

**DESISTANCE IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: THE  
ROLES OF MARRIAGE, MILITARY, AND GENDER**

An Honors Fellows Thesis

by

JESSICA HOLLEY

Submitted to the Honors Programs Office  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

April 2011

Majors: Sociology and Psychology

**DESISTANCE IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: THE  
ROLES OF MARRIAGE, MILITARY, AND GENDER**

An Honors Fellows Thesis

by

JESSICA HOLLEY

Submitted to the Honors Programs Office  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

Approved by:

Research Advisor:

Associate Director of the Honors Programs Office:

Holly Foster

Dave A. Louis

April 2011

Majors: Sociology and Psychology

## ABSTRACT

Desistance in the Transition to Adulthood: The Roles of Marriage, Military, and Gender.  
(April 2011)

Jessica Holley  
Department of Sociology  
Texas A&M University

Research Advisor: Dr. Holly Foster  
Department of Sociology

Research is needed on desistance from crime using samples of males and females. Through the use of three waves of the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health) data which represents a diverse and contemporary sample, this thesis investigates the effects of social bonds including marriage and military enlistment on desistance from delinquency. Analyses use survey adjusted Ordinary Least Squares Regression and Logistic Regression change score models. Analyses are first conducted on the combined sample, and then similarities and differences in social bonds on changes in delinquency are examined across gender sub-samples. Drawing on Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control, I examine whether the social bonds found in marriage and military involvement decrease delinquency over time. My results revealed that in the whole sample, marriage lead to desistance but military enlistment did not. When analyzed by gender, marriage was significantly related to desistance in males, not females, and that difference was found to be significant. In addition, military enlistment was found to lead to females desisting from crime, but it

was not associated with male desistance. This thesis extended Sampson and Laub's theory in that it found marriage decreases delinquency in males from a contemporary sample. However, Sampson and Laub theorized military decreasing delinquency as well. My thesis did not support that. In future research, the effects of military enlistment on desistance should be studied in a larger sample. In addition, the mechanisms in a marital relationship that lead to desistance should be investigated.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without the help of Dr. Holly Foster, who served as my advisor. Through weekly meetings and several edits, she challenged me and pushed me further than I thought was possible. I am indebted to the Psychology and Sociology Departments of Texas A&M University who provided me with funding to present this thesis at the Southwestern Social Science Association's annual meeting. I also wish to thank my friends and family who constantly encouraged me through this process.

This research uses data from Add Health, a program project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Information on how to obtain the Add Health data files is available on the Add Health website (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>). No direct support was received from grant P01-HD31921 for this analysis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT .....		iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....		v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....		vi
LIST OF TABLES .....		viii
CHAPTER		
I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II	LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
	Introduction .....	5
	Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control .....	5
	Women and crime .....	10
	Marriage .....	15
	Military enlistment .....	21
	Hypothesis .....	28
III	METHODOLOGY .....	29
	Introduction .....	29
	Data .....	29
	Methods .....	31
	Measures.....	31
	Analyses .....	35
IV	RESULTS.....	36
	Descriptive statistics.....	36
	Effects of military enlistment and marriage on changes in delinquency .....	38
	Effects of military enlistment and marriage on high delinquent behavior .....	41
	Effects of military enlistment and marriage on delinquent behavior by gender .....	45
V	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	50

	Page
Introduction .....	50
Discussion .....	51
Study strengths and limitations .....	61
Future research aims.....	62
REFERENCES.....	64
CONTACT INFORMATION .....	68

**LIST OF TABLES**

TABLE	Page
1 Descriptive Statistics .....	37
2 Survey Adjusted OLS Regression of Changes in Delinquent Behavior (Wave 3) on Marital Status, Military Involvement, and Controls .....	39
3 Survey Adjusted Logistic Regression of High Delinquent Behavior (Wave 3) on Marital Status, Military Involvement, and Controls .....	43
4 Survey Adjusted OLS Regression of Delinquent Behavior (Wave 3) on Predictors by Gender .....	46



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A central focus in Life Course Criminology is the criminal careers paradigm, or a longitudinal focus on offending over time (Piquero et al. 2003). In the research on criminal careers, desistance is an important element that needs more attention. The literature presents several definitions for desistance, but here it will be defined as decreases in delinquent behaviors. One way of studying desistance sociologically is by utilizing the Life Course paradigm (Elder 1986). The Life Course perspective applied to Criminology offers insight into within-individual changes in offending over time, as opposed to looking between groups (Blokland and Nieuwbeerta 2010).

The four primary themes of Life Course Criminology, according to Elder and his colleagues (2003), are location in time and place, timing of lives, linked lives, and human agency. Life Course theorists believe that each historical period and geographical location contains unique opportunities and limitations. In addition, the timing of certain critical life events may have differing consequences based on when it occurs in an individual's life. Life Course theorists emphasize the idea that an individual's actions and decisions effect others. They also stress the importance of an individual's ability to

---

This thesis follows the style of *American Sociological Review*.

make a choice within specific structural constraints. By focusing on the importance of historical, geographical, and temporal backgrounds, interpersonal lives, and human agency, researchers can concentrate on several of the factors that go into individuals' lives, instead of simply looking at one facet. As will be discussed further in Chapter II, each of these factors plays a unique role in an offender's chances of desisting from crime.

Part of the Life Course theory describes transitions and turning points (Elder 1986). In an individual's life course, there are transitions, or key life events, that serve as turning points in their life. In other words, certain life events can change the trajectory of an individual's life. Life Course Criminologists use marriage and military enlistment as possible turning points that could lead to desistance from crime.

Two notable theorists, Laub and Sampson (1993; 2003), have researched these turning points and used them to develop their Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control. This theory builds on Social Control Theory (Hirschi 1969) and places an emphasis on the bonds of social capital that the turning points such as marriage and military enlistment develop, and how they prevent the individual from committing further crimes. In their theory, sources of social control are age-graded. The life narratives Sampson and Laub collected from former delinquents described how their wives turned their life around or how upon military enlistment they were given opportunities to have a real career. Their statistical data also supported their theory. However, their sample was

limited to white males who were raised in the 1940s. The focus of this thesis is on the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood and key sources of social control at those developmental stages and will contribute new findings on marriage and military enlistment in the contemporary era.

The study of women and crime has been limited up until the past couple of decades. Several studies have looked at the role of marriage in desistance in both sexes, but have found mixed results (Broidy and Cauffman 2006; Giordano 2002; Leverentz 2006). Other researchers have investigated how military enlistment affects an individual's criminal career, but have also found contradicting results, possibly due to temporal settings (Elder 1986; Bouffard 2005; Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010). This thesis aims to research the effects of marriage and military enlistment in a contemporary sample consisting of both males and females.

The data used is from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), consisting of emerging adults of all major racial and ethnic groups. As will be discussed later in detail, the study design made certain that the sample was representative of US school children (Harris et al. 2009b). The first wave of the survey occurred while the students were between Grades 7-12. The second wave was conducted two years later in 1996, using a subset of students. That subset was subsequently followed up between 2001 and 2002, representing Wave III. The longitudinal focus of this data set permits the assessment of change over time using change score regression

models. This modeling strategy will provide a test of the influences of age-graded forms of social bonds on changes in delinquency net of earlier levels of delinquency.

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II presents the literature review, describing the past research on these topics, concluding with the four focal hypotheses to be tested. In brief, these cover age-graded influences on changes in delinquent behavior and hypothesized gender differences in these effects. Chapter III outlines the data and methodology used to research the proposed hypotheses. Chapter IV describes the results that were found, and the concluding chapter presents the discussion and conclusions. Implications for theory and policy will be discussed as well as strengths and limitations of the research. Suggestions for further research will also be presented.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Desistance is an important component of research on criminal careers that is receiving further attention (Laub & Sampson, 2001). The literature presents several definitions for desistance, but here it will be defined as decreases in delinquent behaviors. My research will explore changes in levels of delinquency and crime in the transition to adulthood as more research is needed on factors contributing to desistance, in particular looking at gender differences related to marriage and military enlistment.

This chapter first describes Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control (1992) which provides the theoretical context for further work on desistance.

This is followed by a section on women and crime to clarify patterns of offending by gender and to further contextualize work on desistance in relation to gender. Finally, I examine marriage and military enlistment as contributors to desistance in the life course.

This chapter concludes with the focal hypotheses to be tested in this thesis.

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

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck began a landmark longitudinal study in 1940 that followed 500 white delinquent boys and 500 white nondelinquent boys, each delinquent boy matched with one nondelinquent based on characteristics such as social class and

residential neighborhood. The Glueck study lasted from 1940 to 1965, between the participants' average ages of 14 and 32 (Sampson and Laub 1990). The Gluecks were mainly interested in cross-sectional analysis of the data.

Several decades later, Laub and Sampson happened upon the 60 cartons of old case files in the Harvard Law School Library basement and discovered they were from the Glueck archives (1993). They coded and analyzed the data and identified several significant findings, all of which lead to the formation of the Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control (Sampson and Laub 1990). The essential premise of this theory states that “crime and deviance result when an individual’s bond to society is weak or broken” (Sampson and Laub 1990:611). They argue that social capital is what bonds a person to society as it acts as a bond to a social institution. Sampson and Laub theorize that to the degree an individual has social capital, investing them in their work and/or family life, they are less likely to commit crime.

In 2003, Laub and Sampson released *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives* that extended their original theory and addressed questions critics had about their previous work. Since their original book, they had conducted criminal history and national death record searches for the 500 delinquents, and had also interviewed 52 of them to get an in-depth life history narrative from each at age 70. Their results lead them to argue that “desistance from crime is explained by a confluence of social controls, structured routine activities, and purposeful human agency” (2003:33). The last factor, that of human

agency, refers to an individual's personal choice. Laub and Sampson view each individual as an active participant in their own lives. As their previous work did not include this, they are now able to relate a person's agency to their life course. This extension elaborates their theoretical framework through an emphasis on routine activities and human agency.

A key point for Sampson and Laub is that an individual has the potential for both continuity and change in terms of offending over the life course (1990). Displaying antisocial behavior as a child can continue on and predict various poor outcomes as an adult, such as imprisonment. Those tendencies, however, can be altered by turning points, or "experiences in adolescence and adulthood [that] can redirect criminal trajectories in either a more positive or negative manner" (Sampson & Laub 2005b:16). Sampson and Laub define a trajectory as a long term sequence of behavior, and it can contain various transitions, or specific life occurrences (e.g., working a steady job), that may or may not change the trajectory. Turning points, however, do redirect the trajectories, though the researchers argue that they are "part of a process" and do not result in change overnight (Laub & Sampson 1993:304).

In their analyses of the Glueck data, Sampson and Laub discovered three primary turning points in the life courses of the delinquent sample: steady employment, a close marriage, and enlisting in the military (1992). Each of these forms the critical social capital that binds the individual to the institution, resulting in interdependent

responsibilities and expectations. The reciprocal nature of this bond takes time to grow, but over time, the individual feels obligated to the institution, thereby preventing delinquency.

In their 2003 book, Laub and Sampson described four characteristics that each turning point had in common. The turning points should: “(1) Knife off the past from the present; (2) provide not only supervision and monitoring but opportunities for social support and growth; (3) bring change and structure to routine activities; and (4) provide an opportunity for identity transformation” (Laub and Sampson, 2003:148-149). All of these contribute to a more rigid daily routine and an alteration in personal agency. The ‘identity transformation’ they referred to would allow the delinquent to see themselves in a new light, one with better resources and a more optimistic future. They would then make better choices, that is act on personal agency, and lead them to desistance. They viewed all of these factors as necessary for a positive turning point, and the structural turning points (stable jobs, good marriages, military enlistment) would lead to change in the delinquent’s behavior.

Sampson and Laub used quantitative and qualitative methods to study the Glueck data, and this development of social capital is best seen in the narratives of the former delinquents. One example explored the life of a formerly delinquent man, Tony. Though he had five arrests between the ages of 17 and 25, some of which were for serious crimes such as armed robbery, between the ages of 25 and 32, he had no subsequent arrests.



Though Tony was married to his wife at age 22, their marital relationship was rocky and they separated several times. However, at some point in the next several years, their relationship strengthened, and as the interviewee noted, “Tony’s wife gives him good counsel and she sees to it that the subject follows her advice” (Laub & Sampson 1993:15). In Tony’s story, it is clear to see the development of social capital arose with the assistance of his new steady job and his wife. The turning point in this case was the marriage becoming closer, along with the stable job.

Though their original theory described such turning points as a gradual process, they found instances of both gradual and abrupt change in their analyses of the narratives (Laub and Sampson 1993). These incremental changes involved entering the institution of marriage, such as in Tony’s case, while those in the military experienced an abrupt change in their social bonds. Another one of the former delinquents, Mickey, described the military as throwing one “in with guys from all over the country; some of them were well educated and had good backgrounds. I began to see that my thinking was way out of line and that I was probably wrong. I began to do things their way and things have gone well ever since” (Laub and Sampson 1993:316). As described in further detail below, the military allows those enlisted to leave their original social group and to meet those that are different than they are. As with Mickey, they may consciously recognize that the new way of doing things is better, and along with the military institution itself, they quickly form bonds with their fellow soldiers, resulting in social capital. Their identity also changes, leading to a different sense of personal agency.

One of Laub and Sampson's primary points is that criminal offenders desist as a result of two factors that interact with one another: individual actions and situational context (2003). In what they term "situated choice", or "the interaction between life-course transitions, macro-level events, situational context, and individual will," (2003:281), the researchers stress how an individual's choice impacts the structures around him or her, and likewise structures can limit and modify individual choices. For instance, upon choosing to enter the institution of marriage, an individual started to change their behavior as they have new responsibilities to their family, such as providing financial resources. They chose to get married and enter into that structure, and then the responsibilities that were contained in the institution lead them to change their behavior.

In summary, Sampson and Laub argue that an offender will desist in crime through the formation of informal social control, derived from a stable job, a good marriage, or being enlisted in the military (1993, 2003). They also argue that an individual's choices take place within a larger structure, and they impact one another. Turning points in an individual's life course, coupled with the necessary personal agency will also assist in leading a person to desist.

### **Women and crime**

In the 1920s, the Gluecks conducted a sample of 500 delinquent females as well as a follow up 5 years later and it is one of the few historical samples taken of delinquent

females (Broidy and Cauffman 2006). Sampson and Laub did not use this data when formulating or analyzing their theory and it appears that most of the research, up until recently, has focused mainly on males. The resulting insufficient information can be attributed to several causes. First, there has been a general lack of data to analyze regarding female criminals (Giordano, Cernkovich, Rudolph 2002). Up until the past decade or so, there were not enough women in the criminal justice system to allow for the traditional longitudinal studies. Insufficient data is followed by insufficient analysis and research.

Another reason for the lack of information, as described by Kruttschnitt and Gartner, includes “the generally less serious nature of [women’s] offending” (2003:1). In the 1980s, according to the *Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)* which reports national arrest statistics, females were responsible for ten percent of the Violent Crime Index, meaning they were arrested for only ten percent of all homicides, robberies, forcible rapes, and aggravated assaults (Steffensmeier, et al. 2006). During this time, women were arrested the most for ‘less serious’ crimes such as shoplifting, and as such did not garner as much attention as the ‘serious’ male criminals did.

In addition, culture perceived women as more delicate and trainable, especially up into the 1950s. The following decade witnessed a rise in criminologists researching female criminals, though as described above, there was a dearth in the data available. However, between the 1980s and 2000s, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of

females arrested (Steffensmeier, et al. 2006). By 2003, women had doubled their representation in the Violent Crime Index and now made up twenty percent (Steffensmeier, et al. 2006). In the same year though delinquent girls comprised only fifteen percent of juveniles in care of the justice system, that number had risen 96% since 1991 (Colman, et al. 2008). The number of women in prison between 1990 and 2000 increased by 125% (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2003).

It is evident that women are arrested and convicted more now than before. The increase in prevalence brings with it an increase in theorists' attention. There are two main theories explaining the influx in female deviance, the first arguing that women's behavior has changed and the second attributing the difference to policy change (Steffensmeier, et al. 2006). Those in favor of the former argue that in the past couple of decades, as the cultural expectations of women have changed and allowed them more independence from child-raising and domestic work, they have experienced changes that contributed to an increased involvement in violent behavior. Those arguing the latter would cite policy changes such as "the war on drugs, and federal and state sentencing reforms and sentencing guidelines" (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2003:9) that have resulted in the disproportionate increase in female arrest and conviction rates for behaviors they have done in the past, but before were ignored.

Observing a closing gender gap in arrest data, Steffensmeier and his colleagues (2006) compared the *UCR* arrest data to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The

NCVS collects a nationally representative sample and asks crime victims a series of questions regarding the crime, including the offender's sex. Their hypothesis was that the criminal justice system had changed over the past two decades, resulting in the increase in female arrests. Since the NCVS collected data from the victims themselves, it was unaffected by the criminal justice system policies. The results supported their hypothesis, and they concluded that the "cumulative effects of [the] policy shifts, rather than a change in women's behavior toward more violence, ... accounts for their higher arrest rates and the narrowing gender gap in official counts of criminal assault" (2006:94).

Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2003) also support this argument. They argue that the policy changes in the United States disproportionately affected women more than men, resulting in the increase in women's arrest, conviction, and incarceration rates. In between the years of 1980 and 1996, almost half (43%) of the female prison population increase was due to drug-related offenses. For men, the rate was only twenty-eight percent. In addition, the sentencing reforms that removed child-care responsibilities as a mitigating circumstance affected women more so than men since women are more likely to be living with dependent children.

Those investigating female desistance from crime appear to produce contradictory evidence, leading to unclear conclusions and inconsistent results (Broidy and Cauffman 2006). Broidy and Cauffman (2006) utilized the Glueck survey of 500 delinquent

women from the 1920s and found evidence that support Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control. Specifically, those that were in a good marriage, were mothers, or worked as a homemaker were most likely to desist. Their results maintain that the formation of social capital is strongly related to desistance. While for men social capital acts as an informal social control, the researchers argued that for women, it gives them access to conventional social roles. The social roles are based off of the cultural norm of the time, and in this case, these women felt shame for the crimes they had committed and wished to confine themselves to the private sphere.

Though both Broidy and Cauffman's (2006) study as well as Sampson and Laub's (1993) study utilized temporal-specific longitudinal data, set in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Broidy and Cauffman conclude that social capital is a key determining factor in desistance regardless of historical context. They purport, though, that the way social capital affects individuals can be contingent on the historical time period. For instance, as will be described in the following section, though Broidy and Cauffman found marriage to have a significant effect on desistance among women in their sample, Giordano and her colleagues (2002) did not find the same in their contemporary sample. The former argues that the difference lies in the aforementioned bonds to conventional social roles. During that time period, marriage represented the acceptance of society's role of women, and gave them certain responsibilities. However, in a more current sample, that trend appears to no longer hold.

Despite the recent influx of interest in females as criminals, there are still many questions left unanswered, specifically regarding their pathways to desistance. Two possible pathways are marriage and military enlistment, both of which have been investigated thoroughly concerning delinquent males, but much is still unknown about delinquent females.

### **Marriage**

Sampson and Laub were among the first to explore the effects of marriage on desistance. However, their work was confined to studying only male delinquents. Other researchers have looked at how marriage affects both genders. In the following section, the findings of various researchers on the effects of marriage on both male and female delinquents will be compared and contrasted.

Sampson and Laub describe a few predominant turning points that had a significant impact on the desistance of the delinquent boys in their sample, one of which was being married (1998; 2005; Laub and Sampson 1993; 2003). Their analysis revealed that the stronger the social bonds were to their family, the less likely they were to commit crimes and other deviant acts. Explicitly, they found that it was only the good marriages that had the protective effect; simply being married appeared to have no lasting effect on desistance. They specifically found that in the time period immediately following the beginning of their “ex-post good marriage,” (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998:234) their offending rate was nineteen percent that of those who were in a not-good marriage. At

the second time period following, the difference increased to fifty-eight percent and by the third time period, it was sixty-eight percent. This dramatic difference highlights the strong and gradually increasing preventative effect of a good marriage, as this form of social bond takes time to develop and grow (Laub and Sampson 1993; 2003; Leverentz 2006).

Sampson and Laub view these good marriages as turning points and also a source of social capital. As a married couple shares more experiences together, they grow closer and form a social bond. Over time, the bond brings them closer and each individual has more invested in the relationship. The investment serves as an incentive to desist from crime as they now have more to lose (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998). In addition, Laub and Sampson (1993; 2003) found in their qualitative analysis that the men in the sample described how their wives would not allow them to spend time with their former delinquent friends. The interviews also revealed the pressure wives put on their husbands to follow their advice and be responsible to their job and their family. These both resulted in a change in routine activities. This is clear evidence of the existence of the informal social bond formed between husband and wife – she is serving to connect him to the broader institution, that is society.

A bad marriage is characterized by an overall weak attachment (Sampson and Laub 1990). This is evidenced by possible periods of separation, financial and emotional neglect, and desertion. A good marriage for Sampson and Laub encompassed social



cohesiveness, mutual investment, and close emotional ties. They identified five key outcomes that occurred in a good marriage that played a role in the observed desistance:

First, marriage offers potential resources of another person (social support and capital)... Second, marriage contains an element of direct social control... Third, marriage means a change in routines and lifestyle activities, namely, new friends, new family, and new time obligations... Fourth, marriage often means a residential change, which can affect routine activities and in turn influence both opportunities and barriers to crime. Fifth, marriage may lead to children, who can not only change one's worldview but dramatically alter routine activities. (Laub and Sampson 2003:283)

These effects of a good marriage can all lead to desistance. However, though Laub and Sampson (2003) argued that these characteristics were not gender, place or time specific, this study has a distinct temporal and geographical setting. In the past, several researchers have applied Sampson and Laub's theory to other samples with differing results (Broidy and Cauffman 2006; Giordano 2002; Leverentz 2006; King, Massoglia, and MacMillan 2007; Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwbeerta 2009). Though Sampson and Laub's analyses did not include women, some of these other studies did. However, as described below, some found that being married had no negative effect on female delinquency while others found that it did have a significant negative effect on their samples, that is it decreased delinquency.

One study whose findings did not correspond with Sampson and Laub's theory is from the work of Giordano and her colleagues (2002). Their data came from a longitudinal study that included 127 interviews conducted in 1987 of an Ohio institution for delinquent girls. They also drew a comparable sample of 127 males from three institutions. Several years later in 1995, they conducted a follow up of the original participants. Their findings revealed "the subjective measures of attachment to a spouse/partner... are not strong predictors of desistance" (2002:1012). Instead, they argue that what is critical is the "normative orientation" (2002:1045) of the spouse, that the spouse did not have a delinquent past. The researchers found that desistance was more likely to occur if the delinquent's spouse provided a contrast to the delinquent's previous background. An example of this would be if the spouse had no criminal history and had a steady job. This contrast, they assert, can act as an outline of how to live a pro-social life that the delinquent may follow, resulting in desistance.

In a similar vein, Broidy and Cauffman (2006) found that women who are married before they are convicted have a higher rate of recidivism than those who were not married. The researchers maintain that if women are associated with deviant males, then those associations can draw them into criminal behavior, possibly leading them to conviction. Then, if they were married to such an individual, they are released into the same environment. Overall, Broidy and Cauffman argue that marital attachment alone is not sufficient to provide social control. Instead, in agreement with Giordano and her colleagues (2002), the marriage must be with a socially-normative spouse.

Others with similar findings suggest a different argument. When comparing the differences between genders, Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwbeerta (2009) report that, among a sample from the Netherlands taken in the late 1970s, men display higher rates of desistance resulting from marriage as opposed to women. However, they also noted that marriage decreases the odds of conviction for both genders. A possible explanation they emphasized draws from the fact that men make up a larger proportion of the incarcerated population than women (Leverentz 2006). As those incarcerated are most heavily concentrated in specific neighborhoods, when both men and women are released from prison and arrive back in the same areas, there are more men with a convicted criminal past than women. Thus, women in these neighborhoods have a higher probability of being involved with and marrying men with a convicted criminal record than men do of marrying a woman with a similar history. Subsequently, women are more likely to be married to men that do not have the contrasting, pro-social background that Giordano and her colleagues cite to be essential for desistance, therefore resulting in a smaller desistance rate.

Several others have found evidence in support of this claim, such as King, Massoglia, and MacMillan (2007). Their sample from the National Youth Survey began in 1976 and ended in 1987, at which point the average ages of participants were between twenty-one and twenty-seven years of age. They found that though marriage had a higher significant effect on males' desistance than females', they both demonstrated a significant effect resulting from marriage.

A study conducted by Leverentz (2006) studied forty-nine women who were current or former residents of a Chicago halfway house for female former offenders. Though very few of the women married someone with a pro-social orientation, several “women did establish prosocial relationships with others who had similar histories as themselves, and these relationships evolved into supportive and mutually reinforcing bonds” (2006:483). It was these developing relationships that aided the women in their desistance. Leverentz described the growing process that both delinquent partners in the relationship underwent, how they helped each other mutually and that with the formation of the strong social bond came the development of noncriminal identities. This provided them with the stake in conformity that lead to desistance.

It is interesting that Leverentz’s (2006) findings differ from those of Broidy and Cauffman (2006), who described how marriage with a non-normative spouse was detrimental to their desistance. However, Leverentz’s sample, although restricted to a certain geographical region, belongs to a much more contemporary setting than Broidy and Cauffman’s. Their sample, as a reminder, was from the Gluecks’ study of 500 delinquent women in the early twentieth century, also in a certain geographic region. Perhaps the difference in temporal setting played a role in each study’s results.

The institution of marriage has changed since the Glueck data was collected in the mid twentieth century. At this time, wives “took primary control of the planning and management of the household and often acted as informal guardians of their husbands’

activities” (Laub and Sampson 2003:43). Since then, the United States has witnessed the “divorce revolution of the 1970s” (King, Massoglia, and Macmillan 2007:36) along with couples cohabitating and getting married later in life. If the gender roles in marriage have changed over time, than wives may no longer be acting as the watchdogs of their husbands, resulting in less informal social control.

However, the aforementioned studies demonstrate how the institution of marriage still has an impact on delinquents’ desistance from crime. While the most recent data discussed here including gender differences comes from the 1990s, it is from a specific city (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002), and much is still unknown about the roles of marriage, desistance, and gender in the current time and across the nation.

### **Military enlistment**

Another life event Sampson and Laub (1990; 1993; 1996) pointed to was being enlisted in the military. They viewed involvement in the military as “a major source of discontinuity in the life course” (1996:347) as it took the individual out of their original environment and surrounded them by others from different backgrounds. They also described it as a place where an individual can have the support and direct supervision that may have been missing from their home. Specifically, the military provides “firm discipline, cooperative relations or teamwork, strong leadership, social responsibility, and competent role models” (Sampson and Laub 1996:348) for enlistees to follow. Thus, being exposed to it in the military, where they have been removed from their original

social sphere and placed in a new atmosphere, may give the disadvantaged individuals a chance to gain a new identity.

Laub and Sampson (2003) also described military service as beginning a sequence of events or experiences that shaped the delinquents' future outcomes. For instance, enlistment at this time period provided them with several resources, such as on-the-job training and educational opportunities that they might not have had access to otherwise. After they were discharged, the GI Bill of 1944 provided with resources to pursue either technical training or a college education (Elder 1986). Consequently, through education, training, being exposed to diverse perspectives, and being cut-off from their old, deviant environments, these delinquents were given the chance for a better future, one that lead to sources of social control. These sources include their specific job in the military in addition to their buddies, as well as a career once they left the military.

Out of their sample, sixty-seven percent were enlisted in the military during World War II and/or the Korean War (Sampson and Laub 1990). The military during that time provided a location for the delinquents to be re-socialized and it removed the social stigma of having a criminal record (Laub and Sampson 2003). They were also cut-off from their delinquent peers and welcomed into a world with new structures and rules, introducing a brand new yet rigid routine. Following the end of World War II, the United States' economy was prosperous and there was a sense of self-efficacy and optimism among those enlisted. Thus, with their training, access to education, and a sense of

personal agency, they were able to turn their lives around from what it once was pre-enlistment.

Others have explored the effects on enlistment on delinquents, such as Elder (1986). He saw involvement in the military as a source of discontinuity in the life course and thought it allowed enlisted men (and women) the chance to see what happens when an individual does not have an education. His study involved a sample of early and late enlistees into the military during World War II. His overall findings suggest that, similar to Sampson and Laub, “the service experience acts as a resocializing mechanism, stripping young men of old, even unwanted identities and building more resourceful ideas of self through new reference groups and primary group support” (1986:236). This emphasis on military enlistment containing the possibility to dramatically re-shape the individual’s life is a strong finding. As such, it is important to investigate further.

As the Glueck data occurred in a specific temporal setting, it is important to explore the characteristics of those that were enlisting at that time period. Several of those that served in World War II and the Korean War were drafted through the conscripted service. That would result in “(theoretically) a representative sample of the country’s age-eligible, male youth” (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010:182). While those with a criminal record were, and still are, restricted from enlisting, that restriction can be ignored through a moral waiver (Bouffard 2005). As stated before, sixty-seven percent

of their sample served in the military, thus this did not represent a roadblock for the delinquent's ability to enlist (Sampson and Laub 1990).

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, otherwise known as the GI Bill, represents an important component of those in the military at this time. Elder (1986) found that it was a significant factor in why several individuals from lower income families enlisted in the military early. Sampson and Laub (1996) described how those from disadvantaged backgrounds took advantage of it, pursuing college and trade schools, in order to emulate those in the middle class. The GI Bill in 1976, however, was discontinued and the various programs that replaced it are said to offer less support for the veterans (Bouffard 2005). However, those that enlist can still receive a free education, a benefit that is noted to be a large incentive currently.

Another change characterizing the modern military is switching to the AVF, or the All-Volunteer Force, in 1973. Bouffard (2005) argues that since then, enlistment has depended on the health of the civilian job market. Historically, when the civilian job market was doing poorly, the military salary was competitive with available civilian jobs and enlistment was high. However, if the former was doing well, then military enlistment suffered. According to MacLean and Elder (2007), in the modern AVF the individuals from disadvantaged families have been more likely to serve in the military than those whose families are better off, giving support to Bouffard's claim.



In addition, there are several characteristics that describe those enlisting (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010; Bouffard 2005; Lundquist 2008). One such example includes gender. Though in 1973 women comprised only 1.6 percent of active-duty military personnel, by 2005 that number had increased to fifteen percent (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010). It is important to note here that “the military is the only major social institution in the nation that may legally discriminate in employment on the basis of gender” (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010:185). Out of all the branches, the Air Force is the most open to women, with ninety-nine percent of occupations available to women. The Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corp sit around ninety-percent, though the number of jobs in the Army and the Marine Corp that are not available to women comprises almost forty percent of all jobs. As such, women may have differing experiences in the military than men.

Other groups that have seen an increase in their enlisting rates are African Americans (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010) and Latinos (Lundquist 2008). Lundquist views the military as a possible relief from the racial segregation and inequalities found at home, and also finds that overall, those enlistees from racial and ethnic minorities rate levels of satisfaction with the military higher than do whites. However, a related finding by MacLean and Elder (2007) stated that this may be relevant only to those enlisted in a time of peace.

Also, as discussed earlier, those individuals who have been convicted of an offense must obtain a moral waiver preceding enlistment eligibility. However, Bouffard reports that “a large number of service members enter with a misdemeanor or felony arrest that is often not disclosed by the individual and not detected through background checks” (2005:279). In fact, in the late 1970s, the presence of a criminal record was a stronger predictor of military enlistment than was patriotic attitudes (MacLean and Elder 2007).

Bouffard’s study (2005) investigated the relationship between individual characteristics and military service and used two samples from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The first was made up of non-institutionalized civilian youth and the second represented those that were enlisted in the military. Both groups were interviewed yearly beginning in 1979 when the sample ages ranged from fourteen to twenty-two years old, and finished in 1994. In a contradiction to Sampson and Laub’s findings, Bouffard’s results state that, “being a delinquent puts someone at risk of later violent offending, regardless of military service” (2005:298). She goes on to add that for those with no delinquent history, military enlistment had no effect on future offending. These results highlight the need for further research as the hypothesized social control bond may no longer be applicable in the AVF era.

Though there is a dearth of research in this area, especially pertaining to women and to more modern times pertaining to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bouffard 2005; MacLean and Elder 2007), others have outlined several benefits the military does

provide. For instance, based on military and civilian age-matched peers, those in the military earn higher pay and better benefits than civilians (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010). The veterans in the AVF period have improved their socioeconomic standing from before enlistment if they use their military training in the job market as civilians (MacLean and Elder 2007). Those who entered the service with less education than average (i.e. high school drop outs) earned higher incomes than similarly-educated nonveterans. These trends demonstrate that enlistment in the military provides several benefits, all of which can lead former delinquents on a path to desistance through the construction of social capital in the form of a steady job for instance.

As was the case with research on the marriage institution, it is helpful to mention that the “relationship between military service and criminal careers depends on historical context as well as on the timing of service in the life course” (MacLean and Elder 2007:178). As the Glueck men served in the military during World War II and the Korean War, that setting posed specific characteristics, risks, and benefits that are both different from and similar to other wars and military conflicts. Of the literature reviewed here, the most modern study investigated the effects of the military on delinquents between the years of 1979 and 1994 (Bouffard 2005). In addition to the lack of recent studies, there has also been a lack of research concerning female delinquents in the military. Though, as discussed previously, some have looked at the characteristics of women in the military (Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal 2010), the factor of delinquency has not received much

attention, possibly stemming from the general lack of data on female delinquents (Giordano, Cernkovich, Rudolph 2002).

### **Hypothesis**

As discussed above, there has been a general dearth in research conducted evaluating the effects of military enlistment and marriage over the life course of both male and female delinquents. Based on the theory purported by Sampson and Laub, I propose that while both military involvement and marriage will reduce delinquency involvement over time, the military effect will be relatively more pronounced in both males and females. The marriage effect is also hypothesized to be present for both, but may have a weaker relative effect. I further posit gender similarities in the influence of the military but gender differences in the effect of marriage. Together, the hypotheses of this thesis are summarized as follows:

- H1) Both military involvement and marriage will reduce delinquency involvement over time
- H2) The effect of military involvement will be more pronounced than the effect of marriage
- H3) The protective effect of military service will be the same for men and women
- H4) The protective effect of marriage will be stronger among men than women

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The following sections look at the data utilized as well as the steps taken in order to test the hypotheses. The first segment will describe in detail the data set that was used along with the response rates. The subsequent section defines the statistical analyses that were performed. The final section details the measures as well as the strength of each measure.

#### **Data**

This research was based on the public use data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The Add Health study design used systematic sampling methods and implicit stratification in order to ensure the sample was representative of US schools with respect to region of country, urbanicity, school size, school type, and ethnicity” (Harris et al. 2009b). As such, each school did not have an equal probability of being selected. The researchers selected 132 schools, comprised of 80 high schools and 52 feeder middle schools. High schools were considered as such if they had an 11<sup>th</sup> grade and had at least 30 students enrolled. Feeder middle schools were defined as schools with a 7<sup>th</sup> grade and their graduates went to one of the selected high schools.

All students at each of these schools were originally sampled in Grades 7-12 for the in-school component of the study, beginning the Wave I component in 1994 and 1995. An estimated 90,000 students completed this survey. Also in the same wave, an in-home sample of students was selected that was followed longitudinally. This subset of students were followed up in 1996 (Wave II) and 2001-2002 (Wave III) with further in-home interviews. At Wave III, the original participants in the in-home sample were between the ages of 18 and 26. The interviews were conducted using laptop computers. While some of the questions were asked by the surveyor who also entered the responses, the more sensitive questions were asked via headphone recordings (Computer Assisted Survey Interviewing or Audio-CASI) and then the participant entered in his or her answer on the laptop. Topics covered in the interviews included family composition and dynamics, educational aspirations, and criminal behavior; all questions regarded age-appropriate behaviors and attitudes.

The response rate for Wave I was 78.9% and 77.4% at Wave III (Harris et al. 2009a). At Wave I, 20,745 students responded for the in-home component and 17,632 of those students were contacted to participate for Wave III. Of those contacted, 15,170 completed the in-home interview. Those with sample weights reduce the sample to just over 10,000 longitudinal cases. The public-use data set available for analyses includes a subset of the in-home sampling, and it is representative of the US school population. In this work, I will be utilizing the public-use data from Waves I and III. Wave I public use

data includes 6,504 of the total number of respondents while Wave III contains 3355 of the original respondents that were re-interviewed with sample weights.

## **Methods**

Given that the Add Health study utilized a cluster design where each cluster was chosen with an unequal probability, special measures needed to be taken to ensure that the analyses take into account the clustering of observations and generalize to the national population (Chantala and Tabor 2010). This is addressed by using the Survey techniques in Stata 11. Survey adjusted OLS and logistic regression analyses will be used in these analyses. Wave III sample weights will also be used with the longitudinal sample analyzing changes in delinquency from Waves I to III.

## **Measures**

### *Delinquency*

As delinquent behavior was measured by age-appropriate questions at Waves I and III, two different scales were used. For Wave I, a 15-item scale was used that included the following behaviors: (1) painting graffiti, (2) property damage, (3) lying to authority figures, (4) robbery, (5) participating in a serious physical fight, (6) hurting someone badly enough they needed medical attention, (7) running away from their residence, (8) driving a car without permission, (9) stealing something worth more than \$50, (10) stealing something worth less than \$50, (11) burglary, (12) use or threaten to use a weapon while stealing something, (13) selling drugs, (14) participating in a group fight,

and (15) being loud, unruly, or rowdy in public. The responses were on a 0 to 3 scale. If the respondent reported they had not engaged in that behavior, that was coded as a 0. If the respondent had engaged in the behavior one to two times, that received a 1. For those who reportedly engaged in the behavior three to four times, they received a 2. The code of 3 was given to respondents to reported they had engaged in the behavior five or more times. The range in the sum of responses for each participant was from 0 to 45, with 0 indicating low delinquency and 45 signifying high delinquency. The mean score is 4.09 with a standard deviation of 5. For Wave I, the Cronbach's alpha is approximately 0.85 and indicates a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach 1951).

Wave III delinquency was measured by a 14-item scale in order to be consistent with prior research (Foster and Hagan 2007). The behaviors measured include: (1) property damage, (2) stealing something worth more than \$50, (3) stealing something worth less than \$50, (4) burglary, (5) use or threaten to use a weapon while stealing something, (6) selling drugs, (7) participating in a group fight, (8) buying, selling or holding stolen property, (9) using someone's credit card, bank card, or ATM card without their permission, (10) deliberately writing a bad check, (11) use a weapon while fighting, (12) carry a handgun at school or at work, (13) participated in a physical fight where the individual was injured badly enough to need medical attention, and (14) hurting someone badly enough they needed medical attention. The responses were on a 0 to 3 scale. If the respondent reported they had not engaged in that behavior, that was coded as a 0. If the respondent had engaged in the behavior one to two times, that received a 1.



For those who reportedly engaged in the behavior three to four times, they received a 2. The code of 3 was given to respondents to reported they had engaged in the behavior five or more times. The range in the sum of responses for each participant was from 0 to 39, with 0 indicating low delinquency and 39 signifying high delinquency. The mean score is 0.96 with a standard deviation of 2.23. For Wave III, the Cronbach's alpha is approximately 0.73, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

A dichotomous measure was formed from the Wave III delinquency measure to indicate high levels of delinquent behavior. A value of 1 was assigned to the category with a mean Wave III delinquency score 1 standard deviation above the mean. A value of 0 corresponded to those not in this group.

### *Marriage*

The respondents at Wave III answered the question "How many times have you been married?" Using a dummy variable, if the respondent had reported being married at least once, then that response was coded as "1." If they had not been married, then they were coded as "0."

### *Military enlistment*

At Wave I, participants were not asked if they were in the military, as they were all in middle or high school. At Wave III this variable was measured as their ages ranged from 18 to 26 years old. The military enlistment scale consisted of two questions; the first one

asked if the respondent was currently in the military. The second question asked if the respondent had been in the military reserves. These variables were combined in the analyses.

### *Control variables*

The control variables used in the analyses include self-reported respondent age, race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES). For SES, the parental reported level of education is used. The primary parent or guardian of the respondent at Wave I was asked how far they went in school. A scale ranging from 1 to 9 was used, where 1 indicated the parent had 8<sup>th</sup> grade or less, and 9 represented professional training beyond a four-year college or university. Age was coded in years and was calculated based on the answer from the Wave I at-home interview. The mean age of the participants taken at Wave III was 21.4 years old.

The race and ethnicity measure utilized Wave I self-report data to construct dummy variables. The respondents that had any incidence of Hispanic status were coded as such. The race/ethnicity statuses as well as their percentage were as follows: Hispanic (11.4%), Black (24.4%), Asian American (3.8%), Native American (2.0%), Other (0.9%), and White (57.5%). In the analyses, the Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Other categories were combined to form a larger 'Other' category (6.7%). Gender was measured as a dummy variable, with females being coded as 1 and males as 0.

## **Analyses**

Descriptive statistics will first be analyzed. Then survey-adjusted multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models will be used to analyze changes in delinquency. These models use change-score regression models that include delinquency at Wave III as the outcome with delinquency at Wave I as a predictor. As Kessler and Greenberg (1981) explained, “the inclusion of  $X_1$  in the equation for a change in  $X$  is a way of picking up these ‘control’ effects” (Hagan and Foster 2001:12). This approach therefore takes into account uncontrolled childhood experiences. Wave III delinquent behavior will first be regressed on Wave I delinquent behavior and controls. Then marriage and military involvement will each be added to the models. Finally, a combined model will be analyzed testing the net effects of the social bond measures. Regression coefficients and standard errors will be reported. A logistic regression model will then be conducted to examine the relative effects of the predictor variables. Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals will be reported. Finally, gender sub-sample survey-adjusted OLS regression models will be analyzed. Models will be tested in both female and male subsamples. The effect of marriage and military involvement will be compared and tested across gender groups for significant difference using a Z-test (Clogg et al. 1995; Paternoster et al. 1998). If this value is greater than 1.96, a significant gender difference will be concluded.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The subsequent sections of this chapter will describe the results of the statistical analyses used to test the hypotheses. The sample used cases with no missing data on study variables. The total number of participants used was 3,355. The first part will present descriptive statistics on the analytic sample. Afterward, a multivariate analysis of the full sample for the mean score of delinquency will be presented. The next section looks at a multivariate analysis for a dichotomized form of delinquency in order to analyze those with high levels of delinquency. The last section will present subsample analyses by gender to answer the remaining research questions.

#### **Descriptive statistics**

Table I presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. Females accounted for 49% of the sample, and at Wave III, conducted in 2001, the average age was approximately 21 years old in emerging adulthood. The mean level of parental education was 5.54, indicating an average level between high school graduation and college graduation. The majority of the respondents at Wave I in 1995 indicated that they lived with their two biological parents (58%), while 22% lived in a single-parent household, 17% lived in a blended family of two parents, and 3% lived in another family structure. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents were white, 14% were African American, 11% were Hispanic American, and 6% were of other race or ethnicity.

At Wave I, the mean level of delinquent behavior was 4.19 on a scale ranging from 0 to 45. At Wave III, the mean level is 0.96 on a scale of 0 to 39. The proportion scoring high on delinquent behaviors, or one standard deviation above the mean, at Wave III was 9%. In addition, 15% of the sample reported being married at least once. Four percent of the sample ever served in the military.

**Table I. Descriptive Statistics, (n=3355).**

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Range
Female	.49	--	0 to 1
Parent Education	5.54	2.31	1 to 9
Age	21.29	1.61	18 to 27
Delinquency at Wave I	4.19	5.26	0 to 45
Delinquency at Wave III	.96	2.23	0 to 39
High Delinquent Behavior (Wave III)	.09	--	0 to 1
Married	.15	--	0 to 1
Ever in Military	.04	--	0 to 1
<b>FAMILY STRUCTURE:</b>			
Blended family:	.17	--	0 to 1
Two parents			
Single-parent family	.22	--	0 to 1
Other family structure	.03	--	0 to 1
Two biological parents	.58	--	0 to 1
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY:</b>			
Hispanic American	.11	--	0 to 1
African American	.14	--	0 to 1
Other ethnicity	.06	--	0 to 1
White	.69	--	0 to 1

**Effects of military enlistment and marriage on changes in delinquency**

As shown in column I of Table II, delinquency at Wave I predicted more delinquency at Wave III,  $b=.08$ ,  $p<.001$ , net of control variables. Being female is associated with lower levels of delinquent behavior at Wave III ( $b=-.90$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Parental education increases delinquency over time ( $b=.05$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Age decreased delinquency from Waves I to III ( $b=-.16$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Living in a single parent family compared to living with two biological parents increases changes in delinquency ( $b=.22$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The other family structures (blended family of two parents and other family structure) are not significantly associated with changes in delinquency. African American young adults are more likely than white youth to engage in delinquency over time ( $b=.31$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Column II of Table II adds ever being in the military to the analysis. Contrary to the first hypothesis, those that had ever been in the military did not display a significant change in delinquency between Waves I and III. This model also shows that delinquency at Wave I predicted more delinquency at Wave III ( $b=.08$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Those that are female are significantly more likely than males to demonstrate less delinquent behavior at Wave III ( $b=-.90$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Parental education is associated with an increase in delinquency from Waves I to III ( $b=.05$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Age also decreased delinquency ( $b=-.16$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Those belonging to single-parent families as opposed to living with two biological parents demonstrate an increased change in delinquent behavior ( $b=.22$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Compared to white young adults, African American emerging adults are more likely to be associated with increased delinquency between the two waves ( $b=.31$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table II. Survey Adjusted OLS Regression of Changes in Delinquent Behavior (Wave 3) on Marital Status, Military Involvement, and Controls (N=3355) [b/(sb)].**

	I	II	III	IV
<b>Independent Variable</b>				
Female <sup>a</sup>	-.90 <sup>***</sup> (.09)	-.90 <sup>***</sup> (.09)	-.88 <sup>***</sup> (.09)	-.88 <sup>***</sup> (.09)
Parent Education	.05 <sup>*</sup> (.02)	.05 <sup>*</sup> (.02)	.04 <sup>*</sup> (.02)	.04 <sup>*</sup> (.02)
Age	-.16 <sup>***</sup> (.03)	-.16 <sup>***</sup> (.03)	-.15 <sup>***</sup> (.03)	-.15 <sup>***</sup> (.03)
Delinquency at Wave I	.08 <sup>***</sup> (.01)	.08 <sup>***</sup> (.01)	.08 <sup>***</sup> (.01)	.08 <sup>***</sup> (.01)
Married	--	---	-.20 <sup>*</sup> (.09)	-.20 <sup>*</sup> (.09)
Ever in Military	--	-.03 (.23)	--	-.01 (.23)
<b>FAMILY STRUCTURE:</b>				
Blended family:				
Two parents <sup>b</sup>	.13 (.13)	.14 (.13)	.15 (.13)	.15 (.13)
Single-parent family	.22 <sup>*</sup> (.10)	.22 <sup>*</sup> (.10)	.22 <sup>*</sup> (.10)	.22 <sup>*</sup> (.10)
Other family structure	.13 (.19)	.13 (.19)	.15 (.19)	.15 (.19)
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY:</b>				
Hispanic American <sup>c</sup>	.10 (.13)	.10 (.13)	.10 (.13)	.10 (.13)
African American	.31 <sup>*</sup> (.15)	.31 <sup>*</sup> (.15)	.28 (.14)	.28 (.15)
Other ethnicity	-.22 (.13)	-.22 (.12)	-.22 (.12)	-.22 (.12)
R <sup>2</sup>	.103	.103	.104	.104
Model adjusted Wald statistic	15.90 <sup>***</sup> F <sub>(10,122)</sub>	14.71 <sup>***</sup> F <sub>(11,121)</sub>	14.49 <sup>***</sup> F <sub>(11,121)</sub>	13.96 <sup>***</sup> F <sub>(12,120)</sub>

\*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05 † p<.10 (two-tailed) Reference Categories: <sup>a</sup>Male; <sup>b</sup>Two Biological Parents; <sup>c</sup>White.

Column III of the same table includes marriage in the analysis with controls variables in Column I. Those that were ever married demonstrate significantly less delinquent behavior between Waves I and III ( $b=-.20$ ,  $p<.05$ ), in support of the first hypothesis. Again, delinquency at Wave I is predictive of an increase delinquent behaviors at Wave III ( $b=.08$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Females show a decrease in delinquency ( $b=-.88$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

In this model, marital status partially explains the gender gap in delinquency. The gender coefficient changed from  $b=-.90$ ,  $p<.001$  to  $b=-.88$ ,  $p<.001$ , a reduction of two percent. Parental education is associated with an increase in delinquency between the two waves ( $b=.04$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The variable age demonstrates decreased delinquent behavior ( $b=-.15$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Living with a single parent, in contrast to living with both biological parents, is associated with an increase in delinquency ( $b=.22$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

In Column III of Table II, of note is that African American young adults in this analysis, net of marital status, are no longer more likely than white young adults to demonstrate a significant increase in delinquency. Being married served as a mediator for this racial group. The African American coefficient changes from  $b=.31$ ,  $p<.05$  in Column I to  $b=.28$  in Column III, or a reduction of 9.7%. African Americans are less likely than whites to be married with a correlation of  $r=-0.12$ ,  $p.000$ . Marital status in turn explains how race is associated with delinquency in emerging adulthood.



The final column of Table II analyses ever being in the military as well as being married. In partial support of the first hypothesis, only being married, net of military status, is significantly associated with a decrease in delinquent behavior from Wave I to Wave III ( $b = -.20, p < .05$ ). Being in the military is not significantly associated with a change in delinquency ( $b = -.01, p > .05$ ). These results do not support the second hypothesis, which stated that the effect of military involvement would be larger than the marriage effect. Delinquency at Wave I is a significant predictor of delinquent behavior at Wave III ( $b = .08, p < .001$ ). Being female is associated with a decrease in delinquency between the two waves ( $b = -.88, p < .001$ ). Again, parental education demonstrates an increase in delinquent behavior ( $b = .04, p < .05$ ). Age decreases delinquent behavior between the two waves ( $b = -.15, p < .001$ ). Compared to those living with both biological parents, those coming from a single-parent household at Wave I demonstrate more delinquency at Wave III ( $b = .22, p < .05$ ).

### **Effects of military enlistment and marriage on high delinquent behavior**

The results of logistic regression analyses are presented in Table III with odds ratios and confidence intervals displayed. These models predict the odds of displaying high levels of delinquent behavior at Wave III. In this study, high delinquent behavior was defined by those whose scores were laying one standard deviation above the mean. As shown in Column I, being female significantly decreases the likelihood of participating in high delinquency over time ( $OR = .27, p < .001$ ). Unlike in Table II, parental education is not significantly related to high levels of delinquent behavior over time. Age decreases the likelihood of high delinquent behavior over time ( $OR = .79, p < .001$ ). Delinquency at

Wave I increases the chances of high delinquency over time (OR=1.07,  $p<.001$ ). Those who lived in a single-parent household had over 1.5 times the odds of showing high delinquency in emerging adulthood compared to those who lived in a two biological parent household. (OR=1.58,  $p<.01$ ). In addition, African American young adults, compared to white young adults, show an increase in the likelihood of high delinquency (OR=1.58,  $p<.05$ ).

Column II of Table III includes ever serving in the military in the analysis. However, similar to Table II, it does not significantly influence delinquency over time, contrary to the first two hypotheses of this study. Being female and age both decrease the odds of high delinquent behavior over time (OR=.26,  $p<.001$ ; OR=.79,  $p<.001$  respectively). Delinquency at Wave I increases the likelihood of high delinquent behavior over time (OR=1.07,  $p<.001$ ). Living with a single parent increases the odds of high delinquency (OR=1.59,  $p<.01$ ) as does being an African American young adult (OR=1.58,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table III. Survey Adjusted Logistic Regression of High Delinquent Behavior (Wave 3) on Marital Status, Military Involvement, and Controls (N=3355) (OR, CI).**

Independent Variable	Odds Ratio			
	I	II	III	IV
Female <sup>a</sup>	.27*** [.18-.36]	.26*** [.18-.37]	.27*** [.19-.38]	.27*** [.19-.39]
Parent Education	1.04 [.97-1.12]	1.04 [.97-1.12]	1.03 [.96-1.11]	1.03 [.96-1.11]
Age	.79*** [.71-.87]	.79*** [.71-.87]	.80*** [.73-.89]	.80** [.73-.89]
Delinquency at Wave I	1.07*** [1.05-1.10]	1.07*** [1.05-1.10]	1.07*** [1.05-1.10]	1.07*** [1.05-1.10]
Married	--	--	.53* [.31-.91]	.52* [.30-.89]
Ever in Military	--	1.31 [.69-2.49]	--	1.40 [.73-2.68]
<b>FAMILY STRUCTURE:</b>				
Blended family:	1.07	1.06	1.08	1.08
Two parents <sup>b</sup>	[.68-1.67]	[.68-1.66]	[.69-1.70]	[.68-1.69]
Single-parent family	1.58** [1.12-2.23]	1.59** [1.13-2.23]	1.61** [1.13-2.28]	1.62** [1.14-2.30]
Other family structure	1.06 [.48-2.32]	1.06 [.48-2.33]	1.10 [.49-2.48]	1.11 [.50-2.50]
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY:</b>				
Hispanic American <sup>c</sup>	1.34 [.83-2.15]	1.34 [.83-2.15]	1.36 [.85-2.17]	1.36 [.85-2.17]
African American	1.58* [1.03-2.43]	1.58* [1.03-2.43]	1.53 [.99-2.36]	1.52 [.98-2.35]
Other ethnicity	.59 [.30-1.14]	.59 [.30-1.13]	.59 [.30-1.14]	.59 [.31-1.13]
Model adjusted Wald statistic	13.84*** F <sub>(10,122)</sub>	12.49*** F <sub>(11,121)</sub>	12.15*** F <sub>(11,121)</sub>	11.04*** F <sub>(12,120)</sub>

\*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05 † p<.10 (two-tailed) Reference Categories: <sup>a</sup>Male; <sup>b</sup>Two Biological Parents; <sup>c</sup>White.

Column III of the same table contains being married in its analysis. The findings support the first hypothesis and demonstrate that being married decreases the likelihood of high delinquent behavior over time (OR=.53, p<.05). Those that are married at Wave III

demonstrate a reduced likelihood of being highly delinquent. Females have a decreased likelihood of participating in high delinquent behavior (OR=.27,  $p<.001$ ). Age is associated with a decrease in odds of high delinquent behavior (OR=.80,  $p<.001$ ). Those that were delinquent at Wave I have an increased chance of being highly delinquent at Wave III (OR=1.07,  $p<.001$ ). Belonging to a single-parent household increases the likelihood of highly delinquent behavior (OR=1.61,  $p<.01$ ). It is of note that, as in Table II, being African American is no longer significant in predicting highly delinquent behavior, further suggesting marriage as a mediating variable.

Column IV of Table III includes both being married and being enlisted in the military in its analysis. In partial contrast of the first hypothesis and in complete contrast to the second hypothesis, being married decreases the likelihood of being highly delinquent (OR=.52,  $p<.01$ ) but being enlisted in the military is not significant. Being female and age is associated with a smaller likelihood of participating in highly delinquent behavior (OR=.27,  $p<.001$ ; OR=.80,  $p<.001$ , respectively). Of note is that being female is the strongest predictor of not being highly delinquent. Demonstrating delinquency at Wave I is predictive of high delinquency at Wave III (OR=1.07,  $p<.001$ ). In addition, belonging to a single-parent family, net of other factors, is the strongest predictor of being highly delinquent (OR=1.62,  $p<.01$ ).

### **Effects of military enlistment and marriage on delinquent behavior by gender**

Table IV tests the informal social control of being married and military involvement on delinquent behavior in gender sub-groups. The models for females are presented in Panel A of Table IV and those for males presented in Panel B.

Among females, Column I reveals that parental education increases delinquency ( $b=.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Age is associated with a decreased amount of delinquent behavior for females ( $b=-.07$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Delinquency at Wave I predicts an increase in delinquent behavior for females at Wave III ( $b=.06$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The other control variables, such as single-parent families and African American young adults, do not demonstrate any significant changes in delinquent behavior.

Column II includes ever being in the military among females. In support of the third hypothesis, being in the military is associated with a decrease in delinquent involvement at Wave III ( $b=-.23$ ;  $p<.05$ ). This result was not apparent in the full sample analyses, but emerges in the sub-group results. For females, parental education increases delinquency ( $b=.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ), as does delinquency at Wave I ( $b=.06$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The association with age demonstrates a decrease in delinquent behavior ( $b=-.07$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

**Table IV. Survey Adjusted OLS Regression of Delinquent Behavior (Wave 3) on Predictors by Gender [b/(sb)]**

Independent Variable	Panel A. Females (n=1813)				Panel B. Males (n=1542)			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Parent Education	.03*	.03*	.03*	.03*	.06	.06	.06	.06
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.03)	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)
Age	-.07**	-.07**	-.06**	-.06**	-.26***	-.26***	-.24***	-.24***
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Delinquency at Wave I	.06***	.06***	.06***	.06***	.09***	.09***	.09***	.09***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Married	--	--	-.08	-.08	--	--	-.49**	-.49**
			(.09)	(.09)			(.19)	(.18)
Ever in Military	--	-.23*	--	-.23*	--	-.00	--	.07
		(.11)		(.11)		(.29)		(.29)
FAMILY STRUCTURE:	.03	.04	.04	.04	.28	.28	.29	.29
Blended family:Two parents <sup>a</sup>	(.11)	(.11)	(.10)	(.11)	(.23)	(.23)	(.23)	(.23)
Single-parent family	.11	.11	.11	.11	.30	.30	.32	.32
	(.10)	(.10)	(.10)	(.10)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)
Other family structure	.26	.27	.28	.28	-.06	-.06	-.04	-.04
	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.35)	(.35)	(.36)	(.36)
RACE/ETHNICITY:	.01	.00	.00	.00	.20	.20	.20	.20
Hispanic American <sup>b</sup>	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.25)	(.25)	(.25)	(.25)
African American	.17	.17	.15	.16	.46	.46	.43	.43
	(.10)	(.10)	(.10)	(.10)	(.30)	(.30)	(.30)	(.30)
Other ethnicity	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.43*	-.43*	-.42*	-.42*
	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.20)	(.20)	(.20)	(.20)
R <sup>2</sup>	.046	.046	.046	.046	.068	.068	.071	.071
Model adjusted Wald statistic	5.09***	4.60***	4.92***	4.49***	7.19***	6.96***	6.46***	6.79***
	F <sub>(9,123)</sub>	F <sub>(10,122)</sub>	F <sub>(10,122)</sub>	F <sub>(11,121)</sub>	F <sub>(9,123)</sub>	F <sub>(10,122)</sub>	F <sub>(10,122)</sub>	F <sub>(11,121)</sub>

\*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05 † p<.10 (two-tailed) Reference Categories: <sup>a</sup>Two Biological Parents; <sup>b</sup>White.

Column III contains the variable of ever being married among females. In support of the fourth hypothesis, being married does not protect against delinquency effect among females. Parental education and delinquency at Wave I increase delinquent behavior ( $b=.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $b=.06$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively). Among females, age is associated with a decrease in delinquency ( $b=-.06$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The final column for Panel A for the female sub-sample includes both ever being in the military and ever being married among females. Partially supporting the third hypothesis, that the protective effect of military service will be the same for men and women, ever being in the military decreases delinquent behavior ( $b=-.23$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The results also support the fourth hypothesis, that the protective effect of marriage will be stronger among men than women, and demonstrate that, among females, being married does not display any significant effects on delinquency. Delinquency at Wave I and parental education increases delinquent behavior ( $b=.06$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $b=.03$ ,  $p<.05$ , respectively). Age is associated with a decrease in delinquency ( $b=-.06$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The results in Panel B of Table IV pertain to the sub-sample of males. Column V regresses changes in delinquency on the control variables. Unlike for females, parental education is not associated with changes in delinquency. Age demonstrates a decrease in delinquent behavior ( $b=-.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Delinquency at Wave I displays an increase in delinquent behavior at Wave III ( $b=.09$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In addition, also unlike the females,

males belonging to other ethnicities besides whites, Hispanics, or African Americans display a significant decrease in delinquency ( $b = -.43$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Column VI includes ever being in the military in the analysis with the control variables. In contrast to the study hypotheses, military enlistment has no significant effects on delinquent behavior among males. Similar to the previous column, age among males reveals a negative effect on delinquency ( $b = -.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Delinquency at Wave I increases delinquent behavior at Wave III ( $b = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Males belonging to other ethnic groups are associated with a decrease in delinquency ( $b = -.49$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Ever being married is included in the analysis with the results shown in Column VII of Table IV. Marriage among males decreases delinquency at Wave III, supporting the fourth hypothesis ( $b = -.49$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Age and other ethnicities are associated with a decrease in delinquency as well ( $b = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b = -.42$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively). Those that were delinquent at Wave I demonstrate an increase in delinquency at Wave III ( $b = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The final column of Panel B regresses changes in delinquency on the control variables, ever being in the military and ever being married among males. Being married is associated with a decrease in delinquency at Wave III ( $b = -.49$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This result differs from those for females. Using a z-test to test for significant differences between males and females, it was found that marriage is more protective for males than females,



supporting hypothesis four ( $z=-2.94$ ) (Clogg, et al., 1995; Paternoster, et al., 1998).

Being in the military was not protective for males as it was for females. However, the  $z$ -test for significant gender differences revealed that those results were not statistically significant ( $z=-.96$ ) (Clogg, et al., 1995; Paternoster, et al., 1998). This does not support hypothesis three. Age and other ethnicities are associated with a decrease in delinquency ( $b=-.24, p<.001$ ;  $b=-.42, p<.05$ , respectively). Delinquency at Wave I has an increase in delinquent behavior at Wave III ( $b=.09, p<.001$ ).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This thesis addresses gender similarities and differences in the effects of social bonds on changes in delinquency. This builds on work started over sixty years ago, when the Gluecks collected what has now become a historical data source, consisting of 500 delinquent white males and 500 nondelinquent white males. The detailed reanalysis of the data conducted by Robert Sampson and John Laub (1993, 2003) formed the basis of their Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control. The central premise of this theory is that “crime and deviance result when an individual’s bonds to society are weak or broken” (Sampson and Laub 1990:611). Sampson and Laub argue these bonds are from social capital individuals form with informal social institutions, such as being married and being enlisted in the military. The social investment, converging with structured routine activities and human agency (Laub and Sampson 2003), can lead delinquents to desistance.

This chapter will explore the key results of the analyses, with a focus on the hypotheses presented in Chapter II. The possible explanations for the results will be discussed, as well as connecting the findings to past research previously addressed. The next section will look at the strengths and limitations of the study, followed by proposed future research.

## **Discussion**

The first hypothesis, that both military involvement and marriage will reduce delinquency over time, was only partially supported by the results. I found being married was significantly associated with a decrease in delinquent behavior. But, being enlisted in the military had no significant effects on delinquency in the Add Health data.

The finding of the marriage effects is consistent with Sampson and Laub's (1993; 2003) findings, in addition to the research by Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwebeerta (2009) and King and his colleagues (2007). Both of these studies used samples from the late 1970s or the 1980s. Bersani et al.'s subjects were from the Netherlands and were studied between the ages of 12 and 55. Their data comes from the Criminal Career and Life-Course Study which is a representative sample of 4% of all criminal cases in the Netherlands tried in 1977. In addition, the birth years of their subjects ranged from 1907 to 1965, representing several generations. This allows for "the comparison of life course dynamics across multiple historical contexts" (Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwebeerta 2009: 8). The total sample encompassed 4,615 people, made up of 4,187 males and 428 females. The composition of this sample enabled the researchers to investigate the effects of gender and socio-historical differences on criminal careers.

King and his colleagues (2007) utilized an American data source, the National Youth Survey, which had data into the participants' twenties. The sample began in 1976 with 1,725 individuals, ages 11 to 17, with the final wave collected in 1987 in which the

participants were between the ages of 21 and 27. The sample was found to be representative of the American youth population and measured several behaviors including deviance, substance abuse, schooling, work, marriage, and parenthood.

The agreement of these previous findings that represent populations from various time periods and the current findings using a contemporary and diverse sample strengthens Sampson and Laub's theory. The protective effect of marriage is possibly from the social bonds that are formed in the relationship, investing the former delinquent to his or her new family.

However, Sampson and Laub specified only good marriages, or those including close emotional ties and mutual investment, as having these protective effects (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998). The data analyzed in this study did not take into account the strength of the marital bond, implying that the marriage may lead to a decrease in delinquent behavior regardless of the emotional bond. It is important to note that in Laub and Sampson's 2003 follow-up of the delinquent males at age 70, they were unable to measure the strength of the marital attachment. They still found that marriage lead to desistance for the Glueck men (Laub and Sampson 2003: 268-269), however, despite their theoretical emphasis.

In addition, other studies (Broidy and Cauffman 2006; Giordano et al. 2002) emphasized that in order for marriage to have the protective effect, the spouse needed to have a

“normative orientation” (Giordano et al. 2002:1045). In other words, it was not the closeness of the bonds between husband and wife that decreased delinquency, but that the spouse provided a contrast to the delinquent’s previous background. Giordano and her colleagues (2002) utilized longitudinal data between the years of 1987 and 1995 of 127 delinquent females and 127 delinquent males, all from Ohio institutions. They did not find a significant relationship between marital attachment and criminal behavior, as Sampson and Laub did (1993). However, in Giordano et al.’s study, only 27% of the females and 24% of the males sampled were married at the second interview in 1995, compared to 66% of the Glueck men who were married at the second wave of data collection. Perhaps there were insufficient numbers in the Giordano et al. study to show a significant relationship between the two variables of interest.

It is of note that the study conducted by Giordano and her colleagues (2002) involved a sample that was more ethnically diverse than the Glueck sample, in addition to belonging to a different time period and cultural backgrounds. A small number of their sample had what they referred to as the ‘respectability package,’ which being in the state of marriage and holding a stable job. For these cases, marriage was protective for those individuals. Those with none of these elements, however, were found to be persistent in their offending.

However, as my results indicate, marriage is protective of further delinquency in emerging adulthood. Future research is needed to determine what about marriage is

essential in leading to desistance, as this present study did not take into account the spouse's criminal background or marital attachment.

The second part of the first hypothesis proposed that military involvement would also reduce delinquency over time. That military enlistment did not have an effect on delinquent behavior is in contrast to the findings of Sampson and Laub (2003) as well as of Elder's (1986). These theorists both viewed involvement in the military as a positive turning point for delinquents as it provided support through the form of structure, education, and career possibilities. However, an absence of support may indicate a change in the military. That is, with the transition from the draft era to the All-Volunteer Force in addition to the different wars the US is involved in, the military during World War II is not the same as the modern military.

Bouffard (2005) studied a sample of those enlisted in the military during the early years of the All-Volunteer Force. Her sample was from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and included two groups: noninstitutionalized, civilian youth and those who were serving in the military. The subjects were interviewed annually starting in 1979 when they were between the ages of 14 and 22 and with the last interview in 1994. Bouffard's primary variables of interest were military service and later criminal behavior. She found that for those with no delinquent history, military had no significant impact on offending. However, those with a delinquent history had a significantly higher chance of later violent offending, regardless of military involvement. My results, though in

contrast to those found by Sampson and Laub, support Bouffard's findings. A possible explanation is the difference in those who served during the draft era versus the All-Volunteer Force. Perhaps there is something inherently different about the men and women who willingly enlist versus those men who were drafted. These results reveal a possible new trend that highlights the need for further research in this area.

The second proposed hypothesis of this thesis stated that the effects of military involvement will be more pronounced than the marriage effect on delinquent behavior. The results from the analyses did not support this. As discussed above, only marriage demonstrated an effect on delinquency. However, while testing for the third hypothesis, that the protective effect of military service would be equal for males and females, it was found that military enlistment emerged as protective of female delinquency. This finding is inconsistent with the theory purported by Elder (1986) and Sampson and Laub (2003), as they did not analyze the effects of females in the military but found military to be protective for male delinquency. However, it is important to note that this finding should be interpreted with caution. The z-test analysis revealed that the gender difference was not significant. Caution is due also to the low level of service involvement in emerging adulthood. Due to the study design and data availability, the data used consisted of those in the military between 1995 and 2002. However, those currently serving overseas in the military were not surveyed. In our sample, only 36 of the females and 136 of the males were ever in the military. This small sample size may restrict power to detect group differences.

Hypothesis four purported that the protective effect of marriage would be stronger among men than women, and this was fully supported. The test for significance revealed that the gender differences were significant. This is consistent with Sampson and Laub's (1993; 2003) findings despite the historical and cultural differences of the Glueck data to the present-day, as their male-only sample demonstrated the protective effects of marriage. This is also consistent with the findings of Bersani et al. (2009), though their sample utilized self-reported delinquency rather than official data. Sampson and Laub argue that the negative effect on crime and deviant behavior is through the social bonds of a strong marriage (1993; 2003). The researchers emphasize the difference between a good and bad marriage and argue that the emotional attachment the spouses hold towards one another is essential. Sampson and Laub maintain that the stronger the attachment, the better the marriage and also the more likely for the spouse to exert direct social control, leading to desistance.

However, as mentioned previously, their follow-up study was not able to "directly model yearly changes in social bonds such as marital attachment... from ages 17 to 70" (Laub and Sampson 2003: 273). Yet Laub and Sampson maintain that the data between ages 25 and 32 of the Glueck men revealed a high correlation between marital attachment and number of years married, supporting the possibility that the investment aspect of a good marriage takes time to grow. Thus, they argue that those married for a long period of



time have a strong attachment to their wives, with the attachment leading to desistance as previously described.

However, a limitation to the third wave of the Add Health data is it did not measure the strength of the marital attachment nor how long the subjects had been married; it only measured if the subject was married or not. Thus, the results here appear to indicate that any marriage decreases criminal and deviant acts over time among men. Future research utilizing further waves of the Add Health data should investigate the possibility of an attachment or duration effect.

The explanation for why marriage is a stronger predictor of desistance for men than women is an important and interesting topic. Some researchers maintain that females have a higher likelihood of being married to a male delinquent than males do of being married to a female delinquent (Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwbeerta 2009). This is due to two well-established trends: (1) more males are imprisoned than females, and (2) those imprisoned upon release return to many of the same neighborhoods. The researchers maintain that the delinquent male spouse would not provide the female with the pro-social background researchers such as Giordano and her colleagues (2002) assert to be essential, therefore hindering desistance. It is possible that the females in our sample were not married to men with a pro-social background. However, the Add Health data did not take into account the criminal history of the subject's spouse, so alternative explanations are important.

On a similar vein, Giordano and her colleagues (2002) also stress the importance of not just the structural changes that occur in an individual's life course, but the role of human agency. They view what Sampson and Laub call turning points as 'hooks for change,' a term that emphasizes the role individual's play in taking advantage of opportunities. It is not just the exposure to a possible turning point that leads to desistance; the individual has to be open to change, be able to create a new 'replacement' self, and change the way they think about deviant behavior. Once that is completed, Giordano et al. argue, the individual will desist. Perhaps for this sample, the female delinquents, but not the males, were unwilling to change or unable to create a conventional self. This possibility highlights the need for qualitative as well as quantitative data, in order to assess the individual's view of themselves.

Others have argued about the changing social norms being the cause of the gender discrepancy. The researchers' Broidy and Cauffman's (2006) data comes from the Glueck's 1920s sample of delinquent women. Their results suggested that at this time period, marriage was protective for women. Though they argued that the formation of social capital is strongly related to desistance, they maintain that the way social capital affects the individual is in large part due to historical context. Specifically, wives in the 1920s had conventional social roles to follow, derived from the norms of the time. For these women, that meant certain duties and responsibilities that would lead to daily routine activities—one of the requisites for a turning point (Sampson and Laub 2003).

Though my sub-group analyses revealed no protective effect of marriage among females despite the full sample demonstrating a protective effect, others have found slightly different results. Both King and his colleagues (2007) and Bersani and her colleagues (2009) have found marriage to be protective of desistance in female offenders, though males had a stronger protective effect. Those researchers cited the gender difference to be due to the higher likelihood of males marrying upward while females marry downward. As described previously, both of these studies used samples from the late 1970s or the 1980s. Bersani et al.'s (2009) subjects were from the Netherlands and were studied between the ages of 12 and 55.

King and his colleagues (2007) utilized an American sample that had data into the participants' twenties. Their data was representative of the youth in the US, and it is important to note that they had a higher proportion of females in their study than was found in Bersani's study. These cross-national results compared to the findings of female desistance by Broidy and Cauffman's (2006) study of 1920 delinquent females demonstrate a possible cultural shift of the meaning of marriage for wives. Broidy and Cauffman argue that the meaning of marriage as well as the social norms has changed since the 1920s. At the time of the Glueck data collection, the men were the breadwinners and the wives were supposed to stay at home and care for the children. Since the Glueck data was collected, we have encountered the "divorce revolution of the 1970s" (King, Massoglia, and MacMillan 2007:36) as well as an increasing rate of

couples cohabitating and waiting longer to get married. Also, more couples are choosing to not have children and many more married women are in the workforce (Cohen and Bianchi 1999; Livingston and Cohn 2010). Essentially, the authors are purporting that the current social norms for married females have changed and the new ones no longer pertain to behaviors that lead to desistance. Perhaps these old roles gave the women the social capital and the social control needed to desist. As the results from this thesis and others previously discussed indicate, marriage may no longer contain the bonds needed for social control on behalf of the wife. However, the reasons for this along with this possibility are speculative, and needs further research to determine this cause.

In the book *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* (2000), Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, through the analysis of several studies, conclude that marriage has multiple benefits for both males and females, despite earlier findings that stressed the disadvantages for females. While both married men and women have better health than singles, married men demonstrate a higher health benefit. The authors explain this difference by stating it “is not that marriage warps women, but that single men lead such warped lives” (Waite and Gallagher 2000: 167). In other words, by getting married, their wives lead them to healthier lifestyles. Though their book did not look at marriage in terms of criminal behavior, the ability for wives to change their husbands’ health could be replicated in the desistance process.

### **Study strengths and limitations**

The Add Health data set has several strengths, including the large sample size it follows longitudinally. In addition, the data is nationally representative of all racial and ethnic groups and of gender (Harris et al., 2009b). These both contribute to the generalizability of the results. In addition, my study was able to test multiple social bonds at once, those being marriage and military enlistment. This allowed me to test the complete effects of one bond net of the other.

In spite of the strengths, the sample used also contains some limitations. The measures may not accurately capture the behavior of interest. The marriage measure solely looked at if the subject had ever been married. It was not able to investigate the strength of the marital bond or the criminal history of the spouse. In addition, as described above, there was a small sample size available for those who had ever served in the military. Only 36 of the females and 136 of the males surveyed were ever in the military; those who were currently serving overseas in the armed forces were excluded from the study. In addition, the public use data of the Add Health data source at the time of analysis only included a subsample of Waves 1 through 3. The ages of the participants at Wave 3 ranged from 18 to 27, so not all the subjects would have had the chance to enter the military yet.

Another limitation includes the small amount of variance in changes in delinquency that was explained by the informal social control measures (i.e. marriage and military enlistment). This leaves open the possibility of alternative variables that play a larger factor in desistance over time.

**Future research aims**

The purpose of this study was to further examine the relationship of marriage and military enlistment in juvenile delinquents' desistance as they become young adults. The results partially supported the hypotheses that were formed from Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control (1993; 2003). Specific topics of future research include the effects of military enlistment on desistance of both males and females using a larger sample size. Also, racial and ethnic differences should be researched further pertaining to the marital and military effect on delinquent behavior. These results would be important in determining if the traditional institutions theorized to provide social control is universal across all groups. It is possible that institutions such as marriage and military enlistment have varying effects on different races, ethnicities and cultures. In addition, how military enlistment and marriage affect individuals who commit property crimes versus those who commit violent crimes should be investigated. It is possible that one of these social institutions can lead to desistance in one type of crime but not the other.

Sampson and Laub valued both qualitative and quantitative data in their analyses of the Glueck data. Interviewing those who have desisted versus those who have persisted in crime using a contemporary sample could be useful in further theory development and testing. Giordano and her colleagues (2002) stressed the importance of an identity transformation in desistance. Without qualitative data, researchers cannot investigate this

claim further. Also, looking at possible differences between homosexual and heterosexual relationships in the desistance process would be interesting and help further theory.

The role marriage plays in desistance is evident, though the mechanisms through which it works is unclear. Looking further into different kind of relationships, from romantic to platonic, would allow researchers to gain a better understanding of these mechanisms. For instance, Giordano (2003) describes how both friends and romantic partners communicate certain norms and values and affect individual's feelings of self-worth, all of which could differ between races/ethnicities and genders. These norms may be relevant to delinquency, pressuring the individual to commit delinquent acts. Through further understanding of these and other mechanisms, theory could be improved as well as possible policy implications.

## REFERENCES

- Bersani, Bianca, John Laub and Paul Nieuwbeerta. 2009. "Marriage and Desistance from Crime in the Netherlands: Do Gender and Socio-Historical Context Matter?" *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 25(1):3-24.
- Blokland, Arjan A.J. and Paul Nieuwbeerta. 2010. "Life Course Criminology." Pp. 51-85 in *International Handbook of Criminology*, edited by Shlomo Giora Shoham, Paul Knepper, and Martin Kett. Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis.
- Bouffard, Leana A. 2005. "The Military as a Bridging Environment in Criminal Careers: Differential Outcomes of the Military Experience." *Armed Forces & Society* (0095327X) 31(2):273-295.
- Broidy, Lisa M. and Elizabeth E. Cauffman, 2006. *Understanding the Female Offender*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice.
- Chantalla, Kim and Joyce Tabor. 2010. *National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health: Strategies to Perform a Design-Based Analysis Using the Add Health Data*. Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Clogg, Clifford C., Eva Petkova, Adamantios Haritou. 1995. "Statistical Methods for Comparing Regression Coefficients between Models" *American Journal of Sociology* 100(5):1261-1293.
- Cohen, Philip N. and Suzanne M. Bianchi. 1999. "Marriage, Children, and Women's Employment: What Do We Know?" *Monthly Labor Review* 122 (12): 22-31.
- Colman, Rebecca, Do Kim, Susan Mitchell-Herzfeld and Therese Shady. 2009. "Delinquent Girls Grown Up: Young Adult Offending Patterns and their Relation to Early Legal, Individual, and Family Risk." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38(3):355-366.
- Cronbach, Lee J. 1951. "Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests." *Psychometrika* 16 (3): 297-334.
- Elder, Glen H., Jr. 1986. "Military Times and Turning Points in Men's Lives." *Developmental Psychology* 22:233-245.
- Elder, Glen H, Jr, Monica K Johnson, and Robert Crosnoe. 2003. "The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory." Pp. 3-19 in *Handbook of the Life Course*, edited by Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan. New York: Kluwer.



- Foster, Holly and John Hagan. 2007. "Incarceration and Intergenerational Social Exclusion." *Social Problems* 54(4):399-433.
- Giordano, Peggy C., Stephen A. Cernkovich and Jennifer L. Rudolph. 2002. "Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 107(4):990-106.
- Giordano, Peggy C. 2003. "Relationships in Adolescence." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 29: 257-281.
- Hagan, John and Holly Foster. 2001. "Youth Violence and the End of Adolescence." *American Sociological Review*. 66(6):874-899.
- Harris, K.M., C.T. Halpern, E. Whitsel, K. Husey, J. Tabor, P. Entzel, and J.R. Udry. 2009a. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health: FAQ About Data [WWW document]. URL: <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/faqs/aboutdata>.
- Harris, K.M., C.T. Halpern, E. Whitsel, K. Husey, J. Tabor, P. Entzel, and J.R. Udry. 2009b. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health: Research Design [WWW document]. URL: <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/design>.
- Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kessler, Ronald C. and David F. Greenberg. 1981. *Linear Panel Analysis: Models of Quantitative Change*. New York: Academic.
- Kelty, Ryan, Meredith Kleykamp, and David R. Segal. 2010. "The Military and the Transition to Adulthood." *The Future of Children* 20(1):1550-1558.
- King, Ryan D., Michael Massoglia and Ross MacMillan. 2007. "The Context of Marriage and Crime: Gender, the Propensity to Marry, and Offending in Early Adulthood." *Criminology* 45(1):33-65.
- Kruttschnitt, Candace and Rosemary Gartner. 2003. "Women's Imprisonment." *Crime and Justice* 30:1-81.
- Laub, John H., Daniel S. Nagin and Robert J. Sampson. 1998. "Trajectories of Change in Criminal Offending: Good Marriages and the Desistance Process." *American Sociological Review* 63(2):225-238.
- Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 1993. "Turning Points in the Life Course: Why Change Matters to the Study of Crime." *Criminology* 31(3):301-325.

- .. 2001. "Understanding Desistance from Crime." *Crime and Justice* 28:1-69.
- .. 2003. *Shared beginning, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Leverentz, Andrea M. 2006. "The Love of a Good Man? Romantic Relationships as a Source of Support Or Hindrance for Female Ex-Offenders." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43(4):459-488.
- Livingston, Gretchen and D'Vera Cohn. 2010. Pew Research Center Publications: The New Demography of American Motherhood. [WWW document]. URL: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1586/changing-demographic-characteristics-american-mothers>.
- Lundquist, Jennifer H. 2008. "Ethnic and Gender Satisfaction in the Military: The Effect of a Meritocratic Institution." *American Sociological Review* 73(3):477-496.
- MacLean, Alair and Glen H. Elder Jr. 2007. "Military Service in the Life Course." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33(1):175-196.
- Paternoster, Raymond, Robert Brame, Paul Mazerolle, and Alex Piquero. 1998. "Using the Correct Statistical Test for the Equality of Regression Coefficients." *Criminology* 36 (4): 859-866.
- Piquero, Alex R., David P. Farrington, and Alfred Bulmstein. 2003. "The Criminal Career Paradigm." Pp. 359-506 in *Crime and Justice, a Review of Research*, Vol. 30, edited by Michael Tonry. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub 1990. "Crime and Deviance Over the Life Course: The Salience of Adult Social Bonds." *American Sociological Review* 55(5):609-627.
- .. 1992. "Crime and Deviance in the Life Course." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18(1):63-84.
- .. 1996. "Socioeconomic Achievement in the Life Course of Disadvantaged Men: Military Service as a Turning Point, Circa 1940-1965." *American Sociological Review* 61(3):347-367.
- .. 2005a. "A General Age-Graded Theory of Crime: Lessons Learned and the Future of Life-Course Criminology." Pp. 165-181 in *Integrated Developmental & Life-Course Theories of Offending*, Vol. 14, edited by David P. Farrington. New Brunswick, NJ; United States: Transaction.
- .. 2005b. "A Life-Course View of the Development of Crime." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 602:12-45.

Steffensmeier, Darrell, Hua Zhong, Jeff Ackerman, Jennifer Schwartz and Suzanne Agha. 2006. "Gender Gap Trends for Violent Crimes, 1980 to 2003: A UCR-NCVS Comparison." *Feminist Criminology* 1(1):72-98.

Waite, Linda and Maggie Gallagher. 2000. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. Ney York: Doubleday.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Jessica Holley

Professional Address: c/o Dr. Holly Foster  
Department of Sociology  
MS 4351  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

Email Address: jessicamholley@hotmail.com

Education: B.S., Sociology & Psychology, Texas A&M University,  
May 2011  
Magna Cum Laude  
Honors Undergraduate Research Fellow  
Phi Beta Kappa