 6.739$, $p < .05$, $\phi = -.596$). JHOs who completed a GED in prison were much more likely to have committed no violent offenses than offenders who did not complete a GED (82% v. 12.5%); moreover, their odds of committing more violent offenses were .97 lower. JHOs who served less time in prison (2-8 years) were more likely to commit 1-8 violent offenses than those who served more time (15-35 years) (73% v. 12.5%); the odds ratio
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number of Violent Offenses</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 (%)</td>
<td>1-8 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6 (100.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4 (30.8)</td>
<td>9 (69.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 7.892**, $\phi = .645$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR = .000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of GED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9 (81.8)</td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 (12.5)</td>
<td>7 (87.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 8.927**, $\phi = -.685$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR = .032</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Served</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-8 Years</td>
<td>3 (27.3)</td>
<td>8 (72.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-35 Years</td>
<td>7 (87.5)</td>
<td>1 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 6.739**, $\phi = -.596$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR = .054</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Old Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 (27.3)</td>
<td>8 (72.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 (87.5)</td>
<td>1 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 6.739*, $\phi = .596$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR = 18.667</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (100.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (35.7)</td>
<td>9 (64.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (52.6)</td>
<td>9 (47.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (1) = 6.107*, $\phi = .567$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR = .000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR = Odds Ratio

*p < .05 (Fisher)

**p < .01 (Fisher)
value indicated that the odds of committing a higher number of violent offenses was .95 lower for JHOs who served longer sentences.

Two post-release variables were significantly related to the number of violent offenses: Return to old neighborhood ($\chi^2 (1) = 6.739, p < .05, \phi = .596$) and pursuing educational opportunities ($\chi^2 (1) = 6.107, p < .05, \phi = -.567$). Offenders who resettled in their neighborhoods of origin after release were more likely to commit a higher number of violent offenses than those who settled in other neighborhoods (73% v. 12.5%); their odds of committing more violent offenses were more than 18 times higher. Conversely, JHOs who pursued educational opportunities after release were much less likely to commit 1-8 violent offenses (0 v. 64%). As expected, the odds ratio value for this analysis was 0. Analyses of two additional post-release variables approached statistical significance: JHOs who associated with their pre-incarceration friends were more likely to commit a higher number of violent offenses ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.000, p < .10$) and those who lived with their kids were less likely to commit a higher number of violent offenses ($\chi^2 (1) = 3.316, p < .10$). Notably, the main indicators of informal social control from Sampson and Laub’s theory (attachment to intimate partner and stable employment) were not related to the frequency of violent recidivism.

Out of the 28 t-test analyses conducted to examine mean differences to frequency of violent recidivism, seven were statistically significant, as shown in Table 14. Of these seven, two belonged to the demographic and pre-incarceration variable category, one to the incarceration-related category, and four to post-incarceration category. Among demographic and pre-incarceration variables, JHOs committed a higher mean number of violent offenses if they were Black (3.54 v. 0) and used accomplices during the homicide incident (3.07 v. 0). The only incarceration-related variable that was significantly related to frequency of violent recidivism
### Table 14. T-test Analyses of Violent Recidivism (n = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number of Arrests</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offender Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (12) = -4.229**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Accomplices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (14) = -3.884**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completion of GED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (17) = 3.49**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Return to Old Neighborhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (13.031) = -3.528**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association with Old friends</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (16) = -2.369*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continued Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (13) = 4.032**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenthood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t (16.798) = 2.774*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05
** **p < .01
was completion of GED; JHOs who completed their GED in prison committed a lower mean number of violent offenses than those who did not complete a GED (0.82 v. 4.63). Moreover, the relationship between time served in prison and frequency of violent recidivism approached statistical significance (p < .10); offenders who served less time for the homicide conviction committed a higher mean number of violent offenses (3.45 v. 1.00).

Significant mean differences in frequency of violent recidivism emerged with respect to four post-release variables. JHOs accumulated a higher mean number of violent offenses after release from prison for the homicide conviction if they returned to their old neighborhood (3.91 v. 0.38) and spent time with their pre-incarceration friends (4.67 v. 1.50). Conversely, released offenders committed a lower mean number of violent offenses if they pursued educational opportunities (0 v. 3.29) and lived with their children (0.50 v. 3.31). Notably, these are the same four post-incarceration variables that exhibited significant mean differences in t-test analyses of the frequency of general recidivism, and the differences were in the same direction. Similar to all previous analyses, attachment to intimate partner and stable employment were not significantly related to the dependent variable.

Overall, of the 84 analyses examining the frequency of violent recidivism, 17 were significant at the .05 level. Five variables were found to be significantly correlated with the frequency of violent recidivism: offender race, completion of a GED in prison, return to old neighborhood after release from prison, association with old friends after release, and pursuing educational opportunities after release. Five variables were significantly related the frequency of violent recidivism in chi-square analyses. JHOs were more likely to commit 1-8 violent offenses if they were Black, did not complete a GED in prison, served fewer years for the homicide conviction, returned to their old neighborhood, and pursued educational opportunities after they
were released. Significant mean differences on the number of violent offenses emerged in t-tests of seven variables: JHOs committed a higher mean number of violent offenses if they were Black, used accomplices in the original homicide offense, did not complete a GED during incarceration, resettled in their old neighborhood, associated with their old friends, did not pursue educational opportunities, and either did not have any children or had children and did not live with them.

Chapter Summary and Synthesis of Findings

The quantitative analyses indicated that attachment to intimate partner and stable full-time employment, which are the main indicators of informal social control during adulthood in Sampson and Laub’s theory (1993, 2003), did not influence the frequency of both general and violent recidivism, regardless of which statistical technique was utilized. However, important patterns emerged. Table 15 summarizes the results of the 168 relationships tested in this study using correlations, chi-square analyses, and t-tests analyses. As shown in the table, 33 of the 168 analyses conducted in the study were found to be significant, which accounts for approximately 20% of all analyses; given that statistical significance was set at .05, only 8 analyses were expected to be significant merely by chance. Notably, the effect sizes in the chi-square analyses (as indicated by Phi values), ranging from .506 to .685, are larger than the average effect sizes in studies within the social sciences (Funder & Ozer, 2020).

Of the 28 independent variables, two were significantly related to both general and violent recidivism in every analysis: offender race and return to old neighborhood after release from prison. JHOs who were Black and those who resettled in the neighborhoods where they grew up after their release for the homicide conviction were consistently shown to engage in more frequent post-release criminal behavior, including violent behavior. The Phi values in the
### Table 15. Summary of Significant Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>General Recidivism</th>
<th>Violent Recidivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic and Pre-incarceration Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender Race</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Crime Neighborhood in Childhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-homicide Record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Homicide Violent Record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Neglect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Accomplices</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger Homicide Victim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Circumstances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Weapon Choice</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
### Table 15 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incarceration-Related Variables</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predatory Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent Disciplinary Misconduct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Victimization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Victimization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED Completion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support in Prison</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Served</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Release Variable</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment to Intimate Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Stability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Old Neighborhood</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support after Release</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenthood</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Programs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association with Pre-Incarceration Friends</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = Statistically significant at the .05 level.
chi-square analyses indicated that these two variables had a moderate relationship with both
general and violent post-incarceration recidivism. The particularly strong relationship between
the race of the JHOs and post-incarceration offending may be due to the neighborhood
environments to which Black and White JHOs were exposed upon release from prison and will
be further explored in subsequent chapters.

With respect to frequency of general recidivism, several other variables emerged as
important, in addition to offender race and return to the old neighborhood. The number of post-
release arrests had a negative correlation with participation in mental health treatment in prison
and time served for the homicide conviction, and a positive correlation with spending time with
pre-incarceration friends after release. Chi-square analyses showed that JHOs who participated in
mental health programs and/or support groups and continued their education after release from
prison were less likely to accumulate a higher number of post-release arrests. Both of these
variables had a moderate effect on the number of arrests. In contrast, t-test analyses indicated
that offenders who used accomplices in the original homicide offense, served shorter sentences,
resumed their relationships with pre-incarceration friends after release from prison, did not
continue their education after release, and either did not have children or had children who lived
somewhere else were arrested more frequently.

The differences in significant variables between the chi-square and t-test analyses may be
attributed to the small sample size. For example, two of the variables that were significantly
related to the number of arrests in t-test analyses (use of accomplices in the homicide offense and
association with pre-incarceration friends after release) approached statistical significance when
Fisher’s test was used; had the sample been larger, these variables would have likely emerged as
significant in the chi-square analyses as well.
Several additional variables were also significantly related to the frequency of violent recidivism. Correlation analyses indicated that the number of post-release violent offenses had a negative correlation with the two measures of education (completion of GED in prison and pursuing educational opportunities after release), and a positive correlation with spending time with pre-incarceration friends. In the chi-square analyses, JHOs who completed a GED while incarcerated, served longer sentences, and continued their education after their release were less likely to engage in violent offending. These variables had a moderate effect on the number of violent offenses, according to Phi values.

Lastly, five other variables were related to the frequency of violent recidivism in t-test analyses: JHOs who perpetrated the original homicide offense with accomplices, did not complete a GED in prison, associated with their pre-incarceration friends after release, did not continue their education after prison, and either did not have children or their children did not live with them committed more violent crimes after they were released from prison for the homicide conviction. Perusal of Table 15 reveals that four variables were consistently found to be significantly related to the number of post-release violent offenses across the three types of analyses: two variables were positively related (race, return to old neighborhood) to violent recidivism and two were negatively related (GED completion, educational attainment).

The next two chapters present the qualitative analyses of the current study. Common themes in the lives of JHOs who desisted from crime during the follow-up period are explored in Chapter 6, including the influence of factors related to informal social control. Conversely, Chapter 7 contains a thematic analysis of the offenders in the sample who have continued to engage in serious criminal behavior after release from prison and/or have not been able to comply with the terms of their parole or probation.
CHAPTER SIX:
QUALITATIVE RESULTS: DESISTERS FROM CRIME

Out of the 19 JHOs in the sample who had been released from prison for the homicide conviction, eight had desisted from crime during the follow-up period. As mentioned in Chapter 4, sample subjects were classified as desisters for the purpose of the qualitative analyses if they have not been rearrested for any serious violent or property offenses, have not been rearrested frequently for minor offending (5 times or more), have not been sent back to prison for a new crime, or have not violated the terms of their parole or probation and been sent back to prison. Six of the desisters have not been rearrested since their initial release from prison; the two remaining JHOs in this category have accumulated a small number of arrests for minor crimes. One of these JHOs has been rearrested twice, while the other one has been rearrested four times.

Regarding offender characteristics, six of the eight desisters were White and five of them grew up in high-crime neighborhoods. With respect to original homicide incident characteristics, all eight desisters served time in prison for completed homicides; two of them were convicted of first-degree murder and six were convicted of second-degree murder. Half of the desisters (n = 4) committed the original homicide with accomplices, and the same number of desisting JHOs killed a victim who was a stranger and committed a crime-oriented killing. Regarding the method of killing, the highest proportion of desisters (n = 3) used a firearm; the remaining five desisters killed their victim using a knife (n = 2), asphyxiation (n = 2), or a blunt object (n = 1).
Perusal of data from the interviews reveals several common themes in the lives of JHOs who desisted after their release from prison. The following themes are discussed in this chapter: avoiding their old neighborhood and friends, positive intimate relationship, stable employment, generativity, human agency, and participation in a rehabilitative reentry program in prison for offenders with a life sentence. Specific statements made by the JHOs are presented throughout this chapter to illustrate the influence of the above factors on their desistance process. A pseudonym was assigned to each desister to protect his identity.

**Avoiding Old Neighborhood and Friends**

Six desisters in the sample did not go back to the neighborhoods where they grew up after they were released from prison and seven of them avoided spending time with their pre-incarceration friends. For example, Edward grew up in a neighborhood in the Northeast with various indicators of disadvantage: many buildings were vacant, illegal drugs were easily obtainable, homeless individuals could be seen drinking alcohol on the street, the sight of prostitutes was common, and gangs violently terrorized neighborhood residents. After moving to the Southeastern state where he was ultimately arrested for homicide, Edward settled in a neighborhood where the sale of illegal drugs was commonplace. Moreover, he frequently consumed drugs with his friends.

Edward was younger than 17 years of age when he was arrested for fatally shooting a man who had previously victimized him. Although some evidence suggested that Edward killed the victim in self-defense, the jury convicted him of second-degree murder. Edward was released from prison after serving approximately five years for the murder and decided not to return to either of the neighborhoods in which he grew up. He felt nostalgic regarding the neighborhood on the East Coast where he was born and raised but decided that returning to that neighborhood
“was not a good idea”. After his release, Edward initially remained in the state where he was previously incarcerated, before relocating to a city in the Midwest. Furthermore, although he has reconnected with some of his old friends on a social media site, he has not spent time with any pre-incarceration friend since his release from prison. Edward has not been rearrested since he was released from incarceration in the mid-1980s.

Gene and Bobby grew up in low-income neighborhoods across the same city in a Southeastern state. Their neighborhoods were characterized by violence, gang-related activities, drug trafficking, and public consumption of alcohol. In his 1980s interview, Gene related that the residents in his predominantly White neighborhood reacted violently when African Americans began settling in it. Furthermore, the JHOs’ friends in adolescence sold drugs and committed assaults.

When both Gene and Bobby were under the age of 15, they were arrested for the brutal killing of an adult man. Gene was deemed to be the more culpable of the two boys and spent approximately 25 years in prison. Bobby, in contrast, served about seven years. Gene did not return to his old neighborhood or reconnect with his old friends after he was released, including Bobby. He initially lived on the street, before settling in the home of a man whom he knew from prison. Subsequently, Gene relocated to a Southern state where his family was living. Gene has not been rearrested since his release from prison more than 10 years ago.

In contrast to Gene, Bobby returned to the neighborhood where he grew up shortly after release to live with his parents. Interview data suggest that he eventually rented a home in a different neighborhood, where he lives with a girlfriend and her children, as discussed further below. Similar to Gene, Bobby has not reconnected with his pre-incarceration friends since his release and claimed that he “does not want to do so”. Since his release more than 25 years ago,
Bobby has been arrested twice for relatively minor offenses, such as DUI and trespassing; he haseen crime-free more than 15 years.

Another JHO who avoided returning to the problematic neighborhood where he grew up after his release from prison was Sam. As an adolescent, Sam and his friends from the neighborhood engaged in a variety of deviant and criminal behaviors: truancy, alcohol use, drug use, vandalism, burglaries, and robberies. One night, while he was under the influence of multiple drugs, Sam burglarized a home and killed the resident when she saw him and screamed. In addition to the homicide, he was convicted of several other property crimes that he committed prior to his arrest for the fatal burglary.

Sam was released from prison after serving slightly more than 35 years and chose not to return to his old neighborhood or reconnect with his pre-incarceration criminal friends. After his release, Sam settled in a different county from the one in which was arrested for murder, first living in a hotel designed to house former offenders and eventually obtaining his own apartment. He also reportedly attended several support groups in the county where he currently lives, including a group dedicated to encouraging recovery from drug addiction. Sam has been out of prison more than two years and has not been rearrested.

**Positive Intimate Relationship**

The interview data suggest that the intimate partners of some JHOs in the sample took steps to ensure that these men would not resume their involvement in criminal behavior. Shortly after his release from prison, Edward met a woman who worked at a convenience store and reported an “instant connection” with her; she became Edward’s wife after six months of dating. They have been married more than 30 years and Edward described her as a “good influence” on his life.
Edward’s marriage facilitated his desistance process in several ways. First, Edward and his wife at some point in their marriage relocated to the Midwestern city where she grew up, which kept him away from potential negative influences in his home state. Second, Edward joined the military and completed tours in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Edward reported experiencing health problems and being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after his honorable discharge from the military, and his wife provided both instrumental and emotional support in helping him overcome these issues. She contacted a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility in order for Edward to receive medical treatment there. Moreover, she encouraged Edward to participate in individual counseling to alleviate his symptoms of PTSD; he described the counseling he received as a “positive experience” in the interview. She also convinced Edward to stop his participation in group therapy when she observed that he was becoming an angrier person as a result of these therapy sessions.

Lastly, Edward related that he had a close relationship with his wife’s parents, although they initially opposed his relationship with their daughter. His father-in-law taught him several skills, including roofing, construction, and building decks. At the time of the follow-up interview, Edward reported using these skills while working on a part-time basis in the city where he lived.

Another JHO whose desistance process was facilitated by marriage was Christopher. This offender was convicted of second-degree murder after shooting a man to death during an argument over a woman. Christopher was under the age of 17 at the time of his arrest and he served approximately 27 years for this conviction. Christopher related that after his release from prison, he was completing a work project at a medical facility when he met the woman who eventually became his wife. He described his wife as very supportive of his efforts to lead a
successful life after incarceration; for example, she enabled him to receive a bachelor’s degree by paying his tuition, which improved his employment opportunities, as described further below.

Christopher stated that his wife’s family was initially opposed to her relationship with a former prison inmate, but they have learned to accept it and felt “positively” toward him at the time of the interview. His wife had adult children from a previous relationship, and Christopher enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren. He had been involved in raising the young grandchildren since their marriage began, which appeared to have given him a sense of purpose. Christopher has not been rearrested since his release from incarceration more than 10 years ago.

Bobby has not been married since his release from prison more than 30 years ago, but one of the intimate relationships in which he has been involved was beneficial to his desistance process in several ways. At the time of the follow-up interview, Bobby had been living with his girlfriend and the children she had from previous relationships for several years. He described the girlfriend as “awesome” and reported that she had compelled him to stop consuming alcohol; this change was an important factor in Bobby’s life because, as previously mentioned, he had been rearrested for a DUI since his release from the homicide conviction. Bobby also stated that he viewed the girlfriend’s children as his own, and he was therefore actively involved in raising them.

**Stable Employment**

Most of the desisters in the sample (n = 6) have held stable employment during the follow-up period. Larry is an example of a JHO who benefited from stability in employment. When he was under the age of 17, Larry was arrested for fatally shooting another young man during an argument over a hat. He was released from prison after 20 years of incarceration and has not been rearrested for any serious crime since his release. The ability to work appears to be
a strong factor in his desistence from serious offending. Larry’s first job after prison was a full-
time security guard, and he was working in this position for several years before his employer
found out that he was a convicted murderer and fired him. Prior to his dismissal, Larry reported
being held in “high esteem” at this job.

Larry related that after losing his job as a security guard, he spent several months taking
temporary jobs, before deciding to open his own business. According to Larry, the business
entailed providing services such as plumbing, cleaning, removing trash, constructing fences, and
remodeling homes. At the time of the interview, Larry’s clients included “a lot of realtors and
five police officers”. This business enabled him to buy his own home and fully pay for it, which
made him very proud of himself.

As discussed above, Larry has not been arrested for any serious violent or property
crimes following his release for the homicide conviction, and he has not been reincarcerated. He
has been rearrested four times for minor offenses, including petty theft, violation of commercial
vehicle marking laws, and possession of ammunition. Larry stated that he was arrested for
possessing ammunition, which is prohibited to him as a convicted felon, because an old bullet
was found in a pile of trash in the back of his pickup truck; he reported that he had been
“cleaning properties and hauling debris away” within the context of his business, and did not
know that the bullet was in the rubble. Larry has been arrest-free for more than two years.

The benefits of stable employment could also be seen in Robert’s life. When he was
younger than 17 years of age, Robert was arrested for killing a family member. He served
approximately 16 years in prison for this crime, and initially struggled to obtain a stable job after
his release due to his conviction history. In the first few years after prison, Robert reported
holding several temporary jobs, which included working at a resort, as a salesman, and in
telemarketing. Subsequently, he decided to enter the field of information technology (IT) and was able to turn this profession into a career. He completed a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in the field, and proceeded to find a job at a large IT company; he worked at that company for more than five years. At the time of the follow-up interview, Robert was employed at a different IT company, where he had been working approximately five years.

Robert was apprehensive about potentially losing his job one day as a result of his murder conviction; he discussed “always waiting for the other shoe to drop” with respect to the possibility that his criminal record would become known. Nevertheless, Robert described a sense of pride in himself due to his employment-related accomplishments; he reported that his mother was also proud of the productive life that he was leading. He has not been rearrested for any offenses since he was released from prison more than 20 years ago.

Stable employment served as a good influence in Seth’s life as well. Seth and his friend, both of whom were under the age of 16, burglarized an older man’s home and killed him after he began to scream. Seth served 30 years in prison for this crime; his accomplice is one of the three sample subjects who have never been released for the homicide conviction. In the first few years after his release from prison, Seth was not able to obtain a permanent job due to his criminal conviction; he worked in a series of temporary jobs, including a cleaning company, a moving equipment and storage company, a drywall contractor, and a retail store.

Seth commented that the jobs in which he worked instilled a good work ethic and a sense of responsibility in him. He was eventually able to obtain a stable, full-time job at a rail company. At the time of the follow-up interview, he had been working in that position longer than one year. Seth has not been rearrested since he was released from prison more than eight
years ago, and his consistent work record appears to have played an important role in his desistance from crime.

Some of the desisters discussed in previous sections of this chapter have also experienced stable employment after they were released from prison. For example, Bobby had been towing vehicles on a full-time basis for more than 15 years; he worked at one towing company for more than 10 years and had been working at a different company for approximately five years at the time of the follow-up interview. Moreover, Christopher has held several full-time jobs since his release, including working at a restaurant, a security company, and a computer company; he reported “moving up” to higher-level positions at each of these jobs. Christopher had been working as an administrator at an institution of higher learning for more than 5 years at the time of the interview. His employment success could be attributed to hard work and his post-release educational attainment; he had completed both associate and bachelor’s degree.

Lastly, Edward was able to obtain several stable, long-lasting jobs after he was released, including at a printing company and a university. He stated that his boss at the printing company served as a source of direct supervision and support for him, which is a benefit of stable employment described by Laub and Sampson (2003). Edward reported that his boss spent time with him outside the job and advised him against drinking alcohol; the boss also reportedly intervened on his behalf when Edward violated one of the conditions of his parole.

**Human Agency**

Interviews with at least four of the desisters displayed evidence of human agency. As discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of human agency refers to the conscious choice that some offenders make to reform their lives and desist from criminal behavior (Laub & Sampson, 2003). When asked about his feelings at the time of his release from prison, Edward stated: “I made a
choice; I am not coming back”. Edward also commented that he was determined to “find a wife and have children”. These statements indicate that Edward made a deliberate decision to desist from crime after he was released and add elements to his life that would facilitate the process of desistance (i.e., marriage and children). Similarly, Christopher reported that he made a conscious decision to change the direction of his life. During the first few years of his incarceration, Christopher engaged in a great deal of misconduct, including the commission of an aggravated assault against a correctional officer; he stated that he was “playing the fool” during those years. While segregated from the general inmate population due to his disciplinary problems, Christopher made a choice to change his behavior and devote effort toward rehabilitation. He commented that he “had lot of weight and had to balance it”, which meant that he aimed to make amends to society for his prior antisocial behavior.

As mentioned previously, Bobby has been arrested twice for minor offenses since his release. He explained his lack of involvement in serious criminal behavior by stating, “I put my priorities first. I have been there and done that”, which demonstrates a conscious commitment to avoid serious violations of the law for the purpose of not returning to prison. In the case of Robert, he reported participating in “dozens of interviews” before being hired in the initial period following his release from prison; his perseverance in searching for a legitimate employment opportunity indicates that he was committed to maintaining a prosocial lifestyle, despite the challenges he faced.

**Generativity**

Evidence of generativity was found in the interviews of at least three desisters. Generativity, as explained in Chapter 3, refers to the willingness to help others in society, and especially younger people (e.g., Maruna, 2001). During his interview, Gene described
widespread corruption and lawlessness at the prisons in which he served his sentence, including the “torturing of children” by correctional officers and other inmates. Moreover, Gene claimed that many offenders who entered prison as juveniles had been killed because prison administrators were “sticking them with predators”, referring to the lack of protection for juvenile offenders from older, exploitative inmates.

When asked about his purpose in life, Gene stated that he wanted to be “the voice of all the children” who had suffered or died in prison. While the veracity of his claims regarding the large-scale torture and murder of juvenile prison inmates is questionable, it is evident that his desire to advocate on behalf of incarcerated juvenile offenders has played an important role in his lack of post-release involvement in criminal behavior. The importance of generativity in Gene’s desistance from crime is particularly noteworthy due to the fact that he has struggled with respect to other factors known to reduce the likelihood of recidivism; for example, he has not held stable employment and was unemployed at the time of the interview. He has also not been involved in any stable intimate relationships since his release.

Another desister whose goal is to help younger people is Seth. He has sought to encourage juveniles to avoid becoming involved in criminal behavior. Seth reported speaking about his experiences in prison to a group of high-risk youth between the ages of 5 and 15; he has also gone to a school to share his insight regarding crime and incarceration. At his interview, Seth explained his motivation for helping children by stating, “I want to give back. There is no point if it can’t benefit somebody”. Indicators of generativity were also found in Sam’s follow-up interview. When asked about his plans for the future, Sam commented that his main goal was to “help people”. He also reported meeting with prison inmates to guide them in preparing for life after incarceration.
Participation in Prison Reentry Program

Three JHOs in the sample have reported participating in a program designed to help individuals sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole reintegrate into society. Two of these JHOs (Christopher and Seth) are desisters; the third JHO was reincarcerated after his initial release from prison and will be discussed in Chapter 7. The program was developed by a retired criminal justice professor, and according to Christopher, it is intended for inmates who are “on the right track”, in terms of their behavior in prison. Christopher added that the program includes classes that teach inmates necessary skills for success after long-term incarceration, including job interview skills, computer skills, effective public speaking, and proper dinner etiquette, among others. The classes are taught by certain inmates and supervised by the professor. Inmates typically spend between one year and three years in the program before they are released on parole. Seth claimed in his interview that of the more than 300 offenders who were released on parole after completing this program, only two have been rearrested for new crimes and “very few had technical violations”.

Christopher benefitted from this reentry program because he reportedly learned computer skills while completing it, and eventually became the instructor for the computer class; as mentioned previously, one of Christopher’s full-time jobs after his release from prison was at a computer company. With respect to Seth, he reported maintaining a close relationship with the founder of the program and viewed her conversations with him as a form of counseling. Moreover, Seth partially attributed his ability to stop using cocaine after release to this woman’s support.

Chapter Summary

The data presented in this chapter demonstrate that desistance is not caused by a single
factor. Several factors explain why some of the men in this sample have not engaged in serious or chronic offending, or have not been reincarcerated, since their release from prison for the homicide conviction. Consistent with Sampson and Laub’s theory, these men have experienced strong informal social control in their lives: most of the desisters have held stable employment at some point after release and some of them have been in intimate relationships with women who cared about them and acted to facilitate their reintegration process. The influence of human agency was also apparent among the desisters in the sample; the statements made by various men indicated that they had made a conscious choice to become law-abiding and productive members of society.

Multiple other factors played important roles in turning homicidal juveniles into largely prosocial adults. After they were released, most of the desisters avoided the negative influences of their pre-incarceration neighborhoods and friends; they did not return to the neighborhoods in which they grew up and did not reconnect with their prior antisocial friends. For some of the desisters, desistance from crime appeared to be driven also by a desire to use their involvement in the criminal justice system to help others, including children and other incarcerated offenders. Lastly, some desisters reintegrated into society better due to their participation in a specialized reentry program for inmates who are serving a life sentence.

The JHOs in the sample who did not desist after their initial release from prison are discussed in the next Chapter. More specifically, Chapter 7 explores important themes in the lives of the offenders who have committed serious post-release crimes and/or have been sent back to prison.
CHAPTER SEVEN:

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: PERSISTENT OFFENDERS

Perusal of the follow-up data indicated that 11 of the 19 JHOs who had been released from prison for the original homicide conviction could be classified as persistent offenders. Every persistent offender in the sample had been reincarcerated during the 35-year period; the highest proportion of them (n = 5) were recommitted to prison three times. Most persistent offenders (n = 9) have also committed serious violent crimes, such as homicide, attempted homicide, aggravated and simple assault, robbery, and kidnapping, among others. With respect to other types of serious post-release offenses, the majority of JHOs in this category have been arrested for property and drug crimes (n = 7), as well as possession of a firearm (n = 6). One of these JHOs has been arrested for a non-violent, sexually oriented offense. Lastly, as mentioned in Chapter 5, four of the persistent offenders are currently in prison. Three of them are serving time for serious violent offenses, and the remaining offender is incarcerated due to a technical violation of parole.

The 11 persistent offenders in the sample are Black and the majority of them (n = 6) grew up in a high-crime neighborhood. Seven of the persistent offenders were involved in completed homicides in the 1980s; six of these JHOs were convicted of second-degree murder and one was convicted of manslaughter. The remaining four persistent offenders were convicted of attempted murder. Regarding the characteristics of the original homicide incidents, all of the persistent offenders committed the homicide offense with accomplices, and with one exception, all of them
(n = 10) committed it in conjunction with another crime. The majority of persistent offenders (n = 7) killed or attempted to kill a stranger, and the highest proportion of them (n = 5) used a firearm in the offense. Other weapon choices included a blunt object (n = 3), a knife (n = 2), and more than one type of weapon (n = 1), including a cinder block and a personal weapon (i.e., kicking the victim).

The remainder of this chapter consists of three sections. First, the distinct trajectories of offending among the 11 JHOs who had continued their involvement in serious criminal behavior and/or had violated the terms of their supervision are presented. Second, important factors that may have hindered these JHOs from successfully reintegrating into society after their initial release from prison are explored. The last section of the chapter focuses on several JHOs who appeared to have desisted from crime later in life, some of whom had previously accumulated multiple recommitments to prison. The factors that had contributed to their eventual desistance are discussed.

Offending Trajectories

The trajectories of criminal and antisocial behavior following the initial release from prison were examined for the persistent offenders in the sample in order to address the fourth research question in the current study, which was “how many distinct behavioral trajectories exist among JHOs released from prison?”. The analysis of offending trajectories was conducted by inspecting the interview data and official arrest records to identify patterns; given the small sample size, group-based trajectory modeling could not be used (Nagin & Tremblay, 2005). Four distinct behavioral trajectories were uncovered through this method: (1) High-Rate Active or Imprisoned Offenders, (2) High-Rate Desisters, (3) Low-Rate Offenders with Long Prison Terms, and (4) Low-Rate Desister. Once again, due to the small sample size, these groups are
preliminary impressions of JHOs’ post-incarceration offending patterns; future research with larger samples is needed to examine whether these different trajectories are representative of young homicide offenders’ experiences after release overall.

The first trajectory of offending (High-Rate Active or Imprisoned Offenders) consisted of five JHOs who have accumulated five or more arrests since their release from prison for the homicide conviction; the highest number of arrests among these JHOs was 24. Three of the men in this group are considered active offenders due to the fact that they have been arrested at least once in their 50s, including one JHO who was arrested for a violent crime within the last five years. The remaining two JHOs in the group are currently serving time in prison for serious violent crimes; both offenders have been incarcerated more than 10 years for these new crimes. Prior to their current recommitment to prison, these two offenders had been frequent and serious recidivists, displaying arrests for violent, property, and drug-related crimes on their records.

The second trajectory (High-Rate Desisters) was comprised of two JHOs who have been arrested at least five times following their initial release from prison, but who appeared to have desisted from crime. Both of these offenders have committed serious post-release violent crimes and had been reincarcerated more than once. However, according to official arrest data and their interviews, these men have not been involved in criminal behavior for more than 10 years. The potential causes of these JHOs’ late desistance are explored toward the end of the chapter.

The third trajectory (Low-Rate Offenders with Long Prison Terms) included three JHOs who have been arrested less than five times after their release for the homicide conviction, but they have also experienced fewer opportunities to reoffend due to a long recommitment to prison. One JHO was recommitted to prison for more than 10 years for a technical violation of parole and was released less than three years ago. The other two offenders have been in prison
more than 20 years; one of them was reincarcerated for a serious violent crime, and the other JHO went back to prison for a technical parole violation.

The last trajectory (Low-Rate Desister) consisted of one JHO who was arrested less than five times during the follow-up period and appeared to have desisted from criminal behavior after he was released from prison for the second time. The official arrest data indicated that this offender has not been arrested in more than 15 years; as discussed further below, he attributed his desistance later in life to strong informal social control in the interview.

**Causes of Persistence in Offending**

The interviews with the persistent offenders in the sample highlight the importance of several factors in their serious post-release criminal behavior and reincarceration. The roles of the following factors in the JHOS’ persistent offending are explored in this section: return to old neighborhood, association with criminal peers, substance abuse, fatalism, lack of stable employment, and issues with anger. Similar to Chapter 6, a pseudonym was assigned to each persistent offender to protect his privacy.

**Return to Old Neighborhood**

Nine of the 11 persistent offenders returned to the neighborhood where they were raised after their release from prison for the homicide conviction. This section focuses on the offenders who had returned to high-crime neighborhoods. One of these JHOS was Raymond, who described his pre-incarceration neighborhood as an area in which murders and robberies were common, people could be observed drinking alcohol on the street, and there was easy access to firearms, drugs, and prostitutes; he referred to his old neighborhood as “the hood”. When he was under the age of 17, Raymond shot and killed a man during a robbery that he committed with a
juvenile accomplice. He was convicted of second-degree murder and served approximately 15 years in prison for this conviction.

After he was released from prison, Raymond settled in his old neighborhood. In his interview, Raymond stated that returning to his old neighborhood “did not work out too well”, referring to the challenges he faced in securing stable housing. His return to this high-crime neighborhood also contributed to the speed at which he recidivated; Raymond was rearrested for the first time approximately five months after his initial release from incarceration.

Overall, Raymond was arrested seven times during the follow-up period, and committed eight violent offenses, including robbery and simple assault. He was also arrested for serious property and drug-related crimes, such as burglary, dealing in stolen property, and possession of cocaine. Raymond has been recommitted to prison three separate times, and he is currently incarcerated; he has been in prison more than 15 years for a conviction related to a strong-arm robbery.

Another JHO who returned to his old neighborhood after his release for the homicide conviction was Mark. This JHO reported that the neighborhood in which he grew up was characterized by violence and the widespread availability of illegal drugs. When he was in his late teens, Mark and his accomplice were arrested for robbing two women and shooting at a man who came to their aid. Both offenders were convicted of attempted murder, and Mark spent approximately two years in prison for this crime.

After his release from incarceration, Mark returned to his old neighborhood and began to sell drugs, which is an activity in which he engaged prior to his original arrest for attempted homicide. He referred to the criminal lifestyle as “easy” and “enticing”, and attributed his involvement in drug trafficking to living in that neighborhood and going back to his “old life”. 
Similar to Raymond, Mark had been out of prison only five months before his first post-release arrest; he was involved in another robbery and attempted murder incident and was recommitted to prison.

At some point during the follow-up period, Mark relocated to another Southeastern state, where he continued to engage in criminal behavior. Throughout the approximately 35 years since Mark’s first release from prison, he has accumulated 16 arrests and has been reincarcerated three times. In addition to armed robbery and attempted murder, Mark has also been rearrested for simple assault. With respect to serious non-violent crimes, he has been arrested for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, various types of property crimes, and possession of a firearm as a felon. His last arrest was for assault and it occurred less than 5 years ago, when he was older than 50 years of age. He is one of several active offenders in the sample.

Thomas grew up in a neighborhood in which drug sales, random assaults, and murders were common. When he was under the age of 16, Thomas and his two friends were involved in a dispute with another young man over fake merchandise. As a result of this conflict, Thomas and his accomplices severely beat the victim using multiple weapons, which led to his death. Thomas was convicted of manslaughter due to a plea agreement and served approximately four years in prison for his involvement in this homicide.

Similar to Mark, Thomas became involved in the sale of drugs upon returning to his old neighborhood after release. Consequently, he has been arrested numerous times for drug-related offenses, including the possession and distribution of cocaine and ecstasy. Nonetheless, Thomas reported that he was “very successful” in selling drugs, which allowed him to buy an expensive vehicle and jewelry.

Thomas was the most prolific offender in the sample, in terms of official arrests. He has
accumulated a total of 24 arrests, six of which were for violent offenses. The violent crimes that he has committed included armed robbery, simple assault, and kidnapping. He was also the only JHO in the sample to have been arrested for a sexually oriented offense (indecent exposure). With respect to reincarceration, Thomas has been recommitted to prison three times, but he is currently not incarcerated. Although this JHO is in his 50s and no longer lived in his neighborhood of origin at the time of the interview, he appears to pose a risk to society nevertheless; he was arrested twice for drug-related crimes within the last five years.

Another persistent offender who was raised in a high-crime environment was Harvey. This JHO stated that illegal firearms were easily accessible in his old neighborhood and that robberies were commonplace. Moreover, Harvey commented that his criminal behavior during adolescence was due to “street influence”. He committed an attempted murder when he was under the age of 16; during a robbery incident in which Harvey and an accomplice were involved, he shot a store clerk multiple times. Harvey subsequently fled to a different state and was arrested approximately one year after committing this homicide offense. Following a guilty plea, Harvey served more than 7 years in prison.

Harvey settled in his old neighborhood after he was released from prison and resumed his involvement in criminal behavior shortly thereafter; his first post-incarceration arrest occurred approximately three months after his release. During his interview, Harvey attributed the crimes he committed to being “a product of my environment”. Since his initial release from prison, he has been arrested a total of 14 times and has committed six violent offenses, including aggravated assault, aggravated child abuse, and simple assault. He has also been arrested for serious property and drug-related crimes, such as larceny theft and possession of cocaine.
Similar to the JHOs discussed above, Harvey has also been reincarcerated three times, two of which were due to serious violent crimes; he has been out of prison more than 10 years. Harvey claimed in his interview that he had desisted from criminal behavior following his last release from prison; he stated that his desistance was due to the desire to spend time with his young grandson. Despite his claim, the JHO’s last arrest, which was related to a motor vehicle violation, occurred less than three years ago.

**Association with Criminal Peers**

The majority of persistent offenders in the sample (n = 7) spent time with criminal friends after their release from prison for the homicide conviction. Several of these JHOs associated with their pre-incarceration friends. For example, Gus stated that he committed various types of crimes with his friends during his adolescence, including robberies and at least one burglary. One night, Gus was involved in the robbery of an adult man along with three other juvenile offenders, which led to the man’s murder; the victim was choked and struck multiple times with a blunt object. Gus and his accomplices were arrested shortly after the incident in a different state. He was younger than 17 years of age at the time of the homicide.

Gus pled guilty to second-degree murder and served approximately seven years for this incident. Gus mentioned in the follow-up interview that after his release, he reconnected with some of his pre-incarceration friends. He stated that his friends “were into the criminal thing” and that their criminal lifestyle enabled them to own “nice cars and clothes”. His association with antisocial friends was reflected in his own behavior: he was rearrested for the first time two years after his initial release for aggravated assault and possession of a firearm.

Overall, Gus was rearrested 12 times, four of which included charges for violent offenses. He was also rearrested for other serious crimes, such as burglary and possession of cocaine; Gus
reported becoming involved in the sale of cocaine after his release. For his post-incarceration criminal behavior, Gus was recommitted to prison three times. He stated that he had stopped engaging in crime after serving his last prison sentence, and the official arrest data are largely consistent with this assertion. The potential causes of his late desistance from criminal activities are discussed toward the end of the chapter.

Some of the JHOs previously discussed in this chapter had also reconnected with their old friends at some point during the follow-up period. In his original interview in the 1980s, Mark asserted that his teenage friends carried guns, committed shootings, and were involved in using and selling illegal drugs. According to Mark’s follow-up interview, he resumed contact with the friends he had in adolescence after he was released for the homicide conviction. He claimed that his old friendships led to an “easy slide” back into criminal behavior and blamed some of the crimes for which he had been arrested on being “misled” by his friends.

Two additional JHOs who reconnected with their pre-incarceration friends were Thomas and Harvey. As a juvenile, Thomas engaged in frequent criminal behavior with his adult friends, including purse snatchings and burglaries; he claimed to have committed approximately 70 burglaries prior to his homicide arrest. After his initial release from prison, Thomas began to spend time with some of his old friends and his first post-incarceration arrest occurred approximately two months after his release. Moreover, Thomas attributed his post-release criminal behavior to being a “follower”.

In Harvey’s case, this JHO asserted that he engaged in criminal behavior during adolescence in order to “be with the crowd, be cool”; similar to Thomas, Harvey appeared to be a follower and vulnerable to peer pressure. After his first release, Harvey reported reconnecting with some of his old friends; he mentioned that other friends with whom he associated before the
homicide incident were in prison. Notably, Harvey was not in contact with any of his old friends at the time of the follow-up interview.

In contrast to the four JHOs mentioned above, Raymond did not reconnect with his old friends after release from incarceration; he said during his interview that “most of them were winos” and he did not want to be in their presence. However, Raymond associated with other antisocial individuals; at least two of his post-release offenses were committed with accomplices, including the robbery and assault for which he is currently incarcerated. When asked about the circumstances behind his post-homicide incarceration offending, Raymond commented that he “should not be around those kinds of people”, referring to his new criminal friends.

**Substance Abuse**

Another prominent theme in the lives of the persistent offenders was substance abuse. Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol contributed to the post-release offending and reincarceration of four JHOs. In the case of Ronnie, drug use appeared to have played a role in his recommitment to prison. This JHO was under the age of 17 when he was arrested for fatally shooting an adult woman during a robbery. Ronnie pled guilty to second-degree murder and was released after serving approximately 21 years in prison.

Ronnie used illegal drugs on a daily basis prior to his homicide conviction, and following his release from prison, he resumed his drug use. According to Ronnie, his frequent drug use led to post-release legal problems; his first violation of probation was due to a positive drug test, which occurred more than two years after his release. Ronnie’s second probation violation was for returning home late from work, and it resulted in his recommitment to prison on a life sentence. If he had not used drugs and tested positive previously, his failure to return home on time may have produced a different outcome, rather than reincarceration.
During his second prison term, Ronnie became involved in the prisoner reentry program described in Chapter 6 in relation to Christopher and Seth’s experiences in prison. As a reminder, this program is intended for inmates who are serving a life sentence and behaving well in prison. Ronnie stated that this program helped him “tremendously” in his rehabilitation process; among other things, he participated in courses related to overcoming drug addiction. Due to his completion of this program, Ronnie was released from prison less than three years ago. Although he has not been rearrested since his second release from incarceration, Ronnie needs to be crime-free for a longer period of time before he can be classified as a desister.

Drug abuse was also an important theme in Derek’s post-incarceration life. This JHO was a late teen when he was involved in a gas station robbery with three accomplices, during which the clerk was shot and wounded. Derek pled guilty to robbery and attempted murder, and he served close to three years in prison. Following his release from prison, Derek was involved in serious criminal behavior for approximately 20 years; he was rearrested 12 times and committed at least seven violent offenses. He was arrested multiple times for both aggravated assault and robbery, and one of his arrests was for possession of a weapon and firing into an occupied building. Moreover, Derek was reincarcerated four times, which is the highest number of recommitments to prison in the sample. As discussed further below, Derek appeared to have desisted from crime after the last time he was released from prison.

On multiple occasions during his interview, Derek attributed his post-release criminal behavior to drug abuse. He stated that he “kept going back to prison because I needed money”, referring to the need to buy drugs. More specifically, he commented that his drug use pushed him to commit robberies and hurt other people. Derek’s problem with illegal drugs was also reflected
in the official arrest data; He was arrested several times for offenses related to cocaine, one of which led to reincarceration.

Another JHO who experienced difficulties due to cocaine was Thomas. As mentioned above, Thomas has been involved in drug trafficking and has accumulated several arrests related to drugs. In addition to selling drugs, Thomas also reported consuming drugs after his release from prison, referring specifically to crack cocaine. The offender lost two intimate partners due to his use of crack cocaine, including one who warned him in advance that she would end the relationship if he were to use drugs; Thomas stated that the woman “kept her promise” and left him when she discovered that he was using crack. Accordingly, Thomas’ drug use deprived him of an important source of informal social control, and further reduced his chance of desisting from criminal behavior.

In contrast to the offenders discussed above, Saul’s life was adversely impacted by both drugs and alcohol. In the early 1980s, Saul was involved in a robbery-related homicide along with multiple juvenile accomplices, similar to many of the persistent offenders in the sample; Saul stabbed to the victim, who was an adult man, to death. Following his arrest, Saul pled guilty to second-degree murder and served close to eight years in prison for this crime.

This JHO was rearrested four times after his release from prison for the homicide conviction. One of Saul’s arrests included three charges for aggravated assault. His other arrests were related to violations of parole, including multiple violations for the use of alcohol and/or drugs. Saul stated that he had abused drugs after he was released from prison; his excessive consumption of alcohol began when his parole officer implemented mandatory drug tests. Consequently, Saul reported becoming “an alcoholic” and attributed at least one of his parole violations to alcohol.
Saul was reincarcerated once during the follow-up period and it occurred after his last violation of parole. He was arrested for failing to report to his parole officer for more than one month. Subsequently, his parole was revoked, and he was recommitted to prison. Saul is one of the persistent offenders who is currently in prison; he has been incarcerated more than 20 years.

**Fatalism**

Interviews with at least three of the persistent offenders displayed evidence of fatalism. As mentioned in Chapter 3, fatalism refers to the belief that one cannot control his/her own destiny (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Matza, 1964). Offenders who demonstrate high levels of fatalism accept their circumstances (e.g., being a felon; experiencing barriers to employment) and do not devote much effort toward changing them. For example, when discussing his post-incarceration offending, Raymond stated: “I gave up. I made this my life”, referring to prison. Raymond also commented, “nothing was going on for me on the street, so I had to do more crime”. These statements suggest that the JHO viewed himself as an offender after his release from incarceration for the homicide conviction, which contributed to his continued involvement in criminal behavior and subsequent recommitment to prison.

Multiple persistent offenders exhibited a fatalistic attitude regarding the difficulties of finding stable employment as a convicted felon. Gus commented during his interview that he was “blocked from jobs” due to his criminal record; he added that following the September 11 terrorist attack, employers began conducting criminal background checks and did not want to hire individuals who had been convicted of felonies. Another JHO, Derek, related that his status as a felon impeded him from obtaining a stable job. In contrast to the desisters in the sample, some of whom also acknowledged the obstacles to stable employment for offenders who are released from prison, the persistent offenders mentioned above appeared to be resigned to the
notion that steady employment was impossible to find as a felon; accordingly, they did not exert sufficient effort toward achieving this goal.

**Lack of Stable Employment**

While some of the persistent offenders were entrepreneurial later in life and started their own business, none of them pursued a career after their initial release from prison. Moreover, no persistent offender has obtained a university degree; one JHO took courses at a local community college, but he decided to withdraw from the college before completing his degree. The lack of post-release higher education and careers is an important distinction between the persistent offenders and the desisters in the sample, given the fact that three of the eight desisters had earned at least an associate degree and pursued stable careers after they were released for the homicide conviction.

The theme of employment instability appeared to be particularly salient in the lives of three persistent offenders. For example, Thomas only had one legitimate job during the follow-up period, which was to detail cars at a certain dealership. As previously mentioned, much of his post-incarceration income derived from the sale of illegal drugs. In the case of Derek, this JHO reported committing robberies and selling drugs due to his inability to find a well-paying job. He mentioned working in several low-wage and unrelated jobs since his initial release from prison, including for a car dealership, a hotel, and a moving company.

Andrew was another JHO whose post-incarceration offending trajectory seemed to be influenced by the lack of steady employment. As a late teenager, this offender was involved in the same robbery and homicide incident as Gus, which was described above. Similar to his accomplice, Andrew pled guilty to second-degree murder; he spent close to 8 years in prison before being released. Notably, Andrew’s involvement in deviant behavior began at the age of 6,
when he was arrested for running away from home. Prior to the homicide incident, Andrew was arrested 14 times, for offenses such as shoplifting, burglary, simple battery, and aggravated battery.

After incarceration, Andrew stated that his search for work was “disappointing”; he struggled to find stable employment due to his felony conviction. Nevertheless, he obtained several short-term jobs through a labor pool service, including at a mental institution, a hospital, and construction company. However, he did not view the income from these jobs to be sufficient and reported selling illegal drugs as well.

With respect to post-release offending, Andrew was arrested five times during the follow-up and accumulated six charges related to violent offenses. For example, he was arrested multiple times for committing aggravated assault. He was also arrested and charged with serious property crimes such as vehicle theft and burglary. Moreover, Andrew’s criminal behavior led to two separate recommitments to prison, and he is currently incarcerated for a violent offense; he has been in prison close to 15 years.

Issues with Anger

The last important theme in the lives of the persistent offenders was unresolved anger. Perusal of the data from the follow-up interviews indicated that anger problems that were not addressed during the homicide-related incarceration or after release contributed to three JHOs’ adult criminal behavior. One of these offenders was Barry, who was arrested when he was younger than 16 years of age for attempted murder; during a robbery committed with two accomplices, Barry injured a male victim with a knife. Following a guilty plea, he served more than 7 years in prison.

Barry’s angry tendencies first became evident during his original prison term. When
asked about violence in which he was involved as an adolescent in prison, he stated, “I have always been the aggressor”. He also reported stabbing another inmate in response to sexual advances. Subsequently, seven months after his release from prison, Barry committed a conflict-oriented homicide; during an altercation with several individuals, he stabbed a male victim to death. While describing this incident, Barry commented: “It came to me. I couldn’t retreat anymore”. This statement suggests that the JHO was too angry to hold himself back from fighting and eventually killing the victim.

He was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to life in prison, probably due to his prior homicide-related conviction. Barry has been incarcerated close to 30 years, and he has continued to exhibit anger problems throughout his new prison term. For example, he reported attacking other inmates and correctional officers if they “poked”, or irritated, him. Overall, Barry has engaged in frequent misconduct since his recommitment to prison; he has accumulated many disciplinary reports for behaviors related to anger, such as assaults against inmates or correctional officers (including assaults that involved a weapon), expressing threats against correctional officers, and disorderly conduct. Notably, the interviewer referred to Barry as an “explosively violent” inmate.

Harvey’s post-incarceration criminal behavior was also influenced by anger. During the follow-up in interview, Harvey discussed two incidents in which he committed an aggravated assault; he mentioned feeling anger in relation to both incidents. In one of the offenses, Harvey hit a man who was reportedly threatening his girlfriend. In the second offense discussed by Harvey, he was angry with a drug dealer who was allegedly spreading false information about him, and proceeded to hit him when he sensed that the male victim was “going for a gun”.

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It is noteworthy that Harvey reported problems with anger in his original 1980s interview as well. For example, when asked whether there were things about himself that he did not like, Harvey responded, “sometimes I get angry, you know, and I could do something to hurt a person…” He also discussed an incident in the original interview in which he attacked another inmate because the latter “dropped some tomato juice on my shoes”. Evidently, Harvey did not receive the help he needed to control his anger during his homicide-related incarceration, which affected his behavior after release.

Lastly, evidence of anger was also displayed in Derek’s life after his release from prison. First, Derek commented that if a manager at a job was too aggressive toward him, his anger would be “triggered”. This difficulty in controlling his anger may explain why Derek struggled to maintain a job, as discussed above. Moreover, the JHO discussed multiple severe violent crimes in his interview, including the aggravated assault of a man with a baseball bat and firing a weapon into his girlfriend’s home after discovering that she had been unfaithful to him; these incidents further demonstrate the degree to which Derek’s post-release behavior had been driven by anger.

The applicability of the themes discussed above to the 11 persistent offenders is presented in Table 16. The most common theme of persistent offending in the sample was return to old neighborhood (n = 9), followed by association with criminal peers (n = 7). In other words, these JHOs returned to their neighborhood of origin or associated with criminal friends at some point after they were released for the homicide-related conviction. Notably, all six themes were applicable to Derek’s post-incarceration life, and four of them were applicable to Thomas’ life. As previously mentioned, Derek accumulated the highest number of recommitments to prison in the sample, and Thomas had the highest number of post-release arrests.
Table 16. Causes of Persistent Offending for Each JHO (n = 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JHO Name</th>
<th>Return to Old Neighborhood</th>
<th>Association with Criminal Peers</th>
<th>Substance Abuse</th>
<th>Fatalism</th>
<th>Lack of Stable Employment</th>
<th>Issues with Anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gus</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronnie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saul</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = Theme is applicable to JHO
Desistance Later in Life

As mentioned in the “Offending Trajectories” section of this chapter, three of the 11 persistent offenders desisted from crime as older adults; two of them desisted after long criminal careers. Perusal of the interview data revealed that the factors contributing to their desistance from criminal behavior were related to Sampson and Laub’s theory: strong informal social control and human agency.

Informal Social Control Factors

Two of the persistent offenders who eventually desisted from crime appeared to have done so due to stable employment and/or a strong attachment to an intimate partner, which is consistent with Sampson and Laub’s (1993; 2003) theory. Both of these factors contributed to Jerry’s desistance process. This JHO was under the age of 17 when he was involved in the robbery and murder of an older man, along with two juvenile accomplices; the victim was beaten to death with multiple blunt objects. He was subsequently convicted of second-degree murder and was incarcerated more than seven years for this homicide offense.

Jerry admitted that he was not serious about desisting from crime after his initial release from prison. He was able to obtain a low-wage job, but stated, “I was not too much paying attention. I had bad intentions, wanting to make myself rich”. He reported working in a legitimate job in order to buy drugs and subsequently sell them. At that time, he did not care about being arrested because “it was easy to make it in prison. I wasn’t scared”. Consequently, approximately five months after he was released from prison, he was rearrested for possession of a weapon as a felon and sent back to prison.

After serving an additional 11 years in prison, Jerry was released and became determined to make a change in his life. With respect to employment, Jerry has been working continuously
since his second release; he has been able to obtain several full-time jobs, including at multiple processing plants and as a restaurant decorator. He commented that by working frequently, he was reducing the likelihood of spending time with antisocial individuals and getting into legal trouble again.

Jerry has also been in a stable and loving intimate relationship for more than 10 years, and he has been raising multiple children with this woman. Conversely, Jerry was not involved in any serious intimate relationships after his release for the homicide conviction. In the interview, Jerry described his partner as “my rock, she puts up with me, she gets me”. This description demonstrates that Jerry would avoid engaging in any behavior that would endanger his intimate relationship. Accordingly, he has not been rearrested since his latest release from prison, which occurred more than 15 years ago.

A stable intimate relationship appeared to be the one of the main motivations for Gus’ desistance from crime. At the time of the follow-up interview, Gus had been living with a woman more than five years and called her a “positive influence” on him. When discussing his partner, Gus stated, “she keeps me out of trouble” and is “strict on me”. The offender added that he knew his girlfriend would leave him if he were arrested again, which further illustrates that she serves as a source of informal social control over his life. Gus has not been arrested in close to 15 years.

**Human Agency**

The interview data indicate that the three late desisters made a conscious choice to take their life in a different direction and stop engaging in criminal behavior. Following his second incarceration term, Jerry “got fed up with prison” and felt like he “hit rock bottom”. As discussed in the previous section, he decided to find stable employment after his second prison term ended.
When asked about his decision to focus on work, Jerry responded, “I had to take the initiative”, which indicates that becoming involved in a prosocial activity (i.e., employment) was a deliberate choice. Furthermore, Jerry reportedly insisted on working during the night in several of his jobs to minimize the likelihood of exposure to circumstances that could lead to crime.

Jerry took other deliberate steps in his pursuit of desistance from crime after the second time he was released. First, Jerry began attending counseling sessions because he felt that he was “withdrawing from others”. Moreover, he reported developing friendships with prosocial individuals; Jerry reconnected with his pre-incarceration friends, with whom he engaged in criminal behavior as an adolescent, after his first release from prison.

Some of Gus’ statements in the follow-up interview indicated that this JHO also made a conscious decision to desist from crime. He commented that as an older man, he did not want to lose his freedom again; as a reminder, Gus was reincarcerated three different times. He added that he “did some crazy stuff in the past”, but now “the light bulb went off”. The last statement demonstrates that Gus understood the consequences of further criminal behavior and was deliberately choosing to avoid engaging in it.

The last persistent offender to desist later in life was Derek, who has not been arrested in more than 10 years. Data from his interview suggested that he had stopped engaging in criminal behavior solely to avoid a sixth prison term. At the time of the interview, Derek was not steadily employed, and he was not involved in an intimate relationship. He specified that if he committed a new crime, he would be “going to prison for life as a habitual offender”; accordingly, he made a choice to end his long-lasting criminal career.

**Chapter Summary**

The JHOs in the sample who committed serious violent crimes and/or were sent back to
prison after their release for the homicide conviction exhibited different offending trajectories during the approximately 35-year follow-up period. As discussed earlier, four offending trajectories were discernible. The first group consisted of men who have had long-lasting criminal careers that included multiple recommittments to prison, and although they are now in their 50s, their involvement in criminal behavior continues. A second group is comprised of other frequent recidivists who are currently in prison. A third group of JHOs has committed fewer crimes due to spending many years in prison for new sentences. The last group of JHOs reoffended when they were younger, but have desisted from crime in their late 30s or 40s and have become law-abiding citizens.

Similar to desistence, persistence in offending after incarceration was influenced by six identified factors. Common factors that contributed to persistent offending were returning to one’s neighborhood of origin, association with pre-incarceration friends or other antisocial individuals, suffering from drug and/or alcohol abuse, displaying a fatalistic attitude regarding the prospect of success after incarceration, the lack of stable employment, and unresolved anger issues. Each one of the 11 persistent offenders was exposed to two or more of the factors mentioned above, and as previously noted, the most serious persistent offenders (Derek and Thomas) were exposed to the highest number of factors (six and four, respectively).

The follow-up data demonstrated that desistance is a possible outcome even for violent and frequent recidivists. Although the sources of informal social control promoted by Sampson and Laub (i.e., stable employment and attachment to intimate partner) were certainly influential in the desistance process, the data in this study suggested that human agency was a more important factor in causing desistance than social control among older offenders. The three JHOs who desisted as older adults did not appear to stop engaging in criminal behavior until they had
made a conscious choice to change the direction of their life. For example, Jerry was able to obtain a job after his first release from prison; however, employment did not serve as a turning point away from crime until Jerry had decided to change his behavior, which occurred after his second prison term. The concept of “desistance by default”, which was described by Laub and Sampson (2003) as inadvertent desistance from crime produced by strong informal social control, did not emerge in the interviews of persistent offenders who had desisted later in life. Overall, stable employment and attachment to intimate partner contributed to desistance only in two of the 11 cases discussed in this chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study presented in this dissertation was to examine the lives of men who committed a homicide offense in adolescence over a 35-year period, using both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The findings from these analyses demonstrated divergent pathways in life among JHOs released from prison; some offenders’ lives were characterized by stability and lack of involvement in criminal behavior, whereas other homicide offenders led chaotic and criminally oriented lives, which resulted in multiple new prison terms. In this chapter, the results that addressed the five research questions for the present study are summarized, followed by a discussion of the study’s implications for criminological theories and criminal justice policy. Lastly, the limitations of the study and potential avenues for future research are presented.

Summary of the Findings

The first research question in this study was “are incarceration-related variables related to frequency of general recidivism and violent recidivism?”. The findings indicated that time served for the homicide-related conviction significantly affected the frequency of both general and violent recidivism, and the completion of a GED during incarceration exerted a consistent significant effect on the frequency of violent recidivism, across every type of analysis (correlation, chi-square, and t-test analyses). JHOs who served less time in prison were more likely to accumulate a higher number of arrests and commit a higher number of violent offenses, which is consistent with some prior research on recidivism among JHOs (e.g., Trulson &
Caudill, 2017). It is possible that offenders who served shorter prison sentences were easily reintegrated into their pre-incarceration antisocial peer networks, which led to a higher frequency of criminal behavior.

JHOs who completed a GED in prison were found to commit fewer violent crimes after they were released. The completion of a degree may have been a function of an offender’s motivation to change their behavior and to lead a prosocial life after prison, and therefore contributed to a lower prevalence of post-incarceration violence. However, similar to some prior studies, the completion of a GED was not related to the frequency of arrests in general (e.g., Zgoba, Haugerbrook, & Jenkins, 2008).

With respect to the second research question (“are post-release variables related to frequency of general recidivism and violent recidivism?”), the most consistent post-release correlates of both general and frequent recidivism were return to one’s neighborhood of origin, association with pre-incarceration friends, and educational attainment. JHOs who returned to their old neighborhood after their release for the homicide conviction and reconnected with their old antisocial friends were more likely to engage in frequent general and violent criminal behavior, and those who pursued educational opportunities were less likely to engage in frequent criminal behavior.

The significant findings regarding return to old neighborhood and association with old friends are related to one another: Offenders who settle in the neighborhood in which they lived prior to incarceration are more likely to spend time with their pre-incarceration friends, and consequently resume their involvement in the same type of criminal behavior in which they engaged before they were arrested for the homicide offense (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). In the present study, none of the eight JHOs who settled in a different neighborhood after their release
reconnected with their old friends. Other important criminogenic factors related to the
disadvantaged neighborhoods to which JHOs often return after incarceration are few
opportunities for stable employment, the widespread availability of illegal drugs, and a conflict-
prone environment due to a higher concentration of individuals who have committed violent
offenses (e.g., Chamberlain & Wallace, 2016; Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Mears, Wang, Hay, &
Bales, 2008; Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

The lower likelihood of frequent recidivism among JHOs who continued their education
after release from incarceration may be a reflection of their conscious effort to improve their
lives and become law-abiding citizens (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Furthermore, as previously
mentioned in Chapter 7, education facilitated the pursuit of stable employment for the offenders
in the sample; the 3 JHOs who completed a university degree during the follow-up period had a
career and a stable work record since their release from prison, which contributed to their lack of
involvement in criminal behavior.

Notably, two demographic and pre-incarceration factors also emerged as significant
correlates of both general and violent recidivism in the quantitative analyses. First, Black JHOs
were more likely to engage in frequent recidivism than their White counterparts, across all types
of analyses. Apart from the stigma that Black men face in American society (e.g., Welch, 2007),
which makes the search for stable employment more challenging for these individuals, the
differences in frequency of recidivism between the two groups may also be due to the
neighborhood in which they lived after release; a supplemental chi-square analysis indicated that
the Black offenders in the sample were much more likely than the White offenders to settle in
their old neighborhood after they were released (77% v. 17%). Consequently, they were more
likely to be exposed to the same environment that contributed to the original homicide offense.
Moreover, JHOs who committed the homicide offense with at least one accomplice engaged in more frequent general and violent recidivism than lone offenders, according to the t-test analyses. This finding is consistent with some prior research on recidivism (e.g., Ouellet, Boivin, Leclerc, & Morselli, 2013), and may be attributed to the greater availability of criminal opportunities for individuals who offend in groups (McNeeley, 2021); alternatively, it may be indicative of a more antisocial orientation among group offenders. As mentioned above, this dynamic appears to be particularly relevant to JHOs who served shorter sentences for the homicide conviction and were able to reconnect easily with their pre-incarceration accomplices.

To address Research Questions 3-5, qualitative analyses were used to examine not only the frequency and severity of JHOs’ post-incarceration criminal behavior, but also the continuity in offending between the original release date and November of 2020, and the different experiences these offenders underwent in the past 35 years. In other words, did JHOs who recidivated after their release for the homicide conviction engage in criminal behavior continuously until middle adulthood, or did a change in their life circumstances and/or attitudes compel them to desist from crime?

In response to the third research question (“what are the main factors that distinguish between desisters and persistent offenders in the sample?”), the qualitative analyses discussed in Chapter 6 revealed several important themes in the lives of JHOs who completely desisted from crime after they were released from prison or those who were arrested infrequently for more minor crimes: avoidance of pre-incarceration neighborhood and friends, a marriage or intimate relationship with a supportive partner, stable employment, a conscious effort to stop engaging in criminal behavior (i.e., human agency), a desire to help young people avoid the criminal lifestyle (i.e., generativity), and involvement in an intensive reentry program designed for individuals
who are serving a life sentence and behaving well in prison. Conversely, JHOs who were reincarcerated and/or engaged in chronic and violent offending tended to settle in their old neighborhoods after release, reconnected with their old friends or formed relationships with other criminal individuals from their neighborhood, abused drugs and alcohol, felt that they had no control over their lives (i.e., fatalistic), were unable to find stable employment, and suffered from anger issues that were not properly treated when these JHOs were incarcerated or after they were released.

There was mixed evidence in the qualitative analyses for the concept of identity transformation, which was discussed in Chapter 3. Similar to findings from prior research, the desisters in the sample were more likely to feel that they had control over their choices and destiny (Liem & Richardson, 2014; Maruna, 2001). However, the follow-up interviews provided little to no evidence of the adoption of prosocial values by the desisters, which was highlighted as an important component of desistance by Giordano and her colleagues (2002). The lack of involvement in serious criminal behavior by these men appeared to stem less from a change in values, and much more from the desire to avoid future incarceration and external circumstances (e.g., stable employment, absence of neighborhood-based negative peer influences, a positive intimate relationship).

The analyses in this study revealed that some men who commit homicide offenses as juveniles pose a grave risk to society upon release. Five JHOs were rearrested more than 10 times since their release from prison for the homicide conviction; one of these JHOs was rearrested more than 20 times (Thomas). The persistent offenders committed a variety of serious crimes during the follow-up period, including murder, attempted murder, aggravated and simple assault, robbery, kidnapping, burglary, and distribution of cocaine, among others. Nevertheless,
the trajectories of offending in the sample differed, even among chronic and violent recidivists.

In response to Research Question 4 ("how many distinct behavioral trajectories exist among JHOs released from prison?"), four groups of offenders were detected in this small sample of JHOs: The first group consisted of JHOs who were rearrested five or more times during the follow-up period, and either were still engaging in criminal behavior as men in their 50s or were incarcerated. The second group included chronic offenders who were rearrested five or more times after their initial release from prison, but who stopped engaging in criminal behavior when they were in their 40s. The third group of JHOs were rearrested less than five times, but their post-release criminal career was interrupted by a long prison sentence. Lastly, one JHO was rearrested once and reincarcerated, but he desisted from crime in his late 30s following his second release from prison.

It would be valuable to assess whether the preliminary offending trajectory groups discussed above are replicated in a future study with a larger sample. Interestingly, in the study by McCuish and colleagues (2018), which employed a semi-parametric group-based modeling analysis to assess offending trajectories up to the age of 28 among juvenile offenders, the authors found evidence for both high-rate desisters and high-rate persistent offenders. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the majority of their sample consisted of individuals who committed a homicide offense or other types of violent crimes.

With respect to the last research question ("what effect do factors related to informal social control have on post-incarceration recidivism outcomes?"), the qualitative analyses suggested that stable employment and strong intimate relationships were important factors in desistance of homicide offenders. Similar to the research by Laub and Sampson (2003), these two factors influenced desistance both directly and indirectly. Intimate partners, and employers
to a lesser extent (e.g., in Edward’s case), served as direct sources of guidance and supervision by encouraging the JHOs to avoid decisions that may lead to adverse outcomes. However, they also contributed to desistance by providing JHOs with a sense of purpose in life and increasing their stakes in conformity; several of the JHOs who have desisted from crime were happy in their jobs (e.g., Christopher, Robert) and/or intimate relationships (e.g., Christopher, Jerry, Edward), and would not want to jeopardize them by committing new crimes.

Family support, which is another indicator of informal social control examined in prior research (e.g., Walker et al., 2020), has not been found to differentiate between the desisters and persistent offenders in the sample. Some of the most chronic offenders in the sample had strong family support after their initial release from prison; for example, Mark’s family provided him with a place to live and a vehicle, while Harvey’s family members gave him a vehicle and direct financial assistance. Conversely, some of the desisters (e.g., Edward, Gene) did not benefit from any family support.

**Implications for Criminological Theories**

The findings provided partial support for Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control (1993, 2003), which was the main theoretical framework for the present study. Despite the fact that the measures of stable employment and attachment to intimate partner were not found to be significantly related to the recidivism variables in the quantitative analyses, these factors emerged as important contributors to desistance in the qualitative analyses. Statements by some of the JHOs during the follow-up interviews illustrated the effects of steady employment and positive intimate relationships on their decision to end their involvement in criminal behavior. These results suggest that strong informal social control serves
as a positive influence in the adult lives of young homicide offenders, who were not examined in the research by Sampson and Laub.

Nevertheless, some of the chronic persistent offenders discussed in Chapter 7 also had stable, full-time jobs (e.g., Mark) or intimate partners to whom they were strongly attached (e.g., Thomas). In terms of Sampson and Laub’s theory, the more salient distinguishing characteristic between the JHOs who have desisted throughout the course of their lives and the JHOs who did not do so is the concept of human agency, as previously discussed. Some of the men in the sample have made a conscious decision to avoid steps that may lead to another prison term; stable employment and involvement in a strong intimate relationship appeared to add to the accomplishment of this goal. Other sample subjects have not made such a decision, for one reason or another, and thus continue to engage in criminal activities even as older men.

Laub and Sampson (2003) discussed the influence of aging on desistance and argued that all offenders eventually desist from crime due to the adverse effects of older age (e.g., health problems), which turn crime and its potential legal consequences into less attractive options. The present study provided mixed evidence for this perspective on desistance. On one hand, four of the eight desisters presented in Chapter 6 were incarcerated more than 20 years for the homicide conviction and were released from prison in middle adulthood. It is possible that their lack of involvement in crime was at least partially due to their older age and reluctance to engage in any dangerous behavior. On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 7, at least three JHOs are active offenders in their 50s. Another JHO, who has been incarcerated close to 30 years for a new homicide offense and was in his 50s during the follow-up interview, reported engaging in recent violence against other inmates and correctional officers. The data in this study suggest that merely aging does not guarantee that a person will stop engaging in serious antisocial behavior.
An emerging theory of desistance attributes the termination of a criminal career to psychosocial maturation, rather than mere age. According to Rocque (2017), a juvenile offender desists in adulthood due to a cognitive transformation, which is facilitated by the adoption of traditional adult roles (e.g., stable employment, marriage, parenthood, completion of a university degree, the payment of taxes). Through these mechanisms, the individual will stop engaging in criminal behavior due to becoming more prosocial, responsible, conscientious, introspective, and open to change, as well as less impulsive.

The present study provided mixed evidence for this theory as well. While some of the JHOs who desisted during the follow-up period viewed themselves as responsible for their own behavior and assumed adult responsibilities in a healthy manner (e.g., Seth, Edward), several other JHOs who have desisted were noted as immature by the interviewer (e.g., Bobby, Derek, Gus). These individuals did not take responsibility for the original homicide offense and blamed other people and circumstances for the challenges they faced after they were released. Also, as mentioned above, they did not hold prosocial attitudes. When comparing the maturity of these JHOs as boys in the early 1980s with their maturity during the follow-up interview 35 years later, the interviewer described them as “frozen in time”.

Partial support was also provided for Giordano and colleagues’ (2002) theory of cognitive transformation in the analyses. As mentioned above, desistance generally was not found to be caused by the development of a prosocial identity among the offenders in this sample, in contrast to one of the theory’s tenets. Various JHOs in the sample were exposed to “hooks for change” such as stable employment or a high attachment to an intimate partner. The offenders who took advantage of these external circumstances to become law-abiding citizens,
however, were primarily those who were previously motivated to change their lives and stop engaging in criminal behavior, in order to avoid another prison term.

The data used for this study displayed some evidence for the existence of Moffitt’s (1993) life-course persistent offender among JHOs. For example, Raymond was arrested for the first time as a pre-adolescent for an offense that may be tied to defiance of authority, which was disorderly conduct. Subsequently, Raymond was arrested more than 10 additional times for serious violent and property crimes, culminating in the homicide offense. After he was released from incarceration, he continued committing serious violent and property crimes in his 30s, and he is now back in prison. Moreover, Andrew was younger than 10 years of age when he was arrested for the first time after committing a status offense. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Andrew was arrested 13 additional times prior to his involvement in the homicide offense. After his release for the homicide conviction, Andrew continued engaging in serious criminal behavior as a man in his 20s, 30s, and 40s, and he is currently serving a long prison sentence. Because the present sample consisted of individuals who were arrested for murder or attempted murder, none of them can classified as “adolescence-limited” offenders, who were described by Moffitt (1993) as adolescents who engage in minor forms of crime to assert their autonomy.

In their analyses of a male cohort from New Zealand, Moffitt, Caspi, Dickson, Silva, and Stanton (1996) identified a group of “recoveries”; these individuals engaged in serious and chronic antisocial behavior in childhood, but they could not be classified as life-course persistent offenders due to engaging in less frequent delinquency in adolescence. They represented approximately 8% of the sample in the study by Moffitt and colleagues (1996). Moffitt and her colleagues (2002) warned that “true recoveries” from deviant and criminal behavior were a rare phenomenon, as many of these men continued to commit crimes in adulthood. In the present
study, two of the 19 released JHOs (11%) can arguably be viewed as true recoveries in adulthood (Gene and Edward). These two individuals engaged in serious antisocial behavior in childhood (e.g., theft, vandalism, aggression at school); in the case of Gene, his first arrest occurred at the age of 8. Their offending behavior decreased in adolescence when they were arrested for murder, and subsequently convicted and sentenced to prison. After they were released from incarceration as adults, they completely refrained from criminal behavior. These results suggest that true recoveries from offending in adulthood, while rare, are possible even among the most serious and violent offenders.

**Implications for Criminal Justice Policy**

The results in the present study provide several preliminary implications for policies that would benefit formerly incarcerated homicide offenders and may be effective in reducing their likelihood of recidivism. For example, given the importance of neighborhood attainment in differentiating between the desisters and serious persistent offenders in the sample, resources should be devoted to helping JHOs settle in a neighborhood other than the one in which they lived prior to incarceration. Research from Maryland showed that deliberate efforts to relocate released offenders away from their old neighborhood resulted in a lower likelihood of recidivism, compared to released offenders who settled in their old neighborhoods (Kirk, Barnes, Hyatt, & Kearley, 2018); this policy should be expanded to help offenders in avoiding the adverse influences (e.g., antisocial friends, high prevalence of illegal drugs, previous reputation) that contributed to their original prison sentence.

The influence of stable employment on desistance either after the first release from prison or later in life highlights the importance of reentry programs that teach job skills to young violent offenders and provide other employment-related services, such as guiding offenders in their
search for a job. Essential job skills include appropriate behavior during an interview, prosocial methods of communication with a supervisor and other co-workers, and effective time management. One such nationwide program for violent offenders, which is referred to as the “Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative”, has produced promising results with respect to its ability to reduce the likelihood of recidivism (e.g., Veysey, Ostermann, & Lanterman, 2014).

The findings also provide support for a more widespread implementation of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in treatment of JHOs and other types of violent offenders. As previously mentioned, several JHOs in the sample committed serious post-release offenses due to unresolved issues with anger; CBT has been shown to be effective in reducing anger problems (e.g., Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer, & Fang, 2012). Given the fact that this treatment method entails changing a person’s belief system (Heide & Solomon, 2003), it may also be useful in reducing convicted offenders’ sense of fatalism regarding the possibility of changing their life circumstances.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study provided a unique life-course investigation of men who committed a homicide offense in adolescence; no prior study has examined in depth the offending patterns and life changes among JHOs up to their mid-50s. This study is important for gaining a preliminary understanding of the different challenges faced by serious violent offenders throughout their adult lives. Nevertheless, the study suffers from several limitations. The primary limitation is the small sample size, which impeded the use of multivariate statistical techniques. Future homicide recidivism research would benefit from using larger samples in order to conduct more sophisticated statistical analyses and assess whether factors such as returning to one’s old
neighborhood and association with criminal peers significantly predict long-term recidivism outcomes for JHOs, after controlling for other relevant variables. A larger sample size would also provide researchers with a better indication of whether measures of informal social control, such as stable employment and attachment to intimate partner, are significant predictors of post-release recidivism for homicide offenders.

Furthermore, the JHOs in this study were all from the same state, which limited the generalizability of the findings to young male homicide offenders in general. Homicide offenders, and convicted felons more generally, do not face the same circumstances in every U.S. state after they are released from incarceration; for example, barriers to employment for felons vary from state to state (Slivinski, 2016). Therefore, future studies should conduct long-term examinations of JHOs from various states, which will clarify whether post-incarceration outcomes substantially differ based on the state in which an offender is released and whether they participate in effective reentry programs.

The generalizability of the results may have also been impacted by the JHOs from the larger sample of 59 offenders who were not included in the present study. As mentioned in the fourth chapter, 10 of the JHOs from the original sample were deceased prior to the recruitment stage of this study, and the available evidence suggests that these individuals would have struggled to desist from crime. Two of these JHOs died due to excessive consumption of alcohol; one of them was killed in a car accident that he caused by driving the wrong way on a major highway while under the influence of alcohol. Two others died as a result of risky sexual behaviors in prison, one was killed following an escape from prison, another offender was killed during a robbery after a long criminal career, and another was killed in a gang-related case of mistaken identity. Additionally, although the 22 sample subjects were not found to differ from
the JHOs who did not agree to participate in the study on pre-homicide factors and time served for the homicide conviction, some of the non-participants were shown to be serious and chronic offenders up to December of 2012 (Khachatryan et al., 2016). For example, three of the 22 non-participants committed post-release homicides, and six of them accumulated 10 or more arrests, including one JHO who was arrested 30 times.

Lastly, the offenders in the sample were all men. There is little to no knowledge currently regarding female JHOs’ post-incarceration experiences over the life course. Accordingly, the post-release lives of girls who commit homicide offenses should be analyzed in depth in future studies, to assess whether similar factors (e.g., settling in a new neighborhood after release, avoidance of pre-incarceration peers, stable employment, human agency, GED, post-release educational attainment) lead to desistance for this group of offenders as well.
REFERENCES


Teachman, J., & Tedrow, L. (2016). Altering the life course: Military service and contact with the criminal justice system. *Social Science Research, 60*, 74-87.


APPENDIX A:

TOPIC INDEX FOR INTERVIEWS WITH JHOS

• Experiences in Prison (All Adult JHOs)
  o Treatment received
  o Participation in educational programs
  o Participation in vocational programs
  o Participation in activities and programs
  o Use of alcohol and/or drugs while incarcerated
  o Work assignments (type)
  o Difficulties experienced with inmates
  o Difficulties experienced with correctional authorities
  o Victimization experiences while incarcerated
  o Disciplinary status/infractions
  o Overall adjustment in prison
  o Overall health
  o Challenges and/or problems encountered
  o Contact with family of origin (extent, type)
  o Contact with pre-arrest friends (extent, type)
  o Friends in prison
  o Relationship with significant other (e.g., girlfriend, boyfriend)
  o Offender’s children
  o Money
  o Future plans

• For offenders who have been released
  o Re-entry experiences
  o Status re: correctional supervision and post-release directives, if any
  o Compliance with post-release directives, if applicable
  o Place of residence (return to same community or re-location)
  o Relational status (e.g., married, living with mate, dating)
  o Offender’s children
  o Contact with family of origin (extent, type)
  o Contact with pre-arrest friends (extent, type)
  o Employment history, opportunities, experiences
  o Educational activities (college, vocational training)
  o Alcohol and drug involvement
  o Participation in counseling
  o Involvement in criminal activities
  o Future plans
• **For offenders who have been released, rearrested, and, if applicable, reincarcerated**
  o Types of arrests / Conviction status
  o Circumstances behind involvement (general, not crime details)
  o Sanctions
  o Effect on significant others
  o Experience of being reincarcerated

• **Reflections and Suggestions by All Adult JHOs re: Getting into Trouble**
  o Reasons for crime evaluated (theory testing)

• **Reflections and Suggestions by all adult JHOs**
  o Reflections on their involvement in homicide
  o Suggestions to help prevent kids from being involved in murder/violent crime
  o Suggestions to help JHOs post-arrest
  o Suggestions to help JHOs while incarcerated
  o Suggestions to help JHOs re-enter society and make a successful adjustment

• **Debriefing**
  o Their assessment of the interview
  o Areas that upset them
  o Additional thoughts/concerns

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1 An odds ratio value produced by a chi-square analysis is identical to the exponentiated coefficient in a bivariate logistic regression analysis.

2 The JHO convicted of manslaughter was originally charged with second-degree murder, which was consistent with the nature of the homicide incident. This charge was later negotiated downward by his attorney in exchange for pleading guilty.