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## ABSTRACT

During the crime-prone years of young adulthood, many people are not yet firmly connected to the work and family institutions that are most studied by criminologists. Instead, they tend to remain closely connected to their parents and often fall somewhere in between complete financial dependence and complete financial independence. In an age range characterized by increased freedom from adult control and new possibilities for expressions of agency, how does offending relate to other key domains of life? In this dissertation, I shed light on the relational and behavioral correlates of crime through three studies of offenders' personal finances and connections with their families of origin. I draw on data from three different national surveys: The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997 cohort), and the National Survey of Families and Households. I show that (1) young adult offenders receive more financial support from their parents than do their non-offending peers and even their own non-offending siblings, and this is not due to their financial need; (2) young adult offenders' financial need appears to be highly subjective, because they have higher incomes and earnings than do their non-offending peers but still incur more debt and experience more economic hardship; and (3) parents more often have conflicted, socially distant, and instrumentally imbalanced relationships with offending young adult offspring than they do with non-offending offspring, but most offender-parent relationships are not particularly troubled. These findings suggest that parental support may be more unconditional than social control theorists might expect. They also suggest that offenders are fully committed neither to crime nor to conformity, but rather show versatility in the means that they are willing to use to pursue their material goals.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Between the ages of 18 and 30, rates of crime and deviance decline more than they do at any other phase of the lifespan (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Most adolescents engage in at least some delinquency (Elliott and Ageton, 1980; Moffitt, 1993; Short and Nye, 1957). By adulthood, most people will have left crime behind, and those who have not may risk being marginalized by the cumulative negative consequences of their misbehavior (Sampson and Laub, 1997). In the interim, there is a period when crime is no longer normative, but it is not yet rare. During this same period, young people also renegotiate their relationships with their families of origin and begin to grapple with others' expectations that they soon will become self-sufficient (Furstenberg et al., 2004; Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Levinson, 1978; Steinberg, 1990). Cross-sectional snapshots of normative development during this age span (e.g., Amato, 2006; MacMillan and Eliason, 2003; Osgood, Ruth, et al., 2005; Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck, and Park, 2005) show that young adults are as diverse in their role status configurations and in the speed and permanence of their apparent movements toward independence as they are in their criminal behavior.

This dissertation is inspired by the idea that criminologists can learn much about the nature of criminality by studying how crime relates to individual differences in behaviors from other key domains of young adulthood. In an age range characterized by increased freedom from adult control and new possibilities for expressions of agency, how do offenders lead their lives? Through three empirical projects I seek to generate some new facts about crime by examining it in relation to life circumstances that are rarely studied by criminologists, namely intergenerational relations in adulthood and

personal financial practices. Many of the most prominent theories of crime were developed to explain juvenile delinquency and the reforming effects of marriage and careers. Others were developed to explain the serious crimes of the lower classes. I explore the extent to which these theories are consistent with general population offenders' life circumstances during a more transitional period. In addition, I describe ways in which new takes on existing criminological theories and the importation of ideas from outside of criminology might help criminologists make sense of my new observations about young adult offending. First, though, I provide an orienting framework to the dissertation as a whole. In the remainder of this chapter I describe my general approach to the study of young adult offending and I preview the specific research questions addressed in this dissertation.

#### DESCRIBING THE NATURE OF CRIMINALITY

At its broadest level, this dissertation is about the nature of criminality, which is the propensity to commit criminal acts (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Many of the major criminological theories seek to explain individual differences in this propensity, and empirical research about criminal behavior has yielded a wealth of information about the precursors of this propensity. In this project, I take a different approach. Rather than predicting who will and will not go on to offend, I begin with individuals who do offend and examine whether they approach other life domains, specifically money and family relations, differently than do individuals who do not offend. In other words, whereas others have asked, what facilitates the occurrence of criminal events (e.g., Cohen and Felson, 1979) and, what causes changes in individuals' propensities to commit crime (e.g., Sampson and Laub, 2005), I ask, what does it mean to be a person who breaks the law? How is everyday life different for offenders versus non-offenders? And how can

these differences inform our ideas about motives for crime and the risks of committing crime?

To frame my three descriptive works I rely on ideas from multiple theoretical perspectives, and especially control and strain perspectives. Commitment to and investment in conventional social ties are central to these theories, although different theorists offer very different takes on these themes. For example, Hirschi (1969) uses the idea of investment in conventional lines of action to explain why people would be reluctant to offend, whereas Merton (1938) focuses on the nexus between individuals' commitment to their goals and their commitment to using only legal means to reach those goals. As I describe in more detail in subsequent chapters, both of these perspectives are useful for this dissertation because they lead to predictions about different domains of offenders' lives. These themes are useful for studies of young adult crime in particular because the key developmental tasks of this age range involve the formation of commitments and investments. The young adult years are about establishing mutuality and reciprocity in relationships with other adults and about defining goals and priorities and enacting strategies to attain them (Arnett, 2004; Erikson, 1950; Keniston, 1971; Levinson, 1978). I seek to shed light on commitments, investments, and crime by examining how young adult offenders and non-offenders approach relational and economic tasks.

Criminological theory thus plays a somewhat nontraditional role in this dissertation. My questions deal more with describing criminality than they do with uncovering the conditions that encourage its expression in crime. Although I derive and test hypotheses about offenders' lives and I borrow statistical tools from the methods of

causal analysis, I make no claims about causal relationships among the constructs I study. Instead, I seek to use the relational and behavioral correlates of young adult crime to make statements about the priorities, predilections, and orientations of offenders. I now describe the three empirical projects that comprise Chapters 2 through 4 of this work.

## OVERVIEW OF THE THREE STUDIES

In this dissertation, I shed light on offenders' economic and interpersonal resources through three studies of their personal finances and connections with their families of origin. We know much about offenders' relationships with the labor market and with romantic partners (for reviews see Fagan and Freeman, 1999; Siennick and Osgood, 2008; Uggen and Wakefield, 2008). We know very little about what other sources of support are available to and used by offenders. This is unfortunate because, during these crime-prone years, many young adults are not yet firmly connected to the work and family institutions that are most studied by criminologists (Amato, 2006; Osgood, Ruth, et al., 2005; Sandefur et al., 2005). What are the key domains of life during this age range, and how do those relate to crime?

Scholars have only recently begun to document what it is like to be an average young adult, but interest in this age span has grown quickly. The major themes emerging from this new empirical work are that young adults tend to remain closely connected with their parents and often fall somewhere in between complete financial dependence and complete financial independence (Furstenberg et al., 2004; Schoeni and Ross, 2005). In the past five years alone, the MacArthur Foundation has funded three books on young adults' increasingly delayed entry into independent adult roles (Settersten, Furstenberg, and Rumbaut, 2005), the challenges faced by young adults who do not receive family

support (Osgood, Foster, et al., 2005), and the financial circumstances of the typical young adult (Danziger and Rouse, 2007). My projects benefit directly from this increased scholarly interest because much of the data I use were recently collected to answer previously unanswerable questions about economic and family life during this transitional age. The three empirical studies presented below address what I see as an interdisciplinary need for descriptive work on crime as a part of life during young adulthood.

In Chapter 2 I examine whether and how offending is associated with parents' financial support of their grown children. Not only must parents of offenders deal with their adult children's criminal behavior, but also any support that they give to these children is not as clearly an investment in the future as is paying for college expenses or providing a down payment for a house. Furthermore, offenders often have siblings who also could benefit from their parents' limited time and money. Are parents willing to serve as a source of support for criminal offspring? And what do parents do when they must choose between helping offspring who have and have not committed crimes? I approach these questions both from a criminological perspective that emphasizes offenders' weak social bonds and also from a contrasting family systems perspective that emphasizes parents' felt obligations to their grown children. I examine the offending-assistance relationship using data from two national samples of young people as well as data from a sibling sample, which allows me to describe inequalities in parents' assistance of offending and non-offending offspring. I also consider the offending-assistance relationship in the context of parent-offspring closeness, young adults'



financial need, and more traditional markers of young people's adult status such as living arrangements, marriage, and employment.

In Chapter 3 I unpack the concept of financial need in the context of young adult offending. Would transfers of money to offenders improve their economic circumstances? Most studies of offenders' economic well-being have focused on their reduced access to legitimate financial resources. My interest in the nature of criminality leads me instead to examine differences in how offenders and non-offenders in the same economic circumstances approach and use their financial resources. I draw on classic theoretical work on crime, material aspirations, and economic means to develop hypotheses about the versatility with which offenders pursue economic goals. I examine crime in relation to not only financial resources, but also financial obligations that rarely have been studied by criminologists. I use statistical methods that allow me to compare the financial problems of offenders and non-offenders who are matched on income, financial assets, and other life circumstances. My results address issues of commitment to deviance and of offenders' investments in their economic futures.

In Chapter 4 I return to the topic of offenders' relationships with their families of origin, giving detailed attention to crime in relation to multiple dimensions of intergenerational relationships. Given the wealth of research on juvenile delinquency and parent-child relations, we know surprisingly little about adult offending and parent-offspring relations. Using data that capture the parent's perspective, I examine not only parents' support of criminal offspring but also offenders' and their parents' geographical proximity, frequency of contact, and levels of affection, conflict, and trust. I use statistical methods that allow me to capture complexity in offenders' emotional and

instrumental relationships with their parents. Drawing again on themes of commitment and investment, I give special attention to the association of crime with mutuality and reciprocity in intergenerational relations. My data allow me to examine whether offenders who stay in touch with and receive support from their families of origin appear themselves to contribute to and invest in those relationships.

## CHAPTER 2: YOUNG ADULT OFFENDING AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM PARENTS

Is young adult offending related to financial assistance from parents? Past work on crime and adult social ties has focused on marriage and employment (e.g., Horney, Osgood, and Marshall, 1995; Laub and Sampson, 2003), but most people also stay connected to their families of origin for their entire shared life-spans (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). In addition, adult offending is concentrated in an age span when most young people are still receiving considerable financial help from their families of origin (Schoeni and Ross, 2005). Given these fundamental facts about intergenerational relationships, we know surprisingly little about adult offenders' ongoing relationships with their families of origin. Offenders' difficulties in school and work mean they are likely to have greater need (Moffitt et al., 2002; Robins, 1966; Tanner, Davies, and O'Grady, 1999), which may elicit more parental assistance. In contrast, research on families and delinquency suggests that offenders are likely to have strained emotional relationships with their parents (Hirschi, 1969; Laub and Sampson, 1988), which may suppress parental assistance. In this paper, I examine whether and how offending is related to the prevalence and amount of financial help that parents give to their young adult children. By addressing this question, I seek to shed light both on the sources of social support that offenders have to draw on and on the impact of young adults' crime on their families of origin.

I focus on financial assistance from parents for many reasons. First, this form of familial support is very common. Between half and three-quarters of young adults receive material help from their parents (Schoeni, 1997; Schoeni and Ross, 2005). Second, there

is substantial overlap between the key age range for adult crime and the age range during which adults are most likely to receive financial help from their parents. Both are concentrated in the late teen years and twenties (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Lye, 1996). Third, parental support can play a large role in shaping young adults' standards of living because of the time needed to build careers and to accumulate independent assets (Spilerman, 2000). Finally, financial assistance is a very concrete indicator of whether or not young adult offenders are in fact still connected to their parents.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, I draw on criminological work on processes of social bonding and on sociological work on family systems to develop competing hypotheses about the relationship between young adult crime and financial assistance from parents. I then test these hypotheses using data from two national samples of young people as well as data from a sibling sample, which allows me to examine the within-family relationship between crime and parental assistance. Finally, I attempt to unpack the offending-assistance relationship by examining it in the context of parent-offspring closeness, young adults' financial need, and more traditional markers of young people's adult status such as living arrangements, marriage, and employment.

#### **SOCIAL BONDS AND THE POTENTIAL COSTS OF CRIME**

How might parents respond to their adult children when those children are involved in crime? Social control theory has been one of the main lenses through which criminologists have viewed parent-child relationships. This theory aims to explain crime, not parental assistance, and so it does not directly yield hypotheses about the offending-assistance association. Still, parents' transfers of money to offspring occur in the context

of a broader interpersonal relationship, and this theory provides useful guidance on what adult offenders' relationships with their parents might look like in general.

Under social control theory, social relationships are important because behavior depends on constraints, and relationships are a key source of those constraints (Hirschi, 1969). That is, people behave in approved ways in large part because they foresee and fear the potential costs of not behaving in those ways. Thus, a key component of these theories is the expected or actual reactions of significant others to criminal behavior. People who care what their significant others think of them should be reluctant to risk losing their respect, esteem, and trust, and under Hirschi's (1969) description of attachment to others and Nye's (1958) description of indirect controls these all are potential costs of crime. Significant others also can exert direct controls over behavior. For example, parents can punish, spouses can give ultimatums, and employers can terminate employees (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Nye, 1958; Wells and Rankin, 1988). The withdrawal of parental financial assistance could be one such potential negative consequence of offending.

Although the role of parents' instrumental support is not well-specified in the social control perspective (Cullen, 1994), criminologists have theorized about how people invest in their significant others. To do this, they draw on Coleman's (1990) theoretical work on social capital. In the strongest interpersonal relationships, each party is invested, and the tie becomes characterized by an interdependence of the parties and by a sense of mutual obligation (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Nagin and Paternoster, 1994). In Sampson and Laub's (1993) work, strong bonds to others involve not only emotional attachments, but also the fulfillment of practical responsibilities in the relationship. For this reason

they define strong marital attachment both in terms of a warm and loving relationship and in terms of the fulfillment of financial responsibilities in the marriage.

Hirschi's (1969) initial formulation of social control theory emphasized the importance of the offender's lack of investment in social ties, but the mutuality inherent in strong relationships means that each party expects the other to contribute to the relationship. That is, social relationships are governed by strong norms of reciprocity (Coleman, 1990; Nagin and Paternoster, 1994; Portes, 1998). In general, when people invest in others they expect that the recipients will repay them in the future. This theme is visible in exchange theories of intergenerational relations, which posit that parents support adult offspring in part to create obligations of communication, time, and later assistance among those offspring (Lye, 1996; Spilerman, 2000). In this regard, offenders can be risky prospects; by offending they already are violating conventional expectations for behavior. People could be reluctant to invest in criminal offenders, and it is possible that for parents financial support represents one such investment.

If intergenerational relationships share these features of other close relationships, then parents should give less money to their adult children when those children are involved in crime. Empirical evidence on juvenile delinquency and relations with parents also leads to this expectation, because it shows that parents and delinquent children tend not to have supportive relationships. Compared to non-delinquents, delinquent youths and their parents spend less time together, feel less close to each other, like and respect each other less, talk to each other less often about their lives, and fight with each other more often (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Hirschi, 1969; Nye, 1958; Patterson and Dishion, 1985). In addition, the parents of delinquent versus non-delinquent youths monitor their

children less, are more likely to miss important events and activities in their children's lives, and are more likely to use ineffective or inconsistent discipline practices (Laub and Sampson, 1988; Warr, 1993; Wright and Cullen, 2001). Given the consistency of the evidence on delinquency and low parental involvement and support, we might expect that adult offenders would not turn to their parents for support either, including the instrumental support that is so common during the ages when adults are most likely to offend. Further supporting this idea is the observation that young people who are involved in crime are more likely to move out of their parents' homes as young adults (Bardone et al., 1996; Maughan and Taylor, 2001; Siennick, 2007). This suggests that offenders who have reached the age of majority may relinquish their instrumental ties to their parents.

In sum, criminological theorizing about offending and social bonds and empirical evidence on juvenile delinquency and parent-child relations both suggest that young adults who commit crime may receive less financial support from their parents. In contrast, theory and research in family sociology lead to the opposite prediction. As I next describe, close family relationships may be governed by different norms and expectations than are other close social relationships, and this may keep even reluctant parents helping offending offspring.

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT WITHIN FAMILY SYSTEMS

Are parents more limited in their responses to offending offspring than are the other significant others of control theories, such as spouses and employers? Research on family dynamics suggests that there are real constraints on relatives' freedom to distance themselves from each other or to withdraw support from each other. For example, only

approximately 7 percent of adults have very detached relationships – characterized by emotional distance, infrequent contact, and little exchange of instrumental help – with their mothers (Silverstein, Bengtson, and Lawton, 1997). Many parents and offspring who are not emotionally close stay in contact nonetheless (Silverstein et al., 1997). In addition, many parents and offspring continue to exchange material and instrumental support as offspring age (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). This ongoing help exchange raises questions about why family members would not enforce age norms that prescribe the independence of adults from their parents (Lye, 1996).

Family theorists suggest that this is because relationships between family members, and especially relationships between parents and children, are governed by strong norms of solidarity that require assisting kin who need help (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991; Luescher and Pillemer, 1998; Lye, 1996). These norms do exist alongside competing age norms for intergenerational independence (Lye, 1996), but the fact that parents continue to help grown offspring indicates that many parents adhere to the solidarity norms rather than the age norms. This suggests that although other close social relationships may be governed by norms of reciprocity, where each party is obligated to contribute something, close family members may feel obligated to help each other regardless of fairness or of the likelihood of reciprocation.

Perhaps as a result of competing norms systems, much intergenerational exchange flows between relatives who have mixed feelings for each other (van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). Parents who feel closer to their adult children are more likely to help those children, but many parents who do not feel particularly close to their children help them anyway (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Many parents feel ambivalent about their relationships



with grown but dependent offspring (Pillemer and Suitor, 2002), but they provide assistance despite the tension, disagreement, and conflict that continued intergenerational dependency may create (Rossi and Rossi, 1990; van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). When considered in the context of theory and research on norms of family solidarity, these findings suggest that parents who support grown offspring are as likely to be motivated by feelings of duty and obligation as they are to be motivated by affection and a desire to invest in offspring. These ideas suggest that the facts that young adult offenders may not be close with their parents and may not be likely to give anything back to their parents may not be informative about the chances that they will receive help from their parents.

Furthermore, our current knowledge of the life circumstances of adult offenders suggests that they could elicit more material support from their parents than do their non-offending age-mates. First, when parents must decide how to allocate their money among multiple grown offspring, they transfer more money to worse-off offspring (Rossi and Rossi, 1990; Spilerman, 2000). The fewer the resources adult children have, the more money they tend to receive from their parents. These findings indicate that parents may be ‘equalizers’ who are motivated to reduce differences in offspring standards of living (Spilerman, 2000). Because offenders tend to have lower standards of living than do non-offenders – they have fewer skills and more trouble obtaining and keeping jobs than do non-offenders (Moffitt et al., 2002; Robins, 1966; Tanner et al., 1999) – their greater financial need could trigger more financial help from their parents.

Also leading to the prediction that adult offenders receive more money from their parents is criminological and psychological work on the transition to independence. Developmental psychologists Ryan and Lynch (1989) draw a distinction between

becoming independent, or self-reliant, and simply becoming autonomous, or self-governing. Criminological research indicates that when deviant young people do enter adult roles, they tend to choose roles that offer the benefits of adulthood, such as freedom and autonomy, and tend to avoid roles that require self-reliance or permanent commitments. For example, delinquent teenagers leave school and begin intensive involvement in paid work relatively early (Bachman and Schulenberg, 1993; Moffitt et al., 2002; Siennick and Staff, 2008), but they may be slower to marry and enter long-term careers (Huiras, Uggen, and McMorris, 2000; Knight, Osborn, and West, 1977; Robins, 1966).

This association of deviance with early but selected role transitions is a key component of the literature on “pseudomaturity” (Jessor and Jessor, 1977), “precocious development” (Newcomb and Bentler, 1988), and “pseudoadulthood” (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986), theories that describe a syndrome of adolescents’ adoption of selected adult-like roles and behaviors prior to their development of mature psychosocial skills. Although the co-occurrence during adolescence of delinquency, substance use, early sexual activity, intensive work during high school, and early home-leaving may represent a movement toward freedom from parental control, it does not necessarily imply that these young people are no longer dependent on their parents. An extension of these ideas to the young adult years suggests that even if young adult offenders enter some adult roles, they could come closer to inhabiting an adult-like autonomous state than they do to being truly self-reliant. This could be reflected in their continued financial dependence on their parents.

This theory and research on crime and adult role transitions, in conjunction with theory and research on parents' felt obligation to grown children, suggests that parents may give financial assistance to criminal offspring even if they have mixed feelings about this assistance and even if they are not very close to those offspring. One prior study has peripherally examined financial dependence on others in relation to young adult offending. A secondary finding in Suitor and colleagues' (2006) study of parent-adult child relationships in Boston suggests that adult children with substance abuse or legal problems may receive more financial help from their mothers than do their non-deviant siblings. However, these authors had limited other information about the adult children, and they did not expect this finding and offer little substantive explanation for it. I view these suggestive findings as consistent with other work in family sociology and with criminological work on the transition to adulthood. In this study I extend this work by examining parental transfers in the context of young adults' structural role statuses and financial statuses.

#### THE PRESENT STUDY

In this study I examine whether relative to non-offenders, young adult offenders receive any more or less financial help from their parents. Answering this question will tell us not only about what social and financial resources offenders have to draw on, but also about how family relations might be different when an adult family member is involved in crime. I address this topic using data not only on two national samples of young people, but also on a sample of siblings from the same families. This allows me to examine the assistance that offenders receive from their parents relative to the assistance received by their own non-offending siblings. It also allows me to determine whether any

association between crime and assistance tracks specific children within families, versus being due to characteristics of families as a whole that lead both to crime and to transfers of money. Finally, in addition to describing the association between offending and financial assistance, I also examine it in the context of the key known correlates of crime and parental assistance, including parent-offspring closeness, young adults' financial need, and more traditional markers of young people's adult status like living arrangements, marriage, and employment.

## DATA AND METHODS

I use two datasets to examine the relationship between young adult offending and financial support from others. The first, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), offers an extensive self-reported offending index, items on both significant gifts received from parents and income received from family and friends, and a social-psychological measure of the quality of the parent-adult child relationship. Add Health also features a sizable sibling sample that allows me to examine within-family differences in support given to offending and non-offending offspring. To examine the robustness of my findings, I include supplemental analyses of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth – 1997 Cohort (NLSY97). The NLSY97 includes comprehensive information on young adults' personal finances and on the dollar amounts of parental transfers.

### THE NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

Add Health is an excellent source of data for this project because it features comprehensive information on young adults' criminal behavior and life circumstances, as well as information on over 3,000 siblings with varying degrees of relatedness. Add

Health drew on a nationally representative sample of adolescents who were in grades 7 through 12 during the 1994-1995 school year. Participants were selected via a two-stage stratified sampling design. First, 132 schools were randomly selected from a national sampling frame stratified by region, urbanicity, school size, school type, and racial composition. Approximately 90,000 students in these schools completed in-school interviews. Then, students in each school were stratified by grade and sex, and a nationally representative probability sample of nearly 19,000 adolescents completed Wave 1 in-home interviews. Wave 1 also contained interviews with the parents of the youths selected for the in-home survey. At Wave 3 in 2001, 14,322 of these in-home respondents (who were then ages 18-28) completed follow-up in-home interviews. Wave 3 is the only currently available wave of Add Health that features information on parental transfers.

This study uses data from the Wave 3 interview, with some background information taken from the Wave 1 interview. In my analyses of the full Add Health sample, I used multiple imputation to reduce potential bias from missing values on the study variables. To do this, I used the ICE (Royston, 2005) and MIM (Carlin, Galati, and Royston 2008) procedures available for Stata versions 9 and above. These procedures allowed me to create five complete datasets featuring imputed values for missing cases, and to combine my estimates across the imputed datasets while accounting for variance across them (Royston, 2005). I included all study variables in the imputation procedure. My analytical sample size is 14,322, versus a sample size of 10,572 that would have

remained after listwise deletion.<sup>1</sup> The substantive results are unchanged under conditions of listwise deletion (full results not shown).

Many Add Health respondents had siblings who incidentally also were selected for inclusion in the study. In addition, the Add Health investigators purposefully oversampled twins, half-siblings, and unrelated siblings. The resulting genetic sample allows me to conduct within-family analyses using data from 3,141 young adults from 1,536 families. I describe these analyses in more detail below.

### *Measures of Financial Support*

*Parental gifts.* At Wave 3, respondents were asked whether each of up to six types of parent (biological, current, and previous residential mothers and fathers) had given them money or paid for anything significant for them during the past 12 months (excluding birthday and holiday gifts). Recipients of parental gifts provided the approximate values of these gifts by choosing from a list of ranges, with response choices ranging from under \$200 to over \$1000. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported receiving this kind of parental transfer.

*Income from family and friends.* In a separate series of Wave 3 questions on past-year income, respondents reported whether or not they had received transfers of income from family and friends. Forty percent reported that they had. There is some conceptual overlap between this item and the item on parental gifts, although this income item differs from the gift item in (1) excluding nonmonetary transfers and (2) including transfers from non-parent relatives and friends.

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<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of this missing data is due to missing parent responses to items on parental receipt of public assistance and parental experience of economic hardship. The substantive findings are unchanged when these variables are excluded from the models.

My measures of financial support tap routine, day-to-day financial assistance of offspring, as opposed to parents' paying for college which is also common during this age span. This is a benefit for this study of the crime-assistance link, because parents' college payments are highly confounded with college enrollment and offenders are less likely to go to college (Siennick and Staff, 2008). The item on parental gifts could include some information on money for college, but I cannot examine this possibility directly because Add Health includes no separate information on college financing. Notably, I find no evidence that the offending-assistance associations described below vary by college enrollment or by student status.<sup>2</sup>

### *Self-Reported Offending*

At Wave 3 respondents self-reported the past year frequency with which they had damaged property, seriously injured someone, stolen something worth over \$50, burglarized a house or building, used or threatened to use a weapon to get something, sold drugs, stolen something worth under \$50, taken part in a group fight, fenced stolen property, used another person's credit or bank card without their permission, or deliberately written a bad check. These self-reported offending items are highly skewed and vary in seriousness. Creating a simple summative scale from these items would overemphasize the more trivial acts, and creating a dichotomous measure of any versus no participation would sacrifice information (Osgood, McMorris, and Potenza, 2002). I use item response theory scaling techniques to measure delinquency as a latent variable,

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<sup>2</sup> In predicting parental gifts from offending, the role statuses described below, offending-by-role interaction terms, and the control variables, for offending-by-full time student interaction term,  $b = .063, p > .05$ , and for offending-by-part time student interaction term,  $b = -.050, p > .05$ . In a similar model featuring an indicator of college enrollment, for offending-by-college interaction term,  $b = -.098, p > .05$ . Analogous coefficients for models predicting income from family and friends are  $b = -.053, p > .05$ ,  $b = -.062, p > .05$ , and  $b = -.081, p > .05$  for offending-by-full time student, offending-by-part time student, and offending-by-college interaction terms respectively.

treating dichotomized scores on the self-report items as indicators of respondents' unobserved 'true' levels of delinquency at a given wave (Raudenbush, Johnson, and Sampson, 2003).

### *Financial Circumstances*

In order to study financial help in the context of financial need, I include five indicators of young adults' personal finances. If offenders have greater financial need than do non-offenders, this could trigger additional financial help from their parents.

*Earnings.* At Wave 3, respondents reported their total earned income before taxes during the previous year, including wages, salaries, tips, bonuses, overtime pay, and income from self-employment. I use a logged version of this item as my measure of Add Health respondents' past year earnings.<sup>3</sup>

*Assets.* Because financial well-being depends on more than earnings alone (Spilerman, 2000), I include a dichotomous indicator of whether respondents had a bank account or received any interest income or dividends from stocks, bonds, or savings accounts during the past year.

*Debts and economic hardship.* Parents direct more financial help toward offspring with greater financial need (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990), which means that offspring who are in debt or have difficulty paying their bills may elicit more parental support than do other offspring. To examine this possibility, I include dichotomous indicators of whether respondents owed money on credit cards, whether they owed money on student loans, and whether they had gone without phone service, been unable

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<sup>3</sup> Fourteen percent of respondents reported ranges rather than specific dollar amounts of earnings. I used these ranges to impute specific earnings amounts for these respondents.



to pay rent or bills for lack of money, or been unable to afford needed doctor or dentist visits during the past year.

### *Parent-Offspring Relationship Quality*

At Wave 3, Add Health respondents answered items tapping the quality of their relationships with their biological and current and previous residential parents. Specifically, they used five point scales to rate the extent to which they enjoyed doing things with each parent, the extent to which each parent was warm and loving toward the respondent, and the closeness of their relationship with each parent. I averaged these items to create a scale where higher scores indicate better relationship quality (alpha reliability = .824). If parents are more likely to help offspring who they have better relationships with, and offenders have worse relationships with their parents, then offending offspring may receive less money from their parents.

### *Role Statuses*

If receiving money from parents is an indicator of offenders' dependency, then does it tell us anything that we did not already know from offenders' lower rates of marriage and employment, and slower achievement of other markers of adulthood? To answer this question, I examine the offending-assistance relationship before and after accounting for measures of role statuses. These include a set of dummy variables tapping living with parents (featured as the reference group), marital status (as measured by co-residence with a spouse), cohabitation, living with others, and living alone. I also include indicators of whether respondents were living with a child, employed, and enrolled in school on a full-time or part-time basis.

### *Demographic Information and Other Control Variables*

My analyses also include controls for other factors that may predict both offending and financial assistance, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, whether respondents grew up in two-parent families, family socioeconomic status (SES) at W1 (measured as the mean of the Z-scores of respondents' parents' levels of education and occupational prestige), dichotomous indicators of whether respondents' parents had received public assistance or experienced economic hardship, respondents' scores on an abridged version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and respondents' years of education.

### THE NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH (1997 COHORT)

To supplement my analyses of the Add Health data, I draw on data from the NLSY97, which includes more detailed information on young adults' personal finances. The NLSY97 features data on a nationally representative cross-sectional sample of adolescents born between 1980 and 1984 as well as a supplemental oversample of Hispanic and black adolescents from the same birth cohorts. Respondents were selected via a multi-stage stratified sampling design. First, more than 1,700 block groups were selected from a sample of 147 non-overlapping primary sampling units chosen from NORC's 1990 master probability sample. Next, members of 75,291 households (78% of eligible households) within these block groups completed screening interviews that identified eligible respondents residing in those households. Wave 1, conducted in 1997, featured computer-assisted in-person interviews with 8,984 (92%) of the 9,806 eligible adolescents, as well as detailed interviews with these respondents' parents. Since then,

respondents have been re-interviewed annually with a high rate of retention (86% completed Wave 7 interviews in 2003).

I use data from the 6,581 respondents who completed age 20 assets interviews between waves 3 and 7, the age and waves that included the most information about young adults' personal finances and offending. I dealt with missing data using the multiple imputation procedures described above. My analytical sample size is 6,581, versus a sample size of 5,616 that would have remained after listwise deletion. The reported associations of offending with parental transfers are somewhat stronger under conditions of listwise deletion (full results not shown), but I present the more conservative multiple imputation estimates.

#### *Parental Transfers*

NLSY97 respondents reported whether their parents gave them any money during the past year, and the dollar amount if applicable. Respondents were instructed not to include loans or allowances. Respondents who did not report exact transfer amounts were asked to choose from a list of ranges. Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported receiving such a transfer. Among recipients, the mean dollar amount received was approximately \$650; the top quarter of recipients reported receiving over \$1,500.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Self-Reported Offending*

NLSY97 respondents self-reported the frequency with which they had damaged property, stolen something worth less than fifty dollars, stolen something worth more than fifty dollars, committed other (non-theft) property crimes, attacked someone, and

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<sup>4</sup> To protect respondents' anonymity, for each measure of personal finances Bureau of Labor Statistics staff replaced the highest 2 percent of values with the mean of the high values. This topcoding, in combination with the log transformations used in this paper, reduces the influence of extreme values. The substantive results are nearly identical when the top 2 percent of values of the parental transfer measure are replaced with the value corresponding to the 98<sup>th</sup> percentile.

sold drugs since the date of the previous interview. As with the Add Health offending scale, I treat these items as indicators of a latent offending construct and I compute respondents' offending scores using item response theory scaling techniques.

### *Financial Circumstances*

*Income.* NLSY97 respondents reported their past-year income from wages and salaries, as well as income from a wider variety of sources including self-employment, partners' wages, parents, child support, interest and dividends, inheritances or trusts, and government benefits.<sup>5</sup> I logged the sum of all of these amounts to create a measure of respondents' total past-year income from all sources. To adjust for inflation, I used the Bureau of Labor Statistics' all-item Consumer Price Index to convert all amounts to 2003 dollars (<http://www.bls.gov/cpi/>).

*Assets.* At the age 20 assets interview, NLSY97 respondents reported the values of their bank or money market accounts, stocks held, bonds or certificates of deposit, pension or retirement accounts, real estate, owned businesses, vehicles, household furnishings including electronics, and other assets. I logged the inflation-adjusted (to 2003 dollars) total dollar amount of these items to form a measure of respondents' total financial assets.

*Debts.* To determine whether financial problems play a role in any offending-assistance association, I include a measure of the inflation-adjusted logged dollar amount

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<sup>5</sup> For each indicator of personal finances, the modest proportion of respondents who did not report specific dollar amounts were asked to report estimated amounts or ranges, which I used to impute specific dollar amounts. Less than 1% of respondents reported estimated amounts of consumer debt, approximately 4% reported estimated bank account balances, and approximately 14% reported estimated wages. This technique resulted in very low rates of missing data. For example, specific or estimated wage amounts at the time of the age 20 assets interview are available for 95% of wage earning respondents.

of respondents' total debt, including balances owed on car loans, educational loans, other consumer debt, and personal loans.

*Illegal earnings.* Respondents also reported their illegal earnings from selling drugs, the value of any goods they stole, and their illegal earnings from other property crimes such as fraud.<sup>6</sup> I logged the inflation-adjusted (to 2003 dollars) total dollar amount of these items to form a measure of respondents' illegal earnings. This allows me to examine whether financial assistance from others is related to other economic resources of any kind – even the illegal sort.

### *Role Statuses*

The NLSY97 data also feature information on the structural role statuses examined in previous work on offending in the transition to adulthood. These include respondents' marital status, cohabitation, parental status, part- and full-time work status, and student status. In addition, I distinguish respondents living in temporary housing situations (e.g., dorms, barracks, shelters, hospitals) and respondents living in stable independent housing from respondents living with their parents (the reference group).

### *Background Characteristics*

My analyses also account for additional factors that may relate both to offending and to parental transfers, including whether the respondent was over age 20 at the time of their age 20 assets interview, male gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, urban residence, whether respondents grew up in two-parent households, respondents' number of siblings, household socioeconomic status (SES) at Wave 1 (measured as the mean of the Z-scores of household poverty ratio at Wave 1, mother's education, and father's

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<sup>6</sup> Only one-third of offenders (5% of all respondents) reported any illegal earnings, and most of the amounts reported were modest (mean amount among those reporting any illegal earnings = \$259.01).

education), and respondents' years of education. In some analyses I also include an indicator of poor family background, that is, whether the ratio of respondents' households' Wave 1 income to the federal poverty level was below 1.

Descriptive statistics for all Add Health study variables appear in table 2.1, and descriptive statistics for all NLSY97 study variables appears in table 2.2.

## ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

My analytical strategy includes two main components. First, I conduct regression analyses predicting measures of parental transfers from offending and the background characteristics among all Add Health respondents and among NLSY97 respondents. These models indicate whether relative to non-offenders offenders receive more, the same, or less financial help from their parents. I use three types of regression to match the different distributions of my dependent variables, which are all dichotomous or limited (Long, 1997). For most analyses I use logistic regression to predict dichotomous indicators of financial assistance. I use tobit regression for the NLSY97 model predicting the logged dollar amount that respondents received because of the large number of respondents who received zero dollars. Finally, because Add Health respondents reported ranges rather than specific dollar amounts of parental gifts, in predicting this outcome I use interval regression.

Second, I compare Add Health siblings to each other using multilevel models where young adults are nested within families. A multilevel framework allows me to separate the variance in financial assistance into a within-family or child-specific component and a between-family component. This is helpful for many reasons. First, siblings may tend to be more similar to each other on parents' help than two random

young adults would be, and if I did not account for that my standard errors would be wrong (Agresti and Finlay, 1997; Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002).

More importantly, a multilevel framework allows me to examine the within-family offending-assistance relationship. The logic of within-family comparisons is that differences between siblings can only be explained by other things that differ between them (Firebaugh, 2008). Those things, for example each sibling's gender, age, and level of offending, are incorporated into Level 1 of my model, the child-specific level. At the family level, Level 2, I include not only family characteristics like socioeconomic status and the total number of offspring, but also the averages across siblings on the sibling-level characteristics. By controlling for these averages, I isolate within-family relationships at Level 1 (Osgood, Forthcoming; Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). The resulting coefficient for the average level of offspring offending will indicate whether families with more offending offspring tend to give out more or less money overall. The resulting coefficient for individual offspring offending will answer this question: When we compare a young adult who commits crime to his or her own sibling who commits less or no crime, which sibling is more likely to receive money from his or her parents? Once I have answered this key question, I examine whether accounting for (1) siblings' financial circumstances, (2) the quality of siblings' emotional ties to their parents, and (3) siblings' marital and employment statuses and other life circumstances changes the offending-assistance association. These measures are the key predictors of parental assistance of grown children that have been identified by family sociologists and economists (e.g., Rossi and Rossi, 1990; Schoeni and Ross, 2005).

Although the NLSY97 data incidentally feature information on some related youths who were living in the same sampled household at Wave 1 and met the study eligibility criteria, I do not have enough power to conduct sibling comparisons using those data.<sup>7</sup> Still, because the NLSY97 data contain more comprehensive information on parent and offspring finances than do the Add Health data, at various points in the results section I note the degree of similarity between the substantive findings based on the Add Health sibling sample and those based on the full NLSY97 sample.

Finally, in both data sources, respondents had unequal probabilities of selection and were sampled from within clusters (households in the NLSY97, and schools in Add Health). I account for these complex survey designs via the *svy* commands available in Stata 9.2 and by using custom sampling weights for analyses of NLSY97 data and sampling weights provided by the Add Health investigators for analyses of data from the representative Add Health sample.

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<sup>7</sup> In exploratory analyses, I examined the feasibility of within-family analyses predicting parental transfers using NLSY97 data on 1,630 respondents from 784 households. In these models the coefficients for well-documented predictors of parental transfers, such as marital and student statuses (Rossi and Rossi 1990; Schoeni and Ross 2005; Spilerman 2000), were in the expected directions but failed to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Due to the low power I have for detecting offending-assistance relationships among NLSY97 families, I choose to focus on sibling comparisons using Add Health data. It is worth noting that the within-family coefficient for offending in predicting parental transfers among NLSY97 respondents is positive and is larger than is the coefficient shown in table 2.4, although its large standard error means that it does not approach statistical significance ( $b = .265, p > .10$ ).



Table 2.1. Descriptive Statistics for Add Health Study Variables

Variable		Range	Full Sample <sup>a</sup>		Sibling Sample	
			Mean/ Percent	SE	Mean/ Percent	SD
Background characteristics	Age in years	18 - 28	21.822	0.120	21.887	1.765
	Male	0 - 1	50.8%		48.1%	
	Black	0 - 1	16.0%		22.5%	
	Hispanic	0 - 1	11.8%		14.5%	
	Asian	0 - 1	3.9%		6.8%	
	Other race (non-white)	0 - 1	2.9%		2.4%	
	Two-parent family at W1	0 - 1	67.2%		66.8%	
	Number of siblings	0 - 4	1.340	0.028	1.976	1.014
	Family socioeconomic status at W1	-2.632 - 1.607	-0.001	0.040	-0.031	0.891
	Parent has history of public assistance	0 - 1	9.9%		12.9%	
	Parent experienced economic hardship	0 - 1	18.0%		22.0%	
	Vocabulary score	1.400 - 14.600	10.126	0.065	0.989	0.141
Years of education completed	6 - 22	13.071	0.086	13.106	2.009	
Offending	IRT scale of past year offending	-.214 - 3.822	0.129	0.010	0.101	0.565
Parental transfers	Parents gave money or paid for things	0 - 1	75.4%		74.7%	
	Received income from family/friends	0 - 1	40.2%		38.4%	
Financial circumstances	Earnings (logged dollars)	0 - 13.617	7.454	0.112	7.479	3.468
	Savings or investments	0 - 1	83.2%		81.5%	
	Credit card debt	0 - 1	38.7%		39.4%	
	Student loans	0 - 1	29.0%		31.0%	
	Economic hardship	0 - 1	31.5%		34.1%	
Relationship	Positive affective relations with parent	1 - 5	4.358	0.010	4.369	0.621
Role statuses	Married	0 - 1	13.4%		14.0%	
	Cohabiting	0 - 1	11.7%		10.9%	
	Living with others	0 - 1	20.1%		21.6%	
	Living alone	0 - 1	10.5%		9.4%	
	Living with a child	0 - 1	20.7%		21.8%	
	Employed	0 - 1	69.7%		68.9%	
	Full-time student	0 - 1	27.8%		28.0%	
	Part-time student	0 - 1	8.0%		8.8%	
N			14,322		3,141	

<sup>a</sup>Descriptive statistics for full sample are survey-corrected

NOTES: SE = standard error; SD = standard deviation; IRT = item response theory

Table 2.2. Survey-Corrected Descriptive Statistics for NLSY97 Study Variables

	Variable	Range	Mean/Percent	SE
Background characteristics	Older than 20 at assets interview	0 - 1	9.0%	
	Male	0 - 1	51.2%	
	Black	0 - 1	17.6%	
	Hispanic	0 - 1	14.5%	
	Asian	0 - 1	2.3%	
	Other race (non-white)	0 - 1	2.3%	
	Two-parent family at W1	0 - 1	65.5%	
	Number of siblings	0 - 4	1.301	0.017
	Family socioeconomic status at W1	-3.579 - 4.974	0.084	0.013
	Poor family background	0 - 1	20.0%	
	Years of education completed	2 - 16	12.172	0.023
Offending	IRT scale of past-year offending	-1.119 - 3.125	0.088	0.007
Parental transfers	Parent gave money	0 - 1	39.1%	
	Amount of transfer (logged dollars)	0 - 11.533	2.530	0.045
Financial circumstances	Income (logged dollars)	0 - 12.125	7.683	0.043
	Assets (logged dollars)	0 - 12.044	3.975	0.052
	Debt (logged dollars)	0 - 10.893	3.751	0.058
	Illegal earnings (logged dollars)	0 - 12.962	0.286	0.018
Role statuses	Married	0 - 1	7.0%	
	Cohabiting	0 - 1	12.9%	
	Temporary housing situation	0 - 1	3.4%	
	Stable housing apart from parents	0 - 1	34.4%	
	Has a child	0 - 1	16.9%	
	Employed full time	0 - 1	45.0%	
	Employed part time	0 - 1	42.4%	
	Enrolled in school	0 - 1	41.1%	

NOTES: N = 6,581; SE = standard error; IRT = item response theory

## RESULTS

### ANALYSES OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLES

Compared to non-offenders, do young adult offenders receive more, the same, or less financial help from their parents? I answer this question through a series of logistic, interval, and tobit regression analyses predicting the prevalence and amount of financial assistance from offending and the background characteristics shown in tables 2.1 and 2.2. These models indicate that offending is positively associated with parental assistance, whether this assistance is measured as parents' giving respondents money or paying for significant items, the direct receipt of money from parents, or the receipt of income from significant others. Offending also positively predicts the dollar value of these transfers. These findings are true across two different nationally representative samples of young adults, and they also apply net of a wide range of factors including offspring age (which is included as a control variable in Add Health analyses and is a constant in analyses of data from 20 year old NLSY97 respondents), family socioeconomic status, and offspring educational attainment.

Table 2.3 shows the results of these analyses for the Add Health sample. The models predicting dichotomous indicators of financial assistance reveal that net of the background characteristics, each unit increase in offending score is associated with a 38% increase in the odds of receiving a financial gift from parents ( $\exp(.320) = 1.377$ ) and a 42% increase in the odds of receiving income from family and friends ( $\exp(.349) = 1.417$ ). (The range of the offending scale among the Add Health sample is approximately four units; most respondents [90%] fall within a range of 1.3 units.) The first column of table 2.4, which features a similar analysis using NLSY97 data, confirms that offending

positively predicts receiving money from parents, although this relationship is only half as strong as is the relationship seen among Add Health respondents (logistic  $b = .164$ , OR = 1.18,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>8</sup> (The total range for the offending scale among the NLSY97 sample is approximately 3.2 units; most respondents [90%] fall within a range of 1 unit).

How much parental assistance do offenders and non-offenders receive? Add Health respondents who received parental gifts gave information about the amount by choosing from a list of ranges. The interval regression coefficient for offending from the center model of table 2.3 shows that offending positively predicts the dollar value of the assistance that respondents received from parents. Predicted values based on this model indicate that in the past year, the average offender (whose offending score equals the mean of active offenders' scores) received an average of \$354 worth of financial gifts from parents, while non-offending offspring received an average of \$140. Parental transfers of cash among NLSY97 respondents are less common than are parental gifts among Add Health respondents (39% versus 75%), but predicted values based on the rightmost model of table 2.4 reveal that among recipients of assistance, the average offender (whose offending score is at the mean of active offenders' scores) received somewhat more cash from his or her parents than did non-offenders (\$264 versus \$197; tobit  $b = .663$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Taken together, these results indicate that offenders receive more financial assistance from parents than do non-offenders, although the modest amounts suggest that the most interesting story about offending and parental transfers involves the prevalence of these transfers rather than their cash value.

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<sup>8</sup> Using listwise deletion rather than multiple imputation produces offending coefficients that are quite similar across data sources (e.g., in predicting parental gifts among Add Health respondents, logistic  $b = .369$ ,  $p < .001$ , and in predicting money from parents among NLSY97 respondents, logistic  $b = .383$ ,  $p < .01$ ). I choose to focus on the more conservative multiple imputation estimates.

Table 2.3. Logistic and Tobit Regression Estimates Predicting Add Health Respondents' Parental Transfers from Offending and Control Variables

	Dependent Variable					
	Parents Gave Money or Paid for Things <sup>a</sup>		Amount or Value of Parental Gift <sup>b</sup>		Past Year Income from Family and Friends <sup>a</sup>	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Offending	0.320 (0.052) ***		0.780 (0.125) ***		0.349 (0.043) ***	
Age in years	-0.248 (0.019) ***		-0.796 (0.059) ***		-0.208 (0.022) ***	
Male	-0.097 (0.060)		-0.391 (0.156) *		-0.308 (0.048) ***	
Black	0.351 (0.092) ***		0.730 (0.211) **		0.267 (0.088) **	
Hispanic	0.033 (0.100)		0.138 (0.251)		-0.072 (0.113)	
Asian	0.388 (0.161) *		1.294 (0.369) **		0.277 (0.128) *	
Other race (non-white)	-0.092 (0.153)		-0.092 (0.432)		0.043 (0.138)	
Two-parent family at W1	0.258 (0.059) ***		0.824 (0.157) ***		0.221 (0.057) ***	
Number of siblings	-0.114 (0.024) ***		-0.353 (0.070) ***		-0.059 (0.023) *	
Family socioeconomic status at W1	0.200 (0.039) ***		0.962 (0.100) ***		0.323 (0.040) ***	
Parent has history of public assistance	-0.129 (0.096)		-0.750 (0.244) **		-0.013 (0.098)	
Parent experienced economic hardship	-0.166 (0.082) *		-0.594 (0.216) **		-0.024 (0.071)	
Vocabulary score	-0.081 (0.022) ***		-0.146 (0.071) *		0.026 (0.023)	
Years of education completed	0.096 (0.017) ***		0.543 (0.048) ***		0.161 (0.016) ***	
Constant	6.143 (0.462) ***		16.973 (1.253) ***		1.742 (0.518) **	

<sup>a</sup>Models for which unexponentiated logistic coefficients are shown

<sup>b</sup>Model for which unstandardized tobit coefficients are shown

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; N = 14,322; SE = standard error

Table 2.4. Logistic and Tobit Regression Estimates Predicting NLSY97 Respondents' Parental Transfers from Offending and Control Variables

	Dependent Variable			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Parent Gave Money <sup>a</sup>		Amount of Parental Transfer <sup>b</sup>	
	b	SE	b	SE
Offending	0.164	(0.057) **	0.663	(0.217) **
Older than 20 at assets interview	-0.228	(0.099) *	-0.889	(0.395) *
Male	-0.081	(0.057)	-0.464	(0.221) *
Black	0.405	(0.072) ***	1.586	(0.275) ***
Hispanic	-0.155	(0.083) †	-0.593	(0.330) †
Asian	-0.083	(0.230)	-0.146	(0.923)
Other race (non-white)	0.462	(0.195) *	1.780	(0.704) *
Two-parent family at W1	0.169	(0.065) *	0.779	(0.257) **
Number of siblings	-0.062	(0.026) *	-0.264	(0.104) *
Family socioeconomic status at W1	0.216	(0.042) ***	0.929	(0.160) ***
Years of education completed	0.092	(0.020) ***	0.408	(0.080) ***
Constant	-1.640	(0.260) ***	-6.451	(1.024) ***

<sup>a</sup>Model for which unexponentiated logistic coefficients are shown

<sup>b</sup>Model for which unstandardized tobit coefficients are shown

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; N = 6,581; SE = standard error

Interestingly, I find no evidence that the offending-assistance relationship varies by background SES.<sup>9</sup> The NLSY97 data provide more comprehensive information on SES than do the Add Health data, so I focus on NLSY97 data here (below I describe similar but within-family analyses using data from Add Health). When I add the interaction of offending and SES to the model from table 2.4 predicting whether or not

<sup>9</sup> The within-family offending-assistance relationship also does not depend on SES. When I add the interaction of offending and SES to the models shown in tables 2.5 and 2.6 below, the coefficients for the interaction terms are small and non-significant (in predicting parental gifts, logistic  $b$  for interaction term =  $-.004$ ,  $p > .05$ ; in predicting income from family and friends, logistic  $b$  for interaction term =  $-.089$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

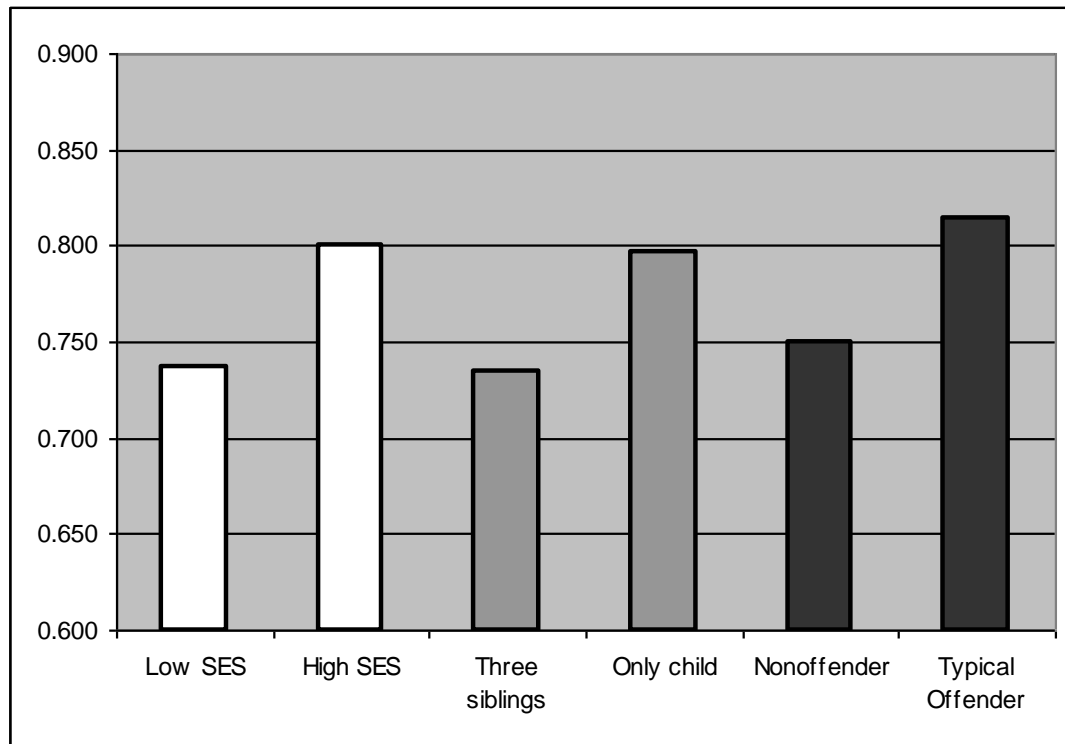
parents gave respondents money, the coefficient for the interaction term is small and non-significant (full results not shown; logistic  $b$  for offending-by-SES interaction =  $-.032$ ,  $p > .05$ ). I added the same interaction term to the tobit model shown in table 2.4 and found that the association of offending with transfer amount also does not vary by SES (logistic  $b$  for offending-by-SES interaction =  $-.133$ ,  $p > .05$ ). I also examined interactions between offending and different levels of household poverty ratio and found that offending does not predict the receipt of parental transfers differently for the first, second, and third terciles of families' logged poverty ratios (for test of differences between offending-by-poverty ratio interaction terms,  $\chi^2(2) = 3.72$ ,  $p > .05$ ). I examined a number of other possible offending-by-SES interactions and found only two that reached even marginal statistical significance. These terms suggests that respondents from poor families (with household poverty ratios below 1.0) may enjoy lesser benefits of offending for transfers (for offending-by-poor family interaction term in predicting dichotomous indicator of transfers, logistic  $b = -.259$ ,  $p < .10$ ; for interaction term in predicting amount of transfer, tobit  $b = -.988$ ,  $p < .10$ ). Still, the general robustness of findings across levels of SES, as well as the small dollar amounts involved, suggest that parents' extra assistance of offending offspring may be more important for understanding parent-offspring relationships than it is for understanding family-based wealth and stratification processes.

What does this relationship mean substantively? Figure 1 illustrates the magnitude of this association relative to the magnitude of the effects of previously documented predictors of parental transfers. The figure shows predicted values based on the first model of table 2.3 and selected values of specific predictors: family SES, sibship, and

offspring offending. Past studies show that family SES is a key predictor of parental assistance, with better-off parents providing more assistance (Rossi and Rossi, 1990; Spilerman, 2000). The first set of bars shown in figure 1 indicates that young adults from families scoring one standard deviation below the mean on SES have a .74 probability of receiving financial gifts, while the corresponding probability for young adults from families scoring one standard deviation above the mean on SES is .80. Past studies also show that people with more siblings receive less material support from parents (Hogan, Eggebeen, and Clogg, 1993; Schoeni, 1997). Each extra sibling lowers the probability of an Add Health respondent's receiving parental gifts by approximately .02, as shown in the center bars of figure 1 which contrast only children with respondents who have three siblings. Finally, the rightmost bars shown in figure 1 show the probability of receiving parental gifts for non-offenders and for the average active offender. This difference has similar implications for getting money or gifts from parents as would moving from having three siblings to being an only child, or alternatively moving up approximately two standard deviations in SES.



Figure 1. Past-Year Probability of Receiving a Financial Gift from Parents



#### WITHIN-FAMILY ANALYSES

The above models feature controls for family composition and socioeconomic status, but there are many other family-level factors that could be driving the offending-assistance relationship. Does this relationship arise because the same family-level characteristics that lead to crime in adulthood also lead to continued dependence on parents, or does it reflect characteristics of specific parent-offspring relationships within families? Furthermore, is parents' differential support of offending versus non-offending offspring explained by offspring financial circumstances, emotional relationships with parents, or role statuses? I address these questions through sibling comparisons, which allow me to examine parents' assistance of individual offspring while netting out the influence of even unobserved differences between families.

Siblings tend to resemble each other in offending (Haynie and McHugh, 2003), but I find that many families contain both young adult offspring who offend and young adult offspring who do not offend. In the Wave 3 Add Health sibling sample, if one young adult offspring is an offender, most (78%) of the time another surveyed sibling is a non-offender. The within-family relationships presented below are driven by parents' differential treatment of siblings who have different scores on the predictor variables.

Table 2.5 presents within- and between-family logistic regression estimates predicting the receipt of parental gifts from offending and the other study variables. Table 2.6 shows analogous coefficients predicting the receipt of income from family and friends.<sup>10</sup> As shown in model 1 of each of these tables, relative to their own siblings, young adults with higher offending scores are more likely to receive parental transfers (in predicting parental gifts, logistic  $b$  for offending = .336,  $p < .01$ ; in predicting income from others, logistic  $b$  for offending = .316,  $p < .01$ ). The within-family coefficients for offending are similar in size to the coefficients based on data from the full samples shown in tables 2.3 and 2.4. Furthermore, the between-family coefficients for offending are close to zero (-.045 and .040 in predicting gifts and income, respectively). These coefficients would reflect the additional relationship between offending and assistance that was associated with uncontrolled family-level factors, if any such relationship

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the within-family estimates shown in tables 2.5 and 2.6 indicate that parental gifts and income from family and friends have somewhat different correlates. Both are predicted by the same family-level factors: two-parent families, minority families, and higher SES families have higher mean log-odds of giving both gifts and income, while families with more offspring have lower mean log-odds of both types of transfer. In addition, married and non-student offspring are less likely to receive both types of transfer than are their unmarried and student siblings respectively. Still, unlike parental gifts, income from family and friends is not associated with affective relations with parents, and it is positively rather than negatively predicted by living with others and by living alone (versus living with parents). These latter findings suggest that the measure of transfers of income does include transfers of income from non-parents. Consistent with this idea and as described in more detail below, offspring offending is a robust predictor of both indicators of transfers, but additional controls for markers of adult independence (e.g., marriage, employment) cause larger reductions in the offending-gifts relationship than they do in the offending-income relationship.

existed. My findings thus indicate that the positive offending-assistance relationship is not a product of characteristics of entire families. Rather, the relationship is child-specific, and it suggests that in this instance of parents' differential treatment of offspring offending offspring actually are favored.

Do offenders receive more money because they are financially needier, because they have different emotional relationships with their parents, or because they have not yet entered adult roles such as employment?<sup>11</sup> Model 2 of tables 2.5 and 2.6 adds offspring earnings, savings, debts, and economic hardship as predictors. Of these financial circumstances variables, economic hardship and savings are most strongly associated with transfers, with siblings who are needier by these measures having higher odds of receiving transfers. As I will show in more detail in Chapter 3, young adult offenders have significantly fewer savings and significantly more hardship than do non-offenders. Still, the inclusion of these variables reduces the model 1 relationships of offending with gifts by only 12% (to logistic  $b = .295$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and of offending with income by only 7% (to logistic  $b = .292$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Recall that the NLSY97 includes more detailed information on young adults' personal finances. Adding controls for income, assets, debts, and illegal earnings to the NLSY97 model predicting receiving money from parents that is shown in table 2.4 actually increases the coefficient for offending (from logistic  $b = .164$  to logistic  $b = .195$ ,  $p < .01$ ; full results not shown). These findings

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<sup>11</sup> It is possible that parents bear the financial burden of offspring involvement with the criminal justice system. Arrests, convictions, and spells of incarceration are rare among Add Health respondents, and in within-family analyses featuring all of these indicators none of the three significantly predicts parental assistance (full results are not shown but are available upon request). Conviction is the only one of these three indicators that positively predicts assistance. Still, conviction does not explain the association of self-reported offending with assistance (when conviction is added to model 1 of tables 2.5 and 2.6, logistic  $b$  for offending = .304,  $p < .05$ , and logistic  $b = .295$ ,  $p < .01$  in predicting gifts and income respectively; logistic  $b$  for conviction = .436,  $p > .05$ , and logistic  $b = .511$ ,  $p < .05$  in predicting gifts and income respectively).

indicate that offenders' higher probability of receiving financial assistance from others is not due to their greater financial need.

Model 3 of tables 2.5 and 2.6 adds relationship quality as a predictor. Respondents who have better relationships with their parents are more likely to receive financial gifts than are their siblings who have worse relationships, although they are no more or less likely to receive income from family and friends. Supplementary analyses indicate that offending offspring have worse than average emotional relationships with their parents (full results not shown; for a within-family model predicting relationship quality from offending and the control variables, linear  $b$  for offending =  $-.086$ ,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that introducing a measure of relationship quality does not explain the association between offending and gifts. The inclusion of this scale actually causes a slight (12%) increase in the coefficient for offending. This pattern indicates that, considering how poorly offenders score on this scale, it is somewhat surprising that they have such high odds of receiving financial gifts from their parents. Given the negligible association of relationship quality with income from family and friends (logistic  $b$  for positive relations =  $-.043$ ,  $p > .05$ ), relationship quality also cannot explain the association of offending with this measure of financial transfers (which declines by only 1% to logistic  $b = .312$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 4 for a more detailed analysis of offending and parent-offspring relationship quality.

Table 2.5. Within- and Between-Family Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting Parental Gifts from Offending and Control Variables among Add Health Respondents

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<b>Within-family models</b>								
Offending	0.336	(0.128) **	0.295	(0.132) *	0.377	(0.129) **	0.242	(0.131) †
Age in years	-0.240	(0.041) ***	-0.257	(0.042) ***	-0.237	(0.041) ***	-0.149	(0.045) **
Male	-0.219	(0.147)	-0.178	(0.152)	-0.250	(0.148) †	-0.252	(0.155)
Vocabulary score	-0.106	(0.070)	-0.104	(0.072)	-0.107	(0.070)	-0.096	(0.072)
Years of education completed	0.006	(0.045)	0.016	(0.049)	0.005	(0.045)	-0.015	(0.047)
Earnings (logged dollars)			-0.035	(0.021)				
Savings or investments			-0.232	(0.184)				
Credit card debt			-0.056	(0.152)				
Student loans			0.078	(0.178)				
Economic hardship			0.497	(0.149) **				
Positive affective relations with parent					0.461	(0.111) ***		
Married							-1.129	(0.219) ***
Cohabiting							-0.489	(0.214) *
Living with others							-0.325	(0.201)
Living alone							-0.830	(0.250) **
Living with a child							0.066	(0.178)
Employed							-0.312	(0.149) *
Full-time student							0.393	(0.189) *
Part-time student							-0.054	(0.239)

(continued)

(Table 2.5 continued)

Between-family models	
Average sibling offending score	-0.018 (0.174)      -0.018 (0.171)      0.031 (0.174)
Average age of siblings	0.027 (0.057)      0.003 (0.055)      0.002 (0.061)
Sibling gender constellation	0.097 (0.199)      0.115 (0.195)      0.085 (0.205)
Black	0.287 (0.144) *      0.333 (0.139) *      0.118 (0.148)
Hispanic	0.281 (0.159) †      0.380 (0.156) *      0.158 (0.163)
Asian	0.253 (0.216)      0.403 (0.210) †      0.031 (0.218)
Other race (non-white)	0.664 (0.408)      0.723 (0.401) †      0.618 (0.412)
Two-parent family	0.403 (0.115) ***      0.242 (0.115) *      0.336 (0.115) **
Number of siblings	-0.207 (0.051) ***      -0.185 (0.050) ***      -0.189 (0.051) ***
Family socioeconomic status	0.338 (0.067) ***      0.352 (0.066) ***      0.319 (0.068) ***
Average sibling vocabulary score	-0.029 (0.088)      -0.019 (0.085)      -0.047 (0.087)
Average sibling educational attainment	0.097 (0.063)      0.095 (0.057) †      0.074 (0.062)
Average sibling earnings	-0.005 (0.028)
Proportion of siblings with savings	0.206 (0.257)
Proportion with credit card debt	0.152 (0.205)
Proportion with student loans	0.075 (0.236)
Proportion with economic hardship	-0.398 (0.203) †
Average sibling relations with parent	0.082 (0.150)
Proportion of siblings who are married	0.370 (0.320)
Proportion who are cohabiting	-0.384 (0.313)
Proportion who are living with others	-0.183 (0.261)
Proportion who are living alone	0.579 (0.361)
Proportion who are living with a child	-0.137 (0.263)
Proportion who are employed	0.144 (0.210)
Proportion who are full-time students	0.275 (0.257)
Proportion who are part-time students	0.018 (0.348)
Constant	7.484 (1.100) ***      7.990 (1.152) ***      5.466 (1.217) ***      6.208 (1.151) ***

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; N = 3,141; SE = standard error

Table 2.6. Within- and Between-Family Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting Income from Family and Friends from Offending and Control Variables among Add Health Respondents

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<b>Within-family models</b>								
Offending	0.316 (0.109) **		0.292 (0.113) *		0.312 (0.109) **		0.302 (0.112) **	
Age in years	-0.201 (0.037) ***		-0.214 (0.039) ***		-0.202 (0.037) ***		-0.161 (0.042) ***	
Male	-0.388 (0.135) **		-0.364 (0.140) **		-0.386 (0.135) **		-0.352 (0.141) *	
Vocabulary score	-0.012 (0.063)		-0.012 (0.065)		-0.012 (0.063)		-0.007 (0.064)	
Years of education completed	0.143 (0.041) **		0.155 (0.045) **		0.143 (0.041) **		0.131 (0.043) **	
Earnings (logged dollars)			-0.028 (0.019)					
Savings or investments			-0.458 (0.177) **					
Credit card debt			0.087 (0.139)					
Student loans			0.105 (0.160)					
Economic hardship			0.383 (0.136) **					
Positive affective relations with parent					-0.043 (0.106)			
Married							-0.447 (0.219) *	
Cohabiting							0.059 (0.207)	
Living with others							0.393 (0.175) *	
Living alone							0.369 (0.222) †	
Living with a child							0.207 (0.175)	
Employed							-0.193 (0.132)	
Full-time student							0.357 (0.159) *	
Part-time student							0.057 (0.222)	

(continued)

(Table 2.6 continued)

Between-family models							
Average sibling offending score	0.040 (0.151)	0.016 (0.156)	0.042 (0.152)	0.032 (0.156)			
Average age of siblings	-0.040 (0.050)	-0.042 (0.053)	-0.039 (0.050)	-0.004 (0.057)			
Sibling gender constellation	0.120 (0.177)	0.123 (0.183)	0.119 (0.178)	0.129 (0.186)			
Black	0.356 (0.126) **	0.365 (0.130) **	0.356 (0.126) **	0.171 (0.133)			
Hispanic	0.212 (0.146)	0.246 (0.150)	0.210 (0.146)	0.125 (0.152)			
Asian	0.150 (0.180)	0.185 (0.186)	0.145 (0.182)	0.029 (0.189)			
Other race (non-white)	0.401 (0.329)	0.274 (0.343)	0.400 (0.329)	0.469 (0.338)			
Two-parent family	0.212 (0.106) *	0.283 (0.109) **	0.216 (0.108) *	0.200 (0.108) †			
Number of siblings	-0.100 (0.047) *	-0.116 (0.048) *	-0.100 (0.047) *	-0.102 (0.048) *			
Family socioeconomic status	0.392 (0.061) ***	0.391 (0.063) ***	0.392 (0.061) ***	0.336 (0.063) ***			
Average sibling vocabulary score	0.034 (0.077)	0.032 (0.080)	0.034 (0.077)	0.016 (0.079)			
Average sibling educational attainment	0.035 (0.051)	0.034 (0.057)	0.035 (0.051)	-0.008 (0.056)			
Average sibling earnings		0.003 (0.026)					
Proportion of siblings with savings		0.447 (0.253) †					
Proportion with credit card debt		-0.198 (0.186)					
Proportion with student loans		0.126 (0.211)					
Proportion with economic hardship		0.194 (0.189)					
Average sibling relations with parent			0.026 (0.142)				
Proportion of siblings who are married				-0.199 (0.303)			
Proportion who are cohabiting				0.075 (0.303)			
Proportion who are living with others				-0.180 (0.234)			
Proportion who are living alone				-0.152 (0.318)			
Proportion who are living with a child				0.032 (0.252)			
Proportion who are employed				-0.160 (0.191)			
Proportion who are full-time students				0.363 (0.225)			
Proportion who are part-time students				-0.164 (0.314)			
Constant	2.274 (0.974) *	2.771 (1.025) **	2.475 (1.092) *	1.385 (1.030)			

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; N = 3,141; SE = standard error



Finally, model 4 of tables 2.5 and 2.6 includes as covariates the role statuses of marital and cohabitation status, living arrangements, parenthood, and employment and student statuses. Past research shows that offenders make slower transitions into adult roles, and I find that in general respondents who do not hold adult roles have greater likelihoods of receiving parental gifts than do their siblings who do hold adult roles. If offenders' failure to enter adult roles explains why they have higher odds of receiving parental assistance, then the coefficients for offending from model 4 should be smaller than the coefficients shown in model 1.

I find that together, the role status variables reduce the coefficient for offending in predicting gifts by 28% and to marginal statistical significance (to logistic  $b = .242$ ,  $p < .10$ ). This suggests that offenders' greater likelihood of receiving gifts may be in part an expression of their more general tendency to avoid the full roles and responsibilities of adulthood. Still, the coefficient for offending indicates that even net of the role statuses each unit increase in offending is associated with a 27% increase in the odds of receiving a parental gift ( $\exp(.242) = 1.274$ ). In addition, the coefficient for offending in predicting income from family and friends declines by only 4% (to logistic  $b = .302$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A supplemental analysis of NLSY97 data reveals that adding controls for these same role statuses produces essentially no change in the coefficient for offending in predicting receiving money from parents (full results not shown; with controls for role statuses, logistic  $b$  for offending =  $.166$ ,  $p < .01$ ; without controls for role statuses [from table 2.4], logistic  $b$  for offending =  $.164$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Taken together, these findings indicate that even when I account for offenders' lower rates of entry into adult role statuses, the majority of the offending-assistance association remains unexplained.

In sum, my results indicate that the more crime that young adults commit, the more likely they are to receive routine financial assistance from their parents. This is true even in within-family analyses that allow me to compare parents' financial transfers to siblings who show different levels of offending, and it is true even when I account for offenders' higher odds of financial problems and relatively poor emotional relationships with their parents. The association of offending with financial support is similar in strength to the associations of other well-known correlates of parental transfers, such as SES and family size. The fact that controls for adult role statuses cause a modest reduction in the offending-assistance association suggests that offenders' greater likelihood of receiving financial assistance partly reflects a general tendency to avoid the full responsibilities of adulthood. Still, most of the offending-assistance relationship remains unexplained by offenders' financial, relational, and other life circumstances.

## DISCUSSION

This study provides new information about adult offending in the context of the family as well as information about young adult offenders' instrumental and interpersonal resources. I find that young adult offenders do not appear to sever their ties to their parents as we might expect based on theory and research on juvenile delinquency. Instead, I find evidence that they remain connected to their parents and that they are even more likely to call on them for day-to-day financial support than are their non-offending peers and their own non-offending siblings. The positive relationship between offending and parental transfers is not driven by offenders' financial need, and it is only partly a reflection of the fact that offenders are slower to take on adult roles in general. It also is visible even though offenders have less positive emotional relationships with their

parents and parents are less likely to help offspring with whom they are not close. This marker of dependency on parents provides new information about offenders' social worlds. Furthermore, it suggests that criminologists could learn much from studying not only the roles and statuses that offenders are willing to take on, but also the roles and statuses that offenders are unwilling to give up.

My findings may seem unexpected given our knowledge of delinquents' relationships with their parents and of key social bonds in adulthood. Delinquent youths rarely look advantaged relative to non-delinquent youths, especially on measures of parent-child relations (e.g., Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Hirschi, 1969; Nye, 1958). Furthermore, adult offenders often are less, not more, advantaged in the domains of marriage and employment (e.g., Sampson and Laub, 1993). In contrast, the present study reveals that not only do adult offenders receive tangible support from their relationships with their parents, but they actually are more likely to receive this support than are their parents' other children. Parents' withdrawal of material support thus does not appear to be one of the costs of offending in early adulthood.

Among the two national samples examined here, the prevalence of parents' transfers of money to offending offspring is more notable than is the amount of this assistance. These transfers thus appear to be more informative about intergenerational relations than they are about crime and economic well-being. What, then, does this study suggest about the nature of adult offenders' relationships with their parents? One possibility is that parents' ability to control the behavior of their offspring is limited by normative constraints on the severity of the sanctions that they can apply. Whether offenders are soliciting more assistance or their parents are offering them more

assistance, my findings indicate that this assistance is more unconditional than social control theorists might expect. Theoretical work on social control processes stresses the importance of mutual obligation in close relationships (Coleman, 1990; Laub and Sampson, 1993), but in parent-offender relationships the parents could be the only parties who feel a sense of obligation. Although dating partners and employers may be able to terminate relationships with people who offend, family members are not free agents who feel that they can withdraw support once a moderate tolerance level has been reached (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991; Luescher and Pillemer, 1998). If the norms that govern family relationships keep parents helping problem offspring well past the point where they feel comfortable doing so, then scholars might not expect young adults to be as responsive to their parents' requests and demands as they might be to their spouses' or employers'.

It also is possible that the parents in this study are unaware of their adult children's offending but would withdraw their support if they did have knowledge of it. If offenders are able to hide their behavior from their families, then we should not expect their significant others to impose sanctions for this undetected offending. The Add Health and NLSY97 data do not allow me to examine this possibility,<sup>13</sup> but I do find evidence of emotional distance and tension in offender-parent relationships as well as evidence that offenders' parents support them despite this distance and tension. Parents' lack of awareness could explain why they are not *less* likely to help offending offspring, but it could not by itself explain why they are *more* likely to help those offspring than they are to help their other, closer offspring. The key finding of the present study is that offending positively predicts parental assistance net of many other known correlates of this

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 4 for an examination of offender-parent relationships from the parent's perspective.

assistance. I leave it to future research to examine the dynamics and negotiations that underlie these transfers of money.

In sum, criminologists often study adult offenders as spouses, as employees, or sometimes as parents themselves, but they also may learn a lot by also studying offenders as someone else's grown children. The transition to financial independence from parents appears to provide new information about the social context of adult crime. Future research on offenders' relationships with their families of origin may be informative not only about the social and financial resources on which adult offenders can draw, but also about who in offenders' lives is affected by their behavior.

### CHAPTER 3. CRIMINALS' INDEBTEDNESS

Adult criminal offenders tend to fare poorly on measures of economic well-being. Most studies that show this have focused on offenders' reduced access to legitimate financial resources. This work shows that offenders, and especially those with official criminal records, have difficulty getting and keeping jobs (Pager, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993) and that when offenders do work they often earn less and experience slower wage growth than do non-offenders (Grogger, 1998; Western, 2002). These observations are important not only because strain and rational choice theories posit criminogenic effects of low financial resources (Becker, 1968; Ehrlich, 1973; Merton, 1938), but also because money can buy people important things such as healthcare, better living conditions, and political influence (Burtless and Smeeding, 2001; Leicht and Fitzgerald, 2006; Link and Phelan, 1995; Neckerman and Torche, 2007). These studies thus highlight the roles of institutions such as the justice system and labor markets in shaping offenders' economic well-being.

What if offenders were not so structurally disadvantaged? Would they still have more financial problems than do non-offenders? In this paper, I cover somewhat different territory than have past studies of crime and economic well-being by considering how different people in the same economic circumstances approach and use their financial resources. More specifically, I ask not only what financial resources do offenders versus non-offenders have, but also given the same amount of money to work with, do offenders experience more debt and economic hardship? In this way, my approach to money and crime is reminiscent of scholars' calls for attention to qualitative differences in the ways that offenders and non-offenders approach comparable situations in other life domains,

such as marriage and employment (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). As I now describe in more detail, theory and research on crime as a response to objective or subjective financial circumstances suggest that offenders and non-offenders could differ both in their orientations toward money and in the things they are willing to do to appear economically successful. These differences could mean that offenders are especially likely to show signs of spending beyond their resources, even in comparison with similarly situated non-offenders.

#### CRIME AS A MEANS TO A MATERIAL END

What does crime have to do with money? Much work on this topic has drawn on anomie and structural strain theories to examine crime as a means to economic success. These theories posit that American culture places a heavy emphasis on individual achievement, especially as symbolized by material success (Merton, 1938; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997). The cultural emphasis on the use of socially approved pathways toward achievement is much weaker (Merton, 1938; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997). Merton (1938) proposes that class differences in educational and occupational chances place real limits on disadvantaged groups' prospects for legitimately achieving material success, but the culture encourages members of these groups to remain ambitious. Faced with such incompatible demands, people, and particularly members of the lower classes, may turn to crime as a faster and more effective route to material success than school or work (Bernard, 1995). This is similar to rational choice theorists' description of crimes as "market or wealth-generating activities" (Ehrlich, 1973:532) that may be preferred alternatives to legitimate work if no desirable jobs are available and if the expected benefits to crime outweigh the costs (see also Becker, 1968; Piliavin et al., 1986).

Although Merton (1938) is most interested in the implications of these ideas for class differences in crime rates, members of any social stratum may aspire to higher material success than they could legitimately achieve. The fact that there is no upper limit on the amount of money that one theoretically could have, combined with the cultural themes of individualism and competition that are entangled with monetary success goals, mean that material success is a moving target that “manages always to be ‘just ahead’” (Merton, 1957:136; see also Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997). Not everyone within a society will aspire to attain the next level of material success (indeed, as described below, Merton himself proposed that some people will reject material success goals [Baumer, 2007]), but those who do have higher aspirations may see incentives for using illegitimate means to get there. Consistent with this idea, people vary in the value they place on material possessions, in their wealth goals, and in their general competitiveness and desire for social dominance, and even among non-disadvantaged samples these values positively predict crime (Agnew et al. 1996; Farnworth and Leiber 1989; Kasser, 2002; Konty, 2005; McCarthy and Hagan, 2001; Wright et al., 2001). Disadvantaged or not, individuals who are less satisfied with their financial circumstances tend to commit more crime (Agnew et al., 1996; Baron, 2007).

The role of money under this theory thus has less to do with objective economic deprivation and more to do with the cultural emphasis on displaying the image of success. For example, the strained offenders of criminologists’ qualitative research on disadvantaged populations do not rob and steal mainly to cover necessary expenses, they do it to create the impression of affluence (Jacobs and Wright, 1997; see also Shover, 1996). Because people are judged by whether they have attained “at least the simulacrum



of success” (Merton, 1957:141) more than they are by how they came to appear so successful, the door is opened for people to use “all those means which enable one to attain it” (Merton, 1957:169; see also Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997:4).

This past work on monetary success goals provides information about possible motives for crime. Still, these insights do not indicate whether offenders and non-offenders differ in how they use their money. To shed light on that topic, I first take a closer look at Merton’s (1938:678) theorizing on the “innovation response” that individuals may adopt when their material success goals exceed their legitimate means.

#### WHAT IS INNOVATION?

According to Merton’s (1938; 1957) well-known typology of modes of adjustment, when people cannot reach culturally prescribed success goals via legitimate means they can respond in a variety of ways. Usually, they continue to accept both the goals and the idea that one should pursue those goals through socially approved means only (conformity). Rarely, they relinquish both the goals and the approved means and they withdraw from the entire system (retreatism).<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, they abandon the goals as unattainable but continue to adhere to social norms of conduct (ritualism). Most relevant for criminologists are those individuals who accept the goals but who are not committed to pursuing those goals solely via approved means. This is the “innovation response” or “illegitimacy adjustment” (Merton, 1938:678) which scholars typically operationalize as crime and delinquency (Merton, 1957:176).

How can we characterize these criminal innovators? Merton alternatively describes innovation as associated with the “elimination” of (1938:676), the “rejection”

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<sup>14</sup> Even more rarely, they reject both goals and means and attempt to create a “new social order” by substituting new goals and means (rebellion; Merton, 1938:678).

of (1957:140), the insufficient internalization of (1957:141), or “attenuate[d] conformity” (1957:169) to the norms that govern approved pathways toward success. It is possible that conditions of economic disadvantage do lead some people to reject work and school outright (e.g., Cohen, 1955). However, Merton (1976:29) later came to distinguish “nonconformers”, who openly reject behavioral norms, from “aberrants”, who simply do not follow those norms. Consistent with the idea of innovators as aberrants rather than nonconformers, crime often is a complement to rather than a substitute for legitimate work and income (Agnew, 1990; Grogger, 1991; Horney et al., 1995; Wright et al., 2001). These working offenders do not limit themselves strictly to illegitimate means toward monetary success, but rather they could be people in pursuit of monetary success goals who are willing to “consider *various* activities that will help achieve these goals” (my emphasis; Baumer, 2007:73; see also Bernard, 1995). By this logic, scholars may expect innovators to increase their purchasing power not only through criminal activity, but also through non-criminal activity such as working longer hours (e.g., Leicht and Fitzgerald, 2006).

For Merton (1957), the distinguishing characteristics of different modes of adaptation involve not the morality or legality of acts, but rather the particular combination of commitment to goals and commitment to approved means that is reflected in those acts. Innovation thus defined is simply “deviation from current norms” (Merton, 1957:182) in the quest toward a goal. Crime is but one of many possible indicators of a willingness to seek success “by any means necessary” (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997:4) or through “all those means which enable one to attain it” (Merton, 1957:169). By this logic, offenders are people whose material aspirations exceed what their incomes can

provide and who are willing to use a variety of tactics to fulfill their aspirations, whether those tactics are socially approved or not. This idea has much in common with Matza's (1964) conception of delinquent youths as "drifters" who are fully committed neither to crime nor to conformity. It suggests that innovators are "means opportunists" (Merton, 1959:179) who are unwilling to adhere to norms if it means giving up on the promise of achieving material success, but who are willing to employ either conventional or deviant routes to material success depending on which routes are currently available.

What do innovators' chosen means to material success have in common, if not their illegality? And what does the idea of offenders as financial innovators imply about the ways in which they use their money? For guidance on these topics, I now consider the quest for the image of success in the context of the "theory of action" (Bernard and Snipes, 1996:323) found in Merton's and others' perspectives.

#### INNOVATIVE ROUTES TO THE IMAGE OF SUCCESS

The above-described image of the offender as an economic actor is of someone with higher-than-average material aspirations who is willing to do what it takes to fulfill those aspirations. Outside of work and crime, when faced with current material wants that exceed their resources, how might people bridge these gaps? With respect to financial behaviors, they may borrow money or divert funds from things that are not directly related to the goal at hand. In the language of classic economics, individuals can inflate their "real income" ("living" or material conditions; Fisher, [1930] 1961:6) above the constraints of their "money income" by using up any savings they have, by overspending, or by supplementing their resources with loans and credit (see also Leicht and Fitzgerald, 2006). What these practices have in common with criminal routes to material success is

their relatively immediate availability. The material success goals featured in anomie and strain theories could involve current displays of success more than they do the gradual accumulation of wealth. This could be reflected in offenders' making short-term financial decisions that further these goals but that could undermine their longer-term economic well-being.

Here many criminological theorists would agree. Merton (1936) writes that people who are very concerned with their immediate situations will tend to choose actions that are aligned with their immediate priorities yet work against their long-term interests. As an example of this phenomenon, Merton (1936) cites Weber's observation that asceticism is its own undoing because the failure to consume leads to the accumulation of wealth. The criminological complement to this idea, as noted by Matza and Sykes (1961:714), is that despite their high material success goals offenders may exhibit "little liking for the slow accumulation of financial resources" but rather may seek to consume more in the present. Both Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) self-control theory and Hirschi's (2004) recent version of social bonds theory portray offenders as people who would tend to use their money in ways that yield short-term benefits even if their actions could have long-term costs. Economists would say that these offenders have a high "time preference" (Fisher, [1930] 1961; Becker and Mulligan, 1997), or that they prefer current over future satisfaction, a preference that is associated with aggression, sensation seeking, and being a "spendthrift" rather than a "tightwad" (Rick, Cryder, and Lowenstein, 2008; Zimbardo and Boyd 1999).

Taken together, these ideas lead me to expect that offenders will show signs of spending beyond their resources, even outside of conditions of objective economic

deprivation. If crime, borrowing, and overspending all are markers of a tendency to pursue the image of success by any means necessary, then relative to non-offenders with the same incomes and financial assets offenders may have more debt and incur more bills that they cannot pay. My hypotheses perhaps more directly derive from economically-oriented strain theories than they do from control theories, which do not yield special hypotheses about financial behaviors specifically. Still, they are consistent with control theorists' depiction of crime as sharing many characteristics of non-criminal but analogous acts (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Matza, 1964). I address the possibility that offending is a marker of versatility in the pursuit of material success goals and that this versatility has broader implications for individuals' financial practices.

#### THE PRESENT STUDY

In this study I examine whether criminal offending is associated with individuals' usage of financial resources, rather than focusing solely on access to resources as have past studies. Past studies of values and crime show that offenders have higher than average material success goals, and a variety of theoretical perspectives suggest that offending could be a marker for people who are willing to be versatile in the ways in which they pursue material success. These observations lead me to examine the implications of these themes for the relationship between crime and actual financial behaviors. I expect to find evidence that offenders treat their current financial resources as insufficient, even when they have the same incomes and assets as do non-offenders, and that the tactics they use to inflate their standards of living are not limited to crime. Merton's (1938) well-known formulation of structural strain theory focuses on how economic deprivation may cause crime. His description of modes of adjustment to strain

leads me to reason that crime and problematic financial practices are related not because one causes the other, but because they both follow from unbridled material aspirations held by people who are willing to be flexible in how they pursue those aspirations.

My empirical approach to this topic is guided by three key considerations. First, I focus on young adulthood, an age span when individuals are first establishing themselves as independent economic actors. At this age range, people still show substantial variability in offending, but the long-term effects of stratification and cumulative disadvantage processes are not yet visible (Elman and O’Rand, 2004; Marini and Fan, 1997). In addition, offending and justice system contacts have not yet dampened wage prospects nearly as much as they will later on in the life course (Nagin and Waldfogel, 1998; Western, 2002). Finally, people in their late teens and early twenties are newly freed from some age-graded institutional restrictions on economic activities, such as laws governing the employment of minors and restricted access to financial tools such as credit. This means that young adults may have access to an unusually wide range of possible means to material success.

Second, I draw on data from large national samples that show considerable variance both in background socioeconomic status and in current financial resources. It is this variation that allows me to examine crime and money among individuals whose financial decision-making is not constrained by “situations of deprivation, desperation, destitution, degradation, disrepute, and related conditions” (Hagan, 1992:5). People who are not economically disadvantaged should have more opportunity to express innovative tendencies in a variety of ways.

Third, I examine offending not only in relation to income and financial assets, but also in relation to consumer and other debt and to difficulty keeping up with expenses. These “social indicators” (Burtless and Smeeding, 2001:34) of financial status have a strikingly imperfect relationship with income, in large part because they are shaped by individuals’ tastes, preferences, and qualities such as prudence (Bauman, 1998; Beverly, 2001; Iceland, 2005; Mirowsky and Ross, 1999; Ouellette et al., 2004; Short, 2005). Thus, measures of debt and economic hardship provide information on the ratio of individuals’ spending to their levels of resources. When resources are held constant, these indicators can yield insight into how individuals use the money that is available to them. For the purposes of my study, they serve as a concrete indicator of differences between offenders’ and non-offenders’ approaches to their personal finances. Because my data feature large sample sizes and considerable variation in the key constructs of interest, I can conduct especially thorough tests of my hypotheses by eliminating alternative explanations for offenders’ economic difficulties. Specifically, I examine debt and hardship among subgroups of offenders and non-offenders who have the same financial resources, show the same rates of parenthood, substance use, and other crime-linked expenses, and have the same rates of experiencing crises that can lead to unmanageable debts, such as illness and unemployment (Sullivan, Warren, and Westbrook, 2000).

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, I describe the overall financial circumstances of two nationally representative samples of young adults. Next, I present regression results that depict the association of offending with measures of financial resources, obligations, and problems among these two samples. Finally, I compare the levels of debt and economic hardship of subgroups of offenders and non-

offenders that are equivalent on income, financial assets, demographic characteristics, and other life circumstances. I expect that given the same financial resources, offenders will be more likely than will non-offenders to experience these financial problems.

## DATA AND METHODS

I use two datasets to examine the relationship between crime and money among young adults: the 1997 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The benefits of the NLSY97 include self-reports of participation in six criminal acts, a comprehensive assets and debts module administered when respondents were age 20, and information on both legal and illegal earnings. The advantages of Add Health include a more extensive self-reported offending scale as well as multiple measures of economic hardship.

### THE NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH (1997 COHORT)

The NLSY97 is an excellent data source for this project because it is possibly the most comprehensive source of information on young adults' financial situations that also includes information on offending. The NLSY97 drew on a nationally representative cross-sectional sample of adolescents born between 1980 and 1984 and a supplemental oversample of Hispanic and black adolescents from the same birth cohorts. Respondents were selected via a multi-stage stratified sampling design. First, more than 1,700 block groups were selected from a sample of 147 non-overlapping primary sampling units chosen from NORC's 1990 master probability sample. Next, NLSY staff administered in-person screening interviews, designed to identify eligible respondents according to their birth cohorts and race/ethnicity, to 75,291 households within the block groups (78% of eligible households). Of the 9,806 adolescents identified as eligible, 8,984 (92%)



completed computer-assisted in-person interviews in 1997 at Wave 1. Wave 1 also contained detailed interviews with respondents' parents. Since then, respondents have been re-interviewed annually with a high rate of retention (86% completed Wave 7 interviews in 2003).

This study uses data from the 6,581 respondents who completed age 20 assets interviews between waves 3 and 7, the age and waves which included the most information about young adults' financial resources, debts, and offending. I used multiple imputation to reduce potential bias from missing values on the study variables. To do this, I used the ICE (Royston, 2005) and MIM (Carlin et al., 2008) procedures available for Stata versions 9 and above. These procedures allowed me to create five complete datasets featuring imputed values for missing cases, and to combine my estimates across the imputed datasets while accounting for variance across them (Royston, 2005). I included all study variables in the imputation procedure. My analytical sample size is 6,581, versus a sample size of 4,069 that would have remained after listwise deletion.<sup>15</sup> The substantive results are unchanged under conditions of listwise deletion (full results not shown).

#### *Measures of Financial Resources and Debt*

*Income.* NLSY97 respondents reported their past-year income from wages and salaries, as well as income from a wider variety of sources including self-employment, partners' wages, parents, child support, interest and dividends, inheritances or trusts, and

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<sup>15</sup> Nearly half of this missing data is due to missing percentile scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. The substantive findings are unchanged when these test scores are excluded from the models.

government benefits.<sup>16, 17</sup> Respondents also reported their illegal earnings from selling drugs, the value of any goods they stole, and their illegal earnings from other property crimes such as fraud.<sup>18</sup> I logged the sum of all of these amounts to create a measure of respondents' total past-year income from all sources. To adjust for inflation, I used the Bureau of Labor Statistics' all-item Consumer Price Index to convert all amounts to 2003 dollars (<http://www.bls.gov/cpi/>). Scores on the logged income variable, and on the assets and consumer debt variables described below, are approximately normally distributed except for large numbers of zero responses. I use tobit regression for models featuring logged income, assets, or debt as the dependent variable.

*Assets.* At the age 20 assets interview, NLSY97 respondents reported the values of their bank or money market accounts, stocks held, bonds or certificates of deposit, pension or retirement accounts, real estate, owned businesses, vehicles, household furnishings including electronics, and other assets. I logged the inflation-adjusted (to 2003 dollars) total dollar amount of these items to form a measure of respondents' total financial assets.

*Debts.* I examine offending in relation to four categories of debt that respondents could have held. Respondents reported whether they had any non-mortgage and non-auto consumer debt, including balances carried on store bills, credit cards, loans obtained

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<sup>16</sup> For each indicator of personal finances, the modest proportion of respondents who did not report specific dollar amounts were asked to report estimated amounts or ranges, which I used to impute specific dollar amounts. Less than 1% of respondents reported estimated amounts of consumer debt, approximately 4% reported estimated bank account balances, and approximately 14% reported estimated wages. This technique resulted in very low rates of missing data. For example, specific or estimated wage amounts at the time of the age 20 assets interview are available for 95% of wage earning respondents.

<sup>17</sup> To protect respondents' anonymity, for each measure of personal finances Bureau of Labor Statistics staff replaced the highest 2 percent of values with the mean of the high values. This topcoding, in combination with the log transformations used in this paper, reduces the influence of extreme values. The substantive results are nearly identical when the top 2 percent of values of the income and assets measures shown in table 3.1 are replaced with the value corresponding to the 98<sup>th</sup> percentiles.

<sup>18</sup> Only one-third of offenders (5% of all respondents) reported any illegal earnings, and most of the amounts reported were modest (mean amount among those reporting any illegal earnings = \$259.01).

through a bank or credit union, margin loans, or other installment loans. I also examine the log of the inflation-adjusted dollar amount of respondents' consumer debt.

Respondents also reported whether or not they owed money on personal loans from relatives and friends, owed money on car loans, or owed money on student loans.

### *Past Year Crime*

My measure of offending is a dichotomous indicator of whether NLSY97 respondents had committed one or more of the following acts since the date of the last interview: damaging property, stealing something worth less than fifty dollars, stealing something worth more than fifty dollars, committing other property crimes such as receiving or selling stolen goods, attacking someone, and selling drugs. Supplementary analyses (not shown) using a continuous item response theory scale of offending (Osgood et al., 2002) reveal that for the purposes of this paper there is little gain from making finer distinctions in level of offending.<sup>19</sup> Thus, I present results using a dichotomous indicator of past year crime, although I note that the substantive findings are similar when a continuous scale is used instead.

Because of anomie and strain theories' emphasis on crime as an alternative route to material success, in some analyses I examine the associations of debt and economic hardship with utilitarian crimes (theft, other property crimes, and selling drugs), or crimes that could potentially yield material gains, separately from their associations with non-utilitarian crimes (damaging property, attacking someone).

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<sup>19</sup> Among NLSY97 respondents reporting past year crime, I find no significant differences between the first, second, and third terciles of item response theory-scaled offending in predicting consumer debt ( $\chi^2 = 0.89, p > .05$ ), personal loans ( $\chi^2 = 0.50, p > .05$ ), student loans ( $\chi^2 = 4.50, p > .05$ ), auto loans ( $\chi^2 = 3.06, p > .05$ ), or logged assets ( $\chi^2 = 2.22, p > .05$ ). There is a significant trend for respondents with higher scores on the continuous offending scale to have higher incomes than do offenders with lower scores ( $\chi^2 = 6.21, p < .05$ ). Given the general robustness of findings across levels of offending, for ease of interpretation and of making comparisons of findings across the full samples and matched samples, I present results based on a dichotomous offending indicator.

### *Other Life Circumstances*

A key aim of this paper is to determine whether offenders have more financial obligations than do similarly situated non-offenders. Some of my analyses thus include measures of life circumstances that are known correlates of offending and that could increase or decrease the financial pressure on respondents. These are marital status, cohabitation, full-time and part-time employment, living with parents, living with minor children, college enrollment, and self-reported general health. Because crime is positively related to substance use and drugs and alcohol cost money, my matched sample analyses also account for an ordinal measure of past month binge drinking (with values ranging from zero to four or more instances of having five or more drinks in a single occasion) and dichotomous indicators of past month marijuana use and past year use of other drugs.

### *Background Characteristics*

My analyses also account for additional factors that may relate both to offending and to debt and hardship, including whether the respondent was over age 20 at the time of their age 20 assets interview, male gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, urban residence, whether respondents grew up in two-parent households, respondents' number of siblings, household socioeconomic status at Wave 1 (measured as the mean of the Z-scores of household poverty ratio at Wave 1, mother's education, and father's education), percentile scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, and respondents' years of education. The matching equations described below also include separate indicators of logged household poverty ratio at Wave 1 and parental education.

## THE NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

To supplement my analyses of the NLSY97 data, I draw on data from Add Health, which includes multiple measures of economic hardship in young adulthood. Add Health drew on a nationally representative sample of adolescents who were in grades 7 through 12 during the 1994-1995 school year. Participants were selected via a two-stage stratified sampling design. First, 132 schools were randomly selected from a national sampling frame stratified by region, urbanicity, school size, school type, and racial composition. Then, students in each school were stratified by grade and sex, and a nationally representative probability sample of nearly 19,000 adolescents completed Wave 1 in-home interviews. These youths' parents were also interviewed at Wave 1. At Wave 3 in 2001, 14,322 of these respondents (who were then ages 18-28) completed follow-up in-home interviews. Wave 3 is the first wave of Add Health to collect information on respondents' assets, debts, and experiences of economic hardship.

This study uses data from the Wave 3 interview, with some background information taken from the Wave 1 interview. I dealt with missing data using the multiple imputation procedures described above. My analytical sample size is 14,322, versus a sample size of 12,296 that would have remained after listwise deletion. The substantive findings are unchanged under conditions of listwise deletion (full results not shown).

### *Measures of Financial Resources and Debt*

*Earnings.* At Wave 3, respondents reported their total earned income before taxes during the previous year, including wages, salaries, tips, bonuses, overtime pay, and

income from self-employment. I use a logged version of this item as my measure of Add Health respondents' past year earnings.<sup>20</sup>

*Assets and other financial resources.* I also examine five dichotomous indicators of various types of financial resources that respondents could have had. These are whether respondents had a checking account, had a savings account, received any interest or dividends from assets such as stocks or bonds, received financial assistance from their parents, or received public assistance during the previous year.

*Debts and economic hardship.* My key measures of debt for the Add Health sample are dichotomous indicators of whether respondents had credit card debt and whether they had any unpaid student loans. Respondents also reported whether or not they or their household had experienced seven forms of economic hardship in the past year. These were going without phone service, not making full rent or mortgage payments because they did not have enough money, being evicted for nonpayment of the rent or mortgage, not paying the full amounts of utility bills for lack of money, having utilities shut off for nonpayment, not receiving needed medical care because they could not afford it, and not seeing a dentist when needed because they could not afford it.

#### *Past Year Crime*

My measure of offending is a dichotomous indicator of whether respondents had committed one or more of eleven criminal acts during the past year. These were damaging property, seriously injuring someone, stealing something worth over \$50, burglarizing a house or building, using or threatening to use a weapon to get something, selling drugs, stealing something worth under \$50, fencing stolen property, using another

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<sup>20</sup> Fourteen percent of respondents reported ranges rather than specific dollar amounts of earnings. I used these ranges to impute specific earnings amounts for these respondents.

person's credit or bank card without their permission, or deliberately writing a bad check. As is also the case for my NLSY analyses, a dichotomous indicator of offending appears sufficient for capturing the association of crime with personal finances among Add Health respondents.<sup>21</sup>

In some analyses I examine utilitarian crime (theft, burglary, using a weapon to get something, selling drugs, fencing stolen property, and credit card or check fraud) separately from non-utilitarian crime (damaging property, injuring someone, taking part in group fights). This is useful for determining whether crimes with economic motives are more closely linked to debt and economic hardship than are other crimes.

#### *Other Life Circumstances*

My matched sample analyses also account for measures of life circumstances that are related to criminal offending and that could impact individuals' financial need. These are respondents' marital status, cohabitation, employment status, living with parents, living with minor children, college enrollment, home ownership, self-reported health, and a dichotomous indicator of not having health insurance. In addition, because substance use and its costs could play a role in offenders' personal finances, my matched sample analyses also account for an ordinal measure of past-year binge drinking (with response choices ranging from never to once a week or more), an ordinal measure of past-month

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<sup>21</sup> Additional analyses of the Add Health data revealed that, similar to the NLSY97 offending measure, a measure of any versus no crime sufficiently captures the association between offending and personal finances for 11 of 15 financial indicators. For example, among Add Health respondents reporting past year crime, I find no significant differences between the first, second, and third terciles of item response theory-scaled offending in predicting credit card debt ( $\chi^2 = 0.29, p > .05$ ), difficulty paying rent ( $\chi^2 = 4.89, p > .05$ ), difficulty paying bills ( $\chi^2 = 2.90, p > .05$ ), earnings ( $\chi^2 = 0.73, p > .05$ ), or having a savings account ( $\chi^2 = 0.40, p > .05$ ). Offenders with higher versus lower continuous offending scores do show significantly greater odds of going without phone service ( $\chi^2 = 8.89, p < .05$ ), having utilities turned off ( $\chi^2 = 9.86, p < .01$ ), going without doctor's visits ( $\chi^2 = 14.74, p < .001$ ), and going without dentist's visits ( $\chi^2 = 9.45, p < .01$ ). Still, even offenders in the first and second terciles of offending have greater odds of these problems than do non-offenders. To facilitate the comparison of findings across the full samples and matched samples, I present results based on a dichotomous offending indicator.

marijuana use (with response choices ranging from never to 10 or more times), and a dichotomous indicator of past month use of any other illegal drugs.

### *Background Characteristics*

All Add Health analyses also account for background factors that may predict both offending and personal finances. These are age, male gender, race/ethnicity, whether respondents grew up in two-parent families, number of siblings, family socioeconomic status at W1 (measured as the mean of the Z-scores of respondents' parents' levels of education and occupational prestige), a dichotomous indicator of whether respondents' parents had experienced economic hardship, respondents' scores on an abridged version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (standardized by age and divided by ten), and respondents' years of education completed.

Descriptive statistics for all NLSY97 study variables appear in table 3.1, and descriptive statistics for all Add Health study variables appear in table 3.2.<sup>22</sup>

### ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

My analytical strategy has two main components. First, I conduct logistic and tobit regression analyses predicting measures of financial resources, obligations, and problems from past year crime and the background characteristics. These models indicate

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<sup>22</sup> A comparison of the NLSY97 means shown in Table 3.1 with means computed only on Add Health respondents of a similar age (ages 19 to 21) reveals many similarities between the two samples. For example, 29% of NLSY97 respondents have consumer debt, 15% are living with a child, and 7% are married, while 31% of young Add Health respondents have credit card debt, 14% live with a child, and 7% are married. Four major points of difference emerge: percent owing money on student loans (16% of NLSY97 respondents versus 24% of young Add Health respondents), percent employed (87% of NLSY97 respondents versus 65% of young Add Health respondents), percent enrolled in college (40% of NLSY97 respondents versus 48% of young Add Health respondents), and past year crime (16% of NLSY97 respondents versus 33% of young Add Health respondents). While some of these differences likely stem from the fact that the NLSY97 is a household sample and Add Health is a school-based sample, the difference in crime stems from the greater number of items in the Add Health offending scale. Given that the Add Health sample as a whole shows more signs of postponing workforce entry in favor of additional education than does the NLSY97 sample, it is not surprising that Add Health respondents report lower mean earnings in young adulthood than do NLSY97 respondents (\$1,727 versus \$3,517).



whether young adult offenders have more or less money to draw on and incur and experience more or less debt and hardship than do young adult non-offenders.

Second, I compare the debt and economic hardship of matched groups of offenders and non-offenders with the same financial resources and life circumstances. These comparisons indicate whether offenders and non-offenders experience different amounts of debt and hardship even when they have the same amount of money to draw on, come from comparable backgrounds, and show signs of being on similar attainment trajectories. To create the matched samples and to test for covariate balance, I used the algorithms available in the *psmatch2* and *pstest* commands written for Stata versions 9 and above (Leuven and Sianesi, 2003). These algorithms allow me to transform offenders' and non-offenders' scores on many predictors into a single continuous function, and to select subsets of cases from each group that have similar scores on this function. After identifying a group of non-offenders that is most comparable to the offending group across all of the matching variables, I use logistic regression models to compare the prevalence of hardship and debt among the two groups. For technical information on multivariate approaches to creating matched samples, see Rosenbaum and Rubin (1983) and Becker and Ichino (2002).

In both data sources, respondents had unequal probabilities of selection and were sampled from within clusters (households in the NLSY97, and schools in Add Health). I account for these complex survey designs via the *svy* commands available in Stata 9.2 and by using custom sampling weights for analyses of NLSY97 data and sampling weights provided by the Add Health investigators for analyses of Add Health data.

Table 3.1. Survey-Corrected Descriptive Statistics for NLSY97 Study Variables

	Variable	Mean/Percent	SE	Range
Background characteristics	Older than 20 at assets interview	9.0%		0 - 1
	Male	51.2%		0 - 1
	Black	17.6%		0 - 1
	Hispanic	14.5%		0 - 1
	Asian	2.3%		0 - 1
	Other race (non-white)	2.3%		0 - 1
	North central state	25.5%		0 - 1
	Southern state	35.4%		0 - 1
	Western state	21.2%		0 - 1
	Urban residence	75.5%		0 - 1
	Two-parent family at W1	65.5%		0 - 1
	Number of siblings	1.301	0.017	0 - 4
	Family socioeconomic status at W1	0.084	0.013	-3.579 - 4.974
	Ability test score (percentile)	48.271	0.421	0 - 100
	Years of education completed	12.172	0.023	2 - 16
Offending	Past year crime	15.8%		0 - 1
Financial circumstances	Has consumer debt	29.0%		0 - 1
	Amount of consumer debt (logged dollars)	2.055	0.045	0 - 10.930
	Amount of other debt (logged dollars)	2.544	0.055	0 - 10.893
	Owes money on personal loan	5.2%		0 - 1
	Owes money on auto loan	24.1%		0 - 1
	Owes money on student loan	15.5%		0 - 1
	Income (logged dollars)	8.165	0.036	0 - 13.045
	Assets (logged dollars)	3.975	0.052	0 - 12.044
Received public assistance	9.7%		0 - 1	
Other life circumstances	Married	7.0%		0 - 1
	Cohabiting	12.9%		0 - 1
	Employed full time	42.4%		0 - 1
	Employed part time	45.0%		0 - 1
	Living with parent	62.2%		0 - 1
	Living with a child	15.1%		0 - 1
	Enrolled in college	39.7%		0 - 1
	Self-reported health	2.014	0.011	1 - 3
	Past month binge drinking	0.810	0.017	0 - 3
	Past month marijuana use	19.6%		0 - 1
	Past year other drug use	7.2%		0 - 1

NOTES: N = 6,581

Table 3.2. Survey-Corrected Descriptive Statistics for Add Health Study Variables

	Variable	Mean/Percent	SE	Range
Background characteristics	Age in years	21.822	0.120	18 - 28
	Male	50.8%		0 - 1
	Black	16.0%		0 - 1
	Hispanic	11.8%		0 - 1
	Asian	3.9%		0 - 1
	Other race (non-white)	2.9%		0 - 1
	Two-parent family at W1	67.2%		0 - 1
	Number of siblings	1.340	0.028	0 - 4
	Family socioeconomic status at W1	-0.001	0.040	-2.632 - 1.607
	Parent experienced economic hardship	18.0%		0 - 1
	Vocabulary score	10.126	0.065	1.400 - 14.600
Years of education completed	13.071	0.086	6 - 22	
Offending	Past year crime	28.4%		0 - 1
Financial circumstances	Has credit card debt	38.7%		0 - 1
	Owes money on student loan	29.0%		0 - 1
	Went without phone service	16.3%		0 - 1
	Could not pay rent	7.3%		0 - 1
	Evicted for nonpayment of rent	1.1%		0 - 1
	Could not pay utility bills	11.1%		0 - 1
	Utilities shut off for nonpayment	4.7%		0 - 1
	Could not afford doctor	8.9%		0 - 1
	Could not afford dentist	12.3%		0 - 1
	Earnings (logged dollars)	7.454	0.112	0 -13.617
	Has a checking account	71.4%		0 - 1
	Has a savings account	62.2%		0 - 1
	Investment income	17.2%		0 - 1
	Financial assistance from parents	75.4%		0 - 1
Received public assistance	6.8%		0 - 1	
Other life circumstances	Married	13.4%		0 - 1
	Cohabiting	11.7%		0 - 1
	Employed	69.7%		0 - 1
	Living with parent	44.2%		0 - 1
	Living with a child	20.7%		0 - 1
	Enrolled in college	34.9%		0 - 1
	Owens home	12.7%		0 - 1
	Self-reported health	3.006	0.013	1 - 4
	No health insurance	37.3%		0 - 1
	Past year binge drinking	1.250	0.043	0 - 4
Past month marijuana use	0.480	0.018	0 - 3	
Past month other drug use	7.1%		0 - 1	

NOTES : N = 14,322

## RESULTS

### YOUNG ADULTS' FINANCIAL RESOURCES, OBLIGATIONS, AND PROBLEMS

I first examine the overall financial circumstances of these national samples of young adults. Overall, these respondents have accumulated only modest financial resources, and many have incurred debts. NLSY97 respondents' mean income (\$3,517) and Add Health respondents' mean earnings (\$1,727) are low, although when only recipients are considered the averages are higher (\$6,221 and \$4,747 respectively).<sup>23, 24</sup> Most Add Health respondents (83%) have either a checking or a savings account, and 17% report income-earning investments, although the NLSY97 data reveal that the amounts of 20 year olds' total assets are quite modest (for entire sample, mean = \$53; for the 60% of respondents who hold assets, mean = \$727). Over half (53%) of the NLSY97 respondents are in debt; consumer debt (29%) and auto loans (24%) are the most common forms. NLSY97 respondents with consumer debt owe an average of \$1,204, and those with other forms of debt owe an average of \$4,077 on those debts. Rates of credit card debt (39%) and student loan debt (29%) are higher among the school-based and slightly older Add Health sample. Nearly one-third (32%) of Add Health respondents report experiencing some form of economic hardship, most commonly going without phone service (16%), being unable to afford a needed dentist visit (12%), and trouble paying utility bills (11%).

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<sup>23</sup> Dollar amounts reported are exponentiated means of variables representing logged dollar amounts.

<sup>24</sup> As would be expected, among income recipients, NLSY97 respondents who are working full-time and are not enrolled in college report incomes that are considerably higher than average (mean = \$10,079). Among Add Health respondents with earnings, employed respondents who are not enrolled in college also report above-average earnings (mean = \$6,583).

## ASSOCIATION OF OFFENDING WITH PERSONAL FINANCES AMONG THE REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLES

I next examine how young adult offending relates to measures of financial obligations, problems, and resources among the samples as a whole. I accomplish this through a series of logistic and tobit regression analyses predicting individual measures of personal finances from past year crime and the background characteristics shown in tables 3.1 and 3.2. These models indicate that young adult offenders have higher incomes and earnings than do non-offenders, although they are somewhat less likely to hold formal financial assets. Offenders also are more likely than are non-offenders to have consumer debt, to owe money to relatives or friends, and to experience economic hardship, but they are not more likely to owe money on major government or bank loans such as student loans or car loans. Note that although I elected to use offending as the independent variable and personal finances as the dependent variable in these models, the logic behind my theoretical framework is not causal. I use regression methods because they allow me to examine the relationship between these constructs while accounting for other important factors such as age, gender, family background characteristics, and educational attainment.

Table 3.3 shows the results of these analyses for the NLSY97 sample. Fitted values based on the coefficient for past year crime in predicting logged income indicate that net of the background variables, offenders' average income is approximately \$1,500 higher than is non-offenders' average income (tobit  $b = .393$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Supplementary analyses (full results not shown) show that this income gap is visible mainly among respondents who are not working full-time, which suggests that part of the reason

offenders have higher incomes is because they tend to work more hours. The coefficient for offending in predicting logged assets suggests that offenders may have fewer financial assets than do non-offenders, although this coefficient is only marginally significant (tobit  $b = -.395$ ,  $p < .10$ ). When income and assets are combined into a single summary measure, net of the control variables offenders have greater personal financial resources (full results not shown; for offending, tobit  $b = .280$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 3.3. Logistic and Tobit Regression Estimates Predicting NLSY97 Respondents' Financial Circumstances from Past Year Crime

Dependent Variable	Coefficient for Past Year Crime	
	b	SE
Models predicting financial resources		
Income (logged dollars) <sup>a</sup>	0.393	(0.096) ***
Assets (logged dollars) <sup>a</sup>	-0.395	(0.216) †
Models predicting financial obligations		
Has consumer debt <sup>b</sup>	0.326	(0.083) ***
Amount of consumer debt (logged dollars) <sup>a</sup>	1.590	(0.402) ***
Owes money on personal loan <sup>b</sup>	0.781	(0.145) ***
Owes money on auto loan <sup>b</sup>	-0.080	(0.099)
Owes money on student loan <sup>b</sup>	0.014	(0.129)

<sup>a</sup>Models for which unstandardized tobit regression coefficients are shown

<sup>b</sup>Models for which unexponentiated logistic regression coefficients are shown

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ;  $N = 6,581$ ; all models included controls for background characteristics shown in Table 3.1; SE = standard error

The models predicting NLSY97 respondents' financial obligations show that net of the background characteristics, relative to non-offenders, offenders have 39% greater odds of having consumer debt ( $\exp(.326) = 1.385$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and owe greater amounts of consumer debt (tobit  $b = 1.590$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Few (5% of) respondents owe money on

personal loans from relatives and friends, but offenders have more than double the odds ( $\exp(.781) = 2.183, p < .001$ ). In contrast, offenders do not appear to have higher (or lower) odds of owing money on car loans (logistic  $b = -.080, p > .05$ ) or on student loans (logistic  $b = .014, p > .05$ ).<sup>25</sup>

Table 3.4 shows coefficients from similar models using data from Add Health. In this sample too, net of the background characteristics shown in table 3.2, offenders have higher earnings than do non-offenders (tobit  $b = .326, p < .01$ ). They also have 21% lower odds of having checking accounts ( $\exp(-.240) = .786, p < .01$ ) and 14% lower odds of having savings accounts ( $\exp(-.147) = .863, p < .05$ ), although they do not appear to be any more or less likely to have income from investments (logistic  $b = .060, p > .05$ ). Offenders have 55% greater odds of receiving financial assistance from their parents ( $\exp(.435) = 1.545, p < .001$ ). The modest positive coefficient for offending in predicting receipt of public assistance is not statistically significant (logistic  $b = .127, p > .05$ ).

The remaining models of table 3.4 show that offending is associated with an increased likelihood of many, but not all, financial obligations and problems. The coefficient for offending in predicting credit card debt is positive, although it is one-third the size of the NLSY97 coefficient relating offending to consumer debt, and it reaches only marginal statistical significance (logistic  $b = .115, p < .10$ ). The offending-credit card debt relationship nearly doubles in size when the analysis is restricted to respondents with credit cards (see footnote 26), which suggests that offenders' lower rates of holding credit cards are dampening the overall association. Consistent with the NLSY97 analyses, offending is not a significant predictor of student loans among Add Health respondents

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<sup>25</sup> The coefficients shown in the bottom two rows of table 3.3 are based on data from the full sample, but offending also is not a significant predictor of auto loans among car owners (logistic  $b = -.050, p > .05$ ) or of student loans among respondents who have attended college (logistic  $b = .087, p > .05$ ).

(logistic  $b = .030, p > .05$ ). The last seven coefficients shown in table 3.4 indicate that relative to non-offenders, offenders have between 71% and 109% greater odds of experiencing various forms of economic hardship (e.g., for the model predicting going without phone service,  $\exp(.534) = 1.706, p < .001$ ; for the model predicting being unable to afford needed doctor visits,  $\exp(.736) = 2.089, p < .001$ ).<sup>26</sup>

### *The Role of the Justice System*

Although it is plausible that legal expenses or court costs may drive offenders into debt, supplemental analyses (full results not shown) indicate that among these samples the associations of offending with debt and economic hardship are not due to contacts with the justice system.<sup>27</sup> I do find some evidence that arrests, convictions, and spells of incarceration could interfere with young adult offenders' accumulation of financial assets, but they cannot explain the association of offending with cash flow in either direction or with economic hardship (see footnote 27 for details).

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<sup>26</sup> I find similar and often stronger results when I limit the analyses to respondents for whom the dependent variable is most relevant. For example, offending is a significant predictor of credit card debt among Add Health respondents who have credit cards (logistic  $b = .210, p < .05$ ), of being unable to pay rent among respondents not living with their parents (logistic  $b = .712, p < .001$ ), of being unable to pay utility bills among respondents not living with parents (logistic  $b = .678, p < .001$ ), and of being unable to afford doctor's visits among uninsured respondents (logistic  $b = .575, p < .001$ ). Offending is not a significant predictor of student loans among respondents who ever attended college (logistic  $b = .029, p > .05$ ).

<sup>27</sup> Small percentages of NLSY97 and Add Health respondents report arrests (7% past-year and 12% lifetime in the NLSY97 and Add Health, respectively), convictions (4% and 7%), or spells of incarceration (1% of each sample). When these justice system contacts are introduced into the first model shown in tables 3.3 and 3.4, offending is a positive and significant predictor of income and earnings, arrest and conviction are not, and the coefficients for incarceration are large and negative, though not always significant (tobit  $b$  for incarceration =  $-.351, p > .05$  and  $-1.152, p < .05$  in NLSY97 and Add Health models respectively). I find few significant relationships of justice system contacts with measures of assets, but the signs and magnitudes of the coefficients indicate that the more intensive a respondent's experience with the justice system, the fewer financial assets he or she may accumulate. For example, in an NLSY97 model predicting logged assets, tobit  $b$  for offending =  $-.220, p > .05$ , for arrest =  $-.562, p > .05$ , for conviction =  $-.654, p > .05$ , and for incarceration =  $-1.707, p > .05$ . In addition, the associations of offending with measures of debt and economic hardship shown in tables 3.3 and 3.4 are substantively similar when the analyses are limited to respondents without criminal justice system contacts. For example, in predicting having consumer debt and owing money on personal loans from offending among NLSY97 respondents with no recent criminal justice system contacts, logistic  $b = .335, p < .001$ , and logistic  $b = .860, p < .001$ , respectively. In predicting credit card debt, trouble paying rent, and trouble affording doctor's visits from offending among Add Health respondents with no lifetime justice system contacts, logistic  $b = .236, p < .10$ , logistic  $b = .569, p < .05$ , and logistic  $b = .523, p < .05$ , respectively.



Table 3.4. Logistic and Tobit Regression Estimates Predicting Add Health Respondents' Financial Circumstances from Past Year Crime

Dependent Variable	Coefficient for Past Year Crime		
	b	SE	
Models predicting financial resources			
Earnings (in logged dollars) <sup>a</sup>	0.326	(0.110)	**
Has a checking account <sup>b</sup>	-0.240	(0.073)	**
Has a savings account <sup>b</sup>	-0.147	(0.060)	*
Investment income <sup>b</sup>	0.060	(0.068)	
Financial assistance from parents <sup>b</sup>	0.435	(0.066)	***
Received public assistance <sup>b</sup>	0.127	(0.111)	
Models predicting financial problems			
Has credit card debt <sup>b</sup>	0.115	(0.061)	†
Owes money on student loan <sup>b</sup>	0.030	(0.061)	
Went without phone service <sup>b</sup>	0.534	(0.078)	***
Could not pay rent <sup>b</sup>	0.591	(0.106)	***
Evicted for nonpayment of rent <sup>b</sup>	0.590	(0.274)	*
Could not pay utility bills <sup>b</sup>	0.577	(0.094)	***
Utilities shut off for nonpayment <sup>b</sup>	0.684	(0.111)	***
Could not afford doctor <sup>b</sup>	0.736	(0.081)	***
Could not afford dentist <sup>b</sup>	0.443	(0.075)	***

<sup>a</sup>Model for which unstandardized tobit coefficient is shown

<sup>b</sup>Models for which unstandardized logistic coefficients are shown

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; N = 14,322; all models included controls for background characteristics shown in Table 3.2; SE = standard error

### *Offending and Financial Problems across Socioeconomic Strata*

Do the associations of offending with financial problems cut across class lines?

All of the models shown in tables 3.3 and 3.4 included controls for background socioeconomic status, and Add Health models included additional controls for whether

respondents' parents had histories of economic hardship. The substantive findings based on NLSY97 data are unchanged by separate controls for logged household poverty ratio at W1 and for a dichotomous indicator of poor family of origin (full results are not shown but are available on request). This means that the socioeconomic standings of offenders' families do not explain why they have higher odds of financial difficulties.

Interestingly, the relationships between crime and financial problems also do not appear to depend on the financial well-being of respondents' families of origin. Of 30 interactions between past year crime and the family finances indicators (SES, household poverty ratio, poor family background, and parents' economic hardship) in predicting the 13 dichotomous indicators of financial problems, only two interaction terms reach statistical significance (full results are not shown but are available on request). These two interaction terms indicate that among Add Health respondents, offenders from more privileged backgrounds may have even greater odds of financial problems (i.e. for offending-by-SES interaction term in predicting going without phone service, logistic  $b = .151, p < .05$ ; for offending-by-SES interaction term in predicting not paying rent, logistic  $b = .192, p < .05$ ). In general, no matter what the resources of their families of origin, offenders have higher odds of incurring debt and experiencing economic hardship than do non-offenders. This provides suggestive evidence for the idea that wanting more than one has, and not just objectively having too little, may be a motivating force driving criminal and other innovative means to material success.

Taken together, these results suggest that criminal offending in young adulthood is associated with an increased cash flow in both directions, as indicated by offenders' higher incomes and greater consumer and personal debt, and with a somewhat lower

likelihood of formal or institutionalized financial assets such as bank accounts. Despite their greater total financial resources, offenders are considerably more likely than are non-offenders to experience various forms of economic hardship. This is true whether or not they are from disadvantaged family backgrounds. Later in this paper, I examine the financial obligations and problems of offenders and non-offenders who have similar financial resources. First, though, I examine whether debt and economic hardship are more closely related to utilitarian crime than they are to non-utilitarian crime.

#### PREDICTING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS FROM UTILITARIAN AND NON-UTILITARIAN CRIMES

Are these observed relationships between crime and financial problems about money specifically, or do they reflect a more general tendency toward deviance or rule breaking? I replicated the relevant models shown in tables 3.3 and 3.4 replacing the single indicator of past year crime with two separate indicators of utilitarian and non-utilitarian offending together (see Appendix A). In general, the coefficients for utilitarian crime in predicting financial problems are stronger and more consistently significant than are the coefficients for non-utilitarian crime, although in only three of the models does the difference itself reach statistical significance. In two of the models (predicting consumer debt among NLSY97 respondents and going without phone service among Add Health respondents) the coefficients for non-utilitarian crime are larger than are the coefficients for utilitarian crime, but in the other eight models the coefficients for non-utilitarian crime are smaller (and typically are at least 50% smaller) than the utilitarian crime coefficients. It is worth noting that I reach similar conclusions when in my NLSY97 analyses I substitute an indicator of any illegal earnings for the indicator of

utilitarian offending, although the coefficients for illegal earnings are smaller (in predicting consumer debt, logistic  $b = .030, p > .05$ ; in predicting personal loans logistic  $b = .486, p < .10$ ). Overall, these results provide support for the idea that crime, debt, and hardship are linked as indicators of innovative ways to fund materialistic pursuits, although they also provide some evidence for a more general process that is not as clearly linked to money specifically.

#### COMPARING THE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS AND PROBLEMS OF MATCHED SAMPLES OF OFFENDERS AND NON-OFFENDERS

Given the same financial resources and the same general life circumstances, would offenders still experience more than their share of debt and economic hardship? To answer this question, I conducted additional analyses examining debt and economic hardship among subsamples of respondents that are equivalent across a wide range of variables and that differ only on past year offending. The regression analyses presented above included controls for basic demographic and background characteristics. The following matched sample analyses feature offender and non-offender groups that are balanced not only on these background characteristics but also on income, financial assets, employment and student statuses, co-residence with parents, family role statuses, health, and substance use. This gives me more leverage to examine whether offenders have higher odds of overspending and debt than do non-offenders even when they have the same economic means and are in similar life situations.

Appendices B and C show that in the full samples, relative to non-offenders, offenders are more likely to be male, to be unmarried, to use drugs and alcohol, to be in poorer health, to have fewer financial assets, and to show signs of an accelerated school-

to-work transition (e.g., completing less education and having higher employment rates, incomes, and earnings). The matched samples are composed of smaller groups of offenders and non-offenders that do not differ significantly on any of the matching variables. The NLSY97 matched samples resemble the total sample of offenders, and the following NLSY97 analyses thus are based on groups of offenders and non-offenders that are two-thirds male and have below average educational attainment, assets, and rates of college enrollment and marriage, and above average income and rates of full-time employment. Matching in Add Health resulted in groups that were less extreme on these characteristics than were the full offender and non-offender samples and that, with the exception of being two-thirds male, resembled the overall means shown in table 3.2.

Table 3.5 shows the results of bivariate logistic regression analyses predicting forms of debt from past year crime among matched samples of NLSY97 offenders and non-offenders.<sup>28</sup> The coefficient in the top row indicates that offenders have 20% greater odds of having consumer debt than do non-offenders who resemble them in financial resources and life circumstances ( $\exp(.185) = 1.203$ ,  $p < .10$ ). This relationship is 43% lower than is the original relationship shown in table 3.3, but it remains positive and reaches marginal statistical significance. The second row shows that relative to similar non-offenders, offenders have over twice the odds of owing money on personal loans from relatives and friends. This relationship is only 10% smaller than is the original relationship and it remains statistically significant. Consistent with the results based on

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<sup>28</sup> The results shown in tables 3.5 and 3.6 are based on samples created through nearest neighbor matching (without replacement), which matches each offending respondent to the non-offending respondent with the closest score on the matching function. The results are substantively similar under kernel matching, which matches each offender to each non-offender but gives greater weight to closer non-offender matches, and under radius matching, which matches each offender to each non-offender whose score falls within a specified caliper (here, .01; see Appendices D and E). All matched sample comparisons are restricted to the region of common support (i.e. cases are used only if their scores on the matching function fall within the range of overlap between the two groups' scores).

the full sample, the matched offender and non-offender groups do not have significantly different rates of owing money on car loans (logistic  $b = .026, p > .05$ ) or student loans (logistic  $b = -.093, p > .05$ ).

Table 3.5. Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting Debt from Past Year Crime among Matched Samples of NLSY97 Respondents

Dependent Variable	Coefficient for Past Year Crime		
	b	SE	OR
Has consumer debt	0.185	(0.100) †	1.203
Owes money on personal loan	0.705	(0.192) ***	2.023
Owes money on auto loan	0.026	(0.115)	1.027
Owes money on student loan	-0.093	(0.144)	0.911

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ;  $N = 1,902$ ; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio

Similarly, the results shown in table 3.6 indicate that Add Health offenders experience more than their share of debt and economic hardship, even in comparison with an otherwise similar group of non-offenders. The association of offending with credit card debt is over 40% stronger in this matched sample comparison than it is in the full sample, which is more heterogeneous on earnings, educational attainment, and demographic characteristics (logistic  $b = .164, p < .01$ ). It also is quite similar in magnitude to the relationship between offending and consumer debt found among the matched NLSY97 samples (OR = 1.178). The offending-hardship relationships are somewhat (generally 9-35%) smaller among the matched samples than they were among the full samples, although even the relationship between offending and inability to afford doctor's visits, which declines the most (56%) relative to the coefficients shown in table 3.4, remains fairly strong and highly significant (OR = 1.382,  $p < .001$ ). As in the NLSY97 analyses, offending is not a significant or strong predictor of student loans among the Add Health matched samples (logistic  $b = .012, p > .05$ ).

Table 3.6. Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting Debt and Economic Hardship from Past Year Crime among Matched Samples of Add Health Respondents

Dependent Variable	Coefficient for Past Year Crime			
	b	SE	OR	
Has credit card debt	0.164	(0.052)	**	1.178
Owes money on student loan	0.012	(0.056)		1.012
Went without phone service	0.403	(0.067)	***	1.496
Could not pay rent	0.379	(0.093)	***	1.461
Evicted for nonpayment of rent	0.537	(0.231)	***	1.711
Could not pay utility bills	0.367	(0.079)	***	1.443
Utilities shut off for nonpayment	0.603	(0.118)	***	1.828
Could not afford doctor	0.324	(0.086)	***	1.382
Could not afford dentist	0.206	(0.075)	**	1.229

NOTES: †p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001; N = 6,320; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio

These matched sample results thus show that young adult offenders have more debt and experience more economic hardship than do non-offenders with the same incomes, financial assets, living arrangements, student and employment statuses, and demographic characteristics. This is not true for all forms of debt: Offenders appear to be no more or less likely to owe money on larger institutional loans for cars or school. Instead, the specific forms of debt and hardship that offenders are more likely to experience are reminiscent of shortfalls of cash.

In sum, my results suggest that people who commit crimes also tend to use a variety of other techniques to increase their purchasing power. In my general population samples, young adult offenders take in more income and earnings than do non-offenders and they appear to spend even more than they make, as evidenced by their higher rates of debt and greater trouble keeping up with expenses. Offenders have more financial

problems even in comparison with non-offenders who have the same financial resources and are in the same life circumstances. This is especially true of offenders who commit crimes that could yield profits. These findings suggest that crime is but one indicator of some individuals' willingness to deviate from conventional pathways in their pursuit of material success.

## DISCUSSION

This study presents new information about crime and economic well-being at the individual level. I find that even though young adult offenders earn more money than do their non-offending peers, they still incur more debt and have more trouble keeping up with their financial expenses. This is true even when I compare offenders with non-offenders who are matched on income, financial assets, and other life circumstances. My results are consistent with a Mertonian conception of offenders as “innovators” who have high aspirations for material success and who show versatility in the means that they use to fulfill their aspirations. These young adults do not appear to steal, sell drugs, commit fraud, borrow from creditors and significant others, or overspend to compensate for objectively low financial resources. Rather, the fact that crime is positively related to both income and financial problems suggests that offending is a marker for people who, when they have access to jobs, credit, and other economic tools, may use a variety of techniques to increase their purchasing power. It also suggests that offenders' commitment to using conventional lines of action toward their material goals is flexible rather than eliminated.

Scholars have consistently found macro-level links between economic factors and crime (e.g., Blau and Blau, 1982; Krivo and Peterson, 1996; Pratt and Cullen, 2005), but



evidence on the micro-level class-crime relationship is mixed (Braithwaite, 1981; Dunaway et al., 2000; Tittle and Meier, 1990). My results bring Merton's (1938; 1957) ideas about money back into the individual-level picture by demonstrating that crime and personal finances are linked in ways that are difficult to see in analyses of objective economic deprivation. Young adult offenders' financial problems do not involve low incomes, but instead involve more extreme inflows and outflows of cash than are shown by non-offenders. These relationships also are not as class-bound as Merton might have envisioned. Regardless of the socioeconomic status of their families of origin, offenders experience more than their share of debt and economic hardship. My findings suggest that goals-means disjunctions may motivate crime even among non-impooverished populations, but these disjunctions could stem from variation in goals more than they do from variation in access to legitimate means. That is, less disadvantaged people may not always have smaller means-goals gaps to fill than do more disadvantaged people because their material aspirations may grow to surpass the advantages that they have.

Although other scholars already have studied crime as an outcome of materialistic values (e.g., Agnew et al., 1996; Wright et al., 2001), the present study shows that crime is associated with actual financial practices and that these different behaviors appear to have shared economic motivations. I do find some associations among behaviors as diverse as assault and skipping payments on bills, which are consistent with the idea that all are indicators of a general tendency toward deviance or rule-breaking, as predicted by self- and social control theories (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 2004). However, I find evidence of a stronger link between problematic financial behaviors and crimes that could yield financial benefits. On their surface, these offenders' financial

problems could appear to be the motivation for their crimes. Yet offenders have more, not fewer, total financial resources, and a long list of socioeconomic indicators and life circumstances cannot fully account for their money troubles. In short, I can find no objective reason why offenders should need more money than they have. With these results as context, I interpret my findings as consistent with the idea that crime, borrowing, overspending, and the pursuit of above-average incomes all are expressions of the same underlying high material aspirations and of a willingness to use “any means necessary” (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997:4) to achieve those aspirations.

My findings on the specific forms of debt that are linked to crime provide further information about the nature of offenders’ economic pursuits. Offending is not associated with auto loans or with student loans, even among respondents who own cars and have attended college respectively. Offending is associated with problems such as credit card and consumer debt, borrowing money from friends and relatives, and skipping payments on bills. These findings are reminiscent of qualitative evidence linking serious crime with a quick need for cash (e.g., Jacobs and Wright, 1997), and they suggest that offenders and non-offenders are likely to make different decisions about short-term spending in particular. This is consistent with control theorists’ prediction that offenders will pursue immediate gains even at the risk of long-term costs. It also is consistent with the idea that the material goals of anomie theory involve current displays of success rather than the gradual accumulation of wealth.

In summary, I have shown that even when given the same (and often more) financial resources, young adult offenders have more financial problems than do young adult non-offenders. My study provides a snapshot of the economic meanings of crime

during the late teen years and early twenties. This is a transitional period for socioeconomic attainment, and it is likely that non-offenders' earnings will come to outpace offenders' earnings as the benefits of postsecondary education become visible (Mortimer, Staff, and Oesterle, 2004). If young adult offenders spend money in ways that are more consistent with their aspirations than they are with the realities of their attainment trajectories, then their longer-term financial well-being and even their socioeconomic mobility could suffer (Keister, 2005). I have focused on individuals' adaptations to economic goals-means gaps rather than on social structure, but these adaptations well could have structuring consequences. Thus, one of Merton's (1938) original questions remains a compelling one: Who responds how to unattainable goals for material success? Answering this question could yield new and important insights into individuals' participation in their own socioeconomic attainment.

## CHAPTER 4. YOUNG ADULT OFFENDERS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR PARENTS

How can we characterize young adult offenders' relationships with their parents? Do offenders and their parents live near each other? Do they spend time together? Do they argue? Do they help each other with the routine tasks of everyday life? Do they like and trust each other? Parent-offspring relationships are related to juvenile delinquency (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987), and they remain highly salient as offspring enter their late teens and early twenties (Aquilino, 1997), the period in which adult offending is concentrated. Despite this, we know very little about how or even whether the characteristics and quality of adult offspring-parent relationships differ when the offspring are offenders versus non-offenders. In this study, I address this topic from a perspective informed by work in both criminology and intergenerational relations. Specifically, I examine the relationships of offending in young adulthood with young adults' and their parents' physical proximity, frequency of contact, help exchange, and relationship quality.

### EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF RESEARCH ON ADULT OFFENDING

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a period of unique possibility for change across many life domains, ranging from role statuses to identities (Levinson, 1978; Rindfuss, 1991; Schulenberg, Sameroff, and Cicchetti, 2004). Not only does this period set the stage for lifelong attainment (Caspi, 1993; Clausen, 1991), but also it is the period of the most dramatic decline in offending and deviance over the entire lifespan (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983). Yet until relatively recently, most known correlates of

crime were childhood and adolescent factors. Researchers knew little about adult offending other than that it often was foreshadowed by juvenile delinquency.

This changed in the early 1990s when Sampson and Laub (1990; 1992; 1993) began publishing a series of influential papers and books on social bonds and crime over the life course. One of their main arguments was that experiences and social processes in adulthood mattered for adult offending (Sampson and Laub, 1992). They focused on institutions of informal social control, which they suggested change from parents, school and peer groups during childhood to work, marriage, and parenthood during adulthood (Sampson and Laub, 1990). Consistent with this, most subsequent research on adult offending has focused on topics such as how and why entry into work, marriage, and other adult roles affects crime (e.g., Horney et al., 1995; Piquero et al., 2002; Uggen, 2000; Warr, 1998). We now know that not only is adult offending foreshadowed by juvenile delinquency, but also it is negatively related to marriage and marital quality as well as employment and job quality (for reviews, see Siennick and Osgood, 2008; Uggen and Wakefield, 2008).

Still, aside from this work on transitions into adult roles, we know little about what other domains of adult life might relate to adult offending. Clearly, adulthood is comprised of more than just marriage and employment. In fact, many social statuses and arenas of life remain relevant from birth to death, even if the nature of their relevance changes with age. Scholars who study intergenerational relationships have established that parent-offspring relations are one of these arenas (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). As I now describe, there are compelling reasons to study young adult offenders not only as spouses and parents themselves, but also as someone else's grown offspring.

### THREE REASONS TO EXAMINE OFFENDER-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

Criminologists have not devoted much attention to young adult offenders' ongoing relationships with their parents, but I propose that they should for three main reasons. First, we know that parents matter for juvenile delinquency. Delinquency is associated with weak or inconsistent parenting practices, parent-child conflict, and low levels of caring, trust, and parental monitoring (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Patterson and Yoerger, 1997; Thornberry and Krohn, 2005). Under many theories of crime, it would be surprising if this were not the case. For example, control theorists suggest that youths who do not care what their parents think of them are freer to offend (Hirschi, 1969). Labeling theorists suggest that youths who believe their parents think that they are "bad" should be more motivated to offend (Matsueda, 1992). Routine activities theorists suggest that youths who are relatively unsupervised should have more opportunities to offend (Osgood et al., 1996; Osgood and Anderson, 2004). Yet once these youths turn 18, criminologists lose interest in their parents.

Research on intergenerational relationships indicates that this omission is a mistake. A second reason to study adult offenders and their parents is that in most families parents play a prominent role in the lives of their offspring throughout the entire shared lifespan. Parents and their adult children tend to live near or even with each other, to have frequent contact with each other, and to feel close to one another (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Even if they do not, some still exchange practical and material assistance (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). This is especially true during the late teen years and early twenties, when adult offspring receive more of their parents' time and money than they ever will again (Schoeni, 1997; Schoeni and Ross, 2005). Parents can provide

resources such as social support, child care, and financial safety nets to their young adult offspring, and their provision of these resources predicts offspring educational, occupational, and family attainment (Cohen et al., 2003; Schoeni and Ross, 2005). Offenders could be left especially vulnerable without these safety nets because relative to non-offenders they have fewer skills, less job stability and less prestigious jobs, and more children (Moffitt et al., 2002; Robins, 1966; Tanner et al., 1999; Woodward, Fergusson, and Horwood, 2006). Yet we do not know if young adult offenders are less, as, or more likely to draw on any of these forms of parental support than are their non-offending counterparts.

A third reason to study offending and parent-offspring relationships past adolescence is that the parent-young adult relationship is not simply an exact continuation of the parent-child relationship. Qualities of early parent-offspring relationships are associated with qualities of their later relationships, but they explain less than 10 percent of the variance in later relationships (Aquilino, 1997; see also Rossi and Rossi, 1990; Tubman and Lerner, 1994). This is partly because recent experiences of offspring and parents can change how these parties feel about and interact with each other (Aquilino, 1997). This means that juvenile delinquents' troubles with their parents may not always foreshadow enduring intergenerational problems. It also means that newly emerging adult offending may be able to disrupt previously harmonious family relations. Because researchers usually do not follow delinquents' family relationships into adulthood, we do not know whether either of these possibilities is true.

Furthermore, the key dimensions of the parent-offspring relationship change as offspring move from adolescence to young adulthood. Optimal parent-young adult

relationships are far more peer-like and egalitarian than are optimal parent-child relationships (Steinberg, 1990). Constructs such as parental supervision and discipline, which are consistent correlates of juvenile delinquency, are not as applicable to parent-young adult relationships. Furthermore, although juvenile delinquency is associated with weak bonds to parents, adult offending could be associated with intense relationships with parents. This is because as delinquent youths age they tend to avoid entering adult roles that require independence, self-reliance, and long-term commitments (Newcomb and Bentler, 1988). As a result, offenders could differ from non-offenders by being more dependent on their parents rather than being more detached from their parents. Not only might offending relate differently to parent-young adult relationships than it does to parent-child relationships, but also researchers must examine them in terms of developmentally appropriate indicators.

For these reasons, I propose that the association of crime with parent-offspring relationships in adulthood is a promising new area of study that could reveal much about offenders' social and practical resources and about what implications crime may have for criminals' families of origin. To develop a framework for investigating this topic I draw on over two decades of research by family sociologists on intergenerational relationships between adults.

#### ORIENTING FRAMEWORK

Family sociologists agree that intergenerational relationships are multidimensional. Parent-offspring dyads vary in the distance between their residences, how often they see or speak with each other, how close they feel to each other, how often they argue or experience conflict, the similarity of their attitudes and beliefs, how often



they exchange material and emotional support, and the degree of obligation they feel toward each other (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991; Luescher and Pillemer, 1998; Rossi and Rossi, 1990; van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). Some scholars argue that all of these dimensions are conceptually and empirically distinct and should be examined separately (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Consistent with this, researchers such as Aquilino (1997) and Spitze and Logan (1990) have found that some of these relationship indicators have different demographic and other correlates. Their studies feature multiple separate regression equations, each with a different relationship indicator as its outcome.

Other researchers argue for data reduction in studies of intergenerational relationships. Silverstein and colleagues (1997) suggest that relationships have three key metadimensions: opportunity structure, or the geographical distance and level of contact between the parties; affinity, or the degree of emotional closeness and agreement of opinions; and functional exchange, or the provision and receipt of support. Different family processes may be captured by different combinations of these aspects of cohesion (Silverstein, Bengtson, and Lawson, 1997; see also van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). For example, most parent-offspring dyads are emotionally close, in regular contact, and exchange low or moderate levels of support, but others show the same levels of closeness and contact, considerable amounts of help exchange, and frequent conflict (van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). Congruent relationships, which are similarly cohesive or incohesive on each relational dimension, may be no more common than are incongruent relationships, which are cohesive on some dimensions but not others (Silverstein et al., 1997; van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). Some researchers therefore study typologies of relationships as defined through combinations of the indicators described above.

Past work in family sociology thus offers guidance on the key dimensions of intergenerational relationships between adults and on two main strategies for analyzing these dimensions. I have found only a handful of studies that provide any hints about how offending might relate to these dimensions, and these studies stem from two very separate lines of research. First, Farrington (1992) and Robins (1966) each included one item on relationships with parents as part of long lists of problems that adult offenders might have. Robins (1966) found that grown antisocial children had less contact with their families than did other adults, but Farrington (1992) found that deviance and arrest at ages 18 and 32 were not related to a combined measure of living or wanting to live away from home because of tension with parents and agreement with mothers and fathers. These are bivariate relationships and they do not tell a consistent story, but parent-offspring relationships were not these authors' major concern.

In a second line of research, a few scholars have included offspring problems as one item on lists of offspring characteristics that may impact parent-offspring relationships. Suitor and colleagues (2006) found that adults with drug or alcohol problems or trouble with the law received more financial help from their mothers than did their non-deviant siblings, but they did not receive more comfort or practical assistance. Belsky and colleagues (2003) combined seventeen items on intergenerational contact and assistance and found that offspring mental health problems, including antisocial personality and drug and alcohol dependence, predicted worse "functional associational" scores in relationships with mothers, but not with fathers. They also combined eight items on closeness and conflict and found that offspring mental health problems predicted worse affective relationships with fathers, but not with mothers (Belsky et al., 2003). It

thus remains unclear whether relative to non-offenders young adult offenders see their parents more (Belsky et al.) or less (Robins) often, receive more support in general (Belsky et al.) or only more financial support, if more of any type (Suitor et al.), or do (Belsky et al.) or do not (Farrington) have worse emotional ties with their parents.

This study addresses the need for a descriptive analysis of young adult offenders' current relationships with their families of origin. First, I describe the associations of offspring offending with individual dimensions of intergenerational relationships, including parent-offspring residential distance, contact, practical and material support, affinity, and conflict. Second, I examine whether offenders show different combinations of these relationship characteristics than do non-offenders. By capturing linkages among multiple aspects of family relations, I can determine whether offenders are generally engaged with or generally disengaged from their parents, or whether these parent-offspring relationships are characterized by closeness along some dimensions but distance along others.

## DATA AND METHODS

To study offender-parent relations, I draw on data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH was conducted specifically to fill an interdisciplinary need for information about family structure and process among a national sample (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call, 1988). It is an excellent data source for this project because it is possibly the most comprehensive source of data on intergenerational relationships that also includes information on young adult offending.

## THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

The NSFH drew on a national sample of non-institutionalized English- or Spanish-speaking U.S. adults who were age 19 or older during the initial 1987-1988 fielding period. Participants were selected via a multi-stage stratified sampling design. First, 1,700 block groups were selected from a stratified sample of 101 primary sampling units that were chosen from Temple University's national sampling frame based on their region, urbanicity, rate of economic growth, and racial composition. Next, approximately 34,000 addresses within these block groups were targeted for screening interviews which identified a cross-sectional sample of individuals age 19 or older and additional individuals age 19 or older who were eligible for oversamples of blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families, families with step-children, cohabiting couples and recently married persons. Ninety-one percent of residences were successfully screened, and over 13,000 (74% of) eligible respondents completed Wave 1 interviews. Respondents living with one or more biological, adopted, step-, or foster children under the age of 18 were asked a series of questions about a randomly selected "focal" child, 1,914 of whom were older (between the ages of 12 and 18) and would enter young adulthood by the following wave. Five years later, 10,005 of these main respondents (82% of those eligible, including 1,536 [80% of] parents of older focal children) completed Wave 2 interviews about recent family experiences.

This study uses data from the 1,125 main respondents (or "parents" in this study) who completed Wave 2 interviews about their now young adult focal children ("offspring") ages 19 to 23, the age range for which complete information on offspring

offending and parent-young adult relationships was collected. I used multiple imputation to reduce potential bias from missing values on the study variables. To do this, I used the ICE (Royston 2005) and MIM (Carlin et al., 2008) procedures available for Stata version 9. These procedures allowed me to create five complete datasets featuring imputed values for missing cases, and to combine my estimates across the imputed datasets while accounting for variance across them (Royston 2005). I included all study variables as well as a number of other parent and offspring characteristics (e.g., geographic region of residence, parent attitudes toward helping offspring) in the imputation procedure. My analytical sample size is 1,125, versus a sample size of 924 that would have remained after listwise deletion. The substantive results are similar when the regression results are replicated under conditions of listwise deletion (full results not shown).

## MEASURES

### *Measures of Parent-Offspring Relationship Characteristics*

*Global relationship quality.* Parents' overall assessments of their relationships with offspring are shaped by the amount of time they spend with those offspring, their emotional ties to their offspring, and sharing and help exchange (see Appendix F). At Wave 2, parents rated the overall quality of their relationships with their offspring on a scale from 0 (really bad) to 10 (absolutely perfect). Five years earlier, at Wave 1, parents gave similar ratings of their overall relationships with their then adolescent offspring on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 7 (excellent).

*Residential distance.* Do young adult offenders live with or anywhere near their parents? Parent-offspring coresidence is determined by main respondents' reports of

whether offspring lived with them in their household at least half the time (excluding offspring away at college or in the armed forces). For non-coresident offspring, main respondents reported the distance in miles between the parent and offspring households. I logged this variable to reduce the skew of its distribution. For use in the latent class analysis, I also created a dichotomous indicator of whether parents and offspring lived within 25 miles of each other. (Coresident offspring were counted as living within 25 miles of their parents.) The 25 mile threshold splits non-coresident offspring into fairly even groups of nearby and far away offspring.

*Frequency of association.* Parents reported the past-year frequency with which they saw their non-resident offspring, as well as the past-year frequency with which they had telephone conversations with or received letters from their non-resident offspring. Response choices for each item ranged from “not at all” to “more than once a week”. Parents also reported the frequency with which they had spent time doing activities or talking with their offspring and the frequency with which they had a meal together over the past three months, ranging from “never” to “almost everyday”. I averaged these four items to form a scale of the frequency of parent-offspring contact ( $\alpha = .75$ ).<sup>29</sup> A majority of parents (66%) reported seeing, talking with, spending time with, or having meals with their offspring multiple times a week. For use in the latent class analysis, I created a dichotomous indicator of whether parents and offspring had more than weekly contact with each other.

*Emotional closeness.* I measure emotional ties through five items tapping parents’ positive feelings toward offspring and lack of tension in the relationship. Parents used four-point scales to rate the extent to which they agreed that it was easy for them to laugh

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<sup>29</sup> Contact scores for coresident offspring were based on the items tapping time together and meals together.

and have a good time with their offspring, their offspring was loving and affectionate, they felt tense or on edge with their offspring, their offspring showed little interest in them, and their offspring was critical of them. I reverse coded the last three items and averaged the set to create a scale where higher scores indicate more positive affect and less tension ( $\alpha = .79$ ). For use in the latent class analysis, I also created a dichotomous indicator of whether parents agreed or strongly agreed both that it was easy for them to have a good time with their offspring and that their offspring was loving. Parents also answered two items on sharing, which tapped how likely they would be to talk with their focal child if they felt depressed, or if they had a major decision to make; response choices ranged from “definitely would not” to “definitely would”.

*Conflict.* Parents reported the frequency with which they argued, fought, or had a lot of difficulty with their focal child during the last 3 months on a six-point scale ranging from “never” to “almost everyday”. Because most parents (61%) reported no parent-offspring conflict, I use a dichotomous indicator of any versus no recent conflict.

*Emotional support.* Parents reported whether or not they had given their offspring advice, encouragement, moral or emotional support during the past month, and whether or not they had received such support from their offspring. Most parents (81%) had provided their offspring with emotional support, and half had received it.

*Practical support.* The NSFH also included items on parents and offspring helping each other with everyday tasks. I created dichotomous indicators of whether or not during the past month parents had helped their offspring with shopping, errands,

transportation, housework, yard work, or car repairs,<sup>30</sup> and whether offspring had helped their parents with these tasks.

### *Offspring Offending*

At Wave 1, parents reported whether their offspring had ever been in trouble with the police; 9% of offspring had. My main measure of offspring offending comes from the Wave 2 interview five years later, when parents reported whether their offspring had had police trouble since Wave 1 (13% had) and their offspring's age at the most recent incident (over half of the incidents had occurred within the previous two years). Many recent studies of young adult offenders rely on self-reports of offending, but I believe that these items are similarly valid for three reasons. First, when the Wave 1 and Wave 2 measures are combined, the lifetime prevalence of police trouble is 18%, which is consistent with the 19% lifetime prevalence of self-reported police contacts among young adult respondents in the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health. Second, like self-reported offending and justice system contacts, offspring who were in trouble with the police by this measure were more likely to be male and neither in school nor working, were less likely to be married, and had lower educational attainment. Finally, the parent-offspring relationships that should be most associated with offending are those in which the parent is aware of the offspring's behavior.

### *Key Covariates and Control Variables*

My regression models also account for background factors that may predict both offending and qualities of parent-offspring relationships, such as parents' gender, age,

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<sup>30</sup> Additional items tapped whether parents had provided their offspring with child care while the offspring was at work or at other times. However, only 22% of offspring have children of their own, and only 4% of offspring are both offenders and parents. Only 5% of parents report giving child care and no other practical help to their offspring. Including child care in the measure of parental help slightly increases the magnitude of the relationship between offspring offending and parental help.



race, and marital status; biological relatedness of parent and offspring<sup>31</sup>; and offspring gender, age, marital status, parental status, employment status, and student status.<sup>32</sup>

Descriptive statistics for all study variables appear in table 4.1.

## ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

My analytical strategy has two main components. First, I use Stata version 9.2 to conduct linear and logistic regression analyses predicting measures of parent-offspring relationship characteristics from offspring offending and other variables. These models indicate whether offenders differ from non-offenders along various individual dimensions of intergenerational relationships. Second, I examine the association of offspring offending with modal types of parent-offspring relationships. I identify these model types using latent class analysis, which family sociologists have used to uncover key combinations of aspects of family relationships (e.g., Hogan et al., 1993; Silverstein et al., 1997; van Gaalen and Dykstra, 2006). My analysis, conducted using Latent GOLD version 4.0 (Vermunt and Magidson, 2005), uses respondents' observed scores on the relationship indicators to identify typical and qualitatively distinct latent relationship patterns based on the observed relationship indicators. To reduce data sparseness, I use dichotomous indicators of each dimension as noted above and in table 4.1. I use the resulting classes as a variable in subsequent analyses; specifically, I conduct multinomial logistic regression analyses similar to the regression analyses described above, but substituting relationship type for individual relationship dimensions. For technical information on latent class analysis, see Lazarsfeld and Henry (1968) and McCutcheon (1987).

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<sup>31</sup> The substantive findings are unchanged when analyses are limited to biological parent-offspring dyads.

<sup>32</sup> Additional controls for urban residence and geographic region do not alter the substantive findings presented in this paper.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

	Variable	Mean/Percent	SE	Range
Parent characteristics	Parent is male	30.1%		0 - 1
	Parent age	47.656	0.200	32 - 78
	Parent is nonwhite race	28.2%		0 - 1
	Parent is married	62.9%		0 - 1
Offspring characteristics	Offspring is parent's biological child	92.7%		0 - 1
	Offspring is male	51.9%		0 - 1
	Offspring age	21.024	0.042	19 - 23
	Offspring is married	15.7%		0 - 1
	Offspring is a parent	21.9%		0 - 1
	Offspring is not working	29.8%		0 - 1
	Offspring is a student	44.1%		0 - 1
Offspring police contacts	Police contact since W1	12.9%		0 - 1
	Years since last police contact <sup>a</sup>	2.424	0.139	0 - 5
	Police contact at W1	8.9%		0 - 1
Relationship characteristics	Overall relationship rating	8.253	0.053	0 - 10
	Overall relationship rating at W1	6.132	0.035	1 - 7
	Offspring lives with parent	40.8%		0 - 1
	Logged miles between residences <sup>b</sup>	3.840	0.090	0 - 9.105
	Offspring lives within 25 miles <sup>c†</sup>	68.5%		0 - 1
	Frequency of parent-offspring contact (scale)	4.179	0.035	1 - 6
	In contact more than once a week <sup>†</sup>	66.1%		0 - 1
	Parent-offspring emotional closeness (scale)	3.342	0.016	1 - 4
	Parent is emotionally close to offspring <sup>†</sup>	90.4%		0 - 1
	Parent-offspring conflict <sup>†</sup>	39.3%		0 - 1
	Parent would talk to offspring if depressed	3.589	0.035	1 - 5
	Parent would talk to offspring if making decision	3.749	0.034	1 - 5
	Parent gave offspring emotional support	81.2%		0 - 1
Offspring gave parent emotional support	50.8%		0 - 1	
Parent gave offspring practical help <sup>†</sup>	44.1%		0 - 1	
Offspring gave parent practical help <sup>†</sup>	44.3%		0 - 1	

<sup>a</sup>Among offspring with a W2 police contact (N = 145)

<sup>b</sup>Among non-coresident offspring (N = 666)

<sup>c</sup>Including coresident offspring

NOTES: N = 1,125; variables measured at W2 unless otherwise noted; SE = standard error; <sup>†</sup>variables included in latent class analysis

## RESULTS

### MOST PARENT-OFFSPRING RELATIONSHIPS ARE CLOSE AND POSITIVE

I first examine the average characteristics of respondents' relationships with their young adult offspring. Like most parent-offspring dyads (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990), overall these parents and young adult offspring are both geographically and emotionally close. The descriptive statistics shown in table 4.1 reveal that most of these parents live with or within a short drive of their grown offspring (69%) and see or speak with their offspring frequently (66% have more than weekly contact). The vast majority (90%) are emotionally close to their offspring. Most parents (81%) report giving their offspring emotional support in the past month. The rates of conflict (39%), provision of transportation or household help (44%), and receipt of practical help (44%) and receipt of emotional support (51%) from offspring are more moderate. Overall, these parents give high global ratings to their relationships with their offspring (mean = 8.25 out of 10).

### OFFSPRING OFFENDING IS ASSOCIATED WITH LOWER GLOBAL PARENT-OFFSPRING RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

I next examine how offspring offending relates to parents' ratings of their overall relationships with their offspring. Table 4.2 shows linear regression coefficients predicting global relationship quality from offspring police contacts and the control variables. Net of parent and offspring background characteristics, parents of offspring who have had police trouble within the past five years give significantly lower global relationship ratings than do parents of offspring who have not had police trouble (linear  $b = -1.047, p < .001$ ).<sup>33</sup> The standard deviation of the global relationship quality variable is

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<sup>33</sup> Supplemental analyses indicate that the size of the offending-relationship quality association does not vary significantly by the recency of offspring police trouble (full results not shown; for test of differences

approximately 1.79, which means that the ratings of parents with offending offspring are slightly more than 1/2 standard deviation lower than the ratings of parents with non-offending offspring. This is a moderate association, but it is still considerably larger than the impact of other events of young adulthood, such as offspring entry into marriage (parents' ratings of global relationship quality are 1/4 standard deviation higher when the offspring is married) and offspring employment (parents' ratings are 1/5 standard higher when the offspring is working).

The coefficients for the control variables are generally consistent with past research on intergenerational relationship quality. Older parents, minority parents, and parents with intact marriages give higher relationship ratings than do younger parents, white parents, and unmarried parents respectively. Although the negative coefficient for parental gender does not reach statistical significance, its sign is consistent with prior studies showing that mothers are closer to their children than are fathers (Lye, 1996). Consistent with Aquilino's (1997) findings, parents who are rating their own biological children and parents whose offspring have made transitions into the adult roles of work and marriage report having significantly better relationships with their offspring than do non-biological parents and parents of unmarried and non-working offspring.

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between coefficients for police contact within the past year, two years ago, and three or more years ago,  $F(2, 1110) = 1.16, p > .05$ ).

Table 4.2. Linear Regression Estimates Predicting Global Parent-Offspring Relationship Quality from Offspring Police Contact and Control Variables

Predictor	b	SE	
Offspring police contact	-1.047	(0.161)	***
Parent is male	-0.193	(0.120)	
Parent age	0.018	(0.008)	*
Parent is nonwhite	0.487	(0.119)	***
Parent is married	0.308	(0.114)	**
Offspring is parent's biological child	1.283	(0.203)	***
Offspring is male	0.089	(0.105)	
Offspring age	0.009	(0.039)	
Offspring is married	0.508	(0.165)	**
Offspring is a parent	-0.209	(0.149)	
Offspring is not working	-0.383	(0.124)	**
Offspring is a student	0.212	(0.113)	†
Constant	5.824	(0.844)	***

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ;  $N = 1,125$ ; SE = standard error

#### OFFSPRING OFFENDING AND SPECIFIC QUALITIES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Parental ratings of global relationship quality reflect many specific qualities of parent-offspring relationships, including residential distance, frequency of contact, affective ties, and help exchange (see Appendix F). Given this, and given the negative association of offspring offending with global parent-offspring relationship quality, it is not surprising that I find that offending offspring tend to score unfavorably on many individual dimensions of parent-offspring relationships.

In table 4.3, each row shows results from a logistic or linear regression predicting a characteristic of the parent-offspring relationship from offspring police contact and the

control variables described earlier. The first row shows that the odds of a young adult offender living with his or her parents are 37% lower than are the odds for a non-offender ( $\exp(-.455) = .634, p < .05$ ). Although more offenders than non-offenders have moved out, they have not moved far. The second row of table 4.3 shows that among non-coresident offspring, offenders live significantly shorter distances from their parents than do non-offenders (linear  $b = -.824, p < .01$ ). Family researchers report that parents tend to have more contact with offspring who live nearby (Lye, 1996; Rossi and Rossi, 1990), but I find that parents have less contact with offending offspring than they do with non-offending offspring (linear  $b = -.292, p < .01$ ). Parents' proximity to their offending offspring does not appear to translate into greater association with those offspring.

Offspring offending also is associated with lower quality of the emotional ties between parents and offspring. Table 4.3 shows that parents feel significantly less close to their offspring when those offspring have had police trouble (linear  $b = -.186, p < .01$ ). Supplemental analyses indicate that the odds of a parent feeling positively versus negatively toward their offspring are 50% lower when the offspring is an offender rather than a non-offender (full results not shown; logistic  $b = -.694, p < .01$ ). Table 4.3 also reveals that the odds of recent parent-offspring conflict are 52% higher when the offspring is an offender ( $\exp(.420) = 1.522, p < .05$ ).<sup>34</sup> There is no significant difference by offspring offending in parents' willingness to talk to offspring if the parent felt depressed (linear  $b = -.023, p > .05$ ), although parents of offenders are less willing to talk

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<sup>34</sup> Supplemental analyses of items tapping the content of parent-offspring arguments indicate that offenders have increased odds of arguing with their parents about a range of topics, including how they dress (logistic  $b = .769, p < .01$ ), their friends (logistic  $b = .710, p < .01$ ), and money (logistic  $b = .619, p < .01$ ), although not about their getting a job or a better job (logistic  $b = .270, p > .05$ ).

to those offspring about major parental decisions (linear  $b = -.281, p < .01$ ).<sup>35</sup> Offspring offending is not a significant predictor of parental (logistic  $b = .304, p > .05$ ) or offspring (logistic  $b = -.204, p > .05$ ) provision of emotional support, although the coefficients are moderate in size. The signs of the coefficients from the models predicting parents' willingness to talk to offspring and exchanges of emotional support suggest that if there is an association between offspring offending and intergenerational sharing, it may take the form of a sharing imbalance where parents are willing to give advice and emotional support to offending offspring, but do not expect much in return.

Despite their low levels of contact with and negative feelings toward their offspring, the odds of the parent of an offender giving that offspring practical help are 72% higher than are the odds for parents of non-offenders ( $\exp(.539) = 1.715, p < .01$ ). Offending is not a significant predictor of offspring provision of practical help, although the sign of the coefficient is in the direction of offenders being less likely to help (logistic  $b = -.211, p > .05$ ).

Taken together, these results indicate that although young adult offenders tend to live nearby their parents, they see, speak with, and share activities with their parents less frequently than do non-offenders. They are less emotionally close with their parents and are more likely to argue with them. Despite having negative feelings toward and relatively infrequent contact with offending offspring, parents appear to be more likely to help these offspring with transportation, errands, housework, and other practical matters

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<sup>35</sup> The substantive findings from models 6 and 7 in table 4.3 are similar when I use ordinal rather than linear regression (for offending coefficient, ordinal  $b = -.050, p > .05$ , and ordinal  $b = -.472, p < .01$  in predicting sharing if depressed and sharing if making a decision respectively), but initial analyses indicated that these models violated the proportional odds assumption of ordinal regression. For this reason, I present estimates from linear models, although I note that my conclusions are robust to these different model specifications.

than they are to help non-offending offspring. On average, offenders thus appear distant from their parents by some measures and engaged with their parents by others.

Table 4.3. Logistic and Linear Estimates Predicting Aspects of Parent-Offspring Relationships from Offspring Police Contact

Dependent Variable	Coefficient for Offspring Police Contact		
	b	SE	
Offspring lives with parent <sup>a</sup>	-0.455	(0.203)	*
Logged miles between residences <sup>b, c</sup>	-0.824	(0.255)	**
Frequency of parent-offspring contact (scale) <sup>b</sup>	-0.292	(0.106)	**
Parent-offspring emotional closeness (scale) <sup>b</sup>	-0.186	(0.048)	***
Parent-offspring conflict <sup>a</sup>	0.420	(0.196)	*
Parent would talk to offspring if depressed <sup>b</sup>	-0.023	(0.106)	
Parent would talk to offspring if making decision <sup>b</sup>	-0.281	(0.100)	**
Parent gave offspring emotional support <sup>a</sup>	0.304	(0.258)	
Offspring gave parent emotional support <sup>a</sup>	-0.204	(0.191)	
Parent gave offspring practical help <sup>a</sup>	0.539	(0.192)	**
Offspring gave parent practical help <sup>a</sup>	-0.211	(0.191)	

<sup>a</sup>Models for which unexponentiated logistic regression coefficients are shown

<sup>b</sup>Models for which unstandardized linear regression coefficients are shown

<sup>c</sup>Among non-coresident offspring (N = 666)

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; N = 1,125; all models included controls for parent and offspring characteristics shown in Table 4.1; SE = standard error

## OFFSPRING OFFENDING AND LATENT TYPES OF PARENT-YOUNG ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

Do the incongruent findings on offender-parent geographical closeness, emotional distance, and high rates of parental assistance indicate that individual parent-offender



dyads are likely to show mixed combinations of relationship characteristics? I next use latent class analysis to examine the association of offending with discrete combinations of relationship qualities. Latent class analysis allows researchers to identify modal configurations of some construct of interest (here, relationships) based on patterns of scores on observed indicators. This technique allows me to examine offending in relation to common underlying “types” of parent-offspring relationships.

The observed indicators used in this analysis are noted in table 4.1 and tap parent-offspring geographical proximity, contact, positive emotional ties, and conflict, as well as parental and offspring provision of practical help.<sup>36,37</sup> As shown in table 4.4, fit statistics indicate that the data could support a model with either four or five distinct patterns of relationship qualities. Of the models with non-significant likelihood ratio  $\chi^2$  values, the four class model has the lowest BIC value, yet the five class model has the lowest AIC value. The five class model yields a significant improvement in model fit over the four class model, and supplementary analyses (not shown) suggest that a five class model results in less between-group homogeneity in terms of the parent and offspring

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<sup>36</sup> Poorer model fit resulted from additional latent class analyses where (1) the dichotomous indicator of geographic proximity was replaced with an ordinal measure of whether respondents lived with parents, within 25 miles, or more than 25 miles away, (2) the dichotomous indicator of more than weekly contact was replaced with an ordinal measure indicating less than weekly contact, weekly contact, or more than weekly contact, (3) the indicator of positive feelings was replaced with an indicator of intense positive feelings which more evenly split the sample, (4) the indicator of positive feelings was replaced with various dichotomized versions of the scale of overall positive affect, (5) the indicator of positive feelings was replaced with an indicator of parents’ willingness to talk to offspring if depressed or making a decision, (6) the indicators of parent and offspring provision of practical help were replaced with dichotomous indicators of practical help exchange and exchange of emotional support in either direction, and various combinations of (1) through (6).

<sup>37</sup> Parameters for the latent class models are based on respondents with complete data on the observed indicators. The 8% of cases that were missing data on one or more observed indicators were assigned probabilities of membership in each latent class based on the model parameters and their available data.

characteristics listed in table 4.1. For these reasons, I present results based on the five class model.<sup>38</sup>

Table 4.5 shows the conditional probabilities of having each relationship characteristic that are associated with each of the five latent relationship types, as well as the prevalence of each relationship type in the population. A first type, which I label “companionable”, is characterized by high probabilities of residential proximity, frequent contact, and positive feelings, and low probabilities of conflict and help exchange. Relationships of this type are close and positive, but do not entail the parties’ relying on each other for assistance with everyday tasks. A second type, which I label “enmeshed”, shares the proximity, contact, and positivity of the companionable group but has much higher probabilities of help exchange in both directions and a moderate probability of conflict. Relationships of this type are characterized by parents’ and offspring intense engagement with each other along a wide range of relational dimensions. A third “agreeable” type has low probabilities of all relationship indicators except for positive affective ties. Relationships of this type are characterized by parents and offspring having a good emotional relationship but little presence in each others’ daily lives.

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<sup>38</sup> The classes of the four class model are substantively similar to the largest four classes of the five class model, although the conditional probabilities of scoring “1” on each indicator that are associated with each class tend to be lower in the four class model. Similar to the main results presented in this article, supplemental analyses using a four class model in place of a five class model indicate that offspring offending is most associated with membership in a relationship class characterized by moderate probabilities of geographic closeness, frequent contact, and parental help, a low probability of offspring help, and a high probability of conflict.

Table 4.4. Fit Indices for Latent Class Models Specifying Different Numbers of Classes

	$\chi^2$	df	p <sup>a</sup>	Log-likelihood	p for improvement over model with one fewer class <sup>b</sup>	BIC <sup>c</sup>	AIC <sup>d</sup>	Index of dissimilarity <sup>e</sup>	Entropy <sup>f</sup>
Two classes	109.776	50	0.000	-3447.7105	--	-237.138	9.776	0.107	0.595
Three classes	79.904	43	0.001	-3432.7747	0.002	-218.442	-6.096	0.068	0.619
Four classes	45.896	36	0.125	-3415.7707	0.000	-203.882	-26.104	0.045	0.613
Five classes	27.960	29	0.520	-3406.8027	0.030	-173.250	-30.040	0.039	0.653
Six classes	19.713	22	0.601	-3402.6793	0.826	-132.929	-24.287	0.028	0.607
Seven classes	16.775	15	0.332	-3401.2103	0.404	-87.299	-13.225	0.022	0.580

<sup>a</sup>Nonsignificant  $\chi^2$  values indicate good model fit

<sup>b</sup>Conditional bootstrap p-value

<sup>c</sup>Lower BIC values indicate better model fit

<sup>d</sup>Lower AIC values indicate better model fit

<sup>e</sup>Index of dissimilarity values below .05 indicate good model fit

<sup>f</sup>Entropy statistics closer to 1.0 indicate that greater proportions of respondents are correctly classified

Table 4.5. Latent Configurations of Young Adult-Parent Relationships

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
	Companionable	Enmeshed	Agreeable	Uncooperative	Distant but Supportive
Final conditional probabilities of having each characteristic					
Offspring lives within 25 miles	0.758	0.972	0.324	0.807	0.124
Contact more than once weekly	0.917	0.902	0.179	0.388	0.117
Positive feelings	0.975	0.914	0.885	0.575	0.999
Parent-offspring conflict	0.315	0.562	0.105	0.832	0.244
Parent gave practical help	0.384	0.717	0.013	0.541	0.940
Offspring gave practical help	0.294	0.961	0.108	0.022	0.331
Final latent class probabilities	0.348	0.344	0.193	0.063	0.052

NOTES: N = 1,125; goodness of fit statistics:  $\chi^2 = 27.960$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p < .05$ , BIC = -173.250, AIC = -30.040, index of dissimilarity = .039

These first three relationship types, which together characterize most (88.5%) of the dyads, are fairly congruent within the three meta-dimensions of relationships described by Silverstein et al. (1997): opportunity, affinity, and function. That is, within relationship types, the probabilities of geographical proximity tend to mirror the probabilities of frequent contact, the probabilities of parental help are similar to the probabilities of offspring help, and when the probability of positive affect is high the probability of conflict tends to be low. The last two relationship types show more incongruity. An “uncooperative” type is characterized by a low probability of frequent contact despite a high probability of geographical proximity, a moderate probability of parental help despite a very low probability of offspring help, and the lowest probability of positive feelings and the highest probability of conflict of all five types. Relationships of this type appear to be distinguished by low affinity and by offspring having little social association with their parents, although their parents do assist them with everyday tasks. Finally, a fifth “distant but supportive” type shows low probabilities of all relationship

indicators except positive feelings and parental help.<sup>39</sup> In relationships of this type parents again give an unusual amount of help considering the infrequency of their contact with offspring, but their emotional ties to their offspring do not appear worse for it, and their lower contact is consistent with their residential distance.

Which relationship types best characterize parent-offender dyads? Table 4.6 shows results from a multinomial logistic regression model predicting latent class membership from offspring police contact and the control variables.<sup>40</sup> Relative to non-offenders, net of a variety of parent and offspring characteristics offenders have approximately three times the odds of having an uncooperative versus a companionable relationship with their parents ( $\exp(1.107) = 3.026, p < .01$ ). Significance tests for the implied contrasts with other reference categories indicate that offenders also have increased odds of having an uncooperative versus an enmeshed relationship (multinomial  $b = .902, p < .05$ ) and of having an uncooperative versus an agreeable relationship (multinomial  $b = 1.022, p < .01$ ). The coefficient in predicting the distant but supportive relationship type is fairly large and is in the direction of offenders having increased odds of this type of relationship as well, but it is not significant. Relative to non-offenders and their parents, offenders and their parents are no more or less likely to have enmeshed or agreeable versus companionable relationships.

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<sup>39</sup> Geographic proximity may seem necessary for high rates of parental provision of practical help. However, 77% of offspring in the distant but supportive class are current students (see table 4.7), who respondents were asked to report as living away at college rather than at home. This suggests that the help exchange may occur while offspring are home during temporary breaks from school. Consistent with this, most parents who gave help to nonresident student offspring reported seeing and having meals with their offspring between monthly and several times a year, and talking to their offspring on the telephone more frequently.

<sup>40</sup> To assign respondents to latent classes, first, using the parameters of the latent class model and respondents' observed scores on the indicators, I calculated the probability that each respondent was a member of each class. Then, to account for the uncertainty of class membership, I assigned each respondent to a class based on his or her probability of membership in each class and on a randomly generated number. The substantive results are unchanged when a modal assignment rule is used instead (i.e. when each respondent is assigned to the class for which he or she has the highest probability of membership).

Table 4.6. Multinomial Regression Coefficients Predicting Latent Relationship Type from Offspring Police Contact

Relationship Type	b	SE	OR	Percentage of offenders assigned to each class	Percentage of non-offenders assigned to each class
Companionable <sup>a</sup>	--	--	--	26.7%	35.3%
Enmeshed	0.205	(0.299)	1.228	32.6%	31.7%
Agreeable	0.086	(0.276)	1.089	21.7%	23.4%
Uncooperative	1.107	(0.381) **	3.026	12.5%	4.6%
Distant but Supportive	0.752	(0.489)	2.122	6.6%	5.0%

<sup>a</sup>Reference category

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ;  $N = 1,125$ ; model included controls for parent and offspring characteristics shown in Table 4.1; police contact coefficients are jointly significant ( $\chi^2(4) = 10.54, p < .05$ ); SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio

The rightmost two columns of table 4.6 show the percentages of offenders and non-offenders that fall into each latent relationship class. These percentages show that most parent-offender dyads do not have uncooperative relationships, but offspring offending is a strong marker of this relatively rare relationship type. Thirteen percent of offenders have uncooperative relationships with parents, versus only 5% of non-offenders. The percentages reveal one more notable offending-related difference: the companionable type characterizes 35% of parent-non-offender dyads versus 27% of parent-offender dyads. The percentages shown in table 4.6 also suggest that the large coefficient for offending in predicting distant but supportive relationship type has little practical importance; the percentages of offenders and non-offenders in this class are 7% and 5% respectively.

Although the multivariate multinomial regression results indicate that offenders and non-offenders are similarly distributed among the companionable, enmeshed, and agreeable relationship types, the percentages of offenders and non-offenders that fall into

these classes appear to suggest otherwise (i.e. offenders appear underrepresented in the companionable type). Supplemental analyses (full results not shown) indicate that the discrepancy stems from the control variables included in the multinomial regression model. In the absence of these controls the coefficients for police contact in predicting the enmeshed and agreeable types are larger (.311 and .213 in predicting the enmeshed and agreeable types respectively), although they still are not statistically significant. Further exploration of the data revealed that simply because they tend to be male, offenders are likely to have agreeable versus companionable relationships with parents, and simply because they tend to be younger they are likely to have enmeshed relationships. Once I account for these demographic factors the multinomial coefficients for offending are reduced.

In the multinomial model on which table 4.6 is based few of the coefficients for other parent and offspring characteristics reach statistical significance, but table 4.7 presents a descriptive analysis of relationship types and these characteristics. The top row confirms that uncooperative relationships are associated with the highest rate of offspring offending (29%). This relationship type also is associated with somewhat younger families, a relatively low rate of offspring marriage, and stepfamilies. Offspring who are geographically and emotionally close to their parents but exchange little help with them (the companionable type) have the lowest rate of offending, are nearly always biologically related to the responding parent, tend to be somewhat older, and have a relatively high rate of marriage. Those who are engaged with their parents along a range of dimensions including help exchange (the enmeshed type) are likely to be somewhat younger, unmarried, and nonwhite. Intergenerational relationships that are emotionally

positive but characterized by little contact and assistance (the agreeable type) are associated with somewhat older families and married offspring and are more likely to involve sons than daughters. Offspring who are emotionally close with their parents and receive support from them but who are distant from them on other measures (the distant but supportive type) are particularly likely to be students with low rates of family formation. Note that the regression estimates for offending presented above are net of all of these parent and offspring characteristics.

These findings tell a more complex story about young adult offenders and their parents than do the associations of offspring offending with isolated qualities of intergenerational relationships. Offspring offending is associated with much greater odds of a relatively rare relationship type that is characterized by low affinity and by offspring receiving much practical support from parents but having little social association with them. These families are geographically close, but when they do have contact it appears to be for instrumental rather than social reasons, and practical help tends to flow in one direction from parent to offspring. Still, most offender-parent relationships are not so incongruent. Instead, they often are emotionally close and fairly conflict-free as well as characterized by little instrumental interdependency (49% fall into the companionable or agreeable type), or are characterized by fairly balanced exchanges of instrumental help and intense engagement along multiple dimensions (33% are of the enmeshed type).



Table 4.7. Means and Percentages on Independent Variables, by Latent Class Membership

	Companionable	Enmeshed	Agreeable	Uncooperative	Distant but Supportive	Significance of Group Differences
Offspring police contact	10.1%	13.2%	12.1%	28.8%	16.4%	**
Parent is male	30.7%	24.6%	34.4%	32.2%	38.8%	
Parent age	48.327	46.632	48.479	46.578	47.027	**
Parent is nonwhite	27.6%	35.0%	23.0%	21.4%	20.6%	*
Parent is married	64.6%	62.1%	60.9%	58.1%	71.1%	
Offspring is biological child	95.4%	94.0%	88.5%	88.3%	90.4%	*
Offspring is male	47.1%	50.2%	60.7%	52.7%	54.2%	†
Offspring age	21.071	20.820	21.313	20.890	20.824	**
Offspring is married	18.8%	9.7%	22.1%	9.0%	10.3%	***
Offspring is a parent	22.3%	22.8%	23.3%	21.4%	6.9%	
Offspring is not working	31.8%	29.6%	24.0%	34.2%	38.3%	
Offspring is a student	40.5%	45.5%	41.5%	39.1%	77.3%	**

NOTES: †p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001; N = 1,125

## THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

Adult crime is strongly foreshadowed by juvenile delinquency (Moffitt et al., 2001), and past studies show that juvenile delinquents have worse relationships with their parents (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987). Do the observed associations of adult offending with parent-offspring relationships reflect family processes that already were present when the offenders were adolescents? At Wave 1, parents rated the global quality of their relationships with offspring and reported whether their offspring had various behavior problems, including trouble with the police. Both adolescent police contact (full results not shown; logistic  $b = 1.595$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and parent-adolescent relationship quality (logistic  $b = -.163$ ,  $p < .05$ ) predict adult police contact net of each other and net of the background characteristics, so these factors could play a role in adult offenders'

relationships with their parents. Interestingly, even when young adult police contact is not controlled, net of adolescent global relationship quality and the background characteristics adolescent police contact is not a significant predictor of later global relationship quality (full results not shown; linear  $b = .012, p > .05$ ).

The addition of adolescent offending and relationship quality to the model from table 4.2 predicting global relationship quality reduces the coefficient for offending by 13% (to linear  $b = -.912, p < .001$ ; see Appendix G). These adolescent indicators produce a similar reduction in the association of adult offending with having an uncooperative relationship with parents (see Appendix G). This indicates that a modest part of the association between offending and relationship quality in adulthood is due to the fact that young adults who offend also offended as adolescents and had poorer quality relationships with their parents to begin with. Still, even when adolescent behavior and relationship quality are included in the model, the relationship ratings of parents of offenders remain approximately 1/2 standard deviation lower than the ratings of parents of non-offenders, and offenders still have increased odds of being in uncooperative relationships with their parents.<sup>41, 42</sup> These findings indicate that problems in adult offender-parent relationships are not simply a continuing residue of past difficulties.

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<sup>41</sup> The association between offending and global parent-young adult relationship quality also does not vary depending on earlier relationship quality (full results not shown; for offending by adolescent relationship interaction term, linear  $b = .069, p > .05$ ) or adolescent offending (full results not shown; for offending by early offending interaction term, linear  $b = .443, p > .05$ ). I also find no significant offending-by-early relationship or offending-by-early offending interactions in predicting later relationship type.

<sup>42</sup> Although 9% of adolescents had had trouble with the police, some other adolescent behavior problems were more commonly reported by parents. I found similar reductions in the coefficients for young adult police contact when I substituted as predictors alternative measures of adolescent behavior, including behavior problems that led to parent-teacher conferences, adolescent emotional problems that required treatment, suspensions from school, whether the adolescent was difficult to raise, and whether the adolescent had a bad temper or bullied others. In fact, when combined these indicators account for no more than 23% of the association of young adult police contact with young adult relationship quality, and the latter association remains highly statistically significant (linear  $b = -.810, p < .001$ ).

Parents' assessments of their relationships with their young adult offspring are tied to recent offspring behavior as well.

In sum, my results reveal that on average, offenders live nearby their parents but have less contact with them than do non-offenders; that they are less emotionally close with their parents and argue with them more frequently; and that they receive more parental assistance with routine tasks of daily life than do non-offenders. Some parent-offspring relationships are characterized by all of these features at once, and offenders are greatly overrepresented in this relationship type. This appears to have more to do with recent offending among offspring than it does with these offspring having adolescent histories of trouble with parents and police. Still, the most problematic relationship type represents only a minority of both parent-offender and parent-non-offender relationships. Parent-offender relationships often are relatively harmonious, and in a sizeable minority of these relationships both parents and offspring are likely to help each other with everyday tasks.

## DISCUSSION

This study provides much new information about young adult offenders' relationships with their parents. First, as we may expect based on studies of juvenile delinquency and the family (e.g., Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Hirschi, 1969; Nye, 1958; Patterson and Dishion, 1985), when a parent has a conflicted, socially distant, and instrumentally imbalanced relationship with his or her young adult offspring, there is a better-than-expected chance that that offspring is an offender. Overall, offenders and their parents spend less quality time together than do non-offenders and their parents, and they score worse on scales of closeness, tension, and conflict. They show greatly increased

odds of an uncommon relationship type that is characterized by all of these negative qualities at once. Parents of offenders also give worse overall ratings to their relationships with these offspring than do parents of non-offenders.

What does not directly follow from the delinquency literature is the fact that even though offenders' relationships with their parents look poor along so many dimensions, they are not completely disengaged from their parents. Silverstein and colleagues (1997:442) report that a small percentage of middle-aged adults have little to do with their parents and are emotionally distant from them, but my analyses reveal no such "detached" relationship type among these younger dyads. At this age even offspring who are not close with their parents, who fight with them, and who have little social contact with them still tend to live nearby their parents and receive practical help from them. This constellation of relationship characteristics is not common, but it is considerably more common among offenders than it is among non-offenders. The fact that the parents who appear to feel the most frustrated with their offending offspring still have not withdrawn support from those offspring suggests that some components of parents' engagement with offspring are more unconditional than we might expect. The distinctive feature of these dyads' help exchange is not an absence of parental support but rather the offspring's low likelihood of reciprocating the parent's support. This indicates that offenders are less likely than are non-offenders to pull their weight in these relationships. As I describe in more detail below, this finding could have implications for crime and social bonds in adulthood more generally (cf. Nagin and Paternoster, 1994).

Interestingly, knowing the basic behavioral and relational history of these families does not appear to be critically important for understanding parents' current responses to

offspring offending. Adolescent offending and relationship quality do foreshadow young adult offending, but the associations of young adult offending with intergenerational relationship quality are visible whether or not offspring were troublemakers as teenagers and whether or not their relationships with their parents were tenuous to begin with. This result is similar to Belsky and colleagues' (2003) finding that young adults' transitions into adult role statuses have similar effects on their current relationships with their parents regardless of how positive their past relationships with those parents were. It also is consistent with Aquilino's (1997) finding that recent life experiences can change families' preexisting patterns of relating. My findings suggest that young adults with troubled behavioral pasts do not pay an extra relational price if they continue to offend, but they also suggest that new offending can disrupt previously harmonious family relations.

My second key finding is that the majority of offender-parent relationships are not particularly troubled. On average, offenders and their parents score less favorably on a range of relationship characteristics, but my analysis of relationship types reveals that *most* offenders have fairly favorable relations with their parents. Parents of offenders do appear to have less confidence in the judgment of their offspring; I find that they are less willing than are parents of non-offenders to seek offspring advice when they have major decisions to make. Still, they are no less willing to share depressed feelings with their offspring, and over half of offender-parent dyads are best characterized by highly positive and un-conflicted relationship types. This suggests that even when parents recognize the flaws of their grown children, this recognition does not necessarily set the overall tone for their relationships with these children. Another one-third of offender-parent dyads are

very involved with each other and participate in unusually balanced exchanges of practical help. In these families, offenders do give something back to their parents, and the increased prevalence of conflict in these relationships appears to be counterbalanced by expressions of offspring affection and by parents and offspring spending enjoyable quality time together.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT OFFENDERS' BROADER SOCIAL TIES

In summary, I have shown that young adult offenders are far more likely than are young adult non-offenders to have unfavorable relationships with their parents, but even when parents are aware that their offspring have had trouble with the law many offender-parent relationships do not seem much worse for this knowledge. What might this mean for our understanding of crime and adult social ties more generally? First, mutual obligation and investment are key to the development of strong social bonds (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Nagin and Paternoster, 1994), and my study provides evidence – from the other party's perspective – that offenders do not always contribute their share. The relationships that I study here are ascribed, not achieved, and thus are less voluntary than are the marital and employer-employee relationships featured in past work on adult crime and social ties. These parents have not severed their ties to these offenders, but this does not imply that people without parental obligations to these offenders will not. If parents' reports are capturing a more general association of young adult crime with a tendency to leave social responsibilities unfulfilled, then this tendency could play an important role in undermining offenders' connections to conventional society.

Second, my results suggest that many offenders are not a drain on their families of origin. Offenders often do not receive instrumental benefits from their relationships with

their parents, and when they do they often return parents' favors. This is reminiscent of Rose and Clear's (1998) suggestion that offenders are not strictly liabilities to their families and communities, and that in some respects they may even be assets. Like those authors' theoretical work, my results do not imply that people who commit crimes "are ideal relatives and neighbors" (Rose and Clear, 1998:453). Rather, they imply that conceptualizing offenders as generally bad people may not be appropriate.

Finally, although the negative reactions of significant others are a key component of control and labeling theories of crime, my results suggest that individuals' significant others may not always react negatively to their offending. The parents in this study are aware of the police trouble of their offspring, but many enjoy and support those offspring nonetheless. This means that even if offenders' significant others do disapprove of their behavior, this disapproval may not color all aspects of these relationships. My findings raise questions about whether "offender" always or even often becomes the centrally defining feature of individuals who commit crimes, particularly from the perspective of people with whom they have extensive histories. When offenders' problematic behavior extends to the ways in which they interact with others, it is reasonable to expect that those others will have the generalized negative emotional reactions of some of the parents in this study. When it does not, and offenders' close relationships go on as usual, then what can we say about the interpersonal costs of crime?

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation presents new information about the behavioral and relational correlates of crime in young adulthood. Rather than seeking to predict whether or not young adults would offend, I began with young adults who did offend and I examined ways in which their personal financial practices and their current relationships with their parents differed from those of non-offenders. I did this using data from three large national samples that each encompass considerable variance in background socioeconomic status, current financial resources, and current family relations (Add Health, the 1997 cohort of the NLSY, and the NSFH). I found that (1) young adult offenders receive more financial support from their parents than do their non-offending peers and even their own non-offending siblings, and this is not due to their financial need; (2) young adult offenders' financial need appears to be highly subjective, because they have higher incomes and earnings than do their non-offending peers but still incur more debt and experience more economic hardship; and (3) parents more often have conflicted, socially distant, and instrumentally imbalanced relationships with their grown offspring when those offspring are criminal offenders, but most parent-offender relationships are not particularly troubled.

By uncovering differences in how offenders versus non-offenders approach key life domains, my studies shed light on the nature of criminality. I find some evidence that offending represents a propensity for generally problematic behavior (cf. Osgood et al., 1988). In Chapter 3 I show that non-utilitarian crimes are positively associated with some problematic financial practices. This finding is consistent with general or syndrome theories of crime and deviance, or the idea that crime is a marker for underlying personal



qualities that have broad and generalized behavioral effects (e.g., Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Jessor and Jessor, 1977). In contrast, I find stronger evidence that crime and its associated problems share instrumental motives. For example, in Chapter 3 I show that financial problems are more strongly and consistently associated with utilitarian crime than they are with non-utilitarian crime. In Chapter 4 I find that offenders' relationships with their parents are instrumentally imbalanced, but they are not unusually imbalanced in other ways (e.g., in terms of emotional support).

The apparent instrumental motives behind crime, financial problems, and relationship problems are not directly anticipated by control theories, which posit more generality in deviance (e.g., Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1990; Hirschi, 2004). In addition, my findings are based on data from general population samples and do not appear to depend on young people's socioeconomic backgrounds or on their current financial resources. Thus, my findings also illuminate aspects of crime not encompassed by social-structural theories that emphasize the criminogenic effects of socioeconomic disadvantage (e.g., Blau and Blau, 1982; Cohen, 1955). Taken together, the results of this dissertation suggest that future theoretical work in criminology could fruitfully integrate existing ideas about individual differences in the general propensity for deviance with ideas about individual differences in economic goals and motivations. A good starting point could be Matza's (1964) proposition that criminal behavior depends on both the absence of constraints and the activation of will.

#### COMMITMENT, INVESTMENT, AND YOUNG ADULT CRIME

Among the national samples examined here, offenders appear to be fully committed neither to crime nor to conformity. For example, I find that many individuals commit utilitarian crime even when they hold legitimate jobs and receive financial

support from their parents. In addition, many young adult offenders reciprocate the instrumental support that they receive from their families of origin. Finally, at least for the time being, young adult offenders' parents are willing to continue to invest in them. These findings suggest that young adult offenders are notable not for their opposition to and isolation from conventional culture and society, but rather for the versatility and flexibility of their behavioral repertoires.

Key to social control theories is the idea that behavior is constrained by its potential consequences, including the prospect of damage to valued relationships and to life chances more generally (Briar and Piliavin, 1965; Hirschi, 1969). Do offenders have reason to believe that they “mortgage” their futures (Sampson and Laub, 1993:142) through their behavior? I find that young adults who are involved in crime have higher earnings and incomes and show signs of at least temporarily increasing their purchasing power through work, crime, borrowing, and other economic practices. I also find that young adult offenders are not cut off by their relatives, but instead receive more of their help and support than do their siblings. Finally, I find that offenders often do not have especially troubled relationships with their parents, even when their parents are aware of their offending. Not only do young adult offenders not face many of the negative consequences that we might expect them to face, but in some ways they actually appear to be advantaged relative to their non-offending peers and siblings. These findings lead me to question whether scholars should expect that young people's behavior will be constrained by potential threats to conventional commitments and relationships. In young adulthood, offenders may not yet have cause to expect that their behavior will jeopardize these commitments and relationships.

It is quite possible that offending and its behavioral correlates have “sleeper effects” (Hagan, 1997:124) that eventually will undermine offenders’ life chances, but that these young offenders do not accurately anticipate this (cf. Siennick and Staff, 2008). As I write this, investigators from ongoing surveys including Add Health and the NLSY97 are collecting and preparing additional data on young adults’ personal finances and on the role of families of origin in the economic well-being of young adults. Soon, researchers will have the opportunity to learn what happens as offenders and their parents age and as offenders’ conventional peers begin to overtake them in the labor market.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF CRIME AND CRIMINALITY

My three empirical projects demonstrate the value of studying crime in the general population during the young adult years. Some scholars argue that criminologists should focus their research efforts on selected populations with substantial histories of serious offending (e.g., Bushway et al., 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2001). This recommendation is consistent with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the differences between offenders and conventional society, such as subcultural theories (e.g., Cohen, 1955), structural strain theories (e.g., Cloward, 1959), and labeling theories (e.g., Hagan and Palloni, 1990). It also is consistent with growing interest in how the justice system shapes individuals’ life chances (e.g., Pettit and Western, 2004). Yet I find that general population offenders’ participation in family and economic life looks different than does non-offenders’, even when they are not socioeconomically disadvantaged and have no experience with the justice system. While studies of marginalized criminals can be very informative about the causes and costs of crime, I suggest that studies of ‘ordinary’ offenders can be equally informative because they allow researchers to examine the nature of criminal propensity separately from questions of structural circumstances.

There also are advantages to studying crime specifically among young adults. By virtue of their age, young adults have some behavioral choices and opportunities that are not available to adolescents. They are less subject to parental controls than they were as teenagers, but most have not yet formed families of their own. Furthermore, during this age range long-term socioeconomic sorting processes are not yet complete. I propose that these features of young adulthood enhance researchers' ability to examine how offenders would act in other key arenas of life in the absence of blocked or restricted access to conventional opportunities. If Matza's (1964) conception of "drift" as unregulated choice can be extended to behavioral domains outside of crime, then the young adult years could offer unique opportunities to observe individual differences in a wide range of behaviors under conditions that encourage drift.

In sum, I have shown that among young adults in the general population, offenders' and non-offenders' lives differ in ways that are not directly anticipated by theories of crime that were developed from research on other age ranges and on disadvantaged populations. Although in some ways my findings raise as many questions as they answer, it is my hope that they provide "grist for theories to explain" (Nagin and Tremblay, 2005: 918) and advance the reflexive modification of criminological theory in light of new empirical facts. I also hope that they will encourage further research on crime in this important and interesting age span.

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Appendix A. Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting Debt and Economic Hardship from Utilitarian and Non-Utilitarian Crime

Dependent Variable	Coefficient for Utilitarian Crime		Coefficient for Non-Utilitarian Crime	
	b	SE	b	SE
NLSY97 Models <sup>a</sup>				
Consumer debt	0.164	(0.103)	0.386	(0.111) **
Personal loan	0.743	(0.181) ***	0.294	(0.218)
Add Health Models <sup>b</sup>				
Has credit card debt	0.221	(0.068) **	-0.099	(0.072)
Went without phone service	0.344	(0.086) ***	0.450	(0.094) ***
Could not pay rent	0.655	(0.121) ***	0.186	(0.144)
Evicted for nonpayment of rent	0.644	(0.312) *	0.316	(0.230)
Could not pay utility bills	0.540	(0.099) ***	0.285	(0.122) *
Utilities shut off for nonpayment	0.635	(0.115) ***	0.410	(0.136) **
Could not afford doctor	0.609	(0.095) ***	0.494	(0.119) ***
Could not afford dentist	0.524	(0.087) ***	0.042	(0.108)

<sup>a</sup>N = 6,581

<sup>b</sup>N = 14,322

NOTES: †p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001; models included controls for background characteristics shown in tables 3.1 and 3.2; SE = standard error

Appendix B. Survey-Corrected Mean Comparisons of Offender and Non-offender Groups for NLSY97 Matching Variables

Variable	Offenders: Mean/Percent	Non-Offenders: Mean/Percent	Significance of Group Differences
Older than 20 at assets interview	10.5%	8.7%	†
Male	68.0%	48.1%	***
Black	16.5%	17.8%	
Hispanic	15.4%	14.3%	
Asian	2.1%	2.4%	
Other race (non-white)	2.5%	2.3%	
North central state	25.0%	25.6%	
Southern state	33.1%	35.8%	
Western state	22.3%	21.0%	
Urban residence	78.0%	75.0%	†
Lives in a metropolitan statistical area	81.8%	81.0%	
Two-parent family at W1	62.2%	66.1%	*
Number of siblings	1.239	1.312	†
Family socioeconomic status at W1	0.118	0.078	
Logged household poverty ratio at W1	5.336	5.302	
Neither parent completed high school	10.3%	10.5%	
Ability test score (percentile)	48.146	48.295	
Years of education completed	11.753	12.251	***
Income (logged dollars)	8.458	8.111	***
Assets (logged dollars)	3.589	4.047	**
Married	4.6%	7.4%	**
Cohabiting	14.4%	12.6%	
Employed full time	49.9%	44.1%	**
Employed part time	35.4%	43.7%	***
Living with parent	60.1%	62.6%	
Living with a child	11.9%	15.7%	**
Enrolled in college	27.9%	42.0%	***
Self-reported health	1.877	2.040	***
Past month binge drinking	1.364	0.707	***
Past month marijuana use	46.1%	14.7%	***
Past year other drug use	26.1%	3.7%	***
N	1,012	5,569	

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



Appendix C. Survey-Corrected Mean Comparisons of Offender and Non-Offender Groups for Add Health Matching Variables

Variable	Offenders: Mean/Percent	Non-Offenders: Mean/Percent	Significance of Group Differences
Age in years	21.511	21.945	***
Male	70.3%	43.1%	***
Black	17.0%	15.6%	†
Hispanic	11.5%	12.0%	
Asian	4.0%	3.8%	
Other race (non-white)	3.4%	2.7%	
Two-parent family at W1	64.3%	68.3%	**
Number of siblings	1.343	1.339	
Family socioeconomic status at W1	0.053	-0.023	***
Parent experienced economic hardship	18.1%	18.0%	
Vocabulary score	10.241	10.080	***
Years of education completed	12.881	13.147	***
Earnings (logged dollars)	7.730	7.345	**
Has a checking account	66.9%	73.2%	***
Has a savings account	59.2%	63.4%	***
Investment income	18.7%	16.6%	†
Financial assistance from parents	81.2%	73.1%	***
Received public assistance	5.9%	7.1%	**
Married	6.0%	16.4%	***
Cohabiting	12.0%	11.7%	
Employed	69.7%	69.7%	
Living with parent	47.2%	43.0%	***
Enrolled in college	35.1%	34.9%	
Living with a child	12.6%	23.8%	***
Owens home	9.2%	14.1%	***
Self-reported health	2.909	3.044	***
No health insurance	43.0%	35.1%	***
Past year binge drinking	1.902	0.991	***
Past month marijuana use	1.004	0.273	***
Past month other drug use	16.9%	3.2%	***
N	3,935	10,387	

NOTES: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Appendix D. Probabilities of Debt among Matched Samples of NLSY97 Offenders and Non-Offenders Created with Different Matching Algorithms

Matching Algorithm	Dependent Variable	Probability for Offenders	Probability for Non-Offenders	OR
Kernel	Has consumer debt	0.321	0.288	1.169
	Owes money on personal loan	0.089	0.052	1.798
	Owes money on auto loan	0.202	0.214	0.927
	Owes money on student loan	0.110	0.123	0.887
Radius (caliper = .01)	Has consumer debt	0.320	0.284	1.187
	Owes money on personal loan	0.089	0.050	1.867
	Owes money on auto loan	0.202	0.213	0.934
	Owes money on student loan	0.110	0.121	0.893

Appendix E. Probabilities of Debt and Economic Hardship among Matched Samples of Add Health Offenders and Non-Offenders Created with Different Matching Algorithms

Matching Algorithm	Dependent Variable	Probability for Offenders	Probability for Non-Offenders	OR
Kernel	Has credit card debt	0.404	0.369	1.161
	Owes money on student loan	0.284	0.281	1.014
	Went without phone service	0.212	0.159	1.425
	Could not pay rent	0.099	0.072	1.412
	Evicted for nonpayment of rent	0.015	0.012	1.327
	Could not pay utility bills	0.140	0.103	1.412
	Utilities shut off for nonpayment	0.069	0.044	1.617
	Could not afford doctor	0.115	0.090	1.325
	Could not afford dentist	0.147	0.127	1.177
Radius (caliper = .01)	Has credit card debt	0.404	0.370	1.156
	Owes money on student loan	0.284	0.280	1.016
	Went without phone service	0.212	0.161	1.398
	Could not pay rent	0.099	0.073	1.399
	Evicted for nonpayment of rent	0.015	0.012	1.276
	Could not pay utility bills	0.140	0.104	1.409
	Utilities shut off for nonpayment	0.069	0.043	1.625
	Could not afford doctor	0.115	0.093	1.273
	Could not afford dentist	0.147	0.130	1.147

Appendix F. Linear Regression Estimates Predicting Global Parent-Offspring Relationship Quality from Specific Aspects of Relationships

Predictor	b	SE	
Offspring lives with parent	0.165	(0.103)	
Offspring lives more than 25 miles away	0.298	(0.111)	**
Frequency of parent-offspring contact (scale)	0.355	(0.042)	***
Parent-offspring emotional closeness (scale)	1.591	(0.090)	***
Parent-offspring conflict	-0.543	(0.089)	***
Parent would talk to offspring if depressed	0.086	(0.045)	†
Parent would talk to offspring if making decision	0.211	(0.048)	***
Parent gave offspring emotional support	-0.076	(0.113)	
Offspring gave parent emotional support	-0.054	(0.092)	
Parent gave offspring practical help	-0.218	(0.089)	*
Offspring gave parent practical help	0.000	(0.097)	
Constant	0.590	(0.308)	†

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; N = 1,125; SE = standard error

Appendix G. Linear and Multinomial Estimates Predicting Parent-Young Adult Relationship Quality and Type from Young Adult Police Contact, With and Without Controlling for Adolescent Police Contact and Relationship Quality

Dependent Variable	Model	Predictor					
		Young adult police contact		Adolescent police contact		Adolescent relationship quality	
		b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Young adult relationship quality <sup>a</sup>	Baseline	-1.047	(0.161)	***	--	--	--
	Adding adolescent measures	-0.912	(0.152)	***	0.254	(0.180)	0.579 (0.043) ***
	Percent change in coefficient for young adult police contact	-13%					
Young adult relationship type <sup>b,c</sup>	Enmeshed	0.205	(0.299)		--	--	--
	Agreeable	0.086	(0.276)		--	--	--
	Uncooperative	1.107	(0.381)	**	--	--	--
	Distant but Supportive	0.752	(0.489)		--	--	--
	Enmeshed	0.172	(0.307)		0.137	(0.397)	-0.029 (0.106)
	Agreeable	0.010	(0.288)		0.133	(0.364)	-0.168 (0.095) †
	Uncooperative	0.950	(0.417)	*	0.143	(0.703)	-0.419 (0.108) ***
	Distant but Supportive	0.677	(0.542)		0.178	(0.813)	-0.158 (0.160)
	Enmeshed	-16%					
	Agreeable	-88%					
	Uncooperative	-14%					
	Distant but Supportive	-10%					

<sup>a</sup>Model for which unstandardized linear coefficients are shown

<sup>b</sup>Model for which unstandardized multinomial coefficients are shown

<sup>c</sup>Reference category = Companionable

NOTES: †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ;  $N = 1,125$ ; all models included controls for parent and offspring characteristics shown in Table 4.1; SE = standard error

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