Exploring the Process and Maintenance of Desistance from Offending

by

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine factors connected to periods of unsuccessful, successful, and maintained desistance. To facilitate this goal, the study was structured around a dynamic conceptualization of desistance and examined the subjective perceptions of 20 self-reported official and behavioural desisters (median and mode age of 30 years) who participated in semi-structured interviews based on a life history narrative approach. Interviews lasted an average of 72 minutes and produced a total of 469 single spaced pages of verified transcripts. Themes were generated through a five stage interpretative phenomenological analysis coding procedure, related to the five stages of the offending and desistance cycle. Overall, participants attributed offending to external factors within their environment, but incorporated the ramifications of their offending into their identities. Participants linked unsuccessful desistance periods to external factors such as experiencing external controls (e.g. physical ailments) or having others attempt to force behavioural change. Resurgence in criminal behaviour following unsuccessful desistance periods was often linked to a cascading breakdown of desistance factors after participants experienced an offending trigger, such as losing employment or relapsing into substance use. In contrast, participants linked successful desistance periods to their identity, and experiencing a desire to change that helped motivate them to attain a positive possible future and to positively overcome threats to their desistance. In addition to identity change, maintenance of desistance was attributed to a change in environment, gaining social capital, and a desire to maintain progress in a positive life direction. Notably, participants tended to report first experiencing identity changes, which led to cognitive transformations and the accumulation of social capital, which ultimately supported sustained desistance. However, there is likely no golden rule that can be applied to all offenders to help them desist. Rather it is important to understand and respect the multifaceted, dynamic, complex, and individual nature of desistance from offending.

Keywords: desistance; offending; identity; qualitative; phenomenology

Dedication

Thank you to those who shared their stories with me, those who helped me hear what was being said, and those who helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel

> If I am worth anything later, I am worth something now. For wheat is wheat, even if people think it is a grass in the beginning.
>
> Vincent Van Gogh

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Glossary

Analytical memos	Memo technique used through qualitative research; focused on impressions of each interview, patterns between interviews, and links to past theories
Attributes	Features of participants (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age)
Audit trail	Common technique that involves researchers detailing the process of data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation to create a comprehensive and transparent rationale for research decisions
Authenticity	The contextual purpose and the value of the research
Causation coding	The goal of causation coding is to "locate, extract, and/or infer causal beliefs from qualitative data" (Saldana, 2016, p. 187) specifically from the participant's point of view of what caused events to occur
Chunking the data	Organizing the data into meaningful chunks useful for answering the key research questions
Codes	Codes are labels that are assigned to meaning units to make them easier to work with and to allow the data to be chunked
Confirmability	Confirmability refers to the level of confidence that the findings in a study are based on the narratives drawn from participants and not from potential researcher bias.
Credibility	Credibility focuses on how representative the research findings are to the lived experience of the study participants
Data saturation	Point at which data collection can be complete and occurs when no new information, themes, or codes are being acquired through data collection and analysis.
Dependability	Reliability of study findings and the likelihood of replicating findings should the study be repeated
Discovery failure	The risk of missing themes due to a restricted sample
Edited transcription	Type of transcription that balances quality of the transcripts with speed of transcription
Homogeneous sampling	Sample is similar to one another across various predetermined traits
Latent analysis	This stage is often viewed as putting the pieces of the data's story together. Attaching meaning and drawing conclusions from the data
Manifest analysis	Coding the data into categories. Tangible and surface value of the data

Meaning units	Units of analysis which typically are words, sentences, or paragraphs which related to each other
Member checks	When preliminary interpretations of the data were discussed with participants to clarify discrepancies
Mind map	Visual thinking tool. Graphical way to represent data to help with the analytical process and to synthesize data
Mindfulness	Being aware of potential researcher bias influencing the research process and project
Network sampling	Otherwise known as snowball sampling. Participants recruit other potential participants through their networks
Nodes	Categories that hold similar data
NVivo	Qualitative data analysis program
Purposive sampling	Sometimes called criterion-based sampling, this is an extremely common sampling technique employed in qualitative research. Allows researchers to select information-rich participants for in-depth examination.
Phenomenology	Phenomenology is an approach commonly employed to study lived human experiences when the research focuses an individual's subjective experiences
Qualitative rigor	The overarching term used to refer to: credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, and authenticity
Reflexivity	Being aware of biases, impressions, experiences, and opinions which could influence the researcher's interpretation of findings.
Reflexive research journal	A documented history of the study during its development and throughout the research process as well as a place to record research decisions and thought processes.
Richness	The quality of the interview data
Theme	Latent content of the text. Answers the "How" question. Represents the underlying meaning of the text
Thick description	Quantity of the data. Describing the phenomenon in sufficient detail to allow for transferability of findings
Transferability	Refers to whether the findings from a given study can be applied to other populations and contexts
Transparency	Being clear about the study process, researcher bias, and other factors that might impact how the results were generated and conclusions were drawn
Triangulation of data	Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data to corroborate and verify study findings.
Trustworthiness	Demonstrating that study results are sound and the results are strong

Chapter 1. Introduction

Individuals can become involved in the justice system through numerous pathways. Individual risk factors (e.g., substance use, stress, coping skills, mental health), social influences (e.g., peers, neighbourhood, family), and cognitive development (e.g., impulse control, attitudes, maturation) can all play a role in the onset and maintenance of criminal behaviour (Hawkins et al., 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Loeber, 1990). A substantial amount of information is known regarding the factors that impact the *occurrence* of criminal behaviour. However, an equally important area for study tightly intertwined with the factors that bring about criminal behaviour is the study of what factors bring about its *cessation*. Although desistance has received attention from researchers in the past, the collective body of work on this topic pales in comparison to the amount of research conducted on factors influencing the onset and prediction of offending behaviour. It is imperative to expand knowledge regarding the process and maintenance of desistance to better understand exit from criminal behaviour, to improve the effectiveness of interventions, and to determine when offenders become interchangeable with their non-offending peers (Bushway et al., 2001; Kazemian, 2007; Farrington, 2007; Mulvey et al., 2004).

Prior to reviewing key areas of debate in the desistance literature, attention will first be paid to the development of theories of desistance over time. Many of these theories are still in active use today and continue to influence how desistance is currently viewed and approached by researchers.

1.1. A Brief History of Theories of Desistance

One of the first influential theories related to desistance was put forward by Quetelet (1833) who postulated that criminal activity decreases with age, essentially because people experience a decrease in their physical prowess and desire to commit crimes. This idea was expanded and incorporated by Glueck and Glueck (1937) into their maturational reform theory of desistance, which states that criminal behaviour naturally decreases with age. These researchers explain that “aging is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reformative process” (Glueck & Glueck, 1937, p.

105) and go on to describe how individuals grow out of offending, with rates of offending naturally decreasing after age 25 years.

In support of the theory of maturational reform, research has repeatedly found that age is one of the best predictors of criminal desistance (Wolfgang et al, 1972; 1987) and ex-offenders have voiced that maturation was an important factor for transitioning out of offending (Hughes, 1998). Offending also begins to be viewed more negatively over time and individuals begin to display shame, guilt, and/or embarrassment regarding their past involvement in antisocial activities as they age (Bryne & Trew, 2008). However, both the assumption that age *causes* desistance and the failure to explain how age in and of itself decreases offending behaviour has received the brunt of the criticism of maturational reform theory (Maruna, 1999; Sampson & Laub, 1992). Many opponents to this theory discuss how factors connected to aging (e.g., biological maturation, life experiences, social development) may be the factors contributing to desistance, rather than aging alone. Additionally, the circular reasoning inherent to this theory is a point of contention for researchers, as many explanations of the causal processes within maturational reform theory simply restate the age-crime relationships instead of expanding and explaining the potential causal relationship (Matza, 1964).

The observation that crime decreases with age has become well known in the offending literature and was echoed by Farrington (1986) in his article discussing the age-crime curve which states that crime rates peak during adolescence and then decrease over time. Although this overarching trend holds true for aggregate crime data, Farrington (1986) also stated this observed trend does not generally reflect age crime curves at an individual level because the rate at which an individual is engaged in offending "does not change consistently between the onset and the termination of criminal careers" (p. 189). One potential reason for this inconsistent change in offending behaviour is crime switching (Farrington, 1986); the observation that as individual's age there is a tendency for the types of crime in which they engage to change and for offenders to become more specialized in their offending behaviour. Crime switching is one opponent view to theories of desistance. This theory posits that rather than truly decreasing in criminal behaviour, desisters appear to decrease their criminal activity by engaging in fewer types of offences and potentially being caught less often as they become more skilled and specialized in their preferred offence.

Although there is debate regarding whether crime switching in fact occurs, there is support for both sides of the argument. In support of the concept of crime switching is the observation that adult offenders show more specialization in their crimes than juvenile offender counterparts (Blumstein, Cohen, Das, & Moitra, 1988) and that different types of offences peak in frequency at different ages (Farrington, 1986). On the reverse side of the argument is the observation that although some offenders do demonstrate specialization over time, the vast majority of offenders are generalists and engage in a wide variety of offences (Piquero, 2000; Piquero et al., 2006; Richards et al., 2012; Simon, 1997). Additionally, there are methodological issues in the study of crime switching that obscure findings such as the positive correlation between offence frequency and variety of offending, and not taking base rates of offending behaviour into account in analyses (Osgood & Schreck, 2007). Although crime switching is an important theory, it is not a sufficient explanation to preclude the concept of desistance.

Although work by Glueck and Glueck (1937; 1950) created a foundation on which theories of desistance could grow, desistance remained largely neglected as a research field until the 1990s when Laub and Sampson (1993) and Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) began to publish on this topic. Theoretical and empirical work by these individuals spurred the development of the field of desistance and created an impetus for the creation of numerous theories and suppositions about how offenders are able to exit from offending and disentangle themselves from a criminal lifestyle. In general, theories of desistance tend to fall within two poles of the desistance debate, mainly, whether the key component for desistance is connected to environmental structure or to human agency (Farrall & Bowling, 1999; Paternoster & Bushway, 2015; Rocque, 2015). The conceptualization of an integrated model of desistance has been the focus of much of the desistance literature over the past two decades.

Placing theories of desistance along the spectrum from structure to agency is the organizational system applied in outlining the desistance theories in the present study. Although dividing theories into those that address structure and those that address agency creates an artificial bifurcation between these two extremes, the choice to describe theories of desistance in terms of these categories was made to better illustrate the growth and theoretical development in the desistance field over time. Work in this domain has been done to attempt to bridge the gap between structure and agency (see Mouzelis, 2008 for a summary of this theoretical area), however, this work is ongoing

and, so, is not reflected prominently in the current work. The theories presented below do not represent a comprehensive list, but rather were chosen based on which have been the most impactful in how desistance has been conceptualized over the past few decades.

1.1.1. Desistance Theories Linked to Structure

In contrast to other theories of delinquent behaviour, control theories do not focus so much on *why* people commit offences, but rather why people *do not* engage in criminal activity. These theories focus on outside influences external to the individual undergoing desistance which control and influence an individual's offending behaviour. Outside influences have typically been classified into those within the micro (individual factors such as employment, residence, relationships), meso (community level such as local organizations, physical environment, socio-cultural), and macro (system level such as politics, policy, government) systems. The present project focuses on theoretical work conducted primarily within the micro system structures. Two key structural desistance theories include social control theory (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990) and the theory of informal social control (Laub & Sampson, 1993).

Social Control Theory (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990)

One of the best-known control theories is social control theory (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990). The overall tenet of this theory is that the need to belong and to form attachments is a basic human motivation. Social bonds (e.g., bonds to parents, peers, community) and the strength of these bonds influence an individual's likelihood to engage in antisocial activities; individuals with weak social bonds are more likely to engage in criminal activity then those with stronger attachments and bonds. Advocates of this perspective do not view weak social bonds in and of themselves as *causing* antisocial behaviour, but rather they are presumed to *create an environment* in which offending is more likely to occur when these bonds are broken. Hirschi (1969) proposed four factors which characterize the strength of social bonds: attachment (i.e., connections to, and interest in other people), commitment (i.e., time and energy required to invest in education, finances, clubs, community organizations), involvement (i.e., spending time on prosocial activities which results in less time to engage in antisocial activities), and beliefs (i.e., sharing a common belief and moral system with those in your

social sphere). Social bonds can be weak in any of these domains. Individuals who lack, or who have low, social bonds are less likely to be deterred by the social costs of deviant behaviour or respond to institutional interventions, and are more likely to act in their own self interest (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990; Hirschi, 1969).

Theory of Informal Social Control (Laub & Sampson, 1993)

One of the most influential theories of desistance shares Hirschi's focus on social bonds connecting individuals to society and is known as the theory of informal social control (Laub & Sampson, 1993), identified more colloquially as "turning points theory." This theory was built from the dataset collected by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1937; 1950) and supplemented by follow up life-history narratives collected from a small subset of the original sample when they were 70 years of age. This data set was originally composed of three waves of data collection concerning 500 delinquent boys in correctional schools residing in Massachusetts during 1940. The participants were enveloped in a vastly different cultural context compared to the context in current society when they transitioned into adulthood. These participants experienced their childhoods during the Great Depression and came of age during the Second World War, many of whom would have been influenced by the military draft. Their early adulthood would have been influenced by the GI bill, which provided a range of employment benefits to veterans of WWII. This sample experienced some of the most extreme social circumstances in the modern era from the traumatic events of WWII to the prosperous time of economic growth that followed. These generational limitations linked to this well researched sample have been discussed by numerous researchers and were acknowledged by Sampson and colleagues (2006) in their more recent work.

The theory of informal social control is anchored to the concept of social bonds with society, in that criminal behaviour results from weak social bonds and desistance from strong social bonds. The foundation of this theory is that in order to desist, offenders must establish strong conventional social bonds, typically through marriage, military, or employment, which will then increase their social capital. Turning point events form natural points for behavioural changes that redirect an individual's life trajectory. Overall, in this theory turning point events provide an opportunity for individuals to separate their past from their present, form new social supports, increase control in their

lives, engage in routine activities, and transform their identity to be consistent with a conventional social role (Sampson & Laub, 2003; 2005).

Although marriage and employment are the most studied turning point events, researchers have examined many other life events in their investigations of impacts for desistance. Example turning point events studied in the desistance literature include residential relocations, educational milestones, forming romantic relationships such as through marriage, attaining employment, joining the military, and having children (Sampson & Laub, 2001; 2003; 2005; Uggen, 2000, Uggen & Wakefield, 2008).

Residential change: Research has also been conducted on residential relocation and mobility which revealed that both male and female offenders desist when they reside with spouses, parents, other relatives, or in a residential program. In contrast, recidivism increases when offenders reside with a boyfriend or girlfriend, when they are homeless, or when they are absent without leave (Steiner, Makarios, & Travis, 2015). From a series of studies, Kirk found that three years following release of custody those offenders who relocated were substantially less likely than their non-relocation peers to be re-incarcerated (Kirk, 2009; 2012).

Education: Education, especially at the post-secondary level, is negatively correlated with offending behaviour. The effect of education is even more pronounced for youth who demonstrate above average academic achievement while incarcerated (Blomberg et al., 2012) and for high-risk adolescents (Ford & Schroeder, 2010). For instance, following release from incarceration, youth who return to regular schooling are less likely to be rearrested up to 2 years post release and if arrested it is for significantly less serious offenses then their non-school attending peers (Blomberg et al., 2011). Potential explanations are that education increases an individual's employability and provides an opportunity for personal growth which reduces recidivism (Batiuk et al., 2005; Stevens & Ward, 1997; Vacca, 2004).

Marriage/romantic relationships: Marriage has long been viewed as one of the most influential and impactful turning points (Laub & Sampson, 1993). It is thought to reduce antisocial behaviour by increasing the amount of structure and social control individuals experience (Sampson & Laub, 1990), reducing opportunities to interact with deviant peers (Warr, 1998), and stabilizing the environment in which the individual

resides (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Individuals who are married for longer periods of time have lower convictions rates, especially in comparison to individuals who never married (Blokland et al., 2005). Further to this, there is support in the literature for a 'courtship effect' in that the changes in the lifestyle that lead to decreases in offending do not start on the day of marriage but occur slowly over time as relationships develop (Laub & Sampson, 2003; McGloin et al., 2011). Both marriage and cohabitation have been linked to decreased rates of offending (Sampson et al., 2006).

Employment: Employment is another well-known turning point event; however, the direction of the relationship between employment and offending is mixed. For the most part, a negative correlation between employment and offending behaviour has been observed in a large number of studies (Apel et al., 2007; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Warr, 1998). However, determining whether employment is a cause or a consequence of desistance has been the focus of much research, with many authors describing that desistance tended to precede gaining stable and satisfying employment (Skardhamar and Savolainen 2014).

Military service: Past research has found that military service results in an abrupt cessation from delinquent behaviour (Elder, 1985; Laub & Sampson, 1993; 2002). However, this observation was predominantly linked to studies using the Glueck data in which a large portion of their sample (67%) served in the military during World War II or the Korean War. Studies using recent samples of military involved individuals demonstrate that military service no longer protects against future offending behaviour for Caucasian males (Craig & Connell, 2013; Craig & Foster, 2013), but that military enlistment resulted in desistance from crime in females and ethnic minorities (Bouffard, 2005; Craig & Foster, 2013).

Reproduction: The impact of having children on desistance is not well understood, with mixed findings in the literature. Overall, females tend to cite having children as a key turning point in their offending careers while more conflicting results hold true for males (Bryne & Trew, 2008; Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002). For instance, although some research has shown that there are small decreases in offending behaviour in males prior to the birth of a child, the reductions in offending behaviour are greatest if the father remains involved with the child at least five years following birth (Theobald, Farrington, & Piquero, 2015).

Social bonds are not guaranteed to occur as a result of experiencing a potential turning point opportunity. For instance, having a child is seen as a turning point event, but simply having a child does not mean that an individual will bond with the child or remain an active member of the child's life and upbringing. Instead of the presence or absence of turning point event, the quality and strength of the bond is theorized to drive the change process (Loeber & LeBlanc, 1990). Building on the example of parenthood, solely entering parenthood may not impact offending, but the increased bond between parent and child, increased responsibilities, and increased structure that a child provides could result in reductions in criminal behaviour.

One key criticism of the theory of informal social control is that turning point opportunities are postulated to be chance events (Rutter, 1996; Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998) occurring to offenders at random when "good things happen to bad actors" (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998, p. 237). Opponents to this theory express issue with this theoretical underpinning as the majority of turning point opportunities reflect choices the individual has made that led to that moment in time (Corman, Noonan, Reichman, & Schwartz-Soicher, 2011; Elder, 2000). Building on this theoretical concern, Sampson and Laub revised their theory in 2003 to include aspects related to human agency. Sampson and Laub (2005) noted that:

> [a] vital feature that emerged from our life-history narratives was the role of human agency—the purposeful execution of choice and individual will—in the process of desisting from crime. (p. 349)

In their revised theory, Laub and Sampson (2003) outline additional turning point events and broaden their theorized contributing factors for desistance to include "human agency and choice, situational influences, routine activities, local culture, and historical context" (Laub & Sampson, 2003, p. 9).They go on to explain that participants were active in their desistance process and that many created a new sense of self such as a desister, a family man, or a good employee which aided desistance (Sampson & Laub, 2005). Despite acknowledging that identity and agency play a role in desistance, these authors continue to assert that structural components are the key factors for desistance and that internal changes (e.g., cognitions, identity) occur in later desistance stages *as a result of* experiencing turning point events.

1.1.2. Desistance Theories Linked to Agency

Desistance theories that fall within this end of the theoretical spectrum focus on the role of human agency and autonomy in the desistance process. These theories focus on the internal processes driving change and tend to centre on offenders *deciding* to offend or *deciding* to desist. Overall, if individuals view offending as advantageous then they will continue to offend, but when they see the high costs and drawbacks of crime they will choose to desist. The key theories within this theoretical orientation focus on cognitive and identity changes that spur desistance and include the theory of cognitive transformation (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002), labelling theory of desistance or "making good" (Maruna, 2001), and identity theory of desistance (Paternoster & Bushway 2009).

Theory of Cognitive Transformation (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002)

The four part theory of cognitive transformation (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002) was developed in response to the concern that Sampson and Laub's work does not allocate sufficient attention to the processes that originally lead to the experience of a turning point event. Giordano held that the theory of informal social control "tends to bracket off the 'up front' work accomplished by actors themselves—as they make initial moves toward, help to craft, and work to sustain a different way of life" (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002, p. 992). In response, Giordano and colleagues created a theory that focused on factors which lead offenders to a point when they will be open to prosocial opportunities such as employment and partnerships (termed 'hooks for change' within this theory). Although Giordano and colleagues still place importance on the structural elements important for desistance, their focus on cognitive changes leading to hooks for change was influential in shifting the theories of desistance debate.

According to the original theory of cognitive transformation (Giordano et al., 2002), individuals can experience four different types of cognitive shifts that are interrelated and promote change in antisocial behaviour. First, offenders must have a shift in their openness and readiness to change. Second, offenders must have increased exposure to, and desire for, certain hooks for change that they view as meaningful, salient, and important. As such, solely being exposed to a hook for change will not spur desistance unless the offender holds attitudes that are consistent with a desire for

change. The third component involves offenders examining their selves reflectively and envisioning a personally appealing and conventional 'replacement self' which begins to act as a "cognitive filter for decision making" (Giordano et al., 2002; pg. 1001). The final cognitive transformation involves the individual no longer viewing crime as positive, viable, or relevant to them or their lifestyle. Desistance is not complete unless the desister undergoes this final stage of attitude transformation otherwise, according to this theory these individuals are at risk for criminal behaviour resurgence.

A revised version of this theory was created that emphasized the importance of both cognitive and emotional transformations on desistance (Giordano et al., 2007). These authors state that many offenders hold an angry or depressive emotional state as a result of their past experience of conflicting interpersonal relationships. As such, offenders need to undergo an emotional transformation in addition to the aforementioned cognitive transformations wherein they create prosocial emotional dimensions to their identity following an experience of "emotional mellowing" (Giordano et al., 2007, p. 1611). If offenders do not undergo an emotional transformation after which they hold a prosocial and emotionally stable sense of self, then ultimately their desistance will fail and they will persist in criminal behaviour.

Giordano and colleagues work contributed to the development of theories of desistance by examining the period that leads up to desistance, integrating an explanation for exposure to hooks for change that did not result in desistance (e.g., people who experienced a potential positive event such as marriage but continue to offend), and focusing on cognitions in addition to structural life changes (Giordano et al., 2002). In addition, this theory was one of the first to examine both male and female desisters and to examine an ethnically diverse sample. They were the first research group to develop a theory based on a longitudinal study of serious adolescent offenders followed into adulthood and to highlight the importance of the social and economic landscape in desistance from crime. Their theory was built from a mixed method foundation which gave voice to desisters' experiences and cognitive interpretations of their life histories. This approach was a notable contribution to desistance above and beyond the theory of informal social control. Giordano and colleagues created a more nuanced understanding of desistance at an individual level through their detailed life history narratives that accounted for individual variation in desistance beyond what would be possible to examine at that time by solely using quantitative methods.

Labelling Theory of Desistance and "Making Good" (Maruna, 2001).

Building from Lemert's (1948) conceptualization of primary and secondary deviance, Maruna and Farrall (2004) created a theoretical distinction between primary and secondary desistance. Primary desistance refers to "any lull or crime free gap... in the course of a criminal career" (Maruna & Farrall, 2004, p. 274) while secondary desistance refers to sustained desistance behaviour over time resulting when desisters assume the identity of a non-offender. Maruna held that primary desistance is of little theoretical interest as setbacks in offending were common, and focused on secondary desistance for the creation of their theory of desistance. Labelling is central to this theory based off of the "looking glass self concept," (Cooley, 1902) when individuals form their identities based on how they believe they are viewed by other people. The theory holds that individuals act in accordance to the labels applied to them and in order to desist they must replace their offending label with a desister label. This "de-labelling process" (Trice & Roman, 1970) was proposed to occur during lulls in criminal behaviour during which time this behavioural change is reflected back to an offender by an outside observer which helps initiate a cognitive change related to their self identity.

Data which informed Maruna's theory of desistance were drawn from the four year longitudinal Liverpool Desistance Study which matched active or persisting offenders to former offenders in order to investigate the life experiences, traits, and social outlooks which differed between the groups. Maruna employed a qualitative phenomenological interview method centered on the process of offending change. From these interviews, Maruna created a theory which focuses on desistance as a product of an offender's identity. However, instead of focusing on identity as a causal mechanism of desistance, the focus is on the role of identity spurring a desire of "making good" (Maruna, 2001, p. 9). Key to this theory is the creation of a "redemption script" where an offender undergoes a willful cognitive distortion that "is not a matter of being re-socialized or cured, but a process of freeing one's 'real me' from these external constraints" (Maruna, 2001, p. 95). During this process, Maruna (2001) outlines two components for secondary desistance, namely that offenders must construct a prosocial identity for themselves that is incongruent with their past criminal lifestyle, and that they must feel that they have the ability to overcome their past circumstances that led to offending. This positive change process is in contrast to a "condemnation script" where

offenders view themselves as victims of society who are unable to overcome societal barriers to desistance by their own volition and therefore continue to offend.

In this theory, identity is viewed to be continuous over time, with offenders justifying their past actions to be in line with their currently held identity. As a result, ex-offenders reinterpret their past criminal actions as justifiable so that their past is consistent with their current desister identity. In this way:

> [d]esisting is framed as just another adventure consistent with their life-long personality, not as a change of heart. Again, this allows the individual to frame his or her desistance as a case of personality continuity rather than change. (Maruna, 2001, p. 154)

Desisters within Maruna's sample were able to create a prosocial and coherent identity (Maruna, 2001), which consisted of having a clear vision for their future and a sense of control over it. These individuals successfully processed their past deviant actions and wanted to build off of their mistakes toward a more positive future. This high level of self-efficacy was a key theme in Maruna's findings with desisters feeling that they were in control of their lives and that they were able to make sense of their past lives by finding meaning and purpose from these experiences.

Identity Theory of Desistance (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; 2015)

One of the most recent theories of desistance was put forward by Paternoster and Bushway (2009) and focuses on the importance of human agency in the desistance process. The backbone of this theory is that individuals continue to offend as long as they perceive the benefits of offending as outweighing the costs. Key to this theory is that individuals have three possible views of themselves: the working self, the positive possible self, and the feared self. The working self is the present version of the individual based on their current experiences and self knowledge, the positive possible self represents what the individual hopes to become, and the feared self is what the individual does not want to become or fears they may become if they do not deviate from their current path. In contrast to Maruna's theory (Maruna, 2001), instead of modifying cognitive interpretations of past acts as aligning with a prosocial identity, Paternoster & Bushway (2009) discuss the importance of an offender willfully casting off an old negative identity and taking on a new positive one after they have had enough of crime and they desire a change.

In this framework, individuals maintain their working self until anxiety over potentially becoming the feared self motivates an attempt to change into the positive possible self. Offenders must not just imagine the possibility of a feared self, but must also realize that the feared self is a likely outcome if they do not engage in some form of change. The process of desistance begins to occur when "perceived failures and dissatisfactions within different domains of life become connected and when current failures become linked with anticipated future failures" (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009, p. 1105). This process of linking the negative aspects of their lives to the consequences of offending is an initial step towards behavioural change. Once offenders realize the possibility of becoming the feared self, they must craft an idea of an attainable positive version of themselves. Once this positive possible self-image has been crafted, individuals will begin to make decisions that are more in line with the possible self (e.g., separating themselves from a party life style) and will begin to desire more conventional goals such as employment and positive relationships.

Important for this process of identity change is the experience of changes in an individual's social network and life preferences, which in turn help reinforce and facilitate the emergence and maintenance of the positive possible self (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). As individuals make changes to work towards their possible self, this signals to others that the individual is in the process of change which then increases the likelihood that the individual will be exposed to prosocial opportunities (Paternoster & Bushway, 2015). This focus on self-improvement and desire for change is theorized to work in conjunction with traditional turning point events (Sampson & Laub, 1993), but can also work in isolation. This theory helps provide an explanation for how some individuals who have not experienced turning point events are able to desist from crime. The authors summarize their theory stating that

> [e]motionally satisfying intimate relationships and stable employment are not essential for desistance, but a change in one's identity is. It is this change in identity that is the willful purposive act of self-improvement that leads, in turn, to other pro-social changes. (Paternoster & Bushway, 2015, p. 215)

1.1.3. Reflection on Theories of Desistance

Much desistance research has developed from the theory of informal social control and has mostly involved determining the turning points that influence desistance

and the traits of successful turning point events to provoke change (e.g., stability, satisfaction). This research has been highly influential and has created a strong foundation for desistance research. As previously described, there are many theories as to what structural events (i.e., maturation, aging, turning points) spur the desistance process and what elements of human agency (i.e., identity development, cognitive development) influence the process surrounding the experience of desistance. In past research these theories have been examined both in isolation and in comparison to one another. Recently, studies have begun to appear which explore the factors that lead to experiencing a life event and when cognitive changes supportive of desistance emerge (i.e., before, during, or after the experience of a life event).

As outlined above, many models of desistance have been put forward. These theories all invoke factors and components that make them unique and differentiate them as stand-alone models. However, there are also many factors that unite these models. Namely, many of the models highlight aging and factors related to aging as important for desistance. Although there is debate surrounding what factors are responsible for desistance, most researchers appear to concede that some process occurs as individuals age and that this can impact desistance over time. It is often unclear how aging, other desistance factors (e.g., turning points, social bonds, maturation, identity formation), and desistance are connected. The chicken and the egg paradox is wholly apparent in the theories of desistance debate (LeBel et al., 2008). The individuality of the desistance process and the roles of internal and external factors is a complex puzzle that is difficult to piece together. Is age the indirect causal agent in that as individuals grow older they naturally encounter desistance factors which then cause them to desist from offending? Or is age a backdrop to the equation and instead desistance factors are constantly present but not accepted and internalized by individuals unless under specific circumstances?

Desistance is increasingly being explained in terms of a combination of theoretical perspectives. This need to merge theories to explain desistance behaviour speaks to the individual nature of desistance. Just as not all individuals enter offending behaviour through the same avenues, not all exit trajectories are valid options for all individuals. It is becoming increasingly common for researchers to attribute desistance in their samples to a complex interplay of both structure and human agency instead of linking desistance to one sole desistance model (Cid & Marti, 2012; F-Dufour et al.,

2015; Rocque, 2015). For instance, Barr and Simons (2015) describe both the roles of social control processes and cognitive transformations on the effect that relationships have on desistance. Meanwhile, Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) found that most offenders in their sample ceased criminal activity prior to attaining employment which was aligned with maturational perceptive while a small subgroup of their sample experienced decreases in criminal behaviour after achieving employment, consistent with the turning point perspective. This increasing tendency for researchers to employ more open perspectives to examine desistance in real world samples will help advance desistance research beyond the foundation of theoretical debate.

Interrelated with desistance is the idea that although individuals may desist from criminal behaviour, problematic behaviour may continue to exist in other life domains (e.g., substance use, poor work habits, risk taking), and that these behaviours may change in form as individuals age (Massoglia, 2006). For instance, Glueck, Glueck, and Glueck (1968) discussed 'delayed maturation' which is the idea that some individuals do not entirely desist from criminal behaviour as they age, but rather commit less serious crimes or engage in antisocial behaviour that does not reach a criminal threshold (e.g., substance use, unhealthy interpersonal relationships). They state that as individuals age they ''lapse into those forms of anti-social behavior which require less and less energy, planfulness, and daring, such as drunkenness and vagrancy'' (Glueck & Glueck, 1940, p. 106). This idea has found solid footing in the academic literature and has been the impetus for a number of theories of criminal displacement (Massoglia, 2006). However, this idea brings about another area of inquiry regarding what a positive outcome for offenders resembles. Is the goal in desistance research to examine how offenders simply stop offending, or should the focus rest on how offenders exit from crime and become positive members of society?

It is apparent that researchers are attempting to determine how these key theories of desistance fit together. However, most often these theories are still examined in isolation instead of in conjunction with one another and this tendency impedes the integration of knowledge across theoretical viewpoints. It is highly likely that both structural and human agency factors impact the desistance process, and the interplay and connections between these factors cannot be properly examined if researchers ground themselves solely within one theoretical orientation.

1.2. Areas of Debate in the Desistance Literature

Since its renewed popularity in the research community, desistance researchers have explored many key areas of interest related to how desistance occurs, factors influential to this process, and in what contexts desistance can be fostered. Despite the increased interest in desistance research, areas of theoretical debate continue to plague the field, which makes it difficult to compare findings across studies or to compile a coherent picture of the desistance process. Key to this area of concern is the observation that the conceptualizations of, and approaches to, measuring desistance have wide variability, and this variability calls into question whether any general claims about rates and patterns of desistance can be made without qualification. The following section outlines areas of needed theoretical growth which are vital to understanding the current state of the field of desistance.

1.2.1. How has Desistance been Defined?

The question of how researchers can be sure that the individuals they are classifying as desisters have truly desisted is at the forefront of academic debate. Desistance, broadly defined, is the transition from an offending state of behaviour to a non-offending state (Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998). However, this concept quickly becomes complicated as desistance can vary greatly along a number of dimensions. For instance, the definition of desistance can change depending on whether the researcher views this concept as a state or a process; as the initial attainment of a non-offending lifestyle or as the continued maintenance of a non-offending lifestyle; as within-individual reductions in offending or as the occurrence of levels of offending observed in community samples. In addition, the desistance process can be brought about either abruptly or through gradual change, start early or late in life, and have long-term permanence or be characterized by frequent setbacks (Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003). Based on this variability in potential definitions of desistance, that there is debate regarding the best operationalization of desistance is understandable (Kazemian, 2007).

A central feature of this debate is establishing a point in the desistance process at which the decreases in criminal behaviour could confidently be defined as desistance. Operationalizing this point is extremely difficult as desistance is not the occurrence of an event, but the absence of an event. It is understandably difficult to establish the

presence of an absence. The following example passage by Maruna (2001) nicely lays out the predicament that is desistance:

> [s]uppose we know conclusively that the purse-snatcher [now deceased] never committed another crime for the rest of his long life. When did his desistance start? Is it not the ...concluding moment the very instant when the person completes [or terminates] the act of theft? If so, then in the same moment that person becomes an offender, he also becomes a desister. That cannot be right. (p. 23)

This passage reflects the debate surrounding how long individuals must maintain their desister status before it can be conclusively determined that the change in their offending behaviour represents a true shift in their offending pattern. To further complicate matters, many individuals who desist from offending experience a fluid desistance process with periodic recurrence in offending following short, medium, or even long periods of continued desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Piquero, 2004; Kazemian, 2007). As a result, there is substantial variability in the desistance research regarding this particular component of the definition of a desister (see Table 1-1 for a summary of desistance definitions across key studies). For instance, some researchers classified participants as desisters while they are still incarcerated or on probation (Bryne & Trew, 2008; Cid & Marti, 2012; Schroeder & Frana, 2009) while others require extremely lengthy periods of time of crime free behaviour before assigning this designation (Haggard, Gumpert, & Grann, 2001; Maruna, LeBel, Burnett, Bushway, & Kierkus, 2002; Mischkowitz, 1994; Sampson, Laub, & Wimer, 2006). The lack of consistency in this component of the definition of desistance is concerning and greatly impacts whether studies on desistance can be meaningfully compared or consolidated to build a coherent theory.

Table 1-1 How Past Studies Defined and Measured Desistance

Authors	Age of Participants	Gender	Desistance Parameters	Measure of Desistance
Barr & Simons, 2015	Wave 4: M = 21.5 Wave 5: M = 23.5	M F	Intra-individual change in count variable of offending. Participants had to have committed at least one criminal act in young adulthood	Self-report
Bryne & Trew, 2008	19-50 years	M F	"Stopping or significantly reducing offending"	Official Records
Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003	13.5-22 years	M F	Static: No offending after cut point	Self-report
			Dynamic: Reductions in offending from nonzero to essentially zero	Self-report

Authors	Age of Participants	Gender	Desistance Parameters	Measure of Desistance
Farrell, 2002	17-35	M F	"Reductions in offense severity or the frequency"	Self-report Official Records
Farrington and Hawkins, 1991	21-32	M	Conviction at age 21. No convictions between 21-32 years	Official Records
Farrington, Ttofi, Crago, & Coid, 2014	Followed from age 8 to 48 yrs	M	The last age at which the participant committed each crime of interest	Self-report Official Records
Giordano et al., 2002	29-30	M F	Participants asked: "Would you say that the overall amount that you do things that could get you in trouble with the law is about the same, more, or less than when you were interviewed back in 1982?"	Self-report
Haggard, Gumpert, & Grann, 2001	Late 20s to early 40s	M	High risk offenders with no reconvictions over 10 year follow up	Self-report Official Records
Healy, 2010	18-35	M	Persister – reported crime Primary desist – no offending for a month Secondary desist – no offending for at least a year	Self-report
Hughes, 1998	18-27	M	History of criminal acts and current efforts to make 'positive life changes' (e.g., self-report absence of criminal activities)	Self-report
Laub, & Sampson, 2003	61-69	M	Desisters: No arrests as adult Persisters: Multiple arrests	Official Records
Maruna, 2001	25-35	M F	Desisters: 1 year of crime-free behavior Persisters: Criminal behavior	Self-report
Maruna, LeBel, Burnett, Bushway, & Kierkus, 2002	--	M	No reconvictions during the first 10 years following prison release	Official Records
Massoglia & Uggen, 2007	29-30	M F	Subjective desistance: subjective offending behaviour compared to five years previously	Self-report
			Reference group desistance: Subjectively comparing participants offending to same aged peers	
			Behavioural desistance: moderation or cessation of antisocial behaviour over past 3 years	
			Official Desistance: no arrests in past 3 years	Official Records
McGloin et al 2011	37-87	M F	Change in score on a offending versatility index (score 1-5)	Official Records

Authors	Age of Participants	Gender	Desistance Parameters	Measure of Desistance
Schroeder & Frana, 2009	20-50	M	"Actively engaged in the beginning stages of the behavioral change process."	Self-report
Shover & Thompson, 1992	*M* = 27	M	No arrests during the first 3 years following prison release	Official Records
Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998	M ~ 26 (SD = 6)	M F	Behavioural Desistance: no illegal income over three years	Self-report
			Official Desistance: no arrests over three year follow up	Official Records
Warr, 1998	24	M F	No new offences (aka. used marijuana, committed theft, vandalism, drunk alcohol) in a year	Self-report
Wyse, Harding, & Morenoff, 2014	22-71	M F	Avoidance of Illegal Behaviour two years following prison release	Self-report

As shown in Table 1-1, there is little consistency in the desistance literature regarding which populations are the focus of research. Populations examined in desistance research vary across the domains of age, past offending behaviour, risk level for reoffending, and stage of change in the desistance process. For example, age ranges for desistant participants in Table 1-1 vary from 13 (Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003) to 87 years of age (McGloin, Sullivan, Piquero, Blokland, & Nieuwbeerta, 2011). Furthermore, risk levels of participants also vary with some studies examining desistance in community samples while others focus on high-risk chronic offenders. In response to the lack of consistency in the definition of desistance, Mulvey and colleagues (2004, p. 220) put forth three criteria which should all be incorporated into a definition of desistance:

1. Offending should remain at low levels for a long period of time
2. A within-individual decline in frequency or rate of offending should be observable
3. Researchers should pay attention to declines both within one type of offending behaviour as well as across multiple types of offending behaviours

This framework will be incorporated into the present study in the determination of an appropriate definition of desistance (see Study Inclusion Criteria in Methods).

1.2.2. When is Desistance Successful?

A complimentary debate to defining when desistance is achieved, is how to determine how long desistance should be maintained before an individual could be viewed as a successful desister. Often the importance of maintenance of desistance is either overlooked in research or portrayed as straightforward (Nugent et al., 2016) and a natural by-product of desistance. However, as reflected in Table 1-1, there is wide variety in how long researchers require that desistance be maintained before classifying individuals as desisters with some researchers failing to direct attention towards this desistance component. Maintenance of desistance is not a guarantee following a decrease in offending; in fact, resurgence of offending behaviour following desistance is extremely common (King, 2013; Maruna et al., 2008), and there is a need to focus on the *continuity of desistance* rather than the initial change (Maruna, 2001). The difficulty individuals experience when attempting to maintain desistance is highlighted clearly in the observed 'zigzag' pattern of criminal behaviour (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Piquero, 2004) in that:

> [c]riminals go from non-crime to crime and to non-crime again. Sometimes this sequence is repeated many times, but sometimes criminals clearly go to crime only once; sometimes these shifts are for long durations or even permanent, and sometimes they are short-lived. (Glaser, 1969, cited Laub & Sampson 2003, p. 55)

This zigzag pattern of offending behaviour has caused researchers to be uncertain regarding their confidence that desistance has occurred for any given individual (Bushway et al., 2001; Laub & Sampson, 2001, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Piquero et al., 2003). Indeed, researchers have postulated that periods of desistance may simply be offending lulls at different points in time as lack of offending does not necessarily mean that offending has completely terminated (Farrington, 1986). Overall, there is no definitive point or length of time in an individual's offending trajectory that researchers can say with absolute certainty that an offender has completely desisted from crime (Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003). This area of debate has resulted in researchers advocating that desistance be viewed as dynamic as the process of termination from offending tends to occur gradually (Kazemian, 2007) and is marked by setbacks, lapses, and resurgences in criminal behaviour (Burnett, 2004; Horney et al., 1995).

Building on this idea is the view that dividing offenders into categorical groups of offenders and desisters may not be beneficial as "the two groups (desisting and persisting offenders) represent similar individuals in different stages of the process of change" (Maruna, 2001, p. 74). As such, there is overlap and interplay between desisting and persisting offenders with the same individuals bouncing back and forth between categories during their process of desistance. Researchers' difficulty in incorporating length of time that desistance should be displayed is apparent in the definitions of desistance used in the literature. Definitions range from participants who are currently in custody but who display "desistance narratives" (Cid & Marti, 2012; Lebel, 2007) to studies which require that participants remain conviction free for 10 years (Maruna, LeBel, Burnett, Bushway, & Kierkus, 2002). However, the vast majority of studies regarding desistance focus on a period of crime free, or crime reduced, behaviour between one and three years (See Table 1-1 for ranges of desistance time periods). This uncertainty in determining when the desistance process either begins, or is complete, feeds into inconsistencies in the definition of desistance and variability in how researchers construct and define their desister samples. At present, these definitional issues have created a barrier in the progress of desistance research as it is difficult to compare findings across studies and populations.

1.2.3. How Desistance has been Measured

A wide variety of approaches have been employed to measure desistance. These measures vary from official records of reoffending, to self-report of offending behaviour, to individual perceptions of desistance narratives. The measurement systems designed to assess desistance are as diverse as the studies themselves. Overall, commentary on the differences in measurement methodologies can be subdivided into three distinct issues, namely: (1) whether to measure desistance as a state or as a process, (2) whether offending behaviour should be compared between individuals or within individuals, and (3) whether to use self-report or official records of offending. Although these debates surrounding these issues are interrelated, each will be examined in turn along with their impact on the study of desistance from offending.

Tightly interwoven components of the measurement debate are how desistance should be defined and, based on these definitions, how it should be measured. Although at times the answers to these domains are the same, there is a subtle differentiation

between measurement and operationalization. Operationalization refers to the subjective process of deciding how a concept that is not directly measurable can be assessed, while measurement refers to the process of coding data, typically numerically, in a manner according to a predetermined rule. The present section primarily focuses on the measurement of desistance, but operationalization is integral to the understanding of this area and as such it is presented as a way of providing additional context to the relevant measurement debates.

Static state versus dynamic process

One of the first theoretical milestones to address when planning a desistance study is whether desistance will be viewed as a state or as a process. Both options have strengths and weaknesses relevant to the methodology employed and the theoretical orientation drawn upon in the study. Theoretically, many researchers favour viewing desistance as a dynamic process where desistance is a gradual decline in offending that occurs slowly over time and is marked by frequent setbacks. Supporters of the dynamic view of desistance advocate for a behavioural focus in desistance through emphasizing the pathways and factors that lead to non-offending (Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003; Farrington, 2007; Kazemain, 2007; Mulvey et al., 2004). However, it is difficult to apply dynamic definitions of desistance outside of longitudinal data sets that permit an adequate coding period that can establish patterns of offending over a lifetime. Although information rich, these studies are also time intensive, expensive to coordinate and run, and involve potentially very complex analyses. Considering that much desistance research is cross-sectional or occurs over shorter durations of time, this dynamic orientation can be difficult, if not impossible, to apply. As a result, it is often practically necessary to apply static definitions of desistance despite the theoretical push in the field to apply dynamic approaches.

In contrast to dynamic approaches, static approaches are more difficult to justify theoretically, but are much easier to apply in terms of study feasibility and manageability. When desistance is conceptualized as a state, researchers typically determine a time-linked cut off point from which to measure offending behaviour (e.g., potentially an age at which the participants behaviour will be divided into a pre and post categories). In this approach, individuals who present with offending behaviour prior to the cut-off point, but not after the cut-off, are categorized as desisters. Although this method enables

researchers to assign participants to precise groups, a requirement for some statistical tests, there are a number of theoretical issues with this approach. Most importantly, there is no accepted cut-off point which could be applied across studies as there is no age or time frame by which point desistance will have occurred for all individuals. As a result, it is entirely possible that a participant might commit a criminal act one month after the cut-off point and never again for the duration of the follow up period. In this example, the participant will be incorrectly classified as a continued offender in the analyses despite the slightly later onset of criminal desistance. This classification system produces a noteworthy concern in the interpretation of data as the groups created are largely heterogeneous in terms of offending patterns. There is no guarantee that participants in the offending group continue to offend beyond the one instance that caused their classification as continued offenders, and no guarantee that the individuals in the desister group will not reengage in offending after the data collection is complete (Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003).

Despite this important concern, static approaches to measuring desistance are straightforward to apply and can be beneficial in addressing research questions regarding the onset and short term maintenance of desistance. Both static and dynamic definitions of desistance have their strengths and limitations. Although contrary to one another in some basic senses, each has utility and is appropriate for specific circumstances.

Benchmark for measuring behavioural change

As stated by Mulvey and colleagues (2004), a comprehensive definition of desistance must put into consideration within-individual decline in offending as well as variety of offences. Within this debate is the question of how much offending behaviour and justice system contact an individual must first incur to be classified as an offender. Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) state that behavioural change is the key feature of desistance and that in order to measure this behavioural change, individuals must first be involved in a non-trivial amount of offending behaviour. It can be argued that it is difficult to study desistance in individuals who have only offended once as they have not established themselves as offenders. By this logic, individuals can only be viewed as desisters if they have first established a distinct offending pattern prior to cessation of criminal behaviour. However, determining when individuals have committed enough, or

serious enough, offences in order to display desistance is arbitrary and difficult to define with any high level of certainty. Once an individual has been classified as an offender, then they can begin to be classified along the desistance dimensions. Typically, researchers will apply some of the following three offending descriptors when compiling a definition of desistance: offending frequency, offending severity, and offending variety scores.

The following example serves as an illustration of these three key areas to operationalizing the concept of desistance. Consider two hypothetical offenders, the first acquired 9 charges for a wide variety of property and assault related offences in one year and acquired 1 charge for a minor theft the following year. In contrast, a second offender acquired 2 charges one year for assaults and acquired 1 assault charge the subsequent year. In this example, the offenders differ in terms of their offending frequency, the change in severity of the types of offences, and in the variety of antisocial acts in which they are engaged.

One popular solution to the operationalization debate is to focus on frequency of offending by setting a cut-off for desistance as the same for all participants, typically defined as the complete absence of offending behaviour. Using this solution, all participants who display offending at a pre-specified level would be classified as desisters. In the example above, likely neither individual would be classified as a desister, despite the first individual displaying clues that they are experiencing a desistance process. Within this example both individuals display a decrease in their rates of offending charges, but the within-individual change in frequency for the first individual is greater than that displayed by the second.

Another option is to examine when participants present with offending levels similar to those observed in community samples (i.e., severity of offending). Typically this type of definition puts into consideration a combination of frequency and severity of offending in that not only must the frequency of offending decrease to community levels, but the types of offences engaged in would also need to reflect less serious crimes. Returning to the outlined example, using this definition the first individual went from engaging in multiple offences at a relatively high frequency, to engaging in one theft the subsequent year. As this individual displays a decrease in both the frequency of offending and in severity of offending, categorization as a desister may be appropriate.

A third option is to look at within-individual change using indicators related to variety of offending. For instance, researchers may examine whether participants display tendencies to engage in many types of offences and whether the class of offences in which they engage decreases. Using the above example, the first individual went from engaging in property and violent offences to solely engage in property offences, while the second individual has only engaged in assaults. Seeing that the first individual decreased the variety of offences in which they engaged, they would likely be classified as displaying a desistant process while the second would not meet criteria.

Using within-individual change measures, individuals can be classified as desisters if their offending decreases compared to their baseline frequency, severity, or variety of offending, typically with the operationalization that the offending behaviour should trend towards zero. Which method is chosen by researchers is connected to how they define desistance as some methods are better fitted for one conceptualization of desistance over others.

Self-report versus official records

Another aspect that impacts the operationalization of desistance is whether a researcher uses self-report or official records to measure changes in offending. Official records of offending are a more conservative approach to measuring criminal behaviour compared to the more inclusive self-report method. Offending measuring techniques are a very important discussion area because although self-reports of offending and official records of offending are highly correlated (Maxwell, Weiler, & Widom, 2000), they do not align perfectly with one another (Kirk, 2006). This misalignment increases depending on the type of official records examined (e.g., arrest, charges, convictions), with one study finding that offenders report on average 80 offences for each official conviction contained in their criminal records (Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber, & Homish, 2007).

To date, a few studies have been conducted which compare rates of official desistance (i.e., official records of offending) to behavioural desistance (i.e., self-report measures of offending). These studies have found that more offenders are classified as desisters when using official records in contrast to self-report of offending (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007). As a result, studies that rely on official records are more likely to examine a heterogeneous desister population composed of both individuals who have truly desisted from offending combined with individuals who have just not been caught or

charged with criminal acts. As such, the sole use of official records to examine offending behaviour would likely result in the misclassification of a subsection of participants as desisters when these individuals are in fact engaged in continued undetected offending. This consequence of relying on official records ultimately leads to the risk of making unrepresentative conclusions regarding desistance through examining participants who may or may not be involved in continued undetected offending behaviour.

1.2.4. Fitting Theories of Desistance into Modern Societal Culture

Cultural norms have changed dramatically since the foundational data regarding desistance were first gathered. The observation has called into question the relevance of past desistance findings for the current generation of offenders who are engaged in the desistance process. Advancements in technology, changes in societal structure, and increased knowledge of developmental stages have altered the societal landscape in such a way that it is almost unrecognizable from the society that existed at the time that the Glueck data were collected. Of particular importance is that the values related to many formerly influential turning points have shifted (e.g., military service is not overly common, employment trends and standards have changed, the landscape of marriage is altered, and couples are waiting to have children or not having them at all) and the culture within industrialized nations has become more humanistic with a focus and emphasis on self-expression and autonomy (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

In addition, the influence of socioeconomic development cannot be understated. As the economic world became more stable and developed, individuals have become more financially secure. This has influenced diversification in social complexity and increased social autonomy and independence (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). With the rise in economic stability, employment has changed dramatically from employment serving a means to a paycheck towards a desire for mentally stimulating and satisfying employment with flexibility in schedules and an emphasis on high salaries (Florida, 2002). Tied into the increase in individual autonomy and choice is the observation that birth rates have been steadily decreasing in the industrialized world with Total Fertility Rates (TFR) in Canada at an all-time low of 1.6 in 2012 (Whyman, Lemmon, & Teachman, 2012) with a substantial number of these births occurring outside of marriage. These birth and marriage trends are in stark contrast to the trends in the

1950s when birth rates were high and it was rare for children to be born outside of a marriage.

Another consideration when studying desistance is the developmental stage of emerging adulthood conceptualized by Arnett (2000). He coined this term in response to the observation that the developmental period between the ages of 18-25 years differed subjectively from adolescence and young adulthood within the current cultural context. Emerging adulthood reflects a delay in the transition in adolescence to adulthood during which period individuals acquire conventional roles and slowly take on adult responsibilities which are theorized to restrain criminal behaviour (Aseltine & Gore, 2005; Hirschi, 1969). This newly emerging stage of development overlaps sequentially with the period in life that desistance was observed to occur naturally (Glueck & Glueck, 1937) and is characterized by

> [r]elative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews. (Arnett, 2000, p. 469)

This increasing delay in experiencing typical life events and experimentation with identities makes the impact of traditionally studied life events on desistance less clear. There is an increasing delay in the timing of major role transitions in the youngest generations. For example, marriage and employment have been the focus of much of the turning point literature, however, the current generation of young adults has difficulty finding stable, long term employment, and premarital cohabitation is common (Ford & Schroeder, 2010). The backdrop for life events has altered and the turning point desistance research has not kept up with this rapidly changing landscape.

The social structure of the modern world has changed vastly since the generations represented in common longitudinal data sets used to study desistance. Although there are a large amount of ongoing studies that capture youth and emerging adults in the current societal context (i.e., The Next Generation Study, the Rochester Intergenerational Study), few research articles have been published from these data that discuss the process of desistance for youth currently experiencing the developmental

shift into adulthood and away from offending behaviour. There is a need to update this literature with a lens tuned to the Zeitgeist of our current culture.

1.3. Aims of the Present Study

Desistance research is once again growing in popularity and importance in the offending literature, as evidenced by the publication of several recent articles examining the topic (e.g., Barr & Simons, 2015; Rocque, 2015; Rocque, Posick, & Paternoster, 2014; Skardhamar & Savolainen, 2014; Steiner, Makarios, & Travis, 2015; Simons & Barr, 2014; Theobald, Farrington, & Piquero, 2015). Unfortunately, as much of the existing foundational data regarding desistance used data sets gathered decades ago (Glueck & Glueck, 1940; Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Laub & Sampson, 2001; McGloin et al., 2011; Mulvey & LaRosa, 1986), the current knowledge regarding desistance is out of sync with the culture and societal structure of the contemporary Western world (Sampson et al., 2006). In particular, the relevance of some factors previously found to be critical to desistance may have changed due to generational shifts in the experience of various life events (e.g., decreasing involvement in the military, increasing rates of common law partnerships, decreasing rates of reproduction). The study of desistance should be reopened to examine whether past research and models continue to hold true in the face of societal and cultural change.

The present study aims to expand on the current desistance literature through a qualitative investigation of factors that lead to and maintain desistance. In particular, the research questions central to this research are:

Research Question 1: Which factors are associated with the onset of a desistance period?

Research Question 2: Do factors that lead to failed desistance periods differ qualitatively from factors that lead to successful desistance periods?

Research Question 3: What factors impact whether an individual will re-engage in offending behaviour after experiencing a period of desistance?

Research Question 4: Which factors are associated with the long-term maintenance of desistance over time?

To address these research questions, a qualitative study was designed to investigate the process of desistance through the application of a psychological lens. Much of the foundational research regarding desistance has employed a quantitative approach which has allowed for an understanding of desistance at a group level. However, group level observations do not necessarily translate to explain an individual's desistance experience and the human element of desistance can be lost using solely this approach. Although quantitative methods are useful to identify covariates of desistance, qualitative approaches can help explore the meaning and functioning behind these factors. A qualitative approach was employed because qualitative methods are especially useful in investigating social and behavioural areas of inquiry (Guba, 1981). Moreover, the gradual and complex nature of desistance is difficult to examine through quantitative methods, which are more useful to apply when desistance is viewed as an event rather than a process (Maruna, 2001). Although quantitative studies have been used to examine desistance as a process (e.g., Bushway et al., 2001; 2003), qualitative life story approaches are more suited for this task as they are able to accommodate individual narratives and delve into a more complex understanding of individual stories (Becker, 1967; Carlsson, 2012). Because the study's focus is on the lived experience of offenders who have desisted from crime, their interpretations of their desistance trajectory, and the multiple individual pathways out of the justice system, a qualitative lens was viewed as an appropriate orientation to employ throughout this study.

The goal of the present study is not to present strong causal evidence or to statistically link various factors to the process of desistance. Rather, the goals of the present study are to better understand the experience of desistance through the participant's perceptions to shed light on the experience of desistance at an individual level. However, the findings in the present study are based on rich interview data which will help provide insight into the mechanisms subjectively linked to the process of failed and maintained desistance experiences.

Chapter 2. Methods

The approach employed in the present study and the study procedures will be described in this section. This section outlines the process of the study from the conceptualization of the population under investigation, to the procedure employed during gathering of data, to steps related to qualitative rigor, and finally the stages of the phenomenological analyses. As transparency in methods is critical to the trustworthiness of qualitative data, rationales and reflexivity were integrated into the present section to provide context to the research decisions that structured the design and the process of the study from conceptualization to theme analysis.

2.1. Study Participants

2.1.1. Inclusion Criteria: Age Range

Through observing age trends connected to emerging adulthood, generational cohorts, and the attainment of various life events linked to desistance, an age range of interest between 25 and 32 was selected for the present study. In particular, emerging adulthood occurs between the ages of 18 to 25 years (Arnett, 2000; Elder, 1985) and is associated with high rates of movement towards criminal desistance (Massoglia, 2006; Piquero et al. 2002; Uggen 2000). Limiting the subject pool to those over age 25 years allowed for a more in depth examination of both the process and maintenance of desistance after the developmental period of emerging adulthood had been experienced. To derive an upper limit to the age range, attention was paid to the average age of experiencing life events linked to desistance in Canadian populations (Table 2-1). Individuals typically progress through these events in the order of educational attainment, to full time employment, to marriage/cohabitation, and finally to having children (Ravanera, Rajulton, & Burch, 2002). An age range that included the mid to late 20s was desirable because most of the life events occurred in this time period.

Table 2-1 Average Age at Various Life Events in Canada

Life Event	Age	Data Source
Emerging Adulthood	Age range: 18 to 25	Arnett, 2000
Criminal Career Duration	Average 18.9 to 28.1 years	Farrington et al., 2014
Marriage	29.1 years for women 31.1 years for men	Employment and Social Development Canada, 2011
Children	29.6 years for women	Employment and Social Development Canada, 2011
Educational Attainment – High School	Mode age of 17 or 18 years	Statistics Canada, 2010a
Education Attainment – College	22.7	Statistics Canada, 2010b
Education Attainment –University	24.8	Statistics Canada, 2010b
First Employment	53.6% of 17-24 year old have full time employment 71.9% of 25-29 year olds have full time employment	Morissette, Hou, & Schellenberg, 2015

Finally, a sample composed of members of the same generational cohort was of interest so that participants would have shared social experiences. Members of Generation Y (a.k.a., Millennial Generation) were of particular interest as they grew up during general economic prosperity in North America but were negatively impacted by the workforce recession in the mid to late 2000s. They also experienced the rapid growth of technology and a tendency to delay typical milestones of adulthood (e.g., marriage). As such, many of these individuals are desisting from crime without experiencing typical life events associated with desistance in the early literature. There is much debate on the birth range of Generation Y, with estimates falling within the early to mid 1980s to the early 2000s. By including participants up to age 32 years in the sample, older members of the millennial generation could be included in the sample.

Although an age range of interest from 25 to 32 years of age was sought, participants who fell outside this age range of interest were invited to take part in the study if this presented an opportunity to examine a unique desistance perceptive. As such, two participants included in the sample fall outside this age range of interest. One female participant was interviewed despite being 23 years of age because she reported having a child, a life event that was underrepresented in the dataset. In addition, one male participant was interviewed despite being 42 years of age because at the time he was interviewed high risk individuals were underrepresented in the sample and he reported a lengthy offending career including being an enforcer for an international gang and spending roughly 8 years in federal penitentiaries. All other individuals invited to participate in interviews fell within the age range of interest.

2.1.2. Inclusion Criteria: Offending and Desistance Patterns

Three aspects of offending and desistance behaviour were used to determine participant's inclusion in the present study: self-reported offending behaviour, official desistance, and behavioural desistance.

Self-Reported Offending Behaviour.

As offending behaviour is normative during adolescence (Moffitt, 1993), criteria were established to ensure that participants had been engaged in levels of offending behaviour that was atypical. Specifically, participants were required to display a "non-trivial" rate of offending over their entire life time (Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998) which was operationalized using two criteria: (1) participants had to report engaging in at least two potentially indictable offences regardless of whether they were detected by police, and (2) participants had to report engaging in at least one offence that led to an official arrest. Although participants also self-reported official charges and convictions, the sample was mostly selected through the use of self-reported arrests as this information is more reflective of actual antisocial behaviour compared to charges or convictions (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Shover & Thompson, 1992; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998).

Official and Behavioural Desistance.

Most studies on desistance employ a measure of either official or behavioural desistance to define their sample. The present study builds upon this research using a hybrid approach that incorporates aspects of both definitions. First, all participants were required to report an absence of contact with the justice system over the three years prior to the study. This criterion ensured that that all participants could be considered official desisters at the time of data collection. A three-year desistance period was chosen to be consistent with past desistance studies which used official records (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007; Shover & Thompson, 1992; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998). Second, participants were screened for self-reported behavioural desistance. During the online screening participants were asked "In the past three years, how many times have you committed an offence and not been caught by the police?" These data were used to sort participants into individuals who at the time of the interview presented with behavioural desistance. Participants who reported both official and behavioural

desistance over the previous three-year period were invited to participate. However, at the time of the interview some participants disclosed additional offending which had occurred within the three-year desistance period that they did not report on the online screening survey. Participants typically cited memory error or ignorance that various actions were offending (e.g., mischief, tax fraud) for failing to disclose this information on the study screen. In these cases, their interview was used to study themes related to offending, unsuccessful desistance, and offending resurgence and not included in the examination of successful and maintained desistance. To increase transparency regarding theme compilation, a description of participants examined during the construction of each theme is included at the beginning of each of the five theme categories in the study results.

2.1.3. Inclusion Criteria: Experience of Life Events

Participants were asked about their experience of life events linked in the research to desistance (i.e., residential changes, educational attainment, employment, military service, romantic relationships, children). Participants indicated how often each life event had been experienced over their lifetime, using a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., none, once, a few times, multiple times) with a neutral response option (i.e., unsure). Participants included in the study had all experienced at least one of the life events.

In order to be included in this study, participants must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Be between the ages of 25 to 32 years of age
- ✓ Must have at least two offences, of which they were arrested for at least one anytime prior to 2013 (aka three years prior to screening)
- ✓ Must have not committed an offence within the last three years (2013-2016) (aka., reporting both official and behavioural desistance)
- ✓ Must report experiencing at least one life event linked to desistance

Figure 2-1 Summary of Study Inclusion Criteria

2.2. Procedure

2.2.1. Recruitment and Compensation

Many difficulties exist around recruiting an official sample of desisters, as these individuals are not connected to typical third parties used to recruit offender samples

(e.g., probation, community reintegration services). As such, participant recruitment involved three main phases using various recruitment procedures. First, paper advertisements were placed in high traffic areas throughout the community (coffee shops, libraries, community centers, gyms, bus shelters), electronic advertisements were placed online (craigslist and Kijiji), and the study was advertised through social media (Facebook, Twitter). Care was taken to place paper advertisements in the community at a variety of institutions and local businesses that were frequented by individuals across a range of socioeconomic statuses. Second, respondent driven network sampling was used during the interview stage of the study (described in more detail under Sampling Procedures below). Finally, due to the observation that the turning point of education was poorly represented in the sample, students attending Simon Fraser University (SFU) were recruited using the undergraduate psychology student volunteer research pool. At SFU, students enrolled in Introductory Psychology or Research Methods have the option of taking part in research opportunities for course credit. To facilitate this, studies are advertised on the Research Participation System (RPS) website and students were able to complete the online screening survey through this portal.

Compensation for participation in the present study took a variety of forms depending on the study component and whether participants were SFU students recruited through RPS. All non-SFU participants who completed the online screening survey were entered into a draw for a $50 gift card and all non-SFU participants who completed an interview were provided a honourium of $40 for their time. Participants who completed the online survey through the RPS system were given 1% course credit, and those who participated in follow up interviews were given the option of receiving a $40 honourium or 4% course credit.

2.2.2. Online Screening Survey

The first stage of the study involved completing an online screening survey. A link to an online survey was provided on all advertisement materials. This survey was designed to take 5 to 10 minutes to complete and queried a number of areas including basic demographic information, past offending behaviour, and the experience of potential life events linked to desistance (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to provide their preferred mode of contact (e.g., phone number, email address) and a preferred contact name.

During the online screen, participants were asked if they were ever arrested, charged with an offence, or convicted of an offence in their entire lifetime and in the past three years. They were asked their age at first and last contact with the justice system. Although there is a possibility of an underrepresentation of official criminal behaviour due to underreporting and poor memory retrieval (Hirschi et al., 1980), research has shown that self-reported rates of official arrests have notable concurrent validity with rates contained in official records (Maxfield, Weiler, & Widom, 2000). Also, self-reports are less biased and more inclusive then official records (Hirschi, Hindelang, & Weis, 1980; Krueger et al., 1994) making them a valid and reliable method to assess offending for research purposes (Thornberry & Krohn, 2000).

Data collection for the online screening survey was conducted using the Canadian online survey software FluidSurveys prior to their merger with the American company SurveyMonkey, to ensure that all data collected adhered to Canadian ethical guidelines regarding online survey tools and storage of electronic data.

2.2.3. Sample Selection

The sample for the interview component of the present study was selected using purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2002). This form of sampling, also known as non-probability sampling, is typical in qualitative studies as it allows researchers to select information-rich participants for in-depth examination. Through studying a purposeful sample of participants, researchers are able to acquire in-depth understanding and insight into areas of interest. Patton (2002) outlines 40 different purposive sampling techniques and indicates that these techniques can be chosen in isolation or combined depending on the intent of the research.

A combination of homogeneous sampling and respondent driven network sampling were employed in the present study. During the initial wave of recruitment, all responses to the online survey were reviewed to select a pool of participants who met the outlined study inclusion criteria. Due to lower than anticipated response rates to the online survey, all individuals who met these criteria were contacted to participate in an interview (i.e., homogenous sampling). Following completion of their interview, participants were given flyers containing study contact information and asked to provide this information to any of their friends or family members they knew who met study

requirements (i.e., respondent driven network sampling). These individuals were then able to self-select into the study by completing the online screening survey. This process was ongoing throughout the interview component of the study until data saturation was met and recruitment procedures were terminated (see Section 2.2.5: Sample size and data saturation for procedures).

2.2.4. Interview Protocol

Participants who met study inclusion criteria were invited to participate in a follow up interview conducted in the community at a location that was both convenient for the participant and public (e.g., coffee shop, library study room). Participants were provided with a hard copy of the consent form, which was also explained orally prior to the interview. Participants were given the opportunity to review this form and ask any questions regarding their participation in the study prior to giving written consent. Participants were also instructed regarding legal reporting requirements and that they could exit from the interview at any point without adverse consequences.

A semi structured interview approach was employed in the present study. This allowed the interviewer flexibility in how questions and prompts were asked to create a more relaxed, natural, and fluid interview experience (McNamara, 2009). Care was taken to establish rapport between the interviewee and interviewer to facilitate the generation of more in depth and comprehensive data. In addition, the suggestions outlined by McNamara (2009) regarding designing effective research questions were followed in that the questions were: (1) open ended, (2) neutral, (3) not redundant, (4) clearly worded, and (5) that care was taken in asking “why” questions. The interview protocol is contained in Appendix B.

The first stage of the interview consisted of rapport building questions and the completion of a life timeline anchored on the recall enhancing technique known as *the time line follow back (TLFB) procedure* (Robinson, Sobell, Sobell, & Leo, 2014; Sobell & Sobell, 1992). The TLFB procedure has been shown to help increase data recall and enhance accuracy in autobiographical reports of alcohol and drug use, sexual behaviour, gambling, intimate partner violence, and aggression (Fals-Stewart, Birchler, & Kelley, 2003; Weinstock, Whelan, & Meyers, 2004; Weinhardt et al, 1998). In the present study, participants were asked to describe key events in their life that they viewed as salient

and important. The events described ranged among participants and included events such as employment, key relationships, trips, illnesses of family members, and completion of developmental life stages. These events were then transferred on to a timeline (Appendix C) and participants were encouraged to remember key events during any periods of time that were missing memory anchors. Participants were also asked about their values and various changes in their identities over their lifetime, and these cognitive changes were also transferred onto the timeline. Following discussion of life events, participants were asked to recall their history of justice system involvement. Incidents when participants reported police contact, periods when they were on probation, and periods when they were incarcerated were transferred onto the life history timeline to assist recall during the subsequent stage of the interview.

The next stage of the interview was derived from the observation that most individuals engage in a zigzag pattern of offending behaviour over their life time. As offending behaviour fluctuates over time, and as it is impossible to conclude that an individual is a “true” desister at any point prior to their death, the focus at this stage was examining dynamic change in offending behaviour and reasons for within-individual change over time. The interview guide was based around the presumption that all participants would report fluctuations in their offending and desistance behaviour. Participants were led through drawing a line graph that represented their actual offending behaviour regardless of whether or not they were detected by police. To facilitate this process, participants were asked to draw a dot on the graph that represented the first time that they engaged in an activity that could have resulted in a charge if they were caught. Next they were asked to draw a dot at the age they were the last time they engaged in an activity that could have resulted in a charge. Following this, they were asked to mark down times when their offending behaviour was at its highest and periods when they were not engaged in any offending behaviour. Lastly, they were asked to draw a curved line connecting the points together which represented the ebb and flow of their offending behaviour over time. When drawing their line graph, participants were instructed to draw a line which represented their *subjective experience of offending* and when their offending was at its highest and lowest points *relative to their own behaviour*. As such, for some participants their peak of offending represents only a few instances of offending, whereas for others their peak of offending may represent a time period when they were embedded in the criminal lifestyle and engaged in a

multitude of crimes. Participants were instructed that these timelines did not have to be exact representations of their offending but rather that their purpose was as a conversational aid to anchor the interview on their individual subjective offending experience and therefore an approximation of their offending behaviour was sufficient for this purpose. Following the interviews, the hand drawn timelines were digitized into PDFs, cleaned using Photoshop, and are contained in Appendix E.

Figure 2-2 contains a visual depiction of offending behaviour for a hypothetical participant which reflects the type of line graph that was typically produced by study participants. In this example, the hypothetical participant reported one sustained period of justice system involvement (represented in red), two peaks in self-reported offending (represented in blue), one brief period of relative desistance (located in between the two peaks in offending), and one prolonged period of maintained desistance (located at the tail of the line graph). This idealization of offending fluctuations over time presumes many instances of offending by each participant and dynamic change between offending and desistance states with participant behaviour changing slowly over time.

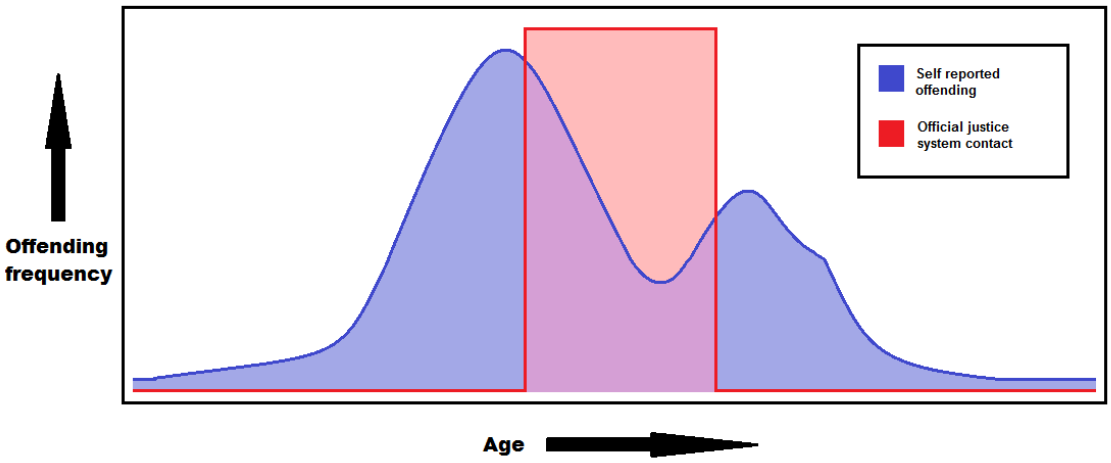

Figure 2-2 Visualization of Offending Behaviour of a Hypothetical Participant

The next section of the interview guide focused on offending and desistance. Participants were guided through their line graph of offending behaviour in chronological order. For any periods of increase in offending, participants were asked to discuss what was going on in their lives that contributed to them starting to offending and continuing to offend. For any periods of decreases in offending, participants were asked to discuss reasons why their offending decreased and what experiences they attributed to this

change in behaviour. During periods of desistance (either brief troughs or prolonged straight lines), participants were asked what helped them not offend and were asked if during these periods they had opportunities to offend and what helped them to resist these opportunities. For instances when participants reported a failed desistance period, they were asked what caused them to break from their desistance trajectory and reengage in offending behaviour.

During the final stage of the interview, the participants were queried whether any of the life events found in the literature were important to their experience of desistance (see Appendix B, Section 4: Summary and Wrap Up). These life events were examined individually and participants were queried about whether the life event was important to them and asked to describe why they either did or did not view it as key to their desistance process. Any life events mentioned by the participant organically during the previous section of the interview were not re-examined during the final stage.

Following the interview, participants were asked to complete the Self Report of Offending (SRO; Huizinga, Esbensen, & Weiher, 1991; Knight, Little, Losoya, & Mulvey, 2004) regarding offending behaviour they have engaged in over their entire lifetime. The SRO questionnaire assesses a participant's involvement in criminal activities that fall into drug, violent, or property related crime categories (See Appendix D for the version of SRO used in the present study). The SRO has good construct validity, sound psychometric properties, and can be applied across genders and ethnicities (Knight et al., 2004). Although the SRO was designed for use with adolescent populations, some studies have successfully used the SRO with young adult samples (Monahan et al., 2009; Sibley et al., 2010). Adaptations made to the SRO in the present study include changing the dichotomous response options to a count variable to allow for more nuanced insight into frequency of offending (Dahlberg, Toal, Swahn, & Behrens, 2005) and adding an item regarding involvement in other illegal activities not directly queried on the SRO. These modifications were to compensate for the potential data limitations that might occur when offenders misremember the number of times they have committed high frequency offences (e.g., dealing drugs) and to reduce the likelihood of inaccurate frequency measurements (Kirk, 2006; Monahan et al., 2013).

2.2.5. Sample Size and Data Saturation

Discovery failure (i.e., the risk of missing data and themes due to a restricted sample) is an important concern related to study validity and needs to be addressed when determining sample size in qualitative studies. The solution to reducing the risk of discovery failure is to reach data saturation prior to the completion of data collection (Mason, 2010). Data saturation, simply put, occurs when no new information, themes, or codes are being acquired through data collection and analysis (Guest et al., 2006). It is at this point that researchers can conclude that enough information has been gathered that their study findings could be replicated (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Unfortunately, there is "no one-size-fits-all method to reach(ing) data saturation... because study designs are not universal" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p 1409). As such, it is important to use methods appropriate to the study approach when determining how saturation will be judged in a given study. For instance, the relative amount and type of data necessary to determine that saturation has been reached will vary between a case study, a focus group, or individual interviews.

One method to determine data saturation is to incorporate indicators to judge both the richness (i.e., quality) and the thickness (i.e., quantity) of the data (Dibley, 2011). Suggestions outlined by Fusch and Ness (2015) were employed during data gathering to support data saturation including interviewing many types of offenders (i.e., property offenders, violent offenders), interviewing individuals with a variety of life experiences (Bernard, 2012), and engaging in efforts to overcome recruitment barriers. In addition, attention was paid to whether new information and themes appeared while coding each participant which would indicate that more interviews were required to reach data saturation. After each interview, an individual case analysis was written within 24 hours of the interview (see Appendix E) along with analytical memos comparing the gathered information to findings from past interviews. If new information was generated then another interview was scheduled with an additional participant, and so on until data saturation was reached. In addition, saturation was examined during data analyses (see section 2.4.1 Steps of Phenomenological Analysis). No new themes or codes were generated while reviewing the final few cases, indicating that data saturation was attained to a sufficient degree in the present study.

To serve as a baseline for when data thickness was likely to be achieved, a minimal sample size of 12 interviews was desired as thematic and theoretical data saturation has been shown to be reached with this number of interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). After the 12th interview, data richness was assessed following each interview, and interviews continued to be conducted until no new themes or data were being generated during data collection. The final sample size for the present study was 20 participants, which fell within the anticipated participant range of 15 to 20 individual interviews.

2.2.6. Data Transcription and Verification

All audio recorded interviews were transcribed by a trained research assistant using an edited transcription technique. This method of transcription was chosen because the transcriber is able to omit components of the recordings (e.g., background noise, emotions in voice) while still maintaining the integrity and meaning of the spoken words. Identifiable data were redacted from the transcripts and transcripts were cleaned to be made readable (i.e., removing redundant words, removing false starts to sentences, and correcting basic grammar errors) while still representing the intent of the language. All interview transcripts were verified by the lead researcher prior to deletion of the audio files. All documents were transferred into NVivo (QSR International, 2012), a qualitative data analysis program, to code the data for relevant themes linked to the research questions of interest to the present study.

During data cleaning, interview and survey data were examined for the presence of pre-determined attributes of interest. These attributes included participant gender, age, ethnicity, history of life events (i.e., type and number of events experienced), history of offending behaviour (i.e., type and frequency of offending actions engaged in over the entire lifetime), number of periods of increased offending, number of desistance trajectories, and number of periods of maintained desistance. This information is provided in section 3.2 Participant Demographics.

2.3. Trustworthiness and Authenticity of Findings

Qualitative rigor is an extremely important concept in qualitative research and combines aspects of trustworthiness and authenticity. Although the goal of qualitative

research is not to uncover a single and unified truth (Thomas et al., 2011), it is still important that researchers have confidence and trust in their findings. Confidence in study findings can be augmented by incorporating methodological checks related to trustworthiness. There are many models of how to assess authenticity and trustworthiness of findings in qualitative research, but one of the most influential and popular is the model proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2000). In this model, trustworthiness is broken down into four concepts: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to the four components of trustworthiness which conforms to standards proposed by conventional scientific research (see Table 2-2), authenticity was proposed in a revised paper by Lincoln and Guba (2000) as a complimentary criteria to consider. Authenticity criteria emerged as a way to represent the philosophical premise of qualitative inquiry rather than as a response to conventional quantitative research approaches. Each of these five domains represented in Table 2-2 will be outlined below along with steps taken to address each of these aspects of qualitative rigor.

Table 2-2 Trustworthiness of Research Findings

Criteria	Qualitative	Quantitative
Truth value: Confidence that findings represent the "truth"	Credibility	Internal Validity
Applicability: Can findings be applied across contexts	Transferability	External Validity
Consistency: Would the findings be replicated in another study	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality: Managing researcher bias and motivations	Confirmability	Objectivity
Representation: Do findings reflect participant views, unbiased results	Authenticity	---

2.3.1. Credibility

This criterion is most closely related to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research. Credibility focuses on how representative the research findings are to the lived experience of the study participants (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Thomas et al., 2011). As outlined by Krefting (1991), a study is credible when its findings reflect the examined experience in such a way that others who have shared that experience will relate with the interpretation presented. As such, credible findings regarding desistance should be broad and inclusive enough that other desisters outside

of the study sample can relate to the present study findings. Some qualitative researchers will bring their findings back to their study participants for feedback and review to increase the credibility of their findings. This process is often both time and resource intensive, but produces rich data. However, in the present study this technique was not employed due to concerns around feasibility and cost; instead recommendations put forward by Shenton (2003) and Thomas and colleagues (2011) were applied throughout the research process from study formation to completion.

First, the present study methodology was built from previous studies and attempted to utilize well-established research methods in designing the interview guide and additional materials. Next, during interviews, strategies were employed to increase honest accounts from participants, such as allowing participants to volunteer for the study, building rapport throughout the interview, and encouraging participants to "veto" questions if they were uncomfortable answering them so as to discourage the inclination to engage in distortions or communicate falsehoods. During data collection, a few participants did ask to avoid talking about certain parts of their life history. This indicated that they felt comfortable enough in the interview to use this response option, which is a testament to the credibility of the data that they did supply. Also, member checks were conducted during interviews, in which preliminary interpretations of the data were discussed with participants to clarify discrepancies and to ensure that the interviewer understood the participant's voice and story as it was being told (Guba, 1981). Additional methods were also utilized outside of interviews to enhance credibility during data collection. Specifically, peer debriefing with other qualitative researchers in the fields of forensic psychology and criminology allowed the methodology to constantly develop, guided the interpretation of themes, and identified researcher biases. In the results section, thick description of the phenomenon – such as highlighting examples from the interviews – was employed to augment credibility. Similarly, in the discussion section findings were related to previous studies on similar topic areas.

Another key technique for the credibility of findings is reflexivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Reflexivity refers to being aware of biases, impressions, experiences, and opinions which could influence the researcher's interpretation of findings. It is a mindful and iterative process which should be engaged in throughout the research process and should inform research decisions. When done diligently, a reflexive research journal is essentially a history of the study during its development and throughout the research

process (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) as well as a place to record research decisions and thought processes. In the present study, reflexivity was documented through analytical memos, which focused on impressions of each interview, patterns between interviews, links between interviews, and links to past theories of desistance. Reflexivity also included reflecting on research decisions, reflecting on perceptions of participants, and being transparent regarding preconceived biases that may influence interpretations. This reflexivity research journal was included as coding material in the theme generation process, and helped inform the development of themes throughout the study.

2.3.2. Transferability

Transferability is similar to the quantitative concept of external validity and refers to whether the findings from a given study can be applied to other populations and contexts (Thomas et al., 2011). Opinions on whether qualitative researchers should examine transferability of findings are varied. On the negative end, many researchers hold the view that because qualitative studies focus on very specific samples of interest, it is not possible or feasible to demonstrate that findings can be applied to other situations and groups (Erlandson, 1993; Shenton, 2003). In addition, Cronbach (1975) argued that the ability to generalize findings decays slowly over time as the phenomenon under investigation are tightly interwoven with the zeitgeist during which the study was conducted. On the opposite end, other researchers contend that transferability is important for the growth of research fields and sharing research findings. Some researchers argue that results should be transferable unless there is a reason to believe that the findings reflect only the experiences of a specific group or demographic.

The orientation applied in the present study was that the onus of determining whether the results of a given study can be applied to a different context falls to the consumer of the research. As such, it is the responsibility of the individual writing up the research to enhance potential transferability by providing information about the study sample, context, and boundaries of the study so that a reader can decide whether the findings are transferable to their context (Firestone, 1993; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Guba, 1981). A variety of relevant details were integrated into the study write-up to ensure that sufficient information about the study context was available for readers when determining transferability. Details relevant for transferability that were outlined in the study write-up include: location of study, study restrictions, number of participants,

participant characteristics, data collection methods, length of interviews, and time period of data collection (Shenton, 2003).

2.3.3. Dependability

The concept related to dependability in quantitative methodology is the reliability of findings and the likelihood of replicating findings should the study be repeated. Considering that replication of studies is a key component of best practice in research, one way that qualitative researchers can increase the dependability of their study is to create a comprehensive audit trail. An audit trial is a common technique that involves researchers detailing the process of data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation to create a comprehensive and transparent rationale for research decisions. Components of a comprehensive audit trail outlined by Thomas and colleagues (2011) include descriptions of: (1) study purpose, (2) participant selection, (3) data collection procedures, (4) how data were reduced or transformed, and (5) process of interpretation of findings. It is important to be transparent in the methodology used so that future researchers are able to replicate the study model. As such, in the current study, detailed sections on the research design, data gathering, theme analysis process, and reflective appraisal of the process of inquiry (Shenton, 2003) have been included in the study write-up.

2.3.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the level of confidence that the findings in a study are based on the narratives drawn from participants and not from potential researcher bias. The concept related to confirmability in quantitative methodology is objectivity. Objectivity is a difficult concept to transfer to qualitative studies in which there is direct interaction between the researcher and the participant that is intrinsic to the data collection process. The potential impact of the researcher on qualitative studies is a hotly debated topic with individuals varying in their opinions on how much this influence should be controlled (Ortlipp, 2008). Some researchers use in depth reflexivity approaches to increase the transparency of their bias, life experiences, and research choices and integrate these within the study, while others use bracketing approaches to control the impact of researcher values. In the present study, it is acknowledged that the ‘instrument for analysis’ in qualitative studies is the researcher (Starks & Trinidad, 2007)

and that researcher preconceptions impact how data are generated, analysed, and written. Efforts to mitigate the role of researcher preconceptions on the research process in the present project included bracketing approaches with the goal of increasing overall study rigor (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Fortunately, steps and recommendations (Shenton, 2003) are available to follow during data gathering, analyses, and study write up to increase the confirmability of qualitative findings, namely using an audit trail, engaging in reflexivity, and triangulation of data. Efforts surrounding the audit trail and reflexivity were respectively described in the sections on dependability and credibility. These techniques were used throughout the project, and were valuable for attempting to mitigate the role of researcher preconceptions. However, it should be noted that as this study was designed with the goal of studying positive outcomes related to desistance, and as such a strengths based orientation was employed which likely influenced study design, interviews, and analyses. However, bracketing approaches were employed to increase researcher awareness of biases and to control their influence on the study outcomes.

Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data to corroborate and verify study findings. In the present study two key triangulation methods were employed: analyst triangulation and theory triangulation. For analyst triangulation, multiple researchers were involved in the data analysis and review of findings. Using multiple coders provided a check on selective perception and helped highlight blind spots in the theme analyses. In particular, a research assistant was present for one fifth of the in person interviews and was involved in the analyses of three interviews in order to facilitate discussion of the themes and to open interpretation of the data to a variety of perspectives. During this process, the secondary coder was provided with transcripts of three data rich interviews and instructed on the process of phenomenological analyses. This coder was instructed to develop two to three themes for each of the areas of inquiry. Following this, both coders engaged in an in depth discussion of the themes derived by the secondary coder on their subset of themes and the themes derived by the primary coder on the entire study sample. Themes derived by both coders had a high level of overlap, and for any points of differentiation consensus was formed through discussion. During the interpretation of themes, theory triangulation was employed by using multiple desistance theories to examine and interpret the study findings. By examining the data through the lens of relevant theoretical perspectives the interviews

were thoroughly explored, influenced by past researchers, and related to findings from other samples of desisters.

2.3.5. Authenticity

Key to phenomenological inquiry is the concept of authenticity. This concept is broken down by Lincoln and Guba (2000) into five sub domains: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Overall, authenticity refers to whether the study findings are balanced, unbiased, and reflective of the information provided by participants. Key to this concept is ensuring that all participant voices are represented in the text and that no stories are intentionally marginalized or hidden. The rationale behind this concept is that by putting energy into representing all participant voices, the researcher can reduce the impact of subjectivity and bias in their findings. Also key to authenticity is whether the research serves to share knowledge and create a more nuanced understanding of a given topic, and whether others can build from the research (e.g., to promote action).

In the present study, care was taken to ensure that all participants were represented within the theme presentation with examples and quotes drawn from each participant. Also, to increase fairness and the sharing of participant stories, individual case narratives were created which outline participants subjective interpretations of their offending and desistance trajectories (see Appendix E). When participant experiences or opinions differed from the rest of the sample, negative case analysis was employed to highlight the individual differences and to be transparent regarding exceptions to the generated themes. This approach allowed for a more individualized understanding of the participant data and for the generation of well-rounded themes.

2.4. Phenomenological Lens

Overall, qualitative data analysis is a dynamic, iterative, and fluid process that "involves flexible thinking, processes of reduction, expansion, revision, creativity, and innovation" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, pg. 81) used to help bring the story out of the data. Like quantitative research, a variety of approaches for interpreting data fall under the heading of qualitative data analysis. These orientations are used to develop a study, frame the analysis, and guide the presentation of results. A framework for

analyzing data in the present study was created based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) and Giorgi (2009). Phenomenology is an approach commonly employed to study lived human experiences when the research focuses on how an individual subjectively experiences a given phenomenon (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The end goal of IPA is to describe the phenomenon as accurately as possible based on the accounts given by participants. A phenomenological approach is useful when attempting to describe individual's motivations and reasons for actions. As the overarching goal of the present study was to understand the unique lived experience of the study participants' offending and desistance trajectories, an orientation grounded in the contexts and perceptions of the participants provided an appropriate study lens.

2.4.1. Steps of Phenomenological Analysis

Like most qualitative analysis techniques, phenomenology does not have a single method, but instead is characterized by an analytic focus on participants' attempts to understand their lived experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As noted above, the approach employed in the present study was heavily influenced by Giorgi's method (2009), and the steps for IPA outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). Additionally, several steps were influenced by the work of Saldana (2016) regarding qualitative coding techniques.

The first stage of IPA involves the researcher taking on a phenomenological mindset by attempting to put aside their preconceived notions and opinions about potential study findings, in order to see the data with as little influence as possible from the outside world. Using this mindset the researcher can see the data as it appears within its own context, without imposing theoretical, societal, or experimental assumptions onto the interpretation. In the present study, this stage consisted of reflexivity and mindfulness regarding potential researcher biases. An open-minded approach was employed in which the data were observed as presented and not through theoretical lenses. During this process a reflexivity journal was instrumental to increase transparency regarding previously held academic knowledge and opinions. Taking on a phenomenological mindset is one of the most difficult stages of IPA, and mindfulness and awareness of potential researcher bias influencing theme development was of paramount importance throughout the entire IPA process.

The second stage of IPA involves the researcher immersing him/herself with the data to help understand the whole experience of the participant prior to applying critical reflection to their data. In the present study, immersion in the data involved two strategies: (1) audio recordings of the participants were listened to while verifying interview transcripts to hear their voices and nuances in their oral narrative, and subsequently, (2) verified participant interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure that the participants' offending and desistance experience were understood from their individual perspectives. All transcripts were coded sequentially as per recommendations by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). In addition, a psychological risk assessment and desistance narrative was constructed for each participant outlining the individual subjective causes that resulted in both offending and desistance behaviour. This was a lengthy process but was conducted to enhance the psychological lens utilized to frame the research and to aid in increased understanding of the worldview and experiences of each participant. These offending and desistance assessments are outlined in Appendix E.

In the third stage of IPA, interview transcripts are cleaned and organized by chunking the data into meaning units, otherwise known as structural coding (Saldana, 2016). This process can be equated to the quantitative process of cleaning the data and readying a data set for analyses. Meaning units are manageable chunks of text (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) that can be extracted from the interview transcripts in whatever manner is most useful for the coding process. For example, in the present study, sections of narratives relevant for each of the two offending and three desistance experiences were pulled from the larger interviews and placed together using the qualitative coding software NVivo (QSR International, 2012) to allow for a streamlined coding process. In particular, interview transcripts were chunked into five key areas, namely, sections of narratives related to: offending, desistance periods that were ultimately unsuccessful, offending resurgence, desistance periods which were ultimately successful, and maintenance of desistance. After data sorting was completed, each of the meaning units were coded down further into more specific nodes relating to the factors described by participants as relevant to their offending and desistance. Chunking of data serves an important function in qualitative research as not all interview data gathered is pertinent to answering key research questions of interest in a given study. As such, a researcher can identify and select which components of the transcripts are

meaningful to the research questions and isolate these data from less pertinent data to facilitate the subsequent coding process.

The fourth stage of IPA involves examining the interviews for similarities and differences between participants. For instance, in the present study substance use was a key factor to examine for almost all of the participants, so all data related to substance use was coded into the same node using NVivo (as per stage 3), and then examined further to determine what components related to this factor were present in the data. This stage needs to be thorough and iterative in order to produce a strong base for the generation of themes. To address the possibility that this stage can be impacted by researcher subjectivity, a systematized process built from general standards in the field of qualitative analysis composed of best practice coding strategies outlined by Saldana (2016) was employed. In particular, causation coding was the primary coding method as it allows the researcher to focus on the causal explanations linking the data together. The goal of causation coding is to "locate, extract, and/or infer causal beliefs from qualitative data" (Saldana, 2016, p. 187) specifically from the participant's point of view of what caused events to occur (Munton et al., 1999). The logic behind causation coding is that people look for causes and justifications of their own behaviour so that they can make their environment more predictable and controllable (Munton et al., 1999). By examining how people make sense of the causality in their world, it is possible to understand the participant's worldview and experience as it relates to their offending and desistance behaviour. During this stage of coding, attention was paid to the antecedents to the behaviour of interest, the outcome circumstances, and the mediating variables tying the antecedents and outcomes together (Saldana, 2016).

The fifth and final stage of IPA involves offering interpretations of the data, or attributing meaning to the data through the generation of themes, otherwise known as latent analysis. This stage is often viewed as putting the pieces of the data's story together. Patton (2002) describes that "interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanation, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order" (p. 480) on the data. During this stage, Saldana's (2016) pattern coding was employed during which nodes are funnelled down and grouped into smaller, more meaningful units that help tie the nodes from the previous stage together into meaningful themes. Pattern coding involved examining the data to identify data

clusters and patterns while paying particular attention to unexpected findings, and similarities between participants. These data clusters were continuously compared to one another to help identify other potential categories during this process and to further condense down the nodes to key themes (White & March, 2006).

To facilitate this latent coding process a large mind map was created which used a detailed colour coding process (see Appendix F for a photo of the final version of the mind map). In this map, pink and yellow post-it notes represent the nodes created through the manifest coding in step 3. Following this all data chunked under each node was reviewed and participant experiences and quotes were transferred onto green post-it notes for female participants and blue post-it notes for male participants, and placed next to the relevant node. Light colour post-it notes represented lower risk participants and darker post-it notes represented higher risk participants. The post-it notes were reorganized and rearranged through an iterative process centered on the goal of grouping information together in a cohesive manner that centered on key themes underlying how the nodes fit into participants overall desistance narratives. Frequent returns to the original transcripts occurred to ensure that drift was not occurring where participant's stories are unintentionally misremembered during the coding process. Identified themes were written on orange post-it notes and were transferred onto the top of the mind map along with explanations of how the theme appeared in the data (purple post-its) and relevant quotes (regular paper) that best represented each given theme. These themes were then rearranged and subsumed under one another until each theme was independent and represented a unique concept important for desistance. Following the development of themes, interview transcripts were re-reviewed to ensure that the themes represented participant voices and experiences.

Although the five IPA stages developed for the present study are described sequentially above for ease of the reader, the analyses were not conducted in a strict hierarchical and scripted fashion. Throughout theme analysis, an iterative and dynamic approach was employed where movement between steps was common. For instance, taking on a phenomenological mindset is important for all stages of IPA and was employed throughout the data collection and theme generation processes through regular entries into the study's reflexivity journal. Additionally, returning to the third stage of IPA (i.e. chunking data into meaning units for further analyses) was common, with transcripts being reviewed regularly when new data trends were encountered. In

addition, during latent analyses when trends were observed which would change the potential meaning of established themes, this would result in revision to the study findings and a return to early stages of IPA to further explore these new emerging areas. Qualitative data analyses were approached in the present study as a method to organize and make sense of the stories being told. This orientation requires flexible thinking and a willingness to revisit and rework themes as new data and trends emerge.

2.5. Ethics Approval and Considerations

The present study underwent ethics review from the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board (REB). The project was discussed during a full board review as a vulnerable population (i.e., offenders) were the focus of the study. The project received ethics approval and a minimal risk designation. As the present study required participants to discuss offending behaviour for which they had not been caught by police, confidentiality was to be maintained for all disclosed information aside for allegations of current child abuse or if the participant disclosed an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others. This assurance of confidentiality was explained to participants prior to commencing the interview. Assurance of confidentiality was viewed as essential to engagement of participants and for the development of rapport. Throughout the interview process, ethical mindfulness was employed (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009) through an awareness of participant comfort, depth of rapport, and disclosure of information. Participants were not queried to discuss topics for which they seemed uncomfortable and the structure of the interview was employed to ensure that the research context was apparent throughout the meeting to mitigate the risk of unplanned information disclosure on the part of the participant.

Chapter 3. Results and Interpretation

The results below are structured into five main theme areas which progress from: (1) the onset of offending (summary in Table 3-3) , (2) to factors which lead to desistance that ultimately failed (summary in Table 3-4), (3) to factors that caused desistance to fail (summary in Table 3-5), (4) to factors that influence successful desistance process (summary in Table 3-6), and (5) to themes that examine how desistance is maintained over time (summary in Table 3-7). Within each theme area are relevant sub-themes that explore factors in more depth. Care was taken to tease apart themes between sections to reduce redundancy and to report the most prominent themes for each stage of desistance. As such, many themes were apparent in multiple theme domains, but were only presented once for ease of the readers. Relevant theory is integrated into the presentation of themes, and a more general discussion is provided following the integrated discussion and results section aimed at delving into more broad areas of discussion relevant to the present study.

Although gender, social class, and ethnicity are important areas of investigation in the desistance literature, themes related to these demographics were not specifically explored in the present study. Additionally, although participants were classified into low and moderate/high risk to offend during theme analysis, examining differences between these risk level designations was also not a key focus of the present study. On the occasion that group differences appeared during theme analysis then they were noted and integrated into the relevant theme discussion. The findings outlined below represent themes related to the larger sample and should be interpreted with caution if attempting to transfer the findings to specific subgroups. Differences on desistance factors related to these social identity and risk profile categories are an important area of inquiry, but the present study was not designed to explore their impact on the exit from offending.

3.1. Participant Recruitment

Study recruitment occurred between July and December of 2016 in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver British Columbia, Canada. During this timeframe, a total of 75 individuals consented to participate in the online screening survey, of which 56 individuals completed the survey in its entirety. Of the survey respondents, 39 met

eligibility criteria (23 male, 16 female). A total of 11 (4 male, 7 female) could not be contacted due to incorrect or out of date contact information, 2 (1 male, 1 female) indicated they no longer wished to participate in an interview after being contacted, and 6 (6 male, 0 female) were not contacted to participate because data collection for male participants was completed prior to their completing the online screening survey.

3.2. Participant Demographics

In person interviews occurred between August 2016 and January 2017. All interviews occurred at a location of the participant's choice and included coffee shops, university study rooms, and community recreation centers. A total of 20 participants (12 male, 8 female) completed interviews (see Table 3-1 for a description of participants offending, life events, and desistance behaviour). As two participants fell outside the age range of interest of 25 to 32 years, age range, median, and mode age were utilized to describe this variable to reduce the effect of outliers. Overall, interview participants ranged in age from 23 to 45, with a median age of 30 and a mode age of 30. In terms of ethnicity, participants self-identified as Caucasian (n = 9, 45%), Asian (n = 4, 20%), South Asian (n = 3, 15%), Aboriginal (n = 3, 15%), and other (n = 1, 5%).

With regard to formal justice system contact, 14 of the 20 participants reported no justice system contact over at least the past 3 years. Of the six participants who self-reported justice system contact within the last 3 years, 3 reported justice system contact during the interview that they did not report on the survey, 2 received a new charge in between completing the survey and being invited for an interview, and 1 was serving a probation sentence but had last received an official charge more than 3 years prior to the interview. The participant serving the probation sentence at the time of the interview, known in this study as "Jimmy," had not been truthful when completing the study screening, and as such his interview data were treated with caution (see Flicker, 2004). Participants reported a variety of lengths of time of their maintained official desistance from the justice system, ranging between 2 to 16 years (mean = 7.5 years; median = 7 years; mode = 11 years).

As participants presented with a wide range of offending and desistance profiles, not all participants met inclusion criteria for each component of the interview and theme analysis (e.g., participants who did not have an increase in offending behaviour were not

included in analyzing offending behaviour resurgence). As such, each included theme is derived from a subset of the total sample. To increase transparency on the theme generation process, descriptions of participant demographics, behavioural desistance, or self reported offending behaviour are described separately at the beginning of each theme domain.

Interviews lasted between 35 and 145 minutes, with the average interview length equalling 72 minutes. A total of 1439 minutes (approximately 23 hours) of audio-recorded interviews were collected for the present study resulting in 469 pages of single spaced interview transcripts.

Table 3-1 Description of Interview Participants

Anonym	Recruited Via	Age	Ages while active	Justice System Contact	Offence Types	Life Events	Length of Current Desistance Period
Aaron	Flyer	28	8 - 11 14 - 19	Arrest Probation	Theft	Graduated Employment Married	Official: 11 years Behavioural: 9 years
Bryan	Flyer	30	13 - 21	Arrest	Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment	Official: 11 years Behavioural: 9 years
Cindy	Flyer	26	12 - 22	Arrest	Drug; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 5 years Behavioural: 4 years
Daniel	Network Sampling	30	10 - 27	Arrest	Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Fraud; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 4 years Behavioural: 3 years
Ethan	Network Sampling	30	18 - 29	Arrest	Assault; Arson; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 6 years Behavioural: 1 year**
Fiona	Flyer	29	10 - 23	Arrest	Drug; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Married Divorced Children	Official: 16 years Behavioural: 6 years

Anonym	Recruited Via	Age	Ages while active	Justice System Contact	Offence Types	Life Events	Length of Current Desistance Period
Georgia	Flyer	31	7 - 31	Arrest Probation Custody	Assault; Escape; Fraud; Robbery; Theft	Relocated Employment Relationship Children	Official: 13 years Behavioural: 0 years**
Henry	Flyer	27	15 - 23 27 - 29	Arrest Probation Custody	Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Robbery; Prostitution; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Married Divorced Children	Official: 0 years* Behavioural: 0 years*
Ian	RPS	26	9 - 21	Arrest Probation Custody	Arson; Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Fraud; Robbery; Theft	Relocated GED Employment Relationship	Official: 4 years Behavioural: 5 years
Jimmy	Flyer	29	10 - 21 25 - 29	Arrest Probation	Assault; Criminal Negligence; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship Children	Official: 0 years* Behavioural: 0 years*
Keith	Flyer	30	9 - 27	Arrest Probation	Criminal Negligence; Drug; Robbery; Theft	Relocate Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 15 years Behavioural: 3 years
Leon	Flyer	32	7 - 19 21 - 30	Arrest Probation Custody	Arson; Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Fraud; Robbery; Theft	Relocated GED Employment Married Divorced	Official: 11 years Behavioural: 2 years**
Marcus	Flyer	29	23 - 29	Arrest Probation	Criminal Negligence; Fraud; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 2 years Behavioural: 0 years**

Anonym	Recruited Via	Age	Ages while active	Justice System Contact	Offence Types	Life Events	Length of Current Desistance Period
Nico	Network Sampling	45	12 - 38	Arrest Probation Custody	Arson; Assault; Attempted murder; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Escape; Fraud; Obstruction; Robbery; Prostitution; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Common law Divorced Children	Official: 8 years Behavioural: 8 years
Ophelia	Flyer	25	12 - 25	Arrest Probation Custody	Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Escape; Fraud; Robbery; Sex offences (prostitution) ; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 0 years* Behavioural: 0 years*
Percy	Flyer	32	16 - 21	Arrest Probation	Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Theft	Relocated Employment Married	Official: 13 years Behavioural: 11 years
Quinn	Flyer	32	7 - 20	Arrest Probation Custody	Assault; Drug; Robbery; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Relationship	Official: 6 years Behavioural: 12 years
Rita	Flyer	28	10 - 17 19 - 25	Arrest	Assault; Arson; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Fraud; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Common law	Official: 11 years Behavioural: 3 years
Stacy	Flyer	23	12 - 18 20 - 23	Arrest	Theft; Fraud	Relocated Graduated Employment Common law Children	Official: 2 years Behavioural: 0 years**

Anonym	Recruited Via	Age	Ages while active	Justice System Contact	Offence Types	Life Events	Length of Current Desistance Period
Tiffany	Flyer	26	14 -18 23 - 26	Arrest	Arson; Assault; Criminal Negligence; Drug; Fraud; Theft	Relocated Graduated Employment Common law	Official: 2 years Behavioural: 0 years**

* Henry and Ophelia reported justice system contact between completing the online survey and participating in an interview. Jimmy failed to report in the online survey that he was on probation, but revealed this information at the time of the interview.
** Participant reported 3 years of sustained desistance on online survey, but recalled more offences at the time of the interview after completing the Self Report of Offending measure.

3.3. Exploring Themes on Offending Behaviour Onset

3.3.1. Description of Participants Offending Behaviour

Participants in the present study ranged widely in their self-reported incidents of offending behaviour from solely engaging in shoplifting to a lengthy criminal career as a gang enforcer. Although participants tended to mostly discuss involvement in one particular form of offending (e.g., thefts, vandalism, drug sales), 19 of the 20 participants reported engaging in multiple offence types described on the Self Report of Offending questionnaire. Offences included such acts as thefts, fraud, drug sales/trafficking, arson, assault with a weapon, prostitution, carjacking, and gang activities.

Participants first started to engage in antisocial behaviour between the ages of 6 to 12 (n = 14, 70%), 13 to 18 (n = 4, 20%) or as adults between 19 and 24 (n = 2, 10%). Participants reported later ages of first police contact (e.g., questioning, detainment, or arrest) occurring between the ages of 6 to 12 (n = 4, 20%), 13 to 18 (n = 11, 55%) or as adults between 19 and 24 (n = 5, 25%). A large portion of the sample presented with behavioural problems prior to adolescence, congruent with Moffitt's (1993) early onset versus adolescent onset offender taxonomy. Although it is outside the scope of the present study to examine differences between these two groups, the importance of age of onset of offending is key to understanding the risk levels of the present sample. Descriptions of study participants risk profiles including description of antisocial behaviour are included in the Appendix E.

Of the 20 participants, 17 reported being arrested and charged by the police while 3 reported solely being detained by the police. With regard to formal justice system involvement, 11 of the participants reported experiencing probation, extrajudicial sanctions, or a period of incarceration. More in depth information regarding participant offending and justice system involvement is contained in Table 3-1 above.

3.3.2. Holding a Negative Identity or Identity Experimentation

Identity is an important concept to consider when examining the onset of offending behaviour as holding a "criminal social identity" is linked to antisocial behaviour with many individuals even finding satisfaction in this role (Maruna, 2001; Shover, 1996). Of the 20 participants, 17 mentioned the impact of holding, or experimenting with, a negative identity congruent with offending behaviour as influential to the onset and maintenance of their antisocial behaviour. As identity is an important and recurring concept in the offending and desistence literature, this theme was explored to demonstrate the role of identity throughout the offending and desistance process. For instance, Ophelia described taking on an antisocial identity in response to negative labelling by her step father who would tell:

> [m]y mom that I lied or stole something. He would plant money on me and say I stole it and show my mom that I had money hidden in my room that wasn't mine. Just stuff like that. So then I started doing that sort of stuff... I would go home and they'd get mad at me for something that [my step father] said I did but I hadn't actually done, then the next day I would go out and actually get in trouble because like 'I'm already in trouble.'

Ophelia recalled beginning to experiment with antisocial behaviour and drug use as a way to rebel against her stepfather and the unhealthy family dynamics that followed his entrance into their family unit. This experimentation fed into other domains of her life and resulted in her engaging in drug use and partying which led to her taking on an identity of a "bad girl." Through her actions, her peers began to view her as rebellious, thus reinforcing her negative identity. Ophelia reported that:

> [a]ll of a sudden people were like 'oh you're a bad girl' and I'm like 'ya I'm a bad girl!' then I'll show up early and drink before [social engagements]. I'm a loser for doing that but I thought that I was the baddest chick ever.

The role of peer influence on self narratives of identity was also expressed by Keith, Bryan, and Fiona who talked about trying to blend in with their peer group by engaging in antisocial behaviour and integrating these activities into their identity as Keith stated, "I thought it was cool, I thought it was part of my identity". In these cases, the participants discussed trying on the identities of their peer group and engaging in experimentation within these social confines. Cindy, Percy, Tiffany, and Quinn reported trying on antisocial personas during their teenage years while trying to figure out who they wanted to be as people. These experimentations were not influenced by peer groups, but rather were self-directed explorations of possible identities. Tiffany recounted taking on the antisocial identity supplied by her family who were offenders and of whom many were patch-wearing members of an international gang; Tiffany stated:

> I was lost, I didn't know who I was as a person and what my purpose was in life and so I basically just chose criminal activity and drugs.

Another way that identity played into offending was through providing a sense of status and protection in adverse environments. Ian, Quinn, and Ophelia all discussed how they would put on different identities in order to adapt and blend into their environments, especially while in prison. Ian described himself as a "chameleon" who would present himself in whatever manner required to blend into his environment while Ophelia stated that "I would show a side of my personality that needs to be shown to get what I want in that moment" when discussing how she could jump between offending and non-offending contexts. Taking on an antisocial identity also resulted in a boost to confidence as described by Nico who stated that after he almost killed a fellow inmate in prison that he viewed himself as a high level offender:

> I felt a real sense of status from it, which is kind of a theme for a lot of my life, and what prison did to me was that I felt more like it gave me status.

Nico stated that through engaging in violent acts while in prison, his fellow inmates gained respect for him, which gave him power within that context. This labelling by his fellow inmates gave him a sense of importance and a sense of self (Shover, 1996). As described by labelling theorists, there is power in labels in that offenders can create a "looking glass self concept" (Cooley, 1902) where they create identities for themselves based on how *they feel that they are viewed* by others (Maruna, 2006). The role of identity in aiding in the onset of offending was most noticeable in situations in which

outside agents applied labels to the participants that were aligned with antisocial behaviour and offending. This highlights the importance of the imposition of labels on the developing self-perception of individuals, especially during adolescence when experimentation with identity is common (Kroger, 2007).

3.3.3. Risk Factors Congruent with Risk Assessment Domains

Participants attributed the onset of their offending to a wide variety of well-known risk factors for offending (see Appendix E for individual case conceptualizations of risk for offending). The most commonly reported factors are presented in Table 3-2 below and clustered into historical/biographical, social/contextual, and individual risk factors congruent with the risk categories provided by the commonly used youth risk assessment tool the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY; Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2003). Most of the factors described by participants are in line with known risk factors set out in the risk assessment literature. Research synthesized by Loeber and Farrington (1998) summarized the importance of these aforementioned factors, which tend to compound upon one another to increase risk for violence (Herrenkohl et al., 2000). The compounding nature of offending risk factors was similar to findings in the present study as participants outlined the interactional nature of their risk factors.

The most common offending influences described by participants were substance use (n = 16), financial need (n = 16), and negative peer influences (n = 14). These are all well known risk factors for offending for both youth and adult offenders. As the present study focuses on desistance factors, and not on factors connected to the initial onset of offending behaviour, themes related to risk factors are not explored in depth. However, this trend was examined to highlight the differences and similarities between the present sample and past offender samples to inform the transferability of findings. Given the congruency between the risk factors described by the present sample and past research findings, it is likely that the offending landscape of the study participants is similar to other offender populations that have been investigated.

Table 3-2 Most Commonly Discussed Risk Factors for Offending

Offending Factor	Count (*n*)	Example from Interviews
Historical/Biographical Risk Factors		
Negative Family Dynamics	8	Rita discussed the role of her parents' divorce and needing to hide this from others as key to her offending
Past Justice System Involvement	7	Leon described how after he had served time in youth custody that he was no longer afraid of being caught as custody was a better alternative to staying at his group home
Social and Contextual Risk Factors		
Financial instability	16	Cindy mentioned that she came from a low income household and would steal items that she could not afford to buy legally
Peer Delinquency	14	Ian stated engaging in offending as a way to look 'cool' to his delinquent peer group and that he would host parties and offend to get drugs to use with his peers
Romantic Relationships	12	Ophelia reported that she dated a gang involved drug dealer and that he was supportive of her escorting and would supply her with drugs when she requested them
Poor Parental Management	10	Keith described having little parental oversight during his childhood after his parents divorced and that he had no structure imposed on his behaviours
Community Disorganization	9	Henry described growing up on a reserve where drinking and offending were common and viewed as necessary to survive
Stress and Poor Coping	7	Georgia mentioned that she would re-engage in substance use when stressed and when her positive coping skills failed
Unstructured Free Time	7	Jimmy reported offending when he was hanging out with his peer group and they were bored and looking for something fun to do with their time.
Individual Risk Factors		
Substance Use Difficulties	16	Nico discussed how his substance use issues were key to his offending and that he would offend to get drugs and as a result of being on drugs
Education Factors	12	Ethan mentioned that schooling helped him become a better offender as he applied what he learned about marketing and economics to become a better drug dealer
Boredom and Stimulation Seeking	11	Tiffany outlined how she would engage in offending as a form of excitement because she was an 'adrenaline junkie'
Holding Negative Identity	10	Fiona felt that she was a 'bad girl' when she was a teen and that she would offend to demonstrate this identity to others

Table 3-3 Summary of Offending Themes

Theme	Count (n = 20)	Description
Holding a Negative Identity or Identity Experimentation	17	Offending attributed to holding, or experimenting with, a negative identity congruent with antisocial activity
Risk Factors Congruent with Risk Assessment Domains	20	The most commonly reported factors by participants are in line with known risk factors in the risk assessment literature including historical/biographical, social/contextual, and individual risk factor categories

3.4. Exploring Factors Related to Unsuccessful Desistance

3.4.1. Participant Initial Desistance Periods

For the purposes of the present study, unsuccessful desistance experiences were operationalized in two ways: (1) as periods of marked decreased offending (e.g., approximating zero: Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003) which were followed by a resurgence of offending behaviour, or (2) marked decreases in offending that did not approximate zero (e.g., reduction from high levels of offending to moderate or low levels) that may or may not have been followed by a resurgence in offending. The trend of deescalating offending behaviour while continuing to persist in some level of antisocial activity is a common behavioural pattern described in the desistance literature (Bachman et al., 2015) and therefore is worthy of investigation. In the current study, data from these two desistance patterns were combined because it was observed that common themes were linked to these two forms of unsuccessful desistance. As such, themes for these two patterns are presented in aggregate.

Of the 20 participants, 18 reported experiencing at least one period of reduction in offending behaviour which ultimately resulted in a failed desistance experience. Of these individuals, 6 reported that during their first period of desistance they were able to completely abstain from offending, while 12 reported that their first period of desistance was solely marked by a decrease in offending behaviour relative to their past offending behaviour. Of these 18 individuals, 12 reported that their offending increased following the unsuccessful desistance period, while 6 reported that their offending plateaued at a medium to low level, which either continued at this level or decreased further over time until the interview for the present study.

3.4.2. Externally Imposed Behavioural Constraints

Failed desistance experiences were often connected to external factors forcing a temporary change in offending behaviour which was unrelated to a conscious decision on the part of the offender to desist. These external constraints took many forms, but were most often described as physical health concerns, physical ramifications of mental health issues, and enforced external consequences for antisocial behaviour such as forced treatment or probation supervision.

Stacy, Ethan, and Ophelia discussed the role of their physical health on their desistance. Physical health concerns and physical deterioration, such as those that are a natural consequence to aging like decreased energy levels, have been thought to influence desistance (Moffitt, 1997). Although most often this theme is discussed in the literature in relation to *fear* of physical harm (Bryne & Trew, 2008; Hughes, 1998), the theme that emerged in the present study was the *consequence* of physical harm. Physical harm was incurred by a subset of interviewees for whom it played a pivotal role in instigating a desistance period. For example, injury was central to Ophelia's first period of desistance, likely as her offending prior to this point was physical in nature and required Ophelia to be in good physical shape. Ophelia worked as an "escort" but had an affinity for robbing her clients instead of exchanging sexual services for payment. After engaging in such activities for four years, Ophelia injured herself while at the gym and required a spinal tap as part of her treatment. This procedure was performed incorrectly and resulted in Ophelia requiring bed rest for three months while she recovered. She stated that at this point in her offending cycle she desisted because "I had to quit (escorting), I couldn't fight people. I couldn't run." A similar sentiment was voiced by Stacy, who described injuring her hands and becoming unable to engage in shoplifting because she lacked the physical dexterity. Ethan also desisted briefly after he discovered that his cerebral arteries were weakened due to his extensive drug use and he became dizzy and had extremely strong headaches that restricted his ability to physically move.

Other participants, such as Marcus, Leon, and Rita, discussed experiencing health issues that impacted their offending, however, the pathways connecting physical health to offending were less direct, and were discussed in relation to mental health concerns which arose and suppressed offending behaviour. For example, Tiffany discussed experiencing physical symptoms of depression in response to some physical health stressors and that during her depression she was exhausted, lacked energy, and lacked the mental acuity to offend as:

> [y]ou can't really offend or do stuff that I used to like fraud when you're depressed and your mind [is] not clear because you'll get caught if you don't think right.

Participants were queried regarding the role of punishment and their justice system involvement on their offending behaviour. Overall, participants did not feel that

their contact with the justice system aided in their desistance from offending. These findings are consistent with research in this area, especially with regard to imprisonment, for which no links, or even negative connections, to desistance have been reported (Bales & Piquero 2012; Gendreau et al. 1999; Nagin et al. 2009; Villettaz et al. 2006). However, a few participants did discuss the indirect role of criminal justice sanctions on their risk for offending. For instance, Daniel described losing his licence due to impaired driving and how he was unable to offend due to his mobility being restricted. In regards to formal contact with the justice system, the influence of this life experience on offending appears to be fleeting. As stated by Ian:

> [w]hen I came out [of jail] I was like 'I never want to go back there again' so I kind of stopped but then I realized that the system wasn't too terribly concerned about putting me back unless I was doing real crime so then I started selling drugs again.

This finding is similar to past research on justice system contact and desistance that indicates that only individuals who are motivated to change benefit from justice system contact. This change typically follows engagement in active collaboration during reintegration when individuals take advantage of opportunities such as education and employment programming (Cid & Marti, 2012).

3.4.3. Social Supports Encouraging Change

Participants focused a great deal of their interviews on the roles of outside agents pushing for positive change and for desistance from offending. Typically, these outside agents included family members, peers, and romantic partners, but at times included service providers such as social workers. The role of outside agents encouraging change has been demonstrated in past studies with researchers finding that friends and loved ones can help promote desistance by encouraging change or pressuring an offender to abstain from crime (Bryne & Trew, 2008; Cid & Marti, 2012; Hughes, 1998; King, 2013), providing material and emotional support influential to desistance (Cid & Marti, 2012; Hughes, 1998), and through outside others believing that change was possible (Haggard et al., 2001; Hallett & McCoy, 2015).

In the present study, the most commonly discussed social connection that supported change was romantic relationships. In general, the effect of romantic relationships on desistance is mixed, with recent studies reporting no effect of marriage

on desistance and that the effects of relationships on desistance occur prior to marriage (Lyngstad & Skardhamar, 2013) and likely serve a supportive, rather than causal, role in the desistance process (Bachman et al., 2015; Carlsson, 2012). For instance, Keith described how his university girlfriend was able to control his behaviour as she took on a "parental role" and gave him stability. He described how she managed his behaviour and forced him to be responsible, as she was:

> [a]lready in university and she's pretty educated and [a] pretty balanced, level headed person. And so I think that gave me a lot of stability.

A similar experience was described by Leon who talked about reconnecting with an old girlfriend when he was 18 years of age. At this time he expressed an interest in going back to school and she believed in him that he could graduate and turn his life around. He stated she was a positive influence on his desistance because:

> [s]he had a good home life, she was on team Canada for judo, all these things. We're still best friends now... when I decided I wanted to go back to school, she picked me up every day and made me go to school. If I didn't want to go to school she would come pick me up and make me go to school. So she was kind of my driving force there.

Very few participants described dating prosocial romantic partners while they were engaged in antisocial behaviour. However, a few participants dated individuals who were less engaged in an offending lifestyle in comparison to themselves. For example, Fiona stated that her offending first decreased because, "I had my first real love boyfriend and he was a good influence. We did more outdoor stuff and whatever." However, this individual was much older than Fiona and, although he was not into drug trafficking like her previous boyfriends, he was still engaged in a partying lifestyle and encouraged her drug use. More commonly participants recalled dating individuals who were also in the offending lifestyle at a similar level as themselves. This selection of dating partners is aligned with the theory of assortative mating (Boutwell et al. 2012; Krueger et al. 1998) that states individuals tend to pair with people who are similar to themselves on various domains. According to principles of assortative mating, partner selection is not random and partners tend to be similar to each other on pre-existing factors, such as antisocial behaviour, prior to the commencement of a relationship (Boutwell et al., 2012). Assortative mating is often contrasted with behavioural contagion where offending behaviour between romantic partners tends to become more similar

over time, although support for this theory is inconclusive (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). There is support for both of these theories in the findings of the present study with participants reporting most often dating partners who were antisocial and participants engaging in offending or other antisocial behaviour with these individuals. Although most participants reported dating and marrying partners who have a similar lifestyle, these relationships were not inherently negative and at times contributed positively to desistance. Many participants described these relationships as creating a potential venue for change where, if both partners desisted from crime at the same time, they were able to support each others' changing self conceptions and behaviours (Giordano et al. 2002). For example, Ophelia described how when she was an escort she dated a drug dealer who was also entrenched in the offending and substance use lifestyle. She stated that at first:

> [h]e was like a gangster kind of and I was a drug addict and it worked perfectly, then I started getting clean, because he asked me to get clean, and he kinda started getting his life together too. It got to a point where I was ready to continue bettering my life but he was like 'no this is it, this is all that I can do'. So I was like, 'okay we can't be together then.'

Although Ophelia ended the relationship with her partner, she was able to make positive progress on her drug addiction and through this was able to connect with a more positive peer group and acquire legal employment. Eventually, Ophelia realized that their relationship was not one that could continue if she wanted to progress further in her life and that by continuing to date her partner:

> [i]t wasn't fair to him, and it wasn't fair to me. That's what I said to him. It's not fair for me to be always bitching at you to be someone you're not and it's not fair [of] me to ask you to be someone that you're not– but it's also not fair to me because you don't want what I want. There's no point.

Ophelia felt that this relationship was instrumental to her change process owing to her boyfriend who helped her see that she had a drug problem and provided a supportive relationship in which to change. Also, as he was changing at the same time he understood the barriers she was facing and was able to provide a benchmark for progress. Similar experiences of dating a partner engaged in antisocial behaviour and gradually desisting at the same time were described by other female participants such as Cindy, Fiona, Rita, and Tiffany.

For the participants of this study, desistance was also influenced in less direct ways by romantic relationships. Henry, Nico, and Jimmy mentioned dating partners who provided them with material support, thus temporarily increasing desistance over the course of the relationship. This observation aligns with research on material support provided by romantic partners on desistance (Wyse, Harding, & Morenoff, 2014) in which offenders can desist when being financially supported by a romantic partner. In the present study Nico reported that when he was first released from the penitentiary:

> NICO: I ended up with my girlfriend who ended up being my girlfriend for 5 years and my first ex fiancée. So we were together for that 5 years so she kind of kept me grounded a little bit.
>
> INTERVIEWER: What about her kept you grounded?
>
> NICO: Just that – you know, I had a steady relationship. She worked and had always worked her whole life. Plus she had some money when I first met her so the need to do crime wasn't as extreme.

This experience was echoed by Henry, who began to date a woman who was collecting child support payments from three ex-partners. Henry discussed how when he was living with her she "took care of me" and that he did not need to offend as much to acquire money as they could live comfortably off of her child support payments. For both Nico and Henry, relying on their romantic partners for financial support encouraged a parasitic lifestyle, and did not spur any real change that would be encouraging of desistance. Interestingly, engaging in a parasitic lifestyle which resulted in reduced offending was only voiced by male participants. Although female participants did describe a reduced need to offend when both partners had employment, none of the female participants described relying on male partners for financial support. Another way that romantic relationships inadvertently decreased offending in the present study was mentioned by Tiffany, Stacy, and Ophelia, who each described dating antisocial males who would engage in offending for them. They described these relationships positively and stated that they were able to take on more traditionally feminine roles owing to the observation that "when I'm with somebody I play a housewife role so I don't really go out and do drugs" (Ophelia). Stacy discussed how her partner would take the blame for offending when they were caught shoplifting; a similar experience was recounted by Nico, who described once taking the blame for a joint robbery so that his fiancée could be released from jail. At the time of their arrest, he viewed himself as being "chivalrous" since she had convinced him that she was terminally ill and that when:

> [w]e both get denied bail, I can't handle it on my conscience the thought of her dying in a jail cell. So I contact the crown and was like 'here's the deal. I will plead guilty to everything you have against me right now. I'll take a joint submission for federal time. All I want in return is for you to let the girl go.'

Another key form of social support that influenced desistance was support through family relationships, which was mentioned by Rita, Cindy, Ophelia, Leon, and Ian as key to influencing the onset of a desistance period. For example, in his late teenage years Leon moved back in with his adoptive father to focus on completing his schooling. During this time he received financial support through this adoptive father, giving Leon the ability to attend high school without worrying about finances. However, parental supports were also described negatively by participants, such as when family members were ill prepared to support change or when family members used ineffective parent management approaches. For instance, Ophelia described how at one point her mother took over control of her finances in an attempt to control Ophelia's substance abuse. Ophelia stated that this level of control "makes me want to run. I just want to run from her. I want to run so bad but I know I can't". Although Ophelia's offending behaviour reportedly decreased under this form of management as she was unable to purchase drugs, she also felt the desire to fight back against her mother and to undermine these attempts to control her behaviour. These examples highlight how outside social support persons may have the best intentions, but are not always equipped with the appropriate skill set to initiate and encourage lasting change in others. For Leon, he was able to temporarily desist through his adoptive father providing a form of parental support which was needed at that particular time in Leon's life. In contrast, Ophelia's mother's support style was overly controlling and invasive, and this form of support was ultimately destabilizing and resulted in Ophelia becoming increasingly creative in acquiring drugs to thwart her mother's control.

Overall, the "testimony of others" (King, 2013), such as having others reflect on and highlight positive change, has been found to be influential in early desistance. King's (2013) research found that many of their participants relied on outside agents to validate their positive sense of self obtained through desistance, as was observable in the present study most often in reference to romantic relationships. Potentially, this reliance on outside agents to promote the idea that change is possible is built through social role-taking and social reinforcement as described in Giordano and colleagues (2007) work on cognitive transformation theory which emphasizes the role of social causes on human

action (Paternoster et al., 2015). The impact of social supports in the present study, especially romantic relationships, on offending was not long lasting; as described by Daniel “you just don’t want to hurt the person you’re with and make bad decisions which affect them... (but) after a while you’re like ‘screw it’, right.” Positive change through romantic relationships was at odds with participants feeling that they were putting on a fake persona in order to impress their current partner. When change was not internalized, but instead was put on in an attempt to align their actions with the expectations of others, the participants were not committed to change and remained unaffected by social supports encouragement to desist (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Holland, 2003). Overall, in the present study, social supports through family and romantic relationships contributed to temporary desistance, but these effects did not appear to last over time or result in sustained desistance, especially if they were working in isolation and participants had yet to experience internal change connected to a motivation to desist.

3.4.4. Negative Emotions Suppressing Offending

Participants often mentioned the role of experiencing negative emotions on temporarily suppressing offending behaviour. Piquero (2017) explored the role of emotions on desistance and found that *remorse* was linked to desistance with serious adolescent offenders who expressed this emotion having lower recidivism in the form of arrests compared to youth did not express remorse. Piquero’s study builds off of theoretical work completed by Warr (2016) who argued for the importance of considering the emotion of *regret* in desistance as:

> [t]o those wise or thoughtful enough to anticipate it, regret is a prudential warning from a possible future. For those less discerning, it is a self-imposed penalty for mistaken or unconscionable choices. In an imperfect world where justice is uncertain, regret is the only sentence that many offenders will ever serve. (p. 238)

Warr (2016) argues that not only does regret occur after the commission of illegal activity, but that the anticipation of regret may even cause offenders to refrain from crime. Although regret and remorse were mentioned by participants, they were described infrequently, were rarely mentioned in the context of temporary desistance, and will not be explored in this theme. Relevant to the present theme is the research which differentiates between feelings of guilt and shame, with the former being

connected to desistance and the latter being connected to recidivism (Hosser, Windzio, & Greve, 2008; Tangney, Stuewig, & Martinez, 2014). In the present study, some participants attributed exiting from offending behaviour in response to feelings of guilt, shame, or embarrassment, which will all be described in turn.

Feelings of guilt were important for Rita's brief exit from offending behaviour. Rita recalled how after accidentally burning down a local park as a young adolescent while playing with fire with her friends she felt immense guilt. She reported that she began to volunteer at the school adjacent to the park on her own initiative to try and make amends. Feelings of guilt were echoed by Percy who stated that after he was first caught for shoplifting, "I knew I was doing something wrong and I knew that I felt bad about it." He attributed these feelings of guilt to his first experience of desistance, but reflected that these changes were not long lasting mainly as the cause of his offending (i.e., low income, lack of employment) were still present in his life. For both Rita and Percy these feelings of guilt were not enough to maintain desistance and both reoffended despite expressing ongoing guilt related to their actions. Keith also mentioned the role of guilt on reducing, but not eliminating, his offending behaviour. He described that while in college he would often shoplift and that:

> I started getting really down on myself. The next day [after shoplifting] I would wake up feeling super guilty, like why am I doing all this stupid stuff? If I get caught, I'm an adult now; I can get in really big trouble.

Although Keith expressed feeling guilty about offending, he was not sufficiently motivated by that negative emotional state to seek out factors that might support long term change in his risk behaviour.

Participants also discussed the role of embarrassment on their desistance behaviours. The role of embarrassment was often discussed alongside social perceptions of being caught for offending. Often, when the responses of the participants' social network to offending were positive, the feelings of embarrassment did not impact offending as outlined by Fiona who explained that after being caught for shoplifting:

> I didn't want to tell anyone. It was embarrassing it wasn't like something I actually did and then the other part of me was like 'hell yeah I did this! Helped my friends!' to be like the bad girl. So I was like torn.

Embarrassment was also experienced by participants when prosocial individuals in their social networks began to realize that the participant was engaged in antisocial behaviour. These feelings of embarrassment appeared when participants realized how others viewed them and that these perceptions were in conflict with how they wanted to present to the world. Ophelia spoke about how at her peak period of substance abuse:

> My mom looked at me and was like 'are you smoking crack?' and I was like 'no'. But people started to know. That's what caused me to stop. I like to have good appearances. I never want my reputation tarnished so much that if I need to call in a favour, I can't be a normal person in the normal world.

Ophelia was worried that she would ruin her chances at having a normal life and felt embarrassed that it was starting to become apparent that she was engaged in hard drug use. This was especially interesting as Ophelia viewed her involvement in offending as temporary and a way to push boundaries. The fact that her offending behaviour was breaking past the point of experimentation and starting to impact her social standing was a shock and created an impetus that helped her address her substance addiction.

In regards to feelings of shame, Nico recalled a pivotal moment that influenced his first period of desistance, which involved him realizing that he was a "predator" and that this realization caused him to feel unease. Nico attended a treatment program while in prison intended to teach offenders the impact of their behaviour on victims of violence. During this workshop Nico described that:

> [t]here was this one really cute girl. She was really timid. She was just a little deer and so afraid and it was because violence was perpetrated against her and I saw the impact that it had had. Then when I realized because you know, here's this group of people that we all hate and we say let's kill these fucking skinners, but when I realized that my thinking - all be it the end goal was different - the thinking was the same. I'm going to take what I want from you because you can't stop me. *I realized how much of a predator I was and I didn't feel good about that anymore* [emphasis added]. I didn't feel good doing a smash and grab. To me it was no different than a guy preying on a woman or a child.

Realizing that his thinking patterns were predatory created an impetus for change for Nico and once released from prison Nico made attempts to turn his life around and attend school. However, feeling shameful about his behaviour was not sufficient to hold up against the life challenges presented after his release from federal custody.

In the current sample, although feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and shame did result in brief cognitive changes or realizing that their actions were wrong or selfish, negative emotional experiences did not result in long term change in offending behaviour. When these emotional states were experienced, the consequent reductions in offending were brought about superficially and were quick to break down in the response to stressors. In the present study, negative emotional responses to offending did not impact long term desistance likely because the individual's commitment to change did not align with their desire to change.

Table 3-4 Summary of Unsuccessful Desistance Themes

Theme	Count (n = 18)	Description
Externally Imposed Behavioural Constraints	13	Failed desistance experiences were often connected to external factors forcing a temporary change in offending behaviour which was unrelated to a conscious decision on the part of the offender to desist.
Social Supports Encouraging Change	10	Outside agents pushing for positive change and for desistance from offending, typically family members, peers, and romantic partners, but at times included service providers such as social workers.
Internalized Negative Emotions Suppressing Offending	10	Participants desisting in response to feelings of guilt, embarrassment, or shame temporarily suppressing offending behaviour.

3.5. Exploring Themes on Criminal Behaviour Resurgence

3.5.1. Description of Participant Offending Resurgence

Re-engaging in offending behaviour following a period of reduced, or absent, offending is extremely common (Bachman et al., 2016; Carlsson, 2012; Kazemian, 2016). In analysing data related to this theme, participants' resurgence in offending was operationalized as having occurred if their offending reappeared after a period of an absence of offending, or if their offending increased following a sustained low level of offending behaviour. Of the 20 participants interviewed, 13 reported a resurgence in their offending behaviour following a period of either reduced criminal activity (n = 7), or following a period of complete absence of offending behaviour (n = 6). Resurgences of criminal behaviour occurred after an average 2.6 year period (range 1-3 years) of non-offending. After periods of reduced offending, resurgence occurred on average after 2.8 year period (range 1-6 years) of maintained low level offending behaviour.

3.5.2. Superficially Addressing Non-Critical Offending Risk Factors

The present theme connects to the themes related to the initial onset of offending behaviour, most notably with participant risk factors for offending. Often participants were aware of the risk factors they presented with that influenced their offending behaviour. Also, during early stages of desistance participants recounted attempting to manage these risk factors. This observation is in line with past research that individuals in early desistance processes are aware of their personal and social risk factors which could cause their desistance efforts to fail (King, 2013). In addition, early desisters can be overly optimistic regarding their desistance in light of the likely social stressors and difficulties that they might face while trying to abstain from crime (King, 2013), which also appeared to be relevant for the present study.

Many participants described addressing their individualized risk factors for offending in such a way that their impact was reduced, but not completely eliminated from their lives. This partial elimination of factors appeared to be due to participants not being intentionally aware of all the factors in their lives which were increasing their offending behaviour. This partial insight into their risk factors for offending resulted in participants reducing some risk factors in their lives but not others. For instance, many participants took a haphazard approach in mitigating their risk for offending and decreased some factors key to their offending (e.g., substance use) but failed to recognize the importance of other risk factors (e.g., peer delinquency) on their offending patterns. Potentially these findings suggest that although participants wanted to desist from crime, they were not fully committed and willing to make substantial life changes in order to sustain and support a non-offending life style. This observation is parallel to Bushway and Reuter (1997) who indicated that both personal commitment and deliberate intention to quit crime is necessary for desistance. Without commitment to change and the intention to do what is necessary to desist, the participants in the present study were putting themselves at a disadvantage for when life stressors inevitably appeared.

Georgia is an interesting case example of the effects of partial dissolution of her risk factors for offending. Georgia first desisted from offending when she was 18 years of age and pregnant with her second child. At the time, Georgia was on probation and she recalled deciding to behave and serve out the rest of her probation period so that she

could be out of the justice system before the birth of her child. To facilitate this process, Georgia stopped using substances which were an integral factor to her offending cycle as she typically offended while high or offended in order to attain drugs. However, at this time she was also in an unhealthy relationship with the father of her child and she maintained connections to her previous negative peer group with whom she had engaged in substance use. After having her daughter, Georgia reported that her offending decreased because “my whole life changed when I had my daughter. I just wanted to do good and raise her good and opposite of what I was raised.” Georgia was able to maintain a low level of offending behaviour for a number of years, however, as she had not controlled risk factors that were linked to her substance abuse she existed within an environment full of temptation and easy access to substances. Georgia recalled relapsing back into her drug use as a way to cope with stressors such as fights with her partner. During this time she would send her daughter to live with relatives which only served to further destabilize Georgia as this allowed her to engage in substance use with her friends which would ultimately spiral into her offending.

Solely removing an individual’s risk factors for offending creates voids in an offender’s life unless these factors are replaced by prosocial alternatives (e.g., negative peers for positive peers, substance use for healthy coping mechanisms, lack of material resources for employment) to promote positive change. As illustrated above, Georgia had simply removed substance use from her life, but had not replaced this behaviour with a prosocial alternative (e.g., prosocial coping mechanisms) nor had she addressed the factors that had originally brought about her substance use (i.e., childhood trauma). As a result, she was prone to relapse as she continued to exist within the same unhealthy environment as when she was offending.

In the present study, early desistance efforts typically failed when participants experienced life stressors which triggered them to re-engage with the risk factors they had initially eliminated or reduced during their desistance period. Participants tended to use negative coping techniques such as substance use and violence which would ultimately lead to relapse or recidivism. It is apparent that simply removing risk factors of offending is not sufficient to encourage desistance, but that these risk factors need to be replaced with prosocial, or protective, factors for change to occur (Hoge, Andrews, & Leschied, 1996; Lodewijks, de Ruiter,& Doreleijers, 2010). This tendency to re-engage in risk factors for offending was most commonly discussed in regard to using substances

following a period of abstention as substances were a key coping strategy especially for those with substance addiction as Nico stated:

> [o]nce you take drugs and alcohol from the real alcoholic, you just exacerbated the problem, you haven't made it better. Just made it worse. It was my coping strategy. It was the only coping strategy that I knew to deal with the fact that I couldn't handle how I felt. It always led me back [to crime].

Georgia, Ian, Keith, Jimmy, Henry, Tiffany, and Ophelia also voiced their reliance on substances as a coping mechanism that was key to their re-engagement with criminal behaviour. It appears that for these individuals, they were using substances as a way to escape stressors instead of attempting to remedy the stressors directly. Many of the stressors experienced were interpersonal and were typically connected to relationships with romantic partners or children. For example, when Henry learned that the mother of his child was cheating on him, he used substances to cope with his negative emotions. He described going over to her house while intoxicated and that he acted violently towards the man with whom she was having an affair. Tiffany described re-engaging in substances to cope with the death of her aunt which created a venue for her to re-engage in gambling and fraud, and Jimmy described using substances once he found out that his ex-girlfriend was pregnant with his child and ultimately assaulted her when he was intoxicated while they were engaged in a verbal argument. Substance use is so intricately tied to offending behaviour that it continues to be viewed as one of the main barriers to successful desistance (Belenko, 2006; Kazemian, 2016; Mumola & Karberg, 2006). In point of fact, Maruna (2001) states that substance use is so integral to offending that the study of desistance subsumes abstaining from both substance use and offending.

In contrast to poor coping with social stressors, many of the participants re-engaged in offending behaviour due to financial stressors. When financial stressors resurfaced during an early desistance period, participants often described returning to offending (Bryne & Trew, 2008). Of the 13 individuals who reported resurgence in criminal behaviour, seven linked the cause of their recidivism to unanticipated financial concerns. Typically, participants experienced financial stressors and had not yet been out of the antisocial lifestyle long enough to know how to access supports and address these concerns in a prosocial manner. Instead they reverted back to their offending skill set and used this knowledge to engage in property-related offences such as theft,

robbery, fraud, or drug sales to quickly acquire money. Re-engaging in property offences was commonly observed in reference to attempts to attend post-secondary schooling. Participants enrolled in university were often overwhelmed by the amount of money required to pay for both schooling and their basic needs. In these situations participants voiced that they were receiving student loans but they saw offending as a fast way to acquire money without taking time away from their schooling. For instance, Nico enrolled in a hotel management program and although he was able to secure student loans to pay for his course, he was unable to secure funds to pay for his housing while he was enrolled in school. Nico attended the welfare office half way through his program to ask for money to pay for his housing for the last semester of the course. When he was unable to secure funding, Nico stated that:

> [t]his is bullshit…then a buddy of mine got out of Kent. We met up. We did a score together. Here's where I was kind of stupid was after we did this, I had more than enough money to be comfortable until the course was over. We made $18,000 cash each and a bunch of gold and liquor and what not. I was set. I was set. But instead my thinking just went - I just said to myself, who am I fucking kidding. Who am I kidding, this is what I'm good at. I'm good at being a fucking criminal.

Other times, participants re-engaged in offending as a means of trying to meet their basic needs such as acquiring food or paying for housing. For instance, Leon described how he was engaged in drug sales even though he was working full time due to his wife asking him for more money for bills. He stated that she was bad with money but was in charge of their household budgeting and expenses and that:

> [s]he was always asking for more and always wanting this and always wanting that then a big huge slap in the face when the bank finally gets a hold of me and being told that we were past when we could come in and fix [what we owed on our mortgage] and a realtor showed up at the house the next day, putting it on the market.

Offending resurgence was easiest when participants continued to maintain a potential avenue back into offending, typically through their social networks. As Ophelia stated, when she was an offender, her friends were "horrible people". When I want to get into trouble I would call them... I can contact any of them from my past," referencing the ease at which she could reconnect to old friends through social networking sites. Maintaining connections to social contacts that could become potential avenues back into crime was also described by Nico who stated that:

> [drug dealing] was always my go to. It was very easy for me to do that because I always had that reputation to fall back on. I always had connections. I had my old street family.

This failure to completely disengage with risk factors for offending created an opportunity for re-entry into crime. Paternoster and colleagues (2015) discussed how success only occurs when offenders no longer view crime as appealing or beneficial and when they no longer wish to be engaged in offending activities. By not fully disconnecting themselves from their risk factors for offending, participants were not truly committed to changing their criminal identity and were not fully disengaged from the offending lifestyle. Potentially, at this stage in their lives they may have felt that change was not yet possible and had yet to fully integrate the ability to attain a positive future into their self narrative. This mishandling of prosocial opportunities demonstrates the importance of offenders being both *receptive* to turning their life around (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009) and being *committed* to positive change (Giordano et al., 2002), or else they will not be receptive to taking the steps necessary to attain and maintain their desistance.

3.5.3. Cascade Effect of Interconnected Desistance Factors

The interconnectedness of desistance factors has been put forward by key researchers as an important area of investigation (Carlsson, 2012; Lebel et al., 2008; Kazemain, 2007) especially with regard to the interplay between internal and external desistance factors (LeBel et al., 2008). However, the interconnectedness of factors relevant for desistance has only been described in a small subset of qualitative studies of desistance (Carlsson, 2012; Cid & Marti, 2012; Wyse, Harding, & Morenoff, 2014). In the present study, many participants reported that their desistance factors built upon and influenced one another resulting in a web of interconnected desistance factors which supported one another. For instance, Fiona stated that after high school she lost contact with her negative peer influences and eventually went to college. Through going to college Fiona learned more about how she wanted to view herself, she met the father of her child, connected herself with more positive peers, and acquired skills which made her employable. Although Fiona did not stay in college, the impact of this event created a cascade effect which allowed other factors important for her desistance to form a venue for change.

In contrast to the building up of positive desistance factors, an equally common theme was the cascading breakdown of accumulated desistance factors. When desistance factors were tightly interwoven the entire network of supports for desistance collapsed when the participant's desistance network experienced a threat to a key factor in the network. The life events that were most commonly linked to dissolution cascading breakdown of protective factors were losing employment, losing contact with children, and romantic relationship conflict. Each of these three domains will be explored below.

First, attention will be paid to employment breakdown. Many participants described enjoying their employment and integrating aspects of their employment into their self narratives. For example, Ophelia reported that she acquired a job as a paralegal after she exited from escorting. She described enjoying this work as she was able to make a comfortable salary and she liked the view of herself working at a high power law firm. She described forming an entirely new identity as a paralegal and that she was able to maintain her desistance through working long hours, not engaging with her negative peers, and abstaining from substance use. However, Ophelia was fired from her employment which was a huge negative event for her maintenance of desistance. Ophelia stated that:

> OPHELIA: When I got fired, I just couldn't handle it. I just couldn't handle it anymore.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's because of the firing itself?
>
> OPHELIA: It's the way the firing happened. I didn't deserve it. If I deserved to get fired, then that's one thing. I was embarrassed, I was humiliated. I was upset, I was mad at myself. It sucked. I pretended it didn't happen... I just couldn't cope at all. I focused my whole life, my whole identity, around working at a law firm. That kind of ended up just crushing my soul when I got fired. I just reverted back to 15 year old me where I was just driving around doing stupid shit with my hood rat friends.

After she was fired, Ophelia reconnected with her friends from her time as an escort in order to acquire drugs as a method of coping with her emotions and ultimately she engaged in a robbery with some of her negative peer associates while they were intoxicated. At the time that she was fired, Ophelia had built her entire desistance network around her employment, and when this main factor disappeared all other parts of her network were insufficient to maintain desistance while she attempted to cope with losing this key input for her newly acquired prosocial identity.

Children and relationships with children were also a main source of desistance factor dissolution when they were removed from a participant's life. As described in an example given above, losing contact with her child was key to Georgia's resurgence in offending behaviour. After she separated from her common law partner, Georgia's daughter decided to move in with her father and Georgia began to re-engage in substance use to cope with this stressor. She eventually reconnected with negative peers, lost her housing, and returned to offending to acquire food and drugs. It appears that the main protective effect in her life at that time was her daughter and when that factor was no longer present in her life she was free to socialize with antisocial peers, engage in substance use, and offend in order to support her addiction. Georgia's circumstances highlight the interconnected nature of desistance factors and how losing one key factor can create a cascade effect wherein all the other desistance factors leave, and are replaced once again with risk factors. This transition was likely seamless for Georgia as she had yet to fully leave the "lifestyle" and had maintained connections to antisocial peer groups while she was abstaining from substance use.

Breakdown of romantic relationships was another common precursor to recidivism (Bersani & Doherty, 2013), especially for the three male participants who shared children with their ex-girlfriends. Henry, Nico, and Jimmy all have young children with ex-girlfriends with whom they had unhealthy relationships that had fallen apart during a period of desistance. None of these pregnancies were planned and in all cases the romantic relationships dissolved within a few years of the birth of the child. In these situations, participants outlined desisting in the context of the relationship in order to take on the role of social and/or financial support for their partners. All three men at the time of data collection continued to have litigious relationships with the mothers of their children and described how the women used their children to win fights by threatening to take away shared custody. These men discussed living in a state of constant worry that they will lose contact with their children and described stressors related to child custody and child support. These stressors were especially important for Henry's resurgence of offending behaviour. Henry decreased his offending by building a prosocial life style anchored on his romantic relationship and shared parenthood of his daughter. His daughter was important for his desistance as he wanted to be stable and financially responsible enough to love and support her. When he potentially risked losing this protective factor after his partner was unfaithful, he did not have adequate coping skills

in place to positively address this life stressor and instead he engaged in substance use and ultimately re-engaged in offending. Unfortunately, the effect of parenthood on desistance, especially for males, is not often researched (Kazemian, 2016). However, there appears to be a cumulative effect of parenthood and union formation on desistance (Savolainen, 2009), which potentially indicates that the removal of these supports would impact recidivism. These research findings highlight the importance of having multiple factors in place to maintain desistance instead of solely relying on one factor as this can destabilize all positive progress if it is removed or threatened.

In contrast to losing a key protective factor, Stacy voiced how gaining a risk factor for offending was enough to destabilize the positive life that she was able to build for herself in her late teenage years. Stacy experienced many milestones when she was 18 years of age, including going to university in a program she found engaging and enlightening, acquiring a job that she liked, developing a strong connection to a mentor, and changing peer groups. However, this desistance period only lasted one year as a result of Stacy meeting a romantic partner who encouraged her to drop out of school, move in with him, and to have a child with him. She spoke about how she did not want to drop out of university, but that she found his logic compelling for having a child when she was 18 years of age because, as Stacy outlined:

> [h]e's the one who wanted to have one - he's the one who's like 'I've been wanting a kid since I was 13 years old' and I was the one who was like 'oh no let me graduate'. Basically the reasoning was... in the logical sense, how things are going these days, if you graduate university, somehow get a job, somehow get in a steady enough position to take time off to have a kid, you're already 40 years old. You have to spend all that money to what, get your eggs unfrozen again?

After having her child, Stacy discussed how her offending came back as neither she nor her partner have stable employment and are sometimes unable to pay their bills. As a result, Stacy re-engaged in shoplifting and thefts to acquire food and clothing, at times stealing from her employers when she had employment.

Table 3-5 Summary of Offending Resurgence Themes

Theme	Count (n = 13)	Description
Superficially Addressing Non-Critical Offending Risk Factors	13	Many participants took a haphazard approach in mitigating their risk for offending and decreased some factors key to their offending but failed to recognize the importance of other risk factors such that the impact of the factors was reduced, but not completely eliminated
Cascade Effect of Interconnected Desistance Factors	11	When desistance factors were tightly interwoven, or when they were based upon one unstable desistance factor, the entire network of supports for desistance collapsed when the participant's desistance network experienced a threat.

3.6. Exploring Themes on Successful Desistance

3.6.1. Description of Participant Successful Desistance

The themes below focus on factors participants perceived as influential to processes of desistance which were followed by a period of at least 3 years of maintained desistance. These themes do not refer to what influenced desistance to be *maintained*, but rather what *led to* a desistance period that was maintained. Successful desistance was operationalized as the last downward trend in offending behaviour which was followed by a maintained desistance period of at least three years.

A total of 14 participants reported experiencing a decrease in offending that was followed by the maintenance of an absence or a low level of offending for at least 3 years following the decrease. The other six participants have not experienced a lengthy enough period of maintained desistance for their desistance trajectory to be classified as successful based on the desistance definition applied in the present study. As such, the following themes were derived from the 14 individuals who reported desisting for at least 3 years. Of these individuals, 3 reported an abrupt change in behaviour from offending to desistance, while 11 reported a gradual decline and exit from crime. Of those who reported a gradual decline, the process which lead to successful desistance occurred over an average of 2.4 years (range 1 to 4, median = 3).

3.6.2. Insight is Important to Spur the Desire to Change

When discussing causes that led to periods of successful desistance, participants primarily outlined the role of changes to their self view or changes in their

perceptions of their reality. These experiences of 'insight' have been observed in other qualitative studies of desistance (Haggard et al., 2001) as important for spurring the change process. In the present study, insights were extremely individual and brought about in a wide variety of situations. However, they were similar in that participants discussed experiencing an event, either acute (e.g., injury, notable social interaction) or chronic (e.g., process of completing a degree, process of completing substance abuse treatment) in duration, which gave them insight into their life and the choices they had been making prior to the event. This gaining of insight was similar to realizing the existence of a feared self proposed in the identity theory of desistance (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). This theorized process involves offenders realizing that their life is not progressing in a way that matches their desired future, and that they risk becoming a negative and undesired version of themselves if they do not attempt to change their life. This dissatisfaction with their lives and feeling that their life is a failure compose the 'crystallization of discontent' (Baumeister, 1991) necessary to spur change.

Building upon this literature, this section focuses on insights that led to perceptual shifts key for desistance in the present sample of desisters. Prior to this examination of insights, attention will first be paid to the social influences that lead to the occurrence of insight. Subsequently, the three most prominent insights observed in the present sample are discussed, namely: (1) participants realizing they were disadvantaging themselves through offending, (2) participants realizing their actions do not define them as people, and (3) participants realizing the disconnect between how they viewed themselves and the antisocial actions in which they were engaged.

Peer and other social influences set the landscape for insight to occur

The importance of social supports in the change process was explored above as a key input for desistance periods which were ultimately unsuccessful. When unsuccessful in promoting lasting change, the social supports had either tried to force an undesired change by exerting control over a participant's life or they had financially supported the participant which temporarily took away the need to offend. In contrast to the role of support people on unsuccessful desistance periods, the influence of others on successful desistance took on a less overt pathway. In general, support was found for the "looking glass self concept" (Cooley, 1902; Maruna et al., 2004) where participants compared themselves to other people as a way to gain insight into themselves. As

stated by Quinn, “we are all mirrors to each other to see how bad or good it can get.” This type of sentiment was observed consistently throughout the interviews with participants using peers to judge how positive their life could become were they to stop offending or how negative they risked their life becoming should they continue to offend. These comparisons occurred organically and typically led to changes in participant’s cognitions about crime, insight into their life direction, and a desired prosocial identity. Also, whereas support people (typically family members or romantic partners) actively encouraging change related primarily to unsuccessful desistance attempts, almost all insights described by the participants as leading to successful desistance resulted from interactions with friends or someone acting within a peer role.

For many participants, most notably Quinn and Leon who left home in their early teens, peers served the role of their family. These participants stressed the importance of choosing people to be family regardless of biological links and how living on the street bonds groups of peers together as a type of family unit. This closeness to same aged antisocial peers is congruent with an observation by Warr (1998) that many offenders view their peer offender group as a second family where they feel important and accepted. The importance of using peers to reflect on possible futures was voiced by Keith who discussed the role of his peer mentor in his desistance. He stated that by seeing his friend succumb to substance abuse and subsequently manage to get sober helped Keith because “just seeing a smart guy who has just made some stupid choices has helped a lot because then I can see that it’s not just me.” Quinn expressed a similar statement regarding how interacting with positive peers makes her feel motivated to continue to try and better herself as a person. She stated that

> [i]f I have good role models, I like to mimic them. So it’s almost like a copycat but I like to mimic them and do better. Take from the good that they have and then put it in my own style.

In both these examples, peers helped Keith and Quinn see what change was possible through observing the actions of their peers. It was important for these participants to compare themselves to a similar peer and not to peers who were non-offenders or those who did not share similar life experiences.

Peer influences also spurred cognitive changes related to participants realizing how negative their lives could become should they continue to offend. These types of interactions were discussed more regularly in the interviews and appeared to play a role

in spurring change and maintaining motivation to change throughout the desistance process. Many participants discussed seeing friends suffer negative consequences from joining gangs such as dying through violence or through drug use. Leon described how:

> [t]he thing that really hit home was when my friends started dying, whether it was from needles in their arms or just bad things happening. You get to this point where you're like 'it won't happen to me' but when it starts hitting close and closer, you realize, it can happen to me. Basically I just didn't want to become a statistic. I didn't want to be that next name that is checked off that list.

Observing negative consequences to drugs and offending were related to both close friends and acquaintances. For instance, Ian relied on both his positive peer group from high school and his negative associates from when he was homeless to judge his worth and potential. Ian stated that when he was homeless he "got to see where my life was going" by interacting with fellow addicts and once he went to rehab he had a "wake up call" as the other patients were much older than him and still embedded in the lifestyle. This observation helped him realized that what he was viewing as a rebelling period of his life was a dangerous progression that could take over his life as it did the other members of his treatment group. Ian also discussed the combined importance of seeing both possible negative outcomes for himself through fellow addicts and possible positive outcomes as demonstrated by his prosocial peers:

> I watched all my friends graduate and I was sitting there smoking weed in the garage with the same people. Then I watched all my friends go travelling or go to university and I was still in the same place doing the same thing. Then I watched all my friends having kids and getting degrees and careers and I was still in the exact same spot doing nothing with my life. That was just really depressing. I just kinda gave up on life. I was like "I'm just one of those people who just doesn't make it."

Although watching his friends progress in life was depressing for Ian, these possible futures were more appealing to him than the one displayed by his negative associates and gave him a positive goal to strive towards when he started making attempts to put together his life.

After desisting, a few participants kept tabs on their old friends with whom they used to offend or use substances through social networking and through casual contact in the community. Participants appeared to use this information as a way to confirm that

they had made the correct choice in exiting an offending lifestyle. Nico stated how he can see how much his life has progressed when he:

> [s]ees some people that I used to use with and quite often they're sitting on the exact same place that we last smoked crack together 10 years ago.

It appears that comparing themselves to their peers with whom they would offend validated the life choices participants had made to change their life trajectory and increased their motivation to continue to maintain their positive progress. Jimmy described how sometimes he would run into friends from his past and how:

> [i]f I do see them again, I'll say 'hey, how you doing, I'm okay'. That kind of thing. Find out what they're doing and I'll be like okay. [Trying to see] whether they're still a fuck up.

In contrast to using friends to judge potential possible futures, participants also discussed using friends to realize that they themselves had value. Quinn discussed how while in prison she found groups of peers who treated her extremely differently from the friends that she had before going into custody. She reported that:

> [t]he native girls [in jail] were so nice to me… I had friends on the outside but they didn't spoil me on my birthday, now they do… [in jail] they were like my sister. They'd give me the clothes off their backs.

Through interacting with peers who valued her for her personality instead of as a way to acquire drugs and free housing, Quinn realized that how her peers treated her when she was an offender was not positive or supportive. Before going to prison, Quinn behaved how her delinquent peers expected her to act, but after realizing that these individuals were not true friends, Quinn realized that she deserved more out of her life and more respect from those around her.

The role of peers has been largely overlooked in the desistance literature, which is a marked deficit in this field given that the role of peers in influencing offending behaviour is extremely well studied (McGloin, 2009; Thornberry & Krohn 1997; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007), with delinquent peers being one of the most well known risk factors for adolescent offending behaviour (Farrington, 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2000). The rare research that has examined friendships and peer influences on desistance has yet to result in an agreed upon mechanism by which this factor impacts desistance. Most research on peers examines their mediating role on crime. For instance, findings have

included that the effects of employment on desistance functions through associations with positive coworkers and minimized contact with negative peers (Wright & Cullen, 2004) and that the impact of romantic relationships on desistance is mediated through peer influences by restricting contact with negative peers (Simons & Barr, 2014; Warr, 1993; 1998). Qualitative researchers have found that during the desistance process, individuals seek out non-criminal associates who are positive influences (Bachman et al., 2015) and intentionally disengage from negative peers. Overall, little is known regarding the impact of peers on desistance with focus mostly resting on the role of romantic relationships. This research deficit is interesting as almost all participants in the present study brought up the role of peers in desistance without being prompted, but very few discussed romantic relationships without prompts. Additionally, participants often downplayed the impact of romantic relationships stating that romantic partners did not influence their decision to initially desist from crime.

The role of peers on desistance likely plays a larger role than what is reflected in the current desistance research. Potentially with the change in the marital landscape and with desistance occurring prior to marriage, the role of peers is increasing and playing a more intricate role in the desistance process beyond mediating the effects of traditional turning point events such as employment and marriage. Overall, in the present study peers appeared to have a huge influence in participants' lives for promoting change and desistance mainly by providing a benchmark for success or a representation of the feared self (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009).

Realizing they were making a bad situation even worse

Many individuals within the sample discussed the importance of realizing that their actions were putting them at an even greater disadvantage on top of their initial risk factors for offending. For example, Leon described realizing that although he had no control over many of his original risk factors for offending, by engaging in offending he was making his situation more dire. By the end of his offending career, Leon described how he became more and more aware of:

> [t]hat little voice in my head that told me I would fuck up everything in the long term. It'll be worse. I just didn't want to give myself a shorter stick than I already had.

Leon realized that he was already at risk for offending seeing that he was engaged with a negative peer group, had a history of childhood maltreatment, and poor coping skills. He finally noticed that his past actions were repeating themselves and that he was in a self-destructive cycle that continued to lead to offending and substance use. Realizing that their actions were circular and feeding into one another where they continued to engage in the same negative behaviour despite not experiencing any positive outcomes was influential for desistance. For instance, Daniel came to realize that his actions were harming himself and that he was stuck in a negative circular pattern:

> I know now that if I continue to make the same decisions and want a different outcome then that's not going to happen. I just kept going back in circles. I just got tired of it.

This realization that past failures promote and connect with the possibility of future failures is consistent with the identity theory of desistance and the crystallization of discontent (Baumeister, 1991) and can serve as a catalyst for identity transformation (Bachman et al., 2015). In Leon's case, he wanted to become a better person and this gave him the impetus to take steps to turn his life around by going to school and moving out of the town in which he grew up.

Nico and Ian both discussed realizing that their substance use was taking away pleasure and happiness from their lives and sought treatment on their own. Both individuals spoke about going to a variety of treatment programs prior to realizing that they desired a change in their life, and described how none of these programs were effective. They attributed this to not taking treatment seriously and not truly wanting to change. However, once they put in the effort to find treatment on their own which matched the style they needed for recovery, they were able to be successful at targeting their addiction. However, both described experiencing insight into the fact that their substance use was likely to kill them before they were able to commit to treatment which increased their motivation to change. Their insights to spur change were not linked to wanting to become a productive member of society, but were survival based as described by Nico who said that he:

> [s]pent the last year of my using living under a bridge in the downtown eastside. I didn't leave there with the intention of getting and staying sober and becoming a productive member of society. I left because I didn't want to die in the downtown eastside. Bottom line. I

> just didn't want to die down there, I had no hope I could get sober and have a good life. I was way beyond that.

Nico's experience is aligned with the identity theory of desistance, which outlines that change occurs once past failures become linked to potential future failure (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Nico finally connected his substance use to his negative life circumstances and realized that he was likely to die if he did not make any changes to his life. This realization that his offending was a result of his own insufficiencies and that it was more costly then beneficial helped Nico make initial moves to change his identity to a recovering addict and to make moves towards a more prosocial lifestyle (Bachman et al., 2015). Important for his desistance process was that Nico made these realizations on his own through the subjective process of reflection and gaining self understanding (Bachman et al., 2015). Prior to this point Nico had attended many substance abuse programs through his contact with the justice system, but he refused to believe that he was an addict or that his offending was linked to substance use. Being told that he was an addict was not as influential as Nico realizing on his own that he had a problem with substances that linked into his negative life style.

Keith also described a pivotal experience when he realized that his actions had the potential to cause him a great deal of physical harm. He talked about engaging in vandalism and property damage with a friend and that his friend threw a street sign they had removed and that it hit Keith in the face. Keith stated that at this point he gained:

> [i]nsight realizing that I could change my whole life with one stupid incident that could end my life or change the possibilities that I have.

This realization that a negative future was possible if they continued living their negative lifestyle was important to spur change in many study participants. Participants described starting to form an alternative version of themselves which was incongruent with the pathway they were currently living. This formation of a new possible version of themselves as a way to spur change is in line with identity theory of desistance. Paternoster and Bushway (2015) described how offenders need to both realize a 'feared self' as well as a 'positive possible self' in order to spur change, which is also in line with Giordano and colleagues (2002) formation of a replacement self. In this way, initial steps towards identity transformation potentially serve as an impetus for cognitive transformations that support desistance. However, although this theme is present in the

current sample, making causal inferences or proposing a temporal pathway leading from one factor to another is outside the bounds of the present study.

Self forgiveness and second chances

Another key cognitive change participants reported was realizing that although they have been engaged in offending behaviour, this does not mean that they are bad people who deserve a negative life. For example, Quinn described growing up in a low income household where most of her relatives were offenders and drug addicts. She never realized that she could get out of this intergenerational cycle of poverty until she went to jail and saw that there were other ways she could live her life. Primarily this theme centered on self-forgiveness and building confidence that change is not only possible but that it is deserved. Leon described the lasting impact of his past actions on his view of himself and how he interacts with the world, stating:

> [s]ometimes I don't forgive myself for everything. But I don't let it totally define who I am either. I am harder on myself sometimes and I give people way too much credit a lot of times because I was a bad person and turned it around.

Aaron described the importance of realizing that he had engaged in some negative behaviour and that it was time for him to try and turn his life around. He discussed how "second chances don't come free" and how "even through you have a second chance... you always have to work for it and it's never as easy (as the first chance)." Central to Aaron's self forgiveness was bonding with his father and learning from his father what it meant to be a "man" and that he needed to change his behaviours if he wanted to make something of his life.

Rita described a similar narrative of self-forgiveness and working towards making amends with her broken social supports. After she was assaulted by her roommate, she went to live with her male adult cousin who had recently moved to Canada from India. She described how prior to this experience she had lived a privileged life but had not appreciated it. She realized how much of her life she had taken for granted and that she needed to take steps to rebuild trust with her family to show that she was committed to turning her life around. She stated her cousin set strict boundaries and how eventually:

> [t]hat made me really happy to be back in my family now and not be the black sheep anymore and I think that motivated me even more to be like okay, I want to go to school and do something with my life so I

> think it was the atmosphere and the environment obviously changed but I feel like it was more so my mentality had changed as well.

This desire to prove to others that forgiveness is deserved has been described in a small number of research studies (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Maruna & LeBel, 2009; McCullough, 2008). These studies tend to focus on offenders working towards gaining forgiveness, rather than focusing on offenders learning how to forgive themselves. Both of these forms of forgiveness were observed in the present study as important for a successful desistance processes. Researchers have postulated that proving themselves worthy of forgiveness is a primary challenge to offender desistance (Maruna & LeBel, 2009) and that working towards reparation is key to interpersonal forgiveness (McCullough, 2008). Ahmed and Braithwaite (2006) even highlight forgiveness as one of three central facets critical to reducing antisocial behaviour.

Gaining a feeling of forgiveness has often been found through spirituality and religion (Kenemore & Roldan, 2006), especially in relation to the forgiveness of sins promised through religion which can lead to self forgiveness (Schroeder et al., 2009). A few participants in the present study described the role of spirituality and religion on helping them forgive themselves of their past actions. Religion has been a recurring theme in the desistance literature, as outlined by Giordano and colleagues (2002) who found that many of their participants referenced God in their desistance narratives. Religion can be a venue for participants to reconceptualise their self identities (Giordano, Longmore, Schroeder, & Seffrin, 2008; Schroader & Frana, 2009) and allows offenders to make changes in their self-narratives that lead towards possible redemption (Maruna & Remsden, 2004; Schroeder & Frana, 2009). Religion was especially important for Percy, Nico, and Quinn who all described the role of karma and giving power of their lives over to a higher power as important to their desistance. For example, Percy stated that spirituality was the main factor that helped him desist and he described the importance of Buddhism and psychic readings in changing his self narrative. He stated that his life began to change after:

> I started learning about spirituality and mindfulness and self development stuff around these years and that's what definitely helped me to realize what life is and if you're going to go and take and do things that are morally wrong, you're going to experience worse feelings and life will actually take from you in different ways. You're never going to predict, it's not an eye for an eye thing. You take from them and it'll take from you. Who knows where or how... I want to

> create a positive contribution in whatever I do. So it's those beliefs I realized, I started believing about life and myself.

For the most part, these individuals felt that spirituality gave their past actions meaning as they could conceptualize their suffering as part of a larger plan for their lives. These individuals described learning from their past mistakes and trying to build a positive life from this foundation. However, religion was not always associated with change when present, such as for Henry whose wife found religion after she miscarried their first child. Although Henry was exposed to religion through his wife and mother, he chose to get divorced because of her newfound religious beliefs, and lost much stability in his life. As such, religion is likely beneficial to those who are open to this worldview, but that it is not applicable for many individuals if it does not fit into their self-narrative.

Realizing the disconnect between their identity and their actions

Two groups of identity theorists are influential in the desistance literature: Maruna's research group and that of colleagues Paternoster and Bushway. One key difference between these theorists is that Maruna (2001) postulates that identity is continuous and that offenders hold prosocial views of themselves and that they deliberately realign their past criminal behaviour to make these antisocial actions consistent, justified, and favourable to what they are "really like" as a prosocial person (Maruna, 2001). In contrast, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) propose that offenders come to a realization of a disconnect between their present "working self" and the existence of the potential "feared self," and then work towards a "positive possible self" as a way to change their life trajectory. Support for both of these theories was observed in the present study and at times both were at play within the same participant. A typical presentation of this theme was that participants justified their past actions as necessary to survive but acknowledged that this state of being was not true to how they viewed themselves as individuals. Although they spoke of continuity between their past and current identity, many also stated realizing the potential of a 'feared self' if they did not take efforts to desist from antisocial behaviour.

Many participants did not view themselves as criminals while they were actively offending and used terms such as "trying to survive" and "offending out of necessity" to justify their actions. Keith, a psychology major in university, aligned his thought process with 'cognitive dissonance' stating that he ignored conflicting information between his

actions and his self view as a positive member of society. In another example, Marcus continued to assert that he was not an offender despite admitting that he was continuing to shoplift at the time of the interview. Many participants also appeared to take on a victim role, and placed blame on society or others for their past offending behaviour. They alluded to being forced into offending due to circumstance or through trying to attain benchmarks of success they felt society pressures people to achieve. This cognitive orientation appeared to foster a desire to change as participants described being uncomfortable engaging in offending that they knew it was wrong when it was in conflict with their positive self narrative. These statements and experiences are more in line with Maruna's theory of desistance in relation to identity in that these individuals viewed their identities as continuous and attempted to justify their past actions based on the currently held identity. An interesting trend was observed in the data that most of the participants who applied this type of lens to their offending justification were lower risk offenders and had engaged in less serious offending behaviour.

Although many participants continued to deflect responsibility for their past criminal actions, others discussed being aware that their actions were in direct conflict with how they viewed themselves while they were offending. For example, Ian, Quinn, and Percy all discussed realizing a disconnection between their actions of engaging in crime and their positive identity. For example, Percy stated that while he was offending:

> I was connected to a part inside of me that wants to be a better person and I know [offending] went counter to it. At some point, I realized that I do want to be a good person so it helped me let go of some of those habits like wanting to get things for free.

Quinn expressed a similar view of herself. She described how while she was growing up she came from a low-income household where many of her family members were criminals and taught her how to engage in crime to get things that she needed to survive like clothing and food. She described how she did not like this life and that she was constantly dreaming of doing better for herself and getting herself out of the circumstances into which she was born. While serving time in the penitentiary for robbing a jewellery store, Quinn recalled that:

> [a]ll I would do is think. I'm all about progressing in life. So when I was in jail all I kept doing when I'm looking out of my little window is [thinking that] I want to go to school. I want to educate myself, I know I'm better than this and I want to be better.

Ian also described having a realization that he was putting on a fake antisocial identity while he was in jail in order to survive. He stated that although he was able to put on new identities, this strategy was exhausting and he grew tired of pretending to be someone else, stating:

> [a]fter going to jail once, I quickly realized that this was not where I wanted to be spending all of my time... you literally have to become someone else just to survive it... I can be a chameleon, I can totally do that, but it's not something I would want to do for months on end.

Ian, Quinn, and Percy became tired of living with an identity that did not match their self concept. Upon self-reflection of their action or identities, participants came to realize the disconnection between their actions and their self view and were uncomfortable with this divide. In contrast, Henry and Nico had more abrupt realizations of a disconnection between their actions and their identities brought on by external sources. Henry recalled being stopped at the Canadian border for suspicion of drug trafficking. He described that the border guards detained him for a long time and that he was strip-searched and had his phone searched. He recounted hearing the border guards talking about him loudly in the station about how:

> [t]his persons doing this and he's a user, he's a dealer. Like holy fuck you made me sound like such a bad person but I am not a bad person. Just because I'm doing this doesn't mean I'm a bad person. I'm just trying to support myself.

This example highlights that at times hearing outsiders talk to them or interact with them in a way that is misaligned with their self view is sometimes enough to spur positive change. Nico described a similar experience of realizing that he was an addict. He discussed using a wide variety of substances but that he never viewed himself as an addict until he started to compare himself to his "normal" friends and that he:

> [s]tarted to see these behaviors of mine and think of my normal friends and I could see there was something really different. My normal friends get drunk too but the difference between them and me is that every time they got drunk, they decided to get drunk before they had a drink. They didn't get drunk accidentally.

Eventually Nico attended a Narcotics Anonymous (NA) group where within the treatment group, substance addiction was understood in a way that matched his self narrative of his addiction. He described that at this group:

> I found this stuff out and it all began because someone presented me with a simple idea and that idea revolutionized my thinking. The idea was that drugs and alcohol never was my problem. That's what makes me an addict. Alcohol and drugs was my solution. My problem was that I can't manage my life sober.

This realization helped Nico see that he had a problem with substances and that this problem was linked into his poor life decisions and offending behaviour. Before this moment, Nico did not identify as an addict, and this helped him realize a disconnection between his self view of being a social drug user with being an addict and offender. This new identity was uncomfortable for Nico who likes being in control of his life, and helped spur his desire to begin to change.

3.6.3. Creating a Desistance Network Supportive of Change

In contrast with failed desistance experiences in which participants partially addressed some key risk factors for their offending but not others and continued to be connected to the offending lifestyle, successful desistance was marked by participants overhauling their entire life. When desistance failed, participants typically did not express motivation to completely exit from their criminal lifestyle, but during successful desistance periods, participants described increased motivation and actions to promote change. Resolve and determination to change are of key importance in the desistance process, with offenders who are driven to change being more successful at avoiding offending behaviour compared to those who are less driven to change (Shover, 1996). Also, the impacts of outside factors for desistance such as marriage and employment are unlikely to promote change if an offender has yet to undergo cognitive change supportive of desistance (Giordano et al., 2007; Rocque, 2015). Indeed, the decision to desist from crime is only the first stage in the desistance process (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) and creates a foundation on which desistance efforts can be built. If offenders do not move past the initial decision to desist towards concrete actions spurring change then it is unlikely that successful desistance will occur.

In the present study this movement from the initial decision to desist to actual desistance typically took the form of participants making drastic changes in their lives to gain control over their risk factors for offending. These changes either started with participants making a notable change in one life domain which had a cascading effect to alter other interconnected risk factors, or involved participants separating themselves

completely from their past lives (otherwise termed 'knife off'; Maruna, 2001). Tiffany is one example of a participant who took drastic steps to separate from her past life in order to control her substance use and offending. She described how when she was in her late teens she decided that she wanted to leave the gang with whom she would engage in antisocial and risky behaviour. She stated that:

> TIFFANY: Yeah I'm pretty much a loner these days. I don't really have any friends because I basically said goodbye to them because I didn't want to live that life anymore. Especially with the drugs, all my friends were doing the drugs with me so when I got clean I had to say good bye to them… I basically said goodbye to everyone… it was hard in the beginning but I knew that I had to do it.
>
> INTERVIEWER: How were you able to stay away?
>
> TIFFANY: I got my friend who was well known in the circle to start this rumor that I got shot and I died… (and) it worked

Tiffany felt that it was necessary to convince the other gang members that she was dead so that she would not risk retribution for leaving the gang. After she spread the rumour, Tiffany moved to a different city in order to build a prosocial life, and she was able to abstain from both substances and offending for four years. Although Tiffany provides a drastic example of "knifing off" from her previous life in order to desist, her experience illustrates one manner that participants were able to exit from offending behaviour. Key to this experience was completely separating herself from her risk factors for offending, and starting again with the motivation to desist driving her decisions.

As outlined above in the theme of criminal resurgence and the interconnectedness of risk factors for offending, participant's lives and risk factors are tightly woven together and disruption to one factor can cascade and create disruption to other factors. In contrast, desistance factors in the present sample were also tightly interconnected and linked together. These desistance factor webs were commonly observed in the present study and often stemmed from one positive change. For example, Keith described making the decision to attend university as a mature student which provided him access to a variety of protective influences against offending. While at university Keith entered into a relationship with one of his classmates who became a "parental figure" and helped Keith adjust to a positive life path as:

> [s]he prevented me from going over the edge a lot and sometimes I still went over the edge and didn't tell her, but it would have happened

> a lot more frequently and I probably would have put myself in a lot more danger if it wasn't for her. Just because I didn't want to screw up for her.

Keith became friends with her peer network and began to dedicate himself to his studies and towards finding a career that allowed him to contribute to society. He disengaged with many of his negative friendship groups who were supportive of his offending, and replaced his unstructured leisure time with school and work. Throughout this time period Keith was able to experience the positive effects of schooling, experience success while in university, enjoy a stable relationship, social support, and changes in his identity. Eventually, after Keith and his girlfriend broke up, Keith described relying more on his family and that he had to take ownership over his positive progress stating:

> I've had to step up and take responsibility for my decisions and avoid getting into situations where I probably won't make the right decisions

By making one change (i.e., going to university), Keith was able to separate himself from risk factors that would negatively impact his efforts to progress himself in life. He was able to build on these successes and realize that he was capable of change which increased his motivation to continue to desist from offending.

Participants often described gaining control over their risk factors for offending including substance use, stress and poor coping, or poor finances when desisting from crime. Typically, substance use and poor coping were tightly interconnected, with participants using substances to avoid addressing problems or stressors in their lives. Once participants ceased engagement in substance use, they typically explored constructive coping mechanisms such as talking problems through with respected social supports or using cognitive techniques to control poor anger management. Participants also described the role of healthy living and exercise as a way to cope with stressors without resorting to substance use or offending. Rita described how "I like working out and I feel like that gives me a healthy mind which makes me make better choices," an opinion echoed by Cindy, Bryan, Fiona, Percy, and Jimmy. Jimmy described getting into boxing and bodybuilding and that this caused a chain reaction in his risk factors. In order to fully commit to this lifestyle Jimmy was constantly at the gym working out and replaced his antisocial peer network with positive gym friends. He was also unable to engage in substance use when training and found that boxing helped him regulate his anger management problems.

Employment and education were other factors that participants addressed when attempting to gain control over their risk for offending. Attending post-secondary schooling was predominantly viewed positively by participants, as it provided structure, direction, and an avenue for identity exploration. Although at times post-secondary education was reported to be destabilizing, this was mostly due to constrained finances from needing to pay tuition and trying to balance work with school time demands. Employment also was described as a double edged factor which at times increased offending while at other times decreased antisocial behaviour. On the negative end, employment opportunities increased offending by providing access for participants to steal from their work environments. Also, many participants described gaining employment that was insufficient to cover their financial needs, which was frustrating. For example, Henry stated that legal employment paled in comparison to his days as a drug trafficker because now:

> I work my ass off every single day and I still don't get anywhere... You know how awesome it is at the end of the day seeing $1,000 in your hands and it's like 'I made this in 6 hours.' And I work all day at my job and I only make $150. Why is this possible? Why is it like this? It's fucked.

Working in low level service sector jobs for little pay is a common experience for desisters (Bachman et al., 2015) and this can cause financial strain and stress. However, despite commonly voicing concerns around low pay and low job satisfaction, employment was an important factor for desistance for many of the study participants. Employment appeared to be most influential when participants reported enjoying their employment and incorporating their employment narratives into their identities, as Bryan's statement exemplified:

> I don't want to be a criminal. I'm a lab technologist, I like what I do. I got a mortgage, I got bills. I got a lot of responsibilities. Maybe I can make easy money doing a drug deal or something but I don't want to go down that road. I've seen friends go down these roads. And it's bad. It's bad. It's not something I want to get involved in. I want to work, get an honest day's work. Do well, pay my bills, survive.

Although it is not possible to deduce a causal relationship between employment and desistance in the present study, much research indicates that offenders take steps towards desistance *prior* to attaining employment (Bachman et al., 2015; Skardhamar & Savolainen, 2014) with identity or cognitive changes helping offenders decide to gain

employment. In the present study, participants described that identity changes occurred which allowed them to desire legal employment, rather than gaining a prosocial identity after working legally. The relationship between employment and reduced offending may be more of a reflection of other factors that led to the attainment of employment (e.g., motivation, attitudes, age of individual) rather than the employment experience itself (Kazemian, 2007; Monahan, Steinberg, & Cauffman, 2013; Uggen, 2000).

Although participants described gaining control over their risk factors for offending, many continued to present with known risk factors for recidivism during periods of successful desistance. However, as long as participants were able to successfully address their individual critical risk factors for offending (Benda & Tollett, 1999; Gottfredson and Tonry, 1987; Hollins, 2011), they were mostly able to successfully cope with stressors that appeared in the other domains. Critical risk factors for offending are integral in the offending treatment literature and represent which risk factors for offending are the driving force for antisocial activity at an individual level. For example, Fiona's critical risk factors for offending appeared to be peer delinquency, poor parental management, and substance use. After Fiona had her daughter, she became more stable, disengaged with antisocial peers, and stopped engaging in frequent substance use. Fiona has built a strong desistance network in which she has a positive romantic partner, a job that she enjoys, repaired familial support, and connections to her community. As such, Fiona is able to cope with additional life stressors such as her housing instability and occasional peer pressure to offend that would have otherwise resulted in recidivism. It is possible that desisters need not control all risk factors for offending, but rather need to gain control over their critical risk factors for offending. Overall, gaining control over risk factors for offending and incorporating these changes into a new prosocial identity appears to be important for desistance. The desire to control risk factors with the goal of self-improvement aids offenders in making prosocial changes (Paternoster et al., 2015).

Table 3-6 Summary of Successful Desistance Themes

Theme	Count (n = 14)	Description
Peer and other social influences set the landscape for insight to occur	10	Social interactions linked to changes in cognitions and insights occurred when participants compared themselves to others through their own initiative typically through interactions with friends or someone within a peer role.
Realizing they were making a bad situation even worse	9	Many individuals within the sample discussed the importance of realizing that their actions were putting themselves at an even greater disadvantage on top of their initial risk factors for offending.
Self Forgiveness and Second Chances	9	Self forgiveness and building confidence that change is not only possible, but that it is deserved since although they have been engaged in offending behaviour, this does not mean they deserve a negative life.
Realizing the disconnect between their identity and their actions	11	Participants acknowledged that engaging in offending was not true to how they viewed themselves as individuals and many realized the potential of a 'feared self' if they did not take efforts to desist from antisocial behaviour.
Gaining Control Over Key Risk Factors for Offending	13	Resolve and determination to change with offenders who are driven to change being more successful at avoiding offending behaviour. This resolve helped participants take control over their critical risk factors for offending

3.7. Exploring Themes on Maintained Desistance

3.7.1. Description of Participant Maintained Desistance

As described previously under the section on successful desistance, 14 participants reported experiencing a maintained desistance period, which consisted of an absence of self-reported offending for at least 3 years. Of these individuals, 2 reported resurgence in offending following a 3-year desistance period. Participants reported a variety of lengths of time of their maintained desistance, ranging between 3 to 12 years (mean = 5.9 years; median = 5 years; mode = 3 years). Of the 14 participants, 10 reported that their maintenance of desistance started when they were between the ages of 20 and 25 years.

3.7.2. Commitment and Internal Drive to Sustain Prosocial Change

The importance of internal drives and motivations to desist were described by participants as the most influential factor for their ability to maintain desistance from offending. Many participants also directly identified the difference between their internal

changes (e.g., identity, cognitions) and the external changes (e.g., children, marriage, employment) on their desistance, highlighting the role of internal changes above and beyond the life events and social capital that they were able to accumulate. For example, Nico stated:

> [t]he good things in my life, the job, the home, my child, none of those things keep me sober. None of those things have enough power to keep me sober. It's entirely spiritual in nature... Living a life of service to my fellow man and maintaining a connection to a power greater to myself is what does it. Wholeheartedly. *The external things are just consequences of a good life* [emphasis added]. By living a good life I have good things but the good things aren't enough to keep me having a good life.

This viewpoint was echoed by Quinn, who explained that external constraints like employment or treatment do not lead to change if individuals do not first wish to change their behaviour. Quinn has found people who treat her well and she has started to see value in herself from reflecting off of these individuals. For Quinn, changing her peer group led to changes in how she was treated which led to internal changes when she realized that the life she led prior to incarceration was not the only life pathway available for her to follow. She stated that in her desistance experience, individual choice was important because:

> [y]ou have to want the change. What's the [expression]? You bring a horse to water, do they drink it or not? Fucking do or fucking don't. If they don't want to drink it then they aren't going to drink it.

Leon expanded onto these ideas describing how the external factors related to desistance did play into his desistance trajectory, but that they would not have had any influence if he wasn't ready and wanting to change. Leon described this as follows:

> [t]hat's life, that's what defines you. What you go through, how you go through it, and how you come out of it is how you define yourself. It's definitely a combination of your outside environment and then your inner self and how you feel inside. That's what defines what you're going to be doing... it's all on you.

The necessity of wanting change to occur in order to spur desistance was a common thread throughout the interviews. Participants stressed their role within their desistance and the need to take ownership over their past actions and over designing a future for themselves. These commitments to change, and desire to desist, were what participants reported drove their behavioural change and taking ownership over their

change narrative is consistent with past studies on desistance (Hughes, 1998). The findings in the present study were particularly relevant to research by Bachman and colleagues (2015) who attributed desistance in their study of 300 formerly drug involved offenders to the identity theory of desistance and to offenders being motivated to avoid becoming a feared version of themselves.

3.7.3. Future Orientation and Fear of Losing Social Capital

In describing reasons for maintaining desistance, many participants described the importance of education and employment. Acquiring employment as an ex-offender is extremely difficult due to a wide variety of barriers related to criminal records and history of antisocial behaviour (Bachman et al., 2015; Kurlychek, Brame, & Bushway, 2006; Rakis, 2005). Participants in the present study noted the difficulty in gaining employment and many discussed the hurdles they experienced while attending post-secondary institutions to gain employment qualifications. For example, Cindy, who had always struggled in school, described experiencing many hurdles related to time, energy, and finances while attending college to train as a dental assistant. After she had acquired work in this field, she stated that she completely stopped offending due to her employer conducting regular criminal record checks and she did not want to lose her employment and have all her effort at college go to waste. A similar sentiment was expressed by Keith and Bryan, who received training in the teaching or medical fields in which criminal record checks are common practice to getting and maintaining employment. Participants who had steady employment discussed how the risks connected to offending began to outweigh the benefits (Bryne & Trew, 2008).

The theme of building social capital was apparent in most interviews. Attachment to society and to a positive life style was hard to achieve for some participants, especially for Cindy and Fiona. Both of these individuals described a desire to return to school, acquire a GED, and attend college. Each of these successes built on the others and created a life landscape that was desirable for the participant. Through these accomplishments these participants were able to secure employment, increase stability in their finances, and contribute to society in a positive manner. These processes were marked by the accumulation of social capital (Laub et al., 1998), which resulted in emotional and personal investment in maintaining the changes. In addition to education and employment, these participants described the importance of relationships and the

desire to maintain their progress for both themselves and for the people they cared about. Although both individuals discussed how easy it would be to begin offending again, the strength of these emotional attachments to successes related to behavioural change appears to be an important factor in dissuading offending behaviour.

Another manner in which social capital seemed to be integrated into change was that as participants gained small amounts of social capital they began to orient towards their future and to realize that they could get positive things in life. This feeling of hope and that their goals were attainable has been described in the desistance literature as important for success (Burnett & Maruna, 2004), potentially even necessary for promoting change. Keith described how experiencing academic success when he first attended university created an important cognitive shift:

> Then also I think it got easier and easier as I was focused on university and I started getting this new idea of myself and that I could do something. [When I was offending], I never had any dreams. I never had any plans. I remember actually, just kind of accepting that I wasn't going to do anything, I wasn't going to go anywhere... It just didn't make sense to me. With doing the amount of drugs that I was doing. I knew that I was hurting myself but I was just like you're not really doing anything anyway. I just accepted it. So [when I went to university], I started thinking, okay, I could actually have a future, I could have a job and be in a relationship.

This example highlights how life events can create "structured role stability" in that marriage, work, and community activities can provide structure and meaning to an individual's daily routine. However, the life events that participants tended to discuss did not happen at random, but instead represented conscious decisions and intentions to achieve. This observation has links to work by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) who described how individuals do not "accidentally" experience turning point opportunities such as marriage and finding stable employment, but rather these events are brought about through decisions made by the individual leading up to the turning point. For the most part, participants have an active role in the life events of education, employment, and romantic relationships.

In the present study, the only potentially "random" life event was having children. Of the six participants who had children (Fiona, Georgia, Stacy, Henry, Jimmy, Nico), none of the pregnancies were planned and the participants were no longer in relationships with their ex-partners, with the exception of Stacy who planned to have a

child at 18 years of age with her current partner. Of these individuals, only Fiona, Jimmy, and Nico have experienced a desistance period of at least three years and, only Fiona stated that her child created a cognitive shift which caused her not to want to offend. Fiona described that after she had her daughter and found a steady relationship with her current partner she began to think more about the future and the consequences of her actions on their lives. She stated:

> [t]here's always a voice inside your head that's like 'don't do it, you've been there and you don't need to be like that anymore' and you're like if something does happen... what will happen to your family?

For the other participants, having children increased the need to offend to acquire funds to financially support their children or only reduced offending behaviour while the participants were living with their children. Although some research has shown that there are small decreases in offending behaviour in males prior to the birth of a child, the reductions in offending behaviour are the greatest after the child's birth if the father *remains involved* with the child for at least five years of the child's life (Theobald, Farrington, & Piquero, 2015). This finding may be understood in light of the view that having children is not a key hook for desistance, but rather it is the relationship quality between parent and child that matters (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007). This quality might be conceptualized as parental involvement and emotional connection to the child. In the present sample, only Fiona and Stacy described being involved with their children as the primary caregiver and integrating the role of mother into their identity.

The accumulation of social capital took many forms in the present study, but the most notable themes centred on employment, education attainment, and children. Little was said by study participants of romantic relationships or their role in accumulated social capital. Overall, the social capital implicated by participant in maintaining desistance involved life events that were desired and worked towards by participants (e.g., training for a specific job and getting employment in that field). Social capital was valued by the participants and appeared to anchor participants and give them something to strive to maintain over time and into their future.

3.7.4. Providing Hope and Helping Other Offenders Desist

Work by LeBel highlights the potential role of helping others in order to maintain desistance, a concept captured by the term “wounded healers” (Lebel, 2007; Lebel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015). This idea has its foundation in identity theory (Maruna, 2001), and outlines the importance of offenders helping one another to change and the role of shared experience for promoting change and support. Maruna theorized that once offenders desist they may try to contribute back to society as part of “making good” during their process of redemption (Maruna, 2001, pg. 87). Importantly, the theory focuses on whether *“helping helps the helper”* (Lebel, 2007, pg. 1), and not whether what the researchers termed the “wounded healer” has been able to promote change in others. Lebel outlines how offenders may go into entry level helping professions which can then help them, the wounded healer, to continue to reduce their offending or maintain their desistance.

The theme of wounded healers was apparent in the present study, with five participants highlighting their work with others as key to their maintenance of desistance, and four others expressing interest in acquiring a job in a helping profession: Leon and Nico work at group homes or halfway houses, Ian presents motivational speeches to at risk youth, Henry worked at an advocacy group for at risk Aboriginal youth, and Quinn volunteers at legal advocacy organizations. In addition, Marcus, Keith, Percy and Tiffany expressed an interest in volunteering, becoming teachers, or acquiring work with at risk youth. Although Marcus and Henry were not successful in maintaining their desistance, their experiences are combined in the present section to allow for a more nuanced analysis of the concept of wounded healers through negative case analysis below. They all talked about how important it was for them to help others and reflected that their shared a history of experiences with the youth offender and at risk populations makes them suited to this line of work, above and beyond individuals who do not have this lived experience. Although the five participants who engaged in a wounded healer role discussed working in these roles to help others, there were other reasons that they each took on this type of work.

Leon, Nico, and Ian were all extremely high risk offenders, with each of them spending multiple years in provincial or federal custody centers, and having engaged in a wide variety of risky offences such as car thefts, assaults as part of enforcing for

gangs, and robberies. Out of the entire sample, they presented as the highest risk with the most complex pathways into and out of crime. Through becoming desisters, all three individuals incorporated their success in desistance into their identities. Of note, none of these individuals first self-identified as success stories, but rather each had an experience when a service provider or other external individual to their immediate social network shared this observation with them. This observation is similar to findings in the desistance literature that labels applied by official sources are more potent to promote change then feedback provided by family members and friends (Wexler, 2001). All three participants in the present study described being told that they were positive outcomes and how rare it is that individuals who have undergone the stressors that they had are able to continue to live, much less desist. As Leon noted, his social worker has repeatedly congratulated him and expressed admiration that he was able to exit from an offending lifestyle. Leon described this experience, reporting that:

> I had a lot of friends growing up with that died and didn't make it. There was – I was saying I was high risk. There were 10 of us kids on a list of - that they didn't think we were going to make it. There are two of us left still... I'm really close with my social worker, my original social worker. We still talk on a monthly basis. She kind of gave me insight into a lot of things and now that I'm an adult we can talk about more things. There's a list of 10 of us that were considered high risk and no hope...

Interestingly, these three individuals were told that they were success stories before they had completely desisted from offending and antisocial activities. They were able to embody the identity of being a "rare outcome" and of being inspirational to others while transitioning to a successful desistance experience. The importance of praise from others is key for helping build prosocial identities, building motivation to change, and helping individuals believe in their potential (Maruna, 2006). This theme appeared to be relevant to the wounded healers within the present study sample.

Participants discussed their perceived role of giving hope to youth and at risk populations who are in similar situations that they had endured. Leon described how he will share his story with youth at the group home to "let them know that there is life after this. Going forward just try to be a better person every day". Nico expressed a similar sentiment regarding his work with adult homeless addicts, stating that:

> [m]y life experiences make me uniquely qualified for the work I do because the population that we serve is dealing with many of those

> same issues if not all of them. That's what I love about my work today. One thing I get to bring to work with me that not all the coworkers do, is hope... The greatest gift you can give to an addict of the hopeless variety is, obviously, hope. I was that guy that had lost hope that I could ever have a normal life, that my life could ever be good.

Nico was a particularly interesting example of a wounded healer, especially as he has firmly integrated the view of himself as giving hope to others as key to his newfound prosocial identity and currently works at a halfway house and is a sponsor for his Narcotic Anonymous (NA) chapter. When Nico was an active offender he expressed always wanting to be the best and to be viewed as a "solid" and "stand-up guy" by his offender peers. He described getting out of offending partly due to a change in mentality by the younger offenders in the federal penitentiary stating that:

> [o]ne of the reasons why I knew I had to get out of [offending] was that I saw that things had changed and like just the general attitude. I saw that this con-code that I had been clinging to that it was all bullshit. It was all fucking bullshit... Some of these younger guys I knew, and this was years ago so I imagine it's only gotten worse, but they didn't perceive me as being solid because I wouldn't rat out someone to keep myself out of jail. They just thought I was stupid. They didn't respect me.

One of the main reasons Nico was engaged in offending was to gain respect, and losing respect from his perceived peers was hurtful and confusing for his sense of identity. When he connected to NA he found a community that could provide him structure and a hierarchy that he could progress through in order to gain respect. By being given the designation of a "positive outcome" by his peers Nico went from being the best offender to being the best ex-offender. He has fully integrated this view of himself into his story, and he has built his current life around giving hope to people using substances through modeling possible positive change.

Henry described a less positive experience as a wounded healer. He found a job in his early 20s working at a local Aboriginal outreach organization where he would counsel at risk Aboriginal youth and connect with schools and other service providers to help educate them on unique needs of Aboriginal students and available community resources to help this population. During this time Henry was still an active offender and engaged primarily in drug trafficking along with working full time at this organization. Henry reflected that:

> I was there for 3 and a half years. It was a great job. I talked to kids about their life. It was so weird, man; I wish I was like in that position now and instead of where I was then. I was lying to these kids the whole time.

This example highlights the importance of individuals acquiring employment in the helping professions when they feel that they are a positive outcome and believe they can promote positive change in others. Henry was not yet ready to be a role model or to give hope to others, and as such he viewed his employment solely as a job and not as an integral part of his identity and he continued to offend during this time frame.

Quinn described a unique reason for becoming a wounded healer, namely that she wanted to "give back" to the community who had given her money to go to university to try and turn her life around. At this time Quinn reported volunteering at her church:

> [w]hen I was in school I volunteered for the school because you have to give back, I got free money from the government [to go to school], I don't know, I had to do that. I liked to work so I volunteered for the school and I volunteered for access justice society... I was a Sunday school teacher I was an usher greeter. I was faithful. In my life, I was actually involved. I was lost [when] I wasn't as involved.

In contrast to the other participants, Quinn sought out opportunities to volunteer and to help others for the reason that she viewed this as important to helping her make amends for her past actions and as important to help her bond with her community. However, she discussed noticing that her actions are often not received well by those she is trying to helping stating that people who try to influence other people:

> [w]ant to control your life because they don't have control over their own life. The point is that I do notice that I do try control other people's lives too. Say that I know that you're on welfare, I'm going to like why what's wrong with you? You're healthy, you're beautiful and you're so smart. So it's kind of uplifting but really you're trying to control them. You can't do that.

Quinn expressed frustration when trying to help others owing to her perception that those receiving help do not appreciate the time and effort and resources put into helping them. Quinn described learning how to help others as an ongoing learning process and described a desire to become a counsellor:

> I don't know what I'm doing in life! Like I want to get a job and I want to help people, that's all I know. First I want to help myself though because I still need the help.

The wounded healer literature aligns with the findings in the present study. Roughly half of the participants discussed the importance of helping others in their ability to maintain desistance. Incorporating their antisocial past into their current identity appeared to give meaning and purpose to their past hurdles and negative life experiences. The quantitative findings that wounded healers have higher self esteem and greater satisfaction with life (LeBel, 2007) appear to be in line with the theme presented here. In addition, participants highlighted their work as a way to be accepted by society and as a way to be successful in employment, congruent with past research (LeBel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015). As Nico described, it is difficult to find employment after being released from custody, and employment in the social services is an area where he can be respected because of his justice system experienced instead of fighting against stigma because of these experiences:

> [n]ot a lot of employers are stoked about hiring ex-addicts or ex-gang members or ex-cons, people who have been homeless. They're not like 'oh my god, really you used to be homeless, you'd make a great employee. You used to be an ex-gang member? Oh fantastic! Or drug addict, you're the guy we're looking for. Now I work in a homeless shelter and that's exactly what – they didn't say it like that but they said it like that.

Although it is outside of the scope of the present study to discuss whether the participants were effective at their jobs in the service sector, it is a notable finding that many participants voiced acquiring meaning from their work with at risk populations. The desire to share their experience and to give meaning to their past appears to be important for the participants healing and acts as a motivator to maintain desistance.

3.7.5. Pains of Desistance and Aversive Desistance Experiences

An unexpected theme was that although some participants were no longer offending, they were also not living full and positive lives. A portion of the participants even reported that negative aspects of their lives were responsible for their desistance. The observation that desistance may not be experienced as an entirely positive transition for ex-offenders was explored by Nugent and Schinkle (2016). These researchers wrote about the "pains of desistance" experienced by both prolific and short-term offenders, and linked desistance to isolation, goal failure, and feelings of hopelessness. Upon re-entry, ex-offenders may feel stigmatized and separate from the community (Behrens, 2004), many feel distrust and bitterness (Bracken, Deana, &

Morrissette, 2009), which potentially leads to purposeful self isolation (Haggard et al., 2001). All of these negative aspects of desistance were apparent in the present sample, most notably feelings of isolation, paranoia/distrust, and poor mental health.

The most commonly reported pain of desistance observed was isolation, both in terms of isolation from peers and from romantic partners. Leon, Aaron, Bryan, and Percy all became intentionally socially isolated from romantic partners and peers during their desistance. Past research indicates that isolation during desistance is common wherein desisters will separate themselves both socially and geographically from other people (Haggard et al., 2001). After being bankrupted by his wife and losing his home, Leon separated from his wife and entered into a 2 year desistance period. Explaining how he was able to achieve this period of desistance he stated:

> I drink a lot at home, I just stay home, I have my dogs, I take them out when I go to work, and that's it. I don't do anything. I've become kind of a shut in I guess.

This sentiment was mirrored by Quinn, who described how during her teenage years most of her offending occurred in the context of her peers with them providing encouragement and opportunities to offend. Once she was released from the federal penitentiary she tried to build new relationships with prosocial peers and with service providers, but found that often these relationships were not as positive as she anticipated. She talked about reaching out to an organization that aids ex-offenders in acquiring employment, and that she ended up feeling attacked by the worker and made to feel shame about how she was living. Since this experience, Quinn learned to mistrust others and that in order to desist she had to:

> [m]ove away and be a loner and cut off all the whores you meet... they want to hang out with you and be your friend... but the problem is they're going to go fuck someone else in the bushes.

Both Leon and Quinn's experiences highlight the importance of trust in others to support desistance, and how easily these connections can break. The ability to trust others was difficult for participants, and having trust broken when attempting to reconnect with society at times resulted in self-imposed social isolation to protect from future harm.

Another negative ramification of desistance was paranoia, distrust of society, and the need for constant vigilance in attempting to stay out of the justice system. This need

for constant vigilance was often voiced by participants whose offending behaviour was tightly connected with their substance abuse. In particular, Nico, Ian, and Keith all discussed the importance of regularly attending NA/AA meetings and keeping in contact with their sponsors to abstain from substances. Nico described how he has a “slippery slope mentality” and that he cannot allow himself to give into temptation in the form of substances as he knows that he will escalate and begin to test his boundaries until he is once again homeless or dead. This constant monitoring of their own behaviour and thoughts was spoken of as though it was a necessary burden and a consequence of their lack of self control displayed when they were addicts. Leon voiced a similar mentality regarding his risk factors for offending stating that “you have to constantly work at it every day. If you don’t then you have given up.”

Although constant attention to potential triggers for relapse was a common theme, participants with adult criminal records also voiced feeling paranoia in the employment sphere. Perceptions of stigma in the workplace are common for ex-offenders (Bachman et al., 2015; Maruna et al., 2004) with some desisters working extra hard to prove themselves worthy of advancement and acceptance due to perceived barriers related to their criminal records. In the present study, Quinn spoke about how she was able to get a job as a receptionist at a spa. She quit this job due to fear of being blamed for theft when she observed some of the masseuses stealing from her till. This insecurity concerning how other people would react to her as a function of her criminal past is congruent with past research, according to which offenders isolate themselves from other people as a way to protect themselves against stigmatization and judgment (Haggard et al., 2001). Participants discussed how frustrating it was trying to re-gain a foothold in the mainstream community, especially when facing stigma and social barriers. Even when participants achieved milestones such as gaining employment, at times they did not view these milestones as stable, and lived in fear that they could lose their social capital. At times this fear created self-fulfilling prophecies such as the aforementioned story by Quinn who was so concerned about getting into trouble and losing her employment that she decided instead to quit her job pre-emptively.

Another negative consequence of desistance was poor mental health, most commonly in the form of depression or anxiety. Nine participants described experiencing poor mental health during periods of their desistance. The directionality between mental health and desistance was not overly clear in the present sample, but most participants

discussed experiencing mental health problems which caused them to become isolated, or to have lower energy or cognitive abilities, which ultimately reduced their offending behaviour. For example, Tiffany experienced a three-year period of depression that resulted in her desisting from fraud for the reason that her mind was not clear enough for her to risk engaging in this type of offence without making a mistake. Bryan, Aaron, and Daniel all discussed becoming depressed and not having the energy to engage in offending. Quinn experienced being in a car accident, and described having increasing feelings of social anxiety and fear, resulting in avoidance of the outside world after these events. Nico elaborated on his feelings of depression stating that during the first phase of his maintenance of desistance, "I wasn't using (substances) but I wasn't happy, joyous or free. I wasn't living a good life. I just wasn't using."

These themes related to the "pains of desistance" highlight the dual nature of this change in the life trajectory. Ex-offenders need to engage in a multitude of changes in order to reintegrate into society, which can be stressful and can also result in the breakdown of key aspects of their lives. For instance, many participants recounted disengaging from negative peer groups but that they were not able to replace these with prosocial alternatives. By targeting risk factors for offending and not replacing them with positive alternatives, this creates a landscape in which individuals are not offending but do not have a healthy and happy life in other key respects. As a result they may become socially isolated or developed mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

Table 3-7 Summary of Maintenance of Desistance Themes

Theme	Count (n = 14)	Description
Commitment and Internal Drive to Sustain Prosocial Change	12	The importance of internal drives and motivators to desist were described by participants as the most influential factor for their ability to maintain
Future Orientation and Fear of Losing Social Capital	9	When social capital was desire by and worked towards by participants, it was valued and appeared to anchor participants and give them something to strive to maintain over time and into their future.
Providing Hope and Helping Other Offenders Desist	7	The desire to share their experience and to give meaning to their past appears to be important for the participants healing and acts as a motivator to maintain desistance.
Pains of Desistance and Aversive Desistance Experiences	9	Although some participants were no longer offending, they were also not living full and positive lives. A portion of the participants even reported that their desistance was brought about through isolation and trauma.

Chapter 4. General Discussion

The present study was designed to examine factors connected to periods of desistance, factors linked to desistance experiences that ultimately resulted in a resurgence of offending, and factors associated with successful maintenance of desistance over time. The study was structured around a dynamic conceptualization of desistance with the intention of examining the ebbs and flow in desistance from the subjective perspective of the study participants. Key to this study was the importance of phenomenological experiences of desistance through the viewpoints of the participants themselves. In the results and interpretation section above, the study findings have been linked to past research and theories of desistance, and as such the general discussion below will emphasize the overarching interpretative narrative of the study findings.

4.1. Research Questions 1 and 2: Which factors are associated with the onset of a desistance period? Do factors that lead to failed desistance periods differ qualitatively from factors that lead to successful desistance periods?

Factors that led to desistance periods which were ultimately unsuccessful were typically brought about through externally imposed behavioural controls (e.g., parental management), through social supports encouraging change (e.g., social workers), or through experiencing temporary negative emotional states which reduced both the energy and drive to offend (e.g., depression). In contrast, factors that led to desistance periods that were ultimately successful were internally driven. Participants tended to describe the importance of gaining insight into their situation, which impacted their desire to change. This self motivation helped participants gain control over risk factors for offending which ultimately impacted their desistance. The importance of motivation to change and offenders making conscious decisions to desist has been highlighted in various studies (Bachman et al., 2015; Bryne & Trew, 2008; Hughes, 1998; King, 2013). For instance, Healy (2010) described the importance of making personal decisions to change in the desistance process, which leads to changes in criminal attitudes and criminal thinking. In their sample of high risk older youth, Haigh (2009) found that in order to desist, their participants stressed the role of having an alternative life path

mentally formulated, being motivated to change, and being able to put their change plans into action. Haigh (2009) also outlines the importance of conscious decision to change as opposed to having change forced through external others. The current study themes align with work by Farrall (2002), which highlighted the role of motivation and social circumstances in the desistance process. In the present study, participants discussed using their peers or others in their social environment to reflect back on their own lives which led to participants making a conscious decision to change and ultimately a successful desistance process.

A key overarching theme in the present study was the role of autonomy and individual agency in decision-making regarding desistance trajectories. When discussing desistance, participants tended to describe changes in their identity which prompted them to attempt changes in the rest of their life domains. Although identity features in the theory of informal social control and the theory of cognitive transformation, both these theories posit that identity changes occur *after* the process of desistance has begun. In the present study identity changes were perceived by participants to occur *prior* to desistance and identity was supported and consolidated during and after the desistance process. The findings of the present study are in line with the respective identity theories of desistance proposed by Maruna (2001) and Paternoster and Bushway (2007). The role of identity was important to spur participants' motivation to desist, which is congruent with Rocque and colleagues (2015) quantitative study of the role of identity on desistance. Using growth curve models, Rocque determined that prosocial identity increases over time and can be used as a predictor of desistance. Although the role of identity has been highlighted by various qualitative studies, its role in desistance has yet to be fully explored in quantitative research.

In the current study, the factors that played into failed versus successful desistance experiences align with Maruna's (2001) categorization of desistance into primary and secondary stages. Maruna refers to primary desistance as lulls in criminal behaviour, while secondary desistance is theorized to involve desistance from crime that is accompanied by a change in identity (Maruna and Farrall, 2004; Maruna et al., 2004). Indeed, in the present study, participants reported experiencing many periods of unsuccessful desistance (primary desistance) and these were attributed to a wide variety of causes; however, when participants experienced successful desistance (secondary desistance), identity appeared to play a key role in this process. In addition, there was

little support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory of informal social control in the factors participants described as important to the onset of their desistance behaviour. This lack of support for the impact of typical turning point events is congruent with more recent research on desistance. In particular, the role of romantic partnerships (Bachman et al., 2015; Leverentz, 2007; Wyse, Harding, & Morenoff, 2014; van Schellen et al., 2012), children (Bachman et al., 2016; Corman et al., 2011), and employment (Apel et al., 2007; Skardhamar et al., 2014) have inconsistent research support as precursors to desistance, although living-wage employment has been found to help with the maintenance of desistance (Bachman et al., 2015), as well as relationships with prosocial, supportive romantic partners (Barr & Simons, 2015; Craig & Foster, 2013; King et al., 2007; Simons & Barr, 2014). In past research, as well as in the present study, external life events appear to serve the role of solidifying and supporting a prosocial identity after the desistance process has occurred, but do not appear to contribute to the *initial development* of the prosocial identity.

4.2. Research Question 3: What factors impact whether an individual will re-engage in offending behaviour after experiencing a period of desistance?

In the present study, re-engaging in offending behaviour following periods of reduced or absent offending was common. This finding is consistent with the observed zig-zag pattern of offending behaviour over the lifespan and the observation that desistance experiences are fragile (Webster, MacDonald, & Simpson, 2006) and fraught with frequent setbacks. Most often, participants reported resurgence in criminal behaviour following a life stressor (typically related to financial concerns or social relationship breakdowns) for which they did not have adequate prosocial coping skills to address. As a result they tended to revert back to their negative coping skills of substance use, violence, or using illegal methods to solve financial problems (shoplifting, robbery, drug sales). In the present study, the tendency to revert back to offending was linked to participants superficially addressing risk factors for offending while still "living a bit of the lifestyle" (Georgia) during periods of desistance. Participants who failed to fully dissolve their bridge back to offending continue to be connected with negative peer groups or to have access to substances thus making their reversion back into illegal behaviour relatively simple. Participants in the present study also had tightly

interconnected desistance webs where the factors supporting desistance were intertwined and interactive. As such, when one aspect of the desistance web suffered a threat (e.g., getting fired), the rest of the desistance network became comprised allowing for a cascading breakdown of protective factors that were supporting desistance.

The ebb and flow of the desistance process was linked in the present study to readiness to change and participant's desire for achieving a non-offending lifestyle. In particular, work by Bushway and Reuter (1997) was important in interpreting the findings, as their observation that both personal commitment and deliberate intention to desist are necessary for behavioural change was supported. Participants who ultimately experienced resurgence in offending behaviour tended to lack one of these two traits. Participants either wanted to change but did not have the intention of drastically altering their lives, or they addressed their risk factors for offending in a superficial manner as they were not fully committed to this lifestyle. Trends in the data related to motivation to change highlight the importance of upfront work by the participants and readiness to change which led to the experience of desistance, congruent with the theory of cognitive transformation (Giordano et al., 2001).

Relevant for the dynamic process underlying the motivation to change is the transtheorteical model of behaviour change, which outlines six stages of change required to promote *intentional* behaviour change (Prochaska, 2013; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). The stages of change include pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination. This model is well known in the psychological treatment literature, especially as it relates to substance abuse (Connors, DiClemente, Velasquez, & Donovan, 2013; DiClemente & Hughes, 1990). Integral to this model is the dynamic nature of the change stages with individuals progressing through them in a dynamic, and potentially non-linear, fashion. Setbacks are common and individuals move through the stages at different paces. Also integral to this model is that in order to maintain change, individuals must integrate their new behavioural patterns supportive of change into their view of themselves and separate the current view of themselves from the past versions of themselves. If participants do not integrate change into their new identity, then change is subject to remission with the behavioural concern reappearing. In the present study, participants reported numerous experiences of failed desistance and that the navigation through the stages of change was fluid with frequent regression and setbacks. These experiences appeared to be

linked to participants not fully committing to change or not fully believing that change was possible or deserved.

Of particular relevance for the present study was readiness to change and working towards attaining a replacement self. Participants who desired change but who had not put in effort to create a replacement self that was different from their current self, made less drastic changes to their lives to support desistance. Research conducted by King (2013) on early desisters notes that individuals in the early process of desistance are often aware of the social and individual factors which could cause their desistance to fail, but that these individuals tend to be overly optimistic about their ability to overcome these stressors. For desistance to occur, participants must have a "sufficiently prosocial" identity (Rocque et al., 2015) and believe that change is possible, or else behavioural reform is unlikely. In the present study, participant narratives highlight the importance of being open and ready to change for promoting desistance and the importance of desiring certain hooks for change to strengthen participants resolve and determination to desist from offending. Participants also generated ideas of "replacement selves" (Giordano et al., 2001) and began to work toward attaining these idealized versions of themselves. These stages of change all seemed to support the development of a prosocial identity in the study participants. In contrast to successful desistance, failed desistance was connected to failure to exit from the initial stages of change linked to low motivation to change and participants not making a conscious effort to maintain change over time. This lack of constant vigilance against threats to desistance and failure to integrate desistance success as an integral component of identity ultimately were connected to desistance failure.

Factors that influence the resurgence of offending behaviour following a period of desistance are not well understood in desistance research. Some qualitative work has presented themes related to offending resurgence and has found that financial stressors (Bryne & Trew, 2008), romantic relationships with a criminal partner (van Schellen et al., 2012), connection with delinquent peers (Elliott & Menard, 1996), and inability to perform a desired role such as providing financially for their family (Wyse, Harding, & Morenoff, 2014) are connected to criminal recidivism in samples of desisters. Indeed, researchers have proposed that the desire to change is often insufficient to maintain change in the face of overwhelming or numerous social stressors (Bottoms et al., 2004; Maruna, 2001). Participants in the present study experienced resurgences in criminal behaviour

in response to social stressors potentially reflecting an incomplete progression through the stages of change and an incomplete integration of being a desister into their prosocial identities. Overall, little research exists which examines the process of desistance failure.

4.3. Research Question 4: Which factors are associated with the long-term maintenance of desistance over time?

As with themes related to successful desistance trajectories, themes related to the maintenance of desistance were primarily related to internal drives. Participants highlighted the role of cognitions supportive of change and of motivations to remain crime free in their desistance narratives. In many of the interviews, participants were queried specifically if they felt the ability to maintain their desistance was related to internal or external factors. Although participants acknowledged the importance of external factors in maintaining their motivation to desist, they attributed the mechanism behind their motivation to internal characteristics such as identity, cognitions, and attitudes. Participants also stressed the importance of autonomy and decision-making, and the importance of constantly making decisions that will support their desistance.

Maruna's (2001) theories on the role of redemption and condemnation scripts on identity transformation were supported in the present study, especially in relation to maintained desistance periods. Many participants described taking on "redemption scripts" (e.g., "wounded healers") and that this was integral in their desistance process. Also, participants recounted needing to atone for their past behaviour and integrating this atonement into their redemption scripts. Labels were very powerful to the study participants, with many of them citing how they felt they were perceived by others as key to their offending, and having others believe that change was possible as important for their desistance. Finding redemption was especially important for the higher risk participants who found meaning and a sense of belonging in their experiences of becoming a wounded healer and using their experiences to provide hope to members of other at risk populations. Finding meaning within their negative life experiences was integral in developing a new self-narrative and identity. Participants were reflective about their engagement in antisocial behaviour and often discussed it as a learning experience which helped them grow into the person they are in the present. As Rita stated, "it feels

like [my negative life experiences] helped me grow as a person and I wouldn't be the person I am today if I didn't go through those experiences." A sense of self-efficacy was also apparent with participants having a clear vision for their future and sense of control over their ability to achieve this future.

Although participants attributed their maintenance of desistance to internal traits, they also conceded that the external factors such as relationships, employment, children, and other "consequences of living a good life" (Nico) factored into their decision-making processes. This build-up of social capital (Sampson & Laub, 2003) was important for maintaining motivation to continue to desist due to fear of losing all that they were able to accumulate, especially for factors which required an investment of money and energy (such as education/training and acquiring employment in their area of specialization). When participants were personally invested in the accumulation of social capital, they were more hesitant to risk losing these life events by engaging in offending. This finding aligns with the theory of informal social control (Sampson & Laub, 2003) in that some participants voiced maintaining desistance out of fear of losing accumulated social capital and social standing. This tendency to orient to the future combined with the realization that crime has consequences that outweigh the benefits was important for desistance from offending.

A relevant finding in the offending literature is that individuals with lower levels of future-orientation are more likely to engage in reoffending than their future-oriented peers (Monahan, Steinberg, Cauffman, & Mulvey, 2009). Future-orientation also features through Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) incorporation of a desire for a future positive self into their theory. Although future-orientation has been postulated as important for initiating a desistance process, its role in the maintenance of desistance has not been adequately explored. One recently discussed aspect of future-orientation is the importance of reflexivity and self-monitoring in desistance with ex-offenders using forethought and intentionality in their decision making to achieve desired futures (Paternoster et al., 2015). In the present study, some attention was paid to participants' goals and desires for the future and how these goals related to their ability to maintain desistance. One rationale participants put forward for maintaining desistance was an increased future orientation combined with taking steps to achieve a possible positive future through the accumulation of social capital typically in the form of education, employment, and social relationships.

Support for Paternoster and Bushway's (2009; 2015) theory of desistance was also reflected in the present data. Many participants described coming to realize that their working self was misaligned with the version of themselves that they wished to become or the version of themselves that they felt they were. This discomfort and realization helped participants weigh the costs of their antisocial behaviour differently which in turn helped them see that their life path was leading towards a feared future rather than a desired future. By changing what they wanted out of life, participants began to take steps to achieve their goal of a positive possible self, where self-improvement played a role in the consolidation of a new positive identity. By maintaining this goal of a positive possible self, participants were able to maintain their motivation to change by creating a goal for which they could strive to achieve.

To support a behavioural change an individual must also experience changes in their cognitions, attitudes, identity, and social network memberships (Veysey, Martinez, & Christian, 2011). In line with findings from the present study were themes generated from a literature review of 29 qualitative desistance studies compiled by Veysey and colleagues (2011). These researchers observed that cognitive changes, behavioural change, and feedback through social networks that change had occurred were important for desistance. They also described how fragile desistance was and how difficult it can be for offenders to shed a comfortable antisocial identity for an untried positive identity. In general, they noted the "substantial cost" to desistance, which aligned with findings in the present study on observed pains of desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). Participants needed to distance themselves from past social relationships, they experienced barriers related to stigmatization when attempting to reintegrate with the community, and they struggled with maintaining control over their risk factors for offending most notably substance use. Resurgence of offending behaviour was also common even after lengthy periods of maintained desistance, further highlighting the delicate balance needed to maintain desistance and the nature of the offending cycle. Even when individuals in the present study were committed to change, their lives were unpredictable with setbacks in desistance from crime being common (Veysey, Martinez, & Christian, 2011).

4.4. Re-Reflecting on Theories of Desistance

As described in the introduction, there are many theories designed to explain the process of desistance from crime. All the desistance models bring new ideas and insights into the study of desistance from criminal behaviour. However, no one theory has risen above the others to best explain how individuals desist, and maintain desistance, from offending. The present study adds to this debate through the observation that individual insights were critical for spurring a desire to change, and that desistance experiences are not always experienced positively by participants. These "pains of desistance" were apparent in many of the study participants and speak to the importance of motivation to change to maintain progress despite experiencing aversive and unanticipated consequences. The role of peers was also apparent in the present study, especially coupled with the observation that the role of families and romantic partners were downplayed by participants which is contrary to past research. In addition, the study findings supported different aspects of many theories of desistance, with the role of structure and agency being revealed as important for different stages of the desistance process. Potentially this observation reflects the need to combine theories across academic silos and disciplines to further bridge the gap between theoretical orientations. In light of the present study findings, potentially, a hybrid desistance model that incorporates cognitive factors (e.g., identity, maturation, readiness to change), the experience of turning point events (e.g., marriage, employment), and the quality of these turning points might best explain individuals exit from criminal activity.

Researchers have increasingly been compiling different aspects of theories of desistance together to better understand the interplay between various factors known in the literature as important for desistance (Farrall & Bowling, 1999; Farrall, Sharpe, Hunter, & Calverley, 2011; McNeill, 2012). It is becoming increasingly common for researchers not to align themselves with one particular orientation, and instead examine how different orientations might complement each other to produce a more nuanced understanding of desistance (Barr & Simons, 2015; Cid & Marti, 2012; F-Dufour et al., 2015; McNeill, 2012; Skardhamar & Savolainen; 2014; Rocque et al., 2015). The present study supports both desistance theories related to structure and theories related to human agency. This observation is congruent with past research that found both structural and agentic inputs were important for explaining the process of desistance

(Lebel et al., 2008; Rocque et al., 2015). Examining the interplay of theoretical models and mapping them onto the desistance process is a crucial next step forward for desistance research, especially regarding the interplay between human agency and environment (Cid & Marti, 2012; F-Dufour et al., 2015; Rocque et al., 2015).

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Research Directions

Overall conclusions drawn from the present study and general implications of the research are outlined in the present section. As it is important to understand the constraints of research projects in order to contextualize conclusions, the limitations of the present study are presented along with steps taken to address these when possible. Following the description of study limitations, a summary of the research findings along with an exploration of the integral role of identity in the desistance process is presented. Finally, implications of the present study within the field of forensic psychology are outlined along with potential avenues for future desistance research directions.

5.1. Present Study Constraints

5.1.1. Potential for Impacts of Volunteer Bias

Selection effects are a common concern for desistance research (Ford & Schroeder, 2010; Laub & Sampson, 2001) in both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (Collier & Mahoney, 1996). The present study employed purposive sampling techniques to create a sample that was representative across life events while adhering to a strict definition of desistance. However, it was not possible to implement an idealized sample selection plan due to logistical constraints, such as low response rates to the online survey and low rates of reported life events linked to desistance such as marriage and children. As a result, the sample was composed almost entirely of individuals who self-reported meeting basic eligibility criteria on the online survey. This inability to be more purposeful in sample selection was a concern, as a few participants reported being a desister on the survey but reported continued justice system contact at the time of the interview. Namely, Ophelia, Henry, and Jimmy all reported continued contact with the justice system at the time of the interview. In these cases care was taken to include only interview data from these individuals when examining factors related to failed desistance experiences and resurgence of offending behaviour. Another limitation with requiring that participants self-select into the study resulted from several participants (Stacy, Rita, Ethan) reporting that they had been officially arrested, but who were actually either only detained by police or by security guards. Thus, their experiences of the justice system are qualitatively different from the other participants

who reported being formally arrested. These subjects were included in the sample under the assumption that although their experience of the justice system was not the same as the other study participants, they conceptualized their experience as atypical from the rest of the general population and viewed these interactions with police or security guards as official contacts with the justice system.

Another potential selection effect is that although the participants who were interviewed did report experiencing a wide range of life events and experiences of offending, not all domains of life events linked in the research to desistance were represented equally in the sample. For instance, although 19 of the participants reported experiencing a serious romantic relationship at some point in their lifetime, only five participants reported being married (of which three had divorced) while another four reported being common law. Also, only six participants reported having a biological child, and no participants reported military involvement (a very influential life event according to Sampson and Laub, 1993). However, all participants reported having employment at some stage of their life, 18 reported achieving an academic milestone (e.g., GED, high school diploma, college diploma, university degree), and 19 reported relocating at some point in their lifetime. As such, the impact of some life events connected to desistance were better represented in the sample compared to other life events, which was a consideration when interpreting results from the present study.

Another consideration regarding sample selection is that participants included in the present study are individuals who *self-identified* as desisters and were willing to participate in a research study regarding a sensitive topic (i.e., offending). Volunteer bias (Boughner, 2012) is a common concern wherein the sample included in a given study is not representative of the population from which it was drawn, thus limiting the transferability of findings. This self selection bias may reflect some inherent trait difference between volunteers and non-volunteers which can lead to findings not being representative of the population or having some findings being exaggerated or minimized. That being said, this is a concern for most research involving human subjects especially when participants are self selected volunteers. Research on volunteer bias highlights the risk that this artifact can have on the generalizabilty and validity of study findings (Demir, Haynes, Orthel-Clark, & Ozen, 2017) as volunteers are typically more educated, intelligent, sociable, and agreeable than non-volunteers (Dollinger & Leong, 2010; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1975). In addition, a common concern in offending research

is missing the “hidden” offenders and desisters from study samples, that is, those desisters who are difficult to locate and who do not self-select to participate in research projects. Attempts were made to be transparent regarding the sample selection procedures and regarding characteristics of the sample (see section 2.3.2 for information on transferability). However, as the composition of the hidden desister population is unknown, the study findings may have limited transferability to all individuals who have experienced this process of behavioural change.

5.1.2. Boundaries within Defining the Population of Interest

A key concern in developing the study was operationalizing the concept of offending. Ideally, participants would display a certain level of various types of offending for inclusion in the sample. This operationalization was linked to the notion that an individual needed to first display a level of antisocial behaviour that was outside normative expectations before they could be considered “enough of an offender” to be able to desist from that life style. Concerns were raised during the proposal of the present dissertation by committee members that the sample would likely be composed of low risk offenders who had minor justice system contact as recruitment was occurring in the community through self-selection. Although efforts were employed to create a sample that was composed of individuals who could be considered to be true offenders with varied offending histories (see section 2.1.2. Inclusion Criteria: Offending and Desistance Patterns), roughly half of the sample would likely have been classified as low risk when they were actively engaged in offending should they have been assessed while in that stage of their offending behaviour (see Appendix E for individual risk narratives). Fortunately, the sample was composed of participants spread across a wide range of risk profiles. However the majority of participants would not be considered high risk based on current best practice standards in forensic psychology risk assessment. More research is required before standards can be set that determine when offending behaviour is at a sufficient level to qualify an individual as an offender and what rates of offending warrant the label “abnormal offending.”

Although the definition of offending used in the present study is somewhat limited, attempts were made to be transparent about the decision making process in settling on a definition and also in applying this definition in participant selection. However, desistance may appear differently for groups of high frequency/severity

offenders compared to low frequency/severity offenders. In addition, it is interesting to note that the sample was composed of both early and late onset offenders who eventually experienced periods of desistance or reduced criminal activity. The overall supposition that individuals who engage in offending during adolescence will desist over time appears to hold true across taxonomies included in the present study (Monahan, Steinberg, & Cauffman, 2009; Moffitt, 2006). However, the role of age on offending and desistance onset was not explored in the present study and no conclusions can be drawn related to this area of study. More research on desistance across different offending types and risk levels of offenders is needed to determine whether type and level of previous offending behaviour impacts an individual's desistance pathway.

5.1.3. Reliance on Self-Report

Much research on desistance relies on official records of offending as this is often thought to be a more reliable method to measure offending behaviour in comparison to self-report measures. Concerns exist in the research community that self-report data will under represent criminal actions and risky behaviour due to participant's intentional underreporting, variably in introspection skills, impacts of social desirability bias, and poor memory retrieval or natural memory decay (Dolcini, Adler, & Ginsberg, 1996; Hirschi et al., 1980; van de Looij-Jansen, Goldschmeding, & de Wilde, 2006). Although these are common critiques of self-report data, this technique is widely used in both criminology and forensic psychology (Hagan, 1993; Piquero, Schubert, & Brame, 2014) and has been found to be both a reliable and valid measure of antisocial behaviour (Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1979; Joliffe & Farrington, 2014; Thornberry & Krohn, 2000). Also, research has shown that self-reported rates of official arrests have notable concurrent validity with rates contained in official records (Maxfield, Weiler, & Widom, 2000) although the quality of self-reports of offending does rely on individual participant factors such as memory ability and attention to detail. Overall, self-reports of offending are viewed to be less biased and more inclusive than official records (Elliott, Huizinga, & Morse, 1986; Hirschi, Hindelang, & Weis, 1980; Krueger et al., 1994) and an appropriate method to employ in the study of forensic samples.

Based on the common critiques of self-report data, another limitation of the present study is the reliance on self-report in all aspects of the gathered data. Strategies were employed to improve participant recall such as using the time line follow back

technique throughout the interview. Also, participants were ensured that their responses would be confidential and anonymized in the study write up, thus encouraging candid reporting and potentially mitigating social desirability effects. However, as it was not possible to triangulate data or to confirm data through secondary sources, this remains a limitation of the present study. That being said, official records are also limited in their validity as they typically under represent actual behaviour (Coleman & Moynihan, 1996; Langton, Berzofsky, Krebs, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012). Overall, it is likely that gathered data are not entirely reflective of reality, however, as the subjective experience of the participants was the focus of the present study this concern does not overpower the importance of the findings.

5.2. Summary of Key Study Themes

The overarching purpose of the present study was to examine the experience of desistance through the subjective viewpoint of individuals who have been able to desist from offending behaviour. In particular, the study was designed to delve into factors related to successful and unsuccessful desistance experiences, factors linked to resurgence of offending following a period of desistance, and factors related to the maintenance of desistance over time. A qualitative approach grounded in phenomenology was employed to examine the real world experiences of desisters and to examine human elements related to desistance.

Many themes have been discussed in the present study. The overall narrative of these themes is that participants tended to engage in offending due to external factors within their environment, and that participants incorporated the ramifications of their offending into their identities, leading them to hold negative identities. Participants tended to frame their offending around identity confusion and justified these narratives through their actions. The ‘chicken and egg’ question (Lebel et al., 2008) of whether subjective or environmental factors are experienced first by a desister is at the forefront of debate in the desistance literature. In the present study, participants primarily linked desistance periods that were ultimately unsuccessful to external factors beyond their control, such as experiencing external constraints like physical ailments or having others encouraging, or attempting to force, behavioural change. At times these external constraints aided in cognitive or identity changes, however, these changes were often superficial or influenced only partial completion of the stages of change. As participants

did not desist on their own accord or through their own merit during these unsuccessful desistance periods, they were susceptible to threats to their desistance. Also, the potential for a cascading breakdown of protection against offending should a trigger for offending appear was likely when the desistance factors were tenuous and interconnected. In contrast, participants linked successful desistance periods to internal factors and motivation to change. This internal drive was important for participants to commit to change, to be focused on a positive possible future, and to overcome threats to their desistance when they arose. Incorporating a survivor aspect into their identity also enabled participants to attempt to help others and to structure their lives around being a desister. In addition, without taking steps to change their environment and to gain social capital, the positive identity created by participants was unlikely to be maintained over time.

5.3. The Complicated Role of Identity in Desistance

As previously stated, identity played an important role in the process of successful desistance. Many participants formed new identities around being a prosocial member of society and as a survivor, which positively influenced their desistance from offending. In addition, although participants discussed accumulating social capital and experiencing turning points, they tended to stress that this social capital was "a consequence of living a good life" (Nico) and that identity and motivational changes were the real factors which helped them to both stop offending and maintain desistance. In particular, the maintenance of desistance was described by the participants of the present study as an energy-intensive process which required constant vigilance to avoid key risk factors for offending and constant attention to live a positive life. This attention to desistance was often connected to internal drives for change and maintained through a desire to conform to their newfound prosocial identities. This constant vigilance was also often connected to negative desistance experiences such as isolation and poor mental health when participants removed key risk factors from their lives but failed to replace these deficits with prosocial alternatives (e.g., negative peers for positive peers).

An interesting and separate finding from those presented above is the observed interplay between identity and desistance. Namely, some participants created caveats in their positive identities during periods of desistance, which could potentially enable them to re-engage in offending should a hypothetical future occur. For instance, adhering to

the lessons taught through Buddhism allowed Percy to create a narrative and a future self-identity which he finds appealing and is willing to work towards achieving and maintaining. Within this identity, offending does not play a role as he views himself as detached from the "materialistic realm" and is focused on the "spiritual realm" of his being. That being said, this new narrative of his identity also has a caveat he has already mentally formulated that could justify him returning to offending. At the end of the interview he specified that:

> [i]f I was standing in a situation where I had to steal to help feed a family or group of children, I would do it because I'm doing it out of love. So when I say that [I've desisted], it's for me and my not wanting to do this kind of stuff.

As such, this new identity he created is not entirely protective and he could easily modify this viewpoint again to accommodate other reasons to offend in order support those that he loves. A similar stipulation was described by Nico who reported:

> NICO: Believe me when I tell you this, if my children were starving I wouldn't have any problem doing a robbery or B&E right now. Not a problem. If we found ourselves in the midst of a weird nuclear war or like you never know! Any situation but if I found myself in a situation like that I have no problem reverting back but the difference would be that it would be for the sake of my kids and if that's the only option.
>
> INTERVIEWER: It would be more of a conscious choice.
>
> NICO: It would be, whereas before it wasn't.

These examples represent an interesting paradox, in that the positive identity that enabled participants to desist from offending also provides a potential rationale to justify the re-engagement in offending behaviour. Participants creating these conditions on continued maintenance of desistance are an illustration of how a positive identity could be modified to allow for 'prosocial' engagement in offending behaviour. As such, the findings of the present study suggest that holding a positive identity was important for desistance, but is likely insufficient on its own to sustain change. This observation leads to an interesting research question, namely whether the traits of the positive identities that participants form which are keeping them from offending (survivor, healer, resilient) protect against threats to offending in the same manner or to the same degree as one another. Potentially, some positive identities may be more subject to breakdown compared to other versions when faced with opportunities to offend. More research in this area is needed.

Another observation related to identity was that some participants viewed their identities as consistent throughout their lives. In an effort to maintain a sense of having a consistent identity these individuals worked to justify their past actions through the lens of their currently held prosocial identity. Statements related to offending as a means to "survive" and that offending was "necessary" were extremely common among the participants of the current study. This emphasis on past offending being justified might be understood in light of Maruna's view that desisters "rebiograph" their past actions to reconcile their past with their current identities as prosocial members of society (Farrall & Maruna, 2004; Maruna, 2001; Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell & Naples, 2004; Maruna & Roy, 2007). In this way identity formation is an ongoing process in which individuals incorporate all their life experiences and make sense of these experiences in terms of a coherent identity linked to the current version of the self in a person's narrative. As a case example, Marcus had a prosocial identity for most of his life and did not begin to engage in offending (primarily property offences) until he was 23 years of age. At the time of the interview Marcus was still in denial about his offending which has lasted from the ages of 23 to 29 years. He stated:

> [while offending] I knew I'm not a thief or like a criminal. That's not who I am. So of course I wanted to get out of that sort of behavior as soon as possible.

Interestingly, Marcus had not adjusted his identity from a prosocial individual to an offender. In fact, when challenged that he was not entirely prosocial because he is engaged in offending, he proceeded to justify his offending, stating that his offending was survival based as he needed to pay for tuition after his parents ran out of money to pay for his schooling. Potentially by viewing offending as a "necessity" in order to "survive" some participants have been able to justify their actions as legitimate as they could view themselves as good people forced to temporarily engage in a negative behaviour. For instance, Leon discussed how while he was in post secondary his offending increased due to financial need. While justifying his offending behaviour as necessary, Leon noticed that he was rationalizing engaging in illegal behaviour and reflected back on this cognitive distortion.

> LEON: [I offended because] I wasn't working a lot. Student loans only go so far until April. You can take summer courses but that's only two more months so yah it was basically a lack of money and seeing other people with it. Wanting money.

INTERVIEWER: That makes sense to me.

LEON: It's bad. It's not bad, it's just selling pot but it's still technically… see I'm trying to rationalize breaking the law. Even now. That's fucked. When you're doing these [interviews], do you ever think that 'yeah buddy you broke the law, you're rationalizing breaking the law.' It's kinda weird.

Protecting new identities from threat is difficult yet it is likely important for individuals to justify past negative behaviour to external constraints. In this way individuals feel as though their behaviour is within their control and that they have autonomy over their decisions and life direction. Reconciling past negative actions that do not fit with a new identity was a common observation in the present study and appeared to be necessary for some participants to view themselves as prosocial people. Potentially this observation connects back to the need for self forgiveness (see section 3.6.2 titled Self Forgiveness and Second Chances) in that those individuals in the present study who were not able to forgive themselves for their past actions needed to justify and validate those actions to prove to themselves that they were not 'bad' people. By viewing offending as a mistake or a consequence of a situation for which the participants had no control, offenders were able to separate themselves, and therefore their identity, from their past offending actions. An interesting trend was that validating and justifying past actions as consistent with a prosocial identity was more commonly described by lower risk participants. Potentially, a survivor narrative within a prosocial identity is able to help protect against offending by virtue of desisters viewing themselves as overcoming life obstacles and becoming resilient. The present study did not explore this area in enough depth to make specific observations on this trend, and future research would be beneficial to determine what types of positively held identities are more protective against reoffending compared to other narratives, especially in relation to offending risk level.

Identity was an important concept for generating themes in the present study. Not only did identity and identity experimentation play a role in the initiation of offending, but it was also important for the exit from crime. Identity played a role in the early stages of desistance, in the process of desistance, and in the maintenance of desistance over time. As noted, it also played a role in justifying future offending and could be used as a tool to protect participants against threats to their self-narratives.

5.4. Study Contributions and Future Research Directions

Limitations notwithstanding, the present study had a variety of strengths and provides novel contributions to the research literature on desistance. A key strength was that it was not grounded using a single theory of desistance, but rather built off of multiple theories central to the debate. This research decision stemmed from the concern that many desistance studies anchored their methods on one theory of desistance and ultimately found that their study results supported the theory on which the study was based. These types of findings are not overly compelling as by grounding the methodology in one theoretical orientation, it makes sense that the findings would ultimately support that orientation. While certainly theories of desistance were influential in developing the study objectives, definitions of the key constructs, procedures, and was used to frame the interpretation of findings, the primary objective of the present study was not to confirm a given theory or to establish a new theory. Rather, the primary objective was to explore desister's experiences and how these individuals make sense of their own desistance process. By applying a broad theoretical approach, the findings that identity and internal factors were perceived as influential to desistance by the participants is more compelling owing to this information not being prompted by the researcher, but rather voiced organically from participants.

A second strength of the present study was employing a multifaceted definition of desistance, which required absence of both justice system contact and undetected offending behaviour. As outlined in the introduction and displayed in Table 1-1, there are inconsistencies in the definition of desistance in the research literature. It has been operationalized in terms of official records, undetected offending, subjective behavioural change, and behavioural change relative to same aged peers (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007). A consequence of this inconsistency in the definitions of desistance is that it is difficult to compare research findings across studies as variation in findings might be simply the result of definitional variation. Although not all participants adhered to the definition applied in the present study due to unanticipated concerns regarding sample selection, efforts were employed to be transparent regarding sample selection for each theme area and to solely generate themes based on participants who met study inclusion criteria for each desistance stage. This approach allowed for increased certainty that the study participants would meet criteria for a variety of desister

definitions employed by other research groups. The majority of research on desistance typically employs either an official or behavioural desistance definition, but through applying a definition of desistance across both measurement types, it increased the confidence to state that the present sample was composed of desisters.

Thirdly, although desistance can be quantified and examined through statistical analyses, psychology is the study of the mind and behaviour both at group and individual levels. By quantifying individuals' experiences, statistical models can be employed to estimate aggregate-level parameters, but these findings do not necessarily translate to an individual level. As such, quantitative research is useful for identifying group-level covariates of desistance, but qualitative research is needed to understand the meaning behind these relations. One of the goals of the desistance field is to better understand the process of exiting from crime in order to help offenders become desisters; as such, a reliance on aggregate data is not sufficient to properly understand this complex process. It is necessary to understand both how desistance functions broadly across groups, but also how desistance is individually experienced. Increasing understanding of the nuances within the process of desistance will be important for individual treatment matching to desistance factors and improving outcomes for ex-offenders. Forensic psychology has come to understand that there is no one-sized fits all treatment plan to address risk factors for offending (Polaschek, 2012; Ward, 2015), and the same shift in thinking would benefit the field of desistance. One of the objectives of the current study was to honour the experiences of individuals who have been able to desist and to develop explanations for desistance behaviour over the process of exiting from criminal behaviour. Although themes outlined in the present study represent the aggregate experience of the participants, the orientation employed in the present study is, first and foremost, concerned with the subjective experiences of desisters. However, a secondary concern was determining whether there are common themes among desisters, and whether these are interpretable through the extant theories of desistance. By employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the present study allowed for the discovery of factors that are perceived by desisters as important to their desistance, and it was possible to connect these perceptions back to the existing desistance literature.

Finally, the present study divided the experience of desistance into three different types: failed desistance, successful desistance, and maintained desistance. This method of gathering and chunking data appears to be unique to the present study. By

incorporating the known “zigzag” pattern of offending behaviour into the backbone of the study methods and approach, a dynamic view of desistance as a process was integrated into the study design. As such, it was possible to examine factors unique to each of these stages of the desistance process and it was possible to examine within-individual differences in the experience of desistance over time. In addition, the field of desistance lacks clarity regarding why study findings differ so markedly from one another. By examining the different stages in the desistance process and looking for differences in what factors brought failed versus successful desistance experiences it is possible to see that different theories and different findings may be based on individuals within a different stages of their change process. Therefore the differences in the desistance study findings may not represent true differences between studies and participant groups, but rather may represent differences in stages of change of desistance. Further clarity regarding factors which influence different stages of the zigzag pattern of offending and desistance would be beneficial to the field and for teasing apart the current conflicting research findings.

Ultimately, the application of desistance research is to understand this process sufficiently well to apply the findings in offender treatment to help individuals exit from crime and maintain a crime free lifestyle (Farrall & Maruna, 2004; McNeill, 2012). Increasingly researchers are acknowledging that risk factors for offending and desistance factors for exiting from offending are not mirror concepts (McNeill, 2012), and that knowledge in both domains are important for building rehabilitation theories. In addition, the importance of strength-oriented interventions is apparent in the application of desistance literature as the factors that promote change in offending appear to be mostly internal and as such need to be encouraged by interventions as self discovery cannot be forced by outside agents (McCulloch, 2005; McNeill, 2006; 2012). The need for interventions to support the development of personal strengths and resources to overcome risk factors is likely important for desistance from offending (Maruna & LeBel, 2003), however, more research is needed on treatment matching and key desistance factors supportive of change before the creation of best practice intervention approaches can occur.

In addition, offenders do not simply desist from crime; they also create a new life for themselves once they desist (McNeill & Weaver, 2010). Viewing individuals simply as desisters and interventions as successful only if crime is absent is short sighted and

defines individuals by what they are not doing instead of what they are doing. Desistance research would benefit from viewing the concept as an ongoing rehabilitative process including successful community integration (Uggen, Manza, & Thompson, 2006). Research should focus on both the process of desistance as well as how individuals rebuild prosocial lives which support their termination from criminal activity (McNeill, 2012). Potentially, interventions should build on the individualized and subjective nature of the desistance process and increase their focus on identity development and treatment matching to individualized needs (Weaver & McNeill, 2010). Many stages of research are required before this goal can be attained.

A variety of calls for actions in the field of desistance have been put forward outlining many topic areas of interest (Bottoms et al., 2004; Bushway & Paternoster, 2013; Farrall & Maruna, 2004; Farrington, 2007; King, 2007). Although the present study was designed to address a few of these key areas of growth, ultimately it is a single study based on a small sample of desisters and represents the voices of the participants from their perspectives. At present little is known about the underlying causal processes that *initiate* the process of desistance (Bushway et al., 2003; Ezell, 2007; Kazemain, 2007; 2016) and how individuals resist the temptation of criminal opportunities (Kazemain, 2007). The majority of research focuses on factors which help the process of desistance to unfold, but little is known about how to determine whether individuals are about to begin on a desistance trajectory or whether any techniques can help initiate this process. At present, the majority of desistance research is anchored around a single time point or around a single contact with research participants. Although this research, like the present study, has generated explanations for desistance, it has not explored directly the changing impact of desistance factors over time or over the lifespan. Longitudinal investigations of desistance and offending are needed to provide a nuanced interpretation of the changing impact of life events on desistance, failed desistance, and trajectories at an individual level.

A mixed method study investigating the dynamic and changing nature of desistance over time, especially as perceived at an individual basis, would be beneficial to help distinguish the factors that are important for the initial desistance trajectory from those that are important for sustained behavioural change. In addition, research into factors influencing the resurgence of offending behaviour in long term-desister populations is lacking. Such longitudinal research would be beneficial to better

understand failed desistance trajectories and important factors to help individuals exiting from offending to maintain their desistance throughout their lives. More research on desistance is required to better understand this field, and based on the influx of published studies on desistance in recent years, many researchers have taken up the call for action and advancement in this field will hopefully occur quickly. Ideally, future research on desistance will employ longitudinal quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method approaches in order to understand both the group and individual level experience of desistance.

In conclusion, the present study provides valuable findings related to the process and maintenance of desistance. The role of identity on desistance was apparent in the present study with identity playing a role in all stages of the offending and desistance process. Overall, the present study highlights the importance of subjective accounts of individual desisters. A one-size-fits-all approach to understanding desistance is likely overly simplistic as pathways into and out of offending are highly individualistic. In the present study evidence was found for the roles of both external and internal factors in the process of desistance, and each played a different role depending on the stage of desistance being experienced. There is likely no golden rule that can be uncovered which can be applied to help all offenders become desisters; rather, it is important to understand the multifaceted nature of desistance, and apply an adaptive and dynamic approach when working with this community. Overall, the results of the present study speak to the complex, individual, and dynamic reality of desistance from offending.

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Appendix A.

Online Screening Questionnaire

Demographics	
Question	**Response Options**
What is your current age in years?	[open ended response]
Were you born in Canada?	Yes No
If you were not born in Canada, how old were you when you moved to Canada?	Less than 12 years of age 12 years of age or older
Gender	Male Female Other Prefer not to disclose
Ethnicity (select all that apply)	Caucasian Asian (Korean, Chinese, etc) South Asian Aboriginal Hispanic African Canadian Middle Eastern Other: _____

Turning Point Events	
Question	**Response Options**
How many times in your life have you moved?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you moved? Roughly how old were you the last time you moved?	[open ended response]
What is your highest level of education?	Some high school Completed High School Some College Some University Degree or Diploma
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you graduated? Roughly how old were you the last time you graduated?	[open ended response]

Turning Point Events (continued)	
Question	**Response Options**
How many part or full time jobs have you worked?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you had a job? Roughly how old were you the last time you had a job?	[open ended response]
Have you ever done a military tour?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were on tour? Roughly how old were you the last time you were on tour?	[open ended response]
How many serious relationships have you been in?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were in a relationship? Roughly how old were you the last time you were in a relationship?	[open ended response]
How many times have you been common law or married?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were common law or married? Roughly how old were you the last time you were common law or married?	[open ended response]
How many children do you have?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you had a child in your life? Roughly how old were you the last time you had a child in your life?	[open ended response]

Turning Point Events (continued)	
Question	**Response Options**
How many a role models or mentors have you had in your life?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you had a role model or a mentor? Roughly how old were you the last time you had a role model or a mentor?	[open ended response]
How many times have you lost someone you loved either due to death or absence?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you lost someone? Roughly how old were you the last time you lost someone?	[open ended response]
Have you ever experienced a serious illness?	None Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were seriously ill? Roughly how old were you the last time you were seriously ill?	[open ended response]

Self-report of Offending	
Question	**Response Options**
In your entire life, how many times have you committed an offence (e.g., shoplifting, selling drugs, vandalism, getting into a serious fight, carrying a gun, B&E)?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
In your entire life, how many times have you committed an offence and not been caught by the police?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
In the past three years, how many times have you committed an offence and not been caught by the police?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure

Official Contact with the Justice System	
Question	**Response Options**
Have you ever been arrested?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were arrested? Roughly how old were you the last time you were arrested?	[open ended response]
Have you ever been charged with a criminal offence?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were charged? Roughly how old were you the last time you were charged?	[open ended response]
Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?	Never Once A few times (2-3) Multiple Times (4+) Unsure
If positively endorsed: Roughly how old were you the first time you were convicted? Roughly how old were you the last time you were convicted?	[open ended response]

Appendix B.

Semi Structured Interview Guide

Instructions to Interviewers:

This component of the project is to examine participant's desistance narratives. In the online screen participants were asked about what life events they have experienced. In order to best structure the interview, please review the participant's survey results prior to the conducting the interview and fill out the column "Presence of Life Event" and ensure that these areas are discussed in Section 2 of the interview.

At the end of the interview, the following chart must be completed.

Life Events from Online Survey			Ever Increase Offending		Ever Decrease Offending	
Life Event	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Change in Residence						
Education						
Employment						
Military						
Romantic Relationships						
Friendships						
Mentor						
Children						
Death or Absence						
Serious Illness						
Other:						

NOTE: Participant's may still be engaged in offending behaviour. Although the interview is focused on past offending, there is still a chance that the participant will disclose current offending behaviour. Be careful of mandatory reporting requirements (i.e., child abuse or neglect, immediate risk of harm to self or to others).

Introduction to Study and Preamble:

Hello, my name is Etta. Thank you for coming in to speak with me today.

I know I told you a bit about what we will be doing today when I first asked you were interested in coming in, but I am going to give you a bit more information now so that you will know what is going on. Basically, for the next hour and a bit, I was hoping we could talk about you, your life, and your experience in the justice system.

Please give this form a read over, it explains what we will be talking about today and other important details about the study you should know before giving your consent (*Give consent form to participant. Allow them time to read the form and ask questions*). Do you have any questions? (*Get participant to sign form if they consent to participant*)

Just to summarize a few points: please feel free to not answer any questions you are uncomfortable with. If you are uncomfortable you can "veto" any question and I will move on to the next question. You can stop participating at anytime and I will still give you your gift card to thank you for meeting with me. Do you have any other questions?

Section 1: Orientation Questions

Note to Interviewer: During this portion of the interview note key events the participant discusses. These events can be transferred onto the first section of the Timeline follow back form. Do your best to time anchor the events. Aim to gather at least four life events that are different from one another to transfer onto the timeline.

To start off, I was hoping we could talk about some general areas. For each of these questions there is no right or wrong answer.

Question 1: To help me understand your answers to the rest of the questions, I was hoping you could tell me an overview of your life so far.

> **Prompt:** What are some of the highlights of your life?

Question 2: What are some of your central personality traits?

> **Prompt:** What features about yourself are important for others to know if they wanted to understand what motivates you?

Question 3: What would you say are the main things that motivate you?

> **Prompt:** What kind of goals or values do you have?

Section 2: Offending Timeline

Note to Interviewer: The completion of the Life History Calendar will serve as a base for discussion on reasons that the individual first started to offend, reasons that might have led to decreases in offending behaviour, and reasons for maintenance of non-offending. It is important to have a solid outline of the participant's pattern of offending behaviour over time to anchor this discussion.

As you read in the consent form, one of the main focuses of this study is offending behaviour. Offending is really common, and one thing that I am interested in is finding out what things increase or decrease offending behaviour. When you filled out your online survey you indicated that you had engaged in some offending behaviour at some point in your lifetime. During this section I don't need to hear details about what exactly you have done, I'm more interested in your experience overall.

Completion of Offending Timeline

Question 4: To start out, I would like us to fill out this chart. The first step is to fill out some information related to your offending behaviour. Some of the information might be hard to remember, so just give it your best estimate. The main point of this tool is to help anchor your memory for the next section, so try to be as accurate as possible, but don't worry if you can't remember all the details exactly.

Undetected Offending Behaviour: Let's start with writing down periods of time in your life that you were involved in offending behaviour regardless of whether it was detected by the police.

- How old were you the first time you engaged in offending behaviour?
- When was the last time you engaged in offending behaviour?
- When were periods that your offending behaviour was at its highest?
- When were periods that your offending behaviour was at its lowest?
- Were there any periods of time when you were not involved in any offending?

Can you use this pencil to connect these points in your offending trajectory? It doesn't have to be exact, just a rough estimate of the ups and downs of your offending behaviour over time. However it makes the most sense to you.

Official Offending Behaviour: Perfect! Now let's fill out the information regarding times that you had contact with the police and the justice system.

- Let's start with arrests, how old were you each time you were arrested?
- Did any of those arrests result in a probation term? When?
- Did any of those arrests result in you being incarcerated? When?

Section 3: Exploration of Reasons for Desistance

Note to Interviewer: Go through the high and low points in self-reported offending behaviour trajectory and discuss them in chronological order with the participant. For each increase in offending ask the questions below regarding peaks, for each decrease in offending ask the question below regarding valleys, and for each period of absence of offending ask the questions below regarding sustained desistance.

Question 5a: Exploration of Peaks and Valleys of Self-reported Offending

Peak: It looks like at this point in your life your offending started to increase or peak (indicate point of increase on the LHC).

- Tell me what were the main things going on in your life at that time that may have contributed to this change in your offending behaviour?

Valley: It looks like at this point in your life you were able to decrease your involvement in offending behaviour (indicate point of decrease on the LHC).

- Tell me what were the main things going on in your life at that time that may have contributed to this change in your offending behaviour?

Sustained Desistance: It looks like at this point in your life you were able to not engage in offending for a pretty long period of time (indicate point of increase on the LHC).

- Tell me what were the main things going on in your life at that time that may have contributed to this change in your offending behaviour?

- During this time were there any opportunities to offend that you were able to bypass? How were you able to not engage in offending in these situations?

Question 5b: Exploration of Official Justice System Contact

- Tell me a bit about your experience with the justice system

    - **Prompt:** How was your experience of being arrested?
    - **Prompt:** How was your experience of the court system?
    - **Prompt:** How was your experience of being incarcerated?
    - **Prompt**: How was your experience on probation?

- So, do you feel that your justice system contact impacted your offending behaviour in any way?

    - **Prompt**: Did these experiences cause your offending to increase?
    - **Prompt**: Did these experiences cause your offending to decrease?

Section 4: Summary and Wrap Up

Question 6: Probe for Impact of Unmentioned Turning Point Opportunities

We have talked about a lot of things that were important to helping you not offend. There were a few other areas that other people have said were useful for them that we didn't talk about today. I'm interested in whether you feel any of these were important for you.

Some people mentioned that (insert turning point) was important for them getting out of offending. Did you find that (insert turning point) was important for you?

Mentioned Life Event			
Life Event	**Yes**	**No**	**Notes**
Change in Residence			
Education			
Employment			
Military			
Romantic Relationships			
Friendships			
Mentor			
Children			
Death or Absence			
Serious Illness			
Other:			

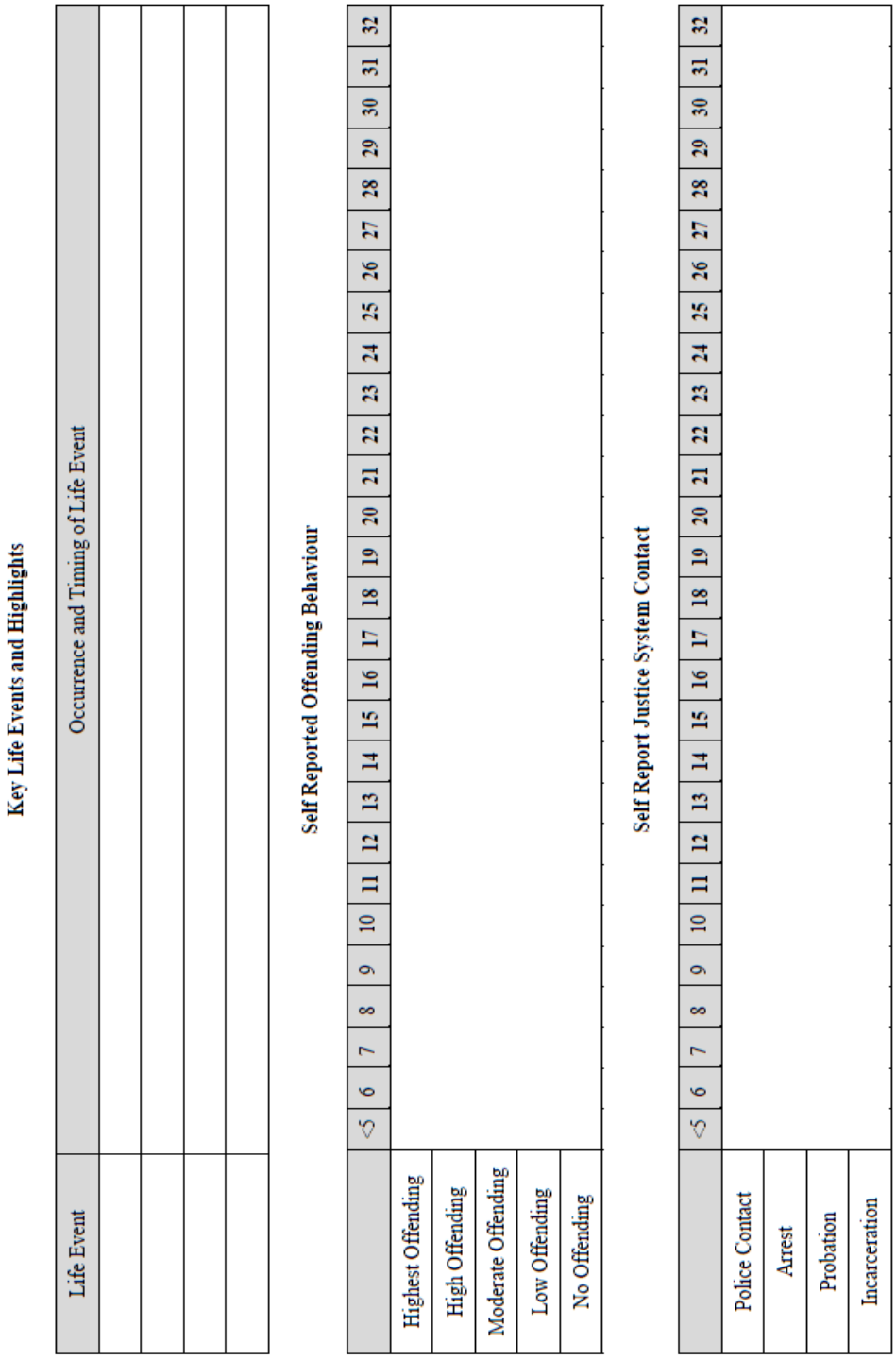
Question 7: Summary and End of Interview

- Overall, looking back on your life, what are the most important events that influenced your offending behaviour?

- Are there any other things that we did not cover that were influential to your exit out of the justice system?

Appendix C.

Timeline Follow Back Life History Calendar



Key Life Events and Highlights

Life Event	Occurrence and Timing of Life Event

Self Reported Offending Behaviour

	<5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
Highest Offending																												
High Offending																												
Moderate Offending																												
Low Offending																												
No Offending																												

Self Report Justice System Contact

	<5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
Police Contact																												
Arrest																												
Probation																												
Incarceration																												

Appendix D.

Self Report of Offending Questionnaire (Huizinga, Esbensen, & Weiher, 1991; Knight, Little, Losoya, & Mulvey, 2004)

Instructions: *In your entire life*, how often have you engaged in any of the following behaviours, regardless of whether or not you were caught by the police?

	Never	Once	2-3 Times	4 times	5 + times
1. Purposely destroyed or damaged property that did not belong to you?					
2. Purposely set fire to a house, building, car or vacant lot?					
3. Entered or broken into a building to steal something?					
4. Stolen something from a store (shoplifted)?					
5. Bought, received, or sold something that you knew was stolen?					
6. Used checks or credit cards illegally?					
7. Stolen a car or motorcycle to keep or sell?					
8. Gone joyriding (stole a car or motorcycle to ride around)					
9. Entered or broken into a car to steal something from it?					
10. Sold marijuana?					
11. Sold other illegal drugs (cocaine, crack, heroin)?					
12. Carjacked someone?					
13. Driven while you were drunk or high?					
14. Been paid by someone for having sexual relations with them?					
15. Forced someone to have sex with you?					
16. Shot and hit someone?					
17. Shot AT someone?					
18. Taken something from another person by force, using a weapon?					
19. Taken something from another person by force, without a weapon?					
20. Beaten up or physically attacked somebody so badly that they probably needed a doctor?					
21. Been in a fight?					
22. Beaten up, threatened, or physically attacked someone as part of a gang?					
23. Carried a gun?					
24. Committed an offence? (including ones that you were not caught for)					
25. Violated your probation conditions? (including times that you were not caught for)					

Appendix E.

Individual Risk and Desistance Case Narratives

Description of Coding Process:

As part of the interpretative phenomenological analyses, the coder needs to immerse themselves in the data and attempt to see a participant's story through the participants' perspective. To help facilitate this process, individual risk and desistance narratives were generated for each of the 20 participants based on how they described the factors influential for their offending and desistance experiences. These narratives were compiled below through the analytical memos and coding journals which formed the audit trail for the present study. These documents were written immediately after the interviews, during and after verification of transcripts, and were amended during coding.

Description of Subjective Offending Trajectory Figures:

The offending timelines created by each participant were digitized and cleaned using Adobe Photoshop. These timeline are *entirely subjective* and drawn by hand by the participants to represent the highs and lows of their offending behaviour *relative to themselves*. The purpose of these timelines was to guide the interviews and to create an anchor on to which participants were queried about their experiences. Participants were instructed to use whatever subjective measure of offending that was useful when drawing their timeline in regards to how they conceptualized their involvement in offending lifestyle (e.g., severity, frequency, general antisocial lifestyle). The majority of participants stated using how often they were offending to draw the lines, while others (typically higher risk participants) stated using a subjective combination of severity and frequency to draw their trajectories. These timelines were generated retrospectively and are not exact depictions of participants offending over time, but rather were rough approximations of offending to guide the interview.

Also included in these figures is a rough approximation of contact with the justice system. For ease of interpretation these instances were colour coded. In particular, dotted green lines represent police contact that did not lead to arrests, solid green lines

represent instances of arrests, red squares represent periods of probation, and solid blue squares represent periods of incarceration. For a few participants, these periods were unable to be teased apart due to high frequency of movement between different justice system contact states; as such they are represented by a pattern combining green, red, and blue together.

Colour	Meaning
Grey	Represents self-report offending behaviour over time regardless of whether they were caught by police. Fluctuations over time are entirely subjective
Green	Dotted lines represent police contact, and solid lines represent police contact that resulted in an arrest or detainment
Red	Red squares represent periods of time that participants spent on probation or parole. These periods also reflect periods under other supervision orders (bail and extrajudicial sanctions)
Blue	Blue squares represent periods of time spent incarcerated. No distinction was made in colour coding time spent in provincial or federal custody

Description of Risk Assessment Process:

Consistent with Haggard and colleagues (2001), the risk assessment tool the HCR:20 (Webster, 1997) was coded for each participant in order to determine the general risk level of the participants. Haggard and colleagues (2001) solely used the items on the Historical subscale of this tool to determine a risk designation, with participants scoring at least 12 points or higher (range 0 to 20 points) being conceptualized as high risk. This approach was informed by Grann and colleagues (2000) who published data depicting a positive relationship between score on the historical factors of the HCR-20 and reoffending. In addition, Grann and colleagues (1999) found support for a positive relationship between scores on the Psychopathy Checklist Revised (Hare, 1991) and reoffending, as such this tool was also used to determine general risk level of the participants. Both these tools use qualitative data (typically interview and file review) coded onto various factors linked to offending or psychopathic traits using three point Likert type scales. This coding structure provides Likert anchors describing subjective factors that coders should use to anchor their coding on each item. This approach is termed *structured professional judgment* and allows for interviewees to be assigned a risk rating from low, moderate, and high by a coder reflecting their perceived risk for reoffending. Both tools have been the subject of much research, and in general meet statistical standards for reliability and validity (Douglas, Ogloff, Nicholls, & Grant, 1999).

Aaron (D01)

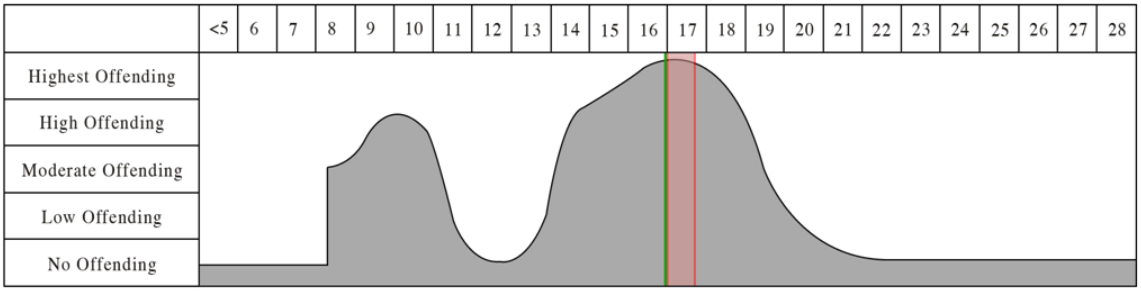
Description of Offending Behaviour

Aaron stated that he began to engage in offending behaviour such as thefts and shoplifting when he was around age 8 years. He described that this was a common behaviour for him to the point that his mother would check his pockets when they were out shopping to see if he had stolen anything when she wasn't paying attention. This behaviour went away when he was around 10, and then resurged from when he was 14 to approximately 17 years of age. Aaron stated that almost all of his offending behaviour involved thefts and shoplifting.

Aaron attributed his offending behaviour to his "lack of a father figure" because his father was working 18 hour days as an engineer in Asia and wasn't around to parent his children. Aaron also discussed the role of income in his offending in that as an adolescent he wanted all the latest technologies that his friends possessed. He described how his mother was very frugal and would not purchase items for him that he desired so he would steal the items instead.

Aaron reported one formal contact with the justice system that involved him stealing from his work when he was 17 years of age. He was put on extrajudicial sanction and was required to write a letter of apology and pay a restitution of $500 for the offence.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Aaron described that his offending went down from when he was 10 to 14 because his grandfather would visit and would buy Aaron the items that Aaron wanted which his

mother would not buy for him. Aaron attributed his second desistance period to getting caught shoplifting. He described experiencing shame after being caught and wanting to never be caught offending again. During this time, he discussed feeling socially isolated and falling into a depression which he linked to his desistance.

When asked how he has been able to maintain his desistance, Aaron talked about how engaging in offending “is more serious now” and discussed how during his childhood and teenage years, police were “really weak, really lazy” and that with the influx of residents to the area the police have “definitely hardened a bit” making offending more difficult to get away with during his adult years. He also discussed the importance of getting full time employment and being able to purchase things he desired legally.

Aaron’s Current Functioning

Aaron has been married for two months following a brief courtship period of roughly 6 months. However, he is still living with his mother and it is unclear of the nature of his marriage. Aaron is working full-time job linked to his university degree and appears happy with his life, despite discussing periods of depression and negative affect.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Aaron received a score of 13 on the PCL-R placing him in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 5 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Bryan (D02)

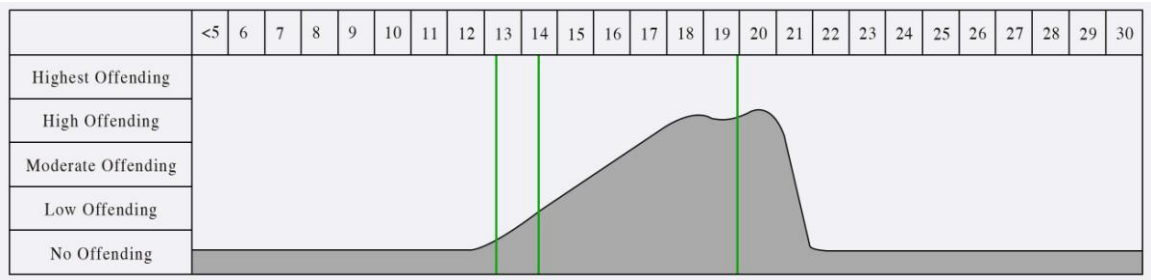
Description of Offending Behaviour

Bryan described being arrested for three separate incidents during his adolescence. The first arrest occurred when he was playing cops and robbers when he was 13 with cap guns and a neighbour phoned the police thinking that real guns were being shot. The second occasion occurred when he was 14 years of age for spitting on a police officer, and the third time he was arrested at age 19 for public intoxication. Bryan reported that he has never been official charged for any offence, been on probation, or incarcerated.

In regards to undetected offending, Bryan began to engage in drug use when he was 13 years of age. He attributed this behaviour to wanting to be popular and mimicking the cool kids in his town. He also discussed the importance of lacking love and support from his family which resulted in insecurity and low self esteem. Bryan described the links between his risk factors for offending linearly in that his low self perception made him more susceptible to peer pressure, which would lead to drug use and offending.

Following a brief decrease in offending in his late teenage years, Bryan stated that his offending increased again after he was laid off from his employment. He described getting back into drug use including marijuana and harder drugs, and engaging in minor crimes. However, this period was short in duration and was followed by a long term maintained desistance period.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Bryan reported experiencing a brief decrease in his offending behaviour around the age of 18 years. He attributed this to getting a job and getting into body building which provided structure to his time. Bryan attributed his second period of desistance at age 21 to going back to school. Around this time, he reportedly moved to a different city and socially isolated himself. He also discussed how he experienced a number of deaths of his peers when he was 18 to 21 through suicides, drug overdoses, and shootings which increased his social isolation and his negative outlook on his life.

At present, Bryan reported maintaining his desistance as a result of social anxiety, acquiring steady income through his employment, and lack of socialization. When queried, Bryan discussed how all of his friends who he used to offend with are either dead or in prison, and that his main social group consists of family members such as his cousins. Although he is still provided with opportunities to offend through this group of peers, he stated that he does not engage in offending because he wants to be a “good person” and offending is in conflict with this goal.

Bryan’s Current Functioning

Bryan is employed at a local hospital as a lab technician. However, he has been on long term disability for over a year due to depression and anxiety interfering with his ability to conduct his job. At the time of the interview, Bryan was hopeful that he would be able to return to work. Bryan lives independently in a house that he owns, does not have a romantic relationship, and is socially isolated due to his depression.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Bryan received a score of 7 on the PCL-R placing him in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 6 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Cindy (D03)

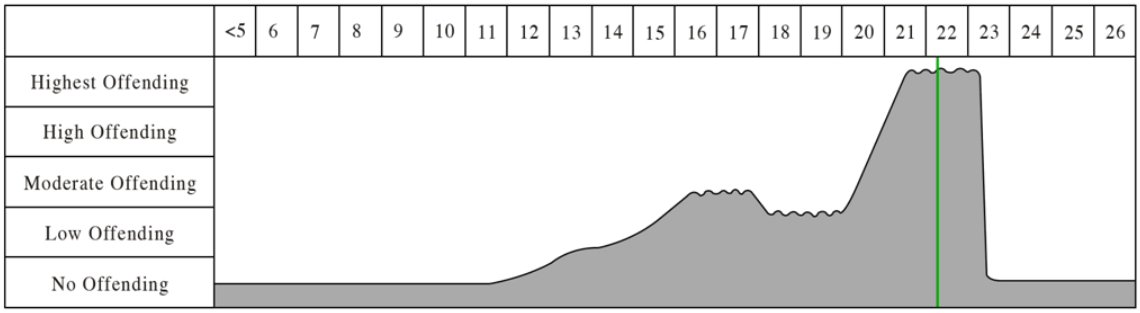
Description of Offending Behaviour

Cindy reported that her biological father died when she was 7 years of age from a drug overdose and that she was raised in a single parent family by her mother. She began engaging in drug use at age 13. She also dropped out of school when she was in grade 8 and was sent to an alternative school. Cindy attributed this negative course in her life to dating a 19 year old male when she was 12 years of age. She said that it was through this relationship that she started to do drugs and stay out all night partying. At age 15 years she started dating her second boyfriend who was a drug dealer and who also encouraged a more antisocial lifestyle.

Cindy reported mostly engaging in minor thefts and shoplifting. She indicated that she had stolen from the cash register at work when she was employed at a restaurant at age 16 and that she shoplifted from stores from age 19-22. She attributed offending to financial stressors related to her post-secondary schooling and stealing to support herself.

She reported that her only official contact with the justice system occurred when she was 22 for shoplifting, right after she had completed a course at a local college. Cindy described that she had to participate in a diversion program as a result of her charge wherein she was required to complete a workshop in exchange for having the charges against her dropped. Cindy reported that this incident was the last time that she had offended.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Cindy described that her first desistance period occurred in her teens after she had broken up with a boyfriend who was a negative influence. She said that at this point she and her mother started spending more time together doing healthy activities like exercising. This desistance period was maintained for a brief period of time which she attributed to spending time with her mother during a “mellow” period.

Cindy stated that her offending dropped off for the second time following being caught for shoplifting because this experience made her aware that she did not want to get a criminal record. She reported that she felt “stupid” in hindsight about this experience because she was risking her future by engaging in minor offences. During this period, Cindy described how important her relationship was with her current boyfriend and her mother for helping support this behavioural change.

When queried about how she was able to stay out of offending, Cindy discussed the importance of her current employment and how she makes more money now and can afford the things that she needs or wants. She also discussed the change in her value system and how she doesn’t want to disappoint the people in her life. She discussed how offending is “not worth it” when balanced against the things that she could potentially lose. When queried about the most important impact on her desistance, Cindy attributed her change to an internal drive to make herself a better person.

Cindy’s Current Functioning

Cindy has had no contact with the justice system for 4 years and has not committed an offence for the past 3 years. She works at a dental office as a receptionist and lives with her long term boyfriend who is also a desister. She has a positive relationship with her mother and a small close knit group of friends.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Cindy received a score of 3 on the PCL-R placing her in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 2 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Daniel (D04)

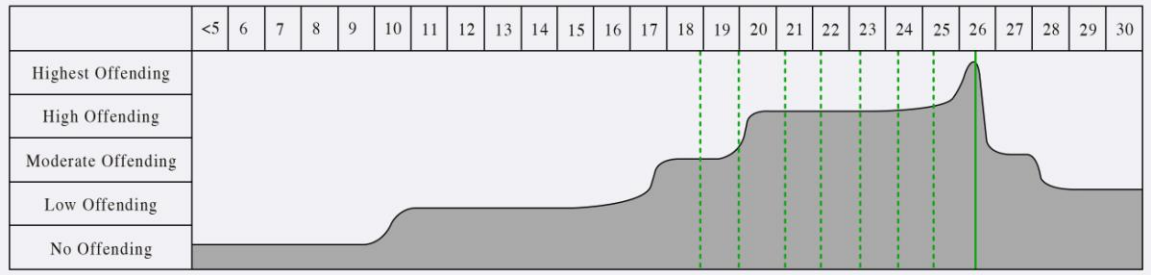
Description of Offending Behaviour

Daniel attributed engaging in shoplifting, destruction of property, and minor drug crimes with his friends starting from 10-17 years of age out of boredom. He also attributed offending in this time to his father's alcoholism because his father would yell at Daniel and his siblings when he was drinking, causing Daniel to stay out of the house for as long as he could hanging out and drinking with his friends to relax and calm his nerves.

Around age 17, Daniel reported that his offending began to increase because he got his driver's license and he would drink and drive around town to show off his truck. Daniel reported that his offending peaked around age 25-26 years of age which he related to not thinking about the future or the repercussions of his actions. This was also around the time that his father died from complications related to his alcoholism. Daniel described this experience as being destabilizing and caused increased substance use.

As an adult, Daniel discussed engaging mostly in driving offences such as drinking and driving, as well as soft drug sales. He indicated that he had been pulled over by police almost every year because he was 19 years of age for various driving offences. He reportedly received an official charge for obstructing the peace when he was pulled over by the police for a DUI when he was 26 years of age. He described spending about $7000 on court time and for hiring a lawyer to fight the charge in court. As a result, he received a conditional discharge order through the courts which required him to complete community service hours in order to have his record expunged.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Daniel indicated that his offending decreased at age 26 because he lost his license as part of his CDO related to obstructing the peace when he was pulled over for a DUI. Daniel explained that his offending first decreased because he lost his license which was a main factor related to his offending. When he was not able to drive, he was also not able to accrue any more DUI charges.

After Daniel obtained his license back, he continued to not engage in DUIs and his offending underwent another decrease in frequency. He attributed this decrease in his offending to “getting older... at that age you kind of smarten up... just be more mature.” At this time Daniel was still selling soft drugs to his friends and coworkers, which he did not consider to be offending. He also attributed his decrease in offending levels to a long term relationship where he wouldn’t engage in offending because he did not want to embarrass his partner or make her need to explain or justify his actions to their friends.

Daniel has been able to maintain his offending at a low level for the past 3 years. When prompted, he attributed this maintenance to experiencing changes in his cognitions and future orientation. He also attributed his maintained low level of offending to positive peer influences who encourages him not to offend or drink and drive.

Daniel’s Current Functioning

Daniel is currently living with a roommate and is not in a romantic relationship. He is employed in a trade that provides consistent and reliable work and is a member of their union. Daniel described staying home a lot and living a low key lifestyle compared to what he used to live in his past. Although Daniel still engages in a constant low level of offending, he has not had any official police contact over the past five years.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Daniel received a score of 8 on the PCL-R placing him in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 3 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

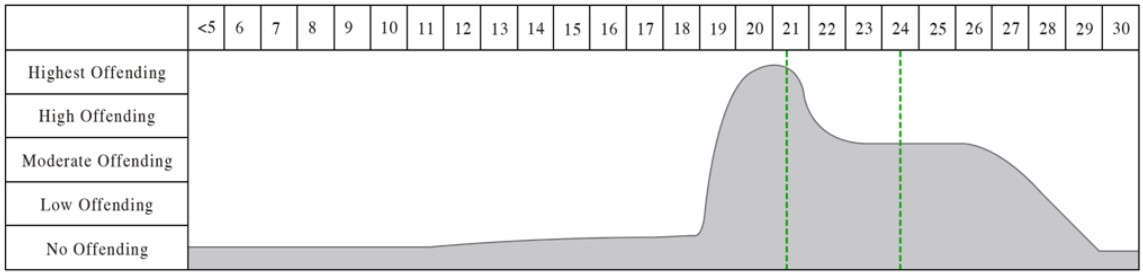
Ethan (D05)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Ethan described growing up in a low income family in a rough part of the inner city. Despite presenting with a number of risk factors for offending during his adolescence, Ethan did not begin to engage in offending behaviour until he was 18 years of age. His offending mainly consisted of thefts, drug sales, destruction of property, and drunk driving. Ethan discussed how his offending first involved vandalism and drug sales, but that he stopped engaging in vandalism when he was in his early 20s, and that after this point his offending was mainly drug sales.

Ethan stated that his offending was linked to substance use, stimulation seeking, boundary testing, and peer influences. Ethan discussed the role of post-secondary schooling in his drug sales because “schooling created the need for money, which influenced the drug dealing.” During this time, Ethan mainly dealt to friends and those connected to his friendship network. He stated that this was important for creating a cliental and for working within an area that had “demand” for his product. He also discussed the importance of his schooling on helping him become a better offender because “studying economics is extremely applicable to selling drugs. Everything I learned from economics that they would teach me – my mind immediately jumped to the weed market, supply and demand and all that stuff.”

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Ethan attributed his first decrease in offending behaviour at age 21 to him ceasing engaging in vandalism. He recounted a story about how he and his friends used to

vandalize cars and that one day they tried to vandalize cars that belonged to local drug dealers. They were caught and chased down by the drug dealers which scared Ethan and his friends. He stated that after this incident, he never engaged in vandalism again, although he continued to engage in drug sales.

Ethan discussed the role of the legalization of weed in his desistance period from age 26 to present. He stated that “when those states legalized weed, it started to change the whole weed industry here” which caused his incentive to sell marijuana to fall away because the market was too competitive. Ethan stated that recently his dealing has dropped to low levels and that he anticipates that his offending will remain at low levels or drop to zero because he cannot compete with marijuana dispensaries.

Ethan’s Current Functioning

At present, Ethan is living independently in an apartment and works full time as a line cook. Ethan continues to be inventive in acquiring more money by renting out his apartment for a week every month to tourists through online rental websites. Ethan has recently experienced a health scare related to his high drug use, and has been told by doctors that he has to stay away from substance use or else he risks suffering from a cerebral aneurism.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Ethan received a score of 10 on the PCL-R placing him in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 6 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

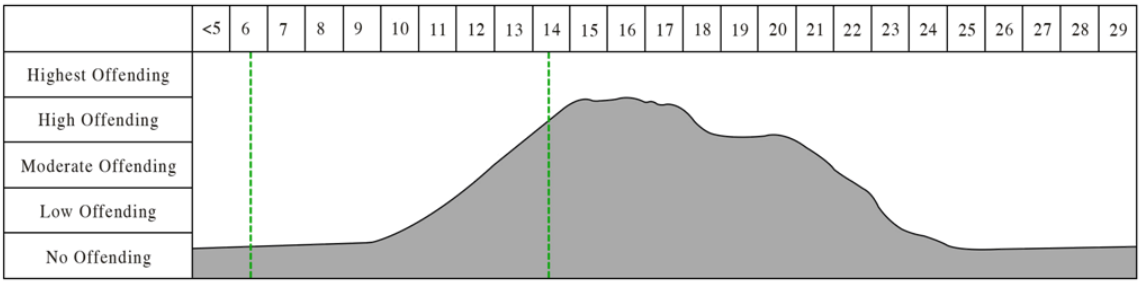
Fiona (D06)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Fiona described an early onset of problem behaviour which started around age 6 years and included thefts, stealing money from her parents, and lying to authority figures. However, this behaviour did not appear to be extremely deviant or atypical. In her teenage years, Fiona reported falling in with a bad crowd who encouraged her to skip school, engage in offending, and use substances. Her friend group was also composed of older male youth who would get the younger female youth to do drug runs on their behalf. She indicated that at the time she was unaware that she was a “drug dealer” and expressed that in hindsight this was dangerous behaviour. At this time, Fiona discussed how she wanted everyone to like her and that she valued her friendships and made poor choices in order to obtain and maintain friendships.

Fiona had one contact with police officials when she was caught at age 14 with a group of same aged peers stealing at the local mall. It appears that Fiona was not officially arrested for this offence, however, the school was contacted and Fiona received a week of detention and was kicked out of student council as a result of her involvement in the thefts.

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Fiona described that her desistance behaviours began around the time that she left high school when she was 17 years of age. She attributed this shift to no longer being in contact with her friends who were a negative influence in high school and to starting a

relationship with her first serious boyfriend. She reported engaging in more prosocial behaviour in her leisure time as a result of this relationship such as spending time doing outdoor activities. Fiona also discussed the importance of taking increasing responsibility over her life direction. She reported that in high school she did not have to think for herself because she would engage in whatever behaviours and choices her friends made. However, after high school she needed to decide what she wanted to do for herself and take ownership over those decisions.

In her early 20s, Fiona started to date a man who was reportedly a more negative influence on her and her risk behaviour increased. This relationship was short lived but resulted in Fiona becoming pregnant and her family encouraging her to marry the father of her child. This marriage lasted a couple of months and ended around the time of her daughter's birth. At this point, Fiona indicated that her offending and risky behaviour decreased substantially because "right when I had my daughter, it was like nope! That was it. You don't do anything stupid anymore." However, although she described that her daughter was a huge positive influence, she attributed this decrease in risk behaviour to increasing maturity and not solely to having her daughter. She described this maturity and shift in responsibilities as a constant presence which helps direct her behaviour in a positive direction.

Fiona's Current Functioning

Fiona is in a long term relationship with a common law partner. She works short term contracts for legal firms and was recently hired into a full time position. Fiona coaches her daughter's sports team and is an active member of parent groups connected to her daughter's activities.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Fiona received a score of 4 on the PCL-R placing her in the "low" psychopathy range, and a score of 6 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Georgia (D07)

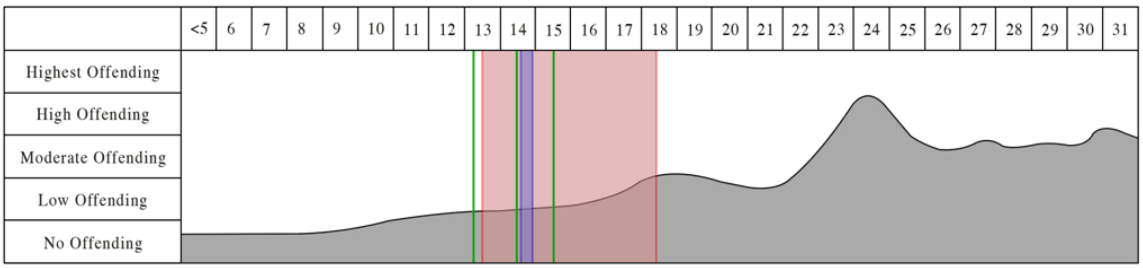
Description of Offending Behaviour

Georgia grew up in the foster care system in the Canadian prairies and was a permanent ward of the government. Georgia described starting to engage in antisocial behaviour such as skipping school and drug use when she was 7 to 8 years of age. During her early teenage years she began to sexually experiment and had her first child when she was 14 years of age, who she put up for adoption, and a second child who she kept when she was 18 years of age. She described a negative adolescence period that was marked by trauma, drug use, and offending.

Georgia reported first getting arrested when she was 13 on fraud charges when she ran out on paying her taxi fee. She was sent to a youth custody center and received her first probation term. She was arrested the second time for shoplifting when she was 14 while pregnant due to shoplifting and, spent two weeks in a custody center and was placed on another probation term. Georgia stated that she spent most of her teenage years on probation and that she acquired many new charges for breaching and failing to comply with her probation conditions. Georgia stated that her last official charge occurred when she was 18 years of age for a breach of probation.

Georgia reported an increase in offending behaviour over the past 5 months prior to the interview while she and her girlfriend were homeless. She reported that they would steal items for food and that she would encourage her girlfriend to offend, but that she was cautious to make sure that they only shoplifted when needed. Georgia did not view this behaviour as offending because they engaged in this behaviour out of necessity.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Georgia was inconsistent in the information she provided during the interview and was not able to provide clear explanations for her desistance. However, she attributed the times that she was "doing well" to peer influences, abstaining from substances, and having her daughter present in her life. She also briefly discussed wanting to change for her daughter and changes in her identity from a partier to a mother with responsibilities.

Georgia reported that her offending decreased after she had her youngest daughter. She stated that, "I did pretty good with my youngest. I stayed out of trouble for a long time. I started to relapse since she hasn't came home." Georgia reported that she was able to abstain from substances from the time she was 18 to 29, and that her substance use began to increase again after her daughter left her care to live with her father. Interestingly, although Georgia reported abstaining from substances, she reported still being actively engaged in offending behaviour during this time.

When queried about how she was able to stay out of the justice system, Georgia attributed this to good timing and that she was able to stay away from the police radar after she moved to the west coast and became unknown to the police in her new place of residence.

Georgia's Current Functioning

At the time of the interview, Georgia was living at an unlicensed recovery home with her girlfriend who she has been dating for the past 5 months. She described her girlfriend as a positive influence and that they help keep each other clean. She stated that she and her girlfriend had been homeless for the first 4 months of their relationship. Georgia reported that she does not have contact with either of her daughters, and that her youngest daughter does not want any contact with Georgia. Georgia also reported actively engaging in offending, although she has been able to remain absent from the justice system for over 13 years.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Georgia received a score of 24 on the PCL-R placing her in the "moderate" psychopathy range, and a score of 16 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

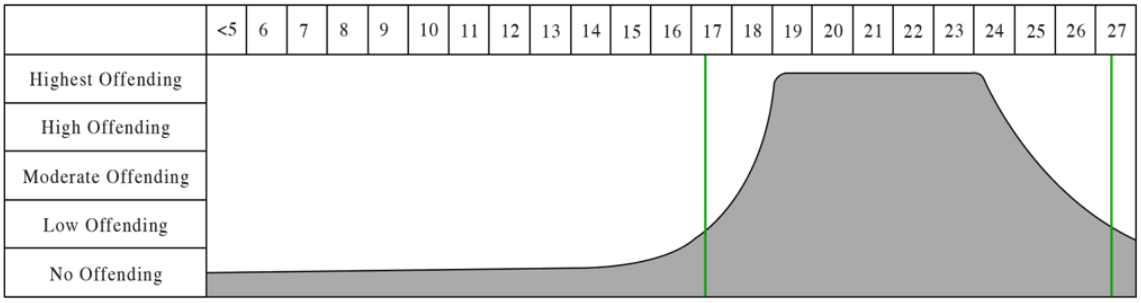
Henry (D08)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Henry described growing up on a small reserve that was fraught with drugs and violence. He described growing up as a “hood rat” and relayed that he was exposed to domestic violence when he was younger and had seen his step father beat up both his little brother and mother. He talked about growing up in a place where drug use, violence, offending, and other negative life styles were the norm and how that changed his perception of what was possible in his life. He told the interviewer that his two sisters were prostitutes and his biological father was currently serving time in jail for attempting to murder a prostitute and disposing of her body.

He described moving out at age 15 years to escape this violence and that he began to sell drugs in order to pay for his living expenses. Henry reported that his offending steadily increased from 15 to 19 years of age and that he was engaging in high frequency of offending, mostly trafficking, from 19 to 23 years of age He described engaging in offending as a way to support himself and show his family that he was successful by being able to give them money. Henry continued to offend regardless of whether he had legal employment.

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Henry had one desistance trajectory beginning at age 24 years, where his offending essentially ceased overnight, and was followed by 3 years of sustained desistance. He attributed this decrease to being caught under suspicion of trafficking. He talked about

how he was flagged at the USA-Canada border by a detection drug dog and was detained for 8 hours. He talked about how violated and helpless he felt and described being strip searched, filmed, and forced to provide the password to his phone for authorities to search. He indicated that he complied with this because he was travelling with his little brother and the border agents reportedly stated that he would be arrested and his little brother would need to find his own way home from the border. This event was highly publicized and all his friends and drug contacts became aware of his encounter with the border agents. He described how this experience caused him to lose his supply chain and customers because he became known in the community as a drug dealer.

Factors that reportedly helped Henry stay out of offending were his daughter and maturation. He described how his life changed when he had his daughter and how he wanted to be there for her and support her. He discussed how he is “not a kid anymore” and that he needs to start thinking of his responsibilities. He talked about the importance of considering his daughter in his decisions and that as he is getting older he is realizing that he can’t be selfish.

Henry’s Current Functioning

Henry is currently apprenticing in a trade and enjoys his employment, despite feeling that his income is too low to afford a decent quality of life. He has a one year old daughter who he loves with an ex-partner. His ex-girlfriend and mother of the child is a destabilizing influence for his offending behaviour. Henry reported engaging in positive recreational activities such as music and that he wants to make a change in his life such as traveling or moving to a new province. Henry also discussed how his social contacts and friends have disappeared since he stopped offending and that he feels socially isolated. He talked about how this causes him stress and makes him lonely.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Henry received a score of 24 on the PCL-R placing him in the “moderate” psychopathy range, and a score 14 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

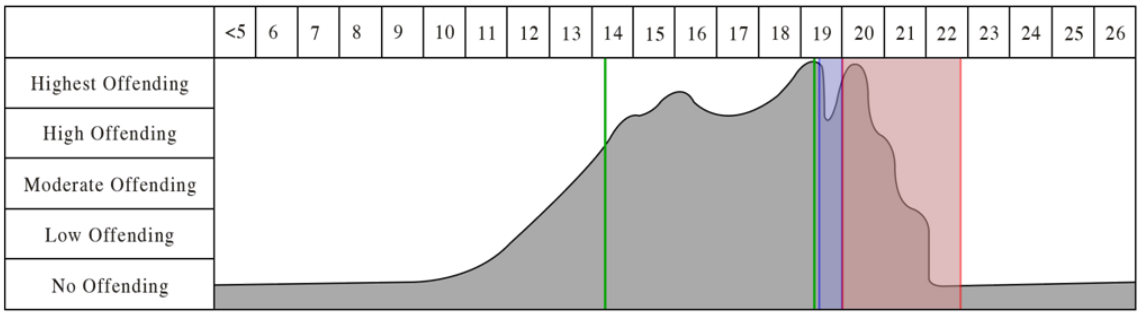
Ian (D09)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Ian reported engaging in substance use when he was in grade 9 and that he really enjoyed the feeling of being high. He reportedly got into a partying lifestyle and reported moving out on his own when he was age 15 after his parents caught him driving their van without a license to pick up girls. After he moved out, he began couch surfing and engaging in thefts from his place of employment to get money for rent and drugs. Most of his offending involved thefts, drug selling, and robberies conducted to obtain money for drugs. Ian also talked about the importance of romantic relationships in his offending cycle. He discussed how he in his late teens dated a “bad girl” who was also engaged in crime and offending. During this time, Ian engaged in more offending because she was encouraging of that lifestyle.

Ian was arrested when he was 19 for conducting an armed robbery. He described engaging in the robbery on his own in order to acquire money to buy crack. He was caught the same day, he pled guilty to the offence, and he served 3 months in custody plus 3 years on probation. This was his only formal offence although he did have two other police contacts. He reported that being in custody was not a pleasant experience but that his probation “was a joke really” because he was never breached or reprimanded despite not complying with his probation conditions.

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Ian reported a few periods where his offending behaviour dropped off. The first drop he attributed to moving back in with his parents and trying to get clean. The second time he reported battling depression and being in an out of psych wards. He described how when he was depressed, he did not offend because he did not have the energy to do so. The last drop in his offending took place over a number of stages which he attributed to his second round of intense substance abuse treatment.

Ian attributed his last period of desistance to receiving treatment for his substance addiction. He received treatment before through involuntary hospitalizations in the psychiatric ward and attending a residential treatment facility. However, he discussed how neither of these experiences helped him decrease his offending because he did not take the opportunity seriously and wasn't engaged in the treatment process. The final time Ian attended treatment, he discussed how it was his decision to attend and that he went about getting into the treatment independently. He discussed how when he was in treatment, he was younger than the other clients by roughly 20 years and that he did not want that life for himself. He was able to engage in treatment during this period, earned his GED, and applied to attend post-secondary education.

Ian reported a sustained desistance period over the past few years. He described that he was able to get out of substance use which then broke the cycle for why he was engaged in offending. He described internal changes in himself and his perception of the world around him. He talked about the importance of sharing his story and having social supports around him who could help him with his abstinence.

Ian's Current Functioning

At the time of the interview, Ian reported no new charges over the previous 7 years and that he had not engaged in illegal behaviour in 4 years. He was enrolled at a local university and working towards a bachelor's degree. He had been dating his current partner for 2 years and described her as a positive influence.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Ian received a score of 23 on the PCL-R placing him in the "moderate" psychopathy range, and a score of 10 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Jimmy (D10)

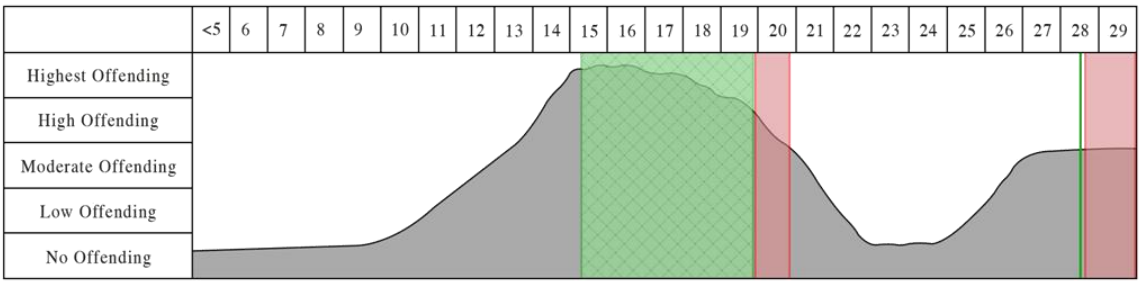
Description of Offending Behaviour

Jimmy described getting into offending behaviour when he was 15. He attributed this to getting into a “snowboarder” culture where he and his friends would do drugs and engage in reckless behaviour on the hills. His friends at this time were mostly composed of teenage drug dealers from middle class families. Within this group, Jimmy was provided opportunities to deal drugs and party while unsupervised by any parental figures. Jimmy also attributed his offending to dropping out of school at age 15. He described that before this time, he was in various extracurricular activities and that he lost this structure when he dropped out at the beginning of high school.

Jimmy experienced one resurgence period of offending behaviour following a 3 year period of maintained desistance. He attributed this period of offending to getting drunk and not controlling his temper. Although he was vague with the details of the offence, it appears that substance use, anger management problems, and being in a toxic romantic relationship were factors in this offence.

Jimmy reported experiencing two periods of probation. Once when he was 20 and another time when he was 27. Jimmy did not feel that his probation experiences impacted his offending behaviour.

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Jimmy reported experiencing one period of failed desistance. He attributed his desistance to “snapping out of it” but was unable to explain what caused him to have this

cognitive shift. He linked his desistance to his period of probation and explained that he did not want to go to jail. Around this time Jimmy described moving to Winnipeg and that he got into boxing and other sports which taught him “self discipline” and structured his free time.

Jimmy got his GED and registered in a variety of different schooling programs for various trades and occupations. Although he did not complete any of these training opportunities, he described that school and work were huge factors in helping him to get out of offending for a few years because he wanted to be a “legit honest guy.” He described experiencing a shift in priorities and that he became aware that a criminal record would impair his ability to get employment in his desired line of work. He also described getting his anger issues under control and that he would try to “not sweat the small stuff” and engage in positive stress relief when angered such as going to the gym.

Throughout the interview, Jimmy did not discuss his son or romantic relationships, however, once prompted Jimmy described trying to turn his life around and to make better decisions in order to support his son. Jimmy appears to be experiencing many setbacks to this goal at this time.

Jimmy’s Current Functioning

Jimmy is currently on probation and has been for the past 1.5 years for an assault charge. He has a one year old son but does not have any contact with his child because he reports that the mother of the child does not want him around their son. Jimmy is currently in school through a local Native education institute and is hoping to move to one of the Maritime Provinces to work for a Band in that region.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Jimmy received a score of 18 on the PCL-R placing him in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 9 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

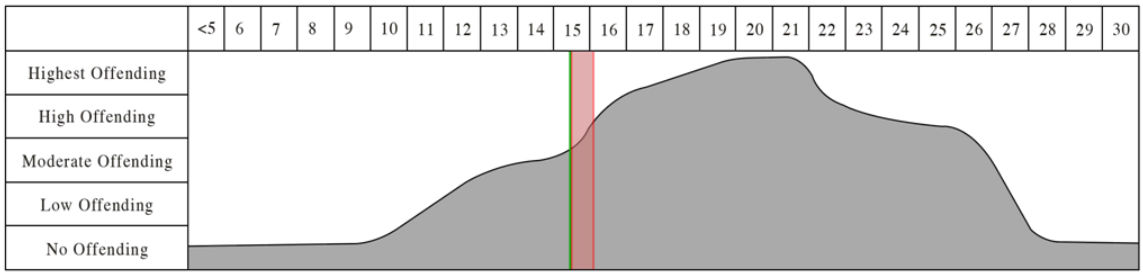
Keith (D11)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Keith reported that after his parents' divorce, he moved to the Canadian prairies and started to get into drugs and partying. He began to sell marijuana in grade 10 and started to engage in graffiti with a group of friends around the same time. Keith described how he was not good at selling marijuana because he was not surreptitious, and was arrested at his high school. He stated that he was expelled from his school and received alternative measures through the court system. Around this time, he moved into his father's care who was extremely lenient which allowed time for Keith to experiment with harder drugs and other delinquent activities.

In late high school, Keith reported engaging in vandalism and low level fraud activities where he and his friends would return items to stores that they had not purchased (e.g., CDs, TVs, BBQ) with fraudulent receipts. Around this time, Keith described being fascinated with "smart criminals" and that he wanted to be a "criminal mastermind." Following high school, Keith was homeless and began to experience panic attacks. During this time, he stole from grocery stores to feed himself and eventually connected with two males through work who ran a grow-op and hired him to trim plants and do general yard work for them.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Keith discussed how he stopped engaging in fraud because he was caught by a sales clerk for returning an item that he did not buy. He said that this experience changed his perceptions. At this point, he realized that he was not a criminal mastermind as he

desired. Although Keith stopped engaging in fraud, he was still engaged in shoplifting and vandalism. Keith began to feel guilty about his offending and started to experience anxiety and panic attacks. Eventually, Keith moved out to BC when he was 20 and obtained a job in construction. He enjoyed this experience but indicated that he did not have much talent for this type of work, so he began to save up money and applied to go to post-secondary in a liberal arts program.

Keith reported enjoying college and that it helped him see that he was smart and capable, despite his poor performance in high school. Although he was still engaged in some antisocial behaviour, college was reportedly a period of positive change for Keith. During this period, he met his mentor, a friend of his mother, who encouraged Keith to attend NA/AA meetings. Keith also described the importance of his romantic relationship and mentioned the positive impact of his girlfriend, who gave him stability.

Keith attributed his maintained desistance to maturing and internal factors such as changed values and identity. He talked about the increased risk associated with offending as an adult and how he has built a lot of social capital and does not want to lose it by offending. He also talked about the role of NA and his mentor in helping him keep his life in order. Keith discussed the role of insight and planning in helping him stay out of offending as well as the importance of his family.

Keith's Current Functioning

At the time of the interview, Keith has been sober for the past two months. Keith is a substitute teacher in a suburban community and enjoys his work. He lives with his long - term girlfriend whom he reports is a positive influence on him and has regular contact with his NA mentor. Keith has not had any official justice system contact for approximately 15 years.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Keith received a score of 15 on the PCL-R placing him in the "low" psychopathy range, and a score of 1 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Leon (D12)

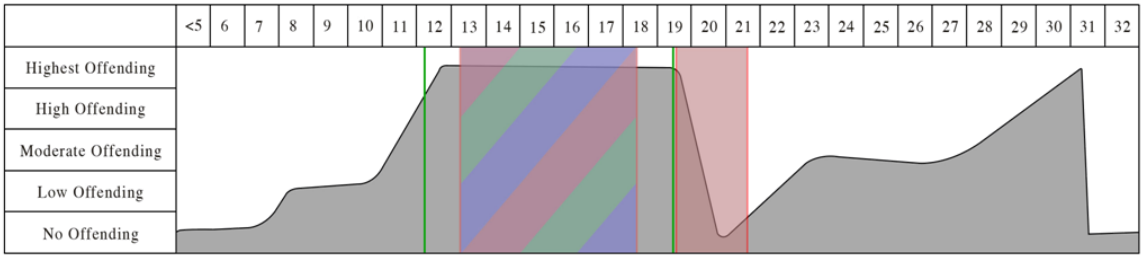
Description of Offending Behaviour

Leon reported being adopted at age 5 years into a family with a physically abusive maternal figure. During this time, Leon described engaging in negative behaviours from age 6 to 10 because he thought that if he was “bad enough” they would send him back to live with his biological family. Leon was moved from the foster home system to group homes at age 13. He recalled sneaking out of the homes and sleeping on the streets with other homeless youth. They would engage in crime together such as stealing cars as a way to “survive” and “have fun”. He discussed how he enjoyed learning how to commit various offences like car thefts because he was bored. During his teenage years, Leon reported going in and out of custody centers. He was often put in maximum security but that overall the experience “seemed like just another group home.”

Leon started engaging in shoplifting at a young age and was first arrested for it at age 12 years. He stated that he was arrested and charged more regularly at age 13-14 years and had accrued over 30 individual charges during his adolescence for break and enters, car thefts, drug charges, and assaults. During this time, he also had over 10 incarcerations which ranged between 1 and 6 months in length.

After a brief desistance period, Leon reported that his offending began to increase again from age 21 to 30 years of age. He attributed this to engaging in drug sales and shoplifting as a means to acquire money to finance his life. He described that “even when I was working, I was still trying to make a dollar.” This was linked to his relationship with his wife who managed their finances and constantly asked him to bring home more and more money.

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Leon discussed how his offending declined sharply when he was around 18-19 years of age in response to seeing his friends experience serious negative repercussions to their high risk lifestyles. Leon reported moving back in with his adoptive father when he was 18 in order to go back to school. During this time, his ex-girlfriend, who was a prosocial influence, became involved in his life and started to encourage him to go to school and would help facilitate him going to school. He found having someone believe in him to be very motivating and it helped him see himself differently.

Around this time when Leon was 19, he reported receiving a conditional discharge order for being caught with marijuana in his car. Following this event, his offending behaviour reportedly desisted because he was worried about becoming an adult offender and did not want to "screw up" his life. Leon moved an 8 hour drive away from his home town and obtained a labour job. After sustaining an injury, Leon went on Employment Insurance and was able to take advantage of one of their programs to do job retraining. He was able to get training for a job in health care and worked at this employment for a number of years before switching into working in the social services.

Leon attributed his most recent desistance period to separating from his wife of 7 years. He explained how during the relationship he was engaged in offending in order to acquire money. Eventually, he lost his house because his wife had not been paying their mortgage, as he had assumed, and they ended their relationship. Once this relationship ended, Leon could get by with the money he brought in legally through his employment.

Leon's Current Functioning

Leon is currently employed in the social service sector. He appears to enjoy this work and finds that bonding and working with at risk youth is rewarding. Leon is separated from his wife and is living on his own. He described being socially isolated and that he does not do much beyond work and hanging out at home with his dogs.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Leon received a score of 14 on the PCL-R placing him in the "low" psychopathy range, and a score of 10 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

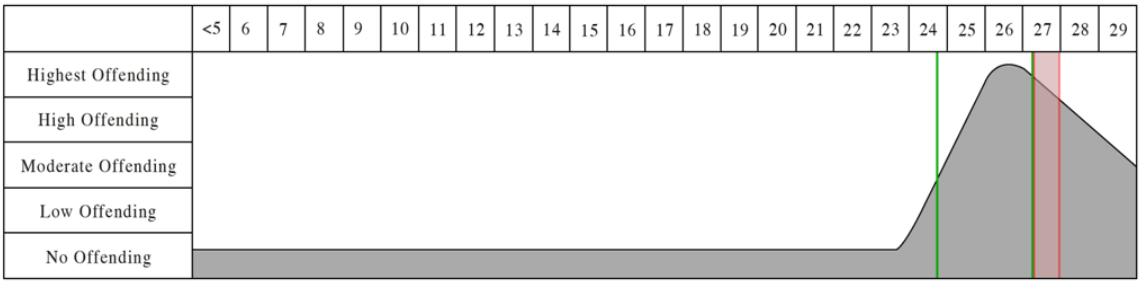
Marcus (D13)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Marcus reported engaging in shoplifting and trespassing when he was around 6 years of age, but that he did not begin offending in earnest until his mid-20s. His offending mostly consisted of fraud and theft, which he attributed to needing money to "survive." He described experiencing a number of financial stressors including going to university and not being able to work due to injuries he sustained from three car accidents which occurred between ages 26-27 years of age. He talked about the stress related to seeing his debt accumulate while he was enrolled at university and taking longer to complete his degree than desired due to injuries from his car accident. However, during this time Marcus also reported living rent-free at his parents' home, that his parents paid for most of his post-secondary education up until he was 26, and that his injuries from the car accident were mostly soft tissue damage.

Marcus reported two official police contacts. The first resulted from shoplifting from a large department store, after which he was banned from the store but no official charges were laid. The second offence involved a fraud charge, which Marcus insists he did not do, and resulted in a one year probation period.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Marcus reported experiencing one desistance trajectory, but he has yet to achieve desistance or maintain a low level of offending for any length of time. He did not have much insight into the causes of his offending or his desistance stating that "I never

wanted to engage in offending behavior. It was just out of necessity so now that I don't have to do it, you know, I can sort of get out of it and not offend."

Marcus discussed the importance of his girlfriend in his desistance. He reported meeting her around age 27 and that she asked him to not engage in offending behaviour anymore. He stated that "shame is a major deterrence" and worries about disappointing her. Another factor that appears to be important for Marcus is his future orientation. At the time of the interview he was planning to become a teacher. He stated wanting to have "integrity" as a teacher and that he needed to desist so that he wouldn't have a "double life."

Marcus's Current Functioning

Marcus is currently in the last semester of his teaching degree which has taken him 7 years to acquire. He is not employed and is physically restricted due to soft tissue injuries related to his car accidents. Marcus described suffering from anxiety and depression following his accidents and that he now suffers from chronic pain. Marcus has a long term girlfriend and currently lives with his parents.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Marcus received a score of 17 on the PCL-R placing him in the "moderate" psychopathy range, and a score of 5 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Nico (D14)

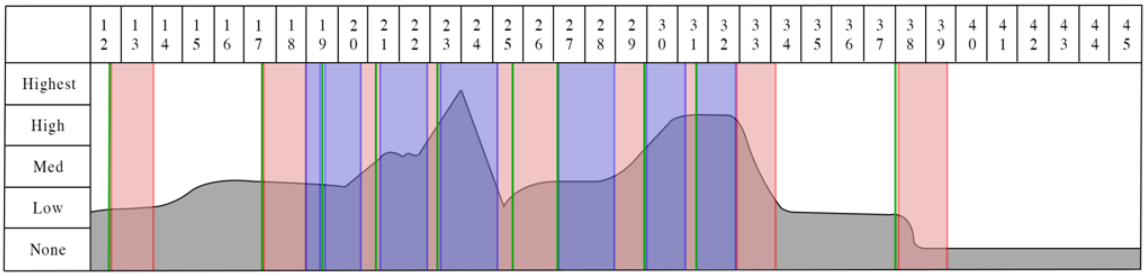
Description of Offending Behaviour

Nico first offended at age 12 which he connected to negative peer influences and boredom. His offending increased at 14 years age after his parents' divorce and his mother went on social assistance. This created financial needs and Nico began to steal and sell drugs in order to bring money into the household. Although he was on probation, his mother supported his drug dealing and would help him facilitate sales. Nico also began to use drugs around age 12 and described being fascinated by them. He described being extremely forward with his drug sales when he was a teenager because he knew the police "weren't about to catch me" as he was a youth offender.

During his 20s, Nico reported becoming involved in a gang as an enforcer and that he would be sent out on retribution calls in order to pay off his drug debt to the gang. Nico was sentenced to one year in jail as an adult during which Nico reported becoming "bitter" towards the justice system. From this point onwards, Nico reported being in and out of incarceration. Following a brief desistance period, Nico described getting back into offending after re-connecting with a friend from the penitentiary, and that at this point his drug and alcohol use began to "take over everything." Nico reported that he was sentenced to 3.5 years in jail for a home invasion and that he was in and out of incarceration during this time for incurring breaches to his parole.

Eventually, Nico reported that his offending peaked for a final time when he was 32 years of age. He linked this to his time living in Vancouver and being homeless on the Downtown East Side. He described this point in his life as his "rock bottom" and that he would engage in petty offences such as shoplifting in order to acquire drugs.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Nico's first period of reduced offending occurred after he completed his third custody sentence when he was 22 years of age. He reported that he began to date a woman who was a positive influence and he signed up for a course in hotel and resort management at the local college. He described difficulties navigating the welfare system and trying to get enough money to pay for the course and his rent throughout the 9 months of the course, and that this ultimately resulted in a resurgence in offending.

Nico described his second period of desistance when he was 32 years of age. He indicated at this point in his life that he was homeless and living on the Downtown East Side of Vancouver. Nico stated that he finally left this area when he was 37 years old and began to take his sobriety seriously because he realized that there was a good chance that he would die if he did not try to change his life. He described the importance of internal changes and internal drives in helping him desist and take control of his life.

Nico described attending a treatment group that "completely changed [his] life" because this new group framed alcoholism in a manner that matched Nico's perceptions of his own substance abuse experience. After Nico addressed his substance addiction, he spoke about the importance of his work with fellow addicts and the importance of giving back and supplying "hope" to his clients at a local homeless shelter as contributing to his desistance. He described enjoying his work and feeling good about himself in his role. He also discussed the role of his daughter in keeping him from offending and how he once again has support from his family to help him maintain his desistance.

Nico's Current Functioning

Nico is currently working full time at a men's homeless shelter and lives independently. He is currently in family court fighting for custody of his daughter and his step daughter against his ex-girlfriend, who is also a recovering addict. Nico does volunteer work and sponsors many ex-addicts through his AA/NA chapter.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Nico received a score of 32 on the PCL-R placing him in the "high" psychopathy range, and a score of 18 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Ophelia (D15)

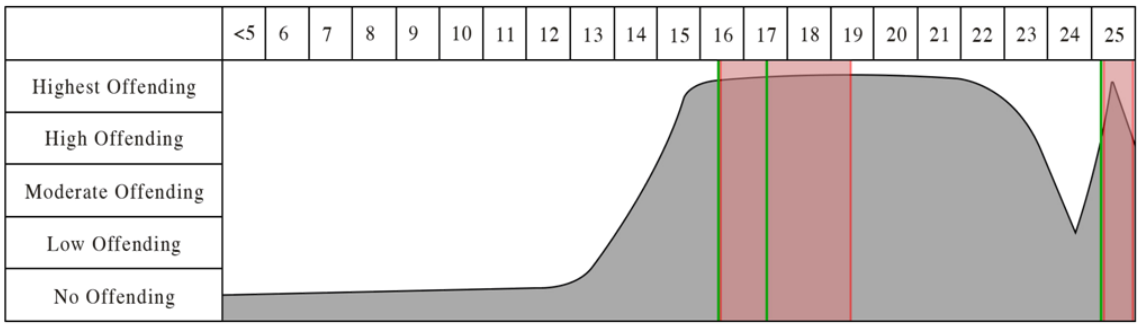
Description of Offending Behaviour

Ophelia described that she started to engage in criminal behaviour around age 12-13 which consisted mostly of shoplifting. She attributed her onset in this behaviour to her relationship with her step father who labeled her as an offender. Ophelia reported that she felt that if she was getting into trouble for stealing when she wasn't, then she might as well engage in thefts because that was expected of her.

Ophelia reported falling into a bad crowd and beginning to engage in drug use when she was in her mid-teens. The need to support her drug habit caused her to engage in credit card fraud when she was 15-16 years of age. Ophelia reports that she was caught by police for this offence and was given 2 years of probation. Around this time, Ophelia was expelled from her mainstream school, moved into a friend's house, and began to attend an alternative school. She described how this was not a positive time in her life because she was surrounded by negative peers who were encouraging of offending.

When Ophelia was around age 18, she got into the escort business because she felt it was a fast way to acquire money to pay for her expensive lifestyle. During this time, Ophelia reported that she was using "a lot of crack and heroin" and that she was dating her drug dealer. During this time, she was engaged in both sex work and robbing her clients. A month prior to the interview, Ophelia reported that she offended following a 3 year desistance period. She explained that this occurred as a result of her getting fired from her job and that she could not cope with the threat to her prosocial identity and reverted back to negative coping practices.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Ophelia reported that her offending behaviour began to decline when she was around age 22 years. She described that she was injured at the gym which made it impossible for her to do her work as an escort. At this time, she was put on bed rest for 3 months and resided with her grandmother. She acquired legal employment at a law firm which she viewed as stabilizing because it structured her time and provided a steady income.

Ophelia was able to maintain her desistance for a few years because she started to view her life and her behaviour differently. She explained that "the life that I was living wasn't congruent with the goals that I wanted in the future. Like within my Party life, I wanted to leave that behind." It appears that during this time Ophelia was working 6 days a week, partying infrequently, and had increased contact with her mother and grandmother.

At the time of the interview, Ophelia was in a desistance phase of her offending cycle. She attributed this to her experience in jail and that she did not want to breach her bail and be sent back to custody. She expressed her fear that if she was sent back to jail that she would become a "career criminal." She reported that her mother had stepped in to take a more active role in supervising her activities and had restricted Ophelia's access to her own money in an attempt to cut off her supply of drugs.

Ophelia's Current Functioning

She is currently out on bail and awaiting trial. It appears that Ophelia is still using drugs and interacting with negative peer influences. However, she is employed and has social support from her mother and grandmother. She is experiencing a number of stressors such as the impending trial and the controlling nature of her mother. Despite the presence of risk factors, Ophelia is maintaining her desistance largely due to fear of breaching her bail and losing her employment.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Ophelia received a score of 21 on the PCL-R placing her in the "moderate" psychopathy range, and a score of 10 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

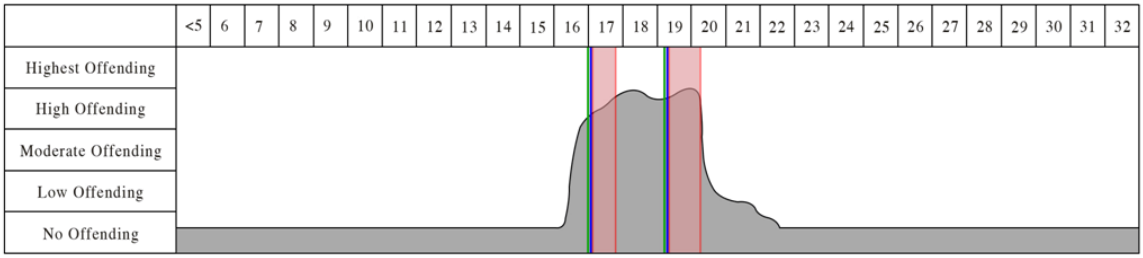
Percy (D16)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Percy attributed getting into offending to his mother and father's parenting style. He stated that they originated from rural China and that his parents were very emotionally closed off from him and that they would not provide him with an allowance or buy him items that he desired. He described beginning to engage in shoplifting to "rebel against social norms" which he linked to his "emotional trauma" and "PTSD" connected to his upbringing and societal pressures. He stated that he began to engage in offending at age 16 years as a result of his "rebellious nature." Percy also talked about the importance of peer pressure in his early offending behaviour.

Percy was first arrested for shoplifting when he was 17 years of age. He described getting extrajudicial sanctions and that he was required to do community service hours and write an apology letter as part of his sentence. He stated that this experience did not dissuade him from offending, and that he continued to seek for the "easy way out" and was caught shoplifting when he was 19, which resulted in an official conviction on his adult record. For this offence, he received a period of probation and more community service hours.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Percy views himself as an extremely spiritual and emotional person. At various points throughout the interview, Percy described himself as an "empath," "emotionally mature," and "spiritual." When discussing his desistance, he put a great deal of focus on to his change in identity and realizing how he wanted to live his own life.

His offending decreased when he was 20 which he connected to getting caught by police. Around this time, Percy described attending his first yoga class and learning about the spiritual world. He discussed the importance of karma, and that he began to worry that he was going to get negative experiences out of his life because he was engaged in negative behaviours. He also described the importance of dealing with the "trauma" related to his Asian "cultural upbringing" which made him feel "small and worthless."

Although Percy focused much of the interview on his internal changes, it appears that around this time he had also secured employment and had experienced changes in his friendship network where he wasn't in contact with the friends with whom he would offend. He also described that his drug use started to decrease around this time following some of his "spiritual awakenings."

Percy linked his maintained desistance to seeing a psychic who told him that he was destined for "great things" and that he would help people. He cited the role of spiritualism in his maintenance of desistance as "throughout this, I was connected to the part of me inside that knows I want to be a better person and I knew this goes counter to it. At some point, I realized that I do want to be a good person so therefore, it helped me let go of those habits or that wanting to get things for free."

Percy's Current Functioning

Percy is currently married and is in a supportive and fulfilling relationship. He does not appear to work, and discussed concerns regarding his finances which he blamed on the Vancouver housing market. Percy does have a yoga teacher training certificate but stated that he has social anxiety which makes it difficult for him to teach classes.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Percy received a score of 20 on the PCL-R placing him in the "moderate" psychopathy range, and a score of 9 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Quinn (D17)

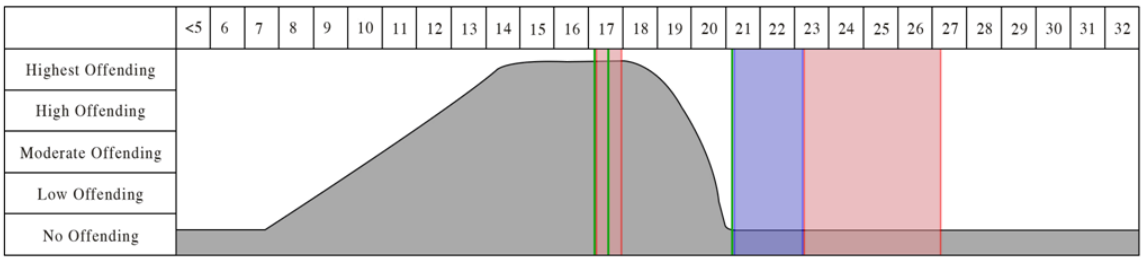
Description of Offending Behaviour

Quinn described starting to engage in shoplifting when she was around 7 years of age with her female cousin. She lived in a low income family where they did not have the means to buy clothing or food so her cousin taught her how to steal to get things that she needed to survive, like winter boots and food. She also described the importance of her peer relationship in her offending, in that from 7-14 years of age she would surround herself with similar people to herself and she would encourage others to engage in antisocial activity as her cousin had done to her.

From age 14 onwards, Quinn described staying far from her home and couch surfing at her friends' homes or, once she began to date, at her boyfriends' homes. During this time, she began to engage in drug experimentation. She recounted not enjoying drug use since it would give her panic attacks or cause her to fall asleep when engaged in other activities. Despite engaging in risky behaviours from a young age, Quinn was arrested for the first time at age 17 and was required to do three months of community service.

Eventually Quinn moved into a one-bedroom housing situation with a large group of offenders and drug addicts. She recounted how her roommates came up with a plan to rob a jewelry store and that Quinn was involved in surveying the store and picking out the money and items that they would steal. She stated that out of the group only she and one other youth were caught and sentenced to jail time. She attributed engaging in this offence to needing money, peer influence, and not thinking for herself.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Quinn linked her desistance to getting caught for participating in the robbery of a jewelry store. Quinn pled guilty to the offence and served 15 months federal jail time. Quinn spoke positively about her experience in jail, describing a close community and being taken care of by the other inmates who taught her how to haggle and barter. Quinn recalled that the friendships she experienced in jail were a huge change from the ones she had while she was offending because they treated her with respect. While in jail, she also "found God" and engaged in reflection about how to progress in her life.

Quinn stated that, "I never actually was stable in my life until after I got out of jail." After her parole ended, Quinn moved provinces and took advantage of a retraining program offered by Employment Insurance. During this time, Quinn reported volunteering at her church and in the community to give back because she was getting money from the government to go to school. Once her school was done, Quinn secured employment at a law firm which she described as an important experience for her development.

Quinn eventually quit her employment due to anxiety and enrolled at a local university and started to take psychology and criminology courses. She described that during this time the factors keeping her out of offending were the stability in her life that resulted from finding a boyfriend who was reliable, going to school, and working. Social influences were also very important for Quinn in maintaining her desistance. When asked what helps her stay out of offending, Quinn replied that "it all comes down to who you want to be. You have to make a choice."

Quinn's Current Functioning

Quinn is living independently and is in her second year of university. She has had a long term boyfriend for the past 5 years who she describes as "the one," because he has yet to cheat on her. Quinn describes herself as always friendly and that she tries to help other people in whatever manner she can even if it is at her detriment. Quinn described suffering from anxiety and that is limiting her ability to be employed and also suffering physical health issues.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Quinn received a score of 14 on the PCL-R placing her in the "low" psychopathy range, and a score of 13 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

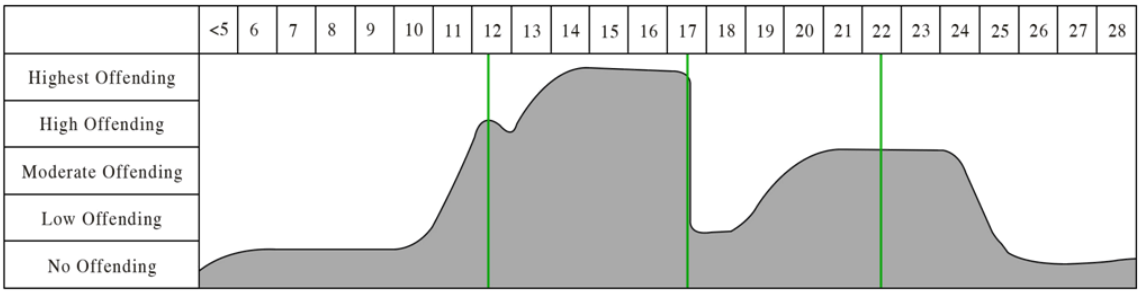
Rita (D18)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Rita attributed her offending to poor coping in response to her parents' divorce. She found this period emotionally confusing and stated she was frustrated she could not talk about her emotions with her family members or any of her friends. Rita reported that she dropped out of her pre-international baccalaureate program, began to skip school, and began getting into physical fights with other students. She described having a short temper and that she would resort to physical violence to "get my point across." When she was 14, she reported getting expelled and switched to another high school which caused her offending behaviour to get worse because she began to experiment with drug use and had unsupervised lunch hours with "toxic" friends. Rita moved out of her parental home when she was 15 years of age and in to an apartment that she shared with her boyfriend who was 6 years her senior. Rita's child care worker reportedly did not like Rita's boyfriend and convinced Rita to move into a shared living situation under a Youth Agreement with a young female ex-heroin addict.

In regards to official offending, Rita described three separate incidents where she was interrogated or arrested by the police. The first incident occurred when she was 12 years of age and accidentally burnt down a local playground while playing with fire with some of her male friends. The second incident occurred when she was arrested for shop lifting when she was 17 years of age. The third incident occurred when she was arrested at 22 years of age when she was pulled over for a traffic violation and the police found marijuana in her car. None of the incidents resulted in official charges or convictions.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Rita reported that her offending behaviour dropped off when she was entering grade 12. She reported that immediately prior to this period she was living with an ex-heroin addict and that this roommate and "her friends came to where I was living and literally like beat the shit out of me. Yeah like it ... really traumatic." She stated that she tried to move back in with her parents but they refused to let her return to the household and instead sent her to live with her cousin. She indicated that her cousin was a "pretty good role model" and that through his influence and support she put her life back together.

Rita described that this period allowed her to reduce her offending and risky behaviour for about a year. She stated that eventually her cousin told her parents to take her back into their home. Rita attributed family support during this phase as hugely influential in helping her exit out of her high risk lifestyle.

Rita's final desistance period at age 24 was attributed to breaking up with her long term boyfriend. She discussed how after the breakup of this relationship, she was able to focus on herself and to increase the stability in her life in terms of employment, friendships, and leisure time activities. Two years after this time, she and her boyfriend got back together with no negative effects on her offending. She discussed how he matured during their time apart and that she became more independent.

Rita's Current Functioning

Rita has not engaged in offending for approximately 4 years and has had no justice system involvement for 6 years. She is currently living with her long-term boyfriend and works full time in finance. She described having a few close friends and that she engages in regular exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Rita received a score of 8 on the PCL-R placing her in the "low" psychopathy range, and a score of 5 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Stacy (D19)

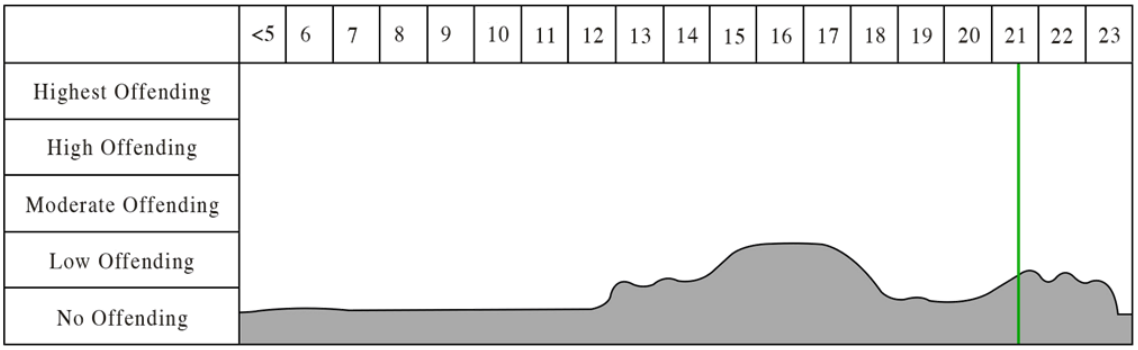
Description of Offending Behaviour

Stacy began to offend when she was around 12 years of age and that her offending primarily consisted of thefts and shoplifting. She reported that her offending began because she was “bored” and because she wanted “pretty clothes.” She recalled enjoying offending and that it was “kind of exciting and easy so it’s very much, what do they call it, opportunistic.” Stacy stated that around 15-16 years of age, she got into fashion and her stealing increased in order to get materials that she could alter and piece together into new garments. She described stealing from a local thrift store so much that she decided to apply there for a job when she was 16 years of age.

Stacy reported that she met her partner when she was 18 years of age and that her parents did not approve of him. Stacy stated that she moved out with her partner when she was 18 without her parents’ knowledge and got pregnant after he convinced her that it was a good idea. She described that she does not regret having a child at 19 years of age, but that it resulted in her dropping out of university and the creation of additional financial stressors and that her offending started to increase again around age 20 when she began to steal food and other items for her daughter.

In regards to formal contacts with police, Stacy reported that she was arrested once by transit police for not buying a ticket and for telling off the police officer. Stacy stated that although she has not been arrested for any other offences, her partner has been arrested for a number of offences that they engaged in together.

Participant’s Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Stacy reported that her offending went down when she was around 18, primarily due to starting university and getting away from her parental home. She described that her home was a “toxic” environment and that her mother was manipulative and a “dragon mother” who caused Stacy stress and to feel destabilized. In addition, she stated that her desistance was connected to her schooling because she was busy with friendships, university, work, and engaging in hobbies like sewing and reading. She stated that she was happy at this stage in her life and felt positively since she moved out of her parental home and was exploring this new stage of her life.

Since having her daughter and moving in with her partner in her late teens, Stacy discussed the importance of her romantic relationship in keeping her offending down. She also discussed the double edged impact of having a child on her offending and desistance because “I can’t get caught ever so I’ll just refrain because of that. But at the same time, yeah I got to feed (my daughter) sometimes.”

Stacy’s Current Functioning

Stacy is currently living with her partner and daughter in a basement suite in Vancouver. She is unemployed and does not have any financial support from her parents. Stacy dropped out after her first year to raise her daughter and does not appear to have any plans to go back to university in the near future.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Stacy received a score of 18 on the PCL-R placing her in the “low” psychopathy range, and a score of 5 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

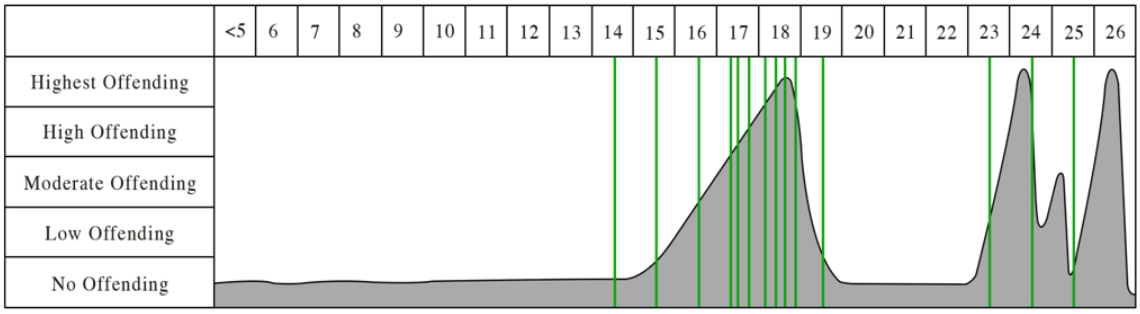
Tiffany (D20)

Description of Offending Behaviour

Tiffany reported experiencing a turbulent childhood where she was abandoned by her father and sexually abused by a few of her mother's boyfriends. She described getting into drugs at a young age as a way of coping with the abuse. Tiffany reported that her offending behaviour peaked when she was around 18 years old, a few months after she was assaulted by one of her high school friends. She attributed her offending behaviour to being bullied because it was tightly linked to her drug use which was then linked to her offending cycle. While offending, she was engaged in drug use and was involved in an antisocial peer circle that encouraged her risky behaviours. Following a desistance period which lasted a few years, Tiffany reported re-engaging in offending behaviour after she relapsed into substance abuse following her aunt's death.

In regards to official contact with the legal system, Tiffany described first being caught for offending when she was 9 years of age when her brother stole chocolate bars from a grocery and they were caught by security. She stated that she was arrested 11 times between the ages of 14 and 18, and has been arrested about once a year from age 23 years to present. She indicated that although she has had 15 arrests, she has never been convicted of any offence which she attributed to having a family lawyer who is employed by her uncle who is a high ranking member of a well known gang. Most of Tiffany's offences involved fraud, thefts, arson, and drug sales.

Participant's Subjective Offending and Desistance Trajectory



Description of Desistance Periods

Tiffany reported experiencing her first desistance period at age 18 years. She attributed this to changes in her future orientation and realizing that she was not on a life path that she desired. Tiffany recalled that getting clean was an extremely difficult process for her. Also at this time, Tiffany reported cutting ties with her negative peer group and that in order to facilitate this, she had a rumour started that she had been shot and had died. She reportedly felt this rumour was necessary to ensure that her friends did not try to re-contact her and so that she would not be tempted to return to the group.

Tiffany reported staying out of offending behaviour for a few years from 20 to 23 years of age due to fear of going to jail. She also relayed that she had become suicidal in her early 20s and did not have the energy or the mental acuity to engage in offending behaviour.

Tiffany reported relapsing after her aunt's death and that this combined with the fact that she ran out of money due to gambling caused her to re-engage in offending such as fraud around age 23 years of age. Over the past 4 years, Tiffany reported experiencing many fluctuations in her offending behaviour. She attributes this to her gambling addiction and engaging in offending to acquire funds to use at the casino. Her offending decreased substantially at one point because she was banned from all casinos in BC for a year, following an experience where she was caught on camera with items belonging to another casino patron. At present, Tiffany reports staying out of offending to create a normal home for her fiancé to return to once he is released from custody.

Tiffany's Current Functioning

Tiffany has been engaged for the past 6 months to a man who is currently in remand awaiting trial for a crime that Tiffany is adamant that he did not commit. Tiffany reported often lying to her partner and manipulating him to test his love for her. In addition, she reported experiencing health problems and has been going to frequent doctor's appointments which is causing her a great deal of stress and financial strain.

In regards to formal risk ratings, Tiffany received a score of 27 on the PCL-R placing her in the "moderate" psychopathy range, and a score of 13 on the HCR-20 Historical scale.

Appendix F.

Mind Map Created During Theme Analysis