REENTRY FROM INCARCERATION DURING YOUNG ADULTHOOD: THE IMPACT OF FAMILY CONTEXT ON YOUTH IN TRANSITION

by

ELIZABETH A. PANUCCIO

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and approved by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Reentry from Incarceration during Young Adulthood: The Impact of Family Context on Youth in Transition

By ELIZABETH A. PANUCCIO

Dissertation Director:
Dr. Mercer L. Sullivan

Youth who return from incarceration often face numerous obstacles including, pre-existing family problems, substance abuse, mental illness, low educational attainment and barriers to employment. Those who reenter during emerging adulthood, a developmental phase occurring between the ages of 18 and 25, face additional challenges as they attempt to take on the responsibilities of adulthood while adjusting to community and family life and meeting the requirements of their release. Since emerging adults typically rely on family members for a significant amount of support, as do returning offenders, the family context of reentry from incarceration during young adulthood must be examined. Prior research has established a relationship between family contextual factors and recidivism, yet studies have also shown that families support returning offenders in ways that are critical to their reintegration, creating a paradox that is not fully understood. Further research is needed into the specific ways that families affect the reentry process for young adults.

A qualitative study was conducted to explore the family context of reentry during young adulthood. In-depth interviews were conducted with formerly incarcerated individuals who were released between the ages of 18 and 25 and members of their

families. Consistent with prior research, the data presented here reveal that youth who return from incarceration struggle to overcome pre-existing family problems but they also rely on family support in confronting the hurdles of reentry. An explanation for this paradox is offered through a developmental analysis of how youth attempt to resolve family problems as they enter their twenties and capitalize on support networks. An increased psychosocial maturity during this phase allows for a reevaluation and realignment of family ties. As young adults reconstruct their families, they identify and activate the most effective sources of support within their own kin networks. This study identifies specific developmental processes that occur during young adulthood and the distinct mechanisms that lead to improvements in family context. Policy implications involve program strategies aimed at strengthening family relationships, increasing family support by redefining traditional definitions of family and widening support networks, and increasing structural opportunities for returning offenders.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Convicted offenders who are sentenced to incarceration are likely to need a lot of support when they return to the community. Research indicates that family support may be of particular importance as returning offenders confront the obstacles of reentry. Families often provide returning offenders with places to live and they may also offer financial assistance, food and transportation. Family members can also provide connections to employment. In addition to tangible support, families may provide emotional support that encourages offenders to desist from crime. There is also evidence to suggest, however, that some offenders experience difficulty with family members upon their release and/or are affected by ongoing family problems. In fact, some studies have reported increased levels of conflict when offenders return to their families following a period of incarceration (Nelson & Trone, 2000; Sullivan, Mino, Nelson & Pope, 2002). There is therefore an unexplained paradox in the literature: families as a critical source of support on one hand and a source of tension on the other hand. This study explores the family context of reentry from incarceration and offers an explanation for the paradox that exists in the reentry literature with regard to family support.

Prisoner reentry has been a topic of increasing concern in recent years following a dramatic rise in the number of offenders released from detention facilities as a result of mass incarceration. Increasing concern about urban family life and crime led to significant change with regard to punitive policies during the 1970s. Determinate sentencing, truth-in-sentencing policies, three strikes laws, and a harsher targeting of drug offenses led to more offenders being locked up for longer periods of time. In 1973 the prison incarceration rate was 96 per 100,000 Americans. By the time it reached its peak

in 2008, the imprisonment rate was 506 per 100,000 (West & Sabol, 2009). When jail inmates are included in the total, the incarceration rate exceeded 760 per 100,000 citizens, which means that close to 2.3 million people were incarcerated in the U.S. by 2008 (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008). While incarceration rates have since been declining, the imprisonment rate for blacks remains much higher than for whites. In 2010, black men were six times as likely as whites to be incarcerated in prisons and jails (Glaze, 2011). The estimated number of men held in prisons and jails in the U.S. on June 30, 2010 was 678 per 100,000 whites and 4,347 per 100,000 blacks.

Developmental theorist Glen Elder (1974) argued that our fates are linked to those of our loved ones and that our lives are shaped by the circumstances of our parents, and even our grandparents, and the historical context in which they lived. This is certainly true for those affected by the era of mass incarceration. A collateral consequence of mass incarceration was a significant number of children with parents behind bars and more children growing up in broken homes. There are more than 1.7 million children under the age of 18 in the U.S. with a parent in state or federal prison (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Youth who were born into families affected by mass incarceration may have been dealt a difficult hand in life. Children of incarcerated parents suffer many consequences as a result of their parents' confinement, including financial hardship, unstable living situations, strained family relationships, psychological and emotional problems, behavioral problems and stigmatization (Braman & Wood, 2003; Hairston, 2003; Travis & Waul, 2003).

In a recent study of the relationships between parental incarceration, family context and youth problem behavior, Kjellstrand & Eddy (2011) found that adolescents

with past parental incarceration experienced many family and parental risk factors, including lower family income and socioeconomic status, higher parental depression, and inappropriate or inconsistent discipline. These adolescents were more likely to exhibit youth problem behaviors and serious delinquency. This finding is consistent with earlier studies that have found young people growing up in similar family contexts are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Aaron and Dallaire, 2010; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994).

During the era of mass incarceration, there was an increase in the number of imprisoned youth. Even though youth crime began to decline during the mid- to late-1990s (Butts & Travis, 2002), between 1985 and 2002 the number of cases in which adjudicated youth were sentenced to some type of residential placement rose 44 percent, from 100,400 to 144,000 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Only recently has the youth custody rate begun to decline. Between 2010 and 2011, the number of committed youth decreased in 43 states (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013), but the decline in the population of minority offenders in residential placement has been much smaller than the decline in the population of white offenders (Hockenberry, 2013). In 2010, 68 percent of the youth custody population was comprised of minority offenders and 41 percent of them were black. There is a large disparity in the number of African American and Hispanic youth in custody versus the number of whites. On October 26, 2011, the youth custody rate in the U.S. was 196 per 100,000 juveniles, but the number of non-Hispanic black juveniles in residential placement was 521 per 100,000, compared to 202 per 100,000 Hispanics, and 112 per 100,000 non-Hispanic whites (OJJDP, 2013). Even though the youth custody rate is decreasing, the impact seems to be

disproportionate by race. In New Jersey, the difference is even more pronounced. In 2010, the youth custody rate for black juveniles was 523 per 100,000, compared to 27 per 100,000 whites (Hockenberry, 2013). Given that one in 11 juvenile offenders in custody reports being a parent (OJJDP, 2013), Elder's theory about linked lives suggests that minority children will be negatively impacted by this trend.

Youth are confined in many different types of facilities, including group homes, residential treatment centers, boot camps, and staff supervised youth facilities. The largest share of committed youth, however, about 40 percent, are held in locked, long-term correctional facilities (Hazel, 2008). While estimates vary, nearly 200,000 of all individuals released each year are under the age of 24 (Mears & Travis, 2004). In New Jersey alone, approximately 1,600 adjudicated delinquents return home each year from a placement in either a secure or residential facility (Stout, 2003).

In recent years, scholars have produced an abundance of research on prisoner reentry. Many have examined the impact of incarceration on families of adult offenders (Braman & Wood, 2003; Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Hairston, 2003; Naser & Visher, 2006; Rose & Clear, 2003; Western, Lopoo & McLanahan, 2004) and how families are affected when adult offenders return to their homes (Breese, Ra'el & Grant, 2000; Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Naser & Visher, 2006; Nelson, Deess & Allen, 1999; Sullivan, Mino, Nelson & Pope, 2002). These processes have been less examined for families of youth offenders and they remain unclear. Offenders released from incarceration during young adulthood face a unique set of challenges as they transition not only from custody to the community, but from adolescence to adulthood. Since the majority have few options but to return to the homes they resided in prior to their incarceration (Altschuler & Brash,

2004; Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz & D'ambrosio, 2001), they will undoubtedly look to family members for some level of support when they return home. Members of the youth reentry population, however, often come from families of limited economic resources and a multitude of other problems. Many of them experience mental health problems, substance abuse, histories of physical or sexual abuse, parental incarceration, and the involvement of child protective services. Descriptive data from the 1997 National Survey of Inmates in State and Correctional Facilities reveal that inmates under the age of 25 experienced high rates of disadvantage in their families of origin (Uggen & Wakefield, 2005). 24.2 percent of young inmates spent a portion of their childhood in public housing, 46.5 percent reported that their parents or guardians received public assistance, 16 percent had been placed in foster care or group homes during childhood, 33 percent had parents or guardians who abused drugs or alcohol, and 31.3 percent reported that one of their parents or guardians was incarcerated while they were growing up. Other studies have found equally high rates of family problems among incarcerated youth. Snyder (2004) found that more than half of all committed juvenile offenders have at least one family member who has been incarcerated. In New Jersey, a study of 259 committed adolescents found that 57 percent had one or more indicators of family problems present (Stout, 2003). These problems included parent or caregiver incarceration, parent or caregiver substance abuse, and involvement of child protective services. Rates of abuse during childhood may also be high among incarcerated youth. In a study of juvenile detainees, Teplin et al. (2013) found that four out of five reported having been physically abused.

Evidence suggests that young people have a difficult time desisting from crime after release from residential correctional programs. According to a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, studies tracking youth released from juvenile corrections facilities have consistently reported high recidivism rates (Mendel, 2011). State estimates indicate that re-arrest rates for youth within one year of release average 55 percent and re-incarceration rates within the same period average 24 percent (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Available studies find that within two to three years, 70 to 80 percent of youth are rearrested and 26 to 62 percent are re-incarcerated on new charges within three years (Mendel, 2011). Juveniles who have been incarcerated are at an increased risk of both adult criminality and incarceration (Aizer & Doyle, Jr., 2011; Gatti, Tremblay & Vitaro, 2009), which may result in part from the numerous obstacles young people face after spending time in a secure confinement facility. The next section will highlight these obstacles.

Challenges of Youth Reentry

Formerly incarcerated youth experience many challenges when they return to their communities after release from detention. When reentering the community, many young offenders return with drug and alcohol problems that were untreated during incarceration (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Snyder, 2004; Uggen & Wakefield, 2005), many suffer from some type of mental illness (Mears, 2001; Snyder, 2004; Steinberg, Chung & Little, 2004; Uggen & Wakefield, 2005), and many incarcerated youth also have learning disabilities and low levels of education (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Sedlak & McPherson, 2010; Snyder, 2004). Returning youth offenders also face significant barriers to employment (Western, 2002; 2006). Finally, they are in a unique

developmental phase because they are making two types of transitions: one from custody to the community and another from adolescence to adulthood (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Confronting the challenges of reentry, such as remaining drug free and avoiding delinquent peers, is made more difficult by also having to confront the challenges of adulthood, such as finding stable employment and contributing financially to households (Uggen & Wakefield, 2005). Each of these challenges will be discussed in more detail below.

Substance Abuse

Alcohol and drug use is common among incarcerated youth but treatment is lacking (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Snyder, 2004; Uggen & Wakefield, 2005). Teplin et al. (2013) reported that multiple substance use disorders are common among detained juveniles. Among study participants who had an alcohol disorder, four out of five also had another type of drug problem. More than two-thirds of respondents in the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement reported serious substance abuse problems, and 59 percent reported that they had been getting drunk or high several times per week or daily in the months leading to their arrest (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). Despite the high rates of reported substance abuse, the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement found that 42 percent of youth residing in juvenile corrections facilities do not receive any substance abuse treatment. This figure includes 35 percent of youth who reported daily use of drugs and alcohol prior to being placed in custody. One-fifth of confined youth reside in facilities that do not even screen for substance abuse and close to another fifth reside in facilities that screen some but not all residents. Those who abused drugs and alcohol

prior to their confinement will likely continue to battle their substance use problems post-release.

Mental Illness

Incarcerated youth are also more likely to have some type of mental illness than are youth in the general population (Mears, 2001; Snyder, 2004; Steinberg, Chung & Little, 2004; Teplin et al., 2013; Uggen & Wakefield, 2005). During the 1990s, states experienced a collapse of public mental health services for children and adolescents and a widespread closing of residential facilities for seriously disturbed youths (Grisso, 2004). The result was an increase in the number of youth with mental health disorders being referred to the juvenile justice system. Research finds that about two-thirds of youth in juvenile confinement facilities have one or more diagnosable mental health problems and that one in every five has a condition so severe that it impairs their ability to function (Shufelt & Cocozza, 2006). In a study of juvenile detainees, Teplin et al. (2013) found that 66 percent had at least one psychiatric disorder and 44 percent had two or more disorders. According to the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement, half of youth in juvenile confinement facilities exhibited elevated symptoms for depression and anxiety (Sedlack & McPherson, 2010). Unfortunately, more than half are held in facilities that do not routinely conduct mental health assessments. Two out of every five youth in confinement had not received any mental health counseling and quite surprisingly, youth with serious symptoms such as suicidal tendencies, anger, and anxiety were less likely to receive counseling than other youth. Teplin et al. (2013) also found the mental health needs of youth in detention to be largely untreated. Of those with major psychiatric

disorders and functional impairment, only 15 percent were treated in the detention center prior to release.

Educational Achievement

Educational attainment is a major obstacle for many young offenders when they return to the community. Many have learning disabilities and low levels of education (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Snyder, 2004). Almost one half of youth in custody are at less than the typical grade level for their age (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). One study found that 58 percent of committed youth ages 15 to 17 had not completed the 8th grade, compared with 24 percent of youth in the general U.S. population (Snyder, 2004). Less than ten percent of youth 18 or older were high school graduates. A more recent analysis using data from the National Longitudinal Youth Survey found that incarceration at age 16 and younger led to a 26 percent lower chance of graduating high school by age 19 (Hjalmarsson, 2008). Part of the problem is that education services in youth confinement facilities are poor. According to one report, the educational programs of many state juvenile justice systems receive failing grades. The most common problems are overcrowding, frequent transfers of the youth, lack of qualified teachers, an inability to address gaps in students' education, and a lack of collaboration with public schools (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003).

In addition to low educational attainment, learning disorders are common among incarcerated youth. The National Council on Disability (2003) found a high rate of educational disabilities among incarcerated juveniles – a rate between three and five times that of the general population of juveniles in the U.S. 30 percent of respondents in the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement reported that they had been diagnosed with

a learning disability (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010) and making matters worse is that services for these youth are lacking in correctional facilities. Just 45 percent of detained and committed youth with a previously diagnosed learning disability receive special education services while in custody (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010).

Barriers to Employment

The employment prospects of young black males are worse today than they have ever been in the past (Wilson, 2010). Those released from incarceration as young adults are likely to have little work experience and may not have completed school. Those who are released after serving time in the adult system face the difficulty of having to report their felony convictions on employment applications. Studies show that incarceration hurts a person's chances of finding employment and may also decrease wages. Western (2002) has argued that incarceration is a turning point that reduces the earnings mobility of young men. Youth who have been incarcerated may suffer earnings losses of between ten and 30 percent up to ten years after their release. Western's (2006) analysis of former prisoners found that for those who did find jobs, hourly wages were reduced by around 15 percent and annual earnings fell by 30 to 40 percent. In another analysis, Rose and Clear (2003) found that most ex-prisoners were unable to find employment and those that did were offered too few hours to qualify for benefits. Some of the barriers to employment are that employers are unwilling to hire people with prison records and prisoners are poorly prepared for steady employment (Western, 2006). Moreover, having a felony conviction bans offenders from working in certain occupations and thus further limits the options available to them. Another barrier to employment for former inmates is that incarceration can cause a disruption in the accumulation of human capital.

Incarceration during adolescence may interrupt high school completion (Hjalmarsson, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1993), thereby reducing earnings potential. Unable to find legitimate employment, formerly incarcerated offenders may be tempted to seek other means of earning an income. Apel and Sweeten (2010) examination of the impact of incarceration on employment during the transition to adulthood challenges these previous findings to some extent. They found that offenders who were incarcerated following their first convictions were less likely to be employed than those who were convicted for the first time and not incarcerated, even those who were only incarcerated for a short period of time. They found, however, that these offenders were not necessarily unemployed due to the stigma of their convictions, but due to voluntary non-participation in the labor force. The long-term prospects for these individuals are dismal because their lack of work experience over time creates deficiencies in their human capital and it becomes difficult for them to find legitimate employment. The authors reported that the inmates in their study faced employment difficulties for a long period of time following their incarceration and may endure for up to six years.

Young adults face additional barriers to financial stability. One such barrier is the restrictions on welfare benefits. Male returning prisoners are the least protected group by public assistance (Simon, 1993). While female parolees commonly receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, few male parolees qualify even though many have children, because TANF is typically awarded to single female caregivers. The program most widely available to male parolees is General Assistance (GA). Benefit levels are set locally but are usually not more than a few hundred dollars a month. Many locations require drug testing and

treatment, job search training, or community service work. When people receiving benefits fail to meet these requirements, they are cancelled from the program. This cancellation policy does not account for the fact that male parolees are a population with shifting addresses and poor bureaucratic interaction skills (Simon, 1993). Even though many male inmates have children when they are released, few will receive the financial support necessary to care for them. Making matters worse, under federal guidelines people convicted of drug-related felonies as well as people who have violated probation or parole are ineligible for TANF payments as well as SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), although states can opt out by passing legislation (McCarty, Aussenberg, Falk, & Carpenter, 2013). Furthermore, many states now require TANF recipients to undergo drug testing and because of the way that TANF and SNAP interact, SNAP recipients could also be affected (McCarty, Aussenberg, Falk, & Carpenter, 2013). Due to the increase in convictions for drug offenses over the last few decades, there is a large population of ex-offenders that is banned from ever receiving public assistance.

The Dual Transition

In the book, *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*, authors describe the growing complexity of the transition to adulthood and the challenges young people face as they take on adult roles (Settersten Jr., Furstenberg & Rumbaut, 2005). According to the editors, while the ages of 18 and 21 are significant legal and social milestones for young people, few people today would be considered adults by the age of 21 based on the traditional markers of finishing school, moving out, beginning a career, and getting married. Youth today are taking longer to reach these markers, creating a new developmental phase in which young people are no longer adolescents but

not quite adults. This new phase is known as "emerging adulthood" and occurs between the ages of 18 and 25 (Arnett, 2000).

The delay in achieving adulthood for youth today is the result of both cultural and economic change. The decline in manufacturing jobs led to the creation of jobs requiring more training and education. Youth today also have more options in terms of education and work and it is now socially acceptable to delay marriage and parenting. As a result, by the early twenties many youth remain undecided about their goals and the path they wish to follow in life, extending their dependence on families. In the United States, about 30% of youth remain at home into their late twenties (Arnett, 2004) and of those that do move out at an early age, nearly half return home at some point during the transition years (Arnett, 2000). On average, parents provide $38,000 in material support for their child between the ages of 18 and 34, but there is a large disparity in the level of financial support that youth in the bottom versus the top quartiles receive. Youth in the bottom two quartiles receive about $25,000 from 18 to 34, while youth in the top 25 percent receive $70,965 (Schoeni & Ross, 2005). The lengthy transition to adulthood is creating a financial burden for families and clearly, there are many families that cannot provide the level of material support necessary to keep young people in the home into their twenties and beyond. This is especially for true for young people in disadvantaged communities and for those in foster care and the juvenile justice system, who lose most of their support at the age of 18 (Settersten Jr., Furstenberg & Rumbaut, 2005).

For those who are transitioning to adulthood after release from incarceration, the cumulative disadvantage they experience may be insurmountable (Sampson & Laub, 1993). When released from incarceration between the ages of 18 and 25, youth offenders

are in a unique developmental phase. In addition to confronting the challenges of prisoner reentry, they must also confront the challenges of adulthood, which may be especially difficult if they were under the age of 18 when they were placed in secure confinement. Having crossed over into "legal" adulthood, youth offenders reentering society are expected to take on the same responsibilities as other young adults, which include maintaining employment, contributing to their household income, achieving residential independence, establishing stable relationships, and caring for their children (Osgood, Foster, Flanagan & Ruth, 2005). These expectations are difficult enough for middle-class college-bound youth, so for working-class non-college-bound youth, the challenges are great. For formerly incarcerated youth, who are stigmatized and face additional problems resulting from their system involvement, the transition to adulthood is especially challenging. Steinberg, Chung and Little (2004) argue that transitioning from the dependency of adolescence to the self-sufficiency of adulthood requires psychosocial maturity – a coordination of skills that results from reciprocal interactions between individuals and their social environments. These authors assume that many adolescents released from the justice system are not psychosocially equipped to manage adult roles and achieve positive adult outcomes.

Data indicate that 15 percent of youth in America between the ages of 18 and 24 who are neither working nor enrolled in school are institutionally disconnected (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004), meaning they are excluded from health care, housing and electoral politics (Foster & Hagan, 2007). Youth involved with the juvenile justice and adult correctional systems are among the most at risk populations of being disconnected by the time they reach the age of 25 (Altschuler, Stangler, Berkley & Burton, 2009).

Most likely, they experienced a disruption in schooling or employment while others their age were making strides in their educational attainment or gaining work experience. A recent study by Bosick and Gover (2010) examining at-risk males at age 25 demonstrates how problems accumulate for incarcerated youth. The majority of their incarcerated male participants were fathers, less than a quarter graduated from high school, none went on to college, and few had achieved stable employment by the age of 25. The majority also spent significant time behind bars away from their children.

Incarcerated youth who resided with family prior to their confinement may have had some level of social support in dealing with life's challenges. At a minimum, they had a place to reside. Some of them may have been involved in the foster care system or placed in a group home. Whatever their circumstances were prior to incarceration, decisions were being made for them either by family members or by public institutions. As they entered secure confinement, the system continued to make decisions on their behalf and provide for their needs. Upon their release, emerging adults are expected to take on adult roles and make important decisions that they have never had to make for themselves. Losing the support provided by the system can be difficult, particularly when transitional services are lacking for 18-25 year olds. Currently, there are few programs designed to smooth the transition to adulthood (Osgood, Foster, Flanagan & Ruth, 2005). "The systems designed to address the needs of vulnerable populations during the transition to adulthood either are no longer available, offer programs of greatly reduced scope, are complicated by new eligibility requirements, or are transformed to different missions" (Osgood et al, 2005:10). There are likely to be very few that assist with the dual transition faced by formerly incarcerated youth. After reaching legal

adulthood, policies towards offenders become less rehabilitative and more punitive as supportive social interventions are believed less effective in adulthood. Research has shown, however, that for youth leaving the juvenile or criminal justice systems, programs focused on deterrence and punishment can hurt their chances of obtaining steady employment and qualifying for educational programs (Altschuler, 2005).

Faced with decreased support from the government, informal social support may be especially important during this phase to motivate success in the absence of a wide array of services. Due to the obstacles they face in achieving the markers of adulthood post-release and given the decline in government support at age 18, some of these troubled youth may look to their families for assistance. Given the many challenges that youth experience after release from secure confinement, their post-release adjustment is undoubtedly affected in part by the level and type of assistance they receive. Steinberg, Chung and Little (2004) argue that social settings play a critical role in facilitating youths' psychosocial development. For some young adults, family members may provide the support necessary for them to develop a healthy psychosocial maturity and overcome the hurdles of reentry. For others, the struggles they face may be exacerbated by family problems and/or lack of family support. For families who are experiencing their own set of challenges, the process of reabsorbing a loved one who returns from secure confinement may be a strain on both family cohesion and family resources.

There is a great deal of research documenting that family contextual factors are associated with juvenile delinquency and post-release recidivism. Yet, studies also indicate that offenders returning home from incarceration receive support from family members that is critical to their successful reintegration, even for those who were

influenced by family problems prior to their confinement. Thus, there is a seeming paradox in the literature: family problems influence negative behavior on the one hand, while family support, even in troubled families, inhibits negative behavior on the other hand. While the link between family factors and delinquency is well established (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Crutchfield & Wadsworth, 2013; Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber et al, 2001; Harper & McLanahan, 2004; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994), relatively little is known about the specific ways in which family factors affect the youth reentry process. Further, studies have illuminated the importance of family support in rehabilitation, but less is known about the ability or willingness of family members to offer meaningful support, particularly when faced with many significant problems of their own. Further research is necessary to examine the social processes involved in youth reentry.

This study seeks to shed light on the social processes involved in youth reentry by examining how returning offenders can find support in families where conflict exists. The study explores the problems that families experience when youth return home, the types of support that youth offenders receive from families as well as the ways that youth contribute to their families, and how the reentry process and the transition to adulthood are affected by family context. By focusing on emerging adults in the 18-25 year old range, this research aims to provide insight into the role that families play as formerly incarcerated youth make the transition from incarceration to the community and from youth to adulthood. The findings of this study will have program implications for building social capital for youth returning from incarceration to improve their likelihood of becoming successful adults.

A qualitative, grounded theory approach was utilized to explore the family context of reentry for 18-25 year old African American males. In-depth interviews focusing on family-related issues during the reentry process were conducted with formerly incarcerated young adults and when possible, with members of their families. Participants were recruited in Middlesex County, N.J. with the assistance of a community-based research assistant who is a formerly incarcerated young adult himself. During interviews lasting approximately one hour, participants were asked open-ended questions about their family problems and strengths both pre- and post- incarceration, the impact these had on the reentry process, and in what ways the role of family context has changed for them during their transition to adulthood. After the interviews were completed they were transcribed verbatim and entered into a qualitative software program, NVivo, for analysis. Data analysis using open, axial and selective coding occurred simultaneously with data collection to identify emerging themes and areas for further investigation.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapters two and three discuss the context of the current study. Chapter two provides a theoretical framework for the study by discussing what is known about the family context of reentry for young adults, identifying gaps in the literature, and highlighting the questions that remain. Chapter three details the study's research design and provides a description of the sample. The findings of the study are presented in chapters four thru seven. Chapter four discusses the impact of prior family problems to establish a baseline for comparing pre- and post- release experiences. Chapter five provides examples of family support following incarceration, even for the participants

who grew up in troubled homes, which presents a seeming paradox that will be explained in chapter six by identifying the developmental processes that occur during emerging adulthood that allow for the realignment of family relationships. This is followed by an extended case study in chapter seven to demonstrate how problems are transmitted between generations and how these problems are sometimes resolved over time. Chapter eight discusses the findings and proposes a theoretical model of the process by which successful reentry can happen when it occurs during the transition to adulthood that includes three major components: the strengthening of social bonds, family support from broadly defined kin networks, and structural opportunity. The final chapter, chapter nine provides policy recommendations and conclusions. Broad implications for policy as well as specific program recommendations are proposed. The limitations of the study and directions for future research are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this study and review what is currently known about the family context of youth crime and reentry. The chapter begins with a discussion of the developmental theory set forth by Elder (1974), which explains how individuals are impacted by their family circumstances and furthers our understanding of the intergenerational transmission of problems. This is followed by a review of Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory which contributes to our understanding of the link between family context and delinquency by explaining how social bonds influence behavior. Finally, Sampson and Laub's (1993) life-course theory explains the role that social attachments play in crime and desistance across the life course and more specifically, they examine the impact of social ties on offending during young adulthood. These theories identify mechanisms through which family circumstances, good or bad, affect human development and how individuals can overcome negative circumstances through changes in their social context.

Elder's Theory of Human Development

According to Elder (1998), the central premise that ties together life-course studies is "the notion that changing lives alters developmental trajectories" (p. 1). Elder observed that life histories reveal frequent changes in residence and work and that these transitions trigger changes in individual development. In his view, behavioral change and continuity are influenced by social trajectories of family, education and work. To a large extent, social trajectories are determined by historical forces. While some individuals possess the human agency to choose their paths in life, for most people, their opportunities are shaped by structural conditions as well as culture.

One of the important lessons of Elder's work is that history affects one's social and psychological adjustment. In his book *Children of the Great Depression*, Elder (1974) examined the impact of serious social and economic crises on children who grow up while they occur. For children who bear witness to such historical events, the stress they endure as a result continues to affect them throughout the life course. Four central principles are set forth by Elder's study:

(1) *Historical time and place:* the life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetime.

(2) *Timing in lives*: the developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person's life.

The timing of life transitions, whether they occur early or late, has long-term consequences through effects on subsequent transitions.

(3) *Linked lives*: lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships.

According to this principle, the misfortune of one family member is shared through family relationships.

(4) *Human agency*: individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances.

Those who possess human agency can successfully adapt under extreme stress or mounting pressure; they are able to build a new life course.

The four main principles of Elder's theory may explain why young adults with histories of family criminality, drug abuse, physical abuse, poverty, or other problems, experience such problems themselves. By examining families impacted by the Great Depression, Elder's study demonstrates how macroeconomic factors (such as a recession or depression) can affect families and their children. When income is reduced, the resulting financial stress can lead to parental emotional and behavioral problems, which often leads to harsh and inconsistent parenting practices as well as less nurturing and involved parenting (Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005. These parenting behaviors can lead to a range of emotional and behavioral problems in children (Braman & Wood, 2003; McLoyd, 1990, 1998). Children who experience economic hardship have difficulties in social, academic and psychological functioning, as well as aggressive behavior and fighting (Conger, 1992).

While some families are affected by macroeconomic fluctuations such as a recession, others are deeply entrenched in long-term economic conditions that were shaped by unequal access to legitimate work opportunities (Matjasko, Barnett, & Mercy, 2013). Under either set of conditions, children may be exposed to risk factors for delinquency. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Crutchfield and Wadsworth (2013) assessed the macro forces that may affect youth crime. The researchers included all children who were between the ages of 14 and 18 at the time of data collection and they found that family poverty significantly predicts delinquency. They argue that the substantial disadvantage that comes from being poor may increase the likelihood of delinquency.

In recent years, several studies have looked at the impact of family contextual factors on youth as well as the intergenerational transmission of problems. These studies support Elder's notion about the interdependency of human lives and that our fates are linked to those of our family members. A selection of these studies will be reviewed below.

The Link between Family Context and Delinquency

There is a large body of research that examines multigenerational crime. In a recent examination of the effects of parental incarceration and other family contextual risk factors on delinquency, Aaron and Dallaire (2010) reported that a history of parental incarceration predicted delinquent behavior. Interestingly, studies that have looked at crime across multiple generations have found crime to be highly concentrated within families. Using data from the Pittsburgh Youth Study, Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber et al. (2001) examined offending among three generations of relatives and found that offending is highly concentrated in families – if one relative had been arrested there was a high likelihood that another relative had been arrested. Boys' delinquency was strongly correlated with the arrest of another family member, most importantly the father. Another recent study investigated the intergenerational transmission of crime within a birth cohort in a Dutch city (Junger, Greene, Shipper, Hesper & Estourgie, 2013). Like the former study, the researchers investigated arrests in three generations of family members (siblings, parents and grandparents) and they found that arrests are heavily concentrated in families. The study also found that parental arrest was related to grandparental arrest, and that the arrests of family members are a major risk factor for poor developmental outcomes.

Other researchers have examined *static* versus *dynamic* theories predicting the intergenerational transmission of crime to further our understanding of how a father's conviction impacts the chance that his child will be convicted of a crime (Van de Rakt, Ruiter, De Graaf, & Nieuwbeerta, 2010). Static theories predict that the *number* of a father's convictions is important in determining his child's likelihood of conviction whereas dynamic theories predict that the *timing* of the convictions is important. Researchers found that both timing of convictions is critical to understanding intergenerational transmission as well as the overall number of convictions. In the first year after a father is convicted, the chance that his child will also be convicted increases drastically and then begins to decline. The more crimes the father has committed, however, the slower the decline in his child's likelihood of conviction. Another interesting study focusing on the impact of a father's incarceration examined the intergenerational transmission of social exclusion and identified specific mechanisms through which a father's incarceration led to increased social exclusion for young adults (Foster & Hagan, 2007). These included socialization problems and strain associated with the incarceration and absence of their biological fathers. Young adults from these disrupted families were at an increased risk of being sanctioned by the state.

Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber's delinquency study (1986) also found an association between family criminality and delinquency but the study identified several other family contextual factors that influence delinquent behavior as well. The researchers identified marital problems and psycho-social problems of parents as risk factors for delinquency. Paternoster and Mazerolle (1994) found a similar association between delinquency and stressful life events, such as the dissolution of the family.

There are therefore many types of family problems that can influence youth behavior. As Elder's principle of "linked lives" states, youth are impacted by the problems and misfortunes experienced by their parents.

If offending behavior stems from the home environment, returning offenders to the same environment after release from incarceration may decrease the likelihood of a successful outcome. Some living environments can actually worsen problems for ex-offenders (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Although studies find that families can be important sources of support during reentry from incarceration, there are several factors that may complicate the transition process. When juveniles return from secure confinement, they continue to be influenced by family risk factors such as childhood physical and sexual abuse, parental pathology, and strained family relationships. The experiences of participants in Braman and Wood's (2003) ethnographic study of families of male prisoners in Washington, D. C. revealed that the benefits of social support do not always outweigh the costs when support providers are potential sources of distress, particularly if there is a familial history of sexual or domestic abuse. With a majority of youth returning to their home environment after release from secure confinement, their post-incarceration behavior is likely to be influenced by family factors. Studies of juvenile recidivism suggest that when family problems persist, the continuation of offending is more likely. Cottle, Lee & Heilbrun's meta-analysis (2001) of risk factors associated with juvenile offending found family problems to be a significant predictor of recidivism.

The studies cited above establish an association between a history of family criminality and social exclusion with delinquent behavior and they support Elder's theory

of human development. There are other theories, however, that discuss why youth are at an increased risk of poor behavioral outcomes when family problems are present. Social bond theory in particular provides an explanation for the development of delinquent behavior in youth who are faced with family problems that strain their relationships.

Social Bond Theory

Existing criminological research shows that families play an important role in the early prevention of delinquent behavior. In *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*, the Gluecks (1950) argued that the most important factor distinguishing delinquents from non-delinquents in early life is the family. Their study revealed that families with weak discipline, poor supervision, and weak emotional ties between parents and children were most likely to produce delinquency. Following this research, several theories of informal control emerged that pointed to the family as an important influence on delinquent behavior. Early control theorists argued that primary groups such as the family are most important in the exercise of social control (Nye, 1958; Reiss, 1951). When primary groups fail to exercise this control, delinquency may be more likely. Studies examining the relationship between family factors and delinquency support this argument in finding that poor parental supervision, low parental involvement with children, weak discipline, and a lack of warmth are strong predictors of offending (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Smith & Stern, 1997).

Hirschi (1969) argued that social bonds are especially critical in preventing delinquency. When youths are attached to and involved with adults, delinquency will be restrained because youths will not want to disappoint their positive role models. Those with no stake in conformity, on the other hand, are freer to break the law. Essentially,

Hirschi argued that by establishing strong emotional ties with their children, parents are able to transmit their ideals and expectations, acting as role models and correcting behavior that does not adhere to the values of the family and of society. Youth who spend more time with their parents will experience more direct supervision but Hirschi argues that even when well-bonded youth are not with their parents, they will consider their parents' response before engaging in questionable activities. Children who do not have a strong bond with their parents are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior because they will not fear the damage that their negative behavior may cause.

An extensive body of research documenting the family factors that predict general delinquency highlights the importance of positive parental relationships in the prevention of delinquent behavior. It has been shown that youth in high-quality family relationships are less likely to engage in violence than youth with problematic family relationships (Herrenkohl, Hill, Hawkins, Chung, & Nagin, 2006). Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) found that lack of parental supervision, parental rejection, and parent-child involvement were all predictors of delinquency. Paternoster and Mazerolle (1994) similarly found that delinquency was related to negative relationships with adults. Other studies have supported this relationship between family strain and adolescent delinquency. Sigfusdottir, Farkas, and Silver (2004) found that anger resulting from family conflict, which was defined as severe arguments and/or physical violence, has a significant positive impact on delinquency.

Parental absence has also been identified as a predictor of delinquency. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Harper and McLanahan (2004) examined the likelihood of youth incarceration among adolescent males from father-

absent households. Their study revealed that incarceration risks were elevated for adolescent males in father-absent households, which may suggest that a weak social attachment to fathers is influential on the development of delinquent behavior. It must be noted, however, that these risks were elevated largely as a result of the co-occurrence of certain conditions with father-absenteeism, such as poverty and residential moves.

Studies have also found an association between parental absence and recidivism. Cottle, Lee and Heilbrun (2001) found that juveniles growing up in single-parent homes or having more out-of-home placements were at increased risk for reoffending, possibly because out-of-home placements strain family relationships. Tollett and Benda (1999) examined predictors of survival in the community among persistent and serious juvenile offenders and found that the odds of returning to detention increased significantly for those with poor parental relationships. In the same study, the authors found that juvenile offenders who were not residing in a home with two parents had increased odds of being returned to custody, suggesting that family structure may influence reentry outcomes. In further support of a relationship between family structure and recidivism, Benda, Corwyn & Toombs (2001) found that adolescents who lived most of their lives with their biological parents in the same home had a 63 percent chance of reoffending in adulthood, compared to 82.9 percent of adolescents who did not fit this category. One possible explanation for these findings is that two parent homes provide more supervision, or that the presence of two parents provides greater opportunity for social bonding, thereby inhibiting delinquent behavior.

Many juvenile delinquency studies have illuminated the significance of social bonds to the desistance process. Born, Chevalier, and Humblet (1997) found that stable

relationships and a decrease in family and personal problems are associated with resiliency and subsequent desistance from crime among juveniles. Similarly, Patchin's (2006) study of the association between family relationships and delinquency among youth enrolled in an intervention for serious juvenile offenders found that those who reported improvements in their family bonds over time were less likely to report continued involvement in delinquency. In their study of youth drug court participants, Gilmore, Rodriguez and Webb (2005) found that social bonds played a significant role in both desistance and program completion. Eggleston (2006) similarly reported that positive social bonds predicted desistance among serious juvenile delinquents.

These studies lend support to social bond theory and highlight the importance of post-release support in the desistance process. There are generally three types of social bonds identified in the literature that seem to have an important impact on recidivism – parenthood, romantic partnerships and relationships with parents. These three types of attachments and their role in the desistance process of young adults will be discussed.

Parenthood and Romantic Partnerships

Several studies have examined the impact of parenthood on youth desistance from crime. A study of former juvenile offenders undertaken by the Council on Crime and Justice (2006) found that a shift in attitude along with life changing events, such as parenthood, marriage, and employment, led to a termination of offending. Another study of formerly incarcerated juveniles also found that becoming a parent has a positive impact on their lives (Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz, & D'Ambrosio, 2001). Fatherhood motivated some of the males to remain drug-free, employed, and out of trouble.

In Nurse's (2002, 2004) study of newly paroled young fathers in California, incarceration heightened the participants' desire to be involved in their children's lives after release. Although many of them faced obstacles in reclaiming the "father role" for the children they left behind, their thoughts about their children while they were incarcerated reveal a significant source of motivation for change. Edin, Nelson, and Paranal's (2004) research on fathers revealed that, for some men, incarceration presented an opportunity to rebuild ties with children, providing a powerful motivation to transform their lives. In addition, they found that fear of incarceration combined with becoming a father can deter criminal activity. The extent to which this is true for younger men, however, remains unclear. For some young couples, incarceration results in severed ties. Beyond that, some researchers have found that even though some young men are initially motivated by their children, some relapse into crime and reincarceration as a result of blocked job opportunities and disadvantage (Berger & Langton, 2011; Smeeding, Garfinkel & Mincy, 2011; Tach & Edin, 2011).

Other research confirms the role of family in the desistance process as juvenile delinquents enter into adulthood. In their study of the persistence of adult criminal behavior, Ouimet and LeBlanc (1996) found family to be influential on behavior in the twenties. Specifically, they reported an association between cohabitation with a partner and desistance from offending after the age of 21. Curtis and Schulman (1984) found that men who lived with their wives and children after release from prison experienced more success than those who lived alone or with parents. Hairston's (1988, 1991) research similarly demonstrated that men who took on husband and parenting roles after

release from incarceration had higher rates of success than those who did not step into these roles.

Relationships with Parents

Many developmental and life course studies emphasize the importance of marriage and parenthood to the desistance process, but the role that their own parents play in desistance is often overlooked as juveniles transition to adulthood. Schroeder, Giordano and Cernkovich (2010) argue that individuals' relationships with their parents continue to evolve as they enter adulthood and an examination of how these relationships promote or inhibit criminal behavior is warranted, particularly for those individuals who do not develop other conventional bonds. Using data from the Ohio Life Course study, they found that strong relationships with parents are a significant predictor of adult desistance and an even stronger predictor of desistance for those with poor romantic bonds. Similar results were obtained from a study of former male and female prisoners which found that men and women with quality parental relationships had a delayed time to failure (Cobbina, Huebner & Berg, 2012). In an analysis of data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study, researchers examined the influence of early and late parenting factors such as support, monitoring and conflict on the offending patterns of participants who were interviewed first as adolescents and later as young adults (Johnson, Giordano, Manning & Longmore, 2011). They found that monitoring during adolescence and continued parental support are associated with lower rates of offending during young adulthood. These studies suggest that additional research into the role parents play in desistance as juvenile delinquents transition to adulthood is necessary.

The next section will discuss Sampson and Laub's (1993) life-course theory which examines the impact of social bonds on criminal offending over the life course. The theory is particularly relevant to the current study because of its contribution to our understanding about the impact of social context on the desistance process of young adults and it incorporates many of the elements of both Elder's developmental theory and Hirshi's social bond theory.

Life-Course Theory

Age is consistently found to be correlated with crime. Evidence suggests that offending peaks during late adolescence and declines by the time offenders reach their mid-twenties, but there is considerable debate as to how age is associated with desistance (Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008; Blokland & Nieuwbeerta, 2005; Steen & Opsal, 2007). Some argue that offending declines in the twenties because this is typically when individuals form social attachments that restrain criminal tendencies. Sampson and Laub's (1993) life-course theory considers the role that family plays in crime prevention across the life course. The authors examine the decline in offending that typically occurs in adulthood by studying the relationship between social bonds and desistance. They identify turning points throughout the life course that can lead to either continuity or change in behavior. Based on their analysis of the longitudinal data compiled by the Gluecks (1950) on delinquent boys, they argue that the formation of strong social attachments, such as getting married or becoming a parent, fosters desistance from crime. In the twenties, when individuals typically start families by marrying and having children, they develop stakes in conformity that restrain criminal tendencies. Unlike other life-course theories, Sampson and Laub (1993) emphasize the

quality and *strength* of social attachments more than their occurrence or their timing. Berg and Huebner's (2011) examination of the link between social ties and recidivism supports this notion. The authors found that the quality of social ties was important in the post-release process.

Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002) argue that social ties can be a "hook" for change that helps offenders to desist from crime. Although they believe that individuals must first develop an openness to change, social support can motivate them towards desistance. Similarly, Panuccio, Christian, Martinez and Sullivan (2012) argue that motivation is essential to the desistance process, but that informal support can both trigger and sustain motivation in returning youth offenders. There may also be a scientific explanation for the decline in offending during young adulthood. Studies show that our brains continue to mature and develop throughout adolescence and well into early adulthood. Until individuals reach the age of 25, their brains are still undergoing important developmental changes (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). The frontal cortex, which is the area of the brain that helps us to think before we act, is the last area of the brain to develop fully (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2011). Once we reach this developmental milestone, we are better able to control our behavior, particularly in difficult life situations. The majority of criminals who begin to desist from crime as they enter adulthood may have developed the ability to control their criminal tendencies. The current study will examine how internal developmental processes lead to changes in social context, encouraging better post-release outcomes. The next section will discuss the literature on the impact of family support on reentry outcomes.

The Role of Family Support in Reentry

The research cited above demonstrates the negative impact of family factors on reentry, but there is a large body of research to suggest that families also play a large role in the reintegration of former prisoners when they are released to the community. Research on parent-child relationships indicates that parents and their adult offspring provide each other material support by transferring goods, money, and shared housing (Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). They also provide practical help by contributing to household chores, running errands, and child care. Families are also a source of emotional or moral support and advice. Families may provide a safety net, which is a shared understanding that an individual has someone to rely on for help if needed, and this knowledge may contribute to an individual's sense of well-being. According to Wong (2008), this type of assistance is difficult to measure and is often overlooked in studies of intergenerational transfers.

Studies of adult prisoners indicate that support from family members post-release is vital to their successful reintegration (Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010; Herman-Stahl, Kan, & McKay, 2008; La Vigne, Visher, & Castro, 2004; Martinez & Christian, 2009; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999; Naser & Visher, 2006; Sullivan, Mino, Nelson, & Pope, 2002). As Simon (1993) argues, given the poor employment prospects and limited access to public assistance that former prisoners face, personal support networks play a crucial role in reentry. In the *Returning Home Study* (Naser & Visher, 2006), which interviewed prisoners both prior to and after their release, 80 percent of respondents identified family as an important factor in staying out of prison. Bahr, Harris, Fisher and Armstrong (2010) conducted a study to compare successful versus

unsuccessful parole completers and for individuals who successfully completed parole, family was an important resource for them as they adjusted to life after prison. All of the parole completers had support from family members and many also reported being able to use friends as a resource.

Most families provide some type of instrumental support, which includes tangible resources such as a place to live, transportation, and financial assistance (Cullen, 1994; Martinez, 2006). In their study of prisoners released to New York City during their first month out, Nelson, Deess, and Allen (1999) found that family members provided material support that was critical to the initial transition to the community. Two days after their release, 40 out of 49 subjects were living with a relative or with a spouse or partner, and about half of these subjects were also receiving some financial support from family. In Naser and Visher's (2006) study of the impact of incarceration on prisoners and their families in Chicago, 76 percent of participants allowed their recently released family member to reside with them, and 83 percent of participants provided their recently released family member with financial support. For many former prisoners, family members also provide employment opportunities. In Nelson, Deess and Allen's (1999) study, some former prisoners found jobs through their family members' connections and Naser and Visher (2006) reported that about one in five of their study participants helped their recently released family members find employment. A recent study examining the links between social ties, employment and recidivism found that offenders with good quality ties to relatives were more likely to be employed (Berg & Huebner, 2011). According to the authors, it is possible that family support motivates offenders to hold conventional roles.

In addition to instrumental support, families of returning prisoners may also provide expressive or emotional support, which involves expressions of encouragement and acceptance. Many studies of former prisoners have found a positive relationship between emotional support from family members and post-release success. Studies that examine the maintenance of inmate ties to family, for example, have found higher rates of post-release success among inmates who maintain strong ties to family members than those who do not maintain such ties (Hairston, 1988, 1991; Holt & Miller, 1972). In their research on prisoners released in Florida, Bales and Mears (2008) found that receiving visitation from family and friends while in prison was associated with a lower likelihood of recidivism and was also associated with delaying the onset of recidivism.

Studies on the influence of family support on post-release outcomes have demonstrated that encouragement and acceptance from family members also lead to better outcomes for returning prisoners. In the evaluation of the La Bodega program, participants stated that a combination of encouragement, pressure, and assistance from family members led to their reduced reliance on drugs (Sullivan, Mino, Nelson & Pope, 2002). Based on interviews with recently released prisoners, Nelson, Deess and Allen (1999) remark that acceptance may be the most valuable contribution a family can make. They state that the subjects who found jobs, stayed away from drugs, made new friends, and felt optimistic, were the ones who spoke the most about their family's acceptance of them

Other studies have found reductions in drug use resulting from family support. The evaluation of La Bodega revealed significant improvements in the lives of drug users and their family members (Sullivan, Mino, Nelson & Pope, 2002). Illegal drug use

among program participants declined from 80 percent to 42 percent. Walters (2000) examined remission from drug abuse and found that self-remitters identified pressure from family as an important factor in facilitating their reductions in drug use, and social support was critical in maintaining change. Another study that examined the influence of family and friends on client progress during drug treatment found better outcomes among clients who had less family conflict (Knight & Simpson, 1996).

Research on juvenile offenders confirms that family support is equally important. Studies have highlighted the importance of both instrumental and expressive support to the success of former youth offenders. Farrall's (2004) study of young male probationers, for example, demonstrates the importance of instrumental support. Many of the juvenile probationers in Farrall's study were able to find employment through their families' connections to work. In particular, employment among young males appeared to be related to their father's employment. Expressive support is also important in curtailing the delinquent behavior of juveniles. In their examination of parental support as a predictor of delinquency, Poole and Regoli (1979) found that subjects with high parental support committed fewer delinquent acts than those with weak parental support. Tatum's (2001) study of delinquency among African Americans found that perceived family support reduced the likelihood of certain types of delinquent behavior among this population. In a study of formerly incarcerated juveniles, it was found that active family involvement and communication was a factor leading to the discontinuation of illegal activity (Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz & D'ambrosio, 2001).

Interestingly, studies have shown that family support may come not just from immediate family members, but from extended and fictive family networks as well.

Family demographics have changed over the past couple of decades. Although fertility has declined among all racial groups, African American women become mothers at younger ages than white women and they have more children than white women (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Ventura, Kirmeyer et al., 2011). These findings about the timing and number of children suggest that African American women become grandmothers at younger ages and have more grandchildren. There has also been an increase in the number of children born outside of marriage, particularly among the economically disadvantaged. In 2009, 41% of children were born outside of marriage, compared with 11% in 1990 (Martinez, Daniels, & Chandra, 2012). Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to have children out-of-wedlock and black children born out-of-wedlock are most likely to be born to parents who are not living together. Children born to parents who are not cohabitating have a greater likelihood of losing touch with their biological fathers (Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). Since most parents eventually form new unions (Cherlin, 2009), these children may inherit a stepparent which in turn can provide them with stepsiblings or even half-siblings. Children in these arrangements are at even greater risk of losing contact with their biological fathers. Since their rates of non-marital childbearing and multi-partner childbearing are higher, blacks are more likely to report having both formal and informal step-kin (Parker, 2011). Interestingly, Seltzer and Bianchi (2013) argue that these demographic differences are likely to influence who individuals consider to be in their family and what they are willing to do for whom.

In *All Our Kin*, Carol Stack (1974) showed how families in an African American ghetto adapted to difficult circumstances by forming large, lifelong support networks comprised of friends and family – support networks that involved mutual exchange,

enabling people to cope with poverty. A later comparison of kin networks among a nationally representative sample of African American and Caucasian mothers found that African American women were more likely to reside with kin, their childcare was more often provided by kin members, and more often they received income from individuals other than their husbands (Hogan, Parish & William, 1990). Recently, Jarrett, Jefferson, and Kelly (2010) conducted a qualitative study with African-American women belonging to extended kin networks. The authors identified several survival strategies for coping with poverty, limited access to social and institutional supports, and exposure to unconventional value systems that included, among other things, resource pooling, kin monitoring and family sociability. On the other hand, Miller-Cribbs and Farber (2008) argue that the ability of African American kin networks to provide support is in decline as a result of long-term community and family poverty, placing poor African Americans at great risk of chronic poverty, especially in the face of limited access to social welfare programs. The authors caution social workers against the assumption that extended kin networks are a reliable source of resilience. Based on these studies, an examination of the importance of kinships for African Americans dealing with adverse circumstances and the types of support they provide is warranted.

The studies cited here highlight many ways in which families affect the reentry process for offenders released from incarceration. Most studies however overlook the impact of incarceration and reentry on the families who reabsorb their loved ones after their release, which can have important program implications. The next section will review what is known about the effects of the reentry process on family members and how post-release outcomes are influenced by family members' experiences.

How Families are Affected by Reentry

Most of the reentry literature focuses on outcomes of released offenders, while few examine closely how families are affected when loved ones return home. Researchers seeking to understand the role of family context on behavior must take into account how entire families are affected by negative or stressful life events, because the overall impact on the family will ultimately affect the individual in transition. Studies of adult prisoners have shed some light on the experiences of family members during the reentry process. The incarceration of a loved one affects families in many ways that carry over when offenders are released. One major consequence of incarceration is the strain it places on family relationships (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001). First, relationships may suffer because family ties are difficult to maintain during incarceration. Data from the Illinois *Returning Home Study* reveal the many challenges that family members face in maintaining contact with inmates (Naser & Visher, 2006). Over two-thirds of respondents never visited their family member during his prison term. 75 percent of respondents mentioned that the prison was located too far away. An additional 38 percent reported that the cost of visiting was too high. The median amount of time it took to travel to the prison was three hours, and they waited an additional 40 minutes to access the visitation room. On average, it cost them $55 to visit the prison. Respondents also identified the cost of phone calls as a barrier to contact with incarcerated family members. The median amount of money they reported spending on phone calls to and from their incarcerated family member was about $50.

Second, when a loved one is incarcerated, family members often feel shame, resentment, or they may experience feelings of desertion (Edin & Kefalas, 2005;

Western, Lopoo & McLanahan, 2004). These feelings may destabilize family relationships and complicate the post-release reunification process. While family members are usually happy about the release of a loved one, they often have conflicting emotions (Nelson & Trone, 2000), including anger, a sense of betrayal, and disappointment. There may be some family members who are unwilling to forgive the offender for what he has done and consequently withhold a source of support that could potentially assist the offender in his transition.

Discussions with Vera's Project Greenlight participants revealed that both offenders and their family members feel anger during the reentry process (Bobbitt & Nelson, 2004). The families reported anger at the behavior that led to incarceration and also about feelings of desertion, while the offenders reported anger that life has moved on in their absence and that family relationships may have changed. When a person is incarcerated, their family members have to adapt to life without them and they sometimes take on new roles. Male inmates return to their families with the expectation that nothing has changed, but research has shown that women become more independent and self-sufficient when their male partners are incarcerated (Furstenberg, 1995). Family members have to adapt to life without their loved ones and they sometimes take on new roles. When prisoners return home, they may return to families that are vastly different from the ones they left. Some former prisoners may have trouble identifying and adapting to their new role in the family, which can cause tension. According to Martinez (2006), the recognition and negotiation of former roles upon a prisoner's return home underlies some of the problems associated with the prisoner's return. In Rose and Clear's (2003) study of former prisoners and their families, respondents reported difficulty in

reincorporating ex-prisoners into their lives. Some ex-prisoners are eager to assume a role that their families grew accustomed to living without. While an ex-prisoner may be ready to resume the role of the "father" for example, the children's mother may not be ready to accept him in that role.

Families are also impacted by the intrusive nature of the post-release supervision process. Hairston (2003) states that both the direct and indirect intrusion of social control agents is a major challenge facing families who reunite after imprisonment. Family members of offenders living in the community cannot escape the surveillance by probation and parole officers. The close monitoring of offenders can create stressful circumstances for families and thus interfere with the reunification process.

There is an emerging literature about families, offending, and reentry, but there are paradoxes we do not understand. It is well-documented that families influence delinquent behavior and our understanding of the relationship between family factors and recidivism is increasing. Yet, studies also indicate that families play an important part in the rehabilitation process and as a result many aftercare programs have incorporated a family counseling component (Patchin, 2006). We do not know however how family problems and family support interact. Few studies have focused on the specific ways that families contribute to the success or failure of offenders released from incarceration, particularly for those transitioning to adulthood. It remains unclear how the impact of family context evolves for young adults. More research is needed to explore the social processes involved when young people returning from incarceration return to their families of origin and especially as they become significant partners and parents themselves.

A pilot study on youth reentry was conducted using data from an evaluation of a youth aftercare program in New Jersey between 2006 and 2008. The data indicated that family support had a significant impact on the desistance process of juvenile participants (Panuccio, Christian, Martinez & Sullivan, 2012), but many questions about the family context of youth reentry remain. Based on the existing research, it is likely that families of formerly incarcerated youth experience many problems that make it difficult for young people to successfully transition to community life, including financial problems, mental and physical health problems, substance abuse, criminality and family conflict, and that these problems are exacerbated by the return of a formerly incarcerated juvenile. It is also likely that despite these problems, many family members want to offer support during the reentry process but the extent to which this is possible may be limited. This study aims to uncover the various ways that families support youth as they reenter from incarceration during emerging adulthood, as well as the factors that interfere with their ability or willingness to offer support. If these factors can be identified, transitional and aftercare programs can better respond to families' needs and draw out the supportive resources that families have. This would place them in a better position to offer support when young adults return from incarceration and improve overall family functioning, thereby increasing the likelihood of success for returning youth offenders and breaking the cycle of crime for future generations.

Research Questions

In an effort to resolve the paradox regarding the impact of family contextual factors on the reentry process of young adults and further our understanding of the social processes involved in reentry, this study will explore the following questions:

Q1: What is the impact of family problems on delinquency and how are young adults impacted by family problems when they return from incarceration?

Q2: What types of support do young adults receive from family members after release from incarceration and how does this support benefit them?

Q3: How do family relationships and expectations change for youth as they transition to adulthood and how do these changes affect the reentry process?

Q4: How do young adults overcome family obstacles and access support when they return from incarceration?

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study designed to explore the family context of reentry from incarceration during emerging adulthood. The study followed a grounded theory approach with the intent of generating theory based on the experiences and views of participants who have all been through a similar process (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Given the limited number of studies on youth reentry and our lack of understanding of the family context in this process, this type of approach is appropriate. Many recidivism studies utilize quantitative data, which does not fully capture the social processes involved in reentry from incarceration. Qualitative methods are best suited for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding about the way things are and why (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Several scholars have stated the need for more qualitative studies that can shed light on social processes (Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993).

A purposive sample of young adults who have been incarcerated and their family members was recruited to discuss the difficulties of reentry during the transition to adulthood. With the assistance of a community-based research assistant, formerly incarcerated youth who are currently transitioning to adulthood were recruited. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 formerly incarcerated young adults and 14 of their family members. Open ended questions were asked to assess the impact of family context on the reentry process, as well as the issues families encounter when a young adult is released from secure confinement. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then entered into NVivo for coding and analysis.

Sample

The sample for the current study was generated in several ways. The first method involved the assistance of a social worker who was the founder and executive director of a youth reentry program in Middlesex County, N. J. Although the program no longer offers direct counseling services, she maintained relationships with many of her former clients and she offered to assist with the current study. At the outset of the study, she recommended speaking with a former client, Antoine, who had just returned home after serving a five year sentence in an adult prison for armed robbery. About a month after his release, Antoine agreed to participate in a pilot interview to help refine research questions. After the interview, Antoine was hired as a research assistant based on his interest in the study. Due to his vast network of friends and acquaintances who are convicted offenders, his primary role as a research assistant was to recruit study participants. We began by contacting some of the people he knew from the neighborhood where he was raised. We also reached out to offenders that Antoine knew from prison and people he knew from his place of employment, which was a warehouse that employed many former offenders hired through a temp agency. Finally, a snowball sampling method was utilized to identify cases that were potentially information rich by asking participants to recommend friends and acquaintances. Noy (2008) argues that snowball sampling can reveal important aspects of the population being sampled because it can uncover "the dynamics of natural and organic social networks" (p.329). More than serving as a technique for finding participants, this method of sampling can be a revealing part of the inquiry (Babbie, 2013). It allows researchers a glimpse into the nature of relationships among members of the population being studied.

There is a long tradition of using key informants in social research (Fader, 2012; Whyte, 1945). While this methodological approach has the potential to introduce bias into the study, the potential benefits outweigh this risk. By forming a relationship with a member of the community, researchers can gain access to members of the study population (Babbie, 2013). Fader (2012) argues that the strength of ethnographic approaches is the ability to establish close, personal relationships with study participants, which is a departure from the traditional notion that researchers should remain detached to eliminate the risk of bias. Key informants can bridge the gap between researchers and their participants by helping to establish trust and also by helping researchers to better understand the environment under examination, for informants can provide valuable insights into the experiences of the study population. Since I was not working with an organization from which I could recruit clients as participants, and since it was not possible to make extended field visits to build relationships with members of the community, it was essential to hire a community-based assistant to gain access to potential participants. Antoine's assistance allowed me to establish trust with study participants who may have questioned my motives without his presence. In addition to recruiting sample members and helping me to better connect with study participants he was an important source of information about youth crime as well as the legal and penal systems. We had many lengthy conversations about these issues and his experiences with them, as well as his knowledge about the experiences of other people in his social networks. Antoine was also able to interpret much of the terminology that participants used which I was not familiar with, including both legal terms and slang terms, and on

the flip side he was immensely helpful in conveying the meaning of my questions to participants when they needed clarification.

Because of where Antoine grew up and engaged in most of his criminal activities, the sample was recruited primarily in Middlesex County, N.J. Many of the participants were based in New Brunswick and its surrounding suburbs. The city itself has an approximate population of 55,181 and according to the latest available census data, about 27 percent of the city's residents are white non-Hispanic, 14 percent are black non-Hispanic, and 50 percent are of Hispanic origin (US Census Bureau, 2010). In New Brunswick, there are 26 percent living under the poverty level, compared to about seven percent in the county and about nine percent in the state. While the city has some neighborhoods with a more balanced class structure and low crime rates, it has many neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty, crime, and gang activity– neighborhoods to which the majority of the sample returned after release from secure confinement. Of the 21 counties in the state of New Jersey, Middlesex County ranks sixth in terms of the overall number of persons committed by the county to a state or local detention facility (New Jersey Department of Corrections, 2013). On January 2, 2013, 1,596 (or 7 percent) of the 23,123 inmates in correctional facilities in New Jersey were committed by Middlesex County.

In 2007, there were 2,912 juvenile arrests countywide and approximately 70 percent of municipalities in the county reported a street gang presence. There are two secure juvenile confinement facilities in the county but many of the incarcerated juveniles from this community are placed in facilities outside the county. Between mid-September 2005 and mid-February 2008, 166 individuals returned to the county after release from

juvenile confinement facilities (N.J. Juvenile Justice Commission, 2008), which amounts to approximately 69 releases per year. Of the individuals released during this time period, 54.8 percent were African American, 17.5 percent were Hispanic and 22.3 percent were non-Hispanic white. 91.6 percent of the sample was male and the average age at admission to aftercare was 17.9 years old.

Given that the average age at admission to aftercare is nearly 18 years old, it will be interesting to explore the impact of the transition to adulthood on family relationships and the influence of family context on post-release outcomes. It is reasonable to assume that youth offenders' relationships with their parents, with their own children and with their partners change as they mature. Research has shown that family relationships play an important role in desistance as individuals become adults (Ouimet & LeBlanc, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Schroeder, Giordano & Cernkovich, 2010). Sampson and Laub (2009) argue that development involves a constant interaction between individuals and social context. Interviews with formerly incarcerated youth will illuminate how the importance of family context changes during the transition to adulthood, particularly as relationships with parents evolve and mature and as individuals become parents themselves.

The sample includes 31 participants, 17 of whom are formerly incarcerated young adults who were released between the ages of 18 and 25 and 14 of whom are family members. The sample is comprised of ten family dyads and an additional five young adults for whom family member interviews could not be obtained. The sample also includes an extended case study with six additional family members beyond the primary dyad – two of whom are also formerly incarcerated young adults. The dyadic approach

as well as the use of a case study responds well to Elder's call for paying attention to the interdependency of human lives. The inclusion of family members in the sample allows for an analysis of how an individual's circumstances are linked to those of his family members. In addition, gathering data from multiple sources may improve the likelihood of obtaining accurate information when asking respondents to discuss their life histories (Babbie, 2013).

While the sample size is small it is sufficient for the purpose of this study, which is to generate theory. The inclusion of 20 to 30 individuals has been recommended for grounded theory approaches in order to saturate the data categories (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). A grounded theory approach involves sampling towards theory construction, not population representativeness (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is a purposive sample in that it includes individuals who have been through a similar process and can provide the information needed to answer the research questions. One goal of purposive selection is to intentionally examine extreme cases that are critical for the development of emerging theories. "Extreme cases often provide a crucial test of these theories, and can illuminate what is going on in a way that representative cases cannot" (Maxwell, 2005:90). Becker (1998) claims that random sampling provides average cases and he argues instead in favor of the selection of highly unusual ones. A particular strength of the sample that was generated in this study is that it includes a broad range of cases from less severe offenses to serious and persistent youth offenders, who are lacking from many large-scale studies of delinquency (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

The inclusion criteria for youth participants in this study were that they had been incarcerated and were released between the ages of 18 and 25, and they had been back in

the community for a minimum of one month. Incarceration was defined as a period of detention in a juvenile or adult secure confinement facility as opposed to a residential or group home. For the purpose of this study, a broad definition of family was used. Family members included those who are biologically related or related by marriage and residing with the youth participants, as well as those who are biologically related or related by marriage and not residing with the youth participants. Family members also included participants' significant partners and close friends who are considered "like family." This is similar to the broad definition of family utilized by the Vera Institute's Family Justice Program, which recognizes that returning offenders have large support networks. Studies have shown that extended kin networks may be of particular importance for poor African American families in communities where incarceration rates are high (Hogan, Parish, & William, 1990; Jarrett, Jefferson, & Kelly, 2010; Stack, 1974).

All of the formerly incarcerated young adults included in the study are African American males. Given the existing research that highlights multigenerational problems that derive from structural inequality, a sample of African American males allows for an examination of these issues. While the results of this study are not generalizable to the population of young adults released from incarceration, they do have important implications for young, urban African American males who reside in communities that experience high rates of incarceration. The returning offenders ranged in age from 19 to 25 years old when they were released from incarceration. Length of the most recent incarceration ranged from one month to four and a half years. Time at risk ranged from one month to five years. Half of the sample members were gang affiliated. Eleven of the

returning offenders had prior convictions but all of them had previous involvement in crime prior to the most recent committing offense. Eight of them had prior incarcerations. One participant, Davay, openly admitted to offending after his most recent incarceration, but claimed to be refraining from crime since finding a steady job. Four participants, Clyde, Lamont, Trey, and Randall had charges pending at the time of their interviews. Table 1 (at the end of the manuscript) presents descriptive information about the youth participants and their family members. Of the family members interviewed, six are significant partners, five are cousins, one is a brother, and there is one mother and one father. All but four of them have past involvement with crime.

There is wide variation among the sample with regard to length of incarceration and time at risk, but this variation is a strength of the study because it allows for an examination of differences in the reentry and desistance process based on these variations. Since time at risk varied greatly among participants, it would be interesting to assess how family relationships change over time. It could be that the first month out is a time of happiness and excitement as offenders regain their freedom and reunite with loved ones. On the other hand, family relationships may be tense as returning offenders attempt to reclaim their role in the family. For those who have been out longer, relationships with family members may improve over time as returning offenders work towards desistance and gain maturity, or they may report greater levels of frustration as they struggle to find jobs and meet family expectations. Having variation in the sample allows a closer look at these processes.

Study Procedures

Before recruitment began, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board to use a study participant as a member of the research team. Antoine then completed the human subjects training course that is offered online through the National Institute of Health. After he successfully completed the training, his certificate of completion was sent to the Institutional Review Board and his name was added to the research protocol as a key personnel member. Participants were recruited between January 2012 and March 2013. When returning young adults were recruited, they were asked to identify a member of their extended family network to participate as well. After a complete family dyad agreed to participate, interviews were scheduled. To ensure confidentiality, each subject was assigned a unique ID number as well as a pseudonym. Each dyad also received a unique family ID number. Documents containing the participants' contact information and ID numbers are stored in a locked file cabinet in the principal investigator's home office. Prior to conducting interviews, informed consent was obtained for each participant. Different consent forms were used for youth participants and family member participants. See Appendix A for IRB-approved consent forms.

Each subject was given a stipend of $50 for their participation. Participants were informed that interviews would last approximately one hour, depending on how much they had to say, and that even though they were receiving a stipend, they were under no obligation to answer questions they did not want to answer and that they could terminate the interview at any time without forfeiting the stipend. They were also informed that their identities will be protected and that while the information they provide may appear in published materials, there will be no way to connect their name to the information

provided. The only potential risk to subjects as a result of their participation was emotional distress caused by the personal nature of the questions that were asked during the interviews. Participants were informed of this risk during the informed consent process and were told that they would be referred to a counselor if necessary, although the researcher would not be able to pay for this service. None of the participants reported experiencing distress as a result of the interview.

Each subject participated in a one-time interview that focused on family-related issues during the reentry process of young adults. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were asked about the young adults' living situations, about how their families were affected by their incarceration, the problems that young adults and their family members experienced after their release, the types of support they receive from both family and non-family members, and the types of help they feel they could benefit from. They were also asked about the experiences they have that are specific emerging adulthood. See Appendix B for the young adult interview and see Appendix C for the family member interview. Pre-structuring the interview was necessary to ensure the research questions could be answered and also to simplify data analysis, but the interviews remained flexible if other topics arose. Unstructured approaches can be useful in revealing the processes that lead to specific outcomes (Maxwell, 2005).

Interviews with participants occurred at least one month after they were released from incarceration. Research on post-incarceration experiences has shown that the first month out is a difficult time, but also a time of opportunity as returning prisoners try to reestablish family ties, find employment, and remain drug and crime free (Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999). The first month out was a sufficient length of time for participants to

discuss the challenges and opportunities they faced early on in their post-release transitions. Antoine was present for all but five of the interviews. I took the lead role in asking questions but Antoine played a large part in probing respondents for more elaborate responses. At times he discussed his own experiences which seemed to draw out lengthier and more detailed accounts of the participants' past experiences. The interviews that were conducted without Antoine's presence were equally informative and the participants did not seem at all reluctant to share their experiences. Perhaps because the participants were recruited by Antoine to begin with, they were more trusting about the nature of the study than they would have been if I had approached them on my own.

The interviews took place at mutually agreed upon locations that were convenient for the participants and that had minimal transportation costs, including public locations (where privacy could be maintained) and participants' homes. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder with the signed consent of the participants. The audio recordings were then transferred to a password protected computer to be transcribed verbatim. Approval was obtained from the IRB to use a third party transcriber and participants were made aware through the informed consent document that interviews would be transcribed by an outside company. Prior to sending audio files to the transcriber, a non-disclosure agreement was obtained. Personal information will be stored for the minimum three year period required by the IRB after the study has been completed. Once this period has expired, all documents containing personal confidential information will be shredded.

There are several variables of interest in this study. The first is family problems, which may include financial difficulties, family conflict, histories of substance abuse, mental illness, or physical health problems, and family criminality. Questions were

asked to determine which of these problems have been experienced by multiple generations within a family and the impact these problems have on young adults in transition. The next variable of interest is family support, which includes both instrumental and expressive support. This was examined with regard to the types of support family members provide young adults as well as the types of support that young adults provide their families. Another variable of interest is developmental change which may occur during emerging adulthood. Finally, while this study was not necessarily looking for a specific outcome, it is interested in the ways that the above variables – family problems, family support, and developmental change – influence different outcomes that result during the youth reentry process, whether the outcomes are improvements or declines in the quality of family relationships, increased or decreased psychological well-being, recidivism or desistance, employment, etc.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection. Analysis began after the first interview was completed and continued throughout the project. Two types of memos were utilized throughout the data collection and analysis process. First, extensive field notes were written after each interview to capture as much detail as possible about the residential and familial environments in which the interviews occurred. Second, early data analysis involved reading through transcribed interviews and writing theoretical notes about preliminary findings. Memos are an important tool during qualitative analysis as they can facilitate analytical thinking about your data (Miles & Huberman, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). They help to elaborate categories, define relationships between them, and identify gaps (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987).

Many emerging themes were identified through this type of preliminary analysis, allowing me to examine them more closely in subsequent interviews.

As I looked at family interactions prior to and following release during the early stages of data collection, it was evident that like the literature suggests, families were both a source of *conflict* and *support*. It was also evident that there were several categories falling within each of these themes. Many different types of family problems were discussed, including *parental absence, abuse,* and *family criminality*. Various types of support were also identified, including *financial assistance* and *emotional support*. Participants talked about the negative impact of their family troubles during their adolescence and how they struggled to overcome those troubles as they transitioned to adulthood. On the other hand, they also talked about their families being important sources of support as they transitioned to the community. By identifying these themes early on and the categories within them, I was able to focus my analysis to develop an understanding of how families who were reportedly a source of conflict could also be a positive influence on the reentry process. As I focused the analysis around these emerging themes, it became clear that there was a strong relationship between *age* and the *quality of family relationships*. For many of the participants, the maturity they achieved during emerging adulthood changed the nature of their family relationships and ultimately allowed them to access support that was either not available to them previously or was not accepted. By the time data collection was finished, this relationship was in full view.

After the interviews were transcribed, they were entered into the software program NVivo, which helps to store, organize and analyze qualitative data. Once the

data was entered, the coding process began. Coding is the main strategy utilized in categorizing qualitative data and the goal is to place data into categories by attaching labels that depict what each segment is about and that will allow comparisons to be made (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987). Coding data also assists in the development of theoretical concepts. The coding strategies that were utilized are open, axial and selective coding. Open coding is concerned with identifying and labeling phenomena found in the text; axial coding involves relating codes to each other; selective coding is the process of choosing the core category and relating other categories to that concept (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

NVivo allows the user to go through text line by line and assign codes based on what is being said or described. Once codes have been established and entered for each interview, the user is able to search the program to find all text that fits a given code, allowing the user to see how the code is being discussed. For example, if I want to see passages in which "financial assistance" is discussed, I would search the code "financial assistance." Because qualitative analysis involves forming raw data into codes and then combining codes into broader themes, NVivo was used to place the codes (known as children) under broader themes (known as parents) to allow an analysis of the relationship between the raw data and the broader themes (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis was completed in March 2013.

Validity

The "credibility" of qualitative research is often questioned (Creswell, 2007). Quantitative researchers design controls that will deal with threats to validity, whereas qualitative researchers often lack the ability to control for threats in advance (Maxwell,

2005). There are certain validation strategies, however, that were used to overcome potential threats to the validity of this study. One of Creswell's (2007) eight validation strategies is clarifying researcher bias at the outset of the study. Based on observations from within my personal life as well as involvement in prior research examining family issues, I am inclined to believe that family context is highly influential on an individual's adjustment and behavior. What I have witnessed personally leads me to think that families can be both detrimental to youths' psychological well-being and also powerfully motivating. In speaking with youth offenders in past studies, many spoke about the significance of their families, both in a negative and positive manner, during their upbringing as well as during their reentry from incarceration. In the current study, I remained open to the possibility that other forces are equally if not more influential on an individual's post-incarceration transition during young adulthood. The interview includes general questions that allowed participants to discuss the difficulties they face as well as things that are going well for them. By including these types of questions, additional sources of strain and support were identified and the interviews were read very thoroughly to ensure that other factors were not overlooked.

Another potential threat to the validity of this study is receiving misinformation or a lack of information as a result of participants wanting to protect their privacy or being uncomfortable discussing personal matters with someone they do not know. This is always a possibility with face-to-face interviewing (Babbie, 2013). My ability to build a rapport with participants was limited as I did not have the opportunity to make long-term or involved observations with specific individuals, but I tried to establish a trusting relationship with them by assuring them that their privacy would be maintained and that

they did not have to discuss topics that make them feel uncomfortable. I eased participants concerns by telling them that I am a student, not a law enforcement officer or a social worker, and that I am trying to learn some things that will help people better understand their situations and how to help them. It was also my hope that the use of a community-based research assistant would increase the likelihood of obtaining accurate and rich information. I suspected that participants would be less likely to question his intentions and be more willing to open up about their situations if they knew they were talking to someone who shared similar experiences and this largely seemed to be the case.

Another validation strategy that was utilized is member checking, which involves soliciting participants' views about the credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2007). In addition to discussing my interpretations of the data with Antoine, I frequently talked about my preliminary findings with participants to gauge their reactions. This was immensely helpful in confirming my results as well as refining them further.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to the methodological approach used in this study. First, the young adults were given some control over which family members were interviewed. As a result, the family member participants were familiar with the young adults' backgrounds to varying degrees. All of the significant partners that were interviewed were in a relationship with the young adults prior to their incarceration. Not all of them, however, were familiar with the young adults' family context during their childhood years. They were selected for interviews regardless because they had high levels of involvement in the young adults' lives and were strong sources of support.

Some of them shared children and in all but one case, they resided together. Still, it would have been ideal to interview parents, primary caregivers or other immediate family members who could comment on the young adults' backgrounds. It was difficult to access these family members for various reasons. For most participants, their fathers were not an option because they were dead, incarcerated or had little to no relationship with their sons. Many of the mothers worked difficult hours and claimed they were too busy or simply did not want to be involved.

A second limitation is that only one family member was interviewed for each participant, with the exception of the in-depth case study. The study would have been improved had multiple family members been interviewed, especially family members from multiple generations, providing several case studies. Due to both budget restraints and time restrictions, this was simply not possible. Had it been possible, a more complete picture of family contextual factors as they influence offending and reentry outcomes in young adulthood would have been provided.

A third limitation of this study and one that was also due to time limitations is the lack of follow-up observations. Only one interview could be conducted with each participant. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of developmental changes, the shifting nature of family arrangements and evolving relationships, it would be ideal to select a baseline for initial interviews, such as one month post-release, and then conduct follow-up interviews at various intervals.

Finally, the results of the current study do not extend beyond low-income African American males from an urban community. Other researchers may want to consider how the processes examined in this study apply to other types of offenders. Studies should

examine whether or not the social processes leading to offending are similar for young adults of other races and socioeconomic statuses. It would be interesting to see how family context differs between groups and the role that family context plays during the transition to adulthood.

The Findings

The next several chapters present the findings. Chapter four discusses the influence of family problems on adolescent behavior and the impact of pre-existing family problems on young adults returning from incarceration. These problems include poverty, family criminality, drug abuse, physical abuse, and parental neglect. Chapter five provides examples of family support following incarceration, often for the same people who were negatively affected by prior family problems, which highlights a seeming paradox that I explain in chapter six by providing a developmental analysis of how and why this occurs. Chapter seven presents an extended case study of a multi-generational family and how its problems are transmitted and resolved over time in the context of a particular family structure. Chapter eight provides an in-depth discussion of the findings, an analysis of how they extend prior research and how they advance the current field of knowledge.

Chapter 4: The Impact of Family Problems

Elder (1974) theorized that the cumulative disadvantage experienced by one family member would impact the lives of other family members, perhaps for several generations. Recent studies examining the transmission of problems from one generation to the next within families (Farrington, Jolliffe & Loeber, 2001; van de Rakt, Ruiter, De Graaf & Nieuwbeerta, 2010) support Elder's theory. The link between family problems and youth problem behavior is well-established. Family criminality, drug addiction, and physical abuse are strongly correlated with youth involvement in crime. The purpose of this chapter is to assess a baseline for the sample with regard to their family problems in order to compare the participants' pre- and post-release experiences. The examples presented here reveal how families become entangled in a vicious cycle of problems and how this cycle negatively impacts youth. For those who end up incarcerated, breaking free from the cycle and preventing it from repeating with their own children is a struggle.

When speaking with participants about their family histories, several themes emerged. All but one participant admitted to a history of criminal involvement and/or drug abuse in their families, all but two participants talked about either the complete absence or partial absence of their fathers, and many were victims of abuse or witnessed abuse in their home. All of the participants discussed the impact of these conditions on their adolescence and to some degree attributed their involvement in crime to their family circumstances. Forehand, Biggar, and Kotchik (1998) showed that the probability of conduct disorder and delinquency increases with the number of family risk factors. It became clear that for a majority of the participants in this study, the presence of multiple family risk factors influenced their delinquent behavior.

There were some key mechanisms through which their family problems influenced their delinquency. First, some of the participants became involved in crime to provide for themselves or because they desired goods that their families were unable to afford. This was typically the case in father-absent households or in households with severe cases of parental neglect caused by drug abuse. Second, several of the participants were victims of verbal and/or physical abuse and they gravitated towards the streets because they were looking to escape conflict in the household and needed an outlet for their anger. Third, the vast majority of the participants were exposed to a criminal lifestyle through family members which may have made crime seem like an acceptable option. The chapter will begin by detailing the life histories of four participants to demonstrate how an accumulation of family factors influenced their involvement in crime. The categories evident in their life histories will then be expanded upon as they relate to other participants' experiences.

Ty

Ty was 22 at the time of his interview and he had been in the community for nearly three years. Ty spent a year in juvenile detention at the age of 15 for committing robbery. After being in the community for close to two years after his release, he was locked up again for robbery at the age of 18. He spent ten months behind bars in an adult prison and was on parole for three years. Ty now has a steady job in a warehouse and reports that he is refraining from crime. Growing up, his life was difficult and he struggled to overcome his anger when he returned home. Ty did not have a relationship with his father as a child. In fact, his father did not try to make contact with Ty until he was just about to turn 20 years old, at which point Ty had no desire to have a relationship

with his dad. In describing how he felt when his father finally reached out to him, Ty said:

> You come back now, 20 years later? What the fuck? You don't know what the fuck I was going through. The things with my mother and her bullshit-ass boyfriend or husband, whatever you want to call him, you understand? Fuck him. Fuck that shit.

In the absence of his father, Ty's mother married a drug addict who was abusive towards her and the children. Being a victim to physical abuse had a profound affect on Ty's psychological well-being and ultimately on his behavior. Below, Ty describes what his stepfather was like when he was growing up:

> He was a drug addict. He was getting high as hell, nodding off, starting mad shit, starting with me. That's why me and my mom relationship wasn't the best relationship. That's why I used to stay with my grandmother sometimes, know what I mean? I still don't understand why, but a lot of shit happened to me. A lot of the shit that happened to me was from her, from her husband. He was abusive. I used to get whooped for no reason and he used to beat on my mom. I used to see that shit. I used to see him getting high, know what I'm saying? I been seeing a lot of shit, like, I just seen it all. I've been through it. By me doing that, it made me want to just flip out when I was younger, just say like fuck it, ya know what I'm saying? Cuz it like comes from your household if you ain't raised right, know what I'm saying, if the parenting not really there, if the parenting sucks…

Ty commented that the abusive environment made him want to "flip out." Research indicates that children who witness abuse are more likely to exhibit violent and delinquent behavior (Cuevas, Finkelhor, Shattuck, Turner, & Hamby, 2013). This may have been a contributing factor to Ty's violent tendencies as a kid and to his eventual involvement in violent crime such as robbery. Regarding Ty's behavior, his older cousin Shemar commented, "He was bad, he was bad." In describing Ty, Shemar stated:

> Out of all the people his age he was the most wildest. He was basically into everything, ya know what I'm saying, he just picked up on everything…He used to get into a lot of fights, he fought a lot.

Ty explained how his stepfather's abuse affected his mental state and how it pushed him to the streets:

> That's why I don't sleep, to this day, I sleep light. He came at me in my sleep. That could fuck somebody's head up. So, if everything's not good in the household, of course you gonna bug out, flip out. You go out and you gonna look for love from your friends so you have some type of affection. But, at the end of the day when you go back home behind closed doors, everything is all fucking different. It's like, fuck, I gotta deal with this shit. Then when you go out, everything is good, but it ain't. Then when you come back, everything is fucking different. It's like a switch gets flipped on, alright we good, then turn that shit right back off, boom. It's like, damn, it's fucked now, it's dark now. This darkness just comes, you just feel it. Turn the switch on, everything's alright, it's lifted, but as soon as you turn that shit off, it's darkness. When it comes from there, it's gonna affect you and it's gonna affect you while you on the streets.

It is clear that Ty went to the streets looking to escape the negativity of his home environment. As a result of damaged relationships with his family members, Ty needed to feel connected to others. The ties he established to the outside world did not have a positive influence on his behavior, but they may have been psychologically and emotionally important. While going out only provided temporary relief, Ty was able to vent his anger and frustration, even though his methods of venting got him into trouble.

Ty's experiences are indicative of several family contextual factors that impacted his behavior. Ty did not have a positive male role model in his life when he was growing up. His biological father was absent from his life until he was an adult and this angered him. In his mind, his father was nothing more than a sperm donor. Ty's stepfather,

someone who Ty said should have been like a father, was a drug addict and he was physically abusive towards the family. The abuse he suffered and the anger he felt about his circumstances may have conditioned Ty to be more aggressive. He admitted to spending more time on the streets to escape the conflict in his home and in doing so, he was exposed to a criminal lifestyle. When asked if his household environment pushed him towards the streets, Ty said:

> Hell, yeah. Fuck that shit. Hell, yeah. That's when the robbing started coming in. I was hustling a little bit and got kicked out of school, but it was like, ok, I have robbing. And shit, it be like a rush. Once you rob one person and you're like, oh shit, I got this much? Let me see if I can get a little bit more, and it be like a rush. Robbing just comes naturally, instant, like, I used to just rob, it comes naturally.

Committing robberies helped to fill a void left by Ty's harsh familial environment. The "rush" he experienced provided him with a positive emotion and perhaps victimizing others gave him a feeling of control that he did not have in his household.

During his adolescence, Ty spent a majority of his time with his older cousin Shemar who was heavily involved in street crime. Shemar is four years older and he took Ty under his wing when Ty was just a child. Shemar had an extremely difficult upbringing himself and his initial turn to the street life may have been brought on by the troubles he faced at home. His mother is a drug addict who lives on the streets and he does not know who his father is. Without parents to care for him, various extended family members who lived in the projects provided Shemar with a place to live but they were not able to provide him with stability. As a result of their own involvement in drugs and crime, Shemar shifted between residences depending on who was in the best position to care for him at a given time. In the absence of a positive male role model, Ty looked

up to his older cousin and tried to emulate him. As Shemar put it, he was a cousin, a brother and a best friend to Ty. In describing Ty's entry into crime, Shemar stated:

> I was getting into trouble and he just carried along and you know, it's like, sometimes you have people that hang around you when you younger and you don't realize they younger than you until it hit you like, I don't know, maybe you about to go see some girls or something and you like, I can't bring this guy. So, like, it was just different things that I was getting into. He got into a lot of things and he just picked up on a lot of things.

Ty was eventually locked up while Shemar himself was never arrested. Interestingly, Ty was introduced to the street life by hanging out with his older cousin, but it was Ty's incarceration that ultimately scared Shemar into giving up his criminal lifestyle. Shemar withdrew from crime after Ty and his friends went to prison.

Ty's family context was clearly a major influence on his adolescent behavior. When Ty returned home from his first bid, his family circumstances continued to affect him and they complicated his transition process. When youth who turn to the streets to escape their home life return from incarceration to a living situation that has not improved, the likelihood of desistance may be reduced. Ty explained how his unstable family environment enabled him to resume a criminal lifestyle after his release from a juvenile detention facility. Below, he describes what it was like when he came home:

> Shit still wasn't correct at home, it wasn't correct. My mother came to see me all the time, alright. I respect her for that, it made me open my eyes more, but I was still going back doing bullshit cuz at home it was fucked up, know what I'm saying? It was fucked up. What the hell, like, she can't support me, I gotta support myself. Like, this motherfucker is doing this and that, like, everything going down like that at the house, I was like fuck it. Ain't shit changed, shit the same.

When he returned home, the realization that nothing had changed in the household made it difficult for Ty to transform his life at 16 years old. He was carrying around a lot of anger, primarily for his mother who failed to protect him. Ty blames his mother for subjecting him to the abuse he endured at the hands of her boyfriend. In talking about his relationship with his mother, Ty said, "I still don't trust my mother to this day." Research has shown that anger resulting from family conflict that involves physical violence or severe fighting has a significant impact on delinquency (Sigfusdottir, Farkas, & Silver, 2004). The anger Ty felt when he returned home may have contributed to his continued involvement in crime.

In addition to the emotional strain caused by his living environment, Ty believed that he had to support himself upon his return, adding to his stress when he came home. Regarding these circumstances, Ty said:

> Ain't nobody doing nothing for me. I gotta put money in my pocket, like, I'm a grown ass man. I'm 16 now, whatever, I gotta put money in my pocket. Shit still fucked up, but, fuck it. I'm gonna do me. I'm gonna go back to what I'm doing, to what I'm used to doing, robbing, getting money. Ain't shit changed for me.

The passage indicates that to some extent, Ty resumed his criminal activities to support himself. His lack of trust in his mother and inability to turn to his stepfather may have partly fueled his desire to care for himself. This feeling seemed to intensify as he moved through his later teenage years and he clearly thought of himself as being grown. Due to the conflict between him and his parents, he felt that he was largely on his own.

Ty's experiences demonstrate a culminating effect of family factors on his behavior. His experiences were similar to those of many other participants who

attributed their criminal behavior to not just a single factor but to a set of family circumstances.

Ernest

Like Ty, Ernest was born to a mother with a low socioeconomic status and she became involved with a drug addict. Ernest witnessed drug abuse in his home at an early age and this drug abuse negatively impacted his home life and his mother's ability to care for him and his siblings. When Ernest was young, he lived with his mother, his two older brothers and his sister. His mom had a boyfriend on and off for about 13 years and Ernest claims her boyfriend was part of the reason why his mother was unable to provide for her family. The money she earned working as a lunch aid would disappear to support her boyfriend's drug habit. The following passage details how his mother's boyfriend impacted the family:

> He used to do drugs on and off. We wasn't blind to what was going on and why he kept being gone and why the money kept being stolen and, like, there'd been times we'd get evicted from our house because he stole the rent money and disappeared for three or four months, and now we go and stay with a family member or something like that. So we was aware -- we knew it was a drug problem. As we got older she kind of told us -- she explained to us but by then we was already in the streets.

In the face of their financial difficulties, Ernest explained that he started selling drugs at just eleven years old to make sure he had proper clothing.

> I probably was selling drugs, probably when I was like 11. My mother has four kids, she was a single parent, and she couldn't afford to do everything for everybody, so we didn't have everything the other kids had so we just wanted extra money and be able to dress and have good sneakers on our feet and wear good proper clothes and everything.

When times got tough, Ernest's grandmother took in his sister and one of his brothers but she would not take Ernest and his oldest brother. As a result, the two brothers were out in the streets sleeping from house to house until at times when their mother would have a place where they could all be together. By the time Ernest was 14 years old, he was on his own. He stayed with friends when he could but he often had to sleep outside in abandoned apartments and he sold drugs to stay alive. He described what it was like trying to survive and how this need drove his criminal activities:

> I worked; I sold drugs; I worked. And the crimes I committed weren't like against innocent people either. It was like people that were outside on the streets with me, like, in the way. They have to get out of the way. They were stopping the money flow. I had my first car when I was 15, sleeping in my car because I couldn't sleep in the house. I wanted to just get out of sleeping in my car and get into an apartment, so people that was in my way had to get out of the way. So, that's why I was catching my charges robbing them and taking their money and stuff.

In recounting what that time was like for him, Ernest commented, "I used to try to block those memories out." He explained how he felt hopeful after his release from his first time behind bars, but that his hopes were soon shattered:

> The first time I got locked up, I came home and we were situated. We moved from out of the projects. My mother had a nice apartment. I knew we were doing good. I was trying to stop being in the streets. I went back to school fulltime. I was staying in school, not cutting class, and just trying to stay good, and then she allowed her boyfriend to come back in, and things started getting crazy again, and that's probably when I started seeing myself outside the house more, not even wanting to go back in the house, and that's when I got locked back up.

When his mother got back together with her boyfriend, the situation at home quickly deteriorated and like Ty, Ernest spent more time outside the house looking to escape the conflict. Before long, he returned to juvenile detention. When he was released, it was

the first time Ernest returned as an adult. He described what his living situation was like when he returned:

> I remember the last time when I was a minor and I got locked up, that's when I did the 18 months. My first day home my mother had an apartment and when I woke up the next morning she wasn't there. It was crazy. It was me and my oldest brother; she wasn't there. The doorbell rung and it was the sheriff come to put a padlock on the door, my first day home from jail, so I knew I was always on my own from there on. I never turned to anybody for help. I never looked for help. I've been a fighter, doing it on my own since I was really, really young, so I figured I'm going to find a way whether I'm down and out, I'm finding a way to get back up.

Upon returning to a situation that was no more stable than before, Ernest realized he could not rely on his family for support and he quickly resumed a life of crime.

In Ernest's case, there were several factors that placed him at risk for a life of crime. His mother was poor and he did not have his father in his life to contribute to his financial well-being or serve as a role model. The person his mother developed a relationship with was a drug addict who stole whatever money she earned. Since they often ended up on the street with nowhere to go, Ernest saw few options but to turn to crime as a means of survival. When the family did have a home to reside in, the presence of his mother's boyfriend led to conflict that pushed Ernest to the streets. His return from incarceration was always a difficult transition, which led him back to crime on many occasions.

Davay

There were several family factors that were influential on Davay's behavior as an adolescent. He was arrested for the first time at 24 years old for possession of cocaine and he spent six months in the county jail. Although he was not arrested until he was an

adult, like the others, Davay began committing crimes at a young age due to his family circumstances. He was a gangbanger who was heavily involved in crime throughout his adolescence. The greatest influence on Davay's early years was his father. Davay's father was mostly absent from his life as the result of a drug addiction that ultimately led to his parents' divorce. Davay attributes his deep entrenchment in crime as a partial result of the psychological trauma caused by his father's neglect.

> My dad cheated on my mom with the babysitter and got her pregnant and that's how I have my other brother and sister. So, my mom up and left him and that messed my whole head up. It messed my brother's head up too, know what I mean? I was upset with my mom because she took my father away and my dad because he allowed it to happen. He didn't even try chasing after us or nothing like that. It's not like I didn't have a father or I didn't want a father – our father didn't want us. I didn't know why, but as I grew up I found out that's true because of his addiction. I was aware [that something was wrong with him] but I didn't know what it was. I just know that sometimes when I see him he's not normal. He up and left and that right there messed my whole head up cuz I had no father that wanted me and as I got older and older and older, I started hanging out with knuckleheads. I call 'em knuckleheads. One thing led to another and I started wanting to be like them. My mom said, "No don't do this, don't do that, you need to do the right thing." I'm like, "Leave me alone. I'm growing up and I'm getting older and you can't control me."

Davay admits that having a father who showed no interest in him affected his mental state and influenced his poor choices. If he and his father had a closer relationship when he was younger, he may not have looked for close relationships elsewhere and been as drawn to negative role models. Like Ty, however, the anger he felt about his situation and his inability to connect with his father sent him looking for positive feelings outside of the home.

The very first time Davay committed a crime was actually out of necessity when his father abandoned him and his siblings. He described how he first broke into a neighbor's home when he was just ten years old after he and his siblings were left alone by their drug-addicted father:

> He was so messed up on drugs when we were babies. When me and my brother were like ten and eleven, we went with him for a whole week and this dude left us in a house with a dog and babies. Remember I told you I had a brother and sister that he had with the babysitter? They were five and two. My dad left us alone for a week straight cuz he was so addicted to that crack. He didn't care about us. He didn't even leave food. He just bought the apartment so there was no furniture. My older brother had to provide for us somehow. Me, I was not into the street life then but I understood it from watching movies and seeing people growing up so I knew I had to go do something when I was young. That's what started the whole thing. I had to go into a house and I took food, I didn't take any money. It was just the neighbor's house. I saw them leave. My brother and sister were still in diapers. We didn't know how to change diapers – that was new to us. My brother did all that. I had to go taking things. That's how it started. It was so easy. At that young age it was so easy and I'm thinking, man, when I get older it's gonna be so easy cuz I'm gonna plot it out. I used to break into houses.

At such a young age, Davay had little choice but to commit a crime in order to survive. That was a pivotal moment in his life because he realized that it was an easy way to obtain the items he needed and as he got older, he was able to carefully plan out his crimes.

In addition to the anger he felt towards his father, Davay had a troubled relationship with his mother when he was growing up. Davay's mother was a Jehovah's Witness and her religious values were very important to her. She tried to impose her beliefs on her children which eventually caused Davay to rebel. He did not appreciate his mother's strict rules and he resented having to go to church. By the time he reached

adulthood, he refused to attend church and this became a major source of conflict between him and his mother, one that left him homeless.

> She tried to disown me one time because I stopped going to church when I started trapping more. She was heavily into the church and she told me, "If you're not gonna go, you don't need to be living with me anymore. I don't want you around me no more". I'm like, why? I'm 18, I'm an adult. I can choose what I want to do. "You choose what you want to do but you're 18, you can live on your own now." So I was homeless, staying from here to here, from girl to girl house.

Davay was 20 when his mother finally asked him to leave home and he sought shelter wherever he could. With nowhere else to turn, he went to stay at his dad's house in Pennsylvania where he remained for a few years until his arrest. Davay said that he "barely knew the dude" but he saw this as his only way out from the dangers of the life he was living at the time. Davay's father was still addicted to crack and Davay harbored a lot of resentment for his dad so "there were no father-son bonding moments." He viewed this time with his father as something he had to do and did not see it as an opportunity to build their relationship. Davay admitted that he even sold crack to his father while he was staying with him.

After Davay's release from jail, parole arranged for him to return to his mother's home. While she was happy to see him, there is still a great deal of tension between them. Nelson and Trone (2000) found that family members are often happy about the release of a loved one but they sometimes have conflicting emotions that interfere with the transition process, including anger, a sense of betrayal, and disappointment. Davay's criminal past concerns his mother and even though he is now 25 years old, his mother has imposed a strict curfew on him. According to Davay, his mother begins calling him an

hour before his curfew to urge him to come home, which is a major source of embarrassment to him. Aside from her concern about his involvement in crime, there are other sources of conflict between them. Davay's mother remarried and Davay does not like living with her new husband, an African man who Davay does not feel like he can relate to. Davay also believes that his stepfather does not care to build a relationship with him since he never attempts to sit down and converse with him.

Money was another source of tension between Davay and his mother when he returned home. He struggled to find a job at first and his mother pressured him for money so he resumed criminal activities. In Breese, Ra'el & Grant's (2000) study of former male prisoners, participants reported feeling pressure to contribute to their families financially but due to the challenges they faced in making such contributions, they re-offended. The respondents also reported frustration over the demands their parents tried to place on them, such as working and going to school. Davay said that he had to lie to his mother about where his money was coming from, which made him feel guilty. He was relieved when he eventually found work so he did not have to deceive his mother anymore. At the time of his interview, Davay was happily employed but he still believes that "crime pays" as long as you're smart and you can avoid getting caught.

Davay's experiences also point to a culmination of family risk factors that increased the likelihood of his getting involved in crime. His parents were torn apart by his father's drug addiction which left him and his brother to be raised by a struggling single mother. Because of his addiction, Davay's father had little involvement in his life. On the one occasion that Davay and his brother were sent to stay with their dad for an extended period of time, they were abandoned and had to steal to survive. Davay's anger

towards his parents led him to spend more time outside of the home and his desire to feel connected led him to establish ties with people who were negative influences. The conflict between him and his mother left him homeless for a period of time and ultimately led him to seek refuge in his estranged father's home, where he continued on his criminal path until he was eventually caught for possession and put in jail. Now that he is home, Davay and his mother continue to conflict over his lifestyle and the pressure she places on him is difficult to bear. He returned to crime to meet the demands his mother was placing on him, even at the risk of destroying their relationship, and he will do so again if he has no other options.

Eddie

Eddie has a lot in common with the participants discussed above. Like the others, he started committing crimes at a young age because his mother struggled to support her children and his father was neglectful. Eddie started committing crimes at 11 years old. At first, he was mostly involved in shoplifting but he gradually moved on to more serious offenses. He was first arrested when he was 13 years old for receiving stolen property when he was caught in a stolen car. After that he was arrested nearly 30 times combined as a juvenile and as an adult. His first incarceration was at 17 years old and he was locked up five or six times after the age of 18. His most recent incarceration prior to his interview was a seven month sentence for distribution of drugs in a school zone while on probation. Growing up, Eddie lived with his mom and his older brother. Eddie stated that his crimes, even as a youngster, were economically motivated. His mother was poor and his father did not provide for his kids. He explained why he turned to crime at such a young age:

> When I was little, I had it rough growing up. I didn't have the best sneakers, the best clothes. I didn't have any of that. So I guess back then when I was young and I was getting arrested for those crimes, I guess I had to do what I thought was right.
>
> My mom had a job. She couldn't really keep food on the table. We were living in a one-bedroom apartment and there were three of us living there. I didn't have the best sneakers. My brother didn't have the best sneakers. We had to just go day by day.

As a child, Eddie had some involvement with his father when he was not incarcerated but he cut ties with his dad when he was 11 years old. His final encounter with his father was a pivotal moment that may have altered the course of Eddie's life. He explained what happened between him and his dad that caused him to turn his back on his father completely:

> He was never there. Once I seen him, he was counting money then I asked him -- I was 11 years old -- I walked up to him and I said, "Dad, can I get $5 so I can get something to eat?" because I didn't eat all day, and he's like, "Aren't they your friends? Go ask your friends to feed you." So ever since he said that, I looked at him and like, all right, I'm just not going to say anything else to you.
>
> Ever since then, I never said another word to him because he said that. You don't treat your 11-year-old son like that. That hurt me for the rest of my life, but now I know how he treated me and my brother, I would never treat my kids like that, even though I don't have any kids now. I'll never treat my kids like that. That's what we call grimy, scandalous. It's not right.
>
> That's what really made me just be like, fuck it, forget it, because he was the one telling me, "Don't sell drugs, don't do this. Go to school, do that and do that," and I was trying. But when he did that, that made me just be like, nah, forget it. You're not going to buy me new sneakers and I'm not going to ask my mom to buy me new sneakers because I already know that we're struggling and she doesn't have any extra money to buy me new sneakers, get me new clothes.

Like Davay, Eddie attributes his initial involvement in crime to his father's neglect. His experiences differ somewhat because his father was a presence in his life until Eddie put an end to their relationship. For the other participants, it was their fathers who chose not to be involved. The lack of financial support from his father on top of his mother's economic struggles steered Eddie towards crime at a young age to obtain the items that his parents did not provide. The example set by Eddie's brother played a major part in his decision to turn to crime. In his father's absence, Eddie looked to his older brother for guidance. Eddie's desire to be just like his brother, who was deeply entrenched in a life of crime, contributed to his own criminal involvement. Eddie's brother is five years older and he is currently in a federal prison for a weapons offense. Eddie described his brother as being "more hard core into the street life" than himself. When they were growing up, Eddie's brother looked after him while their mom was at work. In the following passage, Eddie talks about his admiration for his brother when he was younger:

> I used to want to be just like my brother. He was my only male role model in my life. It was only him and my mom, so everything that he did or he was doing, I wanted to do it because he was my only male role model. He was the only one near that's going to help me, that's going to be there for me. My dad was never there, never bought me a pair of socks.

Eddie's exposure to a "hard core" criminal lifestyle through his only male role model shaped his perception of crime as a means for survival. When reflecting on how he got involved in crime at such a young age, Eddie stated, "Growing up, that's all I've seen. All I saw was the bad guys."

When Eddie was 15 years old, his family got kicked out of their home so his mother moved in with her boyfriend, causing a bit of tension. Because he did not know

the man very well and was not used to living with an “old man,” Eddie chose to stay at a close friend’s house instead. He remained there for over half a year until he worked out his issues with his mother and her boyfriend and he moved in with them. At one point between his bids, Eddie’s mother was battling cancer. She had just had kidney failure and was on dialysis for a couple of years when she found out she had cancer. Since she could not work, her boyfriend had to put in extra hours at his job and ultimately Eddie had to drop out of school to care for his ailing mother. Eddie’s mom chose to hide her illness from him at first and he did not learn about it until after his mother had to be hospitalized to undergo surgery. According to Eddie, this caused him to have a breakdown. The emotional stress caused by his mother’s health and the worry he experienced after quitting school took a toll on Eddie’s mental state. His mother is now in remission and his relationship with his mom and her boyfriend is currently stable. Since his most recent return from incarceration, however, Eddie is expected to pay bills and contribute to household expenses now that he is an adult, a fact that places a great deal of pressure on him.

> Some days I just wake up thinking like, "What am I going to do? I've got to get some money somehow, some way." I don’t want to go back to my old ways but I really need money. Everybody needs money. You need money to survive.

While he claims to be avoiding crime for now, he said the temptation to return to crime is always there and the urge is strong.

> The temptation is there everyday. Everyday I walk out here and I see my friends with money. They're doing their little thing or whatever they're doing. It's just calling me like, "Come on. Come on back. Come on back with me. You might as well. I know you want this money. Just come do it."

Several categories are evident in the family situations described above. Ty, Ernest, Davay and Eddie all experienced the absence of their fathers or some type of parental neglect, they all at some point committed crimes for their survival, all were looking to escape conflict in their homes, all were exposed to crime and/or drug abuse in their families of origin, all turned to extended or fictive kin at some point for support, and all were affected by ongoing family problems after their release from incarceration. These factors were evident in the life experiences of most participants in the study and just as with the four individuals described above, a set of intertwined family circumstances contributed to their criminal involvement, beginning with the absence or limited role of their fathers. Interestingly, there were only two individuals whose parents stayed married throughout their childhoods and who never experienced separation from either of their parents due to incarceration or drug abuse. For the others, however, the problems they experienced growing up seemed to accumulate in their fathers' absence.

Parental Absence

Nearly all participants grew up without their biological fathers. Only two of them were raised with both their biological parents in the same household without any interruptions due to incarceration. Some have no relationship with their fathers at all and some have fathers who cycle in and out of their lives due to periods of incarceration or drug abuse. For several participants, the impact of not having their fathers as positive male role models during their youth was profound. Many of them discussed how they were negatively affected by the absence of their fathers. Kevin was 25 years old at the time of his interview and most recently served a three year sentence behind bars for

committing robbery. Prior to that, he was convicted a couple times on drug charges and sentenced to probation. Kevin stated that he has had police contact since he was 12 years old for getting into trouble frequently as a kid. His father was incarcerated in a federal penitentiary for bank robbery when Kevin was seven years old and he died of AIDS in the prison when he was 11. In the following passage, Kevin discusses how the absence of a father can lead young males to engage in negative behaviors because they do not have a male role model to correct their behavior:

> I think when you don't got a father in your life, you tend to do other stuff. Like if you had a father in your life, someone that could correct your wrong, someone that been through your mistakes already and see you about to make these mistakes and they could correct them, then you won't have to go through that. But due to the fact that your father not there and you don't have any father figures, it's like, you just gone, you just going to go through that by yourself. Your mother could always tell you like, "Don't do that, you being just like your father." She could always tell you that but sometimes you will never listen, you know what I mean?
>
> I mean now I listen to my mom a lot but back then, coming up, like being raised from a boy to a man, I think I just had to go through what I went through by myself. I think that. I honestly think that.

The participant speculates that mothers are not as effective at curbing negative behaviors as fathers because they cannot relate to their sons' experiences. In a similar manner, a participant named Trey who grew up with very little contact with his biological father, discussed the impact of not having a man in his life. Trey stated, "You could quickly talk to a dude before you talk to a female. That's exactly what it was for me. I could talk to a man about things I can't talk to my mom about." For Kevin, even though his mother tried to steer him in a positive direction, in his mind only the guidance of a male figure, someone who knows what it feels like to be a young man, could have made a difference

in his life. It became clear that this guidance could only have been provided by his biological father, for he revealed that his relationship with the man who eventually became his stepfather was tense during his adolescence in part because he did not want someone trying to fill his father's shoes.

Some participants had little contact with their fathers due to incarceration and/or death but others had fathers who were not involved in their lives for other reasons, such as drug abuse or because they lived far away. Of those participants, six of them reported feeling angry about their fathers' absence during their childhoods. Seth did not meet his father for the first time until he was an adult. His parents' relationship ended before he was born and his father moved across the country. Seth was raised by his single mother who struggled financially, so he started selling drugs at 16 years old to make money. Seth stated that he "had mad anger coming up" about not knowing his father. It was not until he was an adult that he was able to get over his anger towards his father and he agreed to meet him.

The absence of their fathers impacted participants in other ways as well. Darnell's father was incarcerated while Darnell was young but he cycled in and out of prison so there were long periods of time during which he was home. Still, his frequent absence from the home along with Darnell's awareness of his father's continuous involvement in crime may have paved the way for his entry into criminal behavior at the age of 14. Darnell has been dealing drugs since that time but was not busted until he was 22. Below, Darnell describes why he got involved in crime:

> Being broke. My father was in jail before so I did it when he wasn't there…If I had to I bought clothes. During the time period when my dad was locked up, it went to rent, things like that, clothes. I had a car at the time so I was paying my car,

> different things, just regular stuff. I was paying for school and stuff so, little things, regular stuff that every 17 year old or 18 year old wants. I was buying them all. That's it. My dad did his longest bid when I was 17, 17 going to 18, he did a three-year bid. He just recently came home like three years ago. My father, he was definitely there. He was a father figure. He was definitely there. It's just, I understood what he did.

Although Darnell felt like his father maintained a presence in his life, his repeated absence from the home impacted Darnell in some important ways. Darnell stated that when his father was away he sometimes sold drugs to contribute to rent money as well as to purchase food and clothing. It would seem that the family experienced a significant decline in income when the father was incarcerated and Darnell did what he could to supplement the loss.

Clearly, there are several ways in which the absence of a father can impact youth development. For Kevin, the absence of his father meant that he did not have a male role model to correct his behavior, and not having a male figure to relate to was detrimental to his psychological well-being. For other participants, there was a feeling of abandonment by their fathers that also led them astray. Finally, Darnell's experience demonstrates how the absence of a father may create a financial need for youth to engage in crime.

Surviving at any Cost

Several participants talked about their initial entry into crime as a means for survival because their parents did not or could not provide for them. For some participants, their family problems were so extreme that they were left largely to fend for themselves. For both Ernest and Davay, drug abuse affected their parents' ability to provide for them. For Ernest, when his mother's boyfriend repeatedly took her money to support his drug habit, they often ended up homeless and Ernest had to support himself at

a young age. For Davay, his father's addiction to crack consumed him to the point that he disappeared for days at a time, leaving Davay and his siblings in an empty house. Eddie's mother was so impoverished that she could not buy clothing for her sons and their father did not contribute to their needs.

Mitchell was similarly pushed into a life of crime to support himself. Mitchell had two brothers and four sisters but grew up with just one of his brothers in the same house. His parents were married and divorced before he was born and he never met his father as a result of a drug addiction. Mitchell's mother had to work two jobs to pay the rent and pay for her car. According to Mitchell, his brother who is ten years older than him had no choice but to grow up fast so he could help pay the bills, so he resorted to drug dealing to earn a living. Mitchell vividly recalled a turning point when he was 13 years old that led to his involvement in crime at such a young age. He asked his mother for five dollars for lunch and she would not give him the money. He then asked his older brother for the money and his brother said to him, "You don't even got five dollars? How do you not even have five dollars?" From that moment on, Mitchell decided he would never have to ask for money again. According to Mitchell, he interpreted his brother's response to mean that he was old enough to make his own money so from that point forward he resolved to do just that.

Lamont, who lost both his parents at a young age and was raised by his grandparents, experienced a similar determination to provide for himself. He was 24 at the time of his interview and he reported that he was locked up numerous times after the age of 16 as both a juvenile and an adult. Even though his basic needs were being met by

the care his grandparents provided, he felt a strong sense of obligation to contribute to his own care.

> I felt as though I was at the age where I didn't want my grandparents to provide for me anymore. I feel like I'm grown, I don't need anybody doing things and with the little part-time job that I did have I wasn't able to get things that I wanted. I wanted everything for myself. I guess by me going out in the streets and doing what I was doing, I thought this is my way out. This is how I'm gonna buy the sneakers that I really want to wear and the jeans that I really want to wear.

Terrance's experiences differ slightly from the others. He is just one of two participants raised in a two-parent household with both of his biological parents and neither of his parents had any involvement in crime or drug use. His parents did, however, struggle financially. Terrance indicated that he started committing crimes at around 12 or 13 because his parents could not afford to give him money for the things he wanted. Both his parents worked but they worked minimum wage jobs and had no extra money to spare. According to Terrance, if he wanted something he had to get it himself and he was too young to work. In order to fit in with other kids who had nice things, he took what he wanted so he could have nice things too.

Youth who commit crime out of necessity may experience greater difficulty in desisting from crime. After the first few times he was released from incarceration, Ernest admits that he returned to crime to support himself. As a teenager with no place to live, he thought that robbing and selling drugs would give him the greatest chance of getting an apartment. Davay also talked about his return to drug dealing out of financial necessity after his release from jail and he stated that he only refrains from crime now

because he has a decent job. First, he explains why he was content living a criminal lifestyle prior to his incarceration:

> It was easy. It's not what I wanted to do but it was easy income. It's what I had to do because it was bringing me money and when you getting money so fast and so easy, say like, strippers, they getting money so fast and so easy they want to do it more and more and more but that's legal. Basically I was a stripper. Basically I was stripping but my stripping was hustling. It's so easy but it's illegal. I don't care, I didn't care and I still don't care.

Davay then admitted that he went back to selling drugs after his release and he explained that he would do so again if he had to:

> I had to. I had to. Say I get fired, I gotta good job now, I work at [a university] doing janitorial work, if they fire me I'm gonna have to go back to trapping or something. Know what I mean? Cuz, if I have no income, how would I get money? If I have to, I'll go rob somebody, stick 'em up real quick.
>
> I don't do none of that stuff no more. I'm not saying I never will because if times is rough and I'm on the outs again, I'm gonna have to resort to something that I know.

If Davay's circumstances change and he becomes unemployed, his initial response may be to engage in illegitimate activities. For those who are accustomed to crime as a means of survival, they may be more likely to turn to it when times are tough.

Looking for an Escape

While some participants turned to crime out of a need for survival or because they lacked a positive male role model to steer them in the right direction, others turned to the street life to escape their negative home environment. Trey was raised by a single mother and had very little contact with his father who lives down south. He was arrested for the

first time at the age of 15 and again at the age of 19, both times for armed robbery. Trey talked about his mother's harsh discipline when he got into trouble as an adolescent. His mother frequently beat him which caused him to run away from home and get into trouble in the streets, often by getting into fights.

Several participants described similar circumstances causing them to spend more time away from home and ultimately leading them to trouble. Kevin was verbally and physically abused by his stepfather, causing him to flee the home and stay with his grandmother. Kevin stated that he did not like his mother's husband and did not want to live in what he perceived to be a negative environment.

> My mother got married in '04. She'll be married for eight years this coming up August. At best, I lived with my mom when I was like 16. I went back to my grandmother's house in Plainfield. It was better that way because at first when she first met her husband or whatever, I ain't like him. They've been married for seven years but all together they known each other since I was like 12. I just didn't like him because I guess I already have a father or whatever. When I first met him, it was like right after my father had passed away so I was basically like, can't nobody try to be my father, you know what I'm saying? My father passed away and I ain't trying to hear what nobody got to say. I don't care who it is. I guess he was like trying to be a father to me or whatever. He used to always yell at me and stuff like that and I ain't like that. We had a fistfight before but… It wasn't too bad. Once we had a fistfight that's the night I moved out.

Kevin left home for several reasons. He resented the presence of his stepfather, mostly because he did not like being disciplined by a man who was not his own father.

Like Kevin, a participant named Allaquan went to stay with his grandmother to avoid conflict with his mom. Allaquan was locked up for the first time at 24 years old for possession of heroin and he was incarcerated for 12 months. He grew up with mom and his sister and he only saw his father about five or six times since he was a baby. He has

two kids (ages 12 and two) with different women. Allaquan sold drugs to supplement his income from a part-time job to provide for his daughter. When he turned 18, his mother expected him to start paying rent which placed pressure on him and he eventually moved out when he was 20. Allaquan and his mother always had a troubled relationship stemming from what he believes are lies she told him about his childhood. After Allaquan's parents split up when he was just a baby, his father took him while his mother kept their daughter. Allaquan's father claims this was an agreed upon arrangement but his mother claims that Allaquan was kidnapped by his father – a charge that landed him in prison. Based on observations he has made throughout his life, Allaquan questions whether his mother told him the truth about his father and this has led to a great deal of conflict between them. Below, Allaquan describes the conflict between him and his mom and how it led to negative behavior. He also explains the important role his grandmother played in his life when he experienced tension in his home:

> Me and my grandmother was close. It got so rough sometimes I used to just stay at my grandmother's house…I used to just love being there. My mom had it strict and I could never do nothing. So once I got at a certain age, it was like I just wasn't listening. I was just doing what I wanted to do, you know. I think my father was telling the truth because when my grandmother was alive, I was here [with my mom] but as soon as my grandmother died, within that year, my mother was looking for my father and she was trying to send me to him. So it had me thinking like, wow, maybe she did just give me away when I was younger. Coming up, I think that's why me and my mom was always fighting. There was so much inside of me that I knew. As a kid you really don't know but then you start thinking back and you start remembering certain things.
>
> My grandmother passed away when I was 16. So in those teenage years coming up, my mom used to keep me in the house so for me to get outside I had to go to my grandmother's house. I would go there and she let me out…She would give me freedom, give me the freedom that I didn't have. I just loved it. We were just so close. She was like my best friend. I think even

> to this day, our relationship is stronger than me and my mother's, you know. It was hard when she passed away. Even to this day, sometimes it hurts me. Because I didn't think I would have that feeling when I was 16. I always be thinking I would have my grandmother a little longer you know. It just hurt me bad. It took a toll on me. I started not caring about nothing because I think that's really when everything started changing. I just didn't care about nothing.

Allaquan carried around a lot of anger towards his mom stemming from his doubts about the truthfulness of her allegations and he eventually rebelled against her strictness. When the conflict between Allaquan and his mother became too difficult to bear, he could turn to his grandmother for emotional support. When she passed away, however, he lost the one person he felt closely connected with and he also lost his ability to avoid his tension-filled home. At that point, he stopped caring about the consequences of his actions and started getting into trouble.

Whether they were on the streets in pursuit of money or they wanted to escape their home environment, most participants reported some type of exposure to criminal behavior within their families that may have initially opened their eyes to the opportunities crime had to offer. In the section that follows, participants discuss how they were impacted by family criminality.

Exposure to Crime and Drug Abuse

When participants reflected on their familial environments growing up and how it shaped their lives, stories of family criminality, drug abuse and physical abuse were numerous. Many of them described criminality and incarceration as a cycle from which families are unable to escape. Ty's cousin Shemar discussed the influence of a person's background on shaping his life's circumstances and how negative conditions can be

passed on through families. He stated, "Sometimes it's your background…Whatever you go through, sometimes it's hereditary, it's a fact that it's passed on to you…".

Antoine was one of three children born to a single teenage mother. Because his mother was poor, they lived in a poverty-stricken neighborhood. Antoine's mother worked long hours to provide for her children and had no choice but to leave them in the care of their uncles, who were well-known criminal figures in the community. Antoine explained how a lifestyle can be transmitted from one generation to the next because exposure to that lifestyle through family members normalizes it for the youth who are routinely exposed:

> If you growing up and you seeing mom, dad, aunts, everybody's getting high, then you gonna feel like that's right. That's why all these girls now are pregnant so young, because this is what they're witnessing. It's what they're growing up seeing so they think it's ok. Most parents are bad parents. They don't want to step in – they just go with the flow. They want to have babies but they don't want to take care of babies. Most grandmas take care of the babies. Nowadays, they're with their grandma. I know in *my* community that's how it is.

The passage suggests that if parents and other potential role models are observed using drugs or committing crimes or even having babies at a young age, youth are at risk of making similar choices. According to Guerra (2013), children who witness violence more regularly come to see it as acceptable behavior and internalize normative beliefs supporting aggression. When this occurs, youth are more likely to exhibit violent behavior. Similar processes may be at work when youth witness other types of crime or drug use. When Seth discussed what led him to selling drugs he stated, "I guess just seeing it, like, man I could do that too and get money."

Randall was 25 years old at the time of his release from his first incarceration and had been in the community for four months at the time of interview. He was locked up for distribution of marijuana, which is how he earned his living since he was about 17 years old. Randall was one of five boys born to a single mother. His father passed away from illness when Randall was still a baby. Randall's mother was a nurse and she worked three jobs to support her five kids. As a result, she was rarely home and Randall was left in the care of his much older brothers – there is a 14 year age difference between Randall and the next youngest son. Randall's brother Darius explained the environment in which Randall was raised:

> We had turns babysitting. Because mom, like I said, she's a nurse so in the daytime she worked at a hospital and then in the evening she worked at a nursing home and on weekends she did private duty so she was never there. So we had to take turns and babysit and things like that and just got caught up.
>
> I'm in the middle, two younger, two older. So my older ones already was out there doing it so the household was always that type of environment so good or bad, take it for what it's worth, he just walked into it, you know. It was kind of a common thing as long as the adults don't know about it and as long as your girlfriend don't know about it, as long as the cops don't know about it. Your friends and everybody else, you cool, so. That's what it was. Randall, he walked into it and then it came to a point where we tried to tell him to stop because you're going to get caught and you should have seen what we went through. We was out there, we was getting money, we were dressing, the GQ, all of that good stuff but if you do negatively, it's always going to come back at you. That's what we wanted to show him but he didn't want to listen so he went out and did it.
>
> Drugs, violent crimes, everything, no robberies. That's one thing we never did. We made sure, what we don't have we're not going to go out there and take it. Whether it's illegal or not, you go work for it. You go get your hustle on to get it, our motto is you don't rob, you don't steal. So never robberies but fights, guns, pipes whatever, knives, we did all that and drugs. And during my time growing up in New Brunswick, the crazy thing about it, selling drugs was, "oh you cool. You're the man, you're selling drugs, oh wow." Every girl wanted you, every bad girl

> obviously. The good ones don't want the drug dealers so we kept that from our girls but still, other girls wanted us which made us go out there and get the money more and then dudes was like, "oh man, they're dressing nice, they're doing this, they got money in their pocket," so they all liked it. Sad to say my little brother, he seen it so he jumped into the game, but we tried to coach him and tell him it ain't the way. It ain't too late for you but we washed up, you know so.

As Darius puts it, Randall "walked into" crime because of his brothers. Darius paints a glamorous picture about the financial and social rewards of their illegitimate activities and Randall may have been attracted to the possibilities that crime held, or perhaps the gravitation to crime seemed natural to him since his four older brothers were all living the street life.

For a participant named Darnell, his father's cycling in and out of prison was a normal part of his life, making him very aware of his father's criminal involvement.

> I knew what he did ever since I was little. He never hid nothing from me so, I mean, I knew what he did. I knew what it took for him to make us happy. So he was gone, he was here, he was gone, he was here – just the life of a hustler.

His understanding of the activities his father was involved with from a young age and his acceptance of his father's choices may have justified in his mind his gravitation towards a similar lifestyle. When Darnell states, "I knew what it took for him to make us happy," he may be suggesting that he accepted his father's illegitimate activities because they allowed the family to maintain a certain lifestyle.

Even when crime-involved family members attempt to steer youth in a positive direction, their cautionary tales may not be enough without changing their own behavior. A participant named Lamont described how seeing family members engage in negative

activities can diminish their capacity to prevent their children from following in their footsteps:

> Nine times out of ten, I think we do what we do and don't listen to family members cuz we're like, "Bullshit, you out here doing the same thing I am. I just seen you selling drugs, you got a gun on you, you out on bail now, how you gonna tell me I'm doing the wrong thing?"

Antoine and Lamont both hinted at the importance of parents taking an active role in the prevention of crime. If they want their children to avoid engaging in crime and drug use, then they have to refrain from doing so themselves. Furthermore, by lack of involvement or intervention when their kids engage in negative behaviors, parents pave the way for their children to follow in their footsteps. Below, Ty discusses how breaking the cycle of crime in families has to begin in the home:

> Programs help you too but it starts with parenting, from knee high, two or three years old. You living near bad schools in a bad neighborhood, like, move, cuz it's about your child. Everything is like a cycle. If you don't want your child to do the same thing you did, move to a different area, have a conversation with him. Talk to him, don't wait until he or she gets to that age when it's too late. Don't wait until she's 15 to have the sex talk, she's already pregnant! Kids know from five or six years old, they know what's going on. They listen to everything and whatever you're talking about, they're gonna repeat that.

The respondents believe that to break a cycle of crime, parents must model appropriate behavior for their children as well as provide early intervention. Shemar stated, "At the end of the day it's about guidance. Some people don't grow up with guidance at a young age. In some homes, the ability to prevent delinquency may be thwarted by parental absence. The next section will discuss experiences of participants who had a parent that was absent or had limited involvement in their lives.

For nearly all of the participants, some aspect of the familial environment pushed them towards the street life. Only one of them, Clyde, indicated that his actions were more the result of peer influence, although his father did abuse alcohol and was involved with drugs. For most participants, it was a combination of a lack of parental involvement and positive role model, a financial need, and a routine exposure to crime. Some also experienced psychological trauma resulting from abuse they suffered. For adolescents who are removed from their families and incarcerated during a time of conflict, returning to those families after release may complicate the reentry process. At the same time that they must face the challenges of reentry, they may also have to confront unresolved family issues. This may be a difficult process for adolescents who have not fully matured emotionally. As they near adulthood and become more mature, the task of confronting family members may be somewhat easier. After Ty returned from his adult sentence, instead of running from his situation like he did as a teenager, he confronted his mother about his anger and distrust. Although he still holds her responsible for his troubled upbringing, it has allowed them to take a step forward in their relationship.

In attempting to cope with their negative family environment growing up, a majority of the participants accessed some type of support from family members outside of their households. As adolescents, many of the respondents looked to extended family members for support. Ty indicated that he often stayed at his grandmother's house to escape the conflict in his home and several other participants did the same. For some, there was no choice but to turn to others for help.

Kin Networks

In addition to weak ties to their fathers, their exposure to crime and drug abuse and their inherited financial difficulties, what many of the participants have in common is an extended kin network that was important to both their physical and emotional survival as youth. While their family circumstances were a negative force in many of their lives, their extended kin networks were a source of resiliency. For several of them, their grandmothers took them in at various points in their lives. Compared with whites, Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to reside in extended family households (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012), including those in which a grandparent and grandchild reside. Black grandmothers who live with a grandchild are more likely to be responsible for most of the grandchild's basic needs, because the home is less likely to include the child's parents (Luo et al., 2012). This was the case for Lamont, whose mother died when he was twelve years old from kidney disease and whose father passed away in prison when Lamont was four or five. His father was serving a sentence for murder and kidnapping at the time of his death. After his mother passed away, Lamont's grandparents took him into their home and raised him. Lamont described the relationship he had with his grandmother:

> I have a good relationship with my grandmother. I love my grandmother to death. My grandmother made sure she always provided for me. She wanted me to have a better life than my mother or my father had. She stayed on me every step of the way. That's my heart, my grandmother.

Lamont's grandparents raised him out of necessity but for others, their grandparents provided an escape from a home filled with conflict. Ty, Kevin, and Allaquan, all of who argued regularly with their mothers, frequently took up residence in their grandmothers' homes to escape the tension. Other participants, like Eddie and

Ernest, turned to the families of close friends when the troubles in their families of origin were too difficult for them to bear.

Reliance on extended kin networks during troubled times has important implications for reentry. Those who have unresolved issues with their immediate families or return to troubled environments may continue to seek out extended family members for help, especially if the type of support they need as they navigate the reentry process is lacking. In the next chapter, I will discuss how kin networks comprised of extended and fictive family members continue to play a vitally important role in the lives of young adults, even after their release from incarceration.

The experiences that were presented in this chapter demonstrate the impact of pre-existing family problems on youth and how they struggle to overcome them. The next chapter provides examples of family support following incarceration that helps young adults as they transition to the community, even for those who were affected by troubled home environments prior to their incarceration. In chapter six, I examine how young adults transitioning to the community access effective sources of support when there was conflict in their family relationships prior to their incarceration or when their family's problems were so severe that there was little support they could provide.

Chapter 5: Family Support during Reentry

Interestingly, some of the individuals who experienced significant family problems during their youth also receive significant amounts of support after their return from incarceration. The majority of participants received support from family members that was critical to their reentry, confirming the findings of prior research on this topic. This support seems to be especially important during emerging adulthood. Offenders released from incarceration during this developmental phase face major hurdles. Perhaps the greatest of these hurdles is finding stable employment, contributing financially to their household, and providing for their kids. Those transitioning to adulthood desire to finish school and find well-paying jobs. Young African American males, however, particularly those with a criminal record, are largely excluded from the labor market. The degree to which they must rely on family for support may be greater than for their white counterparts. This chapter will illustrate the types of familial support that benefited participants during their transition, even among those who faced conflict within their families or problems that limited the amount of support they could access previously.

What type of Support Matters?

Stories about the importance of family support during the post-release transition were numerous. Beyond whether or not they received support, however, the *type* of support they received affected their reentry as well as their transition to adult roles. The following passage captures the role that family support plays in reentry:

> Without my mother I wouldn't be nothin'. I wouldn't be able to get no job because I need her for transportation. If I couldn't live here, I don't know what my mind frame would be. I'd be involved in too much stuff. Maybe I would turn back to being

> negative again. Maybe not, but the support system plays a major part. Having somebody that's there for you and makes you be better – that's just it basically. A lot of people don't have people to be supportive. I'm just blessed. I got my mother. My family just want to help me out and stuff like that. Cuz nobody give you nothin.' Anything somebody do for me, I appreciate it cuz they don't owe me nothin,' they don't, at the end of the day.

In this passage, Antoine raises the importance of two types of support: *instrumental* and *expressive*. Without a home to reside in and a source of transportation, his physical survival would be difficult. The participant does not know where he would live and he would not be able to work if he did not have his mother to drive him around. Equally important, however, is knowing that someone is there for him. Without that type of support, the participant acknowledges that his mental state would suffer and potentially lead to bad decisions. Similarly, Eddie, who has repaired his relationships with his mother and her boyfriend and strengthened their connections, now relies on them heavily for both instrumental and expressive support. Below, he describes the assistance he receives from them:

> They gave me a place to live. The only person that does help me is my mom and her boyfriend. They gave me a place to live and I could go to my aunt's house anytime. That's my mom's twin. If I need money, I could just call her or something like, "Can I hold this and she'd give it to me and I'll pay her back. But most of the time, she doesn't want to get paid back because she knows how it is.
>
> My mom, she'd say, "I know it's hard out here. We're going to support you all the way." If I need a ride for a job interview or something, she would take me. She'd help me out a lot like, "Yeah, just keep trying, keep trying. You're going to get it one day. Just don't go back to the streets."

Like Antoine, Eddie makes clear that tangible forms of support such as financial assistance and transportation, and expressive forms of support offered through verbal

affirmations, are both critical in being able to survive without resorting to crime and to keeping a positive outlook. The interviews revealed many examples of the need for family support in transitioning to the community. Participants' accounts of the types of support they receive from their families and how this support makes a difference in the reentry process are presented below.

Instrumental Support

When released from incarceration, all of the participants relied on family members for a place to live. In addition to providing a place to live, however, families provide other tangibles that are important to returning offenders ability to transition to the community. These include money, transportation and connections to employment. Allaquan described the instrumental support he received from his family after his release and how this assistance eased his stress:

> My mom would try to help out a little bit, leave some money if she could. She knew I really didn't have it. But other than that, even my aunt that stay here, she allowed me to move back here, you know, so family – I got a little help, a little help that I needed.

Allaquan was given a place to live by his aunt, some financial help from his mother, and he went on to say that he relied on family members for transportation when it was needed. When asked how this assistance made things better for him he stated:

> It helped out a lot. It took like a great deal of weight off my shoulders. It's like at first I was thinking I might have to go into the same thing, but then it was like I got some help. Just helps to stay focused, you know.

The obstacles he faced initially led him to think he might have to resume a life of crime but the support provided by his family lifted some of his burdens and made it possible for him to remain in the community.

Many participants indicated that in addition to living with family members, they are being supported financially to some degree. Those who are unemployed may have to rely fully on family members until they start earning an income. Darnell, who was convicted for selling drugs, discussed how a felony conviction diminished his ability to get a job, so he has consequently become dependent on his parents.

> Well, you can't get a job. You got to be more dependent, like, I'm not used to it. You got to be more dependent, like, on your parents and just like loved ones and stuff like that to make sure they're holding down the little bit of things that you need and stuff like that.

Having to depend on his parents for financial support is especially difficult for Darnell because he is used to earning a lot of money through illegitimate means.

Those who do have jobs do not rely exclusively on family for financial support, and some try to avoid asking for money at all, but for some of them the assistance is there if they need it. Kevin describes how he knows he can rely on family members for support if he needs to:

> I mean like if I was to really need help, like, "Ma, I messed up, I partied too much. I can't pay car insurance. I need you to help me. I'll get it back to you next week," she gave me some money. Or if I'll be late with my phone bill, "Pay the phone bill for me, I'll pay it to you next week when I get paid," she'll pay it.

Although Kevin tries to support himself now that he is an adult, he knows that he can fall back on his mother if he really needs help. In addition to his mother, he has several other

family members who helped him financially after his release when he was unemployed. He was given money by his uncle, his aunt who lives in Cuba, and his brother who is now incarcerated. Another participant, Mitchell, lives as best he can on financial aid money that he has in the bank as well as money he receives from intermittent employment. He admits, though, that he frequently has to ask his family members for help:

> Sometimes I ask my mom to help me. Sometimes I ask my friends. I work on the side. Last year I worked the whole time until I went to the halfway house. I went to school at night and I worked in the morning. I had a car last year too so I was able to get around. Now, it's mad hard for me. When I got sent back in the summertime, it messed me up with school and with work. It messed me up a lot. It's just mad hard. I gotta keep asking my mom, or my dad, or my brother. I gotta keep asking people to help me out. Every little bit of money that I do get I put towards this music that I'm working on so every time I do that, I'm back to square one. So, it's like, who's gonna help me this time? It's just hard. I want to work but I don't want to settle. I don't want to do no warehouse or nothing. I still got some money in the bank from financial aid so I'm using that to get around for now.

In addition to monetary support, family members are relied on heavily for transportation. Many participants indicated they would not be able to get to work without rides from family members. Others need transportation to be able to meet their reporting requirements. In the following passage Antoine's mother Divine discusses how instrumental support, particularly transportation, is essential to post-release success:

> Well, let me say this to you. Indirectly the families are involved [in programs] because for one I'm going to tell like for instance, okay, Antoine had to do all these things, going down to this program twice a week, go to parole twice a week, do this, but in actuality how is he going to get there from where we are? Now, most places there's a bus or a train. If I did not have a car and I was not – I mean, how would he really? We're in the middle of East Windsor – even a train station is not in walking distance. Your family has to be involved. Whoever is supporting you has to be involved because if not, then you're breaking the law. How are you going to get there if you're going to drive with no

> license? So to me, it's almost like they set you up for failure. I don't think they set you up to prosper yourself. Once you get into this system if you don't have anybody that cares about you enough, you're fucked. You're doomed probably just to go back to where you started. I got his back 100% no matter what. But say if I was like, maybe, "You ain't using my car, you ain't doing shit, I gave you somewhere to live," how are you going to get back and forth? And if he don't go back and forth, they're going to violate him, you know? Where we live, there's no public transportation – no train and no buses. He got to go all the way to Princeton to get on a train, but again, how are you going to get there? And if you're thinking of yourself, "Man, if I don't get to this program, they're going to violate me," you're going to break another law to get there. I mean I'm just being real. If you don't have anybody that's supporting you and behind you most of the time, nine out of ten the way have this set up you're going to do something wrong to end up back in jail and that's the way I look at it, the way that they have it. And the way they have the jail set up now, you can't call, you can't even eat if you don't have somebody that's supporting you in some kind of way.

So, even beyond the necessity of instrumental support to survival, such as having a place to live and food to eat, it is essential to being able to comply with the conditions of parole and other programs. Divine makes clear that without some level of support from others, remaining free would be difficult, especially for released offenders with strict reporting requirements.

Family members also provide connections to employment for some returning offenders either through their own businesses or through people they know. Lamont explains how he is holding various jobs through family-owned businesses:

> Right now, I'm working a third-shift job. My cousin has a contract for cleaning a day care during the third shift. There's a couple of day cares in Somerset County. The majority of the time though I'm over here on Somerset Street. My cousin has a convenience store over there and he owns a barbershop so at night, I fix up the barbershop and I also help my cousin in the store.

Allaquan, who began working as an exterminator shortly after his release, discusses how he was fortunate to find a job through his family's connections:

> The only reason is I got lucky. It's hard for me to get a job, but the guy who owns a business his parents live next door so my godmother had talked to him and -- He knew me coming up so, yeah, he gave me a chance and everything been good ever since.

If Allaquan did not have this connection, he commented that his job prospects would be uncertain:

> I don't know what I will do. It's so crazy out there. I don't know. It probably will be different. Most likely, it would. Maybe I would try to stick it out to find something else but it took me a while to find that job. Like I was trying to find jobs before that and it's like I can't get no job. I know people that ain't even have no records and it's hard for them to get jobs. So it's like, it's crazy.

Without their families' connections to jobs, returning offenders who struggle to find employment because of their felony convictions may experience a long delay before earning an income.

Families provide additional types of instrumental support to returning offenders. As they transition to adulthood, some may require assistance with basic life skills. Scholars have argued that some offenders lack the psychosocial maturity necessary to succeed after they return from prison and that young adults who exhibit deficits in psychosocial maturity struggle with desistance (Monahan, Steinberg, Cauffman, & Mulvey, 2010; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). The experiences of Randall suggest this may be the case. Randall, who lived with his mother until he was 24 years old and he did not move into his own place until his release from incarceration at the age of 25, routinely looks to his mother for guidance even when it comes to basic decisions like

which milk to get. Randall transitioned from his mother's house to prison and when he was released and living on his own, it was the first time he had to make certain decisions with regard to daily living. Decisions that seem basic to most people, like which type of milk to purchase, may be confusing for those who have never purchased groceries. Fortunately for Randall, his mother is willing to provide the level of support that he requires. In addition to various types of instrumental support, it is evident that expressive support was an equally important factor in the participants' transition home.

Expressive Support

While instrumental support is necessary for survival as well as for maintaining a life of freedom, expressive support, which includes words of encouragement and offering advice, is vital in keeping returning offenders motivated to desist. In the following passage, a participant talks about the importance of expressive support in keeping him on the right track:

> I mean the thing that just going to always push you forward is your backbone, your support system. Like I said if you're around good people and all that, you know, they're going to support you, not even just like financially, mentally wise, it's going to encourage you to move on, to push you forward. You have some people, misery love company. Some people don't want to see you do good so they try to bring you down where they at, you know. Some people you have relationships with on the street will give you drugs to get back on your feet rather than say, "let me take you to a job interview." So, it's like the love and the support is different from different types of people. So it's all about getting the right support from the right people.

The interviews highlighted numerous examples of the role that expressive support plays in helping transitioning offenders to remain positive, to believe in their ability to achieve

desired outcomes, and to find their inner strength. Clyde talked about the importance of just having someone to talk to:

> It's always good to have somebody with their head on their shoulders, you know, somebody to talk to about anything and things like that. It keeps you leveled a little bit.

For Clyde, his girlfriend Moesha is someone he feels comfortable sharing his feelings with, especially because Moesha was also incarcerated and can relate to the challenges he faces. Moesha commented on what it means to have someone you can relate to when going through a difficult time:

> I think it's going to be a good thing actually. I think the effect is going to be good because we both been there. We know what each other going through. He trying to find a job, I'm trying to find a job and then move out. He wants to do the same thing and go back to school. So I think it's really like just being able to help each other relate, yeah. That's what I think.

Moesha mentioned that she and Clyde stayed in written communication with each other while Clyde was incarcerated and that this type of contact was important for him emotionally. She said it allowed him to express himself, and that even when she did not approve of what he was saying, just having someone to listen and respond is critical to a person who is institutionalized, especially if his friends are not supportive of his desire to change. Having a close relationship with someone who knows what you are experiencing, will listen when you need to talk, and can offer advice can be comforting for those who are facing significant obstacles.

Beyond having a friend to relate to, receiving positive encouragement from the people you love may be important in keeping returning offenders motivated. Terrance is a 23 year old who was locked up for a year on a drug charge and he was back in the

community for a year at the time of his interview. Terrance was working in a warehouse and reportedly refraining from crime. He talked about his social ties as a motivating factor in the desistance process. He stated that his support system, including his fiancé, his family and his baby, were his motivational forces. Terrance's fiancé Lateisha, with whom he shares an infant son, talked about the support Terrance receives from his parents and the positive impact of this support:

> His parents are very supportive of Terrance. They want the best for him and it's obvious they did want the best for him. She still calls him now with job opportunities and everything like that, like his mom she be on it, she really do.

Lateisha elaborated on the role his parents' support played in keeping Terrance motivated:

> It plays a big role. I think because his parents were so supportive and that he had not just the backbone but he had that push of, "We want you to do positive" because sometimes like, you know, us being who we are, we want to hear, "Okay I'm proud of you." We want to hear, you know, "I want you to see you doing good." If we don't hear that from the people that we love that can be very discouraging – definitely at times when you just came home and you don't have no job and things of that nature, you want to hear positive things. So since his parents were putting positive things in, I think that made him want to go through it even better. I'm pretty sure if they weren't supportive, it probably would drive him right back to where he was. But since he had that positivity around him, it kept him in a positive mind state and that really is very important.

Darnell spoke similarly about the importance of moral support and encouragement in staying motivated:

> I'm pretty simple so you know just a phone call asking me, "Did you go to class today?" or little things like that help. So I get that from everybody like my closest friends, you know what I'm saying, my parents, my sister and just the few chosen people that

> stuck with me before, through and now. It's just more of like a moral support and that's really I think all I need. I mean financial help is going to be there because my parents are doing pretty decent, but moral support mainly, trying to keep me out of trouble. I guess showing that you care because a lot of people think they don't care. You just let them out to run amok and stuff like that.

According to Darnell, this type of support helps him to "stay motivated and stay focused."

For some, the encouragement they receive may seem like nagging, but frequent "checking in" ultimately helps them. Trey describes how it can be an annoyance when family members push him but he recognizes they are doing something positive:

> They stay on me. They push me to make sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to do or what I have to do. My uncle he's just staying on me every day. It will be annoying but then again I look at it like he's only trying to help me. I can't turn my back on him.

Trey's uncle asks him things like, "What are you doing productive? What are you doing with yourself?" By asking what they have done to be productive, although it may seem likes nagging on the surface, it makes individuals aware that their family members are concerned about them. Even though Trey finds the constant questioning annoying, he appreciates that someone cares for his well-being and that may be a stabilizing force in his family relationships.

Lack of Support

For some participants, the support they receive from immediate family members is limited and the reasons are varied. Some families may have few economic resources available. Other families experience problems so severe that they lack the ability to offer

support. Terrance's fiancé Lateisha has a daughter from a previous relationship with an individual who was also incarcerated. In discussing the importance of family support to desistance, Lateisha explained how her child's father lacked a strong support system due to his family's problems:

> When my daughter father first came home, his mother, they're not really positive people. Everybody was all stuck in their little – you know, their own mess, their own junk, their own sadness and depression that it was hard for him to get that positive mind, like, you can do it.

Eventually, without any support from his family, her daughter's father went back to prison.

Some may have the means to offer assistance but are skeptical when their loved ones return, particularly if they have extensive histories of criminal involvement or incarceration. For Ernest, although his sister lends a tremendous amount of support by caring for his son while he recovers from serious injuries sustained in a car accident, she keeps Ernest at arm's length by letting him know she does not trust him.

> I guess they're happy to see me feeling good, but they still have that side that I can see like, "Oh," like they waiting to see me mess up. Like they know it's going to happen, like they have that, "Oh, I know he's going to do something. I know he's going to go out there and do something crazy." I mean because they -- you hear everybody when they talk, "Oh, I'm just happy to see you doing good, and I hope you won't be back out there again." I feel as though if you're confident in me or believe in me, you won't even mention that part. So that's how I see it like they played a role of "Oh, we're here for you, but --"

Ernest clearly expressed frustration over his sister's continued mistrust of him, even though he has been in the community for a few years. Ernest went on to explain that since so much time has passed, he feels that his family should not be skeptical anymore,

but he knows that time will not ease their concerns. The withholding of expressive support due to a lack of trust is understandable but transitioning offenders may suffer without encouragement from family and it may worsen an already strained relationship.

In the following passage, Antoine explains how family members, mothers in particular, can become fed up with their children when their behavior leads to incarceration and that this frustration may lead parents to withhold much needed support.

> I know for a fact, when you come home if you ain't got the support around you, basically positive people, just knowing somebody cares and loves you, some people have nobody, if you have nobody, especially the men, if you have nobody to talk to or nothing, it's like, "What do I care for? Nobody loves me." Mom's probably dead, Dad's gone, so it's like, "Fuck everything," basically. Some people just don't care. You gotta have support around you, positive friends and stuff like that. Some people go to jail and got nothing. Some people talk to Mom and Dad on the phone, some people go like three or four years without any conversation with them cuz Mom said, "That's it, I'm done," and she washed her hands with them. If you burn your bridges on the streets, when you go to jail nobody gonna be there for you. You only get one mom, you can get a thousand friends. At the end of the day, your mom is all you got, your mom and your dad. Your mom is always there anyway. Your dad's probably not in your life. You better bond with your mom or she'll push you out. If you cross your mom, you think she's gonna be loyal to you? It be like that though.

Antoine also comments in the above passage on how a negative mindset can develop for those who are released from incarceration without a strong support system in place. When asked what happens to people who are released and have no support, Seth remarked, "They go right back in." Ty commented, "I seen people go home on Friday and come back in on a Sunday. I be looking like, 'Yo, you just went home, how you back so quick'?"

Many participants agree that a supportive family is critical in keeping a positive

outlook. Clyde's girlfriend Moesha, who also served time in jail, comments that without encouragement from family, there is a greater likelihood of returning to problem behavior.

> If I didn't have god and like family, you know, telling me to keep on, "It's okay you're going to get a job," you know, if I didn't have that I'm just probably using every excuse to smoke and drink and, you know. I don't do that no more, that's in the past, which I'm glad. Because I did a lot of it when I was younger but I just don't do it no more. I'm so proud of myself.

For the father of Lateisha's daughter, the support he did not get from his family led to his re-incarceration. She explained the impact that a negative family environment and lack of support can have on post-release behavior:

> So when he got stressed out, definitely living in a house with that, like it's easy to call your mom like, "Okay, bye." But when you're right there and your mom is like depressed or people around you, just had a baby, you don't got no job, things like that and nobody is pushing you to do the right thing, you are going to go back and do what you feel comfortable doing and that's whatever got you in trouble the first time.

Expressive support seems to be a necessary element for a successful reentry. Even when participants lack support from immediate family members, they may be able to draw support from extended family members and even from close friends.

Kin Networks

The interviews made clear that participants often derive support from sources beyond immediate family members. The extended kin networks discussed earlier continue to play a critical role in young adults' lives during the reentry process. In some cases, participants returned to their mothers but others lived with extended family

members such as grandmothers, aunts, or their girlfriends' families. Many return to reside with extended family members who cared for them at previous points in their lives. Kevin, who spent most of his adolescence residing with his grandmother because he did not like his mother's husband, returned to her home after his latest release from incarceration. Below, he describes his living situation with his grandmother and the type of support that is exchanged:

> I live with my grandmother right now – my mother's mother. She on fixed income and stuff like that so I got to help around the house when I can… My mother is married and she got her own life. You don't want be around stuff like that… I went to my grandmother house. I didn't want to go to my mom because, like I said, my stepfather will be yelling and all that and him will be like that when people come to their house and knock on the door for me and all that, so to avoid all that I just went to my grandmother house.
>
> It's a full house. It's a four bedroom house and we got my aunt on the couch. I got a room for myself, my other aunt stays there, my uncle stays there and my grandmother has her own room. So it's hard, and one of my aunt's got MS so she can't work, you know what I mean… she just got recently approved for disability like last week so.
>
> I mean, we try to [pool our resources], you know what I mean? Sometimes it's hard because everybody got their own responsibilities like their car or whatever, got to pay payments on your car, got to pay your insurance, got to pay your phone bills, cable bills, electricity. So everybody pretty much help, you know what I mean? I just help, like, I try to give my grandmother $50 a week.

Kevin's grandmother is evidently providing support to several of Kevin's relatives. Beyond the provision of material support, however, she is assisting Kevin by allowing him to avoid an undesirable living situation that may increase the stress he experiences as he tries to maintain a legitimate lifestyle.

Fictive kin networks are also an important source of support for returning offenders during young adulthood. For some participants, fictive kin fill a void that is left by their biological families. Ernest often relied on his closest friend and his friend's mother for support when he found himself living on the streets as a teenager. After his most recent return from incarceration, they continued to provide him with much needed support. Below, Ernest describes how these friends are like his family and how they helped him when he returned home.

> The last time I came home, I actually took my son from my baby mother, and he stayed with me in my friend's house. And even though I was like struggling, he was like a real family. I called him my cousin like a brother to me, we're really close, like him and his mom, his mother love me like I was her son, so she kind of helped me out.
>
> Even when I was down and my mother wasn't around when I was young, his mother was always there for me. And she kind of knew what I was going through, and she gradually accepted me in, except for the nights she knew we was there doing something crazy…
>
> It is almost like having a mentor that will be there for you. It's almost the same way but even better because you know somebody is open in their thoughts so you don't have to feel like you're out in the streets by yourself. So it is; it's like an extended family, so it's a good feeling.

Ernest further explained how his fictive family provided him not only with basic living necessities, but with much needed emotional support.

> Chris, that's my friend's name, his mother, Jolie, I called her "mom" myself. She's always saying, "Don't worry, it's going to be all right. You'll get through it, just keep going. For every good thing you do, you know it's going to be good. But if you turn back and do that one bad thing, you'll mess up. So don't do that one bad thing. Just keep going straight." She always encouraged me. And she'd say, "You could do good three years in a row, if you do one sneaky thing, one bad thing, and it would be a big set back to you and don't do it."

> She always used to tell me that. So even to this day, she'll call me on the phone about two or three times out of the week just to see how I'm doing and how the kids are and why I didn't bring the kids over for Christmas or something like that or day after Christmas come and see us or something like that.
>
> Just to know somebody else cares for you, yeah, because he was always stable in his house. It was always stable. So it was like I said, it was just like another parent, felt like a second mom, having a second mom. It helped out a lot though; it definitely did.

Ernest's friend Chris and his mother Jolie provided him with a stable family environment when he did not have his own. This family provided him not only with a place to live, but with love and encouragement that helps him to maintain a positive mentality.

Most participants belonged to a fictive kin network comprised of their childhood friends, some of them even from rival gangs. These family members look to each other for support when they need something tangible such as money, or when they need reassurance that they are on the right path. When discussing his sources of support when he returned home from his most recent bid, Ty said, "My main friends are like family. They know I just came home, alright, we're gonna help you out and put some money in your pocket."

Maintaining friendships with other offenders will not necessarily draw young adults back into a criminal lifestyle post-release. On the contrary, if these friends are also trying to go straight, they may be able to encourage and support each other throughout the desistance process. Below, Darnell describes the role that friends play in keeping each other focused as they transition away from a criminal lifestyle:

> My friends, most of them that did just come home are on the same page as me. None of them are trying to do nothing bad. Everybody is trying to do it the right way and the legit way or

> the way we're supposed to do it when we were kids so, I think that's what keeps me on the right path and keep everything good.
>
> Family, friends and school – that's my motivation – family and friends. I'll even consider the friends like sort of family. I've known them for so long. Like everybody's family, that keeps me motivated and make sure everybody stays right and make sure everybody doesn't go back to jail. You don't want people to be in there. It's hard when you're in there especially people that got that real bit. I can just imagine…
>
> By all working together--now we got one of our friends whose [musical] talent is whacked so it gives everybody else drive… I mean hustling helps you with a lot of things not just by selling illegal drugs but also getting you a good mind state and a good business type of savvy so it helps you push it toward something different, try to hustle something different, you know what I'm saying, something legal--it helps. So it keeps everybody motivated. You take a good trait from everybody that's done something and put it to good use.

Darnell considers some of his close friends to be like family members and they support one another when times are tough. He believes that if they share the goal of maintaining a legitimate lifestyle, they can derive motivation from each other's accomplishments. Bahr, Harris, Fisher and Armstrong (2010) examined differences among successful and non-successful parole completers and contrary to their expectations, parolees who spent more time participating in enjoyable activities with friends were *more* likely to complete parole. While prior research tells us that associations with peers can negatively influence behavior, the findings of the current study suggest that peers, even ones with criminal histories, can have a positive impact on behavior during emerging adulthood. As young adults mature, the sharing of similar life goals can motivate them towards desistance as they hold each other accountable and support one another throughout the process.

Family Support Typology

In analyzing the data on post-release family support, three types emerged. There is one group of participants who had close and emotionally supportive relationships in their immediate families growing up but other family conditions made them vulnerable to crime, such as the absence of their fathers and extreme poverty. Another group of participants had a high level of conflict in their immediate families that interfered with their ability to access support, but post-release realignments within their kin network resulted in improvements in family support. There was just one participant whose family problems were so severe prior to his incarceration that he had to find alternative sources of support after his release.

High Family Support Pre- and Post- Release

It was clear that some participants had close connections with immediate family members prior to their incarceration but there were other aspects of their familial situations that they could not overcome during their youth. For these participants, there was a high degree of support within their families upon their return. Eight participants, about half of the sample of returning prisoners, fall into this category: Randall, Terrance, Mitchell, Antoine, Darnell, Clyde, Seth, and Lamont. Randall always had a strong attachment to his mother. He is her youngest child and receives a high level of emotional support from her. Her struggle to support five sons on her own kept her away from home for long hours while she worked. In her absence, and without a father, Randall was looked after by his much older brothers who were deeply entrenched in the street life. His eventual involvement in drug dealing was influenced by a combination of his exposure to a criminal lifestyle and his family's desperate financial situation. After his release from incarceration at 25 years old, Randall was better positioned to make use of

familial support. He and his wife moved into their own apartment with their child and having never lived on his own before, he required a lot of assistance with basic everyday decisions. No longer having the responsibility of raising her children, Randall's mother was not tied down to work as she had been in the past. Randall's mother goes out of her way to care for her son, even though he is an adult who is now responsible for his own family. As he faced the pressure of having to not only live on his own for the first time but support a family as well, his mother's devotion was critically important. Although they had a loving relationship when he was younger, she was not available to provide this level of support, leaving Randall exposed to risk factors for delinquency.

Several other participants had potentially supportive family relationships during their adolescence but other family risk factors were present. Terrance, for example, reported a high level of cohesion within his family, but their financial situation led him to crime because he desired things his family could not provide. As he now attempts to live a crime-free life, his mother's frequent checking-in and encouragement in searching for legitimate work opportunities is a comfort to him. Mitchell also reported having a close, supportive relationship with his mother but other family circumstances pushed him towards crime. Being a single mom, his mother was mostly out of the home working and in the absence of his father, Mitchell had his older brother to look to for guidance. When his older brother ridiculed him for not having any money at 13 years old, Mitchell felt a need to earn his own money. Like Terrance, now that he is attempting to live a legitimate life, he leans on his mother for her support, both financial and emotional. Seth's situation is similar. He grew up without a father and was close with his mother, but his exposure to crime and desire for money led to negative choices. Now that he is an adult with three

kids of his own, he counts on his mother's encouragement and words of wisdom, in addition to her relationship with her grandchildren. Antoine was also close with his mother. He was born when his mother was just 15 years old and both of them stated that they grew up together, an experience that produced a very strong bond between them. Although their emotional connection was strong, multiple family risk factors affected Antoine's involvement in crime. Following his release as an adult, the connection with his mother and her seemingly unending support is a major motivational force in his desistance. Darnell experienced close relationships in his family when he was growing up as well, specifically with his mom and his sister, but his father's habitual involvement in crime as a source of income and his numerous convictions paved the way for Darnell to enter into crime himself. Encouragement from his family, along with financial assistance, helps him to stay straight. Darnell's father was back at home at the time of Darnell's interview, so the added financial support to the family probably helped as well.

Clyde indicated that his family was always very close. His parents stayed married throughout his youth and only recently began to have problems that are leading to a separation. Clyde was especially close with his mother and he also had close relationships with his siblings. Although his father abused alcohol and faced drug charges (for which he was never convicted), Clyde believes his involvement in crime was influenced more by neighborhood / peer factors. Speaking about the causes of his involvement in crime, he stated, "Myself, my mindset, places I was out around, people I was with, just my mindset just got changed around." He also revealed that he saw a psychiatrist when he was younger for conduct problems and was diagnosed with ADHD, so internal problems may have played a part as well. Clyde's involvement in crime and

his incarceration in particular devastated his mother. She was happy about his return and since his release his mother has been someone that he can talk to.

Lamont's situation differs from the others described here because he lost both of his parents to death at a young age, leaving him to be raised by his grandparents. Lamont demonstrated a deep affection for them, and his grandmother in particular, and it seems as though they made sure his basic needs were met. It does not seem to be the case that a lack of support was an issue for Lamont.

In all of the situations described here, there were loving and supportive relationships but certain factors interfered with the youths' ability to tap into them in avoiding a criminal lifestyle, such as financial difficulties, the absence of a positive male role model, and exposure to crime. As they struggle to meet the responsibilities of adulthood and remain crime-free, support from the family members they were closely connected with is important to them in achieving their goals. For another group of participants, there was a high level of conflict in their immediate families prior to their incarceration but they were still able to access family support during the post-release transition.

<u>High Family Conflict Problems Pre-Incarceration, High Post-Release Support</u>

For some participants, adolescent conduct problems were influenced to a large degree by family conflict but they moved beyond their negative family circumstances to access support post-release. This was the case for six participants: Ty, Eddie, Kevin, Trey, Davay, and Allaquan. All of these young men experienced conflict in their relationships with their mothers when they were growing up that often drove them away from home. Their relationships were strained primarily as a result of physical abuse and

harsh parenting styles and the anger these young men carried around during their adolescence into their young adulthood. All of these individuals reported relying on their mothers for some degree of financial and/or emotional support post-incarceration. Ty, Eddie, Trey, and Davay all lived with their mothers following their release. Kevin and Allaquan lived with other family members but were able to ask their mothers for financial assistance now and then. For Ty, Davay, and Allaquan, their relationships suffered too much for them to fully embrace their mothers, although they accept their situation for what it is and have resolved to live peaceably with them. While they can turn to their families for some level of financial assistance, they rely more on their friends and significant partners for emotional support. Eddie, Kevin, and Trey have experienced significant improvements in the quality of their family relationships. As a result of these changes, they are all able to utilize some degree of family support in their transitions to the community and to adulthood. The former group makes use mostly of tangible support from their immediate families, while the latter is also able to access a high degree of expressive support through the close relationships they have established. For one of the participants, his family situation was so dire that it could not be repaired to a degree that allowed him to access any type of support within his immediate family.

<u>High Family Conflict Family Problems, Limited Post-Release Support</u>

Ernest's family conditions were so extreme that he was unable to access support within his family of origin following his release from incarceration. He lived primarily on his own since he was a young teenager because his mother was unable to provide a steady and stable living environment. These problems did not get any better following his transition into adulthood and his eventual release from incarceration. Instead, Ernest

looked to friends for support – mainly for a place to stay. Actually, Ernest's mother and brother both passed away after his return from incarceration, so he could not have turned to them even if he wanted to or if they were able to offer any type of support. Eventually, Ernest developed a strong relationship with a woman named Latoya who was gainfully employed and raising a son. The two of them established a household together, blending their families – Ernest had custody of his child from a previous relationship – and having a child of their own. Latoya was a source of encouragement to avoid crime. Had Ernest not had friends he could turn to for a place to live or perhaps had he not met this woman, his situation would have turned out very differently. It must be noted, however, that the desistance process has been long and not without its complications. Ernest continued to commit crimes for some time to earn money and to this day, he admits that he struggles with a drinking problem, drug addiction, and a love of partying. His girlfriend's patience with this aspect of their relationship is has been tested numerous times. In the passage below, Latoya describes what his situation was like when she met him and how she helped him:

> He was staying with one of his relatives when I met him. It's just, the whole environment to me was just negative with everybody, drinking, and then his son at that time was I think three, and the other little boy there was two or three. And it's like if everybody is drinking and partying, what are the kids doing, you know? So when I moved him in and then his son in, I made sure that his son started school and just trying to start to get everything on track, so that's how it was when I first met him.
>
> I think he has matured somewhat. I think by watching the way that I raised my kids and take care of my kids. You know when you have the first kid that you got to raise, there are a lot of things you're not going to know. He didn't know a lot of things, but he learned a lot of things being around me and the way that I interact with my kids and do different things with them and stay

> on top of the day to day activities of their school day and everything like that.

While Latoya certainly seemed to be a stabilizing force in his life, Ernest's reckless behaviors have crept back into the relationship at times and taken their toll. Ernest was involved in a serious car accident and sustained life-threatening injuries for which he ultimately lost his job. At that time, Ernest and Latoya were having major issues over his drinking and drug use. She explained how his partying affected her and their relationship:

> He wound up losing his job now with the car accident. In my opinion, I felt like either you were drunk or high and got in the car accident even though you won't admit it, so it kind of makes me angry sometimes. It was kind of like, you did this to yourself, you were hanging with your friends, being sneaky, doing whatever, and you messed your body up now permanently.
>
> I was just hoping that that changed his perspective on a lot of things because I had to tell him, when you were laid up in the hospital and everything is going on, I didn't see a lot of your friends or whoever you were putting first, and if you keep acting crazy with getting high or drinking and trying to be wild, I'm not going to do it because I'm not going to keep -- it gets to a point where it's just like enough is enough, and I don't feel like babysitting grown people.
>
> He has changed somewhat, but he still has a long way to go and at some point you're just like, do I really have time to be sitting here waiting, you know?

Latoya stated that he is currently doing better – he found another job and he mostly goes to work and comes home. He pitches in a lot with regard to raising the kids as well, which was never really a problem between them, but the fate of their relationship and Ernest's future seems uncertain if he is unable to get his addictions under control.

The examples presented in this section suggest that family support plays a large role in returning offenders' ability to survive not only physically but mentally as well.

Respondents indicated that support is important in motivating them to succeed. The findings reveal that supportive family members come in a variety of forms and some returning offenders may even receive the greatest amount of support from extended or fictive families. There is good reason to reconsider traditional definitions of family, particularly for low income minorities. What is most interesting, however, is that even the participants who were negatively impacted by pre-existing family problems were supported in some way that benefited them during reentry. The purpose of this study is to understand how returning offenders can transition from the family situations described in chapter four to the supportive environments described here. Research on the social processes involved for young males is lacking. The next chapter will explore how and why this transition from family conflict to family support occurs and its implications for desistance.

Chapter 6: Developmental Change – Maturity, Responsibility and Evolving Relationships

The majority of the participants experienced a cumulative effect of family troubles on their adolescent behavior. Yet, when they returned to their families following incarceration they were able to receive much needed support. With the exception of one participant, the previous chapter identified two types of family situations in which support improves for young adults. First, there are those who had close relationships with family members during their youth but other family factors prevented them from receiving a full range of support, either because the families could not provide it at the time or because the youth were not open to receiving support. Second, there are those who experienced serious conflict with family members during their youth that they were able to overcome as they entered adulthood. This chapter will examine the mechanisms through which family situations improve for young adults and aid in the desistance process. This is not a study about the *causes* of desistance, but about *how* desistance happens.

The data revealed a clear relationship between the transition to adulthood and the transition away from a criminal lifestyle, which is consistent with prior research (Blonigen, 2010; Farrington, 1986; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Sweeten, Piquero, & Steinberg, 2013). Several participants talked about the significance of age in their attempts to turn their lives around. The sources of motivation to desist during emerging adulthood are numerous. They include appreciation for family, a sense of responsibility to family, and a desire to make a contribution and to be part of their children's lives in a way that their own fathers were not. These sources of motivation are discussed in more

detail below. First, a discussion about the importance of reaching a certain level of maturity in becoming motivated to desist is warranted.

Maturity / Mental Change

Whether or not internal change precedes motivation to desist is a matter of great debate in the literature (see LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Some argue that subjective change, such as motivation or establishing a new identity, occurs prior to reductions in offending (Maruna, 2001). Others argue that social factors, such as strong social attachments, are more influential on desistance (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Panuccio, Christian, Martinez, and Sullivan (2012) argued that a readiness for change is necessary for desistance to occur, but that social support can both trigger and sustain motivation to change in young adults. Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) similarly argued that social ties can be a "hook" for change. In the current study, several participants talked about maturity and changing attitudes as a critical part of reentry and desistance. For most, maturity was not something they achieved until they approached adulthood. For some, this change began to take place while they were incarcerated. Ty, who was incarcerated as both a juvenile and an adult, believes that his adult incarceration made him grow up faster and reach a level of maturity that is necessary for wanting to achieve a legitimate lifestyle. He describes below how he began to think differently after he was sent to an adult prison:

> It's kind of like the same [as being incarcerated as a juvenile] but it's like, you gain more. You gain more knowledge and you gain more wisdom from being around all the older people who been through it. Sometimes when you young you don't want to hear that shit. It's like, "Whatever." But, at my age, I'm like older for my age. You and me could be like the same age, know what

> I mean, but I'm older than you cuz I know more than you. I'm like five years older than you.
>
> How you gonna get money now? This shit's real. You gotta try to get a job, try to do something, go to school, anything. That's all I can say. You just try to do better. Don't go backwards, just do what you gotta do, live your life, don't go back. Just live, just live, that's life.

Others agree that gaining wisdom is necessary to staying out of trouble and wisdom comes with age. Clyde, who was released at the age of 24, describes how difficult it is to break free from a mindset when you're still young:

> I mean, after a while, it becomes you. It's like you do things that you don't even have knowledge of doing sometimes. You might do things you think are the right thing but it's actually the wrong thing. It's like it messes your mind up, your whole mind state, your mentality. It takes time though to get out of it. The older you get, the more mature you become so it just takes time to get out that mindset.

The passage suggests that with age people gain maturity and the ability to control their impulses. There is evidence that as they transition into their mid-twenties, young adults begin to set legitimate life goals. Lamont, who was 24 at the time of his last release, drew an important connection between his age and his plans for the future, suggesting that those transitioning to adulthood may be more likely to pursue legitimate means of success.

> I'm about to go to Middlesex [County College]. I'm also gonna apply to vocational schools so I can take up a trade at the same time. The first thing I gotta take care of is my license, then I'm gonna get my CDL license to be a truck driver. I gotta do something. I'm damn near 30 years old. By the time I'm 28 I want to at least be a little established. By the time I'm 30 I want to live in a house. I want to be established. I really look at the bigger picture. I was talking to a friend of mine and I asked him, "Where do you see yourself in a few years from now? He told me, 'Being a dentist, living in a nice house, taking care of my family, and just living life, traveling, seeing the world, doing things that a lot people around here aren't doing." I was saying

> about 3-5 years from now I really want to be established. I want to have a permanent job. I be really happy when I'm about to go to work.

Clyde drew a similar connection between his age and the way he wants to live his life moving forward:

> No more time for playing games though. I'm too old for that now so it's time to step up – step up to the plate and do what I got to do, working, no more taking shortcuts in life. Got to go through the right process and do what you have to do like working and things like that. Actually do what you're supposed to be doing out here, the real way of life instead of doing the opposite.

Clyde indicates that he is too old to live the lifestyle he was living in the past and he has reached an age where he must become responsible and take life more seriously, which involves pursuing his goals through legitimate means. It could be that as people age they place more value on maintaining ties to family and to community, leading them to pursue goals that will result in the development of such ties. In the section below we shall see how their appreciation for family increased as participants aged.

Appreciation for Family

One of the more prevalent themes that emerged was the connection between age and appreciation for family. For most participants, the transition to adulthood coincided with a new understanding of and appreciation for family members. Kevin describes this change below:

> When I was younger, before I went to prison, I wasn't even being for none of my family. I was in the streets heavy so that's what I was doing. I had my own crib before I got locked up. I was doing crazy stuff so I didn't want to be involved with none of my family because I ain't want none of that bad stuff to come

> back on my family. But now it's like I ain't doing no bad stuff and family to me is everything, especially if you got a close knit family. Family to me is everything. I talk more to my family now. It's like different now. I'm grown, I can have a conversation. Before I left to go to prison or whatever or before I got incarcerated in the county, it was like I don't want to talk. If it wasn't about hanging with my dudes, partying with chicks, drinking, smoking or nothing like that, it was irrelevant to me. That wasn't good. Because I lost contact, I lost like closeness with my family in that distance. But it never distanced them away from me. It distanced me away from them. They was always there for me but I just was like no, I didn't want to be around them because they wasn't involved in the type of stuff I was involved in. But now it's like I spend more time with them than anything. Before I left I haven't been to Connecticut since like 2000 when my grandmother passed away. But now I've been back there, I've been out there like five times since I've been home to see my nieces and nephews and my grandfather. I still got a great grandmother living out there. She's 95 years old right now. I try to go out there and see her as much as possible because you never know when she's going to leave being that age and she's on bed rest. She sleep most of the time so I try to get out there and see her most of the time.

During his youth, Kevin's only focus was his friends and his partying and it caused him to lose contact with his family. Now that he is an adult, he values his family above all else and makes spending time with them a priority.

Having to take on the challenges of adulthood, especially during a stressful time such as reentry, young adults come to realize the struggles that their parents or other caregivers face in their daily lives. During an interview with Mitchell, he explained how his family supported him through his incarceration and continues to do so now that he has returned home. He has realized, however, that his mother is facing challenges of her own and as a result, he tries not to ask for too much economic assistance.

> My mom, I called her twice a week. I talked to the family at least twice a week. If I needed money, they sent it. Letters and pictures, they sent it. They were there the whole time. That's my whole support system. It's hard now. My mom, she's not used to paying a mortgage so it's kind of hard on her so I fall

> back from asking her for help. It's not like I really need too much. They just there though.

Although Mitchell resides with his mother, he understands that her resources are limited and that just being there for him is a valuable type of support.

Many participants came to develop a stronger appreciation for their caregivers once they were able to realize the impact their behavior had on their families' lives. Perhaps it is the sense that they are loved regardless of the stress they placed on their families that helps returning offenders to appreciate their families more. Some reported that as they transition to adulthood, they are able to think about how their past actions truly affected their families and that an understanding of how their families were impacted is powerful in motivating them to desist. When asked how his family was affected when he got into trouble, Lamont acknowledged how his actions hurt them, particularly his grandmother who was his primary caregiver at the time:

> It hurt my grandmother the most because I always have a sit down with my grandmother, I always talk to her. She would ask me, "Lamont, you not back out there in the streets are you?" And I would say, "No grandma, I'm not, I'm not." I was starting Middlesex County College. I had my courses and everything ready and it felt like I let her down. I told her I'm on the right path and then I basically proved it wrong. I hurt her a lot. I hurt a lot of my family.

Lamont discussed how he now wonders if the stress he caused his grandmother contributed to her health complications. He described how a concern for his grandmother's health is what keeps him motivated now that he is an adult because he does not want to cause her any stress that is detrimental to her well being:

> My grandmother had a stroke during my bid for the drug charge… I don't know. Sometimes I think, due to the stress I

> caused my grandmother and everything I been involved in, sometimes I think, man, did she get that stroke because of me cuz she was stressing? This was like 2007 but she had many strokes here and there. My grandmother is all I have now so I'm gonna make sure she's alright. I don't leave the house if she needs something. If she calls me right now, I'm there. I told her I'm not going back. When your life is really on the line and you might not see your family again or walk on a street corner again, when they're talking about that kind of time, that's when it hit you.

Faced with the possibility of a lengthy prison term, Lamont assesses what he stands to lose. Prior work has shown that when offenders age, they experience shifts in how they think about crime and incarceration similar to the one described above by Lamont. As they age, some are better able to calculate the potential costs of criminal behavior. Shover (1985; 1996) examined the lives of male criminals over the age of 50 to identify changes in decision-making processes as criminals grow older. Shover found that by late adolescence to the early twenties, some criminals develop a deeper understanding of the potential costs of crime and an increasing realization that the financial gains of crime are relatively small. As they move towards their thirties and forties, they develop a growing awareness of time and sense of tiredness. In addition to the realization that his past actions may have had negative consequences for the people he loves most, Lamont now realizes how precious time is with family members. He acknowledged that his grandmother's time is coming to an end soon and he would be devastated if he missed any of the time he has left with her. In addition to an increased appreciation for their families, several participants discussed the improvements they experienced in their relationships as they entered adulthood.

Changing Relationships

One of the benefits of increasing maturity and appreciation for family is improved relationships with parents or other caregivers during emerging adulthood. Participants reported being more communicative with family members and also being more open to having personal conversations. Below, Trey explains how he had a guard up when he was young but now that he is growing up, he can talk to his mother about anything without fear:

> Well, it's different now because I'm grown now so I can talk to her about anything as a man to a woman. But back then, I couldn't because I was still young and not really open minded and I am now.

Relationships become more open because participants said they feel more comfortable as adults discussing their behaviors as well as their feelings with their parents. As adults, they can let their guard down and be honest without fearing the consequences. Mitchell stated that he also has a more open relationship with his family, his mom in particular, now that he is an adult:

> It's more open. I don't hide things from them anymore. I don't hide nothing. I tell my mom everything. I used to hide cigarettes from my mom but now, nothing. I can tell her now that I'm a gangster.

They felt that as they returned from incarceration, it was an especially important time to open up to their family members and there are several benefits to doing so. One benefit of a more honest relationship with parents is that participants reported they could finally admit how they were affected by traumatic events in their childhood, which may pave the way for healing within families. When Ty was an adolescent, he responded to his

abusive situation with anger and rebellion. As an adult, Ty was able to confront his mother about the abuse he experienced and open up to her about the impact it had on his life. In doing so, they have been able to move forward in their relationship. While Ty still holds his mother responsible, he has been able to move past his anger to achieve an improved relationship with his mom.

As they have matured, some participants said they are better able to accept their parents despite the conflict they had in the past and they can better understand the reasons behind their conflict, making it easier for them to let go of their anger. Kevin, who resented his stepfather during his adolescence for trying to assume a paternal role in his life, has now reached a level of maturity where he accepts his stepfather for the place he holds in his mother's life. When asked how his relationship with his stepfather has changed, Kevin remarked:

> Well, I'm saying it's different now. I'm a little grown so I've learned to leave stuff in the past. Me and him got a whole different relationship, like he cool now. He actually helped me buy my first car when I came home. He all right.

Because he's older, Kevin is able to leave the past behind him and has opened up to having a relationship with his stepfather. Allaquan also had a rocky relationship with his mother throughout his youth and the problems they had often drove him to stay with his grandmother. Below, he discusses how his relationship with his mother has improved, particularly because they now live separately and he can now understand that they are better off apart:

> My mother always said, "We're good from a distance. I can love you from afar." [Laughs] She always say that. It's good now. I understand it now, you know. I see that it is better because if I

> were staying with her it would be like there's a lot of things that she just don't like about me but that's me and certain things that I might not like whatever that go on there and that's them whatever. She said I just need to be out on my own, that's the best way so. I felt it's good. It's better that way too.

Now that he is grown up, he acknowledges that he and his mother have differences but they can accept each other for who they are.

Coinciding with an appreciation for families during young adulthood is an increased receptiveness to offers of family support. In discussing the changes that Mitchell has undergone in his relationships since his release at the age of 21, the most noticeable change for his girlfriend Ailee, who has been with him since his release two years ago, was his increased openness.

> I feel like he's opened up more. Before he had a guard up that he didn't want to let anybody in but I feel like now he put the guard down and he listens to what everyone actually has to say and tries to think more positively than he did before. Before he was negative – you couldn't tell him anything. And now he actually takes advice and support and he uses it.

To some extent, the ability of families to support loved ones when they return from incarceration may depend on the willingness of their loved ones to accept their assistance and be open to advice.

Responsibility

It is clear from the interviews that expectations for returning offenders are closely connected to their age. In talking about their families' expectations for them or their expectations for themselves, most participants referred to the fact that they are men now, suggesting that age plays a big part in the post-release transition. As they transition to

adulthood, young adults returning from incarceration are expected to contribute more to their household by pitching in financially, doing chores, serving as more positive role models and even working towards independence. In Ty's opinion, being a man by definition means to contribute financially and take on other household responsibilities:

> You can't be the man if you ain't doing shit, know what I mean? That's part of being a damn man. You could be a man in the house but motherfucker ain't doing shit and he's lazy, don't want to do this, don't want to do that, don't want to take out the garbage. Like, damn, dirty motherfucker! He a dirty ass motherfucker! Do something, like fuck, take out the garbage, clean up, do something. Don't just be a man and say you're a man when you really not. Do what you gotta do.

Ty expresses the opinion that you cannot be a man without taking on responsibilities in the home. Other participants believe that to be a man you should be living on your own. Terrance described his parents' expectations for him now that he's an adult:

> You're grown, you've already been grown so just, I mean, handle your business how you have to handle it. So basically get a job or find some type of income and basically you got to move out or whatever. Like, you're getting older, you can't stay here forever.

In Terrance's case, becoming an adult clearly means to become financially independent. For other participants, however, becoming an adult also means to play a supportive role within the family. In talking about his family's expectations for Antoine, his fiancé Keisha with whom he shares a child, commented:

> I know the family would expect more for him now than before because he's a man. You have to look at a lot of things differently, like, life differently, period. Basically, to take care of what he's supposed to and be a man in the family. Like, you know your situation. You don't have your father so you have to be that strong person for everyone. That's something that you

> *should* do as a man because this is *your* sentence, this is where you gotta pick up – do your bid, do your time. So, they would expect him to do more, to go that extra mile.

In Keisha's opinion, being a responsible adult involves being a positive role model and being there to support the family the way his family was there to support him when he went through a difficult time.

Accepting family responsibilities and meeting expectations may be an indication that returning offenders are ready to confront the challenges of adulthood. During an interview with Darius, he explains how his younger brother Randall, who was released at the age of 25, has demonstrated his maturity by assuming responsibilities that he has not assumed in the past:

> I see a change already because now all he talks about is work, work, work, work. "I've got to do some overtime" and before it was like, "Yo, yo, the Jordans come out next week." Now when I talk to him he's like, "Man, I got to have my rent money next week, I've got to do some overtime to get this rent money." So there's not more about himself, it's about the family.
>
> He's always talking about his rent or he calls me like, "You got any food?" I'm like, "Yeah, what's up? He's like, "I just blew my check on my rent so if you got something, bring it by." So constantly, it's about home and not about himself no more. To me that's growing up, accepting responsibilities, being married with a daughter.

Maintaining his full time job and devoting his entire paycheck to his rent and other family expenses while his wife finishes school indicates to his family members that they have become his top priority. Putting his family's needs above his own, Randall is no longer thinking about just himself, signaling that he has matured and although his life is stressful, he is confronting the demands of adulthood.

For returning young adults who have children or are expecting children while they are transitioning to community life, the expectations for them may be even greater. Seth has three children – two were born before he was incarcerated and one was born about a month after he came home. In a conversation Seth had with his mother after his return from incarceration, she expressed to him that he was growing up and has to do better for his children. Seth describes this conversation below:

> When I came home my mom was just like done with all that. We sat down and talked and my mom was like, "You need to get your stuff together for your kids and for you. You getting older now and you need to be on your own." So, that's what I'm doing – getting everything in order.

Seth's mother communicated to him that as an adult, he should work towards becoming independent and being able to provide for his children. Seth feels that the need to provide for his kids keeps him motivated to stay on the right path.

> I'm doing better. I got three kids so I gotta do what I gotta do. They do keep me focused. If I don't got it, they don't got it. So, I gotta get it so they can have it. Kids are expensive. They need clothes, food, daycare, school, all that. I contribute every week. I get paid, "Here, pay that, pay this." I don't spend nothin' until they done.

Terrance's fiancé Lateisha indicated that Terrance also derives motivation from wanting to be a good father. She describes how since his release, the desire to be a good stepfather to her daughter as well as a good father to their newborn son has kept him focused on being a family man:

> From the beginning to now, I see a lot of changes. I see that he's focusing more on like just calming – like not calming down, like just focused on being a family man. He wants to be a good role model in a family, constructive, like he wants to be a good

> husband, good stepfather, good father. That's where he's trying to set his mind at right now – being a family man, not being young or whatever.

Terrance agrees that having a child is motivational. He comments how a child is a positive force because he wants to remain in the community to play an active role in his child's life:

> Having a child is positive. Knowing that you ain't really trying to be out of that child's life because if you're not in that child's life somebody else is going to be supporting your child and why would you want somebody else supporting your own child. You made that decision to have that child so why would you put that on somebody else?

Many discussed the failings of their own fathers in talking about what it means to be a man and the responsibilities they want to fulfill as they mature into adulthood. For many, a desire to do better than their parents was a powerful motivator in turning their lives around.[1] As they reflected on the absence of their father in their lives, participants reported a desire to be present and to be positive role models for their own children now that they have reached adulthood. Below, Seth discusses how he sees his children as often as he can, nearly everyday, because he does not want to be absent from their lives the way his father was absent from his life:

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[1] Unfortunately, there is considerable evidence that their commitments to their children do not work out over time for many young fathers. Tach and Edin (2011) argued that when casual romantic relationships result in pregnancy, the majority of unmarried fathers are supportive throughout the pregnancy, are optimistic about their romantic relationships, and are committed to being involved with their children. The cumulative disadvantage they experience, however, makes it difficult for them to meet their commitments. The employment and earnings prospects of young fathers, particularly those who have been incarcerated, combined with the likelihood that they will have children with multiple partners and receive little income support from the government, places them in desperate economic situations and leads to instability in their families (Smeeding, Garfinkel & Mincy, 2011). Relationship instability over time between unwed couples lessens the involvement that fathers have with their children (Berger & Langton, 2011). Although the participants in this study are initially motivated by their children and feel hopeful about their futures, existing research suggests that the barriers they face in achieving economic success and stability in their romantic relationships could limit the involvement they have with their children, in terms of their financial support as well as their engagement.

> I see my two, the oldest and the youngest, almost everyday. I see the other one like twice a week. I ain't trying to say I'm gonna be the best. I'm gonna do what I can. I came up with no father so I don't want to do that to my kids.

Ty, whose baby was due a few days after our interview, also commented that he plans to be a part of his daughter's life unlike his own father:

> My sperm donor didn't come until I was 20 years old, know what I mean, he came around 20 years later. He wasn't there for me. So, I'm gonna be there the best way that I can. She gonna see her sperm donor in her life.

Other participants talked about how their fathers' absence affected them and they do not wish their children to have the same feelings of loneliness or abandonment. Allaquan described how being a presence in his kid's life is the most important thing he can do because he knows what it feels like not to have a father:

> Most all of us grew up without a father. I think it plays a big part really because I know what it's like some days you think about it like you ain't thinking about your father but there's going to be days and it hits you and now you want to think about certain situations. You could go through anything and it's like somebody to talk to, you know. You would rather talk to them. So you don't go to your mother about everything, you know. Like certain things I couldn't even talk to my mom about. I knew if my father was there then I would have been able to talk to him, you know. So it's like I went through a lot of stuff on my own and if he was there, he probably would have helped me get through it a little easier. I think it plays a big part. I think about it now, I got to stay in my kid's life, that's the main important thing.

He desires to be involved in his child's life not only to provide for her, but also to provide moral support. Dustin's mother Divine utilized his father as an example to motivate Dustin to live a better life and be a more positive role model for his child:

> His father wanted to spend time with him but he was so into the streets and whatever he was doing so it affected Dustin big time and still to this day. That's why he has a baby on the way and I'm saying, you know, I'm like, "Dustin you're grown now, you and Antoine, you're grown. The only thing I could say to you is I'm glad y'all waited and you're all out of your teens, you finished school," I said, "But it's more," you know, I said, "You've got to be a man. You're going to be a better man than your father was." I said, "You know what it was like sitting waiting at the window. That means you've got to straighten up and that's the only piece of advice I could offer you". It's the same thing that my grandmother said to me, that when you have this baby, this is your baby not until you're 18, but for the rest of your life.

While the participants with children acknowledged the importance of being there for financial as well as moral support, those who experience difficulty in achieving adult responsibilities may find it challenging to remain a constant in their children's lives or to make significant monetary contributions. Becoming independent and being able to provide for family requires a steady income. For nearly all participants, finding a job after their release proved to be a challenge and some were tempted to return to crime. Eddie's cousin, Alwan, who just turned 26 and was released from incarceration as a young adult himself, supports five children. He pays child support for his oldest child who resides with her mother and the remaining four children reside with him and his girlfriend, the oldest two being hers from a previous relationship. Based on his past experience with employment, Alwan admits to being fully involved in drug dealing to support his family and he is not seeking legitimate employment at this time. Aside from his frustration over low wages, Alwan has experienced problems with the child support system which does not allow for adjustments when earnings are reduced, making it

difficult to meet legal obligations.[2] Providing for his family is his top priority and he believes that drug dealing is the most gainful approach. The importance of employment to a successful reentry will be discussed in the following section.

Employment

The biggest obstacle they face when they return from incarceration during young adulthood is finding and maintaining a steady job with decent wages. Even though some participants ultimately found a steady job, all of them experienced frustration for a period of time after their release over their ability to secure employment. Lamont described the difficulties he faced in securing employment and the devastating impact this had on him:

> To me, I'm getting older. When I was 19, I felt like I still had a chance. I never had to deal with anything like this. I was able to get a job anywhere. When I caught that adult charge, everything is real serious. I got a job at [indiscernible] on Route 1. I was supposed to start on a Monday but I got a background check showing the drug charge that I came home on. I was so happy that I got that job. Do you know how bad that really crushed me? When you catch an adult charge that changes everything.

When Terrance was unable to find a job, his fiancé Lateisha could see a change in his mood. She describes how frustrating the process was for him:

> I think in the beginning it was so hard for him because he was having a hard time finding a job. I think that would stress him out because everybody want to carry their own weight and I guess he felt like he wasn't carrying his own weight at that time so he was really stressed out. And you know, taking care of his self, having his own money, he don't have to ask nobody else for money… I can pick up on stuff like that because I lived in a house with guys like with my dad and my brother so I know. Plus I can see when he goes to interview and then he didn't get good feedback from it, I

[2] Smeeding, Garfinkel and Mincy (2011) discuss the complexities of child support policy at length. While access to income support has decreased for young males, child support policy has demanded more from them. Their child support obligations continue to mount as they experience blocked opportunities and decreased earnings.

> could tell his mood will change. Filling applications day after day like three applications a day and not getting no phone call, I can see that he was getting really frustrated. Like he was just trying his hardest to find a job and it was like it was not going good for him at that time. So it really affected his mood where it was obvious. Like it was obvious that that was what was hurting him.

Part of Terrance's frustration was caused by the fact that he was unable to contribute in a way that a man is supposed to, suggesting that having a job is a major step towards becoming an adult.

Interviews illuminated how truly important employment is to the adult desistance process (see Sampson & Laub, 1993; Tripodi, Kim & Bender, 2010). Kevin, Davay, and Eddie all discussed their ongoing criminal activity during young adulthood when they were unable to earn a legitimate salary. After he was released from his most recent adult sentence, Kevin was hopeful about his future when he earned a degree in medical coding and billing and completed an internship. When he was unable to find a job, however, he fell into despair and gravitated towards the streets.

> Right there I got off my positive side. I didn't feel like there was any hope, like you know what I mean, it was hard. I started going actually more back to the streets and then I caught two charges and then after them two charges though I was like, "No, that negative side has to go right now. I got to get back on my positive one."

Ultimately, Kevin found a job at a warehouse and has been staying away from crime. Below, he discusses the importance of his employment in keeping him on a straight path:

> This job keep me out of trouble because, like I said, if I ain't got that type of money, I'm easily influenced by negative things. If I don't have like a steady income, it's like, I know one thing I know how to do for sure to get some.

When money is not available through legitimate means, there may be an insurmountable temptation to return to crime, particularly when returning offenders are faced with the expectation that they will make more significant financial contributions to their families or even to become fully independent. Davay admitted that he did return to crime initially after his release because he could not find a job:

> When I came home, I had to do something to get money, but I was looking for a job at the same time but nobody would hire me because of my record. I'm a black man out here, you know what I mean? So it was hard for me to get a job and have money and my mom was pressuring me for money, you know, "You need to get a job, you need money, how do you have all this money if you don't have a job?" I had to keep lying to her. I still do but I have a job so I don't have to lie to her.

In the above passage, Davay points to a significant problem – discrimination faced by young black men in the labor market (see Pager, 2003; Pager, Western & Sugie, 2009). Many participants also believe that due to their criminal records, their access to legitimate means of success is blocked by the perception that they are bad and they will never change. In discussing why he could not find a job when he first came home, Davay expressed that employers are quick to judge:

> Getting a job at first was hard cuz of my record. They see your record and automatically think he's no good. That doesn't mean I'm not good. That just means I messed up… They see a record, no we don't want to hire him, he has a record, but that don't mean anything. That just means I slipped. That don't mean I won't come to work everyday for the rest of my life. That don't mean none of that but they don't see that. They see a black man with a record.

In Davay's opinion, his potential as an employee was never even assessed – employers did not look beyond the fact that he is a young black man with a criminal record. Like

Davay, Eddie discussed how the desistance process has been complicated by his inability to find a job, which he believes is largely the result of his drug charges:

> I was trying to slow down, but it's hard out here. It's hard. People don't want to hire anybody. They've got convictions. They don't want to hire you. They look at your background, anything that you're going to continue to commit crimes or you might steal from them or do something to them or something, but it's not like that.
>
> It's like when you come home, you want to do better. You want to get a job, but if no one is hiring you, then what are you supposed to do? How are you supposed to eat and feed yourself? You can't because you can't get any job. You can't pay your bills.
>
> And then when you come home, the court system, they want you to pay them $50 every month. How are you supposed to do that if you don't have a job? You're looking for a job and you're trying, but no one is hiring you. What are you supposed to do?

Although Eddie reported that he is currently refraining from crime, the temptation to return to it is strong. He describes this feeling below:

> If you got a drug charge, they're really not going to hire you, and that's what I've got. So some days I just wake up thinking like, "What am I going to do? I've got to get some money somehow, some way." I don't want to go back to my old ways because I really need money. Everybody needs money. You need money to survive. Without money, I'll be like one of the bums out there walking around begging for dollars, sleeping outside.

Eddie said he is determined to avoid crime because he does not want to go back to prison, but if he continues to face barriers to employment he may face difficulties in fighting the temptation to resume a criminal lifestyle, particularly because he stated, "I have to pay bills now. I can't live anywhere for free anywhere so I got to do what I got to do."

While some participants spoke about the discrimination they face in getting hired, others experience stigmatization even when they are employed. Ty, who works in a warehouse, explains the negative treatment he receives in his place of employment:

> Once you come on my shift – second shift – you ain't got nothing but convicts – 3:30pm-12am – nothing but convicts. Everybody like black and everybody got a record. First shift is different ethnicities and.... It's like a whole new different ballgame. Once you come home and they give you a chance to work, like my job, they give second chances, but while they doing that we get blamed for everything. If something is missing or something happens, our shift is like the worst shift. That be the second shift all the time and it sucks. That's why I want to stay there for like a year so I can get a better job. Cuz you ain't gonna get hired nowhere else without experience for like a year or two. So, that's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna stay there for like a year. I don't like it. I'm tired of it cuz of all the, excuse me, bullshit! At the end of the day, it's a good job but it needs to change or something. I could tell, someone like you working in the office, you might feel comfortable during the first shift but once the second shift comes, you gonna feel like, ok, like they don't say nothing, they just walk right past you and it's like totally different. Like their vibe, like I can feel it, and I been there for ten months! Now, "I know your name and you just not saying hi to me, well, forget *you*, and *you* keep it moving, I've got to do my work." So, that's how I see it, that's how I see it. It's just like that cuz once you see second shift and once you see people with dreads, you automatically think they bad. Man, it sucks. You trying to turn your life around and people won't give you that chance. They just look down upon you. It's like, why is he doing that when he don't know nothing about me? "But, go ahead, that's how you feel, I can't blame you." But at the end of the day, I'm still gonna say, "Fuck you in my head," know what I'm saying, and just keep it moving.
>
> You think the world is gonna change but people criticize us and look down. Lynching is still here but people aren't getting hung. We're getting hung because we can't get no jobs. What's the point? If y'all want us to better ourselves when we locked up and do this and do that, but when we come out here it's a whole totally different world. You feel me? They don't want to give you that chance. They don't want to see you succeed. They want you to go back to what you were doing cuz they getting paid. The COs, the warden, the deputy warden. Regular COs come in making like $40,000.

Even though he is supposedly being given a chance to better himself, it is made known to him as well as to the other convicts who work the second shift alongside him, that they are not trusted. They are judged based on both their appearance and their background. Ty believes that his oppression extends beyond his place of employment. He talks about being oppressed by structural forces that trap convicted black men in the system by making them unemployable and untrustworthy.

Employment is a very important part of the reentry process for youth who are transitioning to adulthood and it is clearly linked to family context. As men, there is an expectation that they will step up and provide for their families and at the same time they are expected to be positive role models. In order to do so, they need to be able earn an income through legitimate means. For several participants, the desistance process has been a long, bumpy road, as evidenced by their multiple convictions. Those who had more than one arrest continued to engage in crime as a way to make money. Even participants who have only one conviction, like Davay and Allaquan, reported having to resume criminal activities until they secured jobs. Now that they are adults, the pressure they feel to support their selves or to contribute to their families may set them back if they are unable to achieve success in the labor market.

Peer Influence

Interviews with the young adults suggest that the extent to which they are influenced by peers also changes significantly during this developmental phase. Many reported being swept up by negative behaviors that occurred in groups when they were teenagers, but now that they have entered into a phase that has given them new responsibilities, they are able to make decisions that serve their best interests. Those who

were actively involved in gangs when they were younger now have the freedom to live their lives how they choose to do so, without fearing repercussions (see Decker & Lauritsen, 1996). While they will never renounce their gang affiliation, they can choose not to be actively involved. In the following passage, Ernest explains this gang desistance process:

> Yeah, I still talk to them. I talk to them on the phone and we might go hang out. I mean there's a difference from being in the gang and gang banging. That's what people have to understand. Once you're in a gang, you're always going to have that title on you for your life.

Interestingly, Ernest stated that he will always be a gang member, even though he does not consider himself to be an active member. Respondents in Bolden's (2013) qualitative study about gang desistance expressed a similar contradiction – they did not consider themselves to be part of the gang but they also stated it was impossible to leave. Ernest went on to explain that gang banging is something primarily teenagers do and they eventually grow out of it:

> If you're still 30 years old and you want to gang bang, there's something wrong with you. There's something wrong with you. Now I've been in a gang -- I've been in a gang since I was 12. Something would be wrong with me if I consider myself out there gang banging -- it would be something wrong with me, like what's the purpose now?

Ernest described the difference between being in a gang, which is stating your affiliation and gangbanging, which is active involvement in gang activity. While no one can say they are not affiliated, those who have moved beyond adolescence can choose to withdraw from gang activities (see Bolden, 2012).

Some participants openly admitted that they regret their past gang involvement. Mitchell explained why he regrets his affiliation:

> I regret doing it. I just regret it because it's not the same anymore. Everyone is unloyal now. I could be more tight with somebody that's not a Crip or that's Blood or something else than I could be with someone who's in the same gang as me. So, I find that there's no point. There's no reason for me to even do it. I'll still do it at the end of the day cuz it's me. I can't deny it. If I go to jail and there's other Crips and Bloods or whatever, they'll say, "That's such and such and he's such and such," and it's not like I can be like, "No I'm not no more." I can't do that, but it's like I'm not out here active. I'm not out here chilling outside with the homies. I'm not doing none of that. That's why I'm just keeping to my music.

Because he is an adult, he is not afraid to admit that he does not want to gangbang. He is able to set himself apart, at least in the outside world, and focus on his own goals. Research examining why people leave gangs have cited disillusionment with gang life a factor that pushes them away from the lifestyle (Brenneman, 2012; Carson, Peterson, & Esbensen, 2013). As Mitchell reached adulthood, he came to the realization that his fellow gang members were not his true friends because of the disloyalty among them. Similarly, Shemar described how being in a gang does not guarantee the type of loyalty you can expect from your closest childhood friends:

> The people you grew up with, those are your real homies. At the end of the day, in a gang or not, this is your dude. These are people you already built a foundation with. That's why when some people come home, they joined a gang, and they go right back to jail. Cuz, this guy will sell you out for five dollars.

Being able to separate their identities from their gangs may help to diminish the negative influence of peers as youth age. Moreover, their peers may actually be a positive influence as they transition to adulthood. As they make this transition together,

many reported that they rely on each other to stay focused. Antoine explains how he and his friends help each other know they have matured and have different ambitions:

> Now we all older and we been through so much stuff. We not gonna be around people that gonna allow us to go there no more. We smarter. We became young men basically. Someone might be doing something negative but at the end of the day we're not doing the things we were doing before. Everybody took a step in life. Everybody smarter. It's different now. We help each other basically.

Having friends who have also gotten into trouble in the past is not necessarily a negative force in returning offenders' lives, particularly if they are facing similar obstacles and share similar goals.

Developmental Processes

Prior research points to an explanatory relationship between age and desistance from crime. The age-crime curve peaks by the early twenties and then declines sharply, but the reasons for this are a matter of debate (see Blonigen, 2010; Brown & Males, 2011; Farrington, 1986; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Shulman, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2013; Sweeten, Piquero, & Steinberg, 2013; Tittle & Grasmick, 1997). The findings presented here indicate that age is indeed a factor in reentry and desistance, and they illuminate the developmental processes occurring at this point in the life course that allow offenders to experience improvements in their social context. The data suggest a number of distinctive mechanisms through which internal psychological adjustments lead to the external realignment of life links. Specifically, this chapter identifies three developmental processes during emerging adulthood that can result in the reevaluation and restructuring of family and peer relationships:

1. An increasing maturity leads to shifting priorities and attitudes about the importance of family.
2. A greater appreciation for family leads to an increased openness to family connections and offers of support.
3. Accepting adult responsibilities leads to greater involvement in family roles.

As they transition to adulthood, some returning offenders gain maturity and wisdom and exhibit shifting mentalities and attitudes. Where they once saw the value in earning fast money, they now see the value in remaining free so they can be with their families. They associate adulthood, and particularly being men, with taking on more responsibility in the family. Motivating them during this phase of their lives is a desire to make financial contributions, to devote more time to helping around the house, to be positive role models and to be better parents for their children. This internal reorganization can lead to improvements in the strength of family ties and produce a social context in which desistance can occur. Elder's (1974) principle about the timing of developmental transitions is exemplified here. As emerging adults gain psychosocial maturity, some develop the human agency to make changes to their external environment, such as the improvement of family processes, thus enabling them to access the support they need to avoid reoffending.

Complicating the success of these processes is the tension that emerges between increased psychosocial maturity and stronger personal relationships, on one hand, and ongoing barriers to finding employment on the other hand. Returning offenders experience some difficulty in taking on adult responsibilities and fulfilling family obligations when they are unable to secure legitimate employment. There is therefore a

close link between employment and the ability to satisfy adult roles. Personal relationships may begin to suffer if young adults fail to live up to their expectations and when their external links weaken, human agency could diminish. Elder (1998) argued that who one *will* become is determined by who one *can* become. Limited access to structural opportunity and damaged life links may affect this developmental process.

The data presented in this chapter highlight a developmental phase in the mid-twenties where an emerging psychosocial maturity allows a reexamination and restructuring of family ties. During this phase, young adults reevaluate their relationships with family members which can lead to more open, satisfying and mutually beneficial relationships. Sometimes, this developmental phase involves identifying and activating the most effective sources of support within one's extended family network, which may or may not include immediate family members. So, while emerging adults reexamine family on the one hand, they may reconstruct family on the other hand. In the next chapter, an extended case study will break down the process of the intergenerational transmission of problems, examine the supportive function of extended families, and discuss the developmental processes that occur during the early to mid-twenties as they relate to family relationships and reentry.

Chapter 7: Divine's Family – An In-Depth Look at a Cycle of Crime, Incarceration and Poverty

Elder's (1974) work, among other life-course studies, discusses the importance of the timing of developmental transitions on the life course. For example, having a child during adolescence may increase the strains and deprivations that a person experiences, leading to cumulative disadvantage that could impact the individual well into adulthood and ultimately shape the lives of his or her children and maybe even grandchildren. Youth who grow up with family criminality and abuse are more likely to engage in delinquency as well as more likely to recidivate. There are unresolved problems in the literature, however, about how the intergenerational transmission of problems occurs. This chapter examines the process of intergenerational transmission by presenting a case study of a family plagued by multi-generational problems. Case studies focus attention on a single instance of a social phenomenon and can form the basis for the development of nomothetic theories (Babbie, 2013). Drawing on Elder's (1998) observations about the life course, this chapter demonstrates how developmental trajectories are determined by the timing of life events as well as by the experiences of other family members, a concept he terms "linked lives."

Up to this point, the study has concentrated on dyadic links. Dyadic analyses are valuable but they do not provide an understanding of the wider context of linked lives. This chapter allows for an examination of a wider network of linked lives in detail. While one case is not necessarily representative of the larger population, it does not mean that it is not typical. Prior research suggests that crime and substance abuse are concentrated in families. The case study presented here is based on interviews with eight

family members. They include Divine, her three sons Antoine, Andrew and Dustin, who are all young adults who have been incarcerated, their older cousin Sam, Antoine's significant partner Keisha, Dustin's significant partner Chantal, and Dustin's father Miles.

Divine is forty years old. She has three sons, Antoine who is 25, Andrew who is 22, Dustin who is 20, and she also has an 11-year old daughter. Antoine and Andrew share a biological father who was a high ranking gang member and well-known throughout the streets. He was killed as during an armed robbery when he 18 years old. Antoine was barely two years old when his father was shot in the head and Andrew was not yet born. Their father's death left Divine to raise her two young sons on her own at 17.

Divine's childhood up to that point was far from easy. Her mother was a drug addict and she cycled in and out of jail for various crimes, mostly for shoplifting and drug offenses. Most of her jail sentences ranged from six months to one year, but at one point she was locked up for four years for check forgery. When she wasn't in jail, her mother was running in the streets. Divine recalled a period during her youth when she and her mother were running the streets at the same time. Due to her mother's inability to care for her, Divine was raised by her grandmother who was both blind and deaf. Three of Divine's great aunts also resided in the house with her grandmother. This arrangement exemplifies the reliance on female headed kin networks that is typically found in low-income communities (Stack, 1974). Although she would not have survived without this support, the living arrangement was not always ideal. One of the aunts living in the

household abused Divine verbally and mentally. In the passage below, Divine describes her living situation as a child:

> My mother was in jail for shoplifting, drugs, which would all result back to drugs. You know, it was all about drugs, it always would be. But shoplifting that was the main thing. You know, it would be six months, a year sitting there. Then one time she got caught up with something else, I think writing bad checks or something like that and that's when she really went away for like four years, you know, and the reality had just set in. When she was away, I had my grandmother who was blind and deaf but the one sister that she was living with who was my great aunt, she was the meanest wickedest witch of the west. So, it was like here I am, my grandmother can't see or hear. She would verbally, mentally abuse me like the whole time I was there. So it was a crazy situation. "You bitch, you're going to be just like your mother." I went through my whole childhood like that.

Divine spoke about the stigma she experienced as a result of her family's problems and how this affected her behavior as an adolescent.

> That's why I kind of, you know, made the decisions that I did. I mean there's some things like, you know, I got teased. I fought all the time because, "Oh, your mother is a dope addict. Oh, your mother is in jail." You know, my grandmother was blind and deaf so, who's going to come to the school for me? It was just, you know, my mother was a dope addict and my grandma had a handicap. You get teased for that... So I took that underneath but it was kind of rough. As you get hit from all angles and I was the only child so it wasn't like I had a bunch of brothers or – you know, I had to learn how to survive by myself.

In talking about the teasing she suffered and how she fought all the time, Divine draws a clear link between being stigmatized and her aggressive behavior.

When she was 16 years old, after having Antoine, Divine left home. About a year later, Antoine and Andrew's father was killed and another year after that, when she was 18 years old, Divine's grandmother passed away. Divine was emotionally distraught, leading her down a path of reckless behavior.

> My grandmother who was like my rock, she died when I was 18 so that's when I had Antoine and Andrew then. For a little phase there, I just had lost it because our grandmother, that was like my best friend, so I went through a lot. Mind you, I had just lost Antoine's father the year before that. So it was a lot going on.
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> Just moving recklessly as an adolescent. Like some of the choices that I made then of driving around with no license, getting pulled over, no registration, just moving reckless. I had so many tickets. I thought they were going to disappear. I just wasn't thinking in my right state of mind. Then when I got to be like 23 or 22, one day I just was like, I'm tired of living like this. I remember one time I got pulled over by the police and Antoine said to me, "Whose name are you going to use?" and something just struck through me. I always had car. My aunt, I told her, I said take that car because as long as it's there, I'm going to drive it and it took me two years but I just – something just came over me then. I just said I can't do this because I always said that the stuff that I went through… I was the only child going back and forth staying with my mother in jail or this person picking me up. I just was like I'm never doing that. I'm never doing that [to my kids].
>
> But after my grandmother died and Antoine's father died, I just like, I lost it for a couple of years until I got myself together and then I just was like I got to do what I've got to do. I've got three kids and that's just when I tried to buckle down and get my license. I went and called Trenton, I had two pages full of tickets-- it must have been every municipal court in the state of New Jersey.
>
> You know, it was a lot, it was a lot going on back then in my early 20s and teens. I endured a lot. Antoine used to be like, "Mom, I'm surprised you don't smoke crack because you went through so much stuff," and I did. But it was what it was.

Divine attributes her reckless behavior to the emotional distress she endured as a result of her life experiences – her mother's frequent trips to jail and the loss of both her grandmother and the father of her two oldest boys while she was still young of age. What is also revealed in the above passage is that Divine's oldest son, Antoine, became aware as a young child that his mother was doing something wrong. When he observed his mother providing fake identities to the authorities to escape trouble on a seemingly

routine basis, Antoine may have inherited a lack of respect for the law. At the very least, he may have learned techniques for self-preservation.

In the midst of her troubled behavior, Divine got involved with Dustin's father, Miles, about a year or two after Antoine's father died. She moved in with Miles when she was about 18 years old and got into some legal trouble. Divine was charged with drug possession during a raid on Miles' apartment and she received pre-trial intervention (PTI). Because she was unable to fulfill all the requirements of the program, primarily her financial requirements, she was violated and placed on probation, giving her a felony conviction on her record. She describes below how she was charged and the impact the conviction has had on her ability to get a job:

> I went off with Miles when I was living in the projects. I was 18 when I first got there and boom, my door would get kicked in. And my mother was incarcerated. This was during the time she was gone for four years. She's incarcerated. She's calling me from Clinton telling me Divine, "Just make sure there's nothing on you. I'm hearing his name. I'm hearing his name all the way down here."
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> The next day my door got kicked in with something that wasn't supposed to be there but he had like a bundle of coke or whatever and that was, you know, like I said one of the choices that I made to be there with him. That haunts me still now because I have a possession charge, you know, that I tried to get expunged, can't. I went through all of that. So it prevents me from getting certain jobs.
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> He did say, "She don't have nothing to do with this, it's mine." But they were like, "We're not buying that bullshit." That's exactly what they said. "If anything we'll give her a lesser charge," you know whatever, so they gave me the possession charge and they gave me PTI. I was working part time. I tell you I did everything. I passed all the urines, I did everything, but I wasn't able to pay all the money that I owed and the judge that I had was just nasty. He wasn't trying to hear my story. He violated me and instead of the PTI which would have wiped everything out, he gave me probation. Now it's on my record and that's what happened. I went through everything but I wasn't

> in a position to pay all that money at that time because I was back living with my mother, you know. I had my own apartment so now he got locked up, everything, you know. So if I got $20, Duke's a baby, I need pampers, do you really think I'm going to come give it to probation or PTI? So they violated me and that was the beginning of my nightmares because just from that that charge, you know, it's on my record.

Divine and Miles were in a relationship for 10 or 11 years and were married for the last two or three. According to Divine, she was young and vulnerable and she married Miles for the wrong reasons. Divine believes that Miles treated her children well, especially her stepsons, and she said he was the only father figure they had growing up. Divine experienced a period of financial stability with Miles because he maintained a stable job at a local university for ten years while she worked at a law firm. Miles was incarcerated prior to their relationship but never while they were together, although he remained involved in dealing drugs. Below, Divine explains that Miles avoided legal trouble while they were living together but that he still dabbled in drugs:

> Well he was incarcerated before we got married but while we were together and married no because, you know, I was like, "You've got to get a job." He was working at Rutgers for ten years but he messed all that up. Because my thing was after I bought my house, you're still dipping and dabbing and I know you are and I'm telling you, "You don't bring nothing in my house, don't bring it in," you know. But okay, he's a clown. I said, "don't bring nothing in my house," so I'm wondering why he won't rake up the leaves and one day I just get so mad and I go out there and start raking and I raked up a whole fucking bag of drugs. [He said] "Oh, well you said don't bring it in the house," you know.

An interview with Divine's son Dustin revealed that his parents' relationship was sometimes abusive. Below, Dustin describes what he witnessed between them:

> I've seen my dad and mom fight and I know how hurtful it feels to see your parents fighting with each other. You know, arguing is one thing but I'm talking about fist fighting. My dad, he hit on my mom, not all the time, but occasionally and one time she was calling for my help. She was calling for my help and I'll never forget it. I was in my room and she was calling for my help and I went in and he was on top of her hitting her. I kind of tried to help him get off of her but he threw me into the wall. I was around nine. I was young. So he was a big drunk. Like he would get drunk and come home and you know –

Dustin witnessed physical violence between his parents at a very young age. Despite what he witnessed, his parents' breakup was traumatic for Dustin. Once their relationship ended, Miles went back to drug dealing full-time and eventually began a cycle of imprisonment. Most recently, Miles was incarcerated in 2004 for a drug offense and he was released on parole in 2010. He went back in for 90 days during the summer of 2011. Dustin was eight or nine when his father split from his mother and he was 12 when his father went to prison for six years. Miles said that when he divorced Divine, he went his own way and was missing from his son Dustin's life for his entire adolescence. He was so into the streets after he left that he had limited involvement in Dustin's life and according to Divine, this absence placed a huge strain on Dustin's relationship with his father.

In addition to her divorce from Miles, Divine experienced another set of problems as her children grew. Her middle son Andrew exhibited serious behavioral problems as a child that caused repeated suspensions and expulsions from school and eventually required psychiatric attention. He was first expelled from the school system at seven years old. He was diagnosed as having multiple problems and was placed into various programs during his youth. In the passage below, Divine describes Andrew's conduct disorder:

> So, you know, he was emotionally disturbed. Multiple handicaps, that's what they diagnosed him with. Most of it was behavioral because academically he's intelligent. It was just behaviorally, he just did stuff to the extreme at six and seven. I mean from lighting stuff on fire, from torturing animals, he did it all. He did it all and I could not keep a job with him. It was just so stressful with him coming up so it was like he was that one that always had to be with me. Nobody would babysit him. If he can't go to school, who's going to watch him? So I couldn't keep a job, nothing. That was Andrew, like pretty much early he gave me problems all the way through.
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> He had multiple handicaps. He was emotionally disturbed. Multiple meaning more than one. And most of it was behavioral though, you know? But it was not just one thing. I mean he was in UMDNJ a couple of times. I had to put him in there. Like once or twice he tried to kill Antoine. Like when they were little I think it was always a thing.

Andrew's problem behavior extended to the home and he often got into violent fights with his brothers. Divine indicated above that Andrew attempted to kill his older brother twice but in addition he often beat his younger brother Dustin. She stated that, "When he was not in his right state of mind, he tortured Dustin. He tortured him and it was crazy." Below, Dustin describes in his own words the abuse he endured at the hands of his older brother Andrew:

> Me and Antoine, we always got along but me and my other brother didn't because he had issues as far as he's bipolar and he had, you know, he would always snap on me and I was younger, much younger than he was. When it was just me and him in the house, he always fight me pretty much a lot. Like, he got me really, really angry. It took me a long time to forgive him for those things.
>
> It affected me a lot because it made me scared of certain people when I was younger. It made me scared of a lot of things and then at one point I just broke and I just started getting into a lot of fights and things of that sort. But he pretty much would always fight me so I was forced to fight and it wasn't like a sibling fight, it was like he was fighting me like I was somebody on the streets that he didn't care about. So it was pretty harsh.

At one point Divine pleaded with the doctors to place her son in a residential program because he was beyond her control. Divine had difficulty maintaining employment as a result of the attention required by her son Andrew's disruptive behavior and she lost several jobs during their childhood years. When the conflict with his mother become too much to bear, Andrew often left the home and went to reside in his great aunt's house. Divine believes that Andrew's psychiatric problems are the result of the emotional distress she experienced when he was in the womb due to the death of his father. According to Guerra (2013), "maternal behavior has direct bearing on children's development during the prenatal period, and a number of maternal characteristics and behaviors can lead to higher levels of biological and neuropsychological vulnerability associated with later aggression."

Complicating her life further, when she was 26 years old, Divine's mother passed away and she had to take in her ten year old sister, who falls in between her two oldest sons in terms of her age. Divine experienced problems raising her sister because she did not respect her authority. She thought of Divine as her sister, not her parent, and she also fought extensively with Divine's sons because as their aunt, she felt she should be treated with respect even though they are the same age. This conflict with Divine's sister added to the tension in the household. Below, the path taken by each of Divine's three sons in their teenage years will be examined in detail.

Antoine

Antoine started getting to trouble around sixteen years old. He had joined a gang and he described his behavior as "wilding." He was involved mostly in drug dealing and

robberies. In 2004, he was incarcerated in a juvenile prison for 22 months for an armed robbery. He was reincarcerated in 2007 for five years on drug charges and conspiracy charges. In explaining his early involvement in crime, Antoine spoke about his upbringing and the influence it had on his own behavior:

> I was playing sports. I got to play at Giants Stadium in 2003. And for basketball, Rutgers was looking at me – they wanted me to come there. In 2006 I was going to meet the coaches and stuff and then I just was beat and I chose the streets. Everybody that do that is a dummy. I know I'm not dumb, it's just, at the time, I wanted to keep doing what I do and be with all my friends and you just take everything for granted basically. Knowing what happened with my own roots – my father, he passed – my whole family tree. Not saying I wanted to die but it became like expected, like, this is what's gonna happen, either he's gonna get locked up or I'm gonna be dead, because that's all I seen. Growing up, from four years old, I witnessed too much stuff. I witnessed everything, seen everything from where I was living at – I lived in the projects. I was living on [street] in New Brunswick and everything was happening in the neighborhood. I was four or five so I was seeing stuff I wasn't supposed to see.
>
> My mother always working. My cousin would watch me. My uncle would always come over there. He got sentenced to 27 years in 2005. My two uncles, I got a lot of 'em, but my two uncles out of all of 'em came and supported me. I always had people watching me – that wasn't a problem – it's just, in that environment you see everything. That's the life they were living and I witnessed it. So, regardless of what you say to me, I'm listening to it but this is what I'm still seeing. I saw my uncle, for no reason, punch somebody in the face. And I was young, like maybe nine. It's crazy – I witnessed too much. By the time I was 14 or 15, I seen everything.

Antoine reveals that his exposure to crime at such a young age most likely played a part in the decisions he made during his adolescence. This exposure, combined with the expectation that he would either be incarcerated or end up dead like his father, justified a criminal lifestyle. In a sample of formerly incarcerated youth, Alltucker, Bullis, Close and Yovanoff (2006) found that youth with a family member who had been convicted of

a felony were two times more likely to engage in early delinquency than youth with no felons in their families. Other research investigating the interrelationships among offending in multiple generations of family has found that offenders are highly concentrated in families and that boys' delinquency is predicted by the arrests of siblings, parents, uncles, aunts and grandparents (Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber & Kalb, 2001).

Like Antoine, many of the participants were looked after by relatives when their parents were working or when they were unable to care for them as a result of drug addiction or incarceration. While these relative caregivers often play a vital role in their upbringing, they sometimes expose youth to a world that strips them of their innocence. As Antoine points out above, cautionary tales about the consequences of bad behavior may be less effective when youth are surrounded by negative examples. Below, he elaborates on how behavior is transmitted to innocent youth who are exposed to crime and drugs within a family and within a household.

> The only way they're gonna do something is what they seen or what they learn. They get taught. Everything you do, you get taught. You don't just come out and say, "This is what I'm gonna do." No, you a baby so all this stuff is from somebody teaching you and what you seeing and stuff. That's it. All I used to see was just -- I remember going in my house and seeing drugs and money everywhere. Living in the projects, like I'm seeing dope bags, I'm thinking they're stamps, I don't know what this is. I'm like, "Yo, what the hell?" My uncle, like, he head of the gang and all that stuff so he shown me how to shoot a gun and all this stuff. And then it was, everybody like, "Oh, this is little T" and this and that so they give me respect for my father but it's like I'm going to do what I'm going to do anyway. Like I feared nobody so it was like, I always in my mind said like, "I'm going to do what I want." I guess they say that's in your blood because of them but it's just I – like my life was confusing like my life really was messed up. It was like I'd do it all over again, but I'd make better decisions because my mom

> did her absolute best. There was nothing else she could do, like anything she could do like I always had stuff.

Antoine was first incarcerated at the age of 16 for an armed robbery and he was sentenced to 22 months in a maximum security juvenile detention center. After his release, he resumed his criminal activities. He was locked up again when he was 18 years old for a drug offense and sentenced to 54 months in a secure adult detention facility. He was released at the age of 24. While serving his sentence, Antoine realized how his incarceration affected his family and his mother in particular.

> When you in jail, you selfish thinking you going through it by yourself. Everybody that love you, that care about you, it's hurting them just as much if not worse. My mom was always crying on the phone. I just be like, man, I let my mom down. Cuz now, everybody in my family is wilding, both my brothers, and it's like, I don't know how my mom could take it. But to this day, I'm surprised my mom ain't using drugs and getting high. She lost my father when she was 16 and I was only one and a half. She lost my father, her father, her mother, her great grandmother, me going to jail, my brother going to jail, all that stress on one person. She could have given up a long time ago, but she never gave up. That's my mother. Whatever she got, she always made sure we ate first. We never was rich but my mom always made ends meet and she had me when she was 15. My mom and I basically grew up together. I know when I was locked up, the effect it had on her. She used to tell me about it, we would always talk. I owe her a lot too. She didn't have to let me live with her when I came home. I'm grown now. She let my girlfriend live with her. She didn't have to do none of that stuff. But it's the little things like that, we forget.

Seeing the impact of his incarceration on his mother, Antoine recognized how his behavior had consequences not just for him but for his family as well. As he reflected on his past, Antoine came to realize the struggles that his mother went through in her personal life and what she endured to provide for her children. He achieved an appreciation for the difficulties she overcame and the sacrifices she made to care for

them. Adding to his appreciation for his mother is that she continues to extend her support even after he put her through the stress that he did. She even extended her generosity to his girlfriend Keisha, who had no place to live while Antoine was incarcerated. While he was away, Divine and Keisha resided together and combined their resources to maintain the household.

Since his release, Antoine has received a significant amount of support from family members. His girlfriend Keisha explained how she remains positive and encourages him no matter what difficulties they are facing:

> Well, I still be strong for both of us because I don't want him to fall victim to anything, like, the days where it's a lot of crazy stuff going on cuz, you know, it's still a lot of problems and you don't want to show a sign of weakness that will make him fall victim to the crimes that he was doing before. You just try to like keep him focused and keep yourself focused and you just try to let him know that everything gonna be alright even when you're going through a hard, rough time. You just try to keep it up and it'll be ok. Just keep up the good spirits because you don't want to be mad all the time or angry or just sad because that will make him, the energy that I'm giving off will rub off on him and make him do something that he'll regret. So, I don't feel as though I have to be as strong as I was then because he's home now so, it's not like I have to walk around on eggshells – it's a sigh of relief.

While Antoine has received a lot of support from members of his family, he also makes important contributions to them. When was first released, before he was earning an income, he gave himself to the family in various ways. As Antoine described, he took on the role of being a positive male figure.

> I'm there, just, for my little sister. I'm playing a major role as the male figure. It's all females together so just basically another male figure. I try to be there the best way I could.

When asked about the contribution Antoine makes to his family, his girlfriend Keisha described the importance of his devoting his time to them after his return:

> His time, basically. He's there for them and more hands on. Time is more than anything. All the money in the world can't buy time. With you being here, it's priceless. When you show us love and passion, like, it's a great feeling. You don't always have to give someone something to show them that you care. Just give them time. That's all it takes – talking to somebody or just, you know, giving someone advice – that's more than anything. That's the biggest contribution that he's made since he's been home. [Describing how Antoine feels] "I want to be there for my family. I want to get back the time that I lost all those years."

Antoine expressed that he has matured significantly while he was incarcerated in the adult prison. He describes below how his mentality changed:

> I'm smarter and I'm more mature. When I was wilding and doing all that stuff I was young. I was chasing something that was never gonna be there. It was friends, it was, it's just not thinking basically, not thinking. Then I got the 54 months and just became a better person. I'm calmer now. I used to get an attitude faster. I would react before thinking. I didn't realize what I was doing.

He further explains how he is driven to stay out of prison and his primary motivation is being there for his family:

> Basically, if you're focused and you want to change, you can change. You just have to be you. You can't worry about what another person thinks about the decisions you're making. You have to make them yourself. Nobody's gonna take care of you – you gotta take care of yourself. You can't come out here thinking that people owe you stuff. It's you – everything is on your back. And if you want to change, you can change. I know I'm not going back to jail. I know it, I can feel it. I really feel, like, now I would rather just work everyday because of my mother, my girlfriend, my little sister, because it's about me but it's about them too. I don't want my sister to go through none of what I went through. I want her to go to college and everything and become a better person. If I have to put myself on the line

> and work hard and do all that stuff, I would do it. I ain't gettin' no younger. I would rather for them to be good. As long as I'm ok – that's how I look at it – as long as I'm ok, everything's gonna be good.

His family members also recognize a change in his level of maturity as well as his attitude towards life. Below, Keisha describes the change she sees in Antoine:

> It's changed so much. I mean, he became a man, from his time in there. Like, his whole actions, his character, his maturity, everything is just changed. He went from a boy to a man, like, he just understand more. He knows that's not what he want to do. He want do something so he can say, "Hey, I did this," and "I can almost change the world," basically. So, it's a big change. He's more hands on with getting a job and trying to go to school and getting his high school diploma. He's more for himself now than the streets. It's not about the streets, it's about family and that's all that matters at the end of the day.

Like many of the other participants, becoming more mature led Antoine to develop legitimate life goals such as finding a good job. His actions have also made clear that his family is his number one priority.

Antoine's greatest fear since his return has been an inability to provide for his family. His mother worries that his concern for his family's financial difficulties are placing too much stress on him. Below, she describes how his transition to adulthood has brought increased his awareness of what it takes to survive financially and how this awareness has added to the pressure he feels:

> I know I've heard him say to Keisha, "This is the worst I've ever seen my mom" as far as financially. I've always been in the position, I either worked two jobs – I mean I've always been a go-getter no matter what the situation was. So we're kind of struggling a little bit. Because I mean he's so used to me, they are so used to me and I don't know I guess that's partly my fault. I think everything that I went through staying with this aunt or staying with this. You know, I went through a lot and being that they didn't have their father, I guess I probably always tried to --

like they're not used to wanting for anything. Even though the situation that I was in, like I told you my mother was here, so I always had help and I always worked two or sometimes three jobs if I had to. So I tried to make sure that they didn't lack that because they were lacking the father. Sometimes that's not always good because he said to Keisha, "Man I've never seen my mom like this" and that's my fear… I'm like, "Antoine, just maintain. It's not like we're not eating – you're just used to me always having way more than, over and beyond and always having money…

So that worries me because I don't want him to be in a position where he feels like he has to do something so that's why I'm always constantly talking to him, "Hey, you know, Antoine" – "Yeah, I know, faith, faith ma." [Laughs] Because I'm always preaching to him… So that's what – you know, I say to him, we're going to be fine and I've been in this situation more times than you know, I just have not let you know. But you're grown now and this is the reality. Look, I let you know stuff now because you have to know how the real world works. And you've never seen mommy like this because if it was just me I've always made do and that's all they know. I've always by one way or another had been able to do that. But he's just not used to like, "Hey mom, we're broke."

We're not broke, we're still eating. Our bills are paid. I said this is what you have to be thankful for. Some people don't have a roof over their head. So now we don't have money to just say, oh, come, we're going to the mall, going shopping this week and next week. You could just blow money. But I say, Antoine it's a steppingstone. I said we're in a situation now. You have to crawl before you walk. You didn't have your license, you didn't have this. So all these are baby steps. Again because if you just go out there and start doing stuff, you're going to end up right back where you was before. So you got take small steps to get to where you're going. But now, he's starting to see because you working here and there and you got your permit now, you know, stuff is starting. But it's not going to happen just like that and you have to work at it. You can't just expect somebody to say here, here's a job paying $20 an hour. It's not going to work like that.

So that was my biggest thing when he came home. I was just trying to make it so that I don't want him in a position where he feels like, you know, oh I've got to do what I have to do. Because I know how he feels about me, like I'm all he knows so everything is mom, mom, mom… So that was my biggest fear with him, but I sit and I talk with him all the time. He knows. I think he's on the right path to do what he has to do.

Antoine was fortunate to find a job as a counselor for at-risk youth almost immediately after his release but the hours were limited. He worked various warehouse jobs through a temp agency that lacked permanency and decent pay. Eventually, he found a permanent warehouse job that allowed him to log many hours of overtime and after several months, he was promoted to a supervisor. He continues to reside in his mother's house with his girlfriend Keisha, their infant son, and his younger sister. There are great pressures on him to contribute to the household expenses as well as to provide for his son, but his attitude remains positive.

Andrew

Andrew has been living on and off with his aunt since he was a baby because he and his mother have not always gotten along. The source of their conflict, as Andrew put it, is that "she thinks she's the boss and I'm really the boss." Andrew liked staying with his aunt because although she gave him rules to follow, he chose not to follow them and there were never any consequences. When he did not follow his mother's rules, on the other hand, she would eventually become frustrated to the point that she would ask him to leave.

Andrew stated that he has been committing crimes his whole life. As a juvenile, he often got into fights and he received probation at various times. He claims that he began committing more serious offenses when he turned 19 out of financial need because his mother kicked him out of the house. Most of his crimes since then have involved shoplifting and petty theft. He was first convicted of an adult crime at the age of 19 for receiving stolen property and he was sentenced to probation. While serving his sentence, he was charged with violation of probation and theft and he spent four months in jail. He

was also placed on intensive supervision probation (ISP) which requires him to wear an electronic monitoring device, places him under a curfew and has strict reporting requirements. Prior to our interview, he briefly went back to jail for about one month due to outstanding warrants he had been issued for traffic offenses.

After his release, he went to live with his aunt. His aunt's son Sam also resides in the house and he has played a large role in Andrew's life over the years. As his much older cousin, Sam helped to raise Andrew whenever he stayed with him and his mother. When Andrew was a kid, Sam frequently took Andrew to the park and to the store to purchase items that he wanted. According to Sam, Andrew preferred staying at his aunt's house because he received special treatment. With regard to his mother's affection for Andrew, Sam stated, "My mom like him a lot. My mom look out for him. We all look out for him. He get special privileges here." Perhaps Andrew receives attention from his aunt that he feels he does not receive in his mother's home. Growing up, Divine believes that Andrew felt he lived in Antoine's shadow. Antoine received a lot of attention because of his athletic ability, in addition to the fact that he was easily recognized by people in the neighborhood. The fact that Andrew seeks refuge in his aunt's home during times of trouble exemplifies one of the key themes of this study, which is searching for alternative kin support when the support provided in the immediate family environment is perceived to be insufficient.

While he was still incarcerated, Sam helped Andrew by putting minutes on his calling card so he could call home and make legal phone calls when necessary. When he was released, Andrew received support from a variety of sources. His cousin Sam continued to help him financially when he asked for assistance. Andrew also stated that

his mother helps him by giving him rides. Antoine's girlfriend Keisha also helps Andrew out when she can. At the time of our interview, Andrew was working on the weekends at a job he got through a temp agency earning $9 per hour and he reported that he helped out family members when possible. His cousin Sam mentioned that Andrew cooks dinner for his aunt and her husband sometimes and he often brings food home. He also pays back his debts when he borrows money from family.

When I met with Divine a couple of months after interviewing Andrew, she revealed that he was locked up again for violating his probation and the outcome was still pending. Andrew continues to struggle with his relationships. He and his mother still have problems getting along. His family members agree that he has a habit of being rude to the people who care about him and he often ignores them for weeks at a time. Divine believes that Andrew's actions indicate he is not ready to change. She described Andrew's attitude towards the family:

> Last time I talked to him, he got mad last week because he was like, "Oh, ma are you coming up here?" But I said, "Andrew when you're on the streets, if I call you…" This is how he answers, "I'm busy. I'm doing something." I said, I tell you we're starting Sunday dinners again. I want to start doing it at least if nothing else on Sunday we all can get together. He was like, "Yeah, yeah, ma, I miss your macaroni and cheese." But then it's like you don't come, you don't come, you don't, because you're too busy doing shit you have – excuse my language – you ain't got no business doing. You don't want to hear nothing nobody has to say, you don't want to hear nothing. So when you're outside on the streets, you talk so nasty.
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> The last time before he got locked up I owed him $40 for something. He'd text me don't speak to me until you got my money, it's just a damn principal, all this. So, you know, I called him back, gave him a piece of my mind. Of course, he wouldn't answer the phone after that. But I said you know what, I'm going to show your ass the next time because you will be locked back up again and because this is a cycle for him. You do this all the time when you're on the streets, to everybody not just me, like

> your circle and when I try to tell him, I said, "We are all that we have" and I don't have a big circle. It's not like I had tons of sisters so it's not like they have a bunch of aunts and uncles. It's just us. You know, my three boys, my daughter. My grandmother, my mother, all my tree, you know, immediate tree is gone. So literally this is all that we have right here. If we don't stick together, then what?
>
> It's proven, every time your back is up against the wall, your friends, everybody that you're running with, nobody putting no minutes on no phone for you to even get through. Nobody doing nothing for you and who are you going to call to come up there and see you? I was like you tell us that you're going to always need your mother for one thing or another. So as soon as you told me don't speak to you this and that, you get locked up. Of course after he was in there for a month or two, I put the money in here for him to talk to call now at least to see what was going on with him. So now he's, "When are you going to come to see me, when are you going to come to see me?" I was going to come see him last week but I say, you know, "You're calling me more now, what is your problem?" Like because he still got that, you know, that's what I say one thing with him, the ADHD, whatever is on that brain, just like, "What the fuck is your problem? You act like you got a bug up your butt."
>
> So I say this to him, I just was like, "You know what Andrew, I'm done with this" and I hung up on him, you know? So then he's calling back Dustin because he would call to my aunt's house through Sam and says he's sorry and this and that. It's like you're always sorry later. Like he'll do what he do and you're nasty and I said to him the last time, "He said you know what mom – right before he got locked up he said, "Every time I be disrespectful to you within the next two days I get locked up." I said, "Well why don't you take heed to that then?" I said, "Because it's going to run out of if you keep burning the bridges and cutting off the hand that feeds you. Like no matter what, you're not living here now but you're still going to need your mother for something always. You just shouldn't operate like that."
>
> So he is locked up again and I could barely get a hold of you and now you want me to break my neck to come up to you, which I'm going to go see him but when I get ready, when it's convenient for me. Because I'm not rushing to go up there, for what, because I still don't think he learned his lesson.

Until Andrew shows that he is ready to make a change and treats his mother with more respect, Divine is cautious about the effort she exerts to help her son. His cousin

Sam tries to caution him about the importance of treating the people who care about you with respect so they do not turn their backs on you.

> When he get locked up, he'd call me or he'd call Antoine to bail him out. I see Antoine bailed him out a little while ago. Yeah, he'll call. I always told him never forget where you come from because you never know when you're going to need somebody. Stop treating people like that. When he don't want to be bothered and answer your phone calls, I told him to stop treating people like that because you're going to need somebody. Sure enough, he calls, tell Antoine "my bail is such and such, get me out." You can't just shit on people like that. You can't do it.

Andrew's words indicate he is ready to make a change but his actions indicate otherwise. His family members reported that he continued to commit theft while he was on ISP and it obviously landed him back in jail. He often closes himself off from family members and does not speak to them for weeks at a time, even though they would offer him their full support. Divine talked extensively about the emotional and behavioral problems that Andrew exhibited in early childhood and perhaps these issues still affect him.

Dustin

As a child, Dustin suffered from abuse. His older brother Andrew tortured him physically. At the same time, he witnessed abuse between his mother and father. Dustin was afraid in his own home and he eventually became angry to the point that he would get into fights at school. Dustin's acknowledgement that he became violent during adolescence as a result of the abuse he experienced confirms prior research on the relationship between exposure to abuse in the home and adolescent conduct problems (Ireland & Smith, 2009; Maxfield & Widom, 1996). When his parents split up and his

father left, his limited involvement with his father after that worsened his emotional state even further.

In his father's absence, Dustin had only his oldest brother Antoine to look to for guidance. When Antoine was incarcerated the first time, Dustin was about 12 years old. Antoine's incarceration was deeply troubling for Dustin, who stated that he looked to Antoine as a role model after his father left. Below, Dustin explains how devastated he was by his brother's incarceration:

> It affected me a lot. I cried about it because I didn't have anybody to really look up to. Because I don't have a father really, that's somewhere else. And when he does come home, he doesn't even, like he can't even look me in my eyes and have a conversation with me because he's so, like he doesn't even know me really. He knows but as far as like – I was getting out the 9th grade going into the 10th grade and he thought I was graduating high school. Like, he doesn't know too much.

As was the case with many of the study participants whose fathers were not involved or were minimally involved in their lives, the men who could potentially serve as role models for them were caught up in problems of their own, such as criminality or drug abuse. Those who had stepfathers or even older cousins or uncles who took care of them from time to time, the majority of these male figures were involved in illegal activities.

Just as his mother described being stigmatized when she was young because of her family's circumstances, Dustin spoke about the way his family's problems affected him and the impact they had on his frame of mind as an adolescent. Despite her desire and best efforts to protect her children from the same embarrassment that she suffered, Divine's sons did not escape the ridicule. Below, Dustin describes the harmful consequences of his family's criminality:

> When I was coming up I was very easily influenced. People used to be like, "Oh his dad is locked up, his brother is locked up – he's going to be just like them." My grandmother, she also did drugs so they used to say the same thing about my mom, like, everybody would say to her as she was coming up, "Oh, she's going to be just like her mom – a crack head," things like that. She changed and she didn't go down that route. I was so, like, listening to people and every little thing, you know? I would think about it too late, like, "Oh fuck, it's not worth it," but I had already done something [bad]. Now people look at me like, "I told you he was going to be just like them."

Family-based stigma in the community has not been discussed much in the literature, but some ethnographic studies have uncovered the embarrassment that family members experience when loved ones are incarcerated. In *Doing Time on the Outside*, Braman (2007) discusses the fear of stigmatization that families have, particularly when the details of an arrest are distorted, and he describes how some of the children in his study became withdrawn following their fathers' incarceration as a result of the shame they felt.

Similar to his mother, Dustin attributes some of the bad choices he made during adolescence to these painful experiences. Dustin first started getting into trouble at the age of 16 and his crimes were mostly motivated by a desire for fast money. He picked up a couple of charges as a juvenile. He was charged with assault which was ultimately dropped and he was also charged for having counterfeit money, a charge for which he received pre-trial intervention (PTI). He was allowed to avoid sentencing as long as he stayed out of trouble for one year. At the age of 17, Dustin moved out of his house after a conflict with his mother about money. As the result of a car accident that happened when he was a small child, Dustin was awarded a large amount of money to be doled out by his mother as she saw fit until he turned 18. As a teenager, Dustin believed that his mother used his money inappropriately which led to many arguments between them.

Then, when he was 17, his mother expected him to pay her $500 a month for rent to sleep on her couch plus an additional $100 a month for his car insurance. At that point, Dustin left the home and shortly thereafter he moved in with his girlfriend.

When he was 18, Dustin was convicted of receiving stolen property, credit card theft and assault and he was sentenced to three years of probation. At the age of 20, while still on probation, Dustin was charged with possession with intent to distribute and was sent to drug court. Dustin pleaded for leniency because he was expecting a child with his girlfriend Chantal. He told the court that he needed help to get his life back on track so he could be there for his child. Dustin's cry for help worked – he spent three months in the county jail and was ordered to complete five years of probation. At some point during the sentence, he will be expected to complete a six month inpatient drug treatment program. After his release from the county jail, he was residing with his girlfriend Chantal who lived with her grandmother and her aunt. He stated that he contributes what he can to the household – he gives them whatever money he can and he also purchases food and other necessary items.

At the time of his interview, Dustin and Chantal were expecting their first child. Like many of the other participants, his relationship with his father has motivated Dustin to want to do better for his own child. He discussed the troubles he experienced finding employment and the importance of needing a job with a child on the way:

> I really, really need a job, you know, especially now bringing a child into this world. It's making me think about the dumb stuff. Actually I feel like I'm maturing a lot because some things that I used to do to get fast money, like I will really overlook it now because I think about my child that's on his way. I don't want my child to feel like it doesn't have a father like I didn't have one. Like all I ever had was my mom and my mom used to get upset when my dad used to be out and I wanted to ask him

> something. I'd tell her to ask him for me because she's like, you know you can come and ask me anything but you can't ask him anything. But she wouldn't, she never knew how I felt. I didn't like talking to him because I didn't really know him like that. Like I know him but he couldn't tell you anything about me right now if you went and asked him, you know.

Dustin desires to have a better relationship with his child than he had with his father and to be there for his child in a way that his father was not there for him. Now, when he assesses the risks and benefits of obtaining fast money, he factors into the equation the impact his actions will have on his child. He believes that his desire to be a better father has helped him to mature because he no longer sees the value in crime. In addition to his desire to be a better father than his was, Dustin believes that his child has given him something to live for. Below, he describes how the baby is helping him to maintain a positive outlook:

> I think it can help me change for the better because I didn't have anything… You know, pretty much like at one point in my life I felt like I didn't have anything to live for because it was like I kept getting in trouble and everybody kept thinking I had – my probation officer thought I had a mental problem. I don't have a mental problem. Even being in trouble, I need some help, I need somebody there for me. I don't have no one that comes and talks with me and my girlfriend she's very nonchalant. She doesn't talk too much about anything. Like if something wrong with me, she doesn't talk to me about like…
>
> I mean I love her, but it's just I think she has to change her communication key. I mean I don't like it. She doesn't communicate. She's very quiet. She doesn't talk much at all. Like to me she will, but she has anger problems as well and that's affecting me a lot because she gets very snappy and she likes to fight me and things, but I mean I deal with her because I love her. I do want to be with her, but it's just I want her to change and I tell her all the time, like, I need you to change because how can we try to become someone's parent and we can't even get along, you know, and it's over simple stuff. It's very simple. It's not like nothing major like cheating or anything. It's just simple dumb stuff.

> I'm hoping and praying that when the baby does come that she changes because I don't want to be fighting in front of my child. Because I've seen my dad and mom fight and I know how hurtful it feels to see your parents fighting with each other. You know, arguing is one thing but I'm talking about fist fighting…

Dustin hopes not only that his child will give his life a sense of purpose and direction, but that the baby's arrival will improve his relationship with his girlfriend Chantal. He knows too well the impact that fighting between parents can have on a child's well being. If Dustin and Chantal cannot salvage their shaky relationship, history may be doomed to repeat itself.

In addition to his relationship issues with Chantal, Dustin continues to struggle with being stigmatized. He believes that having a supportive family is important to success, however, he feels as though his family does not fully support and stand behind him.

> I just think the family should always stay positive, think positive. You know, don't say, "you're not doing anything, you're going to go back down that route." Don't say negative things. Keep positive and maybe that will push the person to stay straight.
>
> I mean that's how my grandmother is. She's one of those old cranky grandmothers and she's always saying, "Oh, you're going to be just like your dad" and stuff like that. But I mean it kind of made me upset because I used to go to her and explain to her, you know, I want to change, can you help me? I don't want to be in prison, I don't like it when I'm in there in jail. You know, it's all you do is look out a window all day and you're in a small room all day.

Regardless of the fact that he is facing employment challenges, problems with Chantal, and difficulties overcoming others' perception of him as a criminal, Dustin believes he is maturing he and has a new attitude about his past activities.

> Now that I'm older and I'm like trying to stay out of trouble and do a clean slate, I see the things that I did wasn't worth it. Now I have a record and things and it's just not worth it.

According to Dustin, he has matured and sees little value in the illegitimate activities he engaged in during his youth. He does not seem to have reached the ability, however, to open up to his family members about the trauma he suffered as a child. He clearly desires to be closer with the people he loves but it seems that his anger is holding him back from improving his relationships. He indicated that he has never addressed the abuse he suffered with his brother Andrew, even now that they are older, and he does not think he will ever attempt to speak about it.

Lessons Learned

This family's story exemplifies nearly all of the themes discussed in the findings. The family has a long history of problems that have been passed down through several generations. They have struggled with poverty, drug abuse, physical abuse, crime and incarceration. As children, Antoine, Andrew and Dustin were routinely exposed to criminal activities through close family members, they had limited involvement with positive male role models, and they often lived under difficult and abusive circumstances. Extended kin networks were critical to this family's survival. Divine's grandmother and great aunts raised her when her mother could not. After she had her children, Divine relied on their uncles to look after them while she was at work. For her sons, extended kin networks played an important role in helping them to escape conflict in the home. Growing up, Andrew often sought refuge from family conflict in his aunt's house and continues to do so as an adult. Dustin dealt with the conflict between him and his mother by leaving home at a young age and moving in with his girlfriend's family. While

Antoine has never had to escape conflict in the home, he has relied on fictive kin including his girlfriend and his childhood friends for moral support and encouragement.

Although they took very different paths through their adolescence and their criminal activities varied tremendously, all three were eventually incarcerated. The impact of incarceration was different for each of them. Antoine, who engaged in more serious offenses and received the harshest sentences, believes that his time in prison provided a wake up call. Andrew and Dustin have both spent time in jail but not prison. They have not been removed from the community or from family for as long as their older brother has and perhaps this is what sets them apart. Antoine was released with a deep appreciation for his family and eagerness to make a contribution to society and live an honest, law-abiding life. Andrew and Dustin claim they do not want to return to jail and are ready to turn their lives around but they have not set concrete goals like Antoine has. In addition, both still report experiencing significant conflict in their personal relationships – Andrew with his mother and Dustin with his mother and his girlfriend. Andrew and his mother continue to argue regularly. Although Dustin does not argue with his mother as he did in the past and he reports positive communication with her, Dustin and his mother still do not see eye to eye on a monetary disagreement that occurred during his teen years. He also experiences problems with his girlfriend who he feels is not communicative enough and does not provide the expressive support that he requires. Antoine reported having a closer and more satisfying relationship with both his mother and his girlfriend than either of his brothers did and he also expressed a greater appreciation for them.

Since their release, they have each struggled to overcome the obstacles of reentry and meet the challenges of adulthood to varying degrees. They all reported frustration in finding employment. Antoine is now set up in a stable job with decent wages and has even been promoted to a supervisory position, but he continues to struggle financially as he contributes to his mother's expenses as well to his baby's needs. He has, however, demonstrated a readiness to live like a responsible adult. He works long hours and when not at work, he is hands-on with the care of his newborn son.

All three sons have received a significant amount of support from family. Antoine seems most receptive perhaps because he is the oldest and has achieved a greater level of maturity. Their mother Divine has taken a different approach with each of her sons, suggesting that the nature of individual family relationships may influence the extent to which support is offered. Although Divine now relies to some extent on Antoine to contribute to the household, she makes clear that she will do whatever she can to assist him. Her involvement with Andrew is limited as she does not appreciate the way he treats his family members. She will be there to support him only if he shows an appreciation for what he gets and does not call upon family only when he needs something. Divine would like to be there to support her son Dustin and although they speak regularly, Dustin is somewhat closed off emotionally and bottles up his feelings rather than expressing what he needs.

Elder (1998) theorized that the timing of life events is important in determining developmental trajectories, which is evidenced by this family's experiences. Being born to a young adolescent mother contributed to the disadvantages that Divine's sons experienced. At which point in their lives people have children affects whether or not

they have the socioeconomic resources to provide for their offspring (Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). Young first-time parents typically have less schooling and less stable employment trajectories than those who delay parenthood. Research on adolescent mothers supports a diminished resources theory. Specifically, the children of adolescent mothers are more crime prone because they lack both economic resources and also personal resources such as attention and supervision (Nagin, Pogarsky, & Farrington, 1997). It is clear that Divine's sons experienced such circumstances. Beyond that, however, birth order seems to be highly influential on the way individuals are affected by and adapt to adverse life events. In the case of this family, all of Divine's sons ventured into crime but their pathways varied tremendously. Being the oldest, Antoine spent the most time being cared for by relatives while his mother struggled to build a stable life and he was therefore most exposed to criminality and the streets at an early age. As an adolescent, Antoine was drawn to the street life and he joined a gang, leading to involvement in violent crimes. Spending most of his time outside of the home, Antoine did not witness the problems in the home to the same extent as his younger brothers and perhaps this explains why he and his mother have the least amount of conflict. Andrew, the middle child, was resentful of the attention his brothers received and his mother's affections for them, especially for his older brother, which led him to rebel against his mother and perhaps contributed to his abuse towards his younger brother Dustin. Andrew adapted to the anger he felt towards his immediate family members by seeking alternative kinship with extended relatives. Dustin, the youngest, witnessed the greatest amount of abuse in the home. This exposure led to anger problems which he believes caused his aggressive behavior during adolescence. The actions of his older brothers also impacted Dustin's

trajectory tremendously. Being beaten by Andrew and then losing his oldest brother Antoine to incarceration affected the choices that he made. The experiences of these family members lend support to Elder's argument about the interdependency of lives and linked fates.

This case study demonstrates that reentry experiences may be determined to some degree by family context. The environment they grew up in and the experiences they had as youth, for their mother as well, influenced the lifestyle choices they made. Their backgrounds play a significant role as they move beyond their legal troubles and try to adopt new lives. The desire to overcome stigmatization, to be better role models, and to be more present and positive in the lives of their children, are driving forces for them as they move forward. The issues they struggled with in their youth, however, continue to affect their family relationships. In turn, the type of support they receive and their receptiveness to support is affected. It is clear that they love one another and want to be involved in each other's lives, but they experienced trauma in the home that is causing unresolved issues between them. They may need to confront these issues before they can experience more open and honest relationships that would increase the amount of exchange between family members, which in turn could potentially limit their involvement in crime.

The family would also benefit from structural opportunities and they need assistance to access them. If they could ease their financial pressures, they might be able to focus on achieving success legitimately and setting long term goals. Helping returning offenders to build a resume is simply not enough – they need to be linked to employers who will hire felons. Furthermore, they need a greater level of assistance enrolling in

school and working through funding issues. Dustin desires greatly to earn a degree but has faced obstacles in finding funding because of his drug conviction. Increasing access to public assistance is also crucial, especially for those who have children to support. In the following section, I will discuss the key findings and their relevance to the current literature and I will also propose a theoretical model for reentry during emerging adulthood.

Chapter 8: Discussion

This study set out to investigate the seeming paradox in the existing literature with regard to the impact of family processes on young adult reentry. The study has furthered our understanding about the social processes involved in reentry during the transition to adulthood by identifying several developmental processes that occur during this phase. Specifically, the data suggest a number of distinct mechanisms through which young adults experience an internal psychological reorganization leading to the external realignment of life links. These realignments allow former offenders to improve and expand their familial support networks, leading to an increased likelihood of successful post-release outcomes.

Prior studies indicate a strong relationship between family factors and crime but they are mostly quantitative and there are few studies that focus on emerging adulthood. This study supports previous findings on the impact of family contextual factors on offending, such as family structure, family conflict, parental criminality and abuse, but it has illuminated the social processes leading to delinquent behavior among adolescents. Based on an analysis of their life histories, youth who are repeatedly exposed to crime and drug abuse become desensitized to it over time. When this happens, family members lose their ability to exert informal control, most especially when youth observe their family members engaging in criminal activities themselves. Other adolescents venture into crime for survival when their parents cannot or do not provide for them and some gravitate towards the streets looking for an escape from the loneliness and abandonment they feel when their parents are not involved in their lives. Finally, there were participants who reveled in the "rush" provided by the street life because their home

environment did not promote positive feelings. The processes leading to involvement in crime and ultimately incarceration have important implications for reentry.

Many grew up in households that were filled with conflict and they had traumatic childhood experiences. Earlier research links family conflict as well as trauma such as physical abuse in the home to delinquency (Sigfusdottir, Farkas, & Silver, 2004). Youth who grow up in father-absent households or had parental incarceration are also more likely to be delinquent (Harper & McLanahan, 2004; Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). The question that remains however is what the implications are for emerging adults when they return to these family environments. Some participants had a great deal of anger or disappointment about the family problems they experienced during their youth and they left home without resolving these feelings. They may suffer from strained family relationships and need ways to cope with the negative events that impacted their youth. Fortunately, there is strong evidence to suggest that during emerging adulthood, they develop the capabilities to work through their anger and develop improved family relationships. By strengthening their personal relationships, they may be able to access a greater level of support in achieving adult responsibilities, thereby decreasing the likelihood of reoffending.

There are two findings of primary importance to be learned from this study. First, the data suggest a developmental phase during the twenties where an increasing psychosocial maturity in some young adults allows them to reexamine and possibly restructure their family ties, which may lead to stronger relationships and improved functioning. Second, when this reconstruction occurs, young adults activate the most effective sources of support within their kin networks, which may be immediate family

members, extended family members or even friends. These processes will be discussed in further detail below.

Developmental Change and Improved Relationships

Research on brain development suggests that the brain is not fully developed before the age of 25 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). The prefrontal cortex, which regulates behavior in social situations, is the last part of the brain to develop. Adolescents are therefore prone to act impulsively. By the age of 25, the brain gives us the capacity to exercise good judgment in difficult life situations. The ability to think before they act provides individuals the opportunity to consider the consequences of their actions before they offend, one of which might include damaging their social relationships, leading them to decide the costs of offending would be too great. Efforts toward making lasting lifestyle changes may not surface until adulthood, as youth move towards a more fully developed brain. The data presented here indeed support a relationship between age and the setting of legitimate goals. It may be important therefore to target individuals in this age group upon their release from incarceration to assist them in developing goals and accessing the means to achieve them.

Yet, social and economic change in recent decades has led to delays in achieving the traditional markers of adulthood such as employment and marriage, creating a transitional period between adolescence and adulthood. When young African American males return from incarceration, they may face significant delays in the achievement of adulthood and independence because of their limited opportunities and access to legitimate means of success. When employment and marriage are delayed – the social

bonds that are typically associated with reductions in offending – can returning offenders still achieve positive outcomes?

There is evidence that other social bonds are influential during emerging adulthood, particularly relationships with parents and children. Salvatore and Taniguchi (2012) examined whether or not social bonds work for emerging adults as they have worked for adults in the past and also if traditional turning points operate the same today as they have in the past. They found strong relationships between social bonds and reductions in criminal offending among emerging adults and that the effects of turning points still operate in the same way. Among other types of bonds, parental attachments and children were both strong predictors of desistance, which the current study confirms. Parental attachments were important to the reentry process for participants in this study, particularly as they improved over time. Those with increases in parental attachment were more likely to move past their conflict, to receive support and to be open to advice. The findings lend support to Schroeder, Giordano and Cernkovich's (2010) argument that individuals' relationships with their parents continue to evolve as they enter adulthood and those with strong parental relationships achieve better outcomes. Nearly all participants reported improvements in their relationships with parents as they neared adulthood. They exhibited an increased openness to restoring relationships with family members and an increased comfort level with honest communication. The reduced levels of conflict and increased openness in their relationships strengthened their bonds and allowed them access to a greater level of instrumental and expressive support.

With regard to children, Salvatore and Taniguchi (2012) explain that those who are involved with their kids have less time to offend because of their involvement with

parental duties. While that may be true to some degree, interviews with participants in this study indicated that the negative experiences with their own fathers and a desire to be better role models is what keeps them motivated to avoid crime. For most participants, their past problems were a powerful motivator for them to lead more productive lives as they neared adulthood. These young adults do not want the problems they experienced, such as residential and financial instability, drug addictions, physical abuse and crime, to be inflicted upon their children. Many strive to provide a better home life for their kids. While some studies contradict these findings and find that young fathers experience decreased involvement with their children over time, it seems that at least initially, their children set them on a path towards desistance. If they can maintain stability in their family relationships, they may be able to achieve their optimism regarding their children. Specific types of program support and policy revisions, which are addressed in the next chapter, may be able to assist young fathers.

The findings presented in this study are consistent with prior research on the effects of social bonds. They build on social bond research, however, by exploring the importance of other types of family attachments during young adulthood, notably relationships with extended and fictive kin members. The findings demonstrate that close relationships with extended family members and friends who are considered to be like family may be equally important as relationships with parents, children or significant partners. Some participants reported having stronger connections with grandmothers, aunts, or close childhood friends than they do with immediate family members. The data suggest that they tend to seek out and activate the most effective sources of support in their kin networks depending on their circumstances and the type/level of support they

need at a particular time in their lives. Based on their own accounts of the significance of these individuals in their lives, it would seem that various types of relationships may be influential in the desistance process.

When young adults experience improvements in family bonds, they develop a stronger appreciation for their families and feel a greater sense of responsibility to them. These relationships encourage them to maintain legitimate lifestyles. Beyond that, however, strong social bonds increase their social capital by expanding their support networks. Family members with strong attachments to returning offenders may be more willing to offer their support and offenders may be more receptive to their offers.

Family Support

The interviews highlight the importance of family support to post-release success. All participants relied on family members for instrumental support upon their return, such as a place to live, transportation, food and other economic assistance. Most continued to do so even after several months and in some cases, for a couple of years, although their economic independence increased over time. While some families had few resources to provide other than a place to live, other types of support were equally important. Expressive support, in particular, is crucial in keeping returning offenders motivated to succeed. This is consistent with Panuccio, Christian, Martinez and Sullivan's (2012) finding that family support can motivate offenders towards desistance. Participants in this study derived a great deal of motivation from the acceptance and encouragement they received from family. Family members of course must be willing to offer their support and the majority of family members interviewed in this study stated that they want to assist the returning offenders in whatever way possible. Young adults with the least

amount of conflict in their immediate family relationships received the greatest amount of support.

Interestingly, both instrumental and expressive support can and often do come from sources beyond immediate family members. Many of the participants have both extended and fictive kin networks from which they draw support. Prior research on African American families has identified both extended and fictive kin networks as being significant resource providers (Jarrett, Jefferson & Kelly, 2010; Stack, 1974). For black families living in poverty, resource sharing between households may be an important survival mechanism. Evidence shows that female-headed kin networks result from extreme discrimination and structural disadvantage. These kinships are characterized by flexibility and movement, cooperation between female kin members, and a high degree of importance of fictive kinship. As the rate of legal marriage declined and female poverty increased, reliance on networks of female kin and fictive kinships increased. Prior research lacks an examination of how young males fit into these extended kin networks. The participants in this study relied heavily at various points in their lives on these types of kinships. Many went to live with grandmothers or aunts who were also caring for other extended family members and they continued to look for support from these kinships after their return from incarceration. In his study linking transitions in work and family life for low-income African American men, Roy (2005) found that fathers consider the establishment of a household to be a shared project with partners and extended kin networks, suggesting that we look beyond traditional definitions of family formation.

The current study also revealed that peers may be an important source of support when offenders reenter society during emerging adulthood. This may be especially true for those with few family members or for those struggling to repair relationships with their family. The findings show that peers were influential on the post-release transition, but not in the expected direction. While at one time their peers pulled them into crime, during this phase of their lives their peers pull them away from crime. Prior research on gangs has shown that some gang members leave their gangs by simply aging out (Hagedorn, 1994; Decker & Lauritsen, 1996) and that some leave as they become involved in activities associated with adulthood, such as work and family life (Decker & Lauritsen, 1996). This study supports findings that a primary reason for leaving the gang is maturation. Like Bolden's (2012) study about patterns of gang membership, the current findings also challenge traditional assumptions about gang loyalty. Participants questioned the loyalty of their gangs and stated they could only trust their close childhood friends, who may even be rival gang members.

This study extends prior research by showing that gang status loses its significance during young adulthood. Whether their friends were gang members or not does not really matter to young adults who are trying to go legit and furthermore, they do not necessarily have to disassociate themselves from their delinquent peers in order to desist from crime. Warr (1998) argued that the relationship between marriage and parenting and desistance can be explained by individuals having less time to spend with their peers. Several participants in this study, however, indicated that the friends they once got into trouble with are now a source of support and motivation if they are engaging in pro-social activities. Bahr, Harris, Fisher and Armstrong (2010) examined

differences among successful and non-successful parole completers and contrary to their expectations, parolees who spent more time participating in enjoyable activities with friends were *more* likely to complete parole. While prior research tells us that associations with peers can negatively influence behavior, the findings of the current study suggest that peers, even ones with criminal histories, can have a positive impact on behavior during emerging adulthood. As young adults mature, the sharing of similar life goals can motivate them towards desistance as they hold each other accountable and support one another throughout the process.

Support from a wide range of kin networks is a major determining factor in the success of young adults transitioning from prison and away from a life of crime. Those lacking a strong support system upon their release may be at a disadvantage. Based on the views of the participants, individuals who do not maintain close ties to family during their incarceration or who anger and disappoint their family members to the point that they intentionally withhold support, fare worse after they are released. According to participants, many of them end up back in prison. The findings therefore suggest that building social capital and widening support networks is an important programmatic goal for returning offenders.

The development of strong social bonds helps young adults to aspire to legitimate goals, but their ability to achieve them is difficult. Family support plays a large role especially for young adults who do not have jobs. They may need to rely to a greater extent on their support systems than youth who do not have criminal records. In an examination of social ties, employment and recidivism, Berg and Huebner (2011) reported that good quality social ties are particularly important for men with histories of

frequent unemployment. Complicating matters, however, is that even though they are generally supportive, most of their family members expect them to take on more adult responsibilities and make contributions to the household. Beyond that, young adults with strong social attachments desire to make significant contributions to the family and feel it is their responsibility as men to do so. The extent to which they can do so, however, is closely connected to employment.

The Link between Family Context and Employment

The findings indicate a clear link between family context and employment. Although this was not a study about employment specifically, there is strong evidence pointing to a relationship between the family context of reentry and employment opportunities. There is an overwhelming amount of research on the exclusion of black males from the labor market. More than 40 percent of black teens and more than 30 percent of young black men ages 16 to 24 were officially unemployed in 2009 and 2010, and these figures do not include those who have given up on finding work and dropped out of the labor force (Sum et al, 2011; Peck 2010). For African American males with a felony conviction, the likelihood of finding a permanent and well paying job is dismal. Incarceration is a turning point that reduces the earnings mobility of young men and reduces hourly wages significantly (Western, 2006). Even when they are able to find employment, ex-prisoners may be offered too few hours to produce significant earnings and to qualify for benefits (Rose & Clear, 2003). Similarly, participants in this study who found jobs reported that they were assigned to the least desirable shifts and worked for low wages. Furthermore, many of the jobs they received were temporary.

Overwhelmingly, the participants identified employment as their biggest post-release obstacle. They drew close connections between their inability to maintain a steady job with decent wages and their inability to contribute to family and meet their own expectations about what it means to be a man. Roy (2005) explored linked transitions in work and family life for low-income African American men by examining patterns of work engagement among three cohorts of fathers to explore how they shape transitions in family residence and family dynamics. Younger cohorts were less able to secure stable work and family arrangements, in comparison to middle and older cohorts. Those who were sporadically employed settled into households that were already established. Family arrangements may therefore be related to the employment of African-American males.

Elder (1998) argued that some individuals possess the human agency to select the paths they want to follow, but life choices are dependent on the opportunities of social structure. As pointed out by Pettit and Lyons (2009), even the most motivated offenders experience wage penalties and a decreased likelihood of employment over time. For some, the barriers they face in achieving their goals may tempt them to revert to a life of crime. In their examination of social bonds during emerging adulthood, Salvatore and Taniguchi (2012) found a significant relationship between greater economic instability and higher levels of offending. In Rose & Clear's (2003) study of former prisoners, many respondents reported that they had considered resorting to crime to solve their financial problems and knew of others who had chosen it. Participants in the current study who experienced frustration finding or maintaining a job thought about returning to crime at various points. Those who were able to secure jobs and make significant

contributions to their families had a more positive outlook for the future. Structural opportunity is therefore an important component of a theoretical model for reentry during young adulthood.

Towards a Theoretical Model for Reentry during Young Adulthood

The findings presented in this study suggest specific developmental processes that occur during the early to mid-twenties allowing some offenders to make improvements in their social context. First, the maturity gained during adulthood leads individuals to reevaluate their priorities and set legitimate goals. Second, they achieve an increased appreciation for their families and understanding about their family members' struggles, leading to a greater level of acceptance, communication, and involvement. These strengthened relationships allow for a greater exchange of support. Third, emerging adults accept a greater responsibility within their families, encouraging them to adopt adult roles. Essentially, young adults experience gains in their psychosocial maturity which provides them the agency to make changes to their personal lives that lead to more positive social contexts. When these developmental processes are achieved, desistance is more likely to occur.

A common experience for almost all participants was an intergenerational cycle of crime as well as parental absence. For many, their attachments to parents and other immediate family members were weak. As young adults, they may be capable of strengthening their social bonds to immediate family members. Strong social attachments to immediate family members as well as to extended and fictive kin members encourage the pursuit of a legitimate lifestyle. Improvements in social bonds

may also lead to increased levels of family support, which is essential to the post-release transition. While the amount and type of support they receive varies, all participants rely on family members to some extent for instrumental as well as expressive support, suggesting it could be beneficial to include families in the reentry process. When immediate family members are difficult to engage or lack the capacity to offer support, non-traditional family members are often called upon. The greatest amount of support sometimes comes from extended or fictive kin networks. It is therefore important to help returning offenders identify sources of support that may be outside of their immediate families. Peers should not be overlooked as potential providers of support as they are not necessarily a negative influence on the post-release transition. Peers who desire to achieve similar outcomes can be powerful sources of motivation.

The findings also draw important connections between family life and structural opportunity. Increased access to legitimate opportunities is essential to improving returning offenders' ability to take on adult roles, provide economic support to their families, and gain independence. Steady and satisfactory employment will also increase the likelihood that they will maintain a stable and positive presence in their children's lives, perhaps preventing the cycle of crime from repeating in younger generations.

Reentry programming for emerging adults should be developed with this theoretical model in mind. Directing program efforts at individuals who are undergoing important developmental changes makes sense, particularly when they are experiencing an increased psychosocial maturity that can allow them the human agency to make adjustments to their lives. As we shall see in the next chapter, specific types of program support can help young adults to strengthen their relationships, gain access to support

within their kin networks, and secure employment, all of which will help them to fulfill adult obligations and maintain legitimate lifestyles. Participants identified several areas of support that are lacking or deficient in reentry programs, which will be discussed. In addition to program recommendations, implications for social and penal policies will be explored.

Chapter 9: Policy Implications and Conclusions

Uncovering the challenges that are specific to offenders experiencing a dual transition from incarceration to community and from adolescence to adulthood has implications for programming that targets individuals in this developmental phase. Mears and Travis (2004) commented that understanding psychological development is necessary to improving reentry outcomes and that although youth should not be excused for their crimes, they require many supports if society wants them to succeed. As pointed out by Osgood, Foster, Flanagan and Ruth (2005), there currently are few programs designed specifically for helping 18-25 year olds deal with the challenges of emerging adulthood. States should remain committed to supporting people as they transition to adulthood since they are responsible for separating them from their families and communities and took responsibility for them for a significant period of time when they were incarcerated (Altschuler, Stangler, Berkley & Burton, 2009). An understanding of the problems that these individuals experience and gaps in the types of assistance they receive can inform policies for addressing the needs of emerging adults reentering from incarceration.

The findings of this study reveal that emerging adulthood may be the ideal time for interventions aimed at rehabilitation and desistance, and that it may be an ideal time specifically for interventions involving families. Offenders who are released from incarceration during the transition to adulthood may be more receptive to offers of support than they were as adolescents and the current data suggests that this openness increases as they approach the age of 25. Programs that target youth in this age group may reach offenders at an important turning point and experience greater success in

reducing recidivism or improving family functioning. Below, I outline specific program recommendations for incarcerated young adults followed by suggestions for broader social policy changes.

Program Recommendations

One of the greatest lessons of this study is that family history matters, even when talking about desistance. Those working with offenders must take family context into account when identifying needs and developing reentry goals and strategies for achieving them. Programs aimed at strengthening families will undoubtedly lead to improved outcomes for prisoners transitioning to the community. Much of the literature on families to date discusses the importance of social capital in successful outcomes (Boeck, Fleming & Kemshall, 2008; Farrall, 2002; Ward & Maruna, 2007) but few have identified specific strategies for its development. One of the goals of this study was to provide recommendations for developing social capital within families, which will improve the resources that young adults can draw from for support. As Boeck et al. (2008) point out, "for young people with key choices to make, widespread network relationships contribute to processes of self-assurance, personal development and, in turn, resilience and desistance" (p.16).

Strengthening Family Ties Prior to Release

Many researchers agree that to achieve the greatest impact on families of returning prisoners, programming should begin prior to an offender's release. Existing research finds strong support for the relationship between social bonds and reductions in offending, but the criminal justice system does little to help offenders maintain or strengthen their social bonds. Wolff and Draine (2004) noted that social capital is

diminished by the emotional and geographical distance created by imprisonment. Participants in the current study agreed that maintaining contact with family members while incarcerated is difficult. They reported that contact was difficult to maintain for various reasons ranging from embarrassment to the cost associated with staying in touch. Corrections agencies can remove barriers to the maintenance of family ties and encourage contact between prisoners and their loved ones (Christian, Fishman, Cammett & Scott-Pickens, 2006; La Vigne et al., 2005; Bobbitt & Nelson, 2004; Hairston, 2003; Petersilia, 2003; Hirsch et al., 2002; Couturier, 1995). There are various ways to facilitate contact between inmates and their family members. Christian et al. (2006) suggest several methods by which the Department of Corrections could facilitate contact. Their recommendations include: (1) advocating for the elimination of phone surcharges; (2) disseminating a family handbook detailing visitation procedures; (3) utilizing video conferencing as a supplement to in-person visiting; (4) establishing consistent visitation procedures across institutions; and (5) broadening definitions of family for the purpose of bringing children to visit and supporting other types of connections.

In addition to encouraging ongoing relationships between prisoners and their families during incarceration, formal pre-release programs could help families prepare for the challenges they will face during the reentry process and improve their overall functioning. Such programs, for example, could offer parenting and family relationship classes, provide pre-release family counseling, and allow families to be involved in the discharge planning process (Christian et al., 2006). Pre-release programs do exist in many states to address the challenges that families will face in the reintegration of a loved one. The Montgomery County Pre-Release Center in Maryland is one example of this

type of program (Nelson & Trone, 2000). This program requires every inmate to have a family sponsor who agrees to attend six weekly educational sessions. The program also provides family therapy for inmates and their sponsors who want counseling. Other states also have pre-release programs aimed at family reunification. The Osborne Association in New York, for example, provides parenting sessions for male prisoners and their children and also conducts ongoing support groups for families in New York City both before and after their family member's release from prison (Bobbitt & Nelson, 2004).

Family counseling

Family strengthening needs to be followed up with a post-release counseling component. Formerly incarcerated youth often return to home environments that were troubled prior to their incarceration. If youth were sent away during a time of conflict or after suffering some type of trauma, or if family members were traumatized by their loved one's incarceration, there are likely to be unresolved issues when they return home. There was general agreement among participants that families would benefit if they are included in transitional programs and receive counseling if there are communication problems or sources of conflict. Some suggested that family counseling is important because it allows returning offenders to see how their actions have affected their families which may encourage them to avoid negative behaviors. The data showed that participants are generally more comfortable speaking about their family problems as they enter adulthood so this is an important time to incorporate family counseling into reentry programming.

Prior experience has shown that programs have experience difficulty engaging family members. As Mills and Codd (2008) noted, social support from families is not automatic. Participants offered suggestions for encouraging families to get involved in programs. One respondent recommended offering incentives, such as tax deductions, to increase the likelihood that family members will attend program activities. Programs could also consider offering gift cards to local stores when family members attend counseling sessions or other types of activities, even in small amounts like ten dollars. This would allow program staff to acknowledge that family members' time is valuable and appreciated. Since one of the greatest barriers to family engagement is that family members themselves often do not have their own transportation and cannot afford other arrangements, staff members could arrange to pick them up and drive them home. Child care may also be an issue so family members should be encouraged to bring small children with them. In that event, programs could have a staff member on hand to look after the children while activities are in progress. The FOR TROY program for formerly incarcerated juvenile offenders, which was operated by the Affinity Counseling Group in New Jersey, offered transportation to family members and also encouraged them to bring their children if they desired.

Identifying Sources of Support

Family members who are involved in reentry efforts do not necessarily have to be from the immediate family. Formerly incarcerated young adults draw support from a broad network of individuals consisting of immediate, extended and fictive kin members. Programs that aim to bring families into the rehabilitation process must look beyond traditional definitions of family and consider the contributions that extended or fictive kin

members can potentially make to a successful post-release transition. Many of the young adults in this study relied greatly on their significant partners and close friends for encouragement or on extended relatives such as grandmothers and aunts. The Ecosystemic Natural Wrap-Around Model for juvenile delinquency works on building family strengths as well as incorporating extended and fictive kin networks (Northey, Primer, & Christensen, 1997). Program staff can assist transitioning offenders in identifying individuals within their kin networks who can play a supportive role in helping them to fulfill program requirements as well as to motivate them towards success.

Mentoring

Many participants spoke about lacking a positive male role model both during their youth and as young adults trying to transition to a legitimate lifestyle. Most agreed that programs have the potential to provide role models but they are not staffed appropriately. They largely believe that programs require male employees from similar backgrounds that have been through similar experiences to show them that they really can turn their lives around. One participant stated, "You got to be able to relate. You got to be able to talk to us." Staffing programs with former male offenders who ultimately succeeded or with individuals who were at-risk youth and overcame the odds may be one of the most critical components of programming for offenders. Many young adults do not have this type of example in their lives and they need someone to show them there is a better way to live. They also need people they can talk to who will understand what they are going through. This may help young adults to develop social bonds with positive male role models at a critical developmental phase. Bouffard and Bergseth (2008) evaluated a youth reentry program for juvenile probationers that emphasized

mentoring activities provided by the staff. Compared to juvenile probationers not enrolled in the reentry program, the treatment group was less likely to test positive for drugs, experienced improvements in levels of risk and need, and had lower risks of recidivism as well as longer time to re-offense. The authors argue that the pro-social bonds created through the mentoring process may increase the clients' motivation to participate in services, and that staff members who fulfill roles that create strong social attachments can increase the chances of desistance.

Linking Returning Offenders to Structural Opportunities

A big part of improving family context for returning offenders is increasing their opportunities to succeed. There are several reasons why reentry programs for emerging adults should include a component that links offenders to structural opportunities such as employment and education. Finding jobs was the biggest obstacle respondents said they experienced and as we have seen, maintaining employment impacts their ability to meet their families' expectations as well as their own expectations about being adults. For those who are released to parole or have been on probation, they are required to work but participants said there is very little support in finding jobs. Some of the participants said they have been enrolled in programs that help them with job search tasks such as building a resume or filling out applications, but they do not do enough to connect offenders to employers who are willing to hire them. One of the respondents suggested a website that informs offenders about companies that will hire them based on their charges.

Programs could also help returning offenders and their family members to identify social programs they may be eligible for. If they can access cash assistance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), housing assistance, or other

programs that would improve the quality of their lives, such as health insurance, then they would be have more resources to support one another. A recent article in the NY Times reported that inmates are now being signed up for Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act (Goode, 2014). According to the article, health care experts estimate that up to 35 percent of those newly eligible for Medicaid under the new health care law are people with histories of criminal justice system involvement, including jail and prison inmates and those on probation and parole. For those who are signed up while incarcerated, a great advantage is that they can have health care coverage when they are released. There may be people who are eligible for social services who do not claim them because they do not know what is available to them or how to go about applying for them. During intake and assessment, programs can identify the areas of support that families need. They should go beyond making referrals, however, and set up appointments for their clients with social service agencies or even accompany them to their appointments and provide follow-up assistance with filling out applications or making phone calls on their behalf. The next section will provide recommendations for changes to government policy.

Building Structural Opportunities through a Revision of Penal and Welfare Policy

Beyond specific program strategies, broader social policies need to be revised to improve conditions for the urban poor. The policies implemented to address growing concerns about crime and social disorder in recent decades have had significant consequences for poor urban families and for families of offenders in particular. Changes to both penal and welfare policies have affected the familial context of prisoner reentry in

at least two important ways: (1) they have worsened families' financial stability, and (2) they have created barriers to family stability and reunification.

To combat increasing rates of violent crime and drug use beginning in the 1970s and continuing through the 1980s, penalties became increasingly harsh. Determinate sentencing, mandatory prison terms, truth-in-sentencing, and three strikes laws have all led to a greater number of offenders being locked up for longer periods of time (Mauer, 2001). These 'get tough' policies have largely targeted families in inner-city communities. For various reasons, incarceration creates serious problems for these families. The longer the period of imprisonment, the worse these problems are likely to be. Studies have demonstrated that one consequence of longer prison terms is fewer prospects for post-release employment as well as reduced wages (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). The government must reduce its reliance on incarceration as a punitive measure. Alternative sanctions should be considered when appropriate to minimize disruptions in offenders' work and family lives. For those who are incarcerated, states should increase their use of indeterminate sentencing to allow offenders the chance for an early release.

At the same time that penal policies became harsher, welfare policies became more punitive and caused financial strain for many offenders and their families. Many of the study participants expressed their frustration with the difficulties they and their families have experienced in gaining access to public assistance, such as cash assistance and SNAP. Some assistance programs bar offenders convicted of certain drug offenses from ever receiving benefits, as well as offenders who have violated probation or parole. Given the dramatic increase in felony drug convictions, families who rely on welfare have paid a price. The punitive restrictions placed on welfare benefits must be revised to

allow returning prisoners the opportunity to care for their loved ones. Male returning prisoners are treated most harshly by welfare policies as male parolees are the least protected group by public assistance (Simon, 1993). While women parolees commonly receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) program, few male parolees qualify even though many have children. The program most widely available to male parolees is General Assistance (GA). Benefit levels are set locally but are usually not more than a few hundred dollars a month. Many locations require drug testing and treatment, job search training, or community service work. When people receiving benefits fail to meet these requirements, they are cancelled from the program. This cancellation policy does not account for the fact that male parolees are a population with shifting addresses and poor bureaucratic interaction skills (Simon, 1993). Even though many male inmates have children when they are released, few will receive the financial support necessary to care for them. Welfare policies should be revised to increase the accessibility of TANF for male former prisoners who have children. In addition, parolees' individual circumstances should be carefully considered before removing them from the GA program.

In addition to the impact on families' economic stability, welfare policies are a threat to family stability in other ways. In particular, they may discourage marriage because benefits are awarded primarily to female-headed families (Schiller, 2008; Braman, 2007). Some of the potential consequences are: (1) fathers may leave poor families to make the remaining members eligible for payments; (2) women may view welfare as an alternative source of financial support and will be more likely to divorce; and (3) women will be less reluctant to become single mothers because they will view

welfare as a source economic support after child rearing (Schiller, 2008). The implication for male prisoners returning home is they may be less likely to be taken in by their female partners if it will pose a threat to their welfare benefits. When this occurs, the cycle of intergenerational crime and incarceration that is associated with father-absent households may repeat itself. To promote more stable unions and better prospects for future generations, welfare benefits should be extended to a greater number of two-parent households.

In addition to increasing the availability of welfare payments by lifting some of the restrictions on former offenders, greater government efforts to connect prisoners to jobs must be undertaken. Incarceration makes it difficult for offenders to access jobs and provide for their families when they come out. By contributing to this problem through mass incarceration, the government needs to be more hands on in developing jobs for former prisoners. Without being given an opportunity, former prisoners cannot prove their worth. If the government aims to reduce recidivism, it should take some responsibility in helping former prisoners to access legitimate means of success. Government partnerships with corporations could be established to encourage employers to hire released prisoners. One way to accomplish this may be to offer incentives to employers such as tax credits. Another possibility for improving job opportunities is to give more offenders the chance to expunge their records. One of the study participants suggested that first time non-violent felons might experience better outcomes if they could wipe their record clean. Many of them expressed the belief that offenders can make valuable contributions to society if only given the opportunity to do so.

Programs that target areas for family improvement are necessary and should include: family strengthening prior to release, post-release family counseling, the provision of services to offenders' family members, the development of positive social bonds through mentoring, and connections to jobs and social services that will improve family circumstances. The government must also do its part to improve family life for the urban poor, especially those who are involved with the criminal justice system. African American males and particularly those with a criminal record need greater access to structural opportunities such as jobs, education, and public assistance. The negative effects of incarceration on families can be reduced through alternative sanction programs and reduced sentence length. By remaining in the lives of their children and being able to provide them with greater financial and residential stability, young African American males would be more capable of ending the transmission of their own problems to their children.

Conclusions

A qualitative approach was used to illuminate the social processes involved in reentry from incarceration during emerging adulthood. Based on in-depth interviews with formerly incarcerated young adults and their family members, it is clear that significant developmental changes occur during the transition to adulthood, allowing individuals to strengthen their relationships through a realignment of their family ties. Improvements in their external links place returning offenders in a better position to receive support, easing the post-release transition. The data presented in this dissertation reveal that kin networks are important to the desistance process and can motivate young adults to pursue legitimate life goals. The data also suggest that social bonds and family

support can improve during emerging adulthood as individuals mature and accept more responsibility. Young adults may be more capable of achieving these improvements if they have greater access to legitimate means of success. The improvement in social bonds and development of new social bonds combined with family support from a diverse range of kin members as well as structural opportunity promotes desistance among emerging adults. While other research has explored these themes, there are few studies that examine their role in emerging adulthood specifically, especially through in-depth interviews with former offenders and their family members. This type of approach sheds light on the mechanisms involved in reentry outcomes.

Future Research

The current study could be expanded and improved upon in several ways. First, the intergenerational cycle of crime, incarceration and poverty suggests that multigenerational studies are important. Future research can add more depth to the current topic by aiming to include family members from multiple generations in qualitative research. In addition, a lot could be gained by conducting longitudinal studies that follow up with returning offenders at various points in adulthood as well as follow-up with their children during adolescence and/or early adulthood to examine the impact of their fathers' history on their own lives. These types of studies would further our understanding of the specific ways in which family problems are transmitted from one generation to the next and in addition, the types of support that multiple generations depend on each other for.

Future studies should also consider exploring the family context of reentry during young adulthood by interviewing returning offenders at several follow-up intervals. As a

starting point, they could be interviewed at one month or three months post-release and then at three or six month intervals for one to two years. This would allow researchers to track developmental changes as they navigate the challenges of reentry and adulthood and to assess the changing nature of their role within the family as well as changes in the nature of their family relationships.

Future research in this area should also include female offenders returning from incarceration during young adulthood. It would be interesting to compare their needs against the needs of returning male offenders, particularly with regard to family relationships and family support. Additionally, studies should look at how family expectations differ for females during young adulthood as well as how female definitions of adulthood compare with male definitions. If these expectations and definitions of adulthood differ for females, they may have different aspirations suggesting that the types of assistance they require will be unique and this would have important implications for programming.

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Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

Family	Young Adult Name	Age	Incarceration Length	Committing Offense	Prior Convictions	Total # of Lockups	Gang Member	Time at Risk	Family Member Name	Relation to Young Adult	Criminal History
1	Antoine	24	4.5 years	Drug Distribution	Y	2	Y	1 mo	Keisha	Girlfriend	N
									Divine	Mother	Y
	Andrew	23	4 months	VOP; Theft	Y	1	N	7 mos	Sam	Cousin	Y
									Divine	Mother	--
	Dustin	20	3 months	Poss of CDS	Y	1	N	1 yr	Divine	Mother	--
									Miles	Father	Y
									Chantal	Girlfriend	Y
2	Clyde	24	18 months	Conspiracy to Attempted Murder; Weapon Poss	Y	Numerous-exact number not known	Y	1 mo	Moesha	Girlfriend	Y
3	Mitchell	21	3 years	Robbery	Y	3	Y	19 mos	Ailee	Girlfriend	N
4	Ty	22	10 months	Robbery	Y	2	Y	3 yrs	Shemar	Cousin	Y
5	Terrance	23	1 year	Weapon Poss	N	1	N	1 yr	Lateisha	Fiancé	N
6	Lamont	24	2 years	Home Invasion	Y	3	Y	1 mo			
7	Darnell	23	5 months	Drug Distribution	N	1	N	3 mos			
8	Davay	25	6 months	Poss of CDS	N	1	N	7 mos			
9	Kevin	25	3 years	Robbery	Y	1	Y	2 yrs	Marcus	Cousin	Y
10	Trey	19	7 mos	Robbery	Y	2	N	1 mo			
11	Seth	23	3 months		N	1	N	9 mos			
12	Allaquan	25	1 year	Poss of CDS	N	1	N	1 yr	Chester	Cousin	Y
13	Randall	25	1 month	Drug Distribution	N	1	Y	4 mos	Darius	Brother	Y
14	Ernest	24	2 years	Robbery; Poss of CDS	Y	5	Y	5 yrs	Latoya	Girlfriend	N
15	Eddie	22	7.5 months	VOP	Y	6	Y	2 mos	Alwan	Cousin	Y

Appendix A: Consent Forms

Form #1: Consent form for confidential interviews of young adults released from incarceration

Hello, my name is Elizabeth Panuccio. I am a student at Rutgers University and I am working on a research project to study the issues facing young adults who return to their communities after incarceration in juvenile or adult detention facilities. In particular, I am looking at how young people are affected by their family situations when they return home and also how their families are affected by the reentry process. I would like to interview about 15 young adults who were incarcerated and at least one of their family members to help me understand these issues. I want to ask you some questions about your recent experiences, including the types of problems you and your family experience, the ways that you support each other, and the types of assistance that would make the transition to the community after incarceration easier for you and your family.

If you agree to let me interview you, I will be asking you a series of questions that do not have simple answers. This interview is not a "test" with right or wrong answers. I want to find out what you feel and think about what has been happening to you. If you are comfortable with letting me record the interview, I would like to do that, because I want to listen while you speak rather than take notes. If you prefer that I do not use the recorder, however, just say so, at any point. If I do make a recording, the file will remain my confidential property. I may use a professional transcriber to assist me in converting audio files into text. In that case, the transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement prohibiting her from sharing information contained in the recording and prohibiting her from copying or storing the recording after transcription is complete. I will destroy the audio files after my study is finished.

If you agree to be interviewed, what we talk about will be confidential. I won't reveal what we discuss to your family members, to any criminal justice or social service agencies, or anyone else that could connect your name or identity to things you tell me. The only times I can't keep things confidential are when I learn about adults abusing kids or the possibility that somebody is planning to hurt himself or somebody else or if I find out about specific past criminal activities unknown to the police.

My notes about this interview will be taken back to my home office and combined with notes about other interviews like this. All records of this interview will be kept locked up inside a file cabinet that only I have access to.

When I have finished all of my interviews, I will analyze the results and discuss my findings as part of my dissertation to complete the requirements of my degree. The dissertation will be published and available for people to read. I may also publish the results of this study in professional journals. Certain things you tell me might be printed in a report, but your name will be kept confidential. I hope this study will help other

people learn some things about young people like you and their families and how to help you get along better in the future.

Because I want you to think carefully about whether to proceed with an interview, I would like to point out some things you might want to consider, in terms of possible benefits, risks, or anything uncomfortable that might go along with doing an interview.

You will be given $50.00 for your participation. That doesn't mean you have to talk about anything you don't want to. You might also enjoy letting your voice be heard by people who might be able to change some things to make it better for young people when they are released from incarceration. I can't promise that what I'm doing will necessarily have that effect, but I do hope that it might do some good.

I do not expect any harm to come to anyone because they talk to me. This interview is confidential, and I will not publish your name or any other information that might identify you as a particular individual. Yet, I realize that talking about your life might upset you somehow. Because of that, I want you to understand that, if you begin an interview, you can stop at any time you like and you can refuse to answer any particular question. If you should need counseling as a result of getting upset by this interview, I would help you find a counselor, but I couldn't pay for it myself.

I expect that an interview would last no more than one hour, depending mostly on what you know and are interested in discussing. It is possible that, as I learn more, I might want to get back to you with some follow-up questions. If so, any further participation would again be entirely up to you.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you don't want to participate at all or in some specific part of what I am doing, I will respect your wishes. If you decide you want to stop the interview after it has already begun, you will still be paid fifty dollars.

If you have any questions about possible benefits, risks, or discomforts that might go along with doing an interview, or about anything else that I am doing, please ask me and I will do my best to answer your questions.

If you would like to contact me at any time about this process, you can reach me at:

Elizabeth A. Panuccio, Project Director
School of Criminal Justice
Rutgers-Newark
123 Washington Street
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Tel: 201-960-3105 E-mail: angiello@andromeda.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150 Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

I agree to participate in the interview procedure as described by

_____ _____
(Name of principal investigator) (Date)

and in the text of this form.

_____ _____
(Name of research participant) (Date)

I also agree to let this interview be tape-recorded, with the understanding that the tape will be used only for research purposes, that I can request the tape be turned off at any point, and that the tape will be destroyed when the research project is completed.

_____ _____
(Name of research participant) (Date)

Form #2: Assent/consent form for confidential interviews of family members of young adults released from incarceration

Hello, my name is Elizabeth Panuccio. I am a student at Rutgers University and I am working on a research project to study the issues facing young adults who return to their communities after incarceration in juvenile or adult detention facilities. In particular, I am looking at how young people are affected by their family situations when they return home and also how their families are affected by the reentry process. I would like to interview about 15 young adults who were incarcerated and at least one of their family members to help me understand these issues. I would like to ask you some questions about (name of young adult)'s recent experiences, including the types of problems (name of young adult) and your family experience, the ways that you support each other, and the types of assistance that would make the transition to the community after incarceration easier for (name of young adult) and your family.

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If you agree to let me interview you, I will be asking you a series of questions that do not have simple answers. This interview is not a "test" with right or wrong answers. I want to find out what you feel and think about what has been happening to you. If you are comfortable with letting me record the interview, I would like to do that, because I want to listen while you speak rather than take notes. If you prefer that I do not use the recorder, however, just say so, at any point. If I do make a recording, the file will remain my confidential property. I may use a professional transcriber to assist me in converting audio files into text. In that case, the transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement prohibiting her from sharing information contained in the recording and prohibiting her from copying or storing the recording after transcription is complete. I will destroy the audio files after my study is finished.

If you agree to be interviewed, what we talk about will be confidential. I won't reveal what we discuss to your family members, to any criminal justice or social service agencies, or anyone else that could connect your name or identity to things you tell me. The only times I can't keep things confidential are when I learn about adults abusing kids or the possibility that somebody is planning to hurt himself or somebody else or if I find out about specific past criminal activities unknown to the police.

My notes about this interview will be taken back to my home office and combined with notes about other interviews like this. All records of this interview will be kept locked up inside a file cabinet that only I have access to.

When I have finished all of my interviews, I will analyze the results and discuss my findings as part of my dissertation to complete the requirements of my degree. The dissertation will be published and available for people to read. I may also publish the results of this study in professional journals. Certain things you tell me might be printed

in a report, but your name will be kept confidential. I hope this study will help other people learn some things about families like yours and how to help you get along better in the future.

Because I want you to think carefully about whether to proceed with an interview, I would like to point out some things you might want to consider, in terms of possible benefits, risks, or anything uncomfortable that might go along with doing an interview. You will be given $50.00 for your participation. That doesn't mean you have to talk about anything you don't want to. You might also enjoy letting your voice be heard by people who might be able to change some things to make it better for families when young people return from incarceration. I can't promise that what I'm doing will necessarily have that effect, but I do hope that it might do some good.

I do not expect any harm to come to anyone because they talk to me. This interview is confidential, and I will not publish your name or any other information that might identify you as a particular individual. Yet, I realize that talking about your life might upset you somehow. Because of that, I want you to understand that, if you begin an interview, you can stop at any time you like and you can refuse to answer any particular question. If you should need counseling as a result of getting upset by this interview, I would help you find a counselor, but I couldn't pay for it myself.

I expect that an interview would last no more than one hour, depending mostly on what you know and are interested in discussing. It is possible that, as I learn more, I might want to get back to you with some follow-up questions. If so, any further participation would again be entirely up to you.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you don't want to participate at all or in some specific part of what I am doing, I will respect your wishes. If you decide you want to stop the interview after it has already begun, you will still be paid fifty dollars.

If you have any questions about possible benefits, risks, or discomforts that might go along with doing an interview, or about anything else that I am doing, please ask me and I will do my best to answer your questions.

If you would like to contact me at any time about this process, you can reach me at:

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If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

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Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150 Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

I agree to participate in the interview procedure as described by

_____ _____
(Name of principal investigator) (Date)

and in the text of this form.

_____ _____
(Name of research participant) (Date)

_____ _____
(Name of parent/guardian if under age 18) (Date)

I also agree to let this interview be tape-recorded, with the understanding that the tape will be used only for research purposes, that I can request the tape be turned off at any point, and that the tape will be destroyed when the research project is completed.

_____ _____
(Name of research participant) (Date)

Appendix B: Young Adult Interview

When was the last time that you were locked up?
- What type of facility were you in? For how long?
- When were you released?
- What were you locked up for? Will you describe the details of the arrest?

Were you ever locked up before this most recent incarceration?
- What type of facility were you in? For how long?
- What were you locked up for?

How old are you now? Did you turn 18 inside a facility or when you were in the community? How much time have you spent in the community since turning 18?

What can you tell me about your past involvement in crime? How old were you when you first started committing crimes? What types of crimes? Are there specific events that led to your involvement?

Can you describe your family situation before you were locked up (beginning when you were a child)?
- Where did you live (neighborhood and type of house)? For how long?
- Who was living in the house?
- What were relationships like? Did everyone get along? Was there any conflict? What kinds of things did you fight about? How did you resolve problems?
- Do you have any kids from before you were incarcerated? What was your relationship like with them before you were incarcerated? In ways were you involved in their lives?

How much involvement did you have with extended family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc)? In ways were they involved in your life?

Did your family experience any problems when you were growing up?
- Drugs
- Mental health
- Financial
- Residential

Can you describe your family situation just after your release from lockup?

How was your family affected by your incarceration?

What is your family situation like now?

- Where do you live (neighborhood and type of house)?
- Who do you live with?
- What is your relationship like with….?
- Do you ever argue? What are your arguments about? How do you resolve them?
- Do you have any kids? What is your relationship like with them?

How are things different with your family now that you are an adult? How have your relationships changed? How has your role changed? How have their expectations changed?

What problems did you experience just after your release?

- Drugs
- Mental health
- Financial
- Residential

What problems did your family members experience just after your release?

- Drugs
- Mental health
- Financial
- Residential

What problems are you experiencing now? What challenges do you face as an adult that are different from the challenges you faced as a juvenile (especially during reentry)?

What problems are your family members experiencing now?

What do you see as the causes of the problems experienced by yourself and your family members?

After your release from detention, did you receive help from anyone in your family?

- If yes, what kind of help?
- How did this assistance make things better for you?

Are you currently receiving help from anyone in your family? What kind of help?
What are the most positive things in your life right now? What do you attribute them to?

In what ways do you contribute to your family?

- To parents? To siblings?
- To children?
- To partners?

Is anyone in your family receiving some type of outside assistance?

- If yes, does this assistance make things better or easier for the family?

Is there some type of help you did not get after your release that would have made things easier for you?

Can you describe the relationship between your parole officer and your family members?

- How much contact? What about? Family members' attitudes towards parole?

Do you think the relationship between your parole officer and your family is positive or negative? Please explain.

Could you talk to me about the programs you have been through both before and after you were locked up? What are some of the things that work well in these programs and what are some of the problems with these programs?

What do you think programs should do to do to help young people and their families? What could programs do to get families involved?

Is there anything else you want to talk about that has made the reentry process more difficult or that has made it easier?

Appendix C: Family Member Interview

When was the last time (young adult) was locked up?

- For how long? When was he released?
- What was he locked up for? Please describe the details of the arrest.

Was he ever locked up before this most recent incarceration?

- What type of facility was he in? For how long?
- What was he locked up for?

How old is (young adult) now? Did he turn 18 inside a facility or when he was in the community? How much time has he spent in the community since turning 18?

What can you tell me about his past involvement in crime? To the best of your knowledge, how old was he when he first started committing crimes? What types of crimes?

Can you describe your family situation before (young adult) was locked up?

- Where did you live (neighborhood and type of residence)? For how long?
- Who was living in the house?
- What were relationships like? Did everyone get along? Was there any conflict? What kinds of things did you fight about? How did you resolve problems?
- Does (young adult) have any kids from before his incarceration? What was his relationship like with them before he was incarcerated? In ways was he involved in their lives?

How much involvement did (young adult) have with extended family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc)? In ways were they involved in his life?

Can you describe your family situation just after (young adult's) release from detention?

How was the family affected by (young adult) being locked up?

What is your family situation like now?

- Where do you live (neighborhood and type of residence)? For how long?
- Who do you live with?
- What is your relationship like with….?

- Do you ever argue? What are your arguments about? How do you resolve them?
- If (young adult) has kids, what is his relationship like with them now? In ways is he involved in their lives?

How are things different with between (young adult) and the family now that he is an adult? How have his relationships changed? How has role changed? How have your expectations changed?

What problems did (young adult) experience just after his release?

- Drugs
- Mental health
- Financial
- Residential

What problems did you and/or your other family members experience just after (young adult's) release?

- Drugs
- Mental health
- Financial
- Residential

What problems is (young adult) experiencing now? What challenges does he face as an adult that are different from the challenges he faced as a juvenile?

What problems are you and/or your other family members experiencing now?

What do you see as the causes of the problems experienced by (young adult) and the family?

After (young adult's) release from detention, did he receive help from anyone in the family?

- If yes, what kind of help?
- How did this assistance make things better for him?

Is (young adult) currently receiving help from anyone in the family? What kind of help?

What are the most positive things in (young adult's) life right now? What do you attribute them to?

Is anyone in your family receiving some type of outside assistance?

- If yes, does this assistance make things better or easier for the family? How?

In what ways does (young adult) contribute to his family?

- To parents? To siblings?
- To children?
- To partners?

Is there some type of help (young adult) did not get after his release that would have made things easier for him?

Is there some type of help the family did not get that would have made it easier to support (young adult) after his release from custody?

Can you describe the relationship between (young adult's) parole officer and your family members?

- How much contact? What about? Family members' attitudes towards parole?

Do you think the relationship between the parole officer and your family is positive or negative? Please explain.

Could you talk to me about the programs that you and/or (young adult) have been through both before and after he was locked up this last time? What are some of the things that work well in these programs and what are some of the problems with these programs?

What do you think programs should do to do to help young people and their families? What could programs do to get families involved?

Is there anything else you want to talk about that has made the reentry process more difficult or that has made it easier?

Curriculum Vitae
ELIZABETH A. PANUCCIO

Education:

Oct 2014 **Ph.D. in Criminal Justice**, School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers University

May 2006 **M.A. in Criminal Justice**, Rutgers University

May 2003 **M.A. in Sociology**, Fordham University

May 2001 **B.A. in Sociology**, Drew University

Teaching Experience:

Aug 14 – Present Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology, *Centenary College*, Hackettstown, NJ

Jan 14 – Aug 14 Adjunct Professor – Sociology Dept.., *Centenary College*, Hackettstown, NJ

I taught Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Senior Seminar in Sociology to traditional undergraduates and to adult learners in a hybrid format.

May 06 – Jul 10 Part-time Lecturer, School of Criminal Justice, *Rutgers University*, Newark, NJ

For several semesters I served as a part-time lecturer in the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University. I taught Corrections as well as Community Corrections, which was an advanced writing intensive course. All courses required the use of Blackboard as an instructional aid.

Sept 09 – May 10 Adjunct Professor, Criminal Justice Dept., *Bergen Community College*, Paramus, NJ

As an adjunct professor at BCC, I taught Introduction to Criminal Justice and Correctional Administration. In addition, I completed a semester-long training program in online course development and teaching.

Sept 04 – May 06 Teaching Assistant, School of Criminal Justice, *Rutgers University*, Newark, NJ

I was awarded a two-year teaching assistantship upon admission into the doctoral program at Rutgers University. During my assistantship, I taught courses in Criminology and Corrections.

Research Experience:

May 14 – Aug 14 Research Consultant, *NYC Board of Corrections*, New York, NY

In this position I wrote a report about best practices in punitive segregation to assist the Board in establishing new regulations for solitary confinement in city jails.

Jul 06 – Oct 08 Research Associate, *Evaluation of Family-Oriented Juvenile Reentry Programs in New Jersey*, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ

In this role, I assisted with a process and outcome evaluation of a youth reentry program which was funded by the Juvenile Justice Commission of N.J. Some of my responsibilities included:

- Designing survey instruments and interview protocols
- Interviewing program participants, their family members, and program staff
- Visiting program sites to observe staff meetings, meetings with clients, and scheduled program activities
- Visiting detention facilities with program staff to observe client recruitment procedures
- Developing and co-facilitating a focus group with program participants and their family members
- Collecting, coding, and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data
- Conducting a review of case files in each program location
- Coordinating the activities of other members of the research team and maintaining records
- Writing sections of the final evaluation and sections of a paper that was presented at the ASC meeting

May 06 – Nov 06 Research Assistant, *Evaluation of Juvenile Day Reporting Centers*, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ

In this role, I assisted with an evaluation of juvenile day reporting centers which was funded by the Juvenile Justice Commission of N.J. Some of my responsibilities included:

- Collecting and coding criminal history information from state databases
- Assisting with the analysis of quantitative data
- Conducting a literature review on evaluations of day reporting centers
- Presenting findings at the American Society of Criminology conference

May 03 – Sept 03 Research Assistant, Vera Institute of Justice, New York, NY

In this role, I was responsible for collecting and coding data from state criminal codes for a study that examined changes to state sentencing policies from 1975 - 2000. The data was entered into the program Access.

May 02 – May 03 Research Intern, Family Justice, Inc., New York, NY

As a research intern, I performed a variety of tasks for this organization. Some of my responsibilities included:

- Under the direction of a faculty mentor, designing and conducting a pilot study examining the relationship between the program's case managers and parole officers
- Writing a report based on the findings of the pilot study to be presented to the program's executive director which was also presented at the American Society of Criminology conference
- Gathering data for a report commissioned by the N.J. Institute for Social Justice to assist the state in identifying neighborhoods for replication of Family Justice's Bodega Model
- Compiling bibliographies of relevant materials for the organization to access through a shared network
- Representing the organization at a meeting of the New Jersey Reentry Roundtable in Trenton, N.J.
- Attending monthly research group meetings to discuss ongoing projects, to give and receive feedback on project activities, and to solve project-related problems

Other Employment:

Sept 11 – Sept 12 Communications Officer, Ho-Ho-Kus Police Department, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ

I was responsible for answering calls for service via telephone, the 911 system, and walk-ins, and for dispatching police officers, emergency medical services, and the fire department as needed.

Jul 06 – Dec 10 Managing Editor, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ

In this role, I was responsible for processing all new and revised manuscript submissions and managing the peer review process. I was also responsible for making revisions to manuscripts, preparing manuscripts for publication, and organizing journal issues.

Technical Skills:

Course Management Systems: Blackboard; Moodle; WebCT
Software Programs: Microsoft Office; NVivo; SPSS

Awards:

Dissertation Fellowship $20,000 (September 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013), awarded by Rutgers University-Newark

Dean's Research Grant $2,050 (December 2011 – December 2012), awarded by SCJ, Rutgers University-Newark

Teaching Assistantship (September 2005 – May 2006), awarded by SCJ, Rutgers University-Newark

Honors:

Completed Core Area Exam with Distinction (March 2009)

Professional Memberships:

American Society of Criminology

Professional Activities:

Served as Co-Coordinator of the "Intelligence Program for New Jersey Police Executives," hosted by the Center for the Study of Public Security and the School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey, November 4, 2005 and December 8, 2005

Publications:

Panuccio, E., Christian, J., Martinez, D.J., & Sullivan, M.L. (2012). Social support, motivation, and the process of juvenile reentry: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 51(3), 135-160.

Angiello, E. (2004). Pre-release programs. In M. Bosworth (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of U.S. Prisons and Correctional Facilities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Presentations:

Panuccio, E. (2013). "The Family Context of Reentry from Incarceration during Emerging Adulthood: Restructuring Family Ties and Activating Support within Kin Networks." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Atlanta, GA, November 20-23.

Panuccio, E. (2012). "Reentry from Incarceration during Young Adulthood: The Impact of Family Context on Youth in Transition." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, IL, November 14-17.

Panuccio, E., Christian, J. & Sullivan, M. (2010). "Social Support and Successful Juvenile Reentry: An Exploratory Analysis." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, CA, November 17-20.

Panuccio, E., Christian, J. & Martinez, D. J. (2009). "Toward Desistance: The Initiation of Change Processes among Returning Juvenile Offenders." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Philadelphia, PA, November 4-7.

Sullivan, M., Christian, J., Jensen, J., McDavid, J. & Panuccio, E. (2008). "Are Gangs Topping our Offers of Reentry Support?" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, St. Louis, MO, November 12-15.

Sullivan, M., McCann, E. & Angiello, E. (2006). "Evaluation of Juvenile Day Reporting Centers." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Los Angeles, CA, November 1-4.

Rodriguez, O. & Angiello, E. (2004). "Family Case Management in Community Supervision as Inter-Organizational Brokering." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Nashville, TN, November 16-20.

Served as a Reviewer for:

- *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*
- *Youth and Society*