

# Emotions and Crime over the Life Course: A Neo-Meadian Perspective on Criminal Continuity and Change<sup>1</sup>

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A symbolic interactionist perspective on the emotions is presented that highlights their social character, forges links to cognitive processes, and suggests ways in which emotions influence long-term patterns of criminal involvement. This neo-Meadian perspective contrasts with theories of desistance that focus on the role of informal social controls and develops the view of an emotional self that flourishes somewhat independent of the major role transitions typically emphasized in sociological studies of the life course. The authors also explore ways in which attention to the emotional realms of experience adds to traditional treatments of the impact of adult transition events (e.g., the “good marriage effect”). Interviews with male and female adolescent offenders and two waves of adult follow-up data document general patterns of association and support the argument that a social view of emotional processes is critical to a comprehensive understanding of life course patterns of criminal continuity and change.

## INTRODUCTION

While Collins (1990, p. 27) has noted that “emotion potentially occupies a crucial position in general sociological theory,” with some notable exceptions (Agnew 1992; Braithwaite 1989), emotional processes have not

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been central to criminological theorizing. In this article we focus on specific ways in which attention to the emotional realms of experience adds to our knowledge about adult patterns of criminal involvement. We draw on insights from the sociology of emotions tradition in order to develop a neo-Meadian perspective meant to highlight that emotions (*a*) are social, (*b*) have strong cognitive underpinnings, and (*c*) influence long-term patterns of criminal continuity and change.<sup>2</sup> The analysis broadens the scope of a symbolic interactionist perspective originally formulated as a theory of cognitive transformation (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002) and develops further a critique of the control perspective on the desistance process (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003).

In order to illustrate these points more systematically, we draw on quantitative and qualitative data derived from a long-term follow-up of serious adolescent offenders. This sample is constructed of male and female youths who were originally interviewed in 1982 while incarcerated. They were followed up and subsequently reinterviewed some 13 years later, when the average age of the respondents was 29. Life history narratives were elicited from a majority of respondents at the time of this initial adult follow-up. A new wave of interviews conducted with these respondents in 2003 (when respondents averaged 38 years of age) provides a longer time horizon from which to assess the degree to which and ways in which emotional processes influence long-term patterns of criminal behavior.<sup>3</sup>

## BACKGROUND

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

A major contribution of Sampson and Laub's research (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003) has been to document that, while delinquents are more likely than other youths to have problems in adulthood, later life events frequently serve to inhibit criminal involvement. Their research, relying on data originally collected by Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck, documented considerable variability in patterns of adult crime, thus underscoring that crim-

<sup>2</sup> The focus on emotions represents a shift from Mead's original cognitive emphasis, but can be considered neo-Meadian since his more general ideas (e.g., the concept of role taking and focus on self-processes) are applicable to understanding the emotional as well as cognitive realms of experience (Engdahl 2004; MacKinnon 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Interviews in connection with this wave actually began in the latter part of 2002 and some respondents were located and interviewed as recently as 2005. However, the bulk of interviews were completed by 2003. Thus, for ease of presentation, throughout the article we refer to the second wave of interviews as the 2003 interviews.

inal behavior need not be conceptualized as resulting from a stable character or personality trait with inevitable lifelong consequences (but see Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Life events such as getting married or acquiring steady employment are viewed as key sources of redirection.

To conceptualize the change process, Sampson and Laub rely on a version of control theory: over time such lifestyle changes have a stabilizing effect and become part of a social and even financial investment process that makes crime less likely (i.e., the idea of too much to lose). In a more recent study, Laub and Sampson (2003) conducted interviews with a subset of the original Glueck respondents as older men. Although they explored a number of other factors that for some appeared to have a beneficial influence (e.g., military experience, children), the authors continued to focus heavily on marriage effects. In addition to the increasing investment idea, they noted that “what has not received enough attention is the role that marriage plays in restructuring routine activities and the direct social control that spouses provide, especially concerning deviant peer group associations” (Laub and Sampson 2003, p. 135). While giving credence to the idea of human agency, in general, and consistent with the logic of the social control tradition, their emphasis has remained upon processes external to the individual (as they continue to focus on what the spouse does or what military experiences offer).

Our view is that the social control perspective describes important mechanisms involved in desistance, but the resulting account of stability and change processes is incomplete. First, two important classes of negative cases are not well explained: individuals who continue to offend, even though they have acquired a spouse or gained employment, and those who have managed to desist, even absent these powerful elements of social control. These issues are particularly important to consider when we focus on the situations facing many contemporary offenders, as marriage over the last half century has been less likely and less stable than in earlier eras, particularly for individuals with low SES and education (see e.g., Booth, Crouter, and Shanahan 1999). In addition, the social control perspective does a good job of explicating some of the long-term benefits of a stable marriage, but is relatively silent on the issue of why (save chance or luck—see e.g., Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998) some individuals begin the process of moving toward a more conventional way of life, or for that matter why some but not others “stick it out.” Indeed, in some respects the control emphasis tells us more about the *hows* than the *whys* of change, and little about mechanisms not tied to marriage or other key transition experiences.

Another potential limitation of social control theory is that it is distinguished in large part by its proponents’ rejection of the importance of social learning mechanisms (Hirschi 1969). Adhering to the logic of the

perspective thus requires focusing exclusively on the existence of a bond (marriage) or the quality of the bond, rather than on the criminal/prosocial orientation of the partner (see Sampson and Laub 1993, p. 191). This idea has not been a well-substantiated aspect of control theory as applied to adolescent behavior (research shows that the delinquent behavior of one's peers influences the adolescent's own conduct; see, e.g., Thornberry and Krohn 1997), and in our view the partner's criminality should not be ignored when theorizing about the nature of the adult partner's influence. Related to this, control theorists assume a constant proclivity to deviate, arguing that it is the degree of control that varies and is of greatest substantive importance. This does not leave much room for motivational considerations, as from the control point of view motivations or "meanings" are seen as either fixed or irrelevant. Reflecting on such concerns, we recently developed a symbolic interactionist perspective on the desistance process that serves as a conceptual counterpoint to the age-graded theory of informal social control.

#### The Theory of Cognitive Transformation

A fundamental criticism of control theory and indeed most sociological treatments of the life course is that it places too much conceptual weight on a few key transition events, themselves currently in a state of change and uncertainty. The focus is on the actions of the change agent, while the actor is depicted as moving from adolescence to adulthood virtually unchanged, but for the good fortune of experiencing one or more of these events. A symbolic interactionist theory of desistance to a greater extent thrusts the actor and actor-based changes into the foreground.<sup>4</sup> Further, Mead (1934) highlighted that all but the most habitual of actions engage cognitive processes. Thus, we proposed a more conditional-upon-cognitive-transformations view of criminal continuity and change (Giordano et al. 2002; see also Farrall and Bowling 1999; Maruna 2001; Shover 1985, 1996). In describing specific types of cognitive transformations linked to desistance, we also found it useful to distinguish cognitive and associated behavioral changes that can be linked to one's relationship with a spouse (or exposure to other transformative experiences—we called these "hooks for change") and those that appear to unfold somewhat independently of these role-based changes. The present analysis preserves this distinction, but considers the role of emotions in relation to these two types of changes.

Our cognitive perspective emphasized that a basic motivation to change generally precedes and accompanies sustained behavior change, but high-

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent general introduction to the symbolic interactionist perspective as it applies to criminological issues, see Matsueda (1992) and Matsueda and Heimer (1997).

lighted that individuals also vary in their openness and receptivity to particular “hooks.” Thus, for example, Uggen (2000) found that somewhat older men were more likely to benefit from job training when compared with their younger counterparts—this hints at the importance of differential openness or receptivity to change efforts. Similarly, while faith-based intervention programs for offenders are well intentioned, some individuals will undoubtedly be more receptive than others to such efforts, and this may also be the case for the same individual at different points in the life course. Mead (1934) noted that cognitive processes (and hence changes in cognitions) emerge through a process of role taking, which Shott described succinctly as the “process of putting oneself in another’s position and taking that person’s perspective” (Shott 1979, p. 1323). According to Mead and other symbolic interactionists, then, thoughts, while located within the individual, are nevertheless deeply social in origin. This is an important point, because it steers us away from a view of cognitive transformations as deriving from individualistic mental processes.

Social experiences are important catalysts for change as they foster new definitions of the situation (i.e., new attitudes) and a blueprint for how to succeed as a changed individual. These notions fit well within the social learning tradition, but we believe this somewhat more intentional, cognitive version adds to traditional emphases of differential association theory (Sutherland 1947). Specifically, we highlighted that, particularly in adulthood, the individual has an important role in making agentic moves in the direction of others who subsequently provide and reinforce the new definitions (Giordano et al. 2002; see also Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). And, consistent with other symbolic interactionist approaches, views of self are seen as providing a higher level of organization and coherence to these attitudes/cognitions and thus may operate so as to preserve behavioral continuity or foster substantial change (Matsueda and Heimer 1997). For example, some environments, such as prison, seem to provide an impetus for change, yet provide little in the way of a satisfying and achievable replacement self. Finally we focused particular attention on the role of contrast effects in connection with role-taking and social influence processes. Offenders have much to learn from others whose behavior presents a strong contrast to their own criminal lifestyles, and this contrast poses a distinct developmental challenge that maximizes opportunities for further growth and development.<sup>5</sup>

As we describe in more detail below, this focus on contrast effects, while generally helpful, does not offer a comprehensive view of role-taking

<sup>5</sup> This accords with Mead’s discussion of the role of the problematic situation (see e.g., Mead 1904, pp. 604–5; see also Giordano et al. 2002).

processes and, accordingly, of the social mechanisms that influence desistance from crime. Emotions also emerge in connection with role-taking experiences and thus need to be incorporated into a more complete symbolic interactionist perspective on criminal continuity and change. Fairly subtle, incremental shifts in the character and management of the emotions may facilitate desistance, and explicit attention to emotional processes provides needed detail about the hows but especially the whys of such role-based changes as the “good marriage effect.” A perspective that includes the emotions is also useful to extend our prior interest in self-views to include attention to the actor’s “emotional self.” Our view is that emotional identities and self-representations can (1) foster criminal continuity or (2) increase the likelihood of experiencing episodic derailments from a pattern of forward progress. The latter represent embarrassing negative cases for the theory of cognitive transformation, and under some conditions (i.e., the presence of a stable marriage) for the age-graded theory of informal social control.

#### A NEO-MEADIAN THEORY OF EMOTIONS AND CRIME

Researchers across a number of disciplines are giving greater attention to emotions as an important object of inquiry and basis of human action (Collins 2004; Lawler and Thye 1999; Massey 2002; Pacherie 2002; Turner 2000).<sup>6</sup> Following the early lead of scholars such as Dewey (1895), researchers have also increasingly positioned themselves against the view of cognitions and emotions as oppositional forces, instead forging a variety of interconnections (see, e.g., Freeman 2000; Lively and Heise 2004; Schwarz 2000; Seeburger 1992). This suggests the general feasibility of specifying a broader symbolic interactionist approach to desistance that encompasses emotional as well as cognitive processes.<sup>7</sup>

Within criminology, emotions are not central to most theoretical perspectives, including Sampson and Laub’s control theory, yet the work of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Braithwaite (1989), and Agnew (1992)

<sup>6</sup> The recent intellectual interest in emotions stands in contrast to a much longer tradition that downplayed or even denigrated the affective, subjective side of human experiences. As Scheff (1990, p. 294) notes, “most formal theories of human behavior are biased toward rational or material models of causation, because emotion and mood do not seem real in our civilization.”

<sup>7</sup> Mead (1904) argued that both emotions and cognitions arise from “problematic situations,” i.e., situations in which the actor cannot proceed ahead on the basis of past habit—by virtue of the new situation, actions are blocked. This provides a Meadian rationale for considering emotions and cognitions as interconnected phenomena (since both unfold—or not—under similar circumstances). We are grateful to Ross Matsueda for developing this insight.

are important exceptions. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) develop the argument that low self-control and associated impulsivity are features of the individual personality that emerge early and continue as relatively enduring traits throughout the life course. Some psychological research, such as the notion of a “hostile attributional bias” also fosters the idea of relatively stable individual differences in emotional attitudes and reactions that are linked to antisocial behavior (e.g., Lochman and Dodge 1994). These conceptions are consequential to theory building: to the degree that we accept the notion that emotions derive from stable traits, it would be neither useful nor necessary to develop a life course view of emotional processes. Agnew and Braithwaite’s analyses offer a more dynamic view of the connections between emotions and crime, suggesting the utility of a life course approach. Braithwaite focused primarily on shaming processes, an emotion that resonates most clearly with theories of informal social control, but one that has symbolic interactionist roots as well (Mead 1918). Our analysis draws on this prior work on shame but directs attention to other emotions: anger, excitement, sadness, and love.<sup>8</sup>

#### Emotional Changes Not Tied to Major Role Transitions

Agnew (1992) highlighted the role of anger in the genesis of delinquent behavior, arguing that while a number of different sources may produce a condition of strain, delinquent involvement is more likely when negative life circumstances have elicited an angry emotional reaction. Agnew also suggested that features of the adolescent period foster increases in this emotion and the spike in delinquency routinely observed during the teen years (Agnew 1997). In our view, a neo-Meadian approach to emotions can make a contribution to our understanding of these processes, as Agnew has suggested that crime is “conditional” on anger, but has not fully elucidated the origins of the angry response.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that the definition of situations as aversive ones and angry reactions themselves emerge through a process of role taking. Identification is strong within the context of early family life and particularly within the parent-child bond. Thus, while some negative

<sup>8</sup> Shott (1979, p. 1323) labeled emotions such as *shame* and *embarrassment* “the role-taking emotions,” as these “virtually require role-taking for their evocation.” More recently scholars have broadened the definition, in effect arguing that role taking is involved in all emotional experience (Engdahl 2004). This expanded definition accords with our interest in moving beyond shaming processes to consider other emotion links to persistence and desistance.

<sup>9</sup> In a recent analysis, Agnew et al. (2002) link the angry response to personality traits of the individual, thus contrasting further with the perspective offered in the present investigation.

stimuli may derive from circumstances outside the family, the family is likely to be an important site for the initial development of an angry repertoire and over time an angry self. For example, a singular negative event such as breaking up with a girlfriend is unlikely to sustain a stable anger identity. Recurrent role-taking experiences will generally be required to shape and solidify the angry self.

Self-control theory (see Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) and our neo-Meadian approach may equally theorize an important role for the angry persona, but a symbolic interactionist perspective ascribes a social origin to these aspects of the self and emphasizes their potential malleability in light of subsequent social experiences. As individuals move forward into adulthood, then, role-taking opportunities across an ever wider set of social arenas may result in *a diminution of the negative emotions that originally connected to criminal behavior*. In line with our prior focus on cognitive processes, we argue that new attitudes and definitions (cognitions) are central to these emotional transformations.

Katz's (1988) phenomenological approach adds to this emotional picture in his focus on the positive, sensate qualities of crime. This view is consistent with many delinquents' own accounts of the thrills and excitement associated with their criminal exploits (Shaw 1930). The developmentally appropriate emphasis on peers during adolescence provides a desirable social forum within which some youths learn to imbue specific behaviors such as drug/alcohol use, fighting, or stealing with these positive meanings. Yet the idea of positive emotional connections and an emotional resonance (both with criminal activities themselves and the personal associations that foster them) adds to Sutherland's (1947) more cognitively oriented "excess of definitions" emphasis. And a youth's developing self-concept as one who is always "up" for a party or a fight helps to round out the self, providing a sense of worth (an initial move toward self-realization—albeit of a particularistic sort) that would be more difficult to craft and sustain relying on themes of victimization and anger alone. Again, however, as youths move into the adult period, these positive emotional connections to crime and associated views of self are less likely to receive social backing of any kind. Thus a gradual *diminution of positive emotions connected to crime* may also be associated with desistance processes.

The changes in emotions described above are part of what can be considered the full or "real" emotional experience (Engdahl 2004). However, Hochschild and other sociology of emotions researchers highlight the distinction between emotions as actually experienced and as manipulated, managed, or displayed to others (Hochschild 1979; Scheff 1990). Thus, a third life course change in the emotional realm with implications for desistance is an *increased ability to regulate or manage the emotions in socially acceptable ways*. The various coping strategies delinquents



learn and increasingly find palatable may not be particularly distinctive or novel (accessing one's social support network, leaving a room), but the stakes are higher than for many other young adults. These life lessons are hypothesized to result from added exposure to others who themselves routinely exhibit age-appropriate coping strategies and continue to express disapproval of what are increasingly viewed by others (and eventually the self) as the actor's own more inappropriate and childish actions.

Cognitive transformations are important to the success of behavioral changes that may result from these role-taking experiences as, over time, delinquents may come to understand the degree to which their participation in delinquency and drug abuse has in fact *been* a less than ideal coping strategy (Cullen 1984). Cognitive connections of this sort are related to surface level emotional changes (the management idea), but eventually to changes in the character of the emotional experience, and in the meaning and salience of the deviant behavior itself. As described in more detail in our theory of cognitive transformation, the latter can be considered the capstone in terms of cognitive shifts associated with sustained behavior change (Giordano et al. 2002).

The emotional mellowing processes described above are likely inter-related. Thus, actors who are no longer as hostile toward their parents as during their youth (a diminution of negative emotions) may in adulthood be more likely to turn to them as an important source of social support (increased skill in emotion management). Our key point here is that while such emotional changes may indeed be associated with a "good marriage effect," these may also occur as a part of development; in brief, they do not fundamentally depend on the actions of a spouse or other obvious catalyst.<sup>10</sup>

It is useful to foreground developmental changes in the character and management of emotions as this serves to highlight that the emotional self has a certain integrity and independence. Emotions conceptualized as self-feelings as well as a stance toward the outer world emerge as a consequential, ever-present feature of the self (Engdahl 2004; Lupton 1998). Yet individuals will vary in the nature of their adult social experiences and in their openness to new directions. While associated with negative and sometimes costly interchanges, from a symbolic interactionist point of view, the angry self has meaning, incorporating aspects of past

<sup>10</sup> Sampson and Laub have been critical of developmental approaches, arguing that they derive from psychology, evoke the idea of fixed stages, and are inconsistent with a life course perspective (Laub and Sampson 2001, 2003). We disagree with this assessment, favoring Mead's highly sociological conception of development as arising "in the process of social experiences and activity; that is develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (Mead 1964, p. 199).

social experiences, present circumstances, and (emotional) attitude taking into an imagined future. The angry self can, for example, take care of itself in new and potentially frightening social situations. Thus, we expect that while criminal involvement generally decreases with age, those within an adult sample who continue to evidence a stronger anger identity will be more likely to persist in crime and violent behavior—even after traditional predictors, including marital attachment, employment circumstances, and their own early behavioral profiles—have been taken into account.

The role of positive emotions such as excitement during the adult years is likely more complex. During adolescence, delinquent acts come to be associated with excitement or thrills. Yet as suggested above, this positive heightened emotionality is difficult to sustain, and for those with a chronic history of delinquency may be replaced in adulthood with feelings of regret, sadness, and depression.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while a diminution of positive emotional connections to crime should prove generally helpful, for mature offenders the more relevant adult emotional dynamic is likely to be depression. Negative emotional attitudes may directly inhibit the actor's ability to see a way out or make a concrete move away from criminal activity.<sup>12</sup> Numerous studies have documented the presence of co-occurring disorders in jail and prison populations and in more general epidemiological surveys (Abram and Teplin 1991), but it is also important to consider this emotional stance toward the outer world and the self as potentially directly inhibiting desistance processes as well.<sup>13</sup> We expect that higher levels of adult depression in a follow-up sample of juvenile offenders will be associated with criminal persistence, net of traditional predictors such as marital attachment and prior delinquent history.

We have suggested that patterns of stability and change in emotions can proceed alongside or completely independent of major role transitions. As suggested above, this contrasts with stable trait notions, but also with Sampson and Laub's life course approach. The changes we described can also, however, be seen as providing an appropriate developmental back-

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent general description of this shifting emotional landscape for delinquent youths, see Hagan, McCarthy, and Foster (2002). This notion of changes in the character of emotional connections to crime is also generally consistent with Laub and Sampson's (2001) observation that factors influencing the initial onset of crime need not be similarly implicated in adult persistence and desistance processes.

<sup>12</sup> That individuals find themselves emotionally "stuck" in a pattern they find increasingly difficult to justify to self and others in terms of fun, excitement, or other positive meanings contributes further to negative emotions.

<sup>13</sup> Maruna (2001) has described the worldviews of persisters as containing an element of resignation and negativity. These worldviews could be a reflection of individual differences between the more and less successful offenders, but also could be conceptualized as potentially malleable feeling states.

drop (an emotional openness) to the very role performances that have, in prior research, been shown to have a conventionalizing effect. This leads us to describe such developmentally based dynamics as “secondary desistance processes.” Recognizing that role-based processes such as the transition to marriage can be highly consequential, however, we next consider how attention to the emotional realm adds to an understanding of such changes (we call these “primary desistance processes”), beyond the mechanisms previously elucidated in control or cognitively oriented studies of the desistance process.

### Role-Based Changes

Braithwaite (1989) emphasized the importance of shaming processes to successful desistance from crime. Our own view is that while groups may indeed shame their members (and to good effect), individuals will not often search out new prosocial affiliations because of their shaming potential. For chronic offenders whose emotional lives and selves are characterized by a large measure of anger and depression and who have been marginalized in multiple respects, shame only adds to the downward emotional themes about the self that the actor has accumulated from previous role-taking experiences.<sup>14</sup> That the individual actively seeks liaisons or settings that will heighten feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment seems counterintuitive and incompatible with a number of theorists’ emphasis on the human striving for self-realization and a sense of worth or purpose (McAdams et al. 1997).<sup>15</sup> Our view is that, for individuals with a significant history of chronic offending, then, shame is unlikely to be the *first* and foremost emotional dynamic associated with long-term behavior change.<sup>16</sup>

An important aspect of Braithwaite’s theorizing, however, has been to highlight that shaming that occurs within a framework of love or caring/concern is more likely to be effective as a dynamic associated with crime cessation (Braithwaite 1989). We suggest reprioritizing these emotions, placing greater weight on emotions such as love (or variations on this emotion), and less on shaming processes. Indeed, it could be argued that

<sup>14</sup> Sherman (1993) noted that feelings of shame and defiant pride that are perceived as unjust can directly amplify deviant behavior.

<sup>15</sup> Further, chronic offenders, prior to making a move toward the prosocial, have shown themselves to be relatively inured to all manner of informal and formal shaming attempts, some undoubtedly caring and well intentioned.

<sup>16</sup> We agree with Braithwaite’s basic premise that if offenders’ early rule breaking had been met with shaming that was reintegrative, the costly spiral of negative outcomes, alienation, and further offending need not have ensued (see also Ahmed et al. 2001).

shame is always secondary to other, more promising emotions.<sup>17</sup> Sampson and Laub's (1993) emphasis on attachment processes is generally in line with this idea, but as stated at the outset, their conceptualization of the good marriage effect focuses more attention on long-term benefits (the investment or social capital notion) and more recently on the importance of added structure and monitoring (Laub and Sampson 2003).

A focus on emotional processes adds in specific ways to these theoretical emphases and to our understanding of mechanisms underlying the desistance process. First, the emotional aspects of a developing relationship are available early on; thus attention to positive emotions is useful as it helps to explain the *initial process of crossing over into prosocial territory*. Social control theory was developed as an explanation of adolescent conformity and delinquency, but during childhood, the youth's membership within the family requires little in the way of explanation.<sup>18</sup> But while the ongoing marriage similarly provides a measure of social control over individual conduct, as suggested at the outset, the initial phase of moving in the direction of a prosocial romantic partner has not been adequately explained. This early phase is important, as chronic offenders have previously shown an aversion to "routine activities," resistance to prosocial advice, and avoided monitoring or control efforts from a number of different sources. In previous work, we theorized a more intentional, agentic view of this crossing-over process, stressing the importance of the actor's own motivation to change.

The social control perspective is limited as a framework for understanding why the individual takes these initial steps toward the prosocial, and, as we argued at the outset, places too much theoretical weight on the actions of the spouse. The theory of cognitive transformation, in turn, likely overtheorizes actor-based changes in perspective and the primacy of associated agentic moves. A focus on role taking and the character of emotions elicited through these positive social interactions, however, serves to highlight the fully social aspects of the catalyst-actor relationship. Sociology of emotions scholars such as Engdahl (2004) have pointed out not only the importance of *contrasts* (our emphasis), but also stressed that role taking involves a process of *functional identification*, in which in-

<sup>17</sup> A reviewer hypothesized that this might vary, e.g., shaming might be more important than love in Japan. We agree that this could vary, but nevertheless argue that some degree of caring always precedes shaming (consistent with the original logic of control theory), and, as we argue below—and inconsistent with control theory—the character of the one who is loved is also a significant consideration.

<sup>18</sup> The emphasis appropriately rests upon ongoing family dynamics, where it has been demonstrated consistently that high levels of parental supervision and warmth are associated with a decreased likelihood of delinquency involvement (Hirschi 1969; Jang and Smith 1997; Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber 1984).

dividuals recognize that they are not precisely identical to other(s) but are functionally identical (Miller 1973). In short, some level of social coordination necessarily precedes role taking but in effect makes it possible.<sup>19</sup> For example, a parole officer or passerby may present a strong contrast to a focal actor, but absent this element of identification, role taking is not likely to occur. Love, then, for some offenders, offers a critical role-taking experience, one that draws inspiration from the process of functional identification and a new direction from the element of contrast. These coordinated social processes set up the most favorable conditions for emotional, cognitive, and behavioral transformations, as well as enhanced informal social control. This emphasis is also generally consistent with the view of scholars who have argued that emotions can be seen as providing energy or valence to new lines of action (Collins 2004; Frijda 2002).

In addition to its qualities of immediacy, the reciprocal character of the love relationship fosters concrete, *positive reflected appraisals* that allow the individual to see past the contours of the current self, envisioning at least the broad outline of a more worthy one. These engage self-feelings (emotions) as well as self-evaluations (cognitions). As the relationship develops, the prosocial spouse acts as an agent of social control, but also as an ever-present *emotional role model* and *source of social support*. Thus, chronic offenders who affiliate with a prosocial spouse benefit from continued observation of the spouse's (emotional) reactions to new situations and life experiences and from active assistance as they cope with their own. This adds conceptually to the idea that successful hooks for change will tend to provide a relatively concrete blueprint for how one is to proceed as a changed individual. Although we previously conceptualized this largely in terms of new definitions (a link to the cognitive), the dynamics involved in social learning also apply to the emotional realm.

And most fundamentally, a love relationship that elicits positive emotions, buffers negative ones, and fosters a more positive sense of self will often be experienced as a highly desirable feature of one's life. Control theorists emphasize that individuals refrain from engaging in deviant behavior in order to avoid losing such a valued relationship. A symbolic interactionist perspective, in contrast, highlights shifts in meaning, as the relationship and life course that has been forged around it are increasingly embraced as worthy end points. The positive emotional connection to

<sup>19</sup> Miller (1973) and Engdahl (2004) reference a more universal human tendency toward social coordination that is essentially precognitive and preemotional. Thus the reader should note that we have shifted the definition of this concept somewhat from their original formulation in order to highlight interactions and social relations that are on some level recognized as meaningful by the actor (see e.g., Glaser 1956).

another serves as a satisfying aspect of life that diminishes feelings of anger and the desire to search for excitement via crime-centered actions and affiliations. Over a period of time, role-taking processes within a loving relationship foster an increasingly other-directed worldview (a protective, caring stance toward the partner, toward one's children). These positive emotional connections further solidify the actor's changing view of self and eventually generalize to a wider array of others, including potential victims.

Unfortunately, the above discussion traces an ideal-typical sequence, one that depends on a strong emotional connection to the type of conventional romantic partner who is able to make a contribution to the actor's emergent view of a different and more "worthy" self. In reality, chronic offenders, even if so inclined, often face difficulties in locating prosocial partners. Further, the quality of romantic ties varies considerably, and may deteriorate from an early promising phase (see the discussion of structural disadvantage in the analysis section below). Finally, the idea of an emotional amplification process necessarily encompasses the potential for strong bonds to antisocial individuals to have an especially deleterious effect on the desistance process. Thus, in contrast to a straightforward social control perspective (wherein attachment is uniformly theorized as beneficial), we expect to find that the emotional valence of the relationship operates in concert with the partner's crime level in its effect on the offender's own level of criminal involvement.

## METHODS

### Analytic Strategy and Measures

In order to investigate aspects of this neo-Meadian perspective on emotions, we rely on qualitative and quantitative data sources. Our analysis of the qualitative data informed the theoretical perspective described above, and in this article, we draw on life history narratives to illustrate conceptual categories and mechanisms that are difficult to portray relying on traditional statistical approaches.<sup>20</sup> However, the narrative data do not allow a formal test of aspects of the theory. In order to investigate associations more systematically, we rely on data derived from three waves of structured interviews with a sample of delinquent youth as they have matured into adulthood. Our objectives are to determine whether variations in the characteristics of respondents' emotional lives (here we focus

<sup>20</sup> For example, we demonstrate linkages between social, cognitive, and emotional processes, identify distinct emotional adaptations that would potentially be obscured by a focus on aggregate trends, and explore a specific "derailment" scenario.

on anger identity and depression) are related to patterns of adult criminality, once sociodemographic characteristics, early behavior (reflecting the idea of a stable trait), and adult social bonds (an emphasis of the age-graded theory of informal social control) have been taken into account. We also explore the amplifying role of emotional processes in connection with romantic partner effects.

We first present primarily cross-sectional results based on the first adult follow-up conducted in 1995. We assess the relationship between adult anger identity and three problem outcomes (criminal behavior, relationship violence, and problems resulting from the use of alcohol and drugs) by estimating ordinary least squares models that include as predictors basic sociodemographic information (race, gender, age, poverty status), attachment to spouse/intimate partner, marital status, a measure of employment circumstances, and prior delinquent history (adolescent delinquency was measured during the initial interview in 1982).<sup>21</sup> We also examine whether adult levels of depression are related to these outcomes, by estimating similar models. Although not a central focus of the current analysis, our sample characteristics provide the opportunity to explore the possibility of distinctly gendered mechanisms. Accordingly, gender interactions are included as a final step in the analyses. A third set of analyses examines the moderating role of emotion in connection with a revised social learning approach to “the good marriage effect.” We assess whether the level of attachment to the spouse/intimate partner influences the effect of the partner’s criminality by introducing a marital happiness by partner’s crime interaction term into a model focused on the respondent’s own criminal involvement.

Using data from the 2003 interviews, as well as information derived from the 1995 follow-up, we estimate models that again focus on these substantive relationships, but assess the respondent’s pattern of behavior across a longer span of time. The results of these models should be viewed as more tentative, due to the smaller number of respondents for whom both 1995 and 2003 scores on the various problem behavior indices are available. Nevertheless, this approach does allow a prospective examination of these processes. We rely on multinomial logistic regression to distinguish three patterns: respondents who evidenced a consistent pattern of desistance from crime across both adult waves (desisters), those whose behavior could be described as more episodic/inconsistent (they report criminal involvement either in 1995 or 2003, but not across both periods

<sup>21</sup> Although relationship violence and drug/alcohol problems are not always in themselves “legally actionable,” these are other problem areas that, particularly in adulthood, frequently figure directly or indirectly into continued difficulties with the law.

(unstable offenders), and those who evidenced high criminality at both waves (persistent offenders).

In 1982 we conducted personal interviews with 254 serious adolescent offenders. This includes the total population of the only state-level institution for girls in Ohio ( $n = 127$ ) and a sample of male adolescents drawn from the populations of three institutions ( $n = 127$ ).<sup>22</sup> In 1995 we attempted to locate all of the respondents who had participated in the adolescent interviews, and eventually found and interviewed 83% of the first wave respondents presumed to be alive in 1995 (six were known to be deceased;  $n = 210$ ). Respondents at that time were an average 29 years of age. We recently completed a new wave of interviews (in 2003) with these respondents, eventually locating 74% ( $n = 153$ ) of the sample who had participated in the first adult follow-up.<sup>23</sup> A logistic regression analysis comparing those interviewed and not interviewed in 1995 revealed no significant differences by race, social class, or 1982 delinquency level, but those interviewed were more likely to be female and somewhat younger ( $P < .05$ ) than those not reinterviewed. A total of 109 women and 101 men participated in this initial follow up. Analyses focused on the time 3 subsample indicate no significant differences by race, gender, or prior delinquency involvement, but those reinterviewed in 2003 were somewhat more likely to be older than those not reinterviewed. All the items included in the scales that follow are shown in appendix A.

#### Problem Adult Outcomes

*Criminal involvement.*—Adult crime was measured at both adult interviews by a modified version of Elliot, Huizinga, and Ageton's (1985) self-

<sup>22</sup> These youths reported extensive criminal activity during the adolescent interview, and involvement across a range of offenses exceeded the average levels of delinquency reported by youths who participated in a comparable neighborhood survey (including the high-rate offenders in the neighborhood study). For a more detailed description of the nature and extent of the offense involvement of the original sample of male and female respondents, see Cernkovich, Giordano, and Pugh (1985).

<sup>23</sup> Many respondents within this sample were extremely difficult to track and locate, due to their marginal and shifting housing arrangements, and, in some cases, desire to avoid detection due to legal problems. In addition to traditional follow-up procedures (phone calls, letters, record checks), we relied on a variety of nonstandard techniques. For example, the interviewer recently located one individual at a Narcotics Anonymous dance and another after four unsuccessful trips to Dayton. On the fifth trip, the respondent's sister accompanied the interviewer to 14 different crack houses in the Dayton area, eventually locating the focal respondent.



reported delinquency scale.<sup>24</sup> The reference period is the last 12 months ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The multinomial models rely on three categories of offending based on both self-report inventories and incarceration histories. Respondents were classified as *desisters* if they reported a low level or no involvement in crime and were not incarcerated at either wave. *Unstable* offenders reported higher levels of involvement or were incarcerated at one of the waves, and *persisters* evidenced involvement or incarceration at both waves.<sup>25</sup> The *partner's criminal involvement index* was derived from a similar inventory, also completed by the respondent in 1995, where the referent is the partner's criminal activity over the prior 12 month period ( $\alpha = .83$ ).<sup>26</sup>

*Perpetration of relationship violence.*—A modified version of the conflict tactics scale (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1980) is used to assess the degree to which respondents self-report perpetration of an escalating set of violent behaviors in the context of a marital or other intimate relationship ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The reference period is the last 12 months. The multinomial results rely on a more generic *violence* subscale, as the intimate partner violence index was not administered at the time of the 2003 wave (see app. A). Respondents who reported no serious violent acts at either

<sup>24</sup> Items were deleted that would have been inappropriate for this adult sample (i.e., status offenses). Each offense was also assigned a ratio-score seriousness weight derived from the National Survey of Crime Severity, in order to avoid the swamping effect of reports of frequent involvement in relatively minor offenses (Wolfgang et al. 1985, pp. 46–50).

<sup>25</sup> At the second wave, the criminal involvement index ranges from 6.51 to 38.30 with a mean of 10.79. At the third wave, the range is from 6.51 to 46.94 with a mean of 9.86. For purposes of these analyses, respondents whose score is 8.75 or below are considered desisters. This reflects either a low rate of involvement in one or two minor offenses (e.g., being drunk in a public place), or no reported involvement. Using this classification scheme, 42 (31.1%) are considered persistent offenders, 50 (37%) desisters, and 43 (31.9%) unstable offenders. We recognize that the multinomial approach is not ideal. It would be preferable to rely on yearly measures, in order to document crime patterns more precisely. Thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that respondents have offended during the intervals not covered by the self-report inventories. However, this modeling strategy does provide a longer window of assessment than the cross-sectional approach. One reviewer also expressed concern that the criminal offender classification included incarceration status, since criminal justice involvement could relate to system biases as well as behavior differences. We agree with this point, but are nevertheless reluctant to consider individuals we interviewed while in prison doing well in terms of desistance from crime. In addition, the violence and drug analyses help to alleviate this concern, as they rely exclusively on self-reports, and, as shown below, reveal generally similar patterns of association.

<sup>26</sup> All respondents who named an intimate romantic partner completed this instrument, whether or not they were currently married to this partner. Analyses shown are not restricted to married partners, as a majority of the respondents in this highly marginal sample were not married at the time of either adult follow-up (these circumstances are discussed further in the results section).

wave were considered desisters, unstable offenders reported violence at one wave, and persistent offenders reported at least one serious violent act at both waves.

*Problem use of alcohol and drugs.*—The extent of alcohol and/or drug related problems is assessed in 1995 and 2003 with a modified version of Jessor and Jessor's (1977) scale, as revised for use in the National Youth Survey (Elliott et al. 1985;  $\alpha = .88$ ) For purposes of the multinomial models, those desisting from drug and alcohol problems reported scores below the median on this scale at both waves, unstable respondents scored above the median at one wave, and persisters reported levels of problem use above the median at both waves.

#### Emotional Constructs

*Anger identity.*—The adult (for the 1995 survey) protocol includes a five-item scale that taps anger dimensions of the respondent's emotional self-concept. This includes items such as "When people say or do something that hurts me, I usually try to hurt them back," and "I can be a pretty mean person" ( $\alpha = .74$ ).

*Depression.*—To measure the respondent's current affective state (1995), we use eight items drawn primarily from the Langner (1962) index, as described in Mirowsky and Ross (1989). Respondents indicated how often during the past 12 months they had experienced certain symptoms, such as feeling "low in spirits" or "wondered if anything is worthwhile" ( $\alpha = .84$ ).<sup>27</sup>

*(Marital/intimate partner) happiness.*—We rely on a slightly revised version of Spanier's (1976) single-item measure of marital happiness (1995).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> This short instrument is not ideal, but does provide a general index of the respondent's current level of depressed mood. Depression is conventionally viewed as a disease or mental disorder, but we see value in considering this as one aspect of the emotional self's content. Individuals responding to such interview questions are describing their current self-relevant feelings and stance toward the outer world. These can thus be seen as self-processes, but here the referent is feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and the like. That depression is known to be deeply influenced by one's social circumstances and in turn to influence them also accords with a neo-Meadian perspective on this aspect of the actor's self-feelings and self-evaluations.

<sup>28</sup> In a previous analysis (Giordano et al. 2002), we relied on a five-item measure of attachment to the spouse or partner. While this scale was characterized by acceptable reliability, it was not significantly related to adult self-reported crime or likelihood of recent arrests. Consistent with our conceptual focus in this analysis, here we employ a measure of marital happiness that appears more face valid as capturing an emotional component of the bond. Respondents are asked to consider the following: "The numbers on the line (from 1 to 7) represent degrees of happiness in relationships. The middle point (4) represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please tell me which

## Background Variables

*Race.*—The race variable is dichotomized as white versus African-American (African-American = 1).<sup>29</sup> *Gender* and *age* are also introduced as controls in the multivariate models, and models include a dummy variable for *poverty status* in 1995. This variable indexes whether respondent reports a total household income at or below the \$10,000–\$17,999 range. In 1995, the poverty line for a family of four was \$15,000.

*Delinquency.*—Adolescent involvement in delinquency is measured by the 27-item version of the Elliott et al. (1985) scale administered as a part of the adolescent interview in 1982 ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

*Adolescent drug and alcohol use* (two items from the larger delinquency scale) is used as a control in models focused on adult drug and alcohol problems.

*Occupational prestige.*—Aside from our interest in marital or relationship happiness, a further measure of the quality of adult social bonds is an occupational prestige ranking that classifies the respondent's occupation, as reported in 1995, ranging from executives, administrators, and managers (coded 7) to service workers and laborers (coded 1 in both cases).

*Marital status.*—Marital status in 1995 is also included in the models (married = 1).

## Qualitative Analysis

In 1995, we elicited open-ended life history narratives from 97 women and 83 men in the sample. The narratives consist of tape recorded interviews conducted in most instances immediately following the completed structured protocol at wave 2. Although this analysis of emotional processes primarily focuses on the lengthy 1995 interviews, we also draw on the new 2003 open-ended interviews to provide a window on how these respondents have fared over the years, since the original life history narrative was elicited.<sup>30</sup>

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number best describes the level of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship with your spouse/partner or girl or boyfriend." Responses range from 1 (extremely unhappy) to 7 (perfect).

<sup>29</sup> Those in the "other race" category are omitted from the quantitative analyses due to the small number in this group, but these respondents are included in the narrative analysis. Results are generally similar when we estimated models using the larger "nonwhite" sample as a contrast.

<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed description of our general approach to the life histories, see Giordano et al. (2002); more detail about the analysis of emotional processes is included in app. B.

EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS NOT TIED TO MAJOR ROLE TRANSITIONS

A Diminution of Negative Emotions

Consistent with prior research on desistance, we observe declines in criminal involvement over the three waves of interviews, as these delinquent youths have matured into adulthood.<sup>31</sup> The life stories elicited at the time of the initial adult interview encompassed a range of topics, but centered on the basic question of how respondents were doing, focusing on crime and well-being more broadly defined. Nevertheless, many narratives eventually reached back to the childhood and adolescent years, as respondents attempted to provide answers to this question. The frequent references to emotions associated with childhood experiences illustrates in a general way, then, that these dynamics may be important not only to an understanding of onset processes, but to the process of desisting as well. These life histories support Agnew's (1992) central focus on anger, as this emotion is frequently mentioned as respondents provide their own accounts of the character of "the early years." While we cannot rule out biological explanations, or the idea that negative emotionality is a personality trait (Agnew et al. 2002), these data highlight that many of these reactions and feelings do appear to have strong social underpinnings. And consistent with our focus on identification processes, the family appears as a frequent site wherein the angry self develops and solidifies:

My dad [was very abusive to mom] in front of me, throw food at her. . . . We used to have to sleep in closets and stuff to hide from him. . . . I remember sleeping in the closet when I was about seven.—Greg

I think I was in the second grade and a boy pushed me down . . . and I went home crying, . . . saying that he beat me up and all this and I remember my Aunt Juanita . . . picked me up and she said what he did to you is not half of what I'm going to do to you, . . . and she beat me up and she said you better do that to him. So I went back the next day and I beat him up. And I just kept doing it and doing it. And they [mother and aunt] would show me how to fight and how to get better.—Stephanie

[It was] like the evil stepmother . . . beat me when dad wasn't around. It was like Cinderella. I was too small [to fight back], . . . too scared.—Eric

These excerpts do provide support for a social learning perspective, but the traditional emphasis on learning "definitions favorable to law violations" does not adequately reflect the child's emotional response to many of these unfortunate family circumstances. Thus, these discussions of the

<sup>31</sup> For a more thorough analysis of aggregate trends, see Schroeder (2005).

early years often include emotional reactions as an integral aspect and consequence of this learning process (*Hell no I didn't sit there. I left. Pissed me off. Got hot under the collar . . . pissed off and left*). Yet in spite of the negative, aversive qualities of many of these early experiences, the respondents' comments as adults sometimes reflect changes in reactions to what were—during childhood and adolescence—quite “logically” experienced as extremely distressing, and ultimately anger-eliciting social experiences. This relates to the first developmental shift with implications for desistance processes, namely, a *diminution of the negative emotions* originally connected to criminal activity:

Now I have a better relationship with my mother. I know at the time I was 14 and 15 years old I really had resentments with my mother, and she worked two jobs so I really couldn't bond with my mother, build no relationship and I really had a resentment with my mother for that, but I thought it was her fault that my father wasn't there. . . . So I pretty much blamed my mother for everything. But today we have a better relationship and I know she was doing the best she could with what she had.—Kim

I always felt like I was neglected like I didn't have someone there, like my dad and mom . . . only gradually realized they [grandparents who raised him] were trying to make up for the loss. They were trying to be our parents. There was a lot of caring there that we didn't realize when we were growing up. And we just didn't realize it.—Gary

This idea of an emotional mellowing is consistent with other findings from our structured data. In response to a direct question about the nature of the respondent's current relationship with their mother, a majority of those in this chronic offender sample (62.9%) reported an improvement from the adolescent period.<sup>32</sup> Respondents do not necessarily connect this emotional mellowing process to traditionally measured life course events or even to changes in the behavior of the individuals involved. These emotional changes described above can thus be considered a developmental process that can take place alongside or even absent key turning points and transitions (consistent with our notion of secondary desistance mechanisms).

Analysis of all of the life histories suggests a further complication: A subgroup of the respondents has apparently achieved a more satisfactory diminution of negative emotions by further distancing themselves (emotionally, physically, or both) from these familial bonds:

<sup>32</sup> Respondents were asked: “How have your relationships with your parents changed since you were a teenager? As a starting point, would you say you feel less close, about the same, or closer to your mother (or the person who raised you) since then?” Possible responses were less close, about the same, or closer.

I spent years trying to make her be a mother to me, trying to understand why she didn't want to be a mother to me. Now I don't care. We have no relationship. A mother is someone that is there no matter what. . . . And it took me years to actually just accept it and to deal with it. But you cannot make someone be what they had no intention of being. . . . She had no intention of being a mother.—Sheryl

While the family of origin has been incorporated into virtually all theories of delinquency, these relationships have largely been ignored when it comes to theorizing about factors associated with delinquents' patterns of adult adjustment. Yet these family members do continue to mature along with respondents, and are arguably less disposable than earlier peer contacts. Thus changes in the character or at least intensity of negative feelings associated with these familial bonds may be one important social dynamic that influences the desistance process.

#### A Diminution of Positive Emotions Connected to Crime

As described at the outset, Katz (1988) contributed significantly to our understanding of crime by focusing on its positive, sensate qualities. This adds to the roster of emotions that come to be associated with criminal activity. If the "early years" narratives referenced only frightening or anger-inducing incidents such as those described above, the individual would be left with a view of self as a rather hapless, pathetic victim. This is often not the case, as these descriptions of respondents' attitudes toward their early criminal involvement reflect:

It's like, "Come on Betsy, we're going to go here!" and . . . it's like I don't want to miss a party.—Betsy

It was like a rush, you know, let's see what we can do today and get away with.—Kristen

It excited me to do different things . . . to see what I could and what I couldn't get away with.—Paul

Me and my friends, . . . we'd sit around and giggle about [the news reports on houses we burglarized] . . . like, them motherfuckers just don't know who it is.—Steve

While the life stories contain considerable evidence of childhood victimization, then, these examples suggest that youths nevertheless were able to carve out a more active, positive sense of self as they described themselves as a partier, a risk taker, or a rebel. As part of this process, respondents may have imbued some of the apparent causes of crime as

well as crime itself with these positive meanings. For example, while Rhonda believed that peer influence was an important factor that led to her delinquency involvement, she nevertheless actively cultivated a friendship with a delinquent companion she described as more exciting than her square friend Jackie: "Sunshine seemed more exciting than Jackie. She always had new clothes, money, boys around her. Even though Jackie was prettier, Sunshine was more popular. It was the thrill to be with Sunshine because she received more attention from other people."

These social connections are important, as role taking with friends fosters crime-relevant emotions (the thrill, the rush, the fun of sitting around and giggling about it) as well as providing the social context for actually carrying out delinquent activity. Sections of the narratives concerning the adult years do not contain many references to the excitement connected with nonconformity or the criminal lifestyle. Almost by definition a *chronic* offender will have been involved in crime scenes, fights, and drug-related social experiences (and frequently extensive fallout from them) many times over in the intervening years (Shover 1985, p. 90). These changes in the way the deviant lifestyle is experienced *emotionally* as well as cognitively can provide a backdrop for making further and more forward-looking life changes:

When I was a teenager, life was just a big party. It wasn't you know I didn't have no responsibilities . . . I acted on impulse—everything I did was impulse—you know and today if I could go back I would have been more serious about life then, because I just can't act on impulse today, you know a lot of things I did then was real stupid, it was just stupid, experiment with different things, different drugs, and that was crazy.—Donna

First, Donna's comments are not consistent with the stable trait view of impulsivity and low self-control (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), because this respondent clearly references temporal changes in this regard. Donna believes that she is now much less likely to act on impulse than during her teen years, and her low self-reported criminal involvement and lack of recent official arrests serve to substantiate the desister storyline. Nor does Sampson and Laub's modified control theory (1993) provide a comprehensive explanation here, in that the changes she references do not tie back in a straightforward way to the influence of new bonds she has acquired (Donna was not married at the time of this follow-up). Further, the idea that there is a relatively constant motivation to deviate held in check by informal controls does not seem consistent with Donna's apparent shift in perspective. Instead, this narrative highlights that emotional dynamics that originally connect to criminal involvement can change significantly over the life course. In some instances these emotional transformations may be associated with life-altering role-based

changes (i.e., the “good marriage effect”), but may also occur as a result of a more gradual developmental process.

#### Increased Skill in Emotion Management

We have suggested that a diminution of negative as well as positive emotions (connected to crime) can be generally helpful to the desistance process. However, actors may also develop in their abilities to regulate emotions in socially acceptable ways. As suggested at the outset, this idea of emotion management highlights the distinction between emotions as actually experienced and as accommodated or displayed to others (Hochschild 1979). Both types of changes (experience vs. management) engage identity processes, as the more mature actor not only constructs a self that is less angry, and less enamored of the criminal lifestyle but one more able to “manage” emotions; that is, to cope:

When I was younger and I was so unhappy, really I didn't know the source of it. . . . Today I'm a little more able to pinpoint the source of my unhappiness. So therefore I can kind of work with it and not allow it to consume me . . . not allow it to just control everything.—Lisa

These narrative excerpts indicate that the respondents believe they have changed significantly in their capacities to directly manipulate their emotions. Such changes include an increased ability to manage original sources of stress, but also to cope with new social situations and life problems that inevitably appear on the horizon. The narratives reflect for some an increased sense of agency with respect to the emotional realm (*I can control it, I can work with it*), and may reference specific coping strategies respondents come to believe are helpful to them:

Uh, usually I call my mom and then after talking with her, I'll call Patrick and talk with him. We're kinda in the same financial situation. He's got he's goin' through some problems with his work too, which workman's comp is tryin' to deny his claim and stuff. . . . Other times I just go for a walk, then come back.—Craig

I can go and talk to them [friends], if I got problems, you know I go and talk to them. They give me advice, try to help me out any way they can. . . . Yea, let's go walk around the wilderness center, let's go to the new high school and swim, you know, play golf not let's go get drunk and you know cause problems and see if we can find somebody to beat up. —Larry



## Mechanisms underlying These Developmental Changes

Above we outlined three areas of developmental change that have implications for understanding general declines in criminality, as respondents have matured into adulthood. While these narrative excerpts suggest the importance of these shifts in feeling, we do not have access to the myriad of social situations that may have literally produced these types of transformations. It is reasonable to argue, however, that the wider social arena of adulthood, changing network affiliations, and time itself provide additional role-taking opportunities. For example, Craig suggested that now he often works things through with his friend Patrick, who is going through some of the same problems with “worker’s comp,” or calls his mom, with whom he now has developed a better relationship.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes, the same friends previously implicated in delinquent actions, in the adult years reinforce more socially productive coping (*Now we go out hunting*). Finally, actors may benefit from prior experience within their own lives, as previous social situations have evoked negative reactions from others and demonstrated costly lessons about emotions and their management. This type of learning too involves role-taking processes.

Although these changes relate to the social and emotional realms of experience, cognitive transformations are important underpinnings of these related changes. For example, Kim suggested that she experiences less resentment toward her mother at least in part because she now *knows she was doing the best she could with what she had*. Gary now believes that *there was a lot of caring there that we didn’t realize*, and recognizes that going out and getting drunk or looking for someone to beat up were not particularly effective coping strategies. Donna’s narrative reflects a different attitude toward herself (an identity shift), as she describes herself as one who *can’t act on impulse today*. In addition, Donna has redefined drugs and the party lifestyle as stupid and crazy, a cognitive transformation that is consistent with our previous focus on “changes in the meaning and desirability of the deviant behavior,” but that links directly to the emotional realm. This buttresses our notion that emotions and cognitions are deeply interconnected, and that sustained behavioral change is more likely when social, cognitive, and emotional processes align in ways that facilitate the desistance process.

<sup>33</sup> Parents are a generation older; hence they may be even farther along in terms of emotional mellowing and their own associated behavioral changes.

VARIATIONS IN THE EMOTIONAL SELF: LINKS TO PERSISTENCE/  
DESISTANCE

Anger Identity

We can also see the interplay of the cognitive, social, and emotional realms through examples within the life histories that are contrary to the prospect of change. Even though developmental changes are referenced often in the narratives, and may be associated with overall age-related declines in criminality, respondents vary significantly in access to social networks that tend to facilitate these emotional transformations, as well as in cognitive and emotional openness to change. Sandra put it quite simply: *I'm real violent towards men. I've got a real [anger] control problem. I think men are dogs.* This short example, while not reflective of change, does nevertheless illustrate several aspects of our theoretical perspective. Sandra's views of self reflect neither a basic openness to change nor receptivity to a relevant hook for change (perhaps counseling, certainly a marriage prospect), two areas we described in our previous analysis of the importance of cognitive transformations. However, in this example, it is clear that Sandra is not merely describing a cognition-behavior link—here emotion is also very much part of the equation. For Sandra, certain entrenched cognitive representations about men (she thinks they are dogs) link to her negative emotions and self-views (as an individual with an anger control problem), and both emotional and cognitive processes are intimately connected to the persistence of her negative behavior patterns (violence). The narrative data highlight that from the actor's own point of view, this identity has meaning and is a recognizable feature of the self. That is, the anger identity fits well with and incorporates aspects of the early years (in Sandra's case the past includes several highly aversive contacts with men), current social experiences (Sandra avoids relationships with men and currently has a lesbian partner), and methods for handling future problem situations.

Table 1 presents results of analyses that explore these connections more systematically, by examining patterns of variation across the sample as a whole. Using first the results of the 1995 adult interview, we examine the association between respondents' anger identities and three problem adult outcomes. Table 1 shows a significant association between anger identity and level of self-reported involvement in adult criminal behavior. These findings are significant net of sociodemographic controls, other traditional predictors of desistance (measures of adult social bonds), and remain significant when an index of prior delinquent involvement is introduced (see model 2). In addition, we observe a significant association between anger identity and self-reports of violence perpetration, and this association also remains significant in the full model. Finally, a significant relationship

TABLE 1  
NEGATIVE ADULT OUTCOMES REGRESSED ON ANGER IDENTITY

VARIABLE	CRIME		PERPETRATION OF RE- LATIONSHIP VIOLENCE		PROBLEM DRUG/ ALCOHOL USE	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Sociodemographic characteristics:						
Race (African American = 1) .....	.312***	.322***	.111	.116	.136	.164*
Age .....	-.032	-.018	-.017	-.017	-.088	-.077
Gender (female = 1) .....	-.189**	-.144*	.093	.109	-.124	-.126
Poverty .....	-.023	.007	.051	.068	-.029	-.024
Adult social bonds:						
Currently married .....	-.001	-.028	.006	.010	-.007	-.012
Marital happiness .....	-.164*	-.133*	-.259***	-.248***	-.238***	-.223**
Occupational prestige .....	-.073	-.054	-.044	-.032	-.005	.006
Emotional self:						
Anger identity .....	.190**	.144*	.257***	.239**	.345***	.329***
Adolescent behavior:						
Adolescent delinquency/substance use <sup>a</sup> ...		.289***		.140		.193**
<i>N</i> .....	183	181	173	171	177	176
<i>F</i> .....	5.70***	7.65***	4.91***	4.77***	5.82***	6.32***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> .....	.208	.287	.193	.211	.217	.255

<sup>a</sup> Adolescent delinquency is included in the models focused on crime and violence perpetration, and adolescent substance use is introduced in the problem drug/alcohol use model.

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

exists between anger identity and problems resulting from alcohol and drug use. This finding is of particular interest, since a relationship to crime but especially violence is more straightforward (particularly when relying on cross-sectional data, the latter could be seen as containing a somewhat tautological element). It is important to highlight that early delinquency (in the crime and violence models) and drug and alcohol use (in the problem drug use model) do not completely account for these associations, suggesting that this view of self is not simply a marker for a behavioral propensity. In each of these models, reported happiness with the intimate partner is inversely related to scores on these problem outcomes, in a manner consistent with Sampson and Laub's (1993) control theory. Marital status is not, however, a significant predictor.<sup>34</sup> It is also important to note that gender by anger identity interaction terms included in each of the models were not significant (results not shown). This indicates a similar effect of anger identity on women and men's self-reports of criminal involvement, perpetration of violence, and problem use of alcohol and drugs.<sup>35</sup>

Table 2 presents results assessing patterns of crime over a longer period of time. Focusing on the theoretically strongest contrast (desistance vs. persistence), we find that anger identity significantly decreases the odds of being a stable desister. In addition, this focal variable is significantly related to unstable offending (those who evidenced crime at one but not both follow-up interviews) as a contrast with desistance. The third contrast compares those who have had some adult problems with crime (unstable) with those evidencing a consistent pattern of adult crime (persistent offenders), and results are in the hypothesized direction but are

<sup>34</sup> Race is significantly related to adult crime and problems resulting from drug/alcohol use. Being female is inversely related to level of self-reported criminal involvement and remains so in the full model. Gender is not a significant predictor of reports of relationship violence or problem drug/alcohol use in this sample group. In these models, poverty status is not significant as a predictor of the various outcomes, and occupational prestige is similarly not significant. The latter results likely stem from the very low socioeconomic standing of the majority of these respondents (here poverty and economic hardship are more accurately viewed as constants than variables—see the discussion of structural disadvantage below). Adolescent delinquency explains additional variance in the crime model, and early substance use in the problem drug and alcohol model.

<sup>35</sup> Ogle et al. (1995) have suggested that women lack a well-developed vocabulary of anger, due to their early socialization. Because of this, violence by women, especially homicide incidents, often erupts in a single outburst, reflecting an extreme solution to (for example) prior extensive, repeated abuse. Our research with this serious offender sample suggests that while victimization experiences are often important underpinnings of the anger identity, this more stable self-view contributes further to a range of adult difficulties. Prior behavior (time 1 delinquency) is also a significant predictor of crime and problems associated with drug and alcohol use for women and men in this sample.

TABLE 2  
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATING LIFE COURSE OFFENDING PATTERNS: ANGER IDENTITY ( $n = 140$ )

VARIABLE	DISTANCE VS. PERSISTENCE		DISTANCE VS. UNSTABLE		UNSTABLE VS. PERSISTENCE	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Sociodemographic characteristics:						
Race (African-American = 1) .....	-1.423*	.241	-.895 <sup>+</sup>	.409	-.528	.590
Age .....	-.038	.963	-.263	.769	.225	1.252
Gender (female = 1) .....	1.389*	4.011	.502	1.652	.887	2.429
Poverty .....	-.536	.585	-.746	.474	.210	1.234
Adult social bonds:						
Marital status (married = 1) .....	-.730	.482	-.700	.496	-.029	.971
Marital happiness .....	.385 <sup>+</sup>	1.470	.369*	1.447	.016	1.016
Occupational prestige .....	-.184	.832	.081	1.084	-.264	.768
Emotional self:						
Anger identity .....	-.760*	.468	-.935***	.392	.176	1.192
Adolescent behavior:						
Adolescent delinquency .....	-.008**	.992	-.002	.998	-.005*	.995

NOTE.—Model  $\chi^2 = 54.894$  ( $P < .001$ );  $R^2_L = .184$ .

<sup>+</sup>  $P < .10$ .

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

not significant. Kim is similarly related to the desistance vs. persistence and desistance vs. unstable contrasts in offending patterns.<sup>36</sup> We also estimated models that gauge the impact of anger identity on long-term patterns of violence. Higher levels of anger identity significantly decrease the odds of being in the stable nonviolent category (desisters) relative to the stable violent offending group (persisters), and also distinguish the unstable from nonviolent desister patterns (see app. table C1). The results for drug and alcohol problems (see app. table C2) are similar to the crime findings depicted in table 2: anger identity influences the odds of being in the low-rate desister category of self-reported problem use as a contrast with a consistent pattern of reporting such problems, and also significantly predicts desistance compared with a more unstable pattern. Anger identity does not, however, distinguish the unstable vs. persistent patterns. Gender by anger identity interactions are not significant in any of the multinomial models.<sup>37</sup>

Laura's narrative is quite congruent with the results described above, but provides a concrete illustration of ways in which past, present, and future have combined to solidify and maintain a particular view of self—one that has meaning, but that appears likely to eventuate in further problems over the long haul. According to our neo-Meadian theory, this involves consequential role-taking processes, self-feelings, and associated self evaluations:

I'm not gonna go out there and look for trouble, try to pick up a fight with someone. But if I'm pushed to the point that you know, like backed in the corner or you know . . . if they're running their mouth when they shouldn't be . . . I've just gotten to the point where, you know, its "hey, I'm not lettin' people run over me no more," and if it comes down that I have to fight, then so be it. I mean that's not really a good way to feel, but the lifestyle that I had to live, I mean it come to the point of, if it comes to me or someone else, you know, then it's gonna be somebody else, it ain't gonna be me.<sup>38</sup>—Laura

Laura described herself in this manner at the time of the 1995 interview.

<sup>36</sup> In these models, race is negatively related to desistance as a contrast with both the persistence and unstable patterns, while being female is significant in the strongest comparison (desister vs. persister). Adolescent delinquency is significantly related to desistance in the same contrast, and also distinguishes unstable from persistent offenders.

<sup>37</sup> We note also that while anger identity is significantly associated with 1995 scores and predicts these offense patterns (using 1995 and 2003 scores), the anger measure is not a significant predictor of the 2003 self-reports per se.

<sup>38</sup> The self-description that Laura offers is also consistent with Anderson's (1999) depiction of worldviews that develop in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods—see the discussion of structural disadvantage below.

When we located this respondent again in connection with the more recent follow-up, she had indeed encountered many additional life course difficulties. Marital conflict and violence were key issues, culminating in divorce from her husband Big Jim, loss of her trailer, and, due to housing problems, for a time the loss of custody of her children. Although Big Jim appeared to be a source of many of Laura's difficulties, this aversive relationship (along with many others) likely contributed to Laura's own angry worldview. In turn, this view of self did not end with her divorce. For example, Laura indicated that she and her son Little Jim often get in serious fights, but also noted that if they sit down and smoke marijuana together, this tends to keep such disagreements from escalating.

### Depression

Table 3 presents results of analyses in which the adult problem outcomes are regressed on levels of self-reported depression, along with the demographic and bonding variables, and prior delinquency. In the cross-sectional results, the association between depression and total adult crime level is significant, but inclusion of prior delinquency in the model attenuates its effect. This indicates that respondents who reported higher levels of delinquency at the adolescent interview have elevated scores on depression in adulthood that are in turn associated with higher adult crime levels. It is interesting to note that marital happiness is not a significant predictor in this model that takes level of depression into account, even prior to the introduction of the control for adolescent delinquency. This indicates that depression can be viewed as a mediator of the previously observed marital happiness–crime association. Analyses described in table 3 also indicate a significant association between depression and relationship violence perpetration, as well as problem use of alcohol and drugs, net of the various controls, and these associations remain significant when prior delinquency or early drug use are included in the models. In these models, marital happiness remains a significant predictor.<sup>39</sup> Interaction results (gender by depression) also indicate a generally similar association for women and men between depression and the perpetration of relationship violence, as well as problem use of alcohol and drugs. However, a depression by gender interaction in the criminal involvement model is

<sup>39</sup> In these models race is significantly related to crime and problem drug/alcohol use, and being male is also a significant predictor of these outcomes.

TABLE 3  
NEGATIVE ADULT OUTCOMES REGRESSED ON DEPRESSION

VARIABLE	CRIME		PERPETRATION OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE		PROBLEM DRUG/ ALCOHOL USE	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Sociodemographic characteristics:						
Race (African-American = 1) .....	.305***	.317***	.106	.113	.117	.150*
Age .....	-.024	-.011	-.007	-.008	-.070	-.058
Gender (female = 1) .....	-.206**	-.156*	.066	.086	-.155*	-.156*
Poverty .....	-.006	.021	.066	.083	.055	-.009
Adult social bonds:						
Currently married .....	-.015	-.039	-.007	-.002	-.038	-.041
Marital happiness .....	-.137	-.132	-.215**	-.205**	-.190*	-.184*
Occupational prestige .....	-.078	-.057	-.045	.031	-.018	-.004
Emotional self:						
Depression .....	.144*	.113	.217**	.210**	.249**	.244**
Adolescent behavior:						
Adolescent delinquency/substance use <sup>a</sup> ....		.301***		.162*		.218*
<i>N</i> .....	183	181	173	171	177	176
<i>F</i> .....	5.18***	7.36***	4.29***	4.38***	4.02**	4.83***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> .....	.192	.279	.173	.197	.1612	.208

<sup>a</sup> Adolescent delinquency is included in the models focused on crime and violence perpetration, and adolescent substance use is introduced in the problem drug/alcohol use model.

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .



significant. In this sample group, symptoms of depression and self-reported crime are significantly related for men but not women.<sup>40</sup>

Table 4 presents the results of multinomial regressions estimating the effect of depression on offending patterns over the longer span of time. Depression decreases the odds of desistance as compared to persistence (the strongest contrast) and also distinguishes desisters from the unstable offender group; this index does not, however, distinguish the persistent from unstable offenders. Further, these self-reports of depressed mood in 1995 do not distinguish any of the violent offending patterns, viewed over the longer period, or the alcohol/drug use patterns we assessed (results not shown). Depression by gender interactions are not significant in these multinomial models.

While feelings of depression are not in themselves as strongly predictive of the full roster of problem outcomes, these self-feelings are nevertheless usefully theorized as a part of a package of emotional disadvantages that may be limiting to some offenders' desistance efforts.<sup>41</sup> Laub and Sampson's (2003) recent work concludes that persistent offenders they interviewed tended to lead lives marked by considerable instability and lack of structure. The lack of solid relationships that provide control and support in turn were associated with continued difficulties. Although these are important observations, as suggested at the outset, Laub and Sampson's theorizing does not provide a full understanding of why it is that some individuals but not others are able to forge and/or maintain stable marital ties and take full advantage of available job opportunities. One explanation stresses that both crime and the lack of adult bonds are reflections of an underlying stable trait or propensity (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), a line of reasoning that is at odds with Sampson and Laub's own life course framework and our symbolic interactionist version of it. The depression findings reported above highlight that negative affective

<sup>40</sup> The direction of this interaction is somewhat unexpected, given the gendered nature of depression and prior research that emphasizes the problem of co-occurring "disorders" among samples of women offenders (Robins 1966). It is important to underscore that the women's rates of depression in this sample are generally high, but that here we find a stronger connection to crime in the case of male offenders. This finding is exploratory, given the small sample size, but may reflect that for these women, negative affective states are associated with a variety of different life conditions, only one of which is related to their criminal involvement. Nevertheless, this intriguing result warrants additional scrutiny using larger longitudinal data sets, and the positive associations across the three types of problem outcomes provide a practical rationale for addressing the mental health needs of serious male as well as female offenders.

<sup>41</sup> A potentially useful direction for future research would be to explore in more detail particular combinations of emotions (e.g., high anger along with high levels of depression) and to assess how these differentially influence persistence and desistance processes.

TABLE 4  
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATING LIFE COURSE OFFENDING PATTERNS: DEPRESSION ( $n = 141$ )

VARIABLE	DISTANCE VS. PERSISTENCE		DISTANCE VS. UNSTABLE		UNSTABLE VS. PERSISTENCE	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Sociodemographic characteristics:						
Race (African-American = 1) .....	-1.310*	.270	-.778	.459	-.532	.588
Age .....	-.050	.951	-.281	.755	.231	1.260
Gender (female = 1) .....	1.450**	4.264	.514	1.671	.937 <sup>+</sup>	2.551
Poverty .....	-.486	.615	-.0676	.509	.189	1.209
Adult social bonds:						
Marital status (married = 1) .....	-.700	.497	-.638	.528	-.062	.940
Marital happiness .....	.296	1.344	0.277 <sup>+</sup>	1.319	.019	1.019
Employment quality .....	-.193	.824	.056	1.057	-.249	.780
Emotional self:						
Depression .....	-.440 <sup>+</sup>	.644	-.453*	.636	.013	1.013
Adolescent behavior:						
Adolescent delinquency .....	-.008**	.992	-.003	.997	-.005*	.995

NOTE.—Model  $\chi^2 = 49.334$ ;  $R^2_L = .164$ .

<sup>+</sup>  $P < .10$ .

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

states may be one of the important and potentially malleable background elements limiting the actor's ability to benefit from "hooks for change" that may be available within the environment. Given the highly disadvantaged positions of many offenders, the idea of completely reshaping their lives appears to some a daunting and potentially demoralizing challenge. Jana, quoted below, for example, expresses a level of resignation that connects emotional and cognitive processes in a narrative that does not reveal much hope for substantial change. We interviewed Jana in a friend's apartment, where she had been sleeping on the couch since her release from prison. Asked about her well-being, she replied:

*Jana:* Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes I'm depressed. Mostly depressed.

*Q:* What depresses you?

*Jana:* Um, mostly now because, since I lost my apartment . . . since I got out of jail . . . finding somewhere to stay . . . um cause I'm use to having my own [apartment]. That's what I was doing today . . . calling around for an apartment . . . I don't really see no future for myself . . . 'cause I just take it day by day. . . . I don't plan things.

*Q:* Ah, so do you see yourself working . . . or what . . . or what do you want to do?

*Jana:* I can't see myself like that.

While many individuals in this sample have experienced multiple, overlapping life difficulties, some narratives also incorporated more positive, optimistic themes. In Jana's case, however, she expressly states a view of self that is inconsistent with a forward looking, positive approach (*I don't plan things*). Our prior emphasis on cognitions seems appropriate, as thought processes are obviously an important part of the mix of influences (Jana notes that she cannot conceive of herself in the role of a working person). Yet her feelings of depression and of being overwhelmed are also part of an emotional self-view that may further limit her ability to take any kind of efficacious individual action (see also Shover's discussion of despair, [1985, pp. 132–37]). In short, the idea of openness to change and receptivity to various hooks for change needs to encompass emotional as well as cognitive dimensions of these world and self-views. When we located Jana in connection with the 2003 interview, she was again incarcerated, serving time for drug possession and child endangerment. This respondent's updated narrative reflects an even greater sense of hopelessness and resignation, as Jana candidly states that she does not plan to give up drinking, may well use cocaine in the future, and does not rule out the possibility of experiencing additional prison time.

DESISTANCE AS A FUNCTION OF ROLE-BASED CHANGES:  
EMOTIONAL MECHANISMS

The emphasis above on fairly subtle emotional processes stems from a theoretical interest in the subjective realms of experience, but it also has been influenced by the nature of the life course circumstances of the respondents who have participated in this longitudinal investigation. While a majority of the Glueck men Sampson and Laub studied went on to marry, and often spent their entire adult lives married to the same individual (Laub and Sampson 2003), a minority of the OLS offenders reported being married in 1995 (32%), and only 8% indicated that they were married at both waves of the adult interview (covering, on average, a span of nine years).<sup>42</sup> These realities provide additional context for the current finding that marital status is not significantly related to self-reported criminal involvement whether viewed cross-sectionally or longitudinally. To illustrate, 9% of the desisters, 4% of the persisters, and 12% of the unstable offenders report being married at both waves.

Within the context of this contemporary and more heterogeneous sample, then, the transition to marriage does not on its own provide us with a comprehensive framework for understanding life course continuities and changes in criminal behavior. Although the sample size is relatively modest, the design of the current study is in basic respects similar to that employed by the Gluecks, as it focuses on respondents originally incarcerated in an institution for delinquent youths. Yet our data provide a stark contrast to Laub and Sampson's portrait of the later lives of juvenile offenders, and in turn the character of the change process. Fundamental transformations in the nature and stability of marriage, a lack of job opportunities for young people with low levels of education and a criminal history (almost 90% of the OLS offenders do not have a high school diploma), along with the marginalizing effects of involvement in drug-oriented lifestyles (see e.g., Uggen and Thompson 2003) have created a much different adult landscape—one that serves to limit, at least for this type of sample, the reach and stabilizing potential of "the good marriage effect."

Yet our critique of current treatments of desistance extends beyond the call to consider dynamics that are somewhat independent of transition events, and the low base rate of occurrence of these events. Although marriage is less likely and less reliable as a route to desistance for individuals in this sample, many respondents have nevertheless been significantly influenced by romantic partners. Our contention is that even when

<sup>42</sup> Obviously, a smaller number of respondents in this subset report (a) being married to the same partner, (b) with whom they have developed a relatively consistent, high-quality bond, and (c) that is in turn supported by adequate economic resources.

we focus on the conceptually well-traveled terrain of the “good marriage effect,” attention to the emotions adds to our understanding of partner effects. First, according to our neo-Meadian theory, role taking that gives rise to positive emotional transformations requires a social situation characterized by functional identification as well as difference (Engdahl 2004). Chronic offenders thus face the difficult task not only of locating a potential partner with whom they feel a certain connection, but whose own lifestyle is sufficiently different (the contrast notion) that it is likely to be associated with new motivation and direction. A rather large number of narratives reflect the presence of identification with partners, but not the important element of contrast.

George, for example, had an extensive arrest record, and was incarcerated at the time of the first adult follow-up. George described his relationship with his former girlfriend as *storybook shit when we was out there*, and was excited that she had recently begun writing him regularly: *I already got plans with the band. . . . I’m going to Florida, I’m definitely going to see my daughter and I’m definitely going to stay out of prison. . . . I’m in school; I’m making excellent grades . . . and uh I’m doing good and I’m hearing from my old lady right*. But while the other aspects of his blueprint for change appeared promising, it did not appear that his love for Monica would prove helpful to the desistance process. George indicated that the last time he had actually seen Monica was when he had visited her in jail, where she was serving time for an aggravated attempted murder charge. When we finally located George in 2003, he had again been arrested and incarcerated, this time for parole violations. George had spent the entire time on the outside with Monica, who had, during the period of his prior incarceration, developed an addiction to heroin. This was particularly unfortunate, as George had previously been a heroin addict, a problem he had successfully surmounted: *She kept telling me, if you want to do it, we can do it together . . . and I’m like no we don’t. I don’t want to do that shit man. If you don’t see what its doing to us now then you’re never going to see it*. George’s more recent life history account makes clear that his continued legal difficulties do not all trace back to his relationship with Monica. Nevertheless, it is equally apparent that this strong emotional tie does not provide a strong foundation for making significant life changes.

Some respondents have clearly been influenced in a positive way by partners: for those respondents who have managed to develop a positive emotional connection to a traditional, prosocial other, this liaison fosters an emotional “openness,” a new beginning and strong relationship basis for developing a different lifestyle, and, in time, a more satisfying replacement self (see Wells and Stryker 1988). As Deb put it, *Something about him that makes me want to do the things I should have before. He*

*makes me feel like somebody that can accomplish something.* As we suggested at the outset, the emotional aspects of a romantic relationship are available early on and can usefully be theorized as providing motivation for new lines of action (Collins 2004).<sup>43</sup> These relatively new feelings about the other and the self are in place prior to the buildup of investments in the relationship that necessarily accrue over a longer period of time. We also suggested that after the early crossing-over period, the prosocial spouse acts as an ever-available *emotional role model*, as well as a source of informal social control. The narrative data do provide some support for this general idea. For example, Laura described her husband John: *He's a real calm guy. I'm the violent one, and he's really calm. He can take a lot.* Jada, who had also made significant lifestyle changes, developed a similar contrast theme: *He is the total opposite of me—He's very quiet and calm and doesn't make really rash decisions so some of that has worn off on me.*

The positive reflections deriving from a generally compatible but more highly prosocial partner offer a glimpse of a more worthy self, and the ongoing process of role taking with such an individual demonstrates a different style of coping. The spouse can also function more directly as a source of *social support*, as actors cope with their own constantly changing and potentially stressful life circumstances. The quote below nicely illustrates how, for a subset of the respondents, all of these positive emotional connections coalesce to solidify the new prosocial direction. Colleen reflects on her own intimate relationship:

He means a whole lot to me, he's like my own little comfort zone. We have a real good understanding, a real good relationship with one another. He's a wonderful father, not perfect yet, but I'm working on it. What I love about him most is his warm heart. He's got a huge heart, he cares about everything and everybody. He helps me out when I'm down by just allowing me to share with him whatever I'm going through, it means a lot to me because I know even if he can't do anything about the situation he'll listen. Lots of times that's all it takes for me is to just talk something through, to come up with a solution. So him just being there to listen does so much for me.

This quote is generally supportive of Sampson and Laub's (1993) social control perspective—individuals may refrain from engaging in criminal acts because they do not wish to lose such a valued relationship. Shame

<sup>43</sup> In line with a traditional learning perspective, these associations also provide a blueprint for how to proceed—a social/cognitive process we emphasized in our previous analysis. However the cognitive emphasis does not tap the full complement of mechanisms underlying the good marriage effect. Indeed, in our view emotions are at the center of the change process.

and imagined shame are also undoubtedly involved (Braithwaite 1989). Yet the idea of being held in check from doing what one would otherwise do (Sampson and Laub 1993), altering one's routine activities (Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995), or learning new prosocial definitions (Gior-dano et al. 2002) does not appear to fully capture all of the mechanisms that underlie Colleen's description of her "good marriage effect." This narrative excerpt serves to highlight that emotional feelings are integral to the transformation process. Colleen's life has changed significantly from the "early years," and her relationship provides a significant source of social support. But even more fundamentally, the positive emotional connections within the relationship help her to shape and sustain a different view of self and others (his *huge heart* opens up her heart). This social relationship is extremely rewarding and fulfilling and replaces drug use and crime as a source of positive meanings. Eventually, this facilitates a more other-directed worldview, one that is a significant part of her identity transformation (*He's a wonderful father, not perfect yet, but I'm working on it*). We note that at the latest adult follow-up, Colleen was still happily married, referred to her husband in warm and complimentary ways, and experienced no legal difficulties or problems related to drug/alcohol abuse.

Table 5 explores the amplifying role of relationship emotions (happiness) in combination with the partner's criminal behavior more systematically, relying on the larger sample who participated in the first adult follow-up interview. We estimate models that regress adult crime on the partner's level of criminal involvement as well as marital happiness. In the base model, we note that the partner's criminal involvement is a significant predictor, and also attenuates the previously observed effect of marital happiness on the respondent's own level of self-reported criminal activity.<sup>44</sup> This general pattern corresponds well with the focus in prior work on the partner's criminality (an emphasis within social learning theory) rather than the level of bonding to the partner (the social control emphasis; see also Simons et al. 2002). Yet traditional regression procedures inappropriately pit one variable against the other. According to the logic of our theorizing here, marital happiness may moderate the effect of the partner's criminality. The complete model adds the interaction, and results indicate that it is significant. That is, the criminality of the spouse/partner is strongly related to the partner's own criminal involvement, but this effect varies depending on the level of happiness that characterizes the relationship. Regardless of level of marital happiness, partner crime remains a significant predictor, but the effect is weakest at low levels of happiness, and strongest at the highest levels of perceived happiness. This finding is generally supportive of our notion that positive feelings for the

<sup>44</sup> A gender by happiness interaction term is not significant.

TABLE 5  
SELF-REPORTED ADULT CRIME REGRESSED ON PARTNER'S CRIMINAL  
INVOLVEMENT AND MARITAL HAPPINESS

VARIABLE	ADULT CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT	
	Model 1	Model 2
Sociodemographic characteristics:		
Race (African-American = 1) .....	.246***	.253***
Age .....	-.002	-.012
Gender (female = 1) .....	-.114	-.102
Poverty .....	-.000	-.010
Adult social bonds:		
Currently married .....	-.052	-.069
Marital happiness .....	-.0896	-.077
Occupational prestige .....	-.055	-.057
Criminality within social network:		
Partner's criminal involvement .....	.427***	.502***
Adolescent behavior:		
Adolescent delinquency .....	.200**	.179**
Interaction:		
Partner's criminal involvement × marital happiness .....	. . .	.144*
<i>N</i> .....	170	170
<i>F</i> .....	12.74***	12.11***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> .....	.417	.432

+  $P < .10$ .

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

partner may have motivational significance, but underscores the need to consider this in conjunction with the partner's own behavioral repertoire. These results provide evidence that attachment processes are more usefully conceptualized as part of a larger set of coalescing mechanisms rather than as stand-alone influences on the desistance process.<sup>45</sup>

The findings described above should be viewed as tentative, given the small sample size and cross-sectional nature of the analysis. Indeed, when we examined the effect of these variables relying on the two waves of interviews (recall that the sample size is even smaller in these analyses),

<sup>45</sup> These results contrast with Sampson and Laub's finding that the "effect of a deviant spouse is insignificant and close to zero" (1993, p. 191), whereas marital attachment has a "large negative effect on crime." We do not believe that this difference is due to inclusion of women in the sample. Analysis of separate models indicates strong effects for men and women. Indeed, a gender by partner crime interaction is significant, indicating a stronger effect for men (see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Holland [2003] for a more complete analysis of gender and partner influence processes).



we found a long-term effect of partner crime, but marital happiness and the interaction term (partner's crime by happiness) were not significant (results not shown). This result is not altogether surprising, since the longitudinal framework links information about partners from 1995 with a longer term pattern of behavior that includes self-reports of crime at the time of the more recent follow-up (when many respondents were no longer with the 1995 partner).<sup>46</sup>

#### TOWARD A SOCIOLOGY OF DERAILMENTS

Desistance is generally understood as reflecting a consistent pattern of crime cessation; yet reoffending, parole violations, relapse, and what Laub and Sampson (2003) refer to as a "zigzag pattern" are also extremely common occurrences observed in long-term follow-up studies of delinquent youths (see e.g., Bushway et al. 2001). These more episodic derailments present a problem for extant theories of desistance, particularly when we focus on actors who have developed strong bonds to conventional others and/or who have clearly expressed a strong commitment to turning their lives around (a cognitive transformation).<sup>47</sup> A focus on emotional processes and the emotional self, however, provides one conceptual bridge between broader life course trends and situated actions that come to be associated with specific derailment experiences.<sup>48</sup> First, we noted above that the emotional self is constantly evolving, but continually incorporates past selves into the current view (see also Mattley 2002). Second, we pointed out that one's self-feelings and stance toward the outer

<sup>46</sup> The significance of partner crime could reflect a long-term influence process; it is also possible that this variable may index level of involvement in a deviant subculture that could have a lingering influence, even if specific partners have changed over time.

<sup>47</sup> Laub and Sampson (2003) found that alcohol was often implicated in the life histories of those men in the Glueck sample who had evidenced a more episodic "zigzag" pattern. These authors also noted that some of these derailments (e.g., getting into a fight) were not considered by the men as "real crime." The latter observation is in line with a symbolic interactionist approach in highlighting some of the consequences of different systems of meaning, in addition to the impact of variations in informal social control. Laub and Sampson's finding of an association with alcohol abuse is also a useful clue about derailments. However, given the closely aligned nature of drugs and crime, particularly in the contemporary context, a return to substance abuse can more properly be classified as a particular type of failure to desist, rather than an explanation for the episodic derailment pattern.

<sup>48</sup> The affect control theory version of symbolic interactionism (see e.g., MacKinnon 1994) may be especially useful in developing a sociology of derailments, since this perspective highlights that emotions signal the relation between experiences and definitions of the situation, i.e., the theory has been useful when applied to an understanding of cognitive and emotional processes as they unfold and are modified in response to the contingencies of specific interactive situations.

world have a certain integrity or independence from the actions that flow directly from major role performances. Finally, emotions provide a needed link to corporeal processes (Shilling 1999). These considerations are especially useful as we seek to understand the behavior of individuals who have made some beneficial life changes, only to become embroiled in a violent altercation or experience a particular drug relapse. Consider, for example, Tisha's description of events that led up to an act of violence, one that occurred after a rather lengthy period of carving out a more conforming lifestyle:

*Tisha:* I was always with somebody, always, school, something, neighbors . . . I just liked to fight . . . but now I've found I got a lot more self-control than what I used to though.

*Q:* But you think you have . . . if somebody provoked you, you could unload on them?

*Tisha:* Oh yeah. I did right here. It was last year. . . . My ex-sister-in-law come down here. Me and my husband has took her two kids three different occasions, and took care of them. She come down in here doing that shit [drugs] again, so I took them again. And then she come in here, telling me what to do . . . cause I cashed her welfare check, just to get these boys some clothes for school. I was clothing them, I was sending them to school, that check in my opinion belonged to them. . . . I cashed her damn check . . . she tried to have me throwed in jail. I told her no, it ain't happening. I done told welfare all about it. You're screwed, man, you're out of it. You ain't getting no drug money. . . . Your young'uns . . . go look at them. . . . Don't they look good? Too bad, you can't have them, and then one day she was out here and commenced slapping the hell out of her boy . . . the oldest one. . . . And I'm watching her through the kitchen door . . . and Jason my boyfriend, he said, you're not getting in it. I said no I'm not, I said it's none of my business. . . . So I met them here at the front door. I said what the hell's going on. She said it ain't none of your business. I said bullshit. I said, thanks to you, HUD and Welfare and everybody else is making me have you stay here . . . whatever pertains in your life pertains to mine. I am head of this household, whatever's going on . . . and this young'un's getting a beating for . . . I . . . it is my business, cause he's in my temporary custody, not yours. . . . I've had a 12-year problem with this woman . . . for 12 years she has did nothing but intimidate me, and I've always been scared of her. I mean, because she's a bulldog (laughs) and I'm just a little thing. I mean, she's a big old girl . . . she's mean. . . . I've seen her knock men out bigger than her. You know, she just pushed me one too many times in my doorway, and I flew into her . . . and by the time we got in the house in the kitchen I commenced then to beating the hell out of her on my kitchen floor . . . and she just laid there . . . flopping . . . just a flopping . . . flopping . . . and I wasn't going to quit. I mean, I'm not the kind of person to hit somebody that ain't going to hit me back, you know . . . when they're just laying there I'll walk away. . . . I'm not that mean, you know, but on that woman . . . yeah, I was going nuts. I was just ready to lose it. I backhanded my boyfriend . . . knocked

him down clean over here into the other side of the wall onto the couch from my kitchen . . . told him you get the fuck away from me I'm killing this bitch. . . . I've had it with her . . . she'll not intimidate these children no more or me. . . . I've had it.

Given Tisha's early delinquent background and current example of a violent altercation, we might conclude that this respondent is simply impulsive and lacks self-control (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). But this line of reasoning is ultimately somewhat tautological and does little to illuminate specific patterns of crime as they unfold within a given offender's lifetime. Self-control theory, for example, neither explains Tisha's rather long period of adult desistance, nor does it shed light on the specific individual or social processes that precipitated the current incident. Tisha's longer (188 page) narrative and self-report/arrest histories suggest that Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory is more adequate as an explanation of the long period of desistance, as we observe that Tisha has a partner who provides a level of stability and support. Tisha also describes a change in perspective and identity (a cognitive transformation) that may have enhanced her desistance potential (*I've found I got a lot more self-control*). However, emotional processes and Tisha's emotional self seem central to an understanding of how and why the violent "derailment" incident unfolds.

Yet even as Tisha describes her emotional display as a case of *going nuts*, our theoretical perspective requires that we reject the notion that in this instance, emotions have "taken over," rendering useless rational faculties or relational considerations (Katz 1999). Instead, we wish to emphasize that rational and relational considerations are still very much involved, and are in good alignment with Tisha's emotional feelings. However, features of the role-taking experience itself appear to have brought to the fore a *different* set of cognitions and emotions than those which in the recent past have served well the desistance process (MacKinnon 1994). In this regard, we note that Tisha does not narrate this episode as a complete failure experience. On the contrary, her description of this social interaction includes several positive self-descriptions. But other aspects of the social situation threaten her still evolving "worthy" self, and newly earned sense of respectability (as the drug-involved relative undermines her parenting efforts, implies that she stole a welfare check, and the like) (see generally, Stryker and Burke 2000, p. 288). Thus, Tisha also brings to the current interactive situation prior aversive (role-taking) experiences with this relative that in the past have evoked anger, fear, and other negative emotions. Part of the past-present-future mix is her own knowledge that she has, in spite of her small size, shown herself to be quite capable of taking care of herself. All of these

elements combine as Tisha resorts to her old ways of resolving conflicts (Davies 1991). From the vantage point of our theoretical perspective, then, when her ex-sister-in-law *pushes her one too many times in the doorway*, Trisha does not just “lose it,” for by her own account, she was *ready to lose it*. This provides a further illustration of the idea of coalescing processes, but in this instance the confluence of social, cognitive, and emotional mechanisms is detrimental to her long-term goal of sustained behavior change. In our view, a useful direction for future research on adult crime patterns would be to forge more systematic theoretical and empirical links between symbolic interaction’s historical focus on the immediate situation, and the longer vantage point of the life course perspective (see, e.g., Joas 1985, pp. 101–3; Tedeschi 1997; Wilkinson and Fagan 2001).

#### THE CONTINUING (EMOTIONAL) IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL DISADVANTAGE

Our analysis has suggested specific ways in which the serious offender’s progress, continued difficulties, or setbacks (derailments) are better understood when emotional processes and their social origins have been taken into account. Consistent with our focus on role-taking processes, we have generally emphasized the actor’s conduct within an immediate network of affiliations. Yet scholars have stressed that the character of these networks and the social dynamics within them are shaped by broader social forces (see Stryker 1980). Interactive situations that give rise to emotional feelings such as those referenced above are influenced in myriad ways by the actor’s location in the social structure (Gordon 1990; Lively and Heise 2004). Disadvantage undoubtedly influences both role-based and less obviously role-based emotional dynamics.

First, poverty is systematically linked to the likelihood that individuals will be able to put together and maintain the type of respectability package that all researchers agree can prove a powerful hook for change. Emotional reactions to these ongoing difficulties provide a proximal, mediating link to continued involvement and/or episodic derailments. As chronic offenders have matured into adulthood, it becomes much more difficult to sustain the rather particularistic views of self that may have sufficed during the adolescent years (e.g., the loyal gang member). Those who are not doing well financially continually confront, through their day-to-day role-taking experiences, the reality that such staples of the adult worthy self as economic viability, a stable family life, and home ownership are proving elusive or impossible to secure within their own lives.<sup>49</sup> For ex-

<sup>49</sup> If emotions emerge in “problematic situations,” that is, situations in which actions

ample, George, in his most recent interview, described his feelings about a period of time when his children slept on the couch in the living room, as a contrast with his drug dealing days, when both had their own rooms. While we do not suggest that the children's sleeping arrangements literally caused the behavior of drug dealing, this evocative "scene" reflects and further engages cognitive, emotional, and linguistic processes that may serve as "hooks" for continued involvement. Highlighting the emotional valence attached to this imagery (and the life circumstances associated with the image) adds to the notion of crime as a rational choice. This also provides a needed corollary to our prior emphasis on "hooks" for change that organize the progressive narratives of more successful desisters.

Other significant life problems incorporated into the narratives do not appear to relate directly to economic issues, but on closer inspection actually contain many elements that relate to the respondents' marginal social and economic circumstances. For example, in the long derailment scenario involving Tisha, the pivotal reason for the fight was that her ex-sister-in-law was mistreating her son, Tisha's foster child. However, an important source of contention between the two was the sister-in-law's welfare check that Tisha had cashed in order to obtain funds for the teen's basic expenses. Dana, a respondent who had experienced numerous problems relating to conflict with her ex-husband, provides another illustration of emotional difficulties that eventually connect back to poverty and social disadvantage:

And he threatens me all the time that I'll have to find another babysitter, and I threaten him back with child support and he's like, "Well I'll take you to court 'cause I can't afford this." I mean it's like a struggle every day. I get frustrated. . . . I get fired up. Especially when I'm alone, 'cause it's like I can't do it. . . . I can't do it. There's just not a goddamn thing I can do about it.

In this instance, if Dana had sufficient resources to hire a traditional caregiver, she would not be locked into continued aversive, stressful contacts with her ex-husband. As suggested above, many of these adult respondents' problems with the law involve rather mundane issues of this sort, rather than spectacular acquisitive crimes. For example, restraining orders lead to violations of restraining orders, or drug use as a coping mechanism brings the individual into contact with an array of other illegal activities.

Economic and social disadvantages undoubtedly also significantly in-

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are blocked, it is intuitive to hypothesize that lower SES individuals are exposed to many more of such situations. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for developing this link between SES and Mead's focus on blocked action.

fluence the nature of actors' salience hierarchies (Stryker 1980). These views on what is more and less central in life influence not only what has been included, but also what has been left out of the narrative, and contribute further to the disadvantaged emotional positions of these respondents. For example, work-related discourse frequently dominates adult life history narratives, particularly during the stages of young adulthood and middle age (Clausen 1993). And a variety of studies have focused on women's preoccupations with juggling work and home/family issues (Carr 2002). In contrast, the world of relationships and the strong feelings they engender looms large for individuals who do not have a fully diversified portfolio of interests and concerns. And certainly money does not ensure happiness, but a lack of resources, adequate living space, and dignified work frequently erode relationship building and sustaining processes.<sup>50</sup> Some problems and altercations described within the narratives, then, appear to relate to this lack of balance. In this climate, seemingly trivial problems sometimes elicit strong emotional reactions and eventuate in larger problems, as occurs in this escalating sequence that began with a criticism of the focal respondent's cooking:

I'm cooking dinner. He says, "I don't know why you cooked that shit cause I ain't about to eat it. You can just throw that shit in the trash can." He just come in the house, drinking that watered down vodka. He just was sickening and I got so tired of him talking to me any kind of way. . . . One day I had had it. I hit his ass one day so hard . . . and then he just took that knife and put it up against my skin and just came down—my flesh was wide open, blood running all over the place.—Kristen

## CONCLUSION

This analysis explored immediate and long-term connections between emotional processes and patterns of criminal behavior. Focusing on the later adult lives of a contemporary sample of delinquent youth, we have argued that (a) there is more to "life" than transition events, and (b) there is more to transition events than is reflected in their social control potential. We developed a neo-Meadian perspective that contrasts with stable trait views of emotion-crime linkages (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) as well as emphases of Laub and Sampson's (2003) social control perspective on the desistance process. The theoretical discussion and findings also

<sup>50</sup> Liebow (1967), e.g., argued that a dearth of economic resources at once heightens the significance of personal relationships while simultaneously fostering greater vulnerabilities within the interpersonal realm.

serve as a rejoinder to our own overly aseptic theory of cognitive transformation (Giordano et al. 2002).

We highlighted three developmental changes not fundamentally tied to transition events that may be associated with aggregate declines in criminal behavior: the diminution of negative emotions originally connected to crime, the diminution of positive emotions, and increased skill in emotion regulation or management. The revised symbolic interactionist perspective we outlined also highlights that emotional identity is an important dimension of the self's content. This idea is supported by cross-sectional and longitudinal data documenting that anger identity is associated with variations in adult crime, net of the actor's current level of social bonding or early delinquency. Depression also distinguishes stable desisters from persisters and those who evidenced an unstable pattern. Significant associations between these aspects of emotional identity (particularly anger identity) and violence as well as drug/alcohol problems are also potentially important, as these adult problem areas often figure directly or indirectly into further adult legal difficulties.

The notion of an emotional self that flourishes somewhat independent of adult transitions such as marriage thus has implications for understanding aggregate crime trends, individual variations, as well as episodic derailments. The argument also provides a modest critique of the "events" orientation of the life course paradigm more generally.<sup>51</sup> Our emphasis here accords with recent research documenting increases in age at marriage, declines in marital stability, and a more highly varied order of all of the major adult transition events. And as many scholars have pointed out, these societal level transformations have influenced the life course experiences of marginal populations more than advantaged groups (Booth, Crouter, and Shanahan 1999). The processes we emphasized also have implications for prevention and intervention efforts: it is difficult to provide job opportunities for offenders, and often impossible to influence the likelihood, character, or stability of marriages. Our findings suggest that anger identity and depression are two potentially malleable areas where early intervention could make a difference, whether or not individuals have secured all elements of the "respectability package (marriage and a stable job)." In addition, targeting these areas may increase the likelihood that individuals will be able to benefit from these and other positive hooks for change that do become available within the environment.

<sup>51</sup> Life course research that focuses on subjective processes often explores how individuals feel about various transition events, in effect continuing the event-based emphasis (i.e., the idea of normative timing; see e.g., Marini 1984). Settersten and Mayer (1997), e.g., acknowledge a need to move beyond primary events and role transitions. Nevertheless, their examples of secondary processes also relate back to these events/roles (e.g., second jobs, periods of unemployment).

A second objective of the analysis has been to show that even when we focus specifically on transition events (notably marriage), attention to emotional processes adds to our understanding of mechanisms that influence desistance from crime. The specific form of role taking involved in a loving relationship with a more prosocial romantic partner engenders positive emotions that contribute to the actor's motivation to embark on a significant self-improvement project. Once involved in the relationship, the spouse acts as an emotional role model and source of social support. This type of relationship fosters feelings about the self and others that help to sustain initial moves toward the prosocial. The positive emotions associated with such a relationship are self-satisfying and serve as replacements for the original (negative and positive) emotional connections to crime, drugs, or violence. These relationships are thus usefully theorized as an important basis of life's meaning, as well as a source of informal social control. This is more than a theoretical fine point. While the added structure and new routines Sampson and Laub emphasized are important concomitants of marriage and in turn desistance, in our view these are not the central mechanisms underlying the marriage benefit. Further unpacking of the good marriage effect is warranted, particularly if we are to generalize beyond partner influences to consider ways in which other hooks for change do or do not serve well as effective catalysts. We note, for example, that treatment strategies such as boot camps designed to provide added structure and routine have been shown to be rather limited in their ability to reduce recidivism (Mackenzie, Wilson, and Kidder 2001). Self-processes that derive from a process of role taking (including emotional transformations that increase a sense of worth or purpose) may prove more central to an understanding of successful, sustained behavior change.<sup>52</sup>

Future research could usefully explore the role of emotional processes in relation to other specific catalysts for change. For example, Rambo (1993) and other scholars who have studied religious conversions note that emotions are central to the conversion process (see also Pargament 1997). According to the logic of our theorizing, the emotional component may be heavily implicated in the initial conversion experience (the crossing-over phase), and spirituality for some offenders and addicts has proven an effective vehicle for emotion coping (see Terry 2003). Further, like-minded social network members may serve as emotional role models and provide active social support (more emotion-coping assistance). Finally, through a continuous process of role taking, these affiliations with

<sup>52</sup> It is important to highlight that fulfilling activities and social relationships will generally be required to influence such identity changes (i.e., we are not referring here to vacuous self-esteem boosting efforts).



others may encourage self-feelings that support the actor's increasingly other-directed actions and associated more worthy view of self. Thus the "redemption" process (Maruna 2001) likely involves socially supported emotional changes as well as cognitive and identity transformations. In turn, a focus on all of these mechanisms adds to the idea that religion serves as an effective form of informal social control (Durkheim 1965).

This study also provides a concrete application of recent trends in theorizing that have underscored the links between cognitive and emotional processes. Thus, we have not abandoned our prior emphasis on the cognitive, but here have endeavored to show the closely aligned nature of these subjective phenomena—whether the referent is behavioral continuity, change, or a specific derailment experience. Many discussions of the interconnected nature of cognitions and emotions are philosophical (Pacherie 2002) or consist of experimental manipulations that examine the influence of one or more emotions on cognitive tasks, or demonstrate the cognitive underpinnings of various emotional reactions (see e.g., Lazarus 1999). We have shown that materials such as life history narratives also provide support for this more contemporary view of compatibility rather than an opposition between cognitive and emotional processes. This emphasis also has implications for current approaches to interventions with offender populations. Although a number of treatment strategies now explicitly target cognitive processes (e.g., the notion of cognitive restructuring; see e.g., Wilson, Bouffard, and Mackenzie 2005), these programs often do not foreground the emotions, or continue to place the two facets of human experience in opposition (i.e., where emotion = crime, and desistance = cognition). A neo-Meadian perspective suggests the need to highlight not only ways in which cognitions and emotions are mutually supportive, but in turn how these are shaped by social processes. This requires moving beyond the relatively individualistic, "deficit" emphasis of many intervention strategies (e.g., the idea of "thinking errors"), and explicitly recognizing that many offenders' negative attitudes and feelings do have social and indeed rational underpinnings (e.g., as these are actively shaped by victimization experiences, limited housing options, loss of custody of children, inability to drive to work site due to prior DUI convictions, marital discord, and the like).

We also used poverty/economic disadvantage as an example to further anchor this discussion of the social nature of emotions to broader structural considerations. Poverty influences many of the processes highlighted in this analysis. Thus, forging additional connections to structurally based sources of disadvantage (the idea of "emotional capital") deepens the contrast to a view of emotional vulnerabilities as a mere reflection of an enduring individual propensity. Obviously, such key structuring variables as race/ethnicity and gender also influence emotional processes as well as

crime trajectories, and these deserve more systematic treatment than we have given them in this analysis. However, our general approach and findings suggest specific areas that warrant additional research attention. For example, the quantitative analyses indicate that African-American respondents in the study are more likely to have persisted in crime, relative to their white counterparts. Our neo-Meadian perspective suggests the utility of exploring emotional dynamics as well as objective areas of disadvantage that may serve to sustain this differential life course pattern (see also Heimer and Matsueda 1997, pp. 248–49).

Future research could also usefully explore additional links between gender, emotion, and crime (see Broidy et al. 2003). The gender interaction results described above documented many areas of similarity as well as some differences (e.g., anger identity was similarly related to violence perpetration, crime, and drug/alcohol abuse, but depression was more strongly linked to crime among men in the sample). These interaction results should be considered tentative due to the small size of this sample group and the gender subsamples in particular. Consistent with the neo-Meadian perspective we developed, however, we see utility in exploring gendered variations in emotional experience and in the social and cognitive underpinnings of emotional processes, while avoiding stereotypical bifurcations (e.g., the notion that women are more heavily influenced by emotions, while men act upon the basis of rational processes; see e.g., Fischer 2000; Shields 2002).

## APPENDIX A

### Scales Used in the Quantitative Analyses

#### *Problem Behavior Indices*

*Criminal involvement.*—What about the last 12 months? How often did you . . . Damage or destroy property? Steal (or try to steal) a motor vehicle, such as a car or motorcycle? Steal (or try to steal) something worth more than \$50? Carry a hidden weapon other than a plain pocket knife? Steal (or try to steal) things worth \$5 or less? Attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting him/her? Get involved in a gang fight? Sell marijuana or hashish (“pot,” “grass,” or “hash”)? Hit (or threaten to hit) somebody? Sell hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or LSD? Have (or try to have) sexual relations with someone against their will? Get drunk in a public place? Break into a building or vehicle (or try to break into) to steal something or just to look around? Use drugs to get high (not because you were sick)? Use force or threat of force to get money or other things? Been paid for having sex with someone? Take things from work worth

more than \$50?—Responses range from 1 (never) to 9 (more than once a day).

*Intimate partner violence perpetration.*—During the past year, how many times have you . . . Threatened to hit or throw something at your spouse/partner? Hit or thrown something at your spouse/partner? Pushed, grabbed or shoved your spouse/partner? Slapped your spouse/partner? Kicked, bit or hit your spouse/partner with your fist? Hit or tried to hit your spouse/partner with something? Beaten up your spouse/partner? Threatened your spouse/partner with a knife? Used a knife on or fired a gun at your spouse/partner?—Responses range from 1 (never) to 8 (almost daily).

*General violence subscale.*—What about the last 12 months? How often did you . . . Attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting him/her? Used force or threat of force to get money or other things? Have (or try to have) sexual relations with someone against their will? Get involved in a gang fight?—Responses range from 1 (never) to 9 (more than once a day).

*Problem use of alcohol and drugs.*—These refer to “how often in the past 12 months you have experienced these things?” Not felt so good the next day because of drinking? Not felt so good the next day because of using drugs? Felt unable to do my best job at work or school because of drinking? Felt unable to do my best job at work or school because of using drugs? Gotten into trouble with my relatives or friends while drinking? Gotten into trouble with my relatives or friends while using drugs? Hit one of my family members because of my drinking? Hit one of my family members because of my using drugs? Gotten into fights with others because of my drinking? Gotten into fights with others because of my using drugs? Stolen money or other things in order to get cash to buy alcohol? Stolen money or other things in order to get cash to buy drugs?—Responses range from 1 (never) to 9 (more than once a day).

#### *Emotional Constructs*

*Anger identity.*—How much [you] agree or disagree with these statements from a larger section about “how you feel about the world today, about yourself, and your life in general.” When people say or do something that hurts me, I usually try to hurt them back. I can be a pretty mean person. I have a lot of trouble controlling my temper. When I drink I sometimes become pretty mean. When I’m really angry, other people better stay away from me.—Responses range from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

*Depression.*—In the past 12 months, how often have you . . . Wondered if anything is worthwhile? Been in low spirits? Had trouble sleeping? Had

periods of time when you could not get going? Felt that things never turn out right? Had trouble remembering things? Felt irritable, fidgety or tense? Felt restless?—Responses range from 1 (never or almost never) to 6 (almost every day).

## APPENDIX B

### Methodological Approach to the Qualitative Data

Life history narratives do not provide direct access to the causes of crime or desistance processes, and necessarily involve a reconstruction of past and current circumstances from the point of view of the actor telling the life story (Neisser 1994). Nevertheless, such materials are useful as they point to conceptual areas, including subjective processes, that may be overlooked when relying on traditional quantitative methods. We began the analysis by flagging emotion-related sections of the narratives for further study. The first stage involved a long period of open coding, memo writing, and discussion of these segments and a general assessment of the place of emotions in the total life history. As the analysis progressed, we developed more specific codes linked to particular emotions, either as described by the respondent (*pissed me off*), or as reflected in emotions actually elicited during the interview (*respondent is crying*). Several stages of the analysis are not immediately obvious within the discussion that follows, but were a necessary step in the process of developing the points we have chosen to highlight. For example, gender issues are of interest, but are not the central focus of the current analysis. Nevertheless, comparing men and women's narratives was an important step in the analysis. Based on these analyses, we concluded that while many aspects of adult development are gendered, the very basic emotional and cognitive processes described in this study are useful in understanding life course patterns evidenced by woman as well as men. Later stages of the analysis involved the development of second order constructs (e.g., the concept of derailments), and a closer examination of links between cognitive and emotional processes. We initially began to study these connections because of difficulties in coding certain examples. That is, it was often difficult to consider a given section or story predominantly *emotional* because it also contained references to the cognitive domain. Further study of such stories thus led to our emphasis on alignments or connections between cognitive, emotional, and control-related processes. Similarly, while it was useful in certain ways to develop files that contained shorter segments of emotion talk, we also regretted the lost connection to the broader set of life circumstances reflected in the complete narratives. This eventually led to our focus in the final section on structural influences, emotional vulnerabilities, and criminal involvement.

TABLE C1  
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATING LIFE COURSE VIOLENCE PATTERNS ( $n = 140$ )

VARIABLE	DISTANCE VS. PERSISTENCE		DISTANCE VS. UNSTABLE		UNSTABLE VS. PERSISTENCE	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Sociodemographic characteristics:						
Race (African-American = 1) .....	-.616	.540	-1.160*	.314	.544	1.723
Age .....	-.114	.893	.124	1.132	-.237	0.789
Gender (Female = 1) .....	-.053	.948	.436	1.546	-.488	0.614
Poverty .....	.107	1.113	.207	1.230	-.100	.905
Adult social bonds:						
Marital status (married = 1) .....	-.121	.886	.016	1.016	-.137	.872
Marital happiness .....	.082	1.086	-.020	.981	.102	1.107
Occupational prestige .....	.436*	1.546	.309*	1.362	.127	1.135
The emotional self:						
Anger identity .....	-1.491***	.225	-1.056***	.348	-.436	.647
Adolescent behavior:						
Adolescent violence .....	-.031*	.969	-.008	.992	-.023*	.977

NOTE.—Model  $\chi^2 = 54.274$  ( $P < .001$ );  $R^2_L = .182$ .

+  $P < .10$ .

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

TABLE C2  
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATING LIFE COURSE PATTERNS OF PROBLEM DRUG AND  
ALCOHOL USE ( $n = 138$ )

VARIABLE	DISTANCE VS. PERSISTENCE		DISTANCE VS. UNSTABLE		UNSTABLE VS. PERSISTENCE	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Sociodemographic characteristics:						
Race (African-American = 1) .....	-2.523***	.080	-.865	.421	-1.658*	.191
Age .....	-.191	.827	-.544*	.580	.354	1.424
Gender (female = 1) .....	1.393*	4.029	.548	1.729	.846	2.330
Poverty .....	-.796	.451	-.085	.918	-.711	.491
Adult social bonds:						
Marital status (married = 1) .....	-.135	.874	-1.121 <sup>+</sup>	.326	.986	2.681
Marital happiness .....	.549*	1.731	.193	1.213	.355	1.427
Occupational prestige .....	.102	1.107	-.138	.871	.240	1.271
The emotional self:						
Anger identity .....	-1.579***	.206	-1.350***	.259	-.230	.795
Adolescent behavior:						
Adolescent drug and alcohol use .....	-.009	.991	-.010*	.990	.000	1.000

NOTE.—Model  $\chi^2 = 76.375$  ( $P < .001$ );  $R^2_L = .277$ .

<sup>+</sup>  $P < .10$ .

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

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